ABSTRACT

Title: COPING WITH HETEROSEXISM AND
HOMOPHOBIA: YOUNG ADULTS WITH
LESBIAN PARENTS REFLECT ON THEIR
ADOLESCENCE

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A growing number of lesbian and gay parents are raising children in the United States
and around the world. The presence of heterosexism and homophobia, however,
continues to present legal, economic, and social challenges for these families. Despite
this reality, social science research has demonstrated the positive, healthy development of
children and adolescents with lesbian and gay parents. How is it, then, that these children
and adolescents demonstrate resilience despite exposure to heterosexism and
homophobia? Utilizing a grounded theory, qualitative approach, 30 young adults with
lesbian parents were interviewed to explore how they perceived, experienced, and coped
with heterosexism and homophobia during their adolescence. Feminist theory applied to a
risk-resilience framework guided the development of this study, the primary purpose of
which was to develop a theory-driven model to explain how adolescents with lesbian
parents cope with heterosexism and homophobia. Findings revealed evidence of
resilience of all participants despite varying levels of exposure to interpersonal,
institutional, and cultural heterosexism and homophobia from their peers, extended
family members, schools, religious institutions, and government. Participants utilized
both "protective" and "de-marginalizing" coping strategies in response to the

various types of heterosexism and homophobia they faced. Intervening factors in

participants' lives that helped to foster their resilience, such as social support on the part

of family and friends, were also identified. Based on these findings, a theoretical model

of how adolescents with lesbian parents cope with heterosexism and homophobia was

developed. Study findings, including the proposed theoretical model and implications of

the study findings for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners who are interested in

fostering the resilience of adolescents with lesbian parents, are discussed.

COPING WITH HETEROSEXISM AND HOMOPHOBIA:
YOUNG ADULTS WITH LESBIAN PARENTS
REFLECT ON THEIR ADOLESCENCE

By

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
2007

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

A growing number of lesbian and gay single persons and couples are raising

children in the United States and around the world. This "gayby boom" (Salholtz, 1990)

has been made possible by increasing numbers of adoptions by lesbians and gay men, as

well as advances in reproductive technology that allow for conception via donor

insemination (Fitzgerald, 1999; Lambert, 2005). Researchers have estimated that there

are between two and eight million lesbian and gay parents in the U.S. (e.g., Falk, 1989;

Gottman, 1990)[1]. Nearly 600,000 same-sex couples self-reported on the 2000 U.S.

Census, with 34% of female same-sex couple households and 22% of male same-sex

couple households reporting having at least one child under 18 years of age living in the

home (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). According to 2000 U.S. Census data, same-sex

couples with children live in 95% of U.S. counties, with the South having the highest

percentage of lesbian- and gay-parent families, followed by the Midwest and West, and

then the Northeast (Bennett & Gates, 2004). It is suspected, however, that these 2000

Census numbers reflect a significant undercount of lesbian and gay couple households,

due to reasons such as respondents' fear of possible negative repercussions for reporting

as same-sex couples (Cahill, Ellen, & Tobias, 2002). In addition, these numbers do not

reflect lesbian or gay single parent households or other diverse arrangements, as the U.S.

Census does not yet collect data on these families. Due to the challenges in attaining an

accurate count of lesbian and gay parents, the precise number of children with lesbian

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[1] These are dated sources; however, no more recent estimates are available. Patterson (1992) explains that
these estimates were based on extrapolations from what was known or believed about the number of
lesbians and gay men in the general population (approximately 10% of the population is considered lesbian
or gay; approximately 10% of gay men and 20% of lesbians are parents). It should be noted that it is not
universally accepted that 10% of the population is lesbian or gay; estimates range from 2%-10%
(Blumenfeld & Raymond, 1988; Laumann, Gagnon, Michael, & Michaels, 1994).

and gay parents is also uncertain. Estimates for the U.S. suggest there are between four and 14 million children who have at least one lesbian or gay parent (e.g., Editors of the Harvard Law Review, 1990; Patterson, 1995) and that anywhere from one to nine million children are currently being raised in lesbian- and gay-parent households (Stacey & Biblarz, 2001).

Despite the increasing number of lesbian- and gay-parent families, the presence of heterosexism and homophobia continue to present legal, economic, and social challenges for lesbian and gay parents and their children. The United States lags behind many other industrialized democratic nations in its legal recognition of same-sex partnerships[2], as only one state in the U.S. currently allows same-sex couples access to civil marriage. Meanwhile, the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act prohibits same-sex couples – married or not – from accessing the more than 1,100 federal benefits, rights, and protections accessible to heterosexual married couples (General Accounting Office, 2004). Some repercussions for same-sex partners include: (a) inability to cover a partner under Medicare or Social Security; (b) inability to obtain health and retirement benefits from a partner's employer; (c) inability to take sick leave or bereavement leave to care for a partner or a partner's child; (d) no legal right to make medical decisions for a partner who falls ill; and (e) an assumption that children born to a same-sex couple are not the children of both partners (Cahill et al., 2002). The lack of legal recognition of these relationships also has negative implications for the children of same-sex couples, especially in the absence of second parent adoption. Examples of the rights children with

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[2] Currently, same-sex marriages are recognized in the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, Canada, and the state of Massachusetts in the U.S.; South Africa is mandated to extend marriage to same-sex couples by the end of 2006; Israel's high court ruled in November 2006 that same-sex couples married abroad can register their marriages in Israel (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Same-sex_marriage).

same-sex parents are denied include, (a) the right to live with a non-biological parent after a biological parent dies; (b) access to health benefits and the right to inherit death benefits from either parent; (c) the right to Social Security benefits if either parent dies; and (d) the right to financial support and a continued relationship with both parents should their parents separate (Cahill et al., 2002). Without access to civil marriage, same-sex couples and their children are denied the formal recognition of their familial relationships that promote enhanced emotional and physical health, as well as economic security of all family members (Pawelski et al., 2006).

Researchers have only just begun to explore the effect that lack of access to civil marriage has on same-sex couples and their families. However, studies have begun to examine the impact that the lack of societal acceptance of homosexuality, in the forms of stigmatization, teasing, and bullying by peers, has had on children with lesbian and gay parents. Some studies have reported specific incidents of teasing and/or harassment experienced by children with lesbian and gay parents (e.g., Ray & Gregory, 2001; Tasker & Golombok, 1997). For example, almost half of the participants in Ray and Gregory's (2001) European study of children ages seven to eleven years old with lesbian and gay parents had experienced teasing in relation to their parents' sexuality. Barret and Robinson (1990) reported that children of gay fathers who disclosed their fathers' sexual orientation were often times called "queer" and "fag" (p. 90). In addition, some of the children in Snow's (2004) non-academic inquiry reported that peers made homophobic comments such as, "Your dad's a homo" (p. 84). One daughter of a lesbian mother blamed people's lack of understanding about lesbian and gay families for why she and her brother "got beat up sometimes" during elementary school (Snow, 2004, p. 48). After

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reviewing the literature, Stacey and Biblarz (2001) concluded that there is "some credible evidence that children with gay and lesbian parents, especially adolescent children, face homophobic teasing and ridicule that many find difficult to manage" (pp. 171-172).

The existence of heterosexism and homophobia, as well as the ongoing debate regarding same-sex marriage in this country and around the world, has sparked questions about the well-being of children being raised in lesbian- and gay-parent families. Although opponents of same-sex marriage contend that the ideal setting for child rearing is in the confines of heterosexual marriage (e.g., Knight, 1996; Stanton, 2003), several professional organizations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Psychological Association, the Child Welfare League of America, and the North American Council on Adoptable Children, have issued statements affirming that lesbian and gay parents are just as likely to raise happy, well-adjusted children as heterosexual parents (Human Rights Campaign, 2004). This assertion is based on the growing body of social science research in this area, which has consistently shown that there are essentially no differences – developmentally or psychosocially – between children raised by lesbian and gay parents and those raised by heterosexual parents (e.g., Green, Mandel, Hotvedt, Gray, & Smith, 1986; Tasker & Golombok, 1997; Wainright, Russell, & Patterson, 2004). These studies have provided evidence of the positive development of children with lesbian and gay parents, despite both the legalized and non-legalized forms of discrimination that these families face.

Consideration of these research findings led to the question: How is it that children with lesbian and gay parents are developing positively and overcoming the stress of heterosexism and homophobia? To help answer this question, advocates on both sides

of the same-sex marriage debate have called for more research on families headed by same-sex partners and, more specifically, on children raised by lesbian and gay parents (e.g., Biblarz & Stacey, 2005; Stanton, 2004). Those opposed to lesbian and gay parenting claim that society's homophobic attitudes will result in severe social stigma of children with lesbian and gay parents (e.g., Cameron, 1999). Indeed, judges in child custody decisions have often cited their concerns about children being teased and harassed by peers as a reason for not awarding custody to lesbian and gay parents (Rivera, 1987; Tasker & Golombok, 1995). Supporters of lesbian and gay parenting, including lesbian and gay parents themselves, also cite concerns regarding the heterosexism and homophobia that children raised by lesbian and gay parents face (Gartrell et al., 1999; 2000; Mitchell, 1998). However, this latter group contends that blame should be placed on negative societal attitudes rather than lesbian and gay parents. In a review of the literature on children with lesbian and gay parents, Buxton (1999) pointed out that the largest problem for children of lesbian and gay parents does not seem to be their parents' sexual orientation, but the homophobia and heterosexism that exist in the outside world.

Due to the fact that research has necessarily focused on comparing the well-being of children raised by lesbian and gay parents to those raised by heterosexual parents in an effort to aid the courts in child custody decisions (Fitzgerald, 1999), research has only just begun which attempts to provide insight into the factors affecting positive outcomes and resilience in children of lesbian and gay parents. Researchers have cited the need for more in-depth studies, especially qualitative studies, that explore the lives and experiences of children with lesbian and gay parents (e.g., Anderssen, Amlie, & Ytteroy,

2002; Lambert, 2005). There have also been calls for investigation into the coping strategies of children with lesbian and gay parents when confronted with heterosexism and homophobia (Clarke, Kitzinger, & Potter, 2004; Fitzgerald, 1999; Gershon, Tschann, & Jemerin, 1999; Lambert, 2005). For example, very little is known about the social support networks of young people with lesbian and gay parents; yet, social relationships with family members, peers, and others could be important sources of support for these children (Gershon et al., 1999).

The current study expanded upon previous studies of children from lesbian- and gay-parent families by exploring the adolescent experiences of young adults who grew up with lesbian parents. Thirty young adults, 18 to 25 years old, who lived with their lesbian mothers during adolescence were recruited from around the U.S. to participate in in-depth interviews. Utilizing feminist theory applied to a risk-resilience framework, the study explored participants' perceptions and experiences of heterosexism and homophobia, as well as participants' coping strategies and support networks. Prior to a thorough description of the current study's methodology, a review of the general literature on children with lesbian and gay parents is presented. Although the current study only included participants with lesbian parents (finding enough adult participants who were actually raised by gay fathers would have proven difficult), literature on children with both lesbian and gay parents is reviewed due to the relatively small number of studies on the topic. Following the literature review are a description and application of feminist theory to a risk-resilience framework to help conceptualize how children with lesbian and gay parents cope with heterosexism and homophobia.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Review of the Literature on Children with Lesbian and Gay Parents

Experience of Heterosexism and Homophobia

Heterosexism and homophobia are evident in the lives of lesbian- and gay-parent family members (Litovich & Langhout, 2004) and are potential sources of stress for this group (Buxton, 1999). *Heterosexism* has been defined as the institutionalized practice of favoring heterosexuality, based on the assumption that heterosexuality is normal and thus other sexual orientations are abnormal (Chesir-Teran, 2003). Another commonly used definition of heterosexism is: "the assumption that everyone is heterosexual or should be heterosexual" (http://pride.asua.arizona.edu/dictionary.htm). *Homophobia* is defined here as the negative emotions targeted at lesbian and gay individuals, their children, or the family in general and stems from heterosexism (Sears, 1992). Heterosexism and homophobia are social realities with which lesbians, gay men, and their families must contend on a daily basis (Bepko & Johnson, 2000), as they may be present at the interpersonal, institutional, and cultural levels. Blumenfeld (1992) described *interpersonal* homophobia as actions related to individuals' prejudices about lesbians and gay men, such as name-calling, telling jokes, and physical harassment. *Institutional* homophobia refers to the ways in which government, businesses, schools, churches, and other institutions discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation (Blumenfeld, 1992). *Societal* or cultural homophobia refers to social norms and codes of behavior that reinforce heterosexism (Blumenfeld, 1992).

Despite recent advances in lesbian and gay rights, such as the 2003 Lawrence *et al. v.* Texas U.S. Supreme Court decision which overturned state sodomy laws (FindLaw,

2003a), the 2003 Massachusetts State Supreme Court decision legalizing same-sex civil

marriage in that state (FindLaw, 2003b), and the 2005 California State Supreme Court

decision ensuring the parental rights of lesbian co-parents (FindLaw, 2005),

heterosexism and homophobia continue to be pervasive throughout society, as evidenced

by the multitude of anti-gay social policies that exist in the U.S. today. Existing social

policies in the U.S. deny same-sex couples civil and legal rights that would validate their

relationships and protect their families (Bepko & Johnson, 2000). The 1996 Defense of

Marriage Act (Public Law 104-199), widely known as DOMA, did two main things: (a) it

defined marriage under federal law as exclusively heterosexual (between one man and

one woman); and (b) declared that states are not required to recognize same-sex

marriages performed in other states (Congressional Information Services, Inc., 1996).

Meanwhile, the U.S. General Accounting Office (2004) found there are 1,138 federal

laws in which marital status is a factor, such as taxation, federal loans, and dependent and

survivor benefits. Moreover, there are numerous state and local laws in which marital

status is a factor in receiving rights and benefits, such as health insurance, health care

decision-making, property rights, and inheritance (Pawelski et al., 2006). Furthermore,

as a result of DOMA, children born to same-sex couples do not have automatic legal ties

to both of their parents, making it necessary for same-sex couples to acquire second-

parent adoptions to ensure the rights and security of their children (Connolly, 2002).

Currently, however, only nine states (CA, CT, IL, IN, MA, NJ, NY, PA, and VT) and the

District of Columbia guarantee second-parent/coparent adoption, either through law or

high court rulings (Pawelski et al., 2006). Indeed, the American Psychological

Association (http://www.apa.org/releases/gaymarriage.html) has stated, "Prohibiting civil

marriage for same-sex couples is discriminatory and unfairly denies such couples, their children and other members of their families the legal, financial and social advantages of civil marriage."

As heterosexism is deeply rooted in U.S. culture (Litovich & Langhout, 2004), children of lesbian and gay parents face more than only legalized forms of discrimination, including institutional-level heterosexism and homophobia in schools, as well as interpersonal heterosexism and homophobia. According to Hurrelmann (1996), schools are one of the most important institutions responsible for the competent and healthy development of adolescents, as school dominates a large sector of an adolescent's social world and has a formative influence on many aspects of the adolescent's life. Therefore, institutional heterosexism and homophobia in schools, which is indicated by factors such as the absence of safe spaces and student initiated and run groups called gay-straight alliances (Chesir-Teran, 2003), has the potential to have a negative impact on the development of adolescents with lesbian and gay parents. An example of how some children with lesbian and gay parents may lack a safe space at school was given by a daughter of a lesbian mother who faced harassment by peers; she noted that "some teachers knew what was going on, but no one would really say or do anything" (Snow, 2004, p. 48). Children with lesbian and gay parents may not feel safe enough at school to be open about their families. They may not have access to teachers with whom they can talk about their families or who will stand up to homophobic comments and actions. Indeed, the 2005 School Climate Survey published by the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN; Kosciw & Diaz, 2006), which surveyed over 1,700 lesbian,

gay, bisexual, and transgender[3] (LGBT) high school students across the U.S., reported that only 17% of school staff intervened when they heard students make homophobic comments.

A lack of integration of LGBT issues into the curricula, the absence of accessible books about homosexuality and/or written by LGBT authors, and a lack of visibility of LGBT teachers, students, and families are also indicators of institutional heterosexism and homophobia in schools (Chesir-Teran, 2003). For example, if posters on school walls only include images of heterosexual couples, families, and historical figures, these displays may contribute to or reflect an underlying climate of heterosexism and/or homophobia (Chesir-Teran, 2003). Furthermore, Chesir-Teran (2003) suggests that schools can either include specialized units on homosexuality or address LGBT issues in positive ways throughout the curricula when dealing with families, relationships, and sexual health. However, studies have found that many schools either do not integrate LGBT issues into the curricula at all or they include negative messages about homosexuality (Friend, 1998; Kosciw & Diaz, 2005; Lipkin, 1995). In fact, the vast majority (over 81%) of the LGBT students included in the GLSEN 2005 School Climate Survey reported that they had never been taught about LGBT people or events in school. Disturbingly, more than 18% of these students had heard teachers or other school staff make homophobic comments (Kosciw & Diaz, 2005).

Lesbian- and gay-parent families, which do not conform to the heterosexual ideal, are often rendered invisible in schools (Gillis, 1998). Wright (1998) found through her

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[3] *Transgender* can be defined as: "the state of one's 'gender identity' (self-identification as male, female, both, or neither) not matching one's 'assigned gender' (identification by others as male or female based on physical/genetic sex); transgender does not imply any specific form of sexual orientation" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transgender).

interviews with children in lesbian step families that what seemed to affect the children in her study the most was the absence of any positive or even neutral feedback or information on lesbian families in the schools. For example, one daughter of two lesbian moms in Wright's study wanted to make two Mother's Day cards at school, but her second grade teacher only allowed her to make one. Other elementary school children who have drawn their two moms or two dads for family tree-drawing activities have reported being reprimanded by teachers for doing these drawings incorrectly (e.g., Youth Leadership and Action Program, 2005). Furthermore, children with lesbian and gay parents find others' general lack of knowledge and understanding about lesbian and gay families to be frustrating and, oftentimes, isolating (Patterson, 1992; Ray & Gregory, 2001). Ray and Gregory (2001) noted that because gays and lesbians were spoken of so little in reference to family life, when children told their peers about having two mothers or two fathers, the other children asked many questions and still did not understand.

Children and adolescents with lesbian and gay parents face interpersonal heterosexism and homophobia through everyday social interactions with others, including peers, teachers, neighboring adults, and extended family members. For example, Ray and Gregory (2001) found that a large number of the children with lesbian and gay parents in their study heard anti-gay sentiments and gay jokes, often on a daily basis. Gartrell, Deck, Rodas, Peyser, and Banks (2005) reported that by the age of ten, 43% of the 74 children of lesbian mothers in their longitudinal study had experienced homophobia; the majority of them (69%) reported feeling angry, sad, or upset about the incidents. Within Gartrell et al.'s sample, experiencing homophobia was associated with more total problems reported on the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL; Achenbach,

1991); however, the social competence and behavior of the children were categorized as "normal" when compared to normative samples on all measures of the CBCL.

Some studies have reported incidents of children with lesbian and gay parents being teased in relation to their parents' and/or their own sexuality (e.g., Gartrell et al., 2005; Haack-Moller & Mohl, 1984; Tasker & Golomobok, 1997). Wright (1998) reported in her qualitative study of lesbian step families that the seven children (ages seven to 20 years old) in the study were sometimes teased about having lesbian moms. One boy experienced an emotionally painful incident when riding home on the school bus. He had told some children that his mom was a lesbian after he overheard them talking about lesbians and gays. The children laughed and pointed at him saying, "Kevin, gross! Kevin's mom is a lesbian!" (p. 146). Wright noted that although the children in her study did not experience a lot of trauma overall, they still had tremendous fears about being teased. Even the children who had not experienced any overt homophobia seemed "to carry around with them a certain uneasiness and anxiety" (p. 149). Despite the evidence that children and adolescents of lesbian and gay parents face the stress of heterosexism and homophobia, often on a daily basis, the literature reveals normative development for these adolescents.

Outcome Studies of Children with Lesbian and Gay Parents

Reviews of the literature (Anderssen et al., 2002; Fitzgerald, 1999) concerning the development of children with lesbian and gay parents have concluded that parental sexual orientation is not an effective predictor of successful child development. In fact, studies have shown that children with lesbian and gay parents are developing in positive directions on measures of cognitive and emotional functioning, behavioral adjustment,

and gender and social development[4]. Fitzgerald noted that the majority of studies

conducted on children with lesbian and gay parents have examined the well-being of

young children from "divorced" families. According to Fitzgerald, "divorced" lesbian-

and gay-parent families are single-parent or stepfamily homes that have formed after the

dissolution of a heterosexual marriage/relationship. A "planned" family, on the other

hand, is one in which children came to the family after the parent or parents already

"came out" as lesbian or gay and can be formed in a variety of ways, including adoption,

known and unknown donor insemination, surrogacy, and/or foster-parenting. Fitzgerald

notes that the importance of the distinction between these two types of families is due to

the possible significance of early childhood experiences, particularly divorce and sex-role

modeling, on later gender and social development. The present review of the literature

will also distinguish between studies conducted with children from divorced versus

planned families and will combine Anderssen et al.'s and Fitzgerald's categorizations of

child outcomes to explore six areas of child development: (a) emotional well-being, (b)

cognitive functioning and school achievement, (c) behavioral adjustment, (d) gender

development, (e) sexual orientation, and (f) social development.

Emotional Well-Being

Emotional well-being is the outcome variable that has been studied the most thus

far with samples of children with lesbian parents, although no published studies to date

have explored this variable with children of gay fathers. Children with lesbian parents

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[4] It is important to note that, for the sake of simplicity and to follow the terminology used in the majority of previous studies, "lesbian" and "gay" are used in this paper to refer to: (a) persons who specifically identified as lesbian or gay and (b) those who were in same-sex couple relationships at the time of study. Likewise, the term "heterosexual" is used to refer to those who have specifically identified as heterosexual and to those who were in opposite-sex couple relationships at the time of study. These labels do not reflect the reality that some persons in same-sex or different-sex relationships may, in fact, be bisexual.

seem to have normal emotional functioning and development of self-esteem in studies of children from divorced (e.g., Gershon et al., 1999; Gottman, 1990) and planned (e.g., Flaks, Ficher, Masterpasqua, & Joseph, 1995; Golombok, Tasker, & Murray, 1997) lesbian-parent families. Golombok, Spencer, and Rutter's (1983) ground-breaking study compared 37 children (13 boys; 24 girls) of lesbian mothers from divorced families with 38 children (24 boys; 14 girls) of single, heterosexual, divorced mothers. All children were between the ages of five and 17 years old, with a mean age of nine to 10 years, and the race/ethnicity of the participants was not reported. Standardized parent and teacher questionnaires (previously developed for Rutter, 1967 and Rutter et al., 1970, 1975 epidemiological studies) were utilized to assess children's emotional difficulties, such as tearfulness, worrying, fears, and sleep difficulties, and revealed no significant between-group differences. Making it the first longitudinal study of its kind, Tasker and Golombok (1997) collected follow-up data from the same families. The older sample, subsequently ranging in age from 17 to 35 years old, consisted of 25 children of lesbian mothers and 21 children of heterosexual mothers. The researchers, again, found no group differences in regard to emotional functioning.

Huggins (1989) utilized the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (SEI) to explore the self-esteem of 18 adolescents (ages 13 to 19) of divorced lesbian mothers, and 18 same-aged adolescents of divorced heterosexual mothers. The SEI measures general, social, home, and academic self-esteem. Each group contained nine females and nine males and all participants were Caucasian. Huggins found no significant differences in adolescents' scores on the SEI as a function of mother's sexual orientation. Due to the small sample sizes, significance tests exploring interaction effects of child's sex and

parental sexual orientation were not run. However, Huggins noted that daughters of

lesbian mothers fell into two distinct groups; one group had extremely high SEI scores,

while the other group had extremely low SEI scores. It was noted that most of the

daughters in the high SEI group: (a) had mothers who had a partner who lived in the

home, (b) had fathers who did not display negative attitudes about the mother's sexual

orientation, and (c) learned about their mother's sexual orientation at an early age.

In a recent ground-breaking study, Wainright et al. (2004) were the first to assess

the well-being of adolescents living with same-sex parents by examining data from a

large national sample. The researchers utilized data from the National Longitudinal

Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health) and compared 44 adolescents from female

same-sex couple homes with 44 adolescents parented by different-sex couples (23 girls

and 21 boys in each group). The adolescents ranged in age from 12 to 18 years old and

were an average of 15 years old; approximately 68% of the sample identified as European

American or White, and approximately 32% identified themselves as non-White or

biracial. One drawback of the secondary data analysis was that it was not possible to tell

from the data whether participants were from divorced or planned families. The

participants completed measures assessing emotional well-being, including depressive

symptoms, self-esteem, and anxiety. Adolescent depressive symptoms were assessed

using an abbreviated version of the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale.

Self-esteem was measured using a six-item scale from the Add Health In-School

Questionnaire that included items relating to feelings of social acceptance and being

loved and wanted. Finally, adolescent anxiety was measured with a seven-item scale

devised from the Add Health In-Home Interview that included questions about frequency

of symptoms such as feeling moody or having trouble relaxing. Wainright et al. found no group differences as a function of family type or gender.

Cognitive Functioning and School Achievement

Four studies have explored the cognitive functioning and school achievement of children with lesbian parents, examining intelligence test scores and grade point averages (GPAs). Green et al. (1986) and Kirkpatrick, Smith, and Roy (1981) examined scores on the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC) and/or the Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence (WPPSI) for children three to 11 years and five to 12 years old, respectively, from divorced families. Green et al. reported that all of the mothers in the study were White; they did not, however, report the race/ethnicity of the children. Kirkpatrick et al. did not include information about the race/ethnicity of the children or families. Flaks et al. (1995) utilized scores on the revised WISC and WPPSI forms for children (ages three to eight years old) from planned families and compared them to children from married, heterosexual-parent families. All of the participants in Flaks et al.'s study were White. Finally, in addition to examining emotional well-being, Wainright et al. (2004) compared the GPAs of the sample of adolescents described earlier. No group differences were found in any of these studies, indicating that the cognitive functioning and school achievement of children with lesbian parents is no different than children raised by heterosexual parents.

Behavioral Adjustment

Seven studies have compared the behavioral adjustment of children raised by lesbian parents to children raised by heterosexual parents. These studies utilized the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL; Brewaeys, Ponjaert, Hall, & Golombok, 1997; Chan,

Raboy, & Patterson, 1998; Flaks et al., 1995; Patterson, 1994; Vanfraussen, Ponjaert-Kristoffersen, & Brewaeys, 2002) or other standardized questionnaires and interviews containing items related to "behavior problems" (Golombok et al., 1983; Golombok et al., 1997). The samples in the studies by Golombok et al.'s (1983) and Chan et al. included both divorced and planned lesbian families, while the other four studies solely utilized planned lesbian families in their samples. None of the above studies found any differences in behavioral adjustment between children with lesbian and gay parents, from either divorced or planned families, and children with heterosexual parents.

Chan et al. (1998) found no differences in behavioral problems, as measured by the CBCL, when they compared 55 children of lesbian couples and single mothers with 25 children of heterosexual couples and single mothers, all of whom were conceived via donor insemination. The children were on average seven years of age. All of the children of coupled parents (both lesbian and heterosexual) had lived with both of their parents since birth, while some of the single mothers (both lesbian and heterosexual) had been previously married. The researchers reported that no differences existed as a function of gender among the variables of interest, therefore the gender breakdown of the sample was not reported. The race/ethnicity of the participants was also not reported. Chan et al.'s study adds to a new body of research that reveals the normal development of children born via donor insemination and being raised in lesbian single parent and couple households.

In a Belgian study, Brewaeys et al. (1997) compared 30 daughters and sons of lesbian couples in planned families, all of whom were conceived via donor insemination, to 52 daughters and sons of heterosexual couples, half of whom were conceived via

donor insemination and half of whom were traditionally conceived. The children ranged

in age from four to eight years old; the race/ethnicity of the families was not reported,

although it is assumed that all of the participants were White. Results of the study

revealed no group differences regarding behavioral and emotional adjustment for boys, as

measured by the CBCL. However, fewer behavioral problems were reported for

daughters of lesbian mothers conceived via donor insemination and daughters of

heterosexual couples who were traditionally conceived, than for daughters of

heterosexual couples who were conceived via donor insemination. This finding warrants

further study to explore possible familial and gender differences regarding the correlation

between method of conception and children's behavior problems.

Gender Development

Researchers have explored two aspects of gender development in children with

lesbian and gay parents: Gender identity and gender-role behaviors. *Gender identity*

concerns a person's self-identification as female or male, and *gender-role* includes

behaviors and attitudes that are regarded by a particular culture as appropriately female or

male (Bem, 1974; 1984). Fitzgerald (1999) asserts that it is important to recognize the

values and biases inherent in the research questions that explore aspects of children's

gender development; namely, utilizing measures of gender-role behavior in order to

surmise whether or not children are developing satisfactorily assumes that there are

behaviors and roles that are appropriate and "normal" for females and males. Fitzgerald,

as well as this author, finds this assumption to be problematic, as it affirms and reinforces

gender-role stereotypes. Fitzgerald elaborates: "The promotion of gender hegemony is

accomplished by judging 'appropriate' child development in terms of such outcomes as

girls wearing dresses and being emotionally supportive, and boys playing with trucks and displaying independent and aggressive behavior" (p. 60). Despite this problematic assumption, Fitzgerald notes that studies that have explored the gender development of children with lesbian and gay parents are immensely important, as they have helped to debunk myths and stereotypes about lesbian- and gay-parent families. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the tremendous contribution and value of these studies, while noting the inherent problems with examining gender-role behavior as a measure of child development.

It is also important to note that social learning theories are the primary basis for the argument that lesbian and gay parenting will not promote healthy psychosexual development in children (Golombok et al., 1983). Classic social learning theories, including role modeling theory, posit that children's imitation of and identification with their parents of the same sex, along with differential reinforcement of gender-typed behavior, form the basis of healthy psychosexual development (Bandura & Huston, 1961; Mussen, 1969; Mischel, 1970). Taking this perspective, it seems to follow that children raised by two lesbian or gay parents would be negatively influenced by the lack of clearly differentiated mother and father role models (Golombok et al., 1983). Furthermore, it would seem that boys who are raised by lesbians and girls who are raised by gay men should have the most difficulty due to the lack of same-sex role models in the home (Golombok et al., 1983).

Despite the social learning theory argument, studies exploring children's gender identity development have found no evidence of gender identity confusion for children with lesbian mothers from either divorced families (e.g., Golombok et al., 1983; Green at

al., 1986) or planned families (McCandlish, 1987). Gottman (1990) examined the gender identities of 35 adult daughters of divorced lesbian mothers and 70 adult daughters of divorced heterosexual mothers. All of the daughters with lesbian mothers had a lesbian co-parent who lived in the home at some point during their upbringing. The daughters of heterosexual mothers were divided into two equally divided groups based on whether their mothers had either "remated" (lived with a man or remarried while their daughter lived at home) or remained single throughout the daughters' childhoods. The daughters ranged in age from 18 to 44, with an average age of 24 years old; race/ethnicity of the participants was not reported. The researcher utilized the Masculinity and Femininity scales of the Personal Attributes Questionnaire to measure gender identity and found that gender identity scores did not differ between groups. McCandlish (1987) conducted observations and structured interviews with seven children, who were born to lesbian mothers via donor insemination, and their mothers. The children ranged in age from 18 months to seven years old; there were two girls and five boys, and all were White. The researcher reported that all of the children who were talking at the time of the interview evidenced healthy gender identity development and knowledge of gender differences.

Studies have also examined gender role behavior and found "appropriate" displays of gender behaviors and attitudes, such as favorite toys and vocational choices, among children of lesbian parents from both divorced families (e.g., Javaid, 1993; MacCallum & Golombok, 2004) and planned families (Brewaeys et al., 1997; Patterson, 1994). The majority of these studies compared children of lesbian mothers to children of heterosexual mothers (children ranged in age from three to 44 years old) and found no differences between these groups in regard to gender role behavior (e.g., Kweskin &

Cook, 1982; Gottman,1990). Green et al. (1986), however, did find some group

differences in this regard. Green et al. compared 56 daughters and sons of lesbian single

and non-single mothers with 48 daughters and sons of non-lesbian, single mothers.

Children in both groups were primarily from divorced families; all of the children were

between the ages of three and 11 years old, and participants' race/ethnicity was not

reported. Results revealed no group differences for boys, but girls of lesbian mothers

preferred some boy-typical activities (e.g., playing with trucks), clothes, and future adult

roles (e.g., doctor, lawyer, astronaut) more than daughters of heterosexual mothers.

Sexual Orientation

A number of studies have examined the sexual orientation of children with lesbian

and gay parents. *Sexual orientation* refers to a person's attraction to sexual partners as

homosexual, heterosexual, or bisexual (Steckel, 1987). A commonly held belief, based on

social learning and role model theory, is that children with lesbian and gay parents will

"turn out" lesbian and gay themselves (e.g., Cameron, 1999; Golomobok et al., 1983).

However, minimal evidence has been found to support the claim that children raised by

lesbian and gay parents are more likely to identify as non-heterosexual as compared to

those raised by heterosexual parents. Again, Fitzgerald (1999) calls attention to the value

judgment inherent in the research question, which assumes that it is "bad" if children turn

out to be non-heterosexual:

> The…question as to whether or not the children of homosexuals [sic] are more
> likely to be gay themselves is immensely problematic for obvious reasons in the
> sense that to be gay or lesbian is assumed to be a negative, unwelcome outcome.
> This position tends to reinforce homophobia, even if unintentionally. (p. 61)

The vast majority of existing studies have not found an increased incidence of

identification as lesbian or gay among children raised by lesbian and gay parents in

divorced families (e.g., Bailey, Bobrow, Wolfe, & Mikach, 1995; O'Connell, 1993). No studies to date have examined the sexual orientations of children raised exclusively in planned lesbian or gay families. Wainright et al. (2004) examined the romantic relationships and sexual behavior of 88 adolescents in a national sample, half of whom were being raised by same-sex parents and the other half of whom were living with two different-sex parents. The researchers found no differences in regard to the percentage of adolescents who had engaged in sexual intercourse or who had had a romantic relationship in the past 18 months. Fewer than 10 of the adolescents reported same-sex attractions and same-sex relationships in the past 18 months; therefore, the researchers report that stipulations that permitted use of the data did not allow them to present group comparisons. These findings, however, are consistent with previous studies, which found that the vast majority of children with lesbian and gay parents identify as heterosexual (e.g., Gottman, 1990; Huggins, 1989; Tasker & Golombok, 1997).

Tasker and Golombok's (1997) study revealed more complex findings regarding the sexual orientation of children of lesbian parents. The researchers compared 25 young adults (17 women; eight men) who were raised by lesbian divorced mothers with 21 young adults (nine women; 12 men) raised by single heterosexual divorced mothers. The age of the participants in this follow-up study ranged from 17 to 35 years for both groups; the race/ethnicity of participants was not reported. Study findings revealed no significant differences between groups with respect to experience of sexual attraction to the same gender. However, the researchers did find that the young adults from lesbian families were more likely to have considered the possibility of having a same-sex relationship and to have actually been involved in a same-sex relationship. Ten daughters and four sons

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with lesbian mothers reported having considered the possibility of becoming involved in a same-sex relationship; only one daughter and two sons of heterosexual mothers reported the same consideration. Six participants (five daughters and one son) from lesbian families, who reported experiencing same-gender sexual attraction, also reported having been involved in a same-sex relationship. None of the four young adults with heterosexual mothers reported having been involved in a same-sex relationship. Tasker and Golombok noted that having a lesbian mother appeared to broaden young adults' views of what constituted potential sexual relationships for themselves (i.e., they were open to the possibility of entering into a same-sex relationship). The researchers also noted, based upon their research findings, that consideration of broader sexual relationship possibilities did not necessarily lead to a non-heterosexual identity.

Social Development

Due to concerns that society's homophobic attitudes may result in difficulties in peer relationships and social stigma for children with lesbian and gay parents (Patterson, 1992), researchers have examined aspects of children's social development. Studies have found no evidence that children with lesbian and gay parents from either divorced (e.g., Green et al., 1986; MacCallum & Golombok, 2004) or planned families (Golombok et al., 1997; Vanfraussen et al., 2002) experience increased difficulties in developing peer relationships. For example, Golombok et al. (1983) reported that most of the children (ages five to 17 years old) in their study reported having a primarily same-sex peer group; children of lesbian mothers did not differ from children of heterosexual mothers in this regard. Furthermore, studies have found that these children did not experience increased incidence of social stigma compared to children with heterosexual parents, as evidenced

by participants' reports of whether or not they had been teased or bullied by peers (e.g., Golombok et al., 1997; Tasker & Golombok, 1997). In Green et al.'s (1986) study, children (ages three to 11 years old) of both lesbian and heterosexual mothers were asked to rate their own popularity among their peers, while mothers were asked to rate their children's social skills and popularity among peers. The researchers found no group differences in these regards, and most mothers rated their children's social development as positive.

Despite the finding that children with lesbian and gay parents do not experience increased stigmatization, some studies did report specific incidents of teasing in relation to the parent and/or child's sexuality (e.g., Barret & Robinson, 1990; Haack-Moller & Mohl, 1984; Vanfraussen et al., 2002). For example, Tasker and Golombok (1997) did not find a higher prevalence of peer group hostility reported among the 25 daughters and sons of lesbian mothers as compared to an equal number of offspring of heterosexual mothers; yet, more sons of lesbian mothers reported being teased about their own sexuality than the other males. Furthermore, although not statistically significant, there was a trend for the offspring of lesbian mothers to report being teased more often in regards to their mothers' lifestyle as compared to children of heterosexual mothers. The authors speculate that their findings may reflect actual occurrences of more frequent teasing of these children with lesbian parents, or may indicate that these children had a heightened awareness in regards to their own and their parents' sexuality. Children of lesbian and gay parents may be more sensitive to remarks by peers regarding sexual orientation and may recognize and remember these incidents more than children of heterosexual parents.

In summary, lesbian and gay parents and their children face heterosexism and homophobia every day in both overt and subtle forms. Despite this stressful cultural reality, research on children and adolescents with lesbian and gay parents from both divorced and planned families reveals positive and healthy development. Studies have explored several aspects of children's development, including emotional well-being, cognitive functioning and school achievement, behavioral adjustment, gender development, sexual orientation, and social development. In light of the finding of normal development in all of these areas, studies exploring how children and adolescents with lesbian and gay parents are able to exhibit resilience despite the presence of heterosexism and homophobia warrants further study.

Theoretical Framework

Feminist theory applied to a risk-resilience framework guided the development of this study, the purpose of which is to conceptualize how adolescents with lesbian parents cope with heterosexism and homophobia. Feminist theory asserts that there are many family forms beyond the traditional nuclear, heterosexual family that are successful in today's society (Osmond & Thorne, 1993; Thompson & Walker, 1995). Rather than focusing on family structure, a feminist perspective emphasizes the importance of family relationships based on loving friendship, models of equality, intimacy, caring, and cooperation as qualities that promote successful families (e.g., Allen & Baber, 1992). The current study was based on the view that lesbian- and gay-parent families are legitimate and successful in raising healthy children and need to be further explored in order for the family field to have a better understanding of families in general. Furthermore, the proposed study utilized a feminist perspective to recognize that

heterosexism and homophobia do, in fact, exist in our society and have the potential to affect families and family members in negative ways. As Speziale and Gopalakrishna (2004) note, "Attempting to function daily in a social environment that denies one, one's life partner, and one's children fundamental legal protections produces stressors with which traditional families do not contend" (pp. 180-181).

A risk-resilience framework was utilized to theorize how adolescents with lesbian parents achieve positive developmental and emotional outcomes despite the stress of heterosexism and homophobia. According to the framework, *risk* is conceptualized as exposure to experiences or conditions, such as heterosexism and homophobia, that increase the probability of negative outcomes for family members (Demo, Aquilino, & Fine, 2004; Garmezy & Masten, 1986). O'Connor and Rutter (1996) encourage researchers to examine how distal risk factors, such as social discrimination and disadvantage, influence proximal processes, such as social support, that foster resilience. *Resilience* is defined as the ability of an individual or family to overcome life's challenges, to rebound from adversity, and to grow stronger as a result of dealing with stressors and adversity (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Walsh, 1998). A major premise of the risk-resilience framework is that an individual family member's reaction to a stressor is influenced by both the nature of the stressor and the individual's capacity to respond (Margolin, Oliver, & Medina, 2001). *Protective factors* moderate the relationship between risk exposure and outcome and, therefore, help a person be less susceptible to a stressor (Patterson, 2002; Rutter, 1995). *Protective processes* are the mechanisms through which protective factors operate and tell us *how* protective factors moderate the effect of the risk factors (Kaplan, 1999). Individual, family, and/or community level

resources and capabilities can act as protective factors and mechanisms that promote

resilience (Garmezy & Masten, 1986; McCubbin & Patterson, 1985). According to

Patterson (2002), protective factors include (a) tangible and psychosocial resources (what

one has) and (b) coping behaviors (what one does). For example, a family member's

cognitive appraisal and coping strategies can act as protective mechanisms for that

individual, by counterbalancing the potential negative effects of the risk factor (Masten,

2001). If a person perceives the risk factor to be within the realm of cope-able stressors,

then the impact of the risk factor will be decreased. Furthermore, if a person is also able

to utilize positive coping strategies, such as accessing social support, then the impact of

the risk factor will be further minimized (Patterson, 1991; 2002). Figure 1 illustrates how

the factors of positive cognitive appraisal, coping strategies, and social support utilization

may have a protective influence on children with lesbian and gay parents who are

exposed to heterosexism and homophobia. A family resilience approach emphasizes the

identification and enhancement of the coping resources that enable individuals and

families to overcome stressors and challenges (Masten, 2001; Walsh, 1998).

Furthermore, the present study examines *how* these coping resources are utilized to

promote resilience – thereby identifying not only the protective factors but the protective

processes as well.

<center>*Heterosexism and Homophobia as Risk Factors*</center>

Heterosexism and homophobia are considered potential individual-, institutional-

and cultural-level risk factors that children with lesbian and gay parents face. Exposure

to heterosexism and homophobia may increase during adolescence, as a young person's

social world increasingly expands beyond the family sphere to the school and peer

groups. Although research into how these risk factors play a part in the everyday lives of children and adolescents with lesbian and gay parents is still somewhat scarce, a growing body of literature has examined the effects of heterosexism and homophobia on lesbian and gay persons themselves (e.g., Herek, 1994). Research on lesbian and gay adolescents and young adults has revealed that experiences of heterosexism and homophobia have been associated with several negative social and psychological outcomes, such as reduced feelings of school safety (Reis & Saewyc, 1999), increased sexual risk (e.g., O'Hare, Williams, & Ezovski, 1996), decrease in self-esteem (Waldo, Hesson-McInnis, & D'Augelli, 1998) and fewer same-gender friendships (e.g., Way, 1996).

Figure 1.
Example of a Risk and Resilience Model for Children with Lesbian and Gay Parents
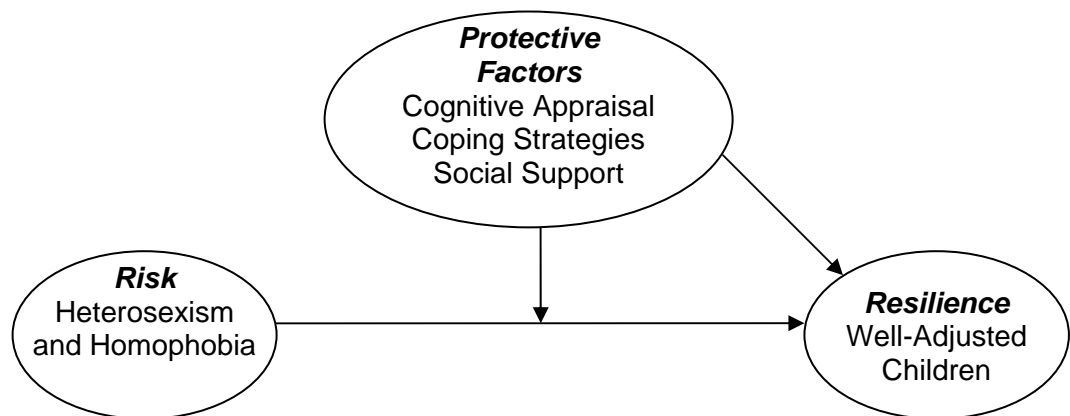
Research suggests that the potential stress and stigmatization that occur as a result of heterosexism and homophobia do pose a risk for children of lesbian and gay parents. Wright (1998) interviewed five lesbian step families – 10 mothers and step mothers, and seven children ranging in age from seven to 20 years old. Three of the mothers/step

mothers identified themselves as mixed race; one was Asian/African American/Caucasian; one was African American/Caucasian; and one was one-quarter American Indian and Caucasian. Three of the children were partially Hispanic. All other participants identified as European American. Based on the children's interviews, Wright surmised that it was the children's fears due to heterosexism and homophobia that "stress the children more than actual occurrences of homophobia" (p. 151). The children seemed to become more secretive and afraid about being in a lesbian family as they moved from elementary school to middle school. One mother described the following story of her eight year-old daughter, Frannie:

> I think it was a year and a half ago – we went to a winter solstice. …As part of the ceremony, the celebration was letting go, you know, what do you want to let go of as a family. What do you want to leave behind as a family. And we went like into a blanket amongst this group of trees and then talked about it ourselves. And what Frannie said at that time was what she wanted [to let go of] was [her fear] that somebody would kill us because we were a lesbian family. (p. 151)

Despite the finding that children with lesbian and gay parents do not differ from children of heterosexual parents on measures of emotional well-being, Gershon et al. (1999) found that adolescents' levels of perceived stigma due to their lesbian parents' sexual orientation did have an effect on self-esteem. Gershon et al. interviewed 76 adolescents, ages 11 to 18 years, with lesbian mothers. Most of the adolescents were White (84%), 7% were Latina/o; 5% were biracial; 2% were African American, and 2% were Native American. Thirty-three percent of the participants were born to women who identified as lesbians, while the majority of participants (67%) were born within heterosexual marriages and had mothers who subsequently came out as lesbians. Perceived stigma was measured by assessing the adolescents' perceptions of others' attitudes toward children of lesbian mothers. Adolescents' self-esteem was measured

using seven subscales from the Harter Self Perception Profile for Adolescents (Harter, 1982): scholastic competence, social acceptance, athletic competence, physical appearance, behavioral conduct, close friendship, and global self-worth. The researchers found that adolescents who perceived more stigma in relation to their mother's sexual orientation had lower self-esteem than those who perceived less stigma in five of the seven self-esteem areas: social acceptance, self-worth, behavioral conduct, physical appearance, and close friendships. In light of these findings, it is important to explore how children with lesbian and gay parents exhibit resilience in the face of heterosexism and homophobia and to identify successful coping strategies and other protective resources and capabilities.

<center>*Cognitive Appraisal as a Protective Factor*</center>

The meanings that adolescents with lesbian parents attribute to their exposure to heterosexism and homophobia have the potential to serve as a protective factor. If an adolescent is able to appraise the heterosexism and homophobia in her/his life as manageable, then that positive cognitive appraisal can moderate the negative effect of the risk factor on the child's well-being. Patterson (1991) identified the ability to attribute positive meanings to a stressful situation as a protective factor associated with resilience. The literature on stress and coping provides evidence of the importance of cognitive appraisal in the coping process (e.g., Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Cognitive appraisal is the categorization of stressors in regard to their meaning and significance for well-being. Positive cognitive appraisal involves perceiving the risk as a cope-able stressor and, thereby, believing that applying a particular coping strategy will be effective (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In understanding the resilience of adolescents with lesbian parents, it is

important to explore the meaning they assign to the heterosexism and homophobia encountered in their everyday lives. It is also important to examine if these adolescents perceive heterosexism and homophobia as risk factors with which they are capable of coping.

The few studies on adolescents with lesbian parents have found these adolescents are aware of the heterosexist and homophobic attitudes of others (Gershon et al., 1999) and often feel that they must be careful with decisions of revealing their parents' sexual identity (e.g., Gershon et al., 1999; O'Connell, 1993). Participants in O'Connell's (1993) qualitative study of 11 female and male adolescents (ages 16 to 23) with divorced or separated lesbian mothers expressed strong love, loyalty, and protectiveness toward their mothers. However, participants also expressed worries about losing friends or being judged by others. Thus, they were likely to keep their mothers' sexual orientation a secret at least from some people outside the family.

Further research is needed to explore how adolescents with lesbian and gay parents perceive heterosexism and homophobia. Such investigations will inform researchers as to the role that positive cognitive appraisal plays as these adolescents cope with these societal risk factors. For example, very little is known about how adolescents with lesbian parents perceive institutional- and cultural-level heterosexism and homophobia, as most studies have analyzed specific individual-level incidents of teasing by peers. Exploration into how adolescents with lesbian parents perceive and appraise all levels of the risk factor will improve our understanding of how these adolescents achieve positive developmental outcomes despite exposure to heterosexism and homophobia.

Coping Strategies as a Protective Factor

Effective coping strategies are thought to moderate the potential negative impact of heterosexism and homophobia on adolescents in lesbian-parent families. According to the risk-resilience framework, adolescents with lesbian parents who are exposed to heterosexism and homophobia and who are able to implement positive coping strategies are less at risk for experiencing negative outcomes. *Coping* refers to what an individual does, behaviorally or emotionally, to handle a stressful situation (Call & Mortimer, 2001).

In their review of the general literature on adolescence, Coleman and Hendry (1999) found that studies with adolescents have revealed utilization of two primary types of coping: problem-focused and emotion-focused (e.g., Compas, 1987; Compas, Orosan, & Grant, 1993). In problem-focused coping, the adolescent attempts to change, reduce, or eliminate the stressor, while in emotion-focused coping, the adolescent attempts to change her/his emotional state created by the stressor. While the use of problem-focused coping appears to remain stable during adolescence, the use of emotion-focused coping seems to increase with age (e.g., Band & Weisz, 1988). Additionally, Compas (1995) suggests that the two types of coping serve different functions; problem-focused coping may be used when the stressor is perceived as controllable or changeable, while emotion-focused coping may be used in situations where there is a perceived threat and/or high anxiety. Similar to Compas' categorization of coping styles, Seiffge-Krenke (1993; 1995) suggested that there are three types of coping: active coping, internal coping, and withdrawal. Active coping is comparable to Compas' problem-focused coping, while internal coping is comparable to emotion-focused coping (Coleman & Hendry, 1999).

Seiffge-Krenke considered both active and internal coping to be functional and considered withdrawal, which involves turning away from the stressor, to be dysfunctional. The literature has also shown some general differences in the way girls and boys cope with stress (Coleman & Hendry, 1999). In general, boys use more active coping and are more likely to seek out information to assist in their problem solving than girls. Boys also use denial, as well as aggressive or confrontational techniques to deal with interpersonal problems, more often than girls. In contrast, girls generally use more emotion-focused coping, and are more likely to compromise and seek social support and comfort than boys (Coleman & Hendry, 1999).

Five studies have specifically explored the coping skills and strategies of children or adolescents with lesbian parents (Bozett, 1987; Gartrell et al., 2005; Gershon et al., 1999; Litovich & Langhout, 2004; Wright, 1998). In their longitudinal study of lesbian-parent families, Gartrell et al. (2005) found that 39% of the 10-year-old children who had experienced homophobic comments about their mothers spoke out in response, by telling their peers they were "wrong," "not nice," or "stupid" (p. 522). Furthermore, the majority of children in the study (57%) reported that they were completely out to their peers about having lesbian parents, while 39% were out to some, and 4% hid this information. Gartrell at al. examined the CBCL scores of these children and found that the children who were out about their families were indistinguishable on these measures from children who were more secretive.

Gershon et al.'s (1999) study of adolescents with lesbian parents evaluated how the coping skills of children with lesbian parents contributed to their psychological well-being. Gershon et al.'s study is one of the few to examine children's own level of

disclosure about a potentially stigmatizing characteristic and its relationship to self-esteem (Gershon et al., 1999). Coping skills of adolescents were measured using three subscales from the Wills Coping Inventory (Wills, 1986): decision making, cognitive coping, and social support. In general, Gershon et al. found that adolescents who perceived high stigma had lower self-esteem even when they had more effective coping skills. One type of coping skill – decision making – was found to have a moderating effect between perceived stigma and self-esteem. In the face of high perceived stigma, adolescents with better decision-making coping skills had higher self-esteem in the area of behavioral conduct. Results also revealed that those adolescents who disclosed their mother's sexual orientation to more people had higher self-esteem regarding their ability to form close friendships than those who practiced less disclosure, even in the face of high perceived stigma. In their discussion of future directions for research, Gershon et al. have called for more studies, including qualitative studies, that explore the coping skills and strategies of children with lesbian and gay parents.

Bozett's (1987) study of children with gay fathers discussed social control strategies that some children utilize to manage the heterosexist and homophobic attitudes of others. Bozett interviewed 19 adolescents and young adults (13 female and six male, ages 14 to 35 years old) from divorced families with gay fathers; the race/ethnicity of the participants was not reported. Bozett found that the principal concern of the participants was that if/when their fathers' sexual orientation became known others would think that they too were lesbian or gay. Therefore, Bozett reported that the participants utilized three types of social control strategies, *boundary control*, *nondisclosure*, and *disclosure*, so that others would perceive them as they wanted to be perceived. The first social

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control strategy, *boundary control*, entailed the children attempting to control either their fathers' behavior, their own behavior, and/or the behavior of others, in order to keep the fathers' expression of his sexual orientation within the boundaries set by the children. For example, one participant attempted to control her father's behavior by asking him to keep his hands off his boyfriend during a party at her home. Another participant controlled his own behavior in relation to his father by not inviting his father to his place of employment, as the son was afraid that his fellow coworkers would correctly identify the father as gay. Other participants controlled the behavior of others', for example, by not bringing certain friends home to keep the friends from seeing the fathers and fathers' partners together.

A second social control strategy utilized by the adolescents and young adults in Bozett's (1987) study was *nondisclosure*. Bozett found that unless the participants were certain that it was safe to do so, the adolescents and young adults would not tell others about their fathers' sexual orientation. Nondisclosure also involved participants referring to their fathers' partners as "uncles" or "housemates," or hiding items such as gay newspapers or books before visits from friends.

The third social control strategy utilized by Bozett's (1987) participants was *disclosure*. Some of the participants felt that in order to control others' reactions to finding out or figuring out that the fathers were gay, they had to "prepare" others before meeting the fathers. The adolescents and young adults in the study were highly selective about with whom they would share their secret about their fathers' sexual orientation. Participants wanted to try to control the dispersion of that information and, therefore, would only tell someone if they were sure that person would not tell anyone else.

Bozett's study was groundbreaking in its examination and discussion of the strategies utilized by adolescents and young adults with gay fathers when dealing with the heterosexist and homophobic attitudes of others.

Wright (1998) identified strategies that the seven children and adolescents in her ethnographic study utilized to cope with heterosexism and homophobia. First, similar to the children in Bozett's study, some of the children in Wright's study chose to either not discuss the fact that they had lesbian parents with any of their peers or to lie about it. In the case of one 15 year-old, even though her friends were aware that she had lesbian mothers, she did not talk about it with her friends and would refer to her step mother as her mother's "friend" or "aunt" (p. 155). Sometimes children, whose peers knew about their lesbian moms, used a second strategy of ignoring it if their peers teased them or made derogatory comments. All three of the children who used the strategy of ignoring found that this did sometimes stop the teasing. Finally, both younger and older children sometimes used the strategy of coming out to their peers about their families. Wright posited that coming out served a protective function by letting others know that the children were not ashamed. Wright also noted that the strategy of coming out served as a way for children to separate friends from enemies by identifying people's levels of acceptance. Two mothers noted that their 16 year-old daughter was able to stop lying about her family when she got old enough to realize that "if they are so stupid [to react negatively], I don't need to have them as friends and I don't care" (p. 158).

Litovich and Langhout (2004) conducted interviews with five lesbian-parent families to explore the difficulties children face due to heterosexism, how families help their children cope with these difficulties, and how coping leads to children's resilience.

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Four of the families were planned and one was divorced; all six of the children in the study were female and were between the ages of seven and 16 years old. All of the parents in the study were White; five of the children in the study were White and one was Honduran and Mexican. The researchers found that the majority of parents began to prepare their children for coping with heterosexism at very young ages, by engaging their children in discussions of sexual orientation and warning children about the possibility of future heterosexist incidents. Some researchers have asserted that it is in children's best interests for same-sex parents to equip their children with terminology regarding sexual orientation and to establish open communication for children to discuss their worries and fears (Johnson & O'Connor, 2001). The children in Litovich and Langhout's study reported that upon initially reaching school age, they were proud of their families and were eager to share information about their families with classmates. For example, when the children in the study were younger, they would often correct classmates' misinformed statements about lesbian families, such as "You can't have two mommies," which seemed to be based on confusion and ignorance about diverse family forms. Participants would correct these statements by explaining to classmates about the makeup of their own families. As the children got older, however, they would correct their classmates' misinformation less and less, as they encountered negative, heterosexist feedback from others regarding their families. Recognizing that their classmates' misinformed statements were now based more on prejudice than confusion, the children in the study often coped by becoming silent about their families.

The lesbian parents in Litovich and Langhout's (2004) study responded to their children's confrontation with heterosexist incidents by releasing their children from the

burden of protecting and defending lesbian families. Although the children in the study

felt they wanted to respond whenever they heard heterosexist and homophobic comments

in school, such as the use of the word "gay" in a derogatory manner, sometimes the

children did not want to "stand out" among their peers (p. 427). Litovich and Langhout

assert,

> Perhaps the most liberating thing a parent can do for children is to explain that
> they can never do away with heterosexism on their own. This offers children the
> chance to seize the right to simply be a child rather than to feel the burden of
> combating the ignorance and intolerance they encounter. (p. 427)

Another coping strategy that the lesbian parents in the study utilized was

encouraging tolerance in their children. When their children came across people with

heterosexist views and attitudes, the parents encouraged their children to remain tolerant

of intolerance and explained heterosexism as one of many views that diversity brings.

Parents also explained to their children that the heterosexism they encountered was not

aimed at them specifically; rather it was targeted at the demographic they represent –

lesbian families.

More research is needed to better understand the coping strategies of adolescents

with lesbian parents in the face of heterosexism and homophobia (Fitzgerald, 1999).

Bozett's (1987) study revealed some social strategies utilized by children with lesbian

and gay parents, while Litovich and Langhout (2004) described some familial coping

strategies. Gershon et al.'s (1999) study shed some light on the potential protective role

that coping skills may play in moderating the negative effects of heterosexism and

homophobia, while Gartrell et al.'s study revealed that children's disclosure strategies

regarding their families do not seem to have an impact on their behavioral adjustment.

However, much more research is needed, especially exploratory research in which

children with lesbian and gay parents inform us as to the many possible coping strategies they utilize when confronted with heterosexism and homophobia. Moreover, more research is needed to reveal the protective resources and capabilities that children with lesbian and gay parents have that in turn have a positive influence on their ability to cope.

Social Support as a Protective Factor

It is important to identify the protective resources that children and adolescents with lesbian and gay parents access to better cope with heterosexism and homophobia. Garmezy (1985) identified three protective resources that are especially prominent for young people facing adversity: (a) resources derived from the intrinsic disposition of the child; (b) a warm, emotionally supportive family environment; and (c) the presence of extended support systems to the family. More recently, Speziale and Gopalakrishna (2004) called for research that explores the social support systems of adolescents with lesbian parents, given the potential protective function strong social support may provide this population. As there are few studies that have explored sources of social support for adolescents with lesbian parents, a review of the general adolescence literature regarding social support is deemed useful.

According to the general research on adolescence, coping is affected by the social support available to the adolescent (Coleman & Hendry, 1999). Research has shown that high levels of support from an adolescent's immediate family (e.g., Hauser & Bowlds, 1990) or peer group (e.g., Hirsch, Engel-Levy, DuBois, & Hardesty, 1990) can positively assist in the coping process. While parents provide important support by offering information and assistance in a non-judgmental manner, family climate can also influence coping (Coleman & Hendry, 1999). Shulman (1993) examined family climate and found

that adolescents in families that were oriented toward independence or the open expression of feelings demonstrated positive coping skills, including planning and the use of others for social support. While familial relationships remain salient throughout adolescence, peers also become an increasingly important source of support (Call & Mortimer, 2001; Collins & Laursen, 2004). In early to middle adolescence, young people reported seeing their friends outside of school as crucial in providing support with ongoing problems (Hirsch et al., 1990). Seiffge-Krenke (1995) found that at the age of 15-16, adolescents felt that they depended on their friends as much as their parents for support, while at age 17-19 dependence on friends was more important. The most important features of adolescent friendships have been identified as intimacy, trust, self-disclosure, and mutual support (e.g., Savin-Williams & Berndt, 1990). Studies have found that quality adolescent friendships and romantic relationships, marked by supportiveness and intimacy, have been linked to positive measures of functioning and well-being (Collins, 2003; Laursen, 1996).

Researchers have identified spheres of social support, or *arenas of comfort*, where adolescents find acceptance and support through strong, positive relationships (Call & Mortimer, 2001; Simmons, Burgeson, Carlton-Ford, & Blyth, 1987). The concept of *arenas of comfort* recognizes that adolescents move between multiple contexts in their everyday lives and that some contexts may be sources of stress and adversity, while other contexts may provide support and comfort. An arena of comfort is thought to provide a safe haven from stress experienced in other contexts, where an individual can relax and be her/himself (Call & Mortimer, 2001). Feelings of both self-acceptance and perceived acceptance by others in an arena of comfort are thought to compensate for harmful or

threatening experiences in another context. Indeed, the perception that social support is available can have a positive influence on an individual's appraisal of a stressor and ability to cope with it (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Research on adult friendships have found that the most effective forms of social support come from the normal, everyday exchanges between friends, rather than from the explicit solicitation and receipt of help (e.g., Weiss, 1990).

Call and Mortimer (2001) explored four arenas of comfort (family, school, peer, and work) for adolescents and found that the presence of an arena of comfort does have a positive influence on feelings of discomfort in other contexts. As previously stated, parents play a crucial role as young people navigate their way through the developmental changes and stresses of adolescence (Call & Mortimer, 2001). Studies have generally found that adolescents perceive their mothers as more emotionally supportive than their fathers (e.g., Steinberg, 1987), while boys report greater comfort with their fathers than girls, and girls report greater comfort with their mothers than boys (Call & Mortimer, 2001). Gender differences in comfort may also exist with peers. Call and Mortimer found that more girls than boys reported close and comfortable peer friendships throughout high school. This difference is likely explained by the finding that girls' friendships seem to be based more strongly on intimacy and disclosure, while boys' relationships with friends are more activity-based (Savin-Williams & Berndt, 1990). Comfort in the school and work contexts have not been empirically explored as thoroughly as in the family and peer group; however, Call and Mortimer suggest that these arenas can potentially provide valuable support for adolescents.

Very few studies have explored social support among children and adolescents with lesbian and gay parents. Wainright et al. (2004) found that greater school adjustment among adolescents with same-sex parents was associated with higher levels of perceived care from peers and adults and closer parent-child relationships. Furthermore, adolescents' perceived care from peers and adults had a stronger effect on school adjustment for adolescents with lesbian parents than for those with heterosexual parents. However, one study that examined utilization of social support as a coping skill with a group of adolescents with lesbian parents found an unexpected result (Gershon et al., 1999). When the adolescents with lesbian parents in Gershon et al.'s (1999) study perceived greater stigma, effective social support coping skills did not protect against feelings of low self-worth or negative evaluations of their physical appearance. In fact, in the face of high stigma, both those with effective and ineffective social support coping skills had lower self-worth and more negative evaluations of physical appearance than those who perceived lower levels of stigma. In answer to these unexpected results, which counter the hypothesis that social support may help a child to cope with stigma, the authors offer possible explanations for these findings. Perhaps (a) the measure of social support coping was inadequate; (b) social support as a coping mechanism is not powerful enough to moderate the relationship between stigma and self-esteem; or (c) the sample size (76 adolescents) was too small to show the moderating effects of social support coping on the relationship between perceived stigma and adolescents' self-esteem.

Further research is needed to explore the social support systems of adolescents with lesbian and gay parents in order to better understand the role that social support plays in how these adolescents cope in the face of heterosexism and homophobia. For

example, very little is known about the extended family relationships of children with lesbian and gay parents; yet, extended family relationships could be important sources of support for this group. Studies by Fulcher, Chan, Raboy, and Patterson (2002) and Patterson, Hurt, and Mason (1998) refute the stereotype that children of lesbian parents lack extended family ties. Both studies found that children with lesbian parents had regular contact with their grandparents and did not differ from children of heterosexual parents in this regard. Furthermore, Patterson et al. (1998) found that fewer child behavior problems were associated with more frequent interactions with grandparents. Research that explores the different possible sources of social support for adolescents with lesbian parents, such as parents, siblings, extended family, friends, and teachers, could provide insight into how these adolescents cope with the heterosexism and homophobia they are likely confronted with on a regular basis.

Resilience as an Outcome

Resilience has been defined here as the ability of an individual or family to overcome life's challenges, to rebound from adversity, and to grow stronger as a result of dealing with stressors and adversity (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Walsh, 1998). A "resilient" individual is one who is psychologically healthy despite exposure to stress (Kaplan, 1999). The previously reviewed outcome studies on children with lesbian and gay parents lend evidence to the notion that this group is resilient despite the existence of heterosexism and homophobia. Furthermore, there are anecdotal reports by adolescents and young adults with lesbian parents citing positive results of living in non-traditional families, such as having a greater understanding of prejudice and being more tolerant of differences in others (Buxton, 1999; Fitzgerald, 1999).

Oswald (2002) explored the literature on lesbian and gay families to identify familial processes that contribute to resilience within these family networks. Two overall categories of processes that strengthen lesbian and gay families were identified as *intentionality* and *redefinition*. Intentionality refers to strategies that create and sustain a sense of family within a heterosexist and homophobic societal context. Specific strategies related to intentionality were identified as choosing kin, managing disclosure, building community, ritualizing, and legalizing. Choosing kin includes creating family out of friendships and integrating gay and straight family members within the family network. Oswald asserts that these processes of involving multiple people in the family network may serve to widen "the circle of support" (p. 376) available to family members. Managing disclosure refers to ways members of lesbian and gay families disperse information about their family identity and relationships. It is posited that this process can foster resilience by bringing gay-affirming family members closer together, while simultaneously creating distance from non-gay-affirming individuals. Building community refers to accessing community resources that provide LGBT-specific information and social support for family members. Ritualizing refers to symbolic performances, such as commitment ceremonies and religious rituals, that help lesbian and gay families to affirm their relationships with one another. Lastly, legalizing involves actions that legally solidify relationships. For example, non-biological lesbian or gay parents may seek out a second-parent adoption, thereby giving greater security to the parent-child relationship. The process of legalizing may promote resilience by providing legal, economic, and social protection and support to lesbian and gay family members.

Redefinition refers to "meaning-making" (Oswald, 2002, p. 379) processes that affirm the existence of lesbian and gay people and their familial relationships in the absence of societal support. The redefinition processes identified by Oswald include politicizing, naming, integrating gayness, and envisioning family. Politicizing refers to members of lesbian and gay families linking what is happening in their personal lives to the larger heterosexist social context. By considering how living among heterosexism influences their own familial relationships, lesbian and gay family members may foster their own resilience by making sense of their situation and determining strategies for coping. Naming is a process that promotes relationship strength by attaching familial meanings to unlabeled and unrecognized relationships, such as co-mothers and chosen kin. Integrating gayness refers to the process of combining the family's lesbian or gay identity with other family identities or associations, including religious affiliations or practices. Finally, envisioning family refers to family members' ability to have flexible and fluid definitions of family that affirm diversity. This process of envisioning diverse family constructs promotes resilience by allowing family members to view their unique family network as an integrated whole. In conclusion, Oswald asserts the importance of studying lesbian and gay families from a resilience perspective:

> Because the resilience approach attends to family strengths within specific contexts, it offers an important lens for the study of gay and lesbian family networks that can move us beyond our present focus on the negative ways that heterosexism impacts families. (p. 381)

Purpose of the Proposed Study

The main purpose of this research was to develop a theory-driven model to explain how adolescents with lesbian parents cope with heterosexism and homophobia. This study focused on coping and resilience and assumed normative child development,

given that research has largely shown that heterosexism and homophobia have not had an adverse effect on the development of children with lesbian and gay parents. It was the goal of the researcher to add to the growing body of literature regarding adolescents with lesbian parents, while also exploring sources of support and mechanisms for resilience (i.e., coping strategies) among this group in the face of heterosexism and homophobia. The research question that guided the research was: "How do adolescents with lesbian parents experience and cope with heterosexism and homophobia?"

Feminist epistemology requires that researchers be wholly transparent regarding their intent and impetus for pursuing topics of study (Allen, 2000). Therefore, it is deemed necessary to acknowledge three broader goals of this research: (a) to increase societal awareness regarding the realities of family life for children of lesbian and gay parents; (b) to alter power imbalances, where traditional, heterosexual families are held in higher regard than lesbian- and gay-parent families; and (c) to empower participants and make the voices of young people with lesbian parents heard. These aims are grounded in feminist epistemology, as a feminist perspective emphasizes the importance of consciousness-raising in regards to power disparities between groups (Cook & Fonow, 1986). This study was intended to be a politicized inquiry that challenges the heterosexist biases that exist in society and in the field of family studies. Heteronormativity makes it all too easy for lesbian and gay families to be pathologized by the very people who are supposed to be "experts" on families and family life, as heterosexual-parent families are viewed as the ideal norm against which all other family types should be compared (Ingraham, 1996; Oswald, Blume, & Marks, 2005). Therefore, an intent of this work was to effect change in power inequities by recognizing lesbian-

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parent families as worthy of study in their own right without comparison to heterosexual-parent families and by increasing researchers', scholars', and practitioners' awareness of the real, lived experiences of those who have grown up with lesbian parents. Furthermore, feminist theorists and researchers assert the importance of making the voices of marginalized groups heard (Allen, 2000; Sollie & Leslie, 1994). Adolescents with lesbian parents are a marginalized group whose voices have not yet been amply heard or represented in the social science and family literature. Lastly, a feminist perspective supports the notion that those who have grown up with lesbian parents are the experts on their own experiences and, therefore, should be viewed as valuable and necessary sources of information regarding lesbian family life. This study aimed to empower participants, thereby giving them – the "studied" – something of value in telling their story (Fonow & Cook, 1991).

Personal Biography

As the author of this dissertation, my personal history has influenced my motivation to pursue this research and perhaps provided me with a unique opportunity to make a valuable contribution to the field. Feminist theory and the qualitative research tradition prompt us as family scholars to be wholly transparent and reflexive regarding the motivation for our work (Allen, 2000; Daly, 1997). Allen (2000) asks us to "communicate in public about our private investments in the work we do" (p. 13), as our assumptions, values, and histories shape our scholarly investigations. As the daughter of a lesbian mother, I was particularly interested in the experiences of others who share this commonality in family background. I was also interested in exploring the diversity of experiences of children with lesbian parents. Although I shared a common bond with

participants, I rightly anticipated that the stories told through the interviews would be very diverse and, likely, very different than my own. There is no one "lesbian family" experience – and this study shed light on some of the various actual, lived experiences of adolescents with lesbian parents. I explored all participants' experiences and was not hesitant to explore the less than positive ones. Adolescents with lesbian parents face unique challenges due to heterosexism and homophobia that make some aspects of their childhoods less than ideal. And, just as not all heterosexual people make good parents, I did not assume that all participants were perfectly parented by their lesbian moms. Participants were assured, however, that I would not interpret any of their negative experiences during adolescence to mean that lesbians should not be allowed to be parents. I intended for this research to move beyond the agendas of past research, which have been to compare the children of lesbian and gay parents to children of heterosexual parents, to explore how resilience is achieved in the face of heterosexism and homophobia. As an "insider" with the group I studied, I believe I was able to quickly attain the necessary level of comfort and trust with participants. In addition, as a member of the Board of Directors of COLAGE (Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere), I was able to utilize my social and professional networks to gain access to this marginalized group. I feel the study findings have important implications for parents, researchers, therapists, and other family practitioners concerned with the well-being of adolescents with lesbian parents in the U.S.

CHAPTER 3: DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

Overall Strategy and Rationale

The current study utilized qualitative research methods to explore the individual lived experiences of young adults with lesbian parents during adolescence. Qualitative analysis has been described as a "nonmathematical process of interpretation, carried out for the purpose of discovering concepts and relationships in raw data" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 11). In the past few decades, qualitative methods have had close ties to feminist inquiry, as a hallmark of qualitative research is deep involvement in issues of gender, culture, and marginalized groups (Creswell, 1998; Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Qualitative studies have been deemed appropriate for assessing issues with an understudied group or population (Creswell, 1998). Creswell (1998) asserts that qualitative research employs rigorous data collection procedures and is necessary when research questions seek to answer *how* or *what*, as opposed to the *why* questions that quantitative studies typically strive to answer. Through extensive and intensive data collection and analysis, the current study aimed to answer questions such as, "How do adolescents with lesbian parents experience heterosexism and homophobia?" and "How do they cope with it?" Creswell also states that qualitative studies are necessary when a topic is not well-understood and needs to be explored in-depth. Furthermore, qualitative methods are well-suited for obtaining "intricate details about phenomena" such as feelings and thought processes that are sometimes difficult to ascertain through quantitative research methods (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). At present, there is a need for detailed exploration into the lives of adolescents with lesbian parents, as family scholars know relatively little about this population.

Modified grounded theory is the qualitative approach that was utilized in the current study. Grounded theory uses a systematic set of procedures to develop a theory about a phenomenon that is derived from and grounded in the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). A basic assumption of grounded theory is that "human beings are purposive agents who take an active role in interpreting and responding to problematic situations rather than simply reacting to experiences and stimuli" (Schram, 2003, p. 74). Grounded theory was especially appropriate for this inquiry, as this type of qualitative approach has been deemed likely to offer insight, enhance understanding, and provide a meaningful guide to action (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Grounded theorists aim to develop a *substantive* or *middle-range* theory that is closely related to the data to explain the issue at hand, rather than higher-level "general" theory (Merton, 1957; Schram, 2003, p. 75). According to Schram (2003), characteristics of grounded theory include: (a) exploration of a process related to a substantive topic; (b) engagement in simultaneous and sequential collection and analysis of data; (c) engagement in an inductive construction of abstract categories, with constant comparison of data with an emerging explanation and refining of the categories; and (d) integration of categories into a theoretical framework that specifies causes, conditions, and consequences of the studied process.

Researchers utilizing a pure grounded theory approach do not begin with a theoretical framework; rather, they construct a theory that emerges from the collected data. The current study, however, used a *modified* grounded theory approach, as feminist theory applied to a model of risk-resilience was the conceptual framework of the study. In order to allow the grounded theory to emerge from the data, I attempted to put aside my preconceived notions of how adolescents with lesbian parents cope with heterosexism

and homophobia. I utilized the theoretical concepts of the risk-resilience framework (i.e., cognitive appraisal, coping strategies, social support, resilience) as sensitizing concepts only, rather than attempting to "fit" the data to these concepts. Feminist theory applied to a risk-resilience framework guided the development of this study proposal; then my challenge as the researcher was to listen to participants' stories without imposing the framework, so that a model of how adolescents with lesbian parents cope with heterosexism and homophobia could emerge from the data.

Sample Selection and Recruitment

Young adults who lived with lesbian parents during adolescence were recruited for participation in one-on-one, semi-structured, open-ended interviews. Requirements for participation included being a young adult between the ages of 18 and 25, who lived with at least one lesbian parent during adolescence (middle school and high school years). Young adults in this stage of "emerging adulthood" – the term given to the transition from adolescence to adulthood (Arnett, 2000) – were sought, as the majority of their adolescent years would still be "fresh" in their minds. Moreover, emerging adults at the end of the adolescent phase were deemed likely to be able to reflect on their adolescence in a way that younger participants who were in the "throes" of their adolescent years might not. Prior to data collection, I had considered ideal participants to be from "planned" lesbian families, rather than "divorced" families, as the former group is the more understudied of the two. However, I remained open to including participants from divorced families, as long as mothers were out as lesbian when participants were four years old or younger, in order to reduce any effects a recent divorce between heterosexual parents may have had on participants' adolescent experiences.

Participants were recruited in two waves, in order to allow a theme of interest to emerge, which would influence the second wave of recruitment. Convenience sampling was utilized to recruit the first wave of ten participants, who were recruited primarily through contact with COLAGE (Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere), a national non-profit organization run by and for children with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender parents. COLAGE has over 1,000 members primarily from the U.S. There are more than 40 active COLAGE chapters in 26 states and the District of Columbia, as well as in Canada, Great Britain, New Zealand, and Sweden. Although the majority of active COLAGE members in the U.S. are primarily from the Northeast (17 chapters in six states) and West (seven chapters in six states), COLAGE also currently has 14 chapters in nine Southern states, as well as nine chapters in six Midwestern states. As of December, 2005, the COLAGE email lists for teens and adults had over 580 subscribers (COLAGE, 2005). The COLAGE staff posted a request for participants on their Internet news updates (see Appendix A), and email messages were sent to COLAGE chapter coordinators across the country (see Appendix B) to inform them about the study and to request their assistance in disseminating information about the study to potential participants. An additional recruitment effort for wave one was carried out with my colleagues through the President's Commission on LGBT Issues at the University of Maryland, College Park, who were asked to disseminate information about the study to potential participants. Interested participants were asked to contact me via email or phone. I then provided these potential participants with further information, such as how long the interview would last and the types of interview questions, and answered their

questions regarding the study. Interviews with interested and eligible participants were then scheduled.

The first wave of ten participants (see Table 1 for a summary of demographic characteristics) included seven females, two persons identifying as transgender/genderqueer[5], and one male. Ages ranged from 19 to 24 years old, with the average age being 21.2 years (SD = 1.5). Eight participants self-identified as White, and two as Bi-racial (Chicano/White and Filipino/White). In regards to family type, half of the first ten participants were from "planned" lesbian families and the other half were from "divorced" families. Furthermore, participants were asked about the location in which they primarily lived during adolescence. Six participants represented two states in the Northeast, three participants represented two states on the West coast, and one participant was from a state considered to be in the South. Participants mainly grew up in urban settings – three primarily lived in a "large, urban city" during adolescence, while three lived in a "small, urban city." Of the remaining participants, three lived in a "suburban" setting during adolescence, and one lived in a "rural" town.

During the second wave of recruitment, theoretical sampling was utilized. *Theoretical sampling* is used to provide more information about a theme of interest (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Based upon emergent themes from the data provided by participants in wave one, I chose to recruit equal numbers of participants from "planned" and "divorced" families in wave two. After reflecting on the interviews of the first wave of participants, a theme of interest that emerged was growing up in either a "planned" or

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[5] *Genderqueer* can be defined as: "a gender identity; a genderqueer person is someone who identifies as a gender other than "man" or "woman," or someone who identifies as neither, both, or some combination thereof; …Some genderqueer people identify as transgender (in the sense of the word as an umbrella term for a broad range of people who identify as a gender other than the one they were assigned at birth based on their perceived physical sex), and some do not" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genderqueer).

"divorced" lesbian family. As previously noted, I had initially considered "ideal"

participants to be from planned lesbian families, rather than divorced families.

Table 1. Summary of Demographic Characteristics for Wave 1

Demographic Item	Research Sample (n=10) Mean (SD)/n
Individual-Level Characteristics	
Age of participants (in years)	21.2 (1.5)
Gender	
Female	7
Transgender/Genderqueer	2
Male	1
Racial/Cultural Group	
White/Caucasian	8
Biracial	2
Family-Level Characteristic	
Family Type	
"Divorced"	5
"Planned"	5
Community-Level Characteristics	
Region of U.S.*	
Northeast (MA, PA)	6
West (CA, OR)	3
South (MD)	1
Community Type	
Urban-Large City	3
Urban-Small City	3
Suburban	3
Rural	1

*Regions of U.S. as outlined by the U.S. Census Bureau
(http://www.census.gov/geo/www/maps/CP_MapProducts.htm)

However, as many young adults from divorced families began contacting me regarding

participation in the study, I realized that these family configurations are still very much a

reality and still remain relatively understudied. Although few studies have examined the

similarities or differences in experiences between these two groups, data from wave one

revealed there were a number of ways in which being from a planned or divorced lesbian

family might influence how participants perceive and experience heterosexism and

homophobia. For example, some of the participants from divorced families talked about

having fathers in their lives who they viewed as "homophobic," while participants from planned families did not. It seemed that the experience of having a primary parental figure who exhibited homophobic behavior was a significant factor in the lives of some participants from divorced families. Furthermore, some participants from divorced families had memories of living with both their mother and father, as opposed to those from planned families who never had such an experience. If some participants had memories of living with a married mother and father, then perhaps their own ideas of what constituted a family played a role in how they perceived and coped with heterosexism and homophobia during adolescence. Other differences, as well as similarities, between the experiences of participants from "divorced" versus "planned" lesbian families were explored and will be discussed further.

It is important to note that another theme of interest emerged after the first wave of recruitment. Five of the first ten participants in the first wave of recruitment identified as queer[6] during adolescence. Specifically, one participant identified as "gay," two identified as "genderqueer," and two identified as "queer." It was immediately apparent that heterosexism and homophobia would likely be perceived and experienced differently depending on an adolescent's own sexual identity. Those participants who identified as queer themselves during adolescence were experiencing heterosexism and homophobia not only in relation to their parents' sexual identity but also to their own. Although this theme relating to participants' own sexual identity during adolescence was identified in the first wave of recruitment, it was decided that it would not be the primary theme of interest for the second wave of recruitment. The two main reasons for this decision were

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[6] *Queer* can be defined as: "an inclusive, unifying, sociopolitical umbrella term for people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, intersex, genderqueer, or of any other atypical sexuality, sexual anatomy, or gender identity" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queer).

(a) I had not planned to ask participants about their sexual identity, and (b) I did not want to risk alienating potential participants by asking about their sexual identities upfront, which I would need to do in order to ensure that I had equal numbers of "queer-" and "non-queer"-identified participants. Emergent themes related to participants' sexual identity in relation to how they perceived, experienced, and coped with heterosexism and homophobia will be discussed further.

After the primary theme of interest was identified (i.e., being from either "divorced" or "planned" lesbian families) the requirement for participants from divorced families changed for the second wave. Due to the fact that it might be of interest to explore whether having memories of living with a married mother and father had an influence on how participants coped with heterosexism and homophobia, the maximum age that participants could be when their mothers came out as lesbian was raised to six years of age (from four years). This age was deemed young enough so that a parental heterosexual divorce would not be the central phenomenon of participants' adolescence.

Recruitment efforts for the second wave of participants were carried out through colleagues at the Whitman-Walker Clinic in Washington, DC, and the LGBT Focus Group of the National Council on Family Relations. Acting upon a suggestion from a fellow researcher of LGBT families, I also posted an online recruitment notice through the Human Rights Campaign Family Net and sent email messages to the leaders of PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) chapters across the country. COLAGE staff also sent out a second request for participants through their Internet news updates. Convenience sampling and snowball sampling, whereby study participants identify and recruit other eligible participants (Marshall & Rossman, 1999), were used to

recruit the remainder of participants. The second wave of recruitment ended when

"saturation" of themes was achieved. *Saturation* involves collecting information that

continues to add to the study findings until no more new categories or themes can be

found (Creswell, 1998). Although no new categories or themes were emerging after

conducting approximately 20 interviews, 30 interviews were conducted to verify

saturation.

A total of 69 people responded to the two waves of recruitment outreach by

contacting me to say they were interested in participating in the study. After further

correspondence, it was determined that 27 of the 69 did not meet eligibility requirements

for the study; three were under the age of 18, and the rest were older than six years old

when their mothers and fathers divorced and their mothers came out as lesbian. These 27

people were informed that they would not be eligible for the study, due to the eligibility

requirements; the reasons for the eligibility criteria were explained, and they were also

thanked for their interest in the study. A total of 42 respondents were deemed eligible for

participation in the study and were sent consent forms; 33 of the 42 returned the consent

forms. One person who returned the consent form later decided she could not find time

to do the interview; therefore, a total of 32 participants were interviewed for the study. It

was not until I was interviewing two of the participants that I realized they did not meet

the eligibility criteria, as they were older than six when their mothers came out. These

two interviews were completed; however, they were not included in the final sample.

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Individual-Level Characteristics

The total sample, comprised of both the first and second waves of recruitment, consisted

of thirty participants (see Table 2 for a summary of participant demographics).

Participants ranged in age from 18 to 25 years old, with an average age of 21.3 years (SD

= 2.2). The sample included 18 participants (60%) who identified as female, eight

participants (27%) who identified as male, and four participants (13%) were categorized

as transgender. Three participants in the transgender category specifically identified as

"genderqueer," while one participant identified as "gender-ambiguous." The vast

majority of the sample (more than 83%) identified as "White" or "Caucasian," while two

participants were "Bi-racial" (Chicano/White and Filipino/White). One participant

identified as "Hispanic," one as "Middle Eastern," and one as "Indian/Asian American."

The sample was a highly educated group, as almost half of the participants (n =

14; 47%) were currently enrolled in a four-year college. Eight participants (27%) had

already received their degree from a four-year college; two of these participants were also

currently in graduate school. Four participants (13%) had completed high school at the

time of the interview and were preparing to enter college, while three participants (10%)

had completed high school or their GED but did not report plans to go to college. One

participant left high school after completing the 10th grade.

Regarding religion, almost half (n = 14; 47%) of the participants said they did not

consider themselves associated with any particular religion at the time of the interview.

Six participants (20%) identified themselves as Jewish, three (10%) said they were

Catholic, and two (7%) said they were Unitarian. Two other participants identified

Table 2. Summary of Interview Participant Demographics

Demographic Item	Research Sample (N=30)	
	Mean (SD)/Percent	Range/n
Individual-Level Characteristics		
Age of participants (in years)	21.3 (2.2)	18-25
Gender		
Female	60.0%	18
Male	26.7%	8
Transgender*	13.3%	4
Racial/Cultural Group		
White/Caucasian	83.3%	25
Biracial	7.7%	2
Hispanic	3.3%	1
Middle Eastern	3.3%	1
Indian/Asian American	3.3%	1
Education		
Some high school	3.3%	1
Completed high school/GED	10.0%	3
Completed high school; entering college	13.3%	4
Currently in college (undergraduate)	46.7%	14
Completed 4-year college	20.0%	6
Currently in graduate school	6.7%	2
Religious Association		
None	46.7%	14
Jewish	20.0%	6
Catholic	10.0%	3
Unitarian	6.7%	2
Pagan	6.7%	2
Quaker	3.3%	1
Agnostic/Buddhist	3.3%	1
Half Jewish/half Christian	3.3%	1
Family-Level Characteristic		
Family Type		
"Divorced"	50.0%	15
"Planned"	50.0%	15
Community-Level Characteristics		
Region of U.S.**		
Northeast (CT, MA, NJ, PA, VT)	43.3%	13
West (CA, OR, WA)	26.7%	8
South (AR, FL, MD)	16.7%	5
Midwest (IL, OH, WI)	13.3%	4
Community Type		
Urban-Large City	33.3%	10
Urban-Small City	20.0%	6
Suburban	36.7%	11
Rural	10.0%	3

*Includes those who identified as "gender-ambiguous" or "genderqueer"
**Regions of U.S. as outlined by the U.S. Census Bureau
(http://www.census.gov/geo/www/maps/CP_MapProducts.htm)

themselves as Pagans, while one participant each identified themselves as Quaker, half Jewish/half Christian, and Agnostic/Buddhist.

Family-Level Characteristics

Half of the participants were categorized as belonging to "divorced" lesbian families, and the other half were considered to be from "planned" lesbian families. It was somewhat difficult to categorize the families of four of the participants, due to participants' lack of clarity regarding parental relationships at the time participants were conceived, and/or the mothers' sexual identity at the time of conception. For example, one participant was conceived naturally after her mother and father had sexual relations, yet it is unclear whether her mother and father were in a relationship at the time. Due to the fact that this participant's mother came out as lesbian years before the participant was conceived, this participant's family was categorized as "planned." In the cases of the other three participants, the mothers seemed to be in romantic relationships with the fathers at some point prior to conception; however, it was unclear whether the mothers came out as lesbian immediately before or after the participants were conceived. Due to the fact that these mothers were in romantic relationships with the fathers at least immediately prior to conception, these three participants were categorized as belonging to "divorced" lesbian families.

The sample also included two sibling groups. The first sibling pair included a female and a male participant. The second sibling pair included a female and a transgender participant. Both sibling pairs were from divorced families.

Community-Level Characteristics

During their adolescence, almost half of the participants (n=13) lived in a

Northeastern state (CT, MA, NJ, PA or VT), while eight participants (27%) lived in a

West coast state (CA, OR, or WA). Five participants (17%) lived in the South (AR, FL,

or MD), while four (13%) lived in the Midwest (IL, OH, or WI). In terms of the type of

community in which participants lived during their adolescence, 11 (37%) grew up in a

town they described as "suburban," while 10 participants (33%) grew up in an "urban,

large city," six (20%) described their adolescent communities as an "urban, small city,"

and three (10%) lived in a "rural" environment.

Data Collection & Management Issues

Eight of the one-on-one, semi-structured, open-ended individual interviews were

in-person, while the rest were telephone interviews. Each in-person interview was

anticipated to be approximately 90 minutes in length; the shortest in-person interview

lasted approximately 60 minutes, while the longest lasted just over two hours. Phone

interviews generally lasted between 60 and 90 minutes; the shortest was about 45

minutes, and the longest about two hours. A second phone call was placed to one phone

interview participant in order to finish the interview. All interview participants were

given $25 each for their time[7]. I took notes during and after the interview sessions to

capture participants' main points, as well as my own thoughts and reactions. A recording

system and transcriber was used to record and transcribe interviews verbatim. I

transcribed the first interview myself, and then five undergraduate students were hired to

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transcribe the rest. After interviews were transcribed, I checked for accuracy by proofreading each transcript while listening to the audio-taped interview.

Participants were asked to read and sign informed consent forms prior to participation in the interviews (see Appendix C). Prior to the phone interviews, the consent form was mailed or emailed to the participants; the signed consent form was then mailed back to and received by the researcher before the phone interview took place. In order to comply with state and federal laws regarding taping of telephone conversations, all participants who took part in phone interviews were asked to give their explicit permission on the consent form for the phone interviews to be audio-taped. Participants were told they were free to ask questions at any time during the study or to withdraw from participation in the study at any time without penalty. Signed consent forms have been kept in a locked file cabinet separate from the raw data in order to ensure confidentiality.

Interview Protocol Development

An interview protocol designed specifically for this study was utilized during the interviews. Prior to the start of the interview, the purpose of the study was discussed with participants in order to help put them at ease with regards to how study data would be used (i.e., study data will not be used to claim that lesbians do not make good parents or should not be parents).   In order to help build rapport and to be open and transparent with participants, I shared the fact that my mother is a lesbian who came out when I was 10 years old. I then answered any questions that participants had at that point about participation in the study. Some participants asked what I would do with the results of the study and where/how they would be disseminated. I told them that I envisioned

writing several journal articles from the findings and that I would share results through

presentations at conferences and with community organizations, such as COLAGE.

The following general and follow-up questions made up the interview protocol

(see Appendix D for the complete Interview Protocol). Some demographic information

was collected first. Then participants were asked to tell the story of their families. For

in-person interviews, participants were given paper and pencil to diagram their families

to help participants have a starting place from which to tell their family story (see

Appendix E). For phone interviews, participants were asked to draw their families ahead

of time and to have the drawing with them during the interview. I then asked phone

interview participants to mail their drawings to me after the interview. These family

diagrams helped to sensitize and inform me regarding each participant's unique family

structure. After telling the stories of their families, participants created a narrative

identity by answering questions, such as "Think back to when you were in middle/junior

high school…what were you like? What things were you involved in?"; "What was your

family like back then?"; and "How did you feel about having (a) lesbian mom(s) while

you were in middle school?" Participants were also asked questions related to their

experiences of heterosexism and homophobia, such as "Can you think of any specific

examples of heterosexism or homophobia you experienced during your middle school or

junior high years? If yes, please tell me about it. Where did it happen? Who was

involved?" If participants did experience heterosexism and/or homophobia, they were

also asked how they dealt with it, as well as what kind of impact the experiences had on

them. Furthermore, participants were asked to discuss how they think these experiences

during adolescence have shaped who they are today and to rate their own level of well-

being. To close the interview, the following question was posed to participants: "Now that you are a young adult, what do you think is important for others to understand about the experiences of adolescents with lesbian parents?"

After piloting the interview protocol with the first five participants, two questions were added as optional probes: (a) "Was there anything you think you learned to do over time to help you deal with the homophobia or the feelings that resulted from those homophobic experiences?," and (b) if participants said they felt they were currently doing well, "How do you think you are able to be doing so well now, given your experiences with heterosexism and homophobia?"

<center>*Privacy Issues*</center>

Appropriate provisions were made to protect the privacy of participants and to maintain confidentiality of identifiable information. A code number was assigned to each participant's interview data, and all participants' names and other identifying information were kept separate from the raw data. Initially, all data were kept in a locked file cabinet in the student researcher's office at the University of Maryland, College Park, to which only the project advisor, Dr. Leigh Leslie, and I had access. After moving out of state during the latter portion of data collection, I kept all raw data in a locked file cabinet in my home in Oxford, Ohio. Furthermore, each participant was assigned a pseudonym that was/will be utilized in interview transcripts, data presentations, and reports – and all names of people referred to in participants' quotes were changed. At the end of the study, all audiotapes and other raw data will be destroyed.

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Trustworthiness Features

Qualitative research has its own standards of quality and verification to establish the *trustworthiness,* or credibility, of a study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Quantitative research terms, such as *internal validity, external validity, reliability,* and *objectivity,* are not deemed appropriate for qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Instead, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), to establish trustworthiness, qualitative researchers use four equivalent, alternative terms: *credibility, transferability, dependability,* and *confirmability.* Verification of trustworthiness is a process that occurs throughout the data collection, analysis, and report writing of a study (Creswell, 1998). Some of the verification techniques utilized in the current study included: theoretical sampling; triangulation; peer review and debriefing sessions; member checks; rich, thick description; theoretical memos; and pilot testing (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility

Credibility refers to the "truth value" of a study, whereby the researcher must show that she/he has represented participants' stories and meanings accurately (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 296). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), in order to achieve credibility, the researcher must: (a) carry out the inquiry in such a way that the probability that the findings will be found to be credible is enhanced, and (b) demonstrate the credibility of the findings by having them approved by the participants. Techniques utilized in this study to achieve credibility were *theoretical sampling, triangulation, peer review and debriefing,* and *member checking.*

Theoretical Sampling

As previously noted, theoretical sampling was utilized for this study. Corbin and Strauss (1990) explain that sampling in grounded theory "proceeds not in terms of drawing samples of specific groups of individuals, units of time, and so on, but in terms of concepts, their properties, dimensions, and variations" (p. 8). In grounded theory, the aim is to build a theoretical explanation of how concepts are related to one another, not necessarily to generalize findings to a broader population (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Corbin and Strauss go on to assert that it is through theoretical sampling that "representativeness" of concepts is achieved.

Triangulation

Triangulation involves collecting information from a diverse range of individuals and settings, using a variety of methods and data-gathering strategies (Maxwell, 1996; Shank, 2002). The purpose of this process is to gather corroborating evidence from different sources in order to shed light on a theme or perspective (Creswell, 1998). As previously stated, 30 participants were recruited for in-depth interviews. This number of participants was sought in order to achieve saturation, or redundancy, of data. In addition to audio-taping the interviews, I also took notes during and after each interview, highlighting important points that participants made and capturing my thoughts and reflections regarding emerging themes. These notes were considered an important, supplemental source of data. These notes were kept in a journal, where I also recorded my reflections and impressions after communications with participants. These various sources of data collection were used to triangulate the data and reach saturation.

Peer Review and Debriefing

Peer review and debriefing sessions provide opportunities for external checks of the research process in an environment that is non-threatening to the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Similar to the concept of inter-rater reliability in quantitative research, a peer reviewer or de-briefer acts as a "devil's advocate" who keeps the researcher honest by asking challenging questions about methods, meanings, and interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As a member of two different qualitative research groups (one at the University of Maryland, and the other at Miami University of Ohio), I had the opportunity to receive constructive criticism and feedback regarding data collection, coding, and analysis. I had fellow group members review my coding schemes and developing theoretical model, to verify the appropriateness of my formulation and relation of concepts and categories during the coding and model-development phases. Furthermore, I also corresponded with a fellow doctoral student who was engaged in qualitative doctoral dissertation work to exchange ideas, problem solve, and offer critical feedback and questioning.

Member Checking

Performing member checks involves soliciting study participants' views of the credibility of study findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher takes the analyses, interpretations, and conclusions back to participants for their judgments regarding accuracy (Creswell, 1998). Lincoln and Guba (1985) consider member checks to be "the most critical technique for establishing credibility" (p. 314). According to Marshall and Rossman (1999), research fundamentally involves issues of power; research is authored by a raced, gendered, classed, and politically oriented individual; and traditional research

has silenced members of oppressed and marginalized groups. For these reasons, I felt it was especially important to perform member checks with participants of the current study, who are members of a marginalized group. Furthermore, some participants were of different ethnic/racial and socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as a different gender, than me. Member checks helped to ensure that I represented the participants' views and experiences accurately.

After completion of interviews and thematic analyses on interview transcripts, all participants in the current study were asked to provide input and feedback on the study findings through member checks. A summary of the components of the theoretical model, including themes, interpretations, and conclusions were emailed to each participant for verification and judgment of accuracy. Participants were strongly encouraged to provide comments, which were considered necessary for thorough verification of the study's credibility. Thus far, nine participants have responded with feedback. Four participants gave very positive feedback and had no suggestions for changes; one of these participants wrote: "It was really cool to read through everyone else's stories and find similarities to my own life." Another participant wrote:

> Give me more! When I first opened the document and saw 18 pages, I was concerned that reading through it would be tedious, but I tore through this and was sad to see I had hit the end. I love it. I'd love to read more if you have more. If you do and you're ready to air it, pass it my way!

Another participant said: "The model gave me a lot of insight to my own experiences, actions, and decisions. More importantly, I developed even a stronger sense of empathy with my mother." One participant gave positive feedback but also had questions/suggestions for improvement regarding how transgender/genderqueer participants were represented in the demographics table:

> In the table of demographic information, you split gender into female/male/transgender. I was trying to think of how I might report that kind of thing, and I don't recall if you even collected this specific information, but I would probably overlap gender identity and trans status. In someway try to indicate both female/male/neither and transgender/non-transgender. So for example, a transman could be counted as male and as transgender, and a genderqueer who doesn't identify as either male or female could be counted as neither and transgender. I don't know if that's possible with the data you have, but it's something to think about.

This participant's feedback spurred an interesting dialogue between us, during which I learned better ways to ask about gender in future research. Subsequently, we decided it would be best to leave the table as it was, because when asking participants about their gender, I did not give them the option of choosing more than one gender label. The final four participants who responded gave positive feedback after their first read and said they would write more after they read through it more thoroughly. I sent out a follow-up email reminder asking participants to provide their feedback – both positive and negative – as soon as they are able.

Initially, I had intended to also conduct an in-person or telephone conference call group member check session, where participants would be asked to give their feedback and reactions to the emailed study findings. Due to time constraints, this aspect of member checking has not yet taken place. This session will be held in the near future, prior to publishing any information gathered for this dissertation.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which study findings can be applied to other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the researcher is responsible for providing sufficient descriptive data to make judgments about applicability of study findings to other contexts possible. In the current study, "rich,

thick description" (Creswell, 1998, p. 203) of participants and their experiences were given to allow the reader to make decisions regarding transferability. Furthermore, I included a wide range of participant experiences in my descriptions in order to illustrate the diversity of participants' stories.

<div align="center">*Dependability*</div>

Dependability refers to the degree to which the researcher has taken into account factors of instability and factors of phenomenal or design change (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As the main instrument in qualitative studies is the researcher, the qualitative investigator must work toward understanding the many ways in which she/he is having an impact on study findings. In grounded theory, the interrelated processes of data collection and analysis help the researcher to guard against inaccurate researcher bias (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). For the current study, analysis began as soon as data collection had begun, and every concept brought into the study or discovered by the researcher was at first considered provisional (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Only after each concept's relevance to the evolving theory was demonstrated repeatedly through the data was it included in the theory. Data collection and analysis were interrelated processes in the current study.

Similarly, constant comparison was used in the current study during data analysis. In grounded theory, as an incident or concept emerges, it should be compared against other incidents and concepts for similarities and differences (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Corbin and Strauss (1990) note that making comparisons "assists the researcher in guarding against bias, for he or she is then challenging concepts with fresh data" (p. 9).

Pilot testing, reflexive journaling, and peer review and debriefing sessions were used in the current study to ensure dependability. I piloted the interview protocol with five participants. Piloting the interviews allowed me to test out the protocol and make necessary adjustments, based on feedback from participants, to the order of questions and lead-ins to the questions. After piloting, minor adjustments were made to the protocol in these regards. In addition, I kept a reflexive journal. In the journal, I wrote notes about my own feelings and reactions over the course of the study, in order to help me to understand how my own biases play a part in my interpretations and assumptions in regards to understanding participants' stories. For example, after the first wave of interviews, on May 11, 2006, I wrote about why I had initially thought participants from "planned" lesbian families would be more ideal than those from "divorced" families:

> I hate to admit it, but I think I let some of my own feelings/insecurities about not being a "real" COLAGEr come into play…I think I was feeling that those from planned lesbian families were the true kids of gay parents, so they were the more ideal in my mind. I think I also was thinking that studying kids from divorced families was somewhat passé. But these are still <u>real</u> family situations that are still common. If I discount/exclude kids from divorced families, I'm ignoring the experiences of many COLAGErs. Get over myself!

Lastly, peer review and debriefing sessions also gave me an opportunity to gain the insights of others regarding the dependability of the study. Corbin and Strauss (1990) asserted that grounded theorists need not work alone and that "opening up one's analysis to the scrutiny of others helps guard against bias" (p. 11). Sharing my study findings with others in the qualitative research groups described above, as well as with Dr. Leslie during our day-long dissertation work session, gave me an opportunity to talk through my thought processes and to hear alternative perspectives, helping me to view the data in new ways.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to whether or not the final report, including the findings, interpretations, and recommendations, "is supported by the data and is internally coherent so that the 'bottom line' may be accepted" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 318). Triangulation, reflexive journaling, theoretical memos, and a code book were utilized in the current study as techniques for establishing confirmability. The use of *theoretical memos*, which are the researcher's notes about the formulation and evolution of theory development, constitutes a system for keeping track of all the concepts, categories, and hypotheses that evolve from the analytical process (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). For example, on July 24, 2006 I wrote the following theoretical memo: "Seem to be different motivations for silence – some don't want to be teased, but P#13 was told to be silent by mom because mom was worried about losing job and custody. All are PROTECTING." The development of a code book (see Appendix F) allowed me to track my coding scheme, as well as the inclusion and exclusion criteria for codes. Furthermore, raw data, including audiotapes and written field notes, will be kept until the project has been completed in order to verify the data. All data analysis notes and computer software files will also be available for verification.

Data Analysis

According to Marshall and Rossman (1999), typical analytic procedures in qualitative research fall into six phases: (a) organizing the data; (b) generating categories, themes, and patterns; (c) coding the data; (d) testing the emergent understandings; (e) searching for alternative explanations; and (f) writing the report. Qualitative researchers do not wait to begin data analysis after data collection has been completed (Creswell,

1998); in fact, data analysis should begin immediately after finishing the first interview and continue until the research project ends (Maxwell, 1996). Following this guideline, analysis of the data in the current study started as soon as data collection began, as thoughts about themes were tracked in my theoretical memos. After 20 interviews were completed, more formal data analysis commenced as I began to develop and refine codes, build my codebook, and apply my coding scheme to each paragraph of data. Transcribed data were entered into the most recent version of the NVivo qualitative data management software, N7 (http://www.qsrinternational.com). As an initial organizational strategy, the data were first organized around the interview protocol; for example, all responses that pertained to participants' experiences of heterosexism and homophobia during middle school were organized under one "node" in the software program, allowing for easy access to all responses related to that interview protocol question. I then began the coding phase by printing out hardcopies of participants' narrative responses that pertained to each question and reading participants' narrative responses numerous times, taking notes in the margins regarding my initial thoughts for codes and themes. The process of data analysis followed the phases of data analysis for grounded theory research: (a) open coding; (b) axial coding; and (c) selective coding (Creswell, 1998).

Open Coding

According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), open coding is the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data. In open coding, the researcher examines the text of transcripts and field notes from individual and group interviews for salient indicators, concepts, and categories of information. *Indicators* are words, phrases, sentences, or a series of words, phrases, or sentences, that are constantly

compared and coded for a concept. A *concept* is a higher-order symbol or label associated with an indicator or indicators. For example, statements such as "I think it made me bitter and angry, angry that kids would be that way and treat people that way," are indicators of a concept that was labeled "angry." Statements such as, "It just got aggravating. Any time I was filling out a form or any time I had to put my father's name in and my mother's name in. It just got aggravating," are indicators of a concept that was labeled "irritated/annoyed." *Categorization* involves the grouping of allied concepts under a more abstract heading. Extending the previous example, the concepts of "angry" and "irritated/annoyed" were grouped under the category labeled "feelings" referring to how participants felt as a result of experiencing heterosexism and homophobia. This first stage of data analysis is considered time-intensive and systematic (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). After several readings of interview transcriptions and notes, I defined initial concepts and categories of information about the phenomenon.

Axial Coding

The initial concepts and categories developed in open coding provided the basis for the axial coding process. In axial coding, the researcher examines the relationships between and among the concepts and categories that were defined in open coding (LaRossa, 2005). In addition, axial coding entails comparing and contrasting concepts and categories across cases allowing themes and patterns to emerge. For example, during the axial coding phase, I read through coded text regarding the impact heterosexism and homophobia had on participants. As I was attempting to examine the relationships among these concepts, two higher-order concepts (i.e., feeling vulnerable and/or marginalized) emerged from the data. I then went through each participant's narrative to

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test whether these new concepts would fit the data. After it was affirmed that they did, I examined the relationships between these new concepts with other coded concepts and categories, such as those related to coping strategies. This process allowed higher-order categories in relation to coping strategies (e.g., protecting and de-marginalizing) to emerge. Strauss and Corbin (1990) emphasized that the different types of coding do not necessarily take place in consecutive stages. Therefore, as expected, I moved back and forth between open and axial coding to fine-tune concepts and categories.

Selective Coding

In the next phase, selective coding, data are interpreted to build a "story" (i.e., theoretical model) that integrates the categories defined through open and axial coding (Creswell, 1998). Selective coding entails the identification of a core category, or central phenomenon, that has "analytic power" because of "its ability to pull the other categories together to form an explanatory whole" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 146). During both axial and selective coding, a core category is identified and connections are made between this central category and other categories and concepts in order to analyze data for process and interaction (Creswell, 1998). The core category or central phenomenon for the present study was identified after thorough immersion in the data. As previously noted, during axial coding the core concepts of "marginalization" and "vulnerability" emerged from the data and connections were made between these categories and others. Building a theoretical model from these core concepts took place during selective coding, as I analyzed the data for process and interaction among and between the concepts and categories. The result of this coding process was the development and presentation of a theory-driven model with specific components (Creswell, 1998).

Five features or types of categories have been identified as components of a theoretical model: causal conditions, strategies, context, intervening conditions, and consequences (Creswell, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). *Causal conditions* are the events that lead to the occurrence of the central phenomenon and are signaled by terms, such as "when," "while," "since," "because," "due to," or "on account of." *Strategies* are the actions or interactions that result from the central phenomenon. (i.e., what happens as a result). An example of a causal condition (i.e., heterosexism and homophobia) is given by a female participant: "I just feel like in those situations when someone would say, 'That's so gay,'…I just felt like they were insulting part of who I was." A strategy for coping with heterosexism and homophobia is illustrated in a quote from a female participant: "I mean I was terrified of people knowing about my family. And so…I withdrew a lot from my family during middle school."

Context refers to the specific location of events (e.g., when and how events occur, the number and type of incidents) that pertain to the central phenomenon and influence the strategies. *Intervening conditions* represent broader structural, contextual conditions that pertain to the central phenomenon of coping with heterosexism and homophobia and also influence the strategies. An example of context (i.e., frequency of homophobia) is given by a female participant: "I think in middle school 'fag' was the big word. 'That's so gay.' It was just like in—just everywhere in slang terminology. And that's what made it so rough." Another female participant refers to an intervening condition (i.e., social support): "I didn't really have allies or people who knew what was going on. Even though I had like grown-up allies, I didn't have people in middle school in my life who did, and…middle school's like the most heterosexist place."

Finally, the *consequences*, or the outcomes of the strategies pertaining to the central phenomenon, are identified. Immediate consequences of participants' coping strategies may be positive and/or negative. An example of a positive consequence given by several participants was that after "coming out" to friends about their families and receiving positive reactions from those friends, participants often felt less afraid to tell other people and, subsequently, would come out to more and more of their peers. An example of a negative consequence was given by a female participant, who did not speak out when she heard homophobic slurs: "It made me so mad, but I didn't say anything, which I'm ashamed of, I really am." For the current study, the identification of these five basic components/categories provided the basis for the development of a theory-driven model to explain how adolescents with lesbian parents cope with heterosexism and homophobia.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Overview of Theoretical Model Development

A grounded theory model for how adolescents with lesbian parents cope with heterosexism and homophobia was developed from interview data collected from 30 participants who grew up with lesbian parents. The following information related to this theoretical model is presented in this chapter: (a) a summary description of how the model was developed, (b) a presentation of the overall model, and (c) a more in-depth description of four components of the model. As a large amount of data were collected for this study, this dissertation serves as my initial attempt to conceptualize and present a plausible explanation for how participants experienced, perceived, and coped with heterosexism and homophobia. My hope is that I will be "mining" these data for years to come; therefore, I intend to provide here both a broad overview of the overall model and a more in-depth description and analysis of only certain aspects of the model, namely the "causal conditions," "central phenomena," "intervening conditions," and "strategies."

The beginning stages of model development entailed the identification of a central phenomenon/category and integration of concepts identified and formulated throughout the coding process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). After being immersed in the data for an extended period of time, I began to ask myself general "storyline" generating questions, such as those suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1998, p.148): "What seems to be going on here?" "What is the main issue with which these people seem to be grappling?" and "What keeps striking me over and over?" While contemplating these questions, eventually two concepts emerged as the central phenomena – participants' feelings and perceptions regarding "vulnerability" and/or "marginalization." In conjunction with

these concepts, I was also repeatedly struck by the diversity of participants' experiences in all aspects of their lives – from their home lives to their social lives and, most pertinently, to their experiences with heterosexism and homophobia. It was immediately apparent that the amount and types of heterosexism and homophobia that participants faced varied greatly from participant to participant. Concurrently, it also became clear that heterosexism and homophobia had varying degrees of impact on participants. While some participants seemed to experience high levels of vulnerability and/or marginalization, others seemed less affected. Once I identified this variation in participants' experience of the central phenomena, my next steps were to determine the conditions that were operating to create this variation (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Through the depiction of the theoretical model, I have attempted to identify and describe these conditions and how they are related both to the central phenomena and the strategies participants utilized to cope with the central phenomena.

Prior to presenting the model, it is important to address issues related to the theoretical sampling strategies utilized for this study. Although family type (i.e., "divorced" versus "planned") played a prominent role in the pre-intervening condition of family visibility and one of the contextual dimensions (i.e., perpetrator characteristics) of the causal conditions, it did not emerge as a salient factor regarding difference of experience of the central phenomena or utilization of coping strategies. While it is clear from some individual participants' words that family type did play a role in how they experienced some of the intervening conditions (e.g., familial social support), no significant themes emerged for one family type or the other. Therefore, when quoting

participants, their family type will be mentioned only when this information (a) is relevant to the themes being discussed and (b) provides pertinent contextual information.

The basic components of the theoretical model developed from the study data are based upon the types of categories generally identified during the axial and selective coding process: causal conditions, context, intervening conditions, central phenomena, strategies, and consequences. According to pure grounded theory, all of the concepts related to each of these components should, ideally, emerge from the data. As this study utilized a *modified* grounded theory approach, some of the basic concepts were identified prior to data collection. For example, as the intent of this study was to explore how adolescents with lesbian parents cope with heterosexism and homophobia, it was expected that heterosexism and homophobia would be the "causal conditions" and that the various ways in which participants coped with these causal conditions would be described as the "strategies" in the model. Furthermore, potential "intervening conditions" (i.e., cognitive appraisal and social support) were identified during the design of the study. Despite prior identification of these basic concepts, the extent and ways in which these concepts actually did or did not pertain to the experiences of study participants were allowed to emerge from the data.

Other aspects of the theoretical model were not conceptualized prior to data collection and can be said to have more "organically" emerged from the data. These aspects include the "central phenomena" and the "consequences." Furthermore, two basic model components – intervening conditions and consequences – were expanded to better represent the study data. A "pre-intervening condition" was conceptualized as a type of intervening condition that has a direct influence on the causal conditions. In

addition, consequences were conceptualized in terms of more immediate and longer-term consequences.

Overview of Theoretical Model

The overall theoretical model for how adolescents with lesbian parents cope with heterosexism and homophobia is presented in Figure 2. The pictorial presentation of this model was based upon the model developed by Morrow and Smith (1995) and described in Creswell (1998) to illustrate the grounded theory approach. In this section, each aspect (i.e., causal conditions and context, pre-intervening conditions, central phenomena, intervening conditions, strategies, and consequences, and long-term consequences) of the current model is briefly described in general temporal order. However, the causal conditions and context are discussed prior to the pre-intervening conditions, as an explanation of the types of causal conditions is necessary before discussing how the pre-intervening conditions have an influence on those types.

Also in this section, salient themes that emerged from the data are highlighted for the pre-intervening conditions, consequences, and long-term consequences only. Supporting evidence in the form of quotes from participants are given to further illustrate the relevance of these themes for those three components of the model. After the overall model is presented, the other four aspects of the model (causal conditions, central phenomena, intervening conditions, and strategies) are described in greater detail. These four model components are shown in Figure 2 with solid lines for boxes; the other three model components have dashed lines.

It is also important to note that although the model includes boxes and arrows that attempt to illustrate possible direct and indirect cause-and-effect relationships between

Figure 2.
Theoretical Model of How Adolescents with Lesbian Parents Cope with Heterosexism and Homophobia

Intervening Conditions:
- Social support
- Parental coping
- LGBT visibility
- Participant characteristics
- Pre-adolescent experiences
- Passage of time

Causal Conditions:
Heterosexism & Homophobia
Types and Context

Central Phenomena:
Perceptions and Feelings of **Vulnerability and/or Marginalization**

Strategies:
Protect & De-Marginalize

Consequences:
Validation/ Empowerment & Invalidation/ Disempowerment

Long-Term Consequence
Resilience
Positive well-being & stronger

Pre-Intervening Conditions:
- Visibility – self and family
- Community & school climate

Continuous feedback loop

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concepts, it is likely these paths of association are not as simple as depicted (Strauss &

Corbin, 1998). Furthermore, it is important to note the existence of multiple feedback

loops, denoting that change is a constant occurrence in this model. Despite these

complexities, the model diagram, in conjunction with more detailed and in-depth

narrative description, helps to begin to explain the story of what I think is going on from

the data.

<div align="center">*Causal Conditions*</div>

The *causal conditions*, the events that lead to the occurrence of the central

phenomena, are the heterosexism and homophobia perceived and experienced by

adolescents with lesbian parents. Blumenfeld's (1992) definitions of homophobia were

utilized and expanded upon to reflect the study data. Participants perceived and

experienced three primary types of heterosexism and homophobia, identified by

Blumenfeld as: Interpersonal, institutionalized, and cultural.

Types of Heterosexism and Homophobia

Interpersonal. Interpersonal heterosexism was defined as individual behavior

related to personal "hetero-normative" assumptions, such as that every child needs a

mother and a father. *Interpersonal homophobia* refers to individual behavior related to

personal prejudices about homosexuality and LGBT people, such as name-calling and

physical harassment (Blumenfeld, 1992). Two sub-types of interpersonal heterosexism

and homophobia emerged from the data: direct and indirect. *Direct* interpersonal

heterosexism and homophobia refers to individual behavior directly regarding the

participant and/or the participant's family. *Indirect* interpersonal heterosexism and

homophobia refers to individual behavior, **not** directly regarding the participant and/or

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the participant's family. Specific examples of direct and indirect interpersonal heterosexism and homophobia are given in a later section.

Institutional. Institutional heterosexism and homophobia were also experienced by study participants. *Institutional heterosexism* is defined here as the ways in which government, schools, churches, and other agencies and organizations render LGBT individuals and their families invisible. For example, many participants reported that their schools sent home forms to be signed by parents that included a line for "mother" and a line for "father," thereby ignoring the fact that some children have two mothers or two fathers. *Institutional homophobia* is defined here as the ways in which government, schools, churches, and other agencies and organizations discriminate against LGBT individuals and their families (Blumenfeld, 1992). For example, some participants told stories about religious leaders who would promote anti-LGBT sentiment through religious teachings. Institutional heterosexism and homophobia include stated and implicit policies, as well as the failure to insure individuals' rights.

Cultural. Cultural, or societal, heterosexism and homophobia are defined here as social norms/standards and codes of behavior that reinforce and legitimize heterosexist and homophobic attitudes and behavior. An example of cultural *heterosexism* noted by some participants was the lack of diverse representations of LGBT characters on TV. An example of cultural *homophobia* reported by some participants was the "unspoken" rule at school dances that it was not acceptable for boys to dance together. All three types of heterosexism and homophobia (i.e., interpersonal, institutional, and cultural) experienced by study participants are described in detail in a later section.

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Context

The three types of heterosexism and homophobia had specific contextual dimensions that also emerged from the data. *Context* has been defined as the specific location of events that pertain to the central phenomena, such as when and how events occur and the number and type of incidents. Two main contextual factors were identified as dimensions of heterosexism and homophobia: (a) The frequency, intensity, and duration of the heterosexism and homophobia experienced by participants; and (b) perpetrator characteristics (i.e., who the source of the heterosexism and homophobia was – friend, family member, stranger, etc.). These contextual dimensions of the heterosexism and homophobia experienced by study participants are discussed further in a later section.

Pre-Intervening Conditions

Intervening conditions have been described by Strauss and Corbin (1990) as broader structural, contextual conditions that pertain to the central phenomenon and also influence the strategies. ***Pre****-intervening conditions* are described here as broader contextual factors that pertain to the causal conditions in the model (i.e., forms of heterosexism and homophobia). Strauss and Corbin do not discuss pre-intervening conditions as an aspect of grounded theory; however, during data analysis it became apparent that certain conditions likely influence the type and amount of heterosexism and homophobia that participants experience. The two pre-intervening conditions that emerged from the interview data with study participants are: (a) visibility of family and self, and (b) community climate.

Visibility of Family and Self

Visibility of family and self refers to: (a) how visible a participant's family was in the community as a lesbian-parent family, and (b) how visible a participant's own sexual identity was to others. How "out" an adolescent's family is to the community could influence the type or amount of heterosexism and homophobia faced by the adolescent. For example, adolescents who are out to their peers regarding their mothers' sexual identity have the potential to experience certain types of direct interpersonal homophobia in relation to their family that other adolescents, who are not out regarding their lesbian family, might not. Lisa had two lesbian moms from the age of six years old; her family decided to be very "out" to those in Lisa's school from the beginning:

> I remember when I started school…they (her moms) were like, "Let's just go with the put everything out there, and, you know, that way you don't have to deal with it, it's just out there, no awkward moments." So, our philosophy was more like, it's not a big deal to tell people. But that definitely put me out there…

When asked how that was for her to be "out there," Lisa began to describe the direct interpersonal homophobia she experienced throughout elementary and middle school: "It's very interesting because unlike other kids, I was identified as gay, even though I didn't identify—even though at that time I didn't even have a sexuality, which was very weird." Although Lisa's experience was not typical of all other participants who were out to their peers about their families, her story does illustrate the potential influence family visibility has on the heterosexism and homophobia that adolescents with lesbian parents may face.

Those adolescents with lesbian parents whose families are not visible to their communities may not have to face direct interpersonal *homophobia* in the form of teasing or harassment, but they may still face direct interpersonal *heterosexism.* Nora illustrated

this point, as she discussed the fact that she was not out to her peers about her mother or her mother's partner; therefore, Nora's mother was identified as a "single mother" rather than a "lesbian mother:"

> So, in a way that made it both easier and harder, because it made invisible what was going on in our family. It made it so that when people made assumptions about who my family was they missed this whole thing, and they could continue to miss it both for our own safety and, in a way, that made me feel like it didn't exist and like my family didn't exist.

Moreover, some participants from divorced families discussed how others sometimes assumed that their mothers were still heterosexual, because their parents had been previously married. This incorrect heterosexist assumption was irritating to some participants, but may have served to protect them from some forms of direct homophobia. Charlie, who is from a divorced family, illustrates this point when addressing how he felt about having a lesbian mother in middle school and how open he was about it:

> The lesbian piece wasn't really very salient, because she didn't have partners…and no one really asked, like they knew my parents were divorced, and so I think since they knew I had, like since my mom was married, then there's that annoying assumption that she must be heterosexual, so there were never any questions about it, it was just oh, she hasn't found the right person yet.

The visibility of participants' own sexual identity also emerged as a factor that influenced participants' experience with heterosexism and homophobia. Participants were not asked to reveal their sexual orientation during the interview; however, all participants were asked to reveal their gender, which is when all four of the transgender participants stated how they currently identified. During the interview, some participants discussed their sexual identities – both how they identified at the time of the interview and during adolescence. Some of the study participants who identified as LGBT during their adolescence faced direct interpersonal homophobia, such as being teased or

harassed, in regards to their own sexual identities. Tom recalled being targeted as "gay" by classmates:

> I was definitely teased…at some points, relentlessly. And I do think a lot of it was just that's what people called people, but I'm fairly certain that some of the teasing was intentional. And they meant that this person actually was gay.

However, for some of these participants, discerning what the heterosexism and homophobia they faced was attributable to was sometimes complex. Amy came out as queer when she was 12 years old; she stated at the beginning of the interview that it was "hard to pick apart" the homophobia that she experienced in terms of what was because of her mom and what was because of her own coming out.

Community Climate

Another pre-intervening condition that likely has an influence on the heterosexism and homophobia perceived and experienced by adolescents with lesbian parents is the level of social tolerance, or "climate," of the communities and schools in which they live. A number of participants referred to their communities as either "liberal" or "conservative" when it came to values regarding acceptance of LGBT people. When asked about how open she was about having a lesbian mom, Rachel responded:

> Well, keep in mind I lived in (Name of Town), MA. It has one of the largest populations of lesbians on the entire east coast. You know, percentage maybe. And so, I really didn't perceive a whole lot of homophobia, or active homophobia living [there].

As previously stated, these pre-intervening conditions (i.e., visibility of family/self and community climate) seemed to have a direct influence on the causal conditions (i.e., heterosexism and homophobia). According to the data and, therefore, to the theoretical model developed for this study, these causal conditions are thought to have a direct influence on the occurrence of the central phenomena.

Central Phenomena

A *central phenomenon* or *category*, according to Strauss and Corbin (1998), (a) emerges from the data, (b) represents the main theme of the research, and (c) integrates all of the other categories to form an explanatory whole. It became evident to me, after extensive immersion in the study data, that participants were doing more than coping with the heterosexism and homophobia they experienced as adolescents – they were coping with the impact that heterosexism and homophobia had on their lives. The central phenomena, which emerged from the data, were that participants were experiencing feelings and perceptions of vulnerability and/or marginalization during their adolescence, as a result of heterosexism and homophobia. As previously stated, there was great variation among participants in terms of the degrees to which they felt, or perceived themselves to be, vulnerable and/or marginalized. Therefore, the goal of this research was then to discover the factors evident in participants' lives that seemed to explain this variation.

Marginalization

Marginalization is defined as the "social process" of being relegated or confined "to a lower or outer limit or edge, as of social standing" (http://www.thefreedictionary.com/marginalization). In this study, the central phenomenon of marginalization refers to participants' feelings and perceptions related to the social process of being relegated to a lower social standing or "outer edge," as a result of heterosexism and homophobia. All study participants experienced feelings and/or perceptions of marginalization to some degree. For example, some participants spoke about how their experiences with heterosexism were a constant reminder that their

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families were different than the "idealized" families in mainstream America. Other participants talked about their awareness of others' attempts to devalue their families – and the feelings that resulted from that, such as irritation, frustration, hurt, anger, and vulnerability.

Vulnerability

More than three-fourths of study participants made implicit and explicit references to vulnerability, which is an aspect of the larger concept of marginalization. *Vulnerability* is defined in general as "susceptibility to injury or attack" (http://www.thefreedictionary.com/vulnerability). In this study, the central phenomenon of *vulnerability* refers to how susceptible to verbal and/or physical attack, as well as emotional and/or physical injury or loss, participants felt or perceived themselves and/or their families to be due to heterosexism and homophobia. For example, some participants feared losing friends or being teased if peers found out they had lesbian parents, while some other participants were aware that their mothers might lose their jobs or custody if others became aware of the mothers' lesbian identity. Both vulnerability and marginalization, as the central phenomena of this study, are discussed in-depth in a later section.

Intervening Conditions

As previously noted, *intervening conditions* have been defined as broad structural, contextual conditions that pertain to the central phenomenon and also influence the strategies. These intervening conditions are thought to play a major role in the variation among study participants regarding their experience of the central phenomena. Six intervening conditions emerged from the data as potentially having a direct influence on

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both the central phenomena and the strategies utilized to cope with the central

phenomena: (a) the various sources of social support available, such as family, friends,

and teachers; (b) how participants' lesbian parents chose to cope with the heterosexism

and homophobia their families faced, (c) how visible other LGBT people and families

were to participants, (d) individual participant characteristics, such as personality, sibling

order, and sexual identity; (e) participants' pre-adolescent experiences with heterosexism

and homophobia; and (f) the passage of time. All of these intervening conditions are

discussed in detail in a later section.

<p style="text-align: center;">*Strategies*</p>

Strategies have been defined by Strauss and Corbin (1990) as the actions or

interactions that result from the central phenomena. In this study, the strategies refer to

the coping strategies utilized by adolescents with lesbian parents to deal with the impact

that heterosexism and homophobia is having on their lives. Two broad categories of

coping strategies were utilized by study participants: (a) "protective," and (b) "de-

marginalizing." These two categories of coping strategies, along with their respective

sub-categories of coping strategies, are discussed in detail in a later section.

<p style="text-align: center;">*Consequences*</p>

Consequences have been described as the outcomes of the strategies pertaining to

the central phenomena. In the current study, the consequences refer to the outcomes of

the coping strategies utilized by participants when dealing with the impact of

heterosexism and homophobia. The working concepts that have emerged thus far

regarding the consequences are "validation/empowerment" and

"invalidation/disempowerment."

Validation/Empowerment

          Validate means "to establish the soundness of" or "to corroborate"

(http://www.thefreedictionary.com/validate). *Empower* means "to invest with power" and

"to enable" (http://www.thefreedictionary.com/empower). The term "empowerment" has

political connotations, as its modern usage originated in the civil rights movement and,

subsequently, the women's movement, which both sought political *empowerment* for

their followers (Houghton Mifflin, 2003). In the present study, there were consequences

that seemed to validate participants' own feelings and sense of self-worth. For example,

Amy talks about the consequences of her political activism:

> Being part of the gay-straight alliance and knowing that, like, not only was this
> important to me, but this was an actual important struggle and, like, feeling that
> value and that justification and being part of something larger than myself.

Empowerment is used in this study to describe consequences that seem to enable

participants to act in ways that allow participants to feel further validation. For example,

Heather described what happened as a result of utilizing the social support of her friends:

> In 8th grade it started to change a little bit, because like I realized…I wasn't
> telling many more people, but when I was telling people, like none of the people
> that I told cared in a negative way. Nobody was like, "Oh my God really?!?"
> They were all like, "That's cool, actually." So, I sort of started to realize that
> maybe I didn't have to hide it as much as I thought I did, and so I still didn't
> advertise it by any means but I would, was more comfortable telling people than I
> had been the year before.

Invalidation/Disempowerment

          For some participants, the consequences of utilizing certain coping strategies was

that they did not feel validated or empowered. For example, Tom dealt with his fear of

marginalization by internalizing his emotions; he hid his family and his own sexual

identity from his peers. Tom explained how internalizing his feelings resulted in three suicide attempts during his adolescence:

> Years of holding things back, you know, it builds up and you blow up, and I did it in a very big way. …And I think that isn't so much a function of growing up with lesbian parents, it's more just growing up in general and having issues to deal with. But, without question, you know, the fact that I didn't know how to address that in school and whatnot, you know, played a part. But, that's kind of how it came back to bite me in the ass.

Although the consequences of Tom's coping manifested in an extreme way, other participants also talked about the difficult feelings they experienced as a result of their coping. One theme that emerged among participants who hid their families from others was "feeling torn" and being "ashamed of acting ashamed." Heather explains how she felt torn between standing up for her mothers and protecting herself during middle school:

> I was really torn, because like I loved them and they were really good parents and they were really good people. And mom was like the chairwoman of the board of the Pride Committee, and they were both really involved in my schooling and in my community stuff. Like, I mean nobody's perfect, but, like, I definitely really love both of them, and so it was hard 'cause I felt bad and I felt like I was sort of letting them down, but I was just terrified about what my peers would think.

Denise added to this theme of "feeling torn" by discussing the emotions that resulted:

> I think what was probably most painful for me was really being proud of my family and who they were and feeling so frustrated that I couldn't outwardly protect them or defend them or speak up for their rights, because they are such—I mean they were such amazing people. And I felt like—I think part of what was so hard was just feeling guilty all the time and feeling ashamed all the time when I knew that was wrong, and I knew that my family would be ashamed of me if they knew how ashamed I was acting.

This aspect of the theoretical model – consequences – needs to be more fully developed. While some participants spoke directly to the result of their coping strategies, others did not. During the design of the study protocol, I was focused on long-term

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consequences related to resilience; therefore, I think that I could have asked more/better questions that directly related to more immediate consequences. In the near future, I will spend more time "mining" the data for evidence related to consequences and will consider asking participants follow-up questions that directly solicit information regarding more immediate consequences of coping.

Long-Term Consequence: Resilience

Resilience was identified as a *long-term consequence*, or outcome, of the coping strategies utilized by study participants. *Resilience* has been defined in this study as the ability of participants to grow stronger as a result of dealing with heterosexism and homophobia and to be psychologically healthy despite exposure to these stressors (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Walsh, 1998). All study participants, despite large variations in adolescent experiences with heterosexism and homophobia, exhibited evidence of resilience. When asked about their current general well-being, more than half of the participants said, unequivocally, that they were "good," "very good," "great," or "fantastic." The rest of the study participants reported they were good, but currently experiencing some sort of "normal" developmental challenge. For example, Marie stated:

> I would say that I am doing well. I think like anyone else there are certain things that are challenging me, like making choices in my own career. But in terms of knowing who I am and being happy in my personal life, I definitely am.

About two-thirds of study participants said they were more "open-minded" and accepting of differences in others as a result of growing up in a lesbian-parent family and having to deal with heterosexism and homophobia. Kendra spoke to this theme when

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asked about how growing up with lesbian mothers and dealing with heterosexism and

homophobia influenced who she is today:

> I would say it's probably influenced me in terms of really being a very open-minded person, and not just in terms of gay and lesbian issues, but I think in terms of everybody's differences and just knowing that every single person is so different and so incredibly wonderful in their own way and being very open to that. …I guess I've never put this into words, but maybe that's part of the reason is because I did have maybe a different, sort of different, growing up situation than maybe a lot of people in the United States.

Some participants spoke about how their adolescent experiences with

heterosexism and homophobia made them stronger and/or prepared them for living in a

world that would not always be accepting of their families or their own sexual identities,

if they too identified as LGBT. For example, Kara, who identifies as genderqueer, said:

"Figuring out that [people were heterosexist and homophobic] was hard, but it was

absolutely necessary for me to exist in this world, because people aren't cool with it, and

that's the way it is." Amy spoke to how her experiences with heterosexism and

homophobia have made her a stronger person:

> I guess I feel like in a lot of ways they've made me feel more confident. I know it is kind of bizarre that like years of basically homophobia and oppression being targeted at me have made me a better person, but like I feel they have. I feel like being able to get through all of that and learning to defend myself and my family has made me really value myself and my family as something worth defending. And also I guess just that now that I'm older and trying to be less angry and shed a lot of the like feeling of superiority towards the people that say homophobic things or feel homophobic things. It's like I want to be more involved with those people, not just as like trying to fix them, but just trying to be around them and letting them judge for themselves. And it's hard thinking I wish they didn't have to judge me, I wish they didn't have to judge my family, but knowing that like my family is strong enough to handle that and we've already handled that. It seems like maybe if they came and lived with my mom and I for a couple of weeks they'd see that we are just a normal screwy family, like every normal screwy family. I think how it shapes my identity is really just it's taught me how to take care of myself, it's taught me that I'm something worth taking care of.

A Closer Look at Four Components of the Theoretical Model

Causal Conditions

The *causal conditions*, as previously discussed, are the heterosexism and homophobia perceived and experienced by adolescents with lesbian parents. Figure 3 is a more detailed pictorial representation of the "causal conditions" component of the model. This figure depicts the three primary types of heterosexism and homophobia perceived and experienced by study participants – interpersonal (direct and indirect), institutionalized, and cultural – as well as the specific contextual factors related to how participants experienced these types of homophobia and heterosexism.

Figure 3. Causal Conditions: Heterosexism and Homophobia
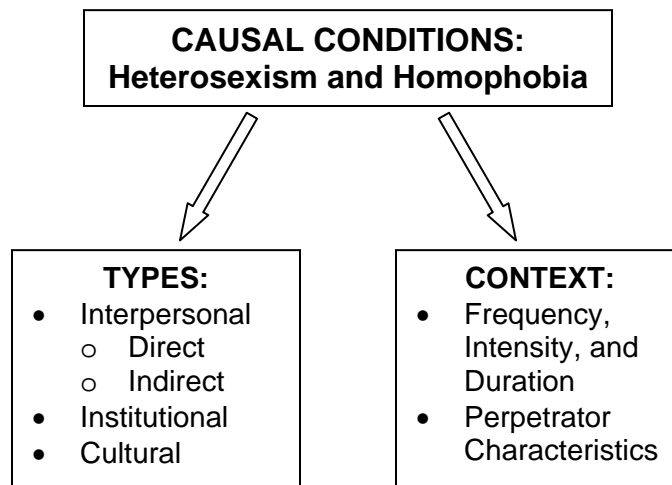
Types of Heterosexism and Homophobia

Blumenfeld's (1992) definitions of interpersonal, institutional, and cultural/societal homophobia were utilized and expanded upon for this study. Blumenfeld's definitions were expanded upon in two main ways: (a) each type (i.e., interpersonal, institutional, and cultural) had two sub-categories of "heterosexism" and

"homophobia," rather than categorizing everything as "homophobia;" and (b) interpersonal heterosexism and homophobia was broken down further into "direct" and "indirect." It should be noted that it was difficult, for the most part, to definitively discern whether an action/attitude/event/situation reported by a study participant should be categorized as "heterosexism" or "homophobia," as many incidents had elements of both. Thus, most examples were categorized as "heterosexism/homophobia;" only when it was very clear that an example given by a participant was either "heterosexism" or "homophobia" was it labeled as such.

Interpersonal. The vast majority (n = 29) of study participants reported witnessing and/or experiencing *interpersonal* heterosexism and homophobia. Interpersonal *heterosexism* is individual behavior related to personal "hetero-normative" assumptions or beliefs. Interpersonal *homophobia* refers to individual behavior related to personal prejudices about homosexuality and LGBT people. *Direct* interpersonal heterosexism and homophobia, which refers to individual behavior in response to the participant and/or the participant's family, was experienced by more than three-fourths (n = 23) of the study participants. A primary source of direct interpersonal heterosexism and homophobia for 16 of the study participants was the participants' own family members. Some participants reported hearing family members make negative comments about their mothers, or knowing about family members' disapproval of their mothers' sexual identity or lesbian partnerships. Amy, who is from a divorced family, stated simply: "I knew that my grandmother didn't have real positive feelings about that." Jenny, who is from a planned family, explained:

> Christine (Jenny's birth mom), her family, her dad disowned her when she decided to be a lesbian and have a kid, so I don't know them. My dad, Matt, his

family was very Catholic, so I was never included in the family. Although I was invited to dinners just because my dad would have me there, but I was definitely not a part of his family because of his family's views.

Other participants also reported direct interpersonal heterosexism and homophobia from family members in the form of a lack of recognition regarding the legitimacy of some familial relationships, especially the relationships between the participants and their non-biological mothers. Lisa, who is from a divorced family, noted: "My dad's family really adores me, unconditionally, but there's no talk of my mother…and when Ann (Lisa's non-biological mother) died, my dad's family really didn't acknowledge that at all." Furthermore, some participants illustrated how the lack of recognition of this mother-child bond can sometimes extend to other familial relationships. For example, Kristy, who is from a planned family, described how direct interpersonal heterosexism and homophobia have played out in her relationships with her non-biological extended family; her non-biological grandparents seemed to have difficulty accepting their daughter's sexual identity and, in turn, seemed not to fully recognize Kristy as their grandchild:

> It wasn't as accepted by my other mom's, Kim's, parents. They weren't too happy with it. I really couldn't say like to the extent because I don't know, but…you can definitely tell that I'm – I mean, I'm considered I guess, one of their grandchildren, but like they don't really send me cards on my birthday like they do my older sister, because that's their biological grandchild.

Another primary source of direct interpersonal heterosexism and homophobia for more than half (n = 17) of the study participants was participants' peers. Some participants reported that their peers often made assumptions, based on heterosexism, regarding family structure or relationships. For example, Kara, who is from a planned

family, gave the following response when asked about the heterosexism and homophobia she perceived in middle school:

> I didn't see it anywhere in my life, other than, you know explaining to one of my friends, "No, Lana's not my father. No, if I had a father, it would not be Lana, because I don't have a father." Like she wanted—like she kind of wanted me to pick which one of my parents would be the father if I were to have a father, and I had to explain to her that neither of them would be the father, because I have two mothers.

Peers of some participants also displayed direct interpersonal homophobia in the form of teasing and harassment. Nora relayed the following story that happened after her peers had discovered her mother was a lesbian: "At some point everybody found out, and in sixth grade at one point my whole class surrounded me on my way out to recess and asked me about it in a way that was terrifying to me." Most of the teasing and harassment experienced by study participants was targeted at participants' own sexual identity, sometimes regardless of how participants themselves identified. For example, Lisa discussed her middle school experiences: "I was always called like dyke, or lezzy— again, identified as gay, even if I didn't necessarily identify that way." Almost one-third of the study participants (n = 9) reported that they identified as gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (GBTQ) themselves during their adolescence; some were out to their peers, others were not. For most of these participants, any direct teasing or harassment they experienced was in relation to their own sexual identities. Jason described the harassment he faced:

> Any homophobia that I experienced in middle school was directed at me because at that time I came out as gay. …Some kids would make fun of me and then others would ignore me. Others would try to preach to me. …One asked me if I knew what the bible said about being gay. Another person asked me if I believed in hell, and when I told them I did, they said, "You probably should because you're going there."

Some of the participants who identified as GBTQ faced direct interpersonal homophobia from family members and others, who blamed participants' sexual identities on the fact that participants had lesbian mothers. For example, Amy said, "I received a lot of, 'Oh, so that's why you're queer,' or 'that's why you're gay.'" According to Jason, a parent of one of his high school peers called his mother and told her it was her fault that he was gay. Kim, who is from a divorced family, explained what happened when she came out to her father: "When I first told him, it was definitely like, he asked the question, he did the like, 'I'll love you no matter what,' but he definitely threw in the like, 'this is because your mom exposed you to it.'"

The vast majority of participants (n = 28) also reported witnessing *indirect* interpersonal heterosexism and homophobia, which refers to general individual behavior, not directly regarding the participant and/or the participant's family. The most common form of indirect interpersonal heterosexism and homophobia, reported by more than two-thirds (n = 24) of the study participants, was peers using homophobic slurs, especially "gay" and "fag," as insults. For example, Debra talked about the widespread use of these terms: "I think in middle school 'fag' was the big word, 'That's so gay.' It was just like in—just everywhere in slang terminology." Dana described how these insults were sometimes targeted at certain people:

> I feel like there were always kids that would say things like, calling people "fag" or saying "They're so gay." In middle school is the first time I ever heard those words. It was always derogatory. It was always in a way that was bad. Instead of calling a guy a "sissy" or a "wuss," it was, "Oh, he's a fag." Or if a girl was bigger than the other girls or not as attractive, it was like, "Oh, she's so dykey." That's when I really came to understand those words.

Primarily during the high school years, some participants recalled hearing general negative comments about LGBT people and about lesbian and gay parents in particular.

One example came from Jesse: "I remember when I was 18, this girl…was telling me that she thinks that gay people make bad parents…and that everyone needs a man and a woman as role models."

Some participants also witnessed or were aware of another form of indirect interpersonal homophobia: others being physically attacked for being perceived as lesbian or gay. Shawn recalled hearing about "a lot of gay deaths and gay beatings" around the time that a movie came out about the murder of Matthew Shepard, a gay University of Wyoming student. Debra told a particularly harrowing story about a high school friend who was taunted and physically attacked for being gay:

> I was very close with a guy named Casey in high school. And we worked together. He was a year younger than me, but we went to the same high school and he was actually in a class with someone in my grade, and he—the kid behind him would sit there and call him "fag" and you know, totally just be completely abusive to him, outright for being gay. Casey was gay. And after school one day, this person who had been abusing…him in class, cut him with a box cutter, attacked him with a box cutter.

Institutional. The ways in which government, schools, churches, and other agencies and organizations render LGBT individuals and their families invisible is what is meant here by *institutional heterosexism.* The ways in which these same institutions discriminate against – or fail to protect – LGBT individuals and their families is what is meant by *institutional homophobia* (Blumenfeld, 1992). More than three-fourths (n = 25) of study participants reported instances of institutional heterosexism and homophobia during their adolescence, with the three most common sources being schools, government, and religious institutions. Almost two-thirds (n = 19) of study participants reported examples of institutional heterosexism and homophobia in their schools, primarily in the form of school policies and administration. For example, many

participants remembered school forms that were sent home for parental signatures, such as permission slips for field trips; the forms often had a line for "mother" and a line for "father." Samantha, who is from a planned family, spoke to this:

> Like getting permission slips signed and having to cross out the part that said father and decide whether to write "mother," or "mother 2," or, you know, "this is my other mother," like which one to put first or which one to put down if I could only put one, and like little stuff like that…basically any form you had to fill out for anything I participated in was always "mother and father."

Rich, who is also from a planned family, talked about the challenge he encountered when filling out forms for his college applications:

> The biggest is actually just recently with all the college stuff with heterosexism. All of the forms and applications and everything, they only recognize married, divorced, or single people. So, it was very difficult to do the forms, the financial information, the guardians, certain security issues. It was difficult.

> Other participants discussed their schools' anti-discrimination policies and

procedures, or lack thereof, as they related to particular situations, such as school dances. Denise recalled her school's policy related to the prom: "In order to get a discount for prom, you had to be in a couple. And that couple—the only couples that were recognized were heterosexual couples or a boy and girl, even if they were just friends." Other participants referred to the handling of anti-gay epithets and harassment by teachers or other school staff. Heather spoke about her disappointment when teachers would not discipline students for making homophobic comments:

> When somebody would say something like that and no one would say anything, especially like if a teacher heard and didn't say anything, like that was really hurtful, because it was like it was your job to make people feel safe and by letting things like that happen and not addressing them like you, like that's not fair to kids…and I felt when nobody said anything it was like why, why are you letting that be ok? Like if somebody said, made like a racist comment, like a teacher wouldn't just stand there and like let it go.

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Some other students also reported facing challenges when they asked school staff for help in keeping themselves and other students safe from homophobia. Debra, who had a gay friend who was attacked by another student, described her interaction with her principal, to whom she went for help:

> So, the principal—I told him basically everything that I just told you (about her gay friend being attacked by another student), even that he was kicked out of his house. And he was like, "Well, I'll see what I can do about it. But the kid's gay, don't you think he's kind of asking for it?" And I'm just like, what?! And he was like, "Well, if my kid was gay, I'd probably kick him out the house too. I don't know how I'd react."

Jason spoke about the resistance he faced from his school when he tried to start a gay-straight alliance:

> It became a very high profile thing when I ended up bringing a lawyer into the school. They were trying to not allow us to have a gay-straight alliance. So, I brought a lawyer in to debate the issue. At that time they were so adamantly against it, they were going to cut out all sports and all extra-curricular activities.

School curriculum is another area where participants recalled examples of institutional heterosexism and homophobia. Most of the examples given by participants lent evidence to the notion that LGBT people and families are often rendered invisible in middle and high school classrooms. Terry spoke about how teachers would divert attention away from possible LGBT romantic love relationships of some historical figures:

> She was the theater teacher, and she talked about Shakespeare and she also was very quick to talk about how any references to loving other men was like, "That's just how people talked back then. That was like love like friendship love," and stuff like that. …I'm sure there were other things like in history classes, just the heterosexism of glossing over people's relationships, historical figures and stuff like that.

Jesse referred to a particular class activity that excluded some families:

That family tree…it's terrible. They put these boxes, "Put your mom over here, and your dad over here, and then your two siblings over here, and then your parents' parents," and like I don't, like there are a lot of people who that works for…but I don't see any reason why there should be a form. Like maybe it would be a fun activity to draw your interpretation of your family structure – that could be great but like that has to be free hand, that can't be like, "This is what it looks like," and then you fill in the names. Because it's just set up to make people feel like they're crazy, and we don't need that.

Some participants recalled that their sex education or health classes only referred to heterosexual relationships and made no mention of LGBT relationships or LGBT sexual relations. Tom remembered an incident in his health class where a teacher displayed homophobia when attempting to answer a student's question:

I remember her giving us a talk about safe sex and whatnot…and someone in our class asking, "Well, how do gay men have sex?" …And she said something about, well, first she was like, "Well, there's no vagina," and it was very obvious that she was trying to let the light bulb go off in his head without her having to say it. But she said something about "sticking things where it wasn't supposed to go." Very clearly remember that.

Another source of institutional heterosexism and homophobia mentioned by almost half (n = 14) of study participants was government – at both the state and federal levels. Participants referred to anti-gay legislation that they were aware of during their adolescence, such as bans against same-sex marriage. For example, Marie recalled: "I would kind of see flashes on the news of right-wing Republicans saying marriage is between a man and a woman." Likewise, Rachel stated: "I'm aware of the legal aspects of that, for instance, you know like, that gay people can not marry." Some participants also referred to other anti-gay legislation, such as those related to adoption. For example, Terry recalled learning about an anti-gay adoption measure that was ultimately defeated in the state legislature:

Well, you know the biggest thing for me was in sixth grade when…Measure Nine was going on. Like that was my awakening to the fact that there was a big

significant homophobic movement. And, I remember going to the mall and seeing some people at a table with some papers, and always being curious about stuff like that, especially stuff that looked more like politically active stuff. I went over and I asked them what was going on, and they very kindly explained to me that they were trying to pass a law that would make it so that homosexuals couldn't have children. …And then there was later ads on TV, like when I was watching my cartoons, there would be ads talking about like how we need to stop gays from having kids and stuff like that.

Furthermore, by failing to enact anti-discrimination laws, the government may render tenuous the security of lesbian mothers' jobs and child custody. A few participants spoke about being aware that their mothers could lose their jobs and/or child custody if others found out about their mothers' sexual identities. For example, Charlie, who is from a divorced family, described his mother's situation:

My mother works in the public school system, and she could still get fired for it. So, I knew that she had to be very careful, and she could also lose custody of me. It's Florida, the backwards state when it comes to all that stuff.

Religious institutions were a source of the institutional heterosexism and homophobia that was reported by more than one-quarter (n = 8) of study participants. Most of these participants referred to general religious beliefs and teachings that perpetuated discrimination against LGBT people, while a few of the participants had direct contact with religious leaders who displayed heterosexism and homophobia. For example, Louis told the following story about his religious school:

The teacher was describing how the bible talks about a man and a woman. …She made a circle and she cut the circle in half, but on one part she—like she kind of cut it in half, but one half had a little lump coming out, which was cut out into the second half, which when you took them apart had the indentation of the lump. So, it was almost like a male and a female. …And she goes, "And God made Adam, and God made Eve, a man and a woman. And let's, let's examine this, how the man and the woman they fit together perfectly to make one circle. …And there's just really no other way for this to work." …So I raised my hand, and I said, "You know, I see what you're saying and I understand what you're saying, but…there are other ways that that can work, and I don't think that if one person loves

another one, they necessarily have to fit together for it to be love."…She got really upset at me. And she kept telling me that it was a sin and this and that.

Denise described the institutional homophobia at her religious school:

So, I went to a different Hebrew school and the Rabbi there was extremely homophobic. …Before I even went there I think like two-thirds of the congregation left at some point, because it was made very clear that GLBT families or people whatever weren't welcome. … I just remember that whenever discussing marriage or families, it was always made very clear that that was not acceptable and not sanctioned by God or Judaism or what have you.

Cultural. Almost two-thirds (n = 19) of study participants discussed *cultural*

heterosexism and homophobia, which is defined here as social norms/standards and codes

of behavior that reinforce and legitimize heterosexist and homophobic attitudes and

beliefs. For many of these participants, specific examples of cultural heterosexism and

homophobia were difficult to come up with, yet they felt heterosexism was "everywhere"

– especially in their schools. Nora explained:

Middle school's like the most heterosexist place. So, it was all just like an enforcement of, you know, social codes and structures you're supposed to be learning at that time has everything to do with heterosexism. …I mean in general just middle school, the whole sort of punishment for not performing gender roles properly, and the beginning of dating and all of that was just, I mean it was just a big heterosexism fest. But like it's hard to even take out anything individual, because it was so self-evident, it was just the water we moved in.

A few participants were able to come up with specific examples of how cultural

heterosexism and homophobia played out in social situations among their peers, such as

at school dances where it was acceptable for girls to dance together, but not boys. Jesse

gave another example:

When you're like twelve or whatever, and you're on the all-school camping trip, and you're playing spin-the-bottle, and you spin the bottle, and if you're a boy and it lands on another boy, you have to spin again, or you kiss the closest girl.

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For some participants, the social codes of cultural heterosexism and homophobia prescribed that people not talk about LGBT issues, especially in middle school. Kristy explained: "It was sort of, nobody really talked about it a lot, but everybody knew it was there." Kendra recalled: "I just don't know if it was a very open issue back in middle school." For Tom, this code of silence carried over into high school:

> I really remember when Matthew Shepard was murdered, being in high school…what I remember most was about how it wasn't really discussed, and I remember, like "How can this not be brought up?"… Looking back on all the things that just weren't ever talked about, it's a lot easier for me to see…people are scared to death to bring up something that is something non-normative.

Cultural heterosexism was perceived and experienced by some participants in the form of messages about "family." Samantha stated: "I think that overall society wants a mother and father, a white picket fence, two kids, a baby, and a dog." Marie added: "There's definitely the assumption that your family takes a certain form or shape." Participants received these messages from society in general, but also specifically through the media. Heather, who is from a planned family, spoke about a lack of representation on television:

> I feel like it's definitely the normal family obviously is portrayed as a mom and a dad and kids, and so you know, I mean it's never like made me distraught that there was no family like mine of T.V., but like you notice those things that like you're not represented anywhere.

Some participants discussed how this lack of representation, in conjunction with the idealization of certain family forms, gave them messages about how society views lesbian-parent families. For example, Charlie noted that "society and media and everybody send you images that your family situation isn't right, isn't normal." Nora said: "The weighted messages in the media and messages around me…teach us whose lives are valuable, whose love is valuable, all of those things." Amy noted there was

more than just heterosexism at work when it came to the cultural messages she received

about different types of families:

> I think a lot of what I've been perceiving these days is that like lesbian parents are more okay than gay men parents. That's definitely one thing that I've seen a lot. And I think that my experiences would have been really different if I'd had two dads, instead of a mom and a step-mom, or if my dad had been gay and single the way that my mom was. I think that would have been very different, because I've definitely seen a lot more negativity aimed at gay men who are parents, which I think is the classic intersection of sexism and heterosexism.

Context

As previously noted, the three types of heterosexism and homophobia (i.e.,

interpersonal, institutional, and cultural) had specific contextual dimensions that emerged

from the data. *Context* is defined here as the specific location of events that pertain to the

causal conditions and, thus, the central phenomena. Two main contextual factors were

identified as dimensions of heterosexism and homophobia: (a) The frequency, intensity,

and duration of the heterosexism and homophobia experienced by participants; and (b)

perpetrator characteristics. As with the types of heterosexism and homophobia

experienced by participants, these contextual dimensions were likely influenced by the

pre-intervening conditions (i.e., visibility of family and self; community climate).

Frequency, intensity, and duration. The frequency, intensity, and duration of the

heterosexism and homophobia experienced by study participants varied. In regard to

frequency, one-fifth (n = 6) of participants reported that they did not experience or

perceive heterosexism or homophobia all that often during their adolescence. For

example, Marie noted: "I don't really feel I experienced it too much." Shawn stated: "I

don't think me or my parents have ever been discriminated against for them being openly

gay or for me having lesbian parents." Meanwhile, the remaining participants reported

having more frequent exposure; less than half (n = 13) of participants were categorized as experiencing moderate frequency, while more than one-third (n = 11) were categorized as experiencing moderate-high frequency. For example, Denise felt that heterosexism and homophobia were all around her, everyday during adolescence: "I mean, it was just omnipresent." Lisa experienced homophobic harassment, sometimes on a daily basis during middle school: "Middle school was particularly really incredibly hard on me, so at one point, I would come [home] crying every day." It is important to note that although some participants said they did not experience much heterosexism or homophobia, all participants were able to recall at least some examples of heterosexism or homophobia that they perceived and/or experienced during their adolescence.

The intensity of participants' experiences with heterosexism and homophobia also varied. For example, about one-third (n = 9) of participants could be categorized as experiencing more intense direct interpersonal heterosexism and homophobia than others, such as being teased or harassed. Being teased and/or harassed in regard to one's family or own sexual identity seemed to be perceived by participants as more intense than, for example, hearing an extended family member make a negative comment about one's mother. Furthermore, direct interpersonal heterosexism and homophobia was experienced by participants primarily in the form of verbal comments. However, Jason, who identified as gay during adolescence, experienced physical attacks in addition to verbal harassment:

> There were only two times when it was physical. Once somebody broke my hand by slamming the locker door on my hand. Another time someone punched me in the back of the head when I was walking down the hall. … I know the hand was about me; he called me a faggot and then slammed the door into my hand. I felt it was safe to assume, even though I didn't really know the situation when the kid

punched me in the back of the head, I felt it was safe to assume it was because I was gay.

Likewise, most instances of indirect interpersonal heterosexism and homophobia reported by participants were general homophobic comments or verbal harassment of others; however, about one-quarter (n = 7) of participants reported being aware of more intense indirect homophobia, such as others being physically attacked. For example, Nora recalled family friends who were shot because they were lesbians: "Some family friends of ours…they were hiking on the Appalachian Trail and they were shot. And Joan was killed."

The duration of the heterosexism and homophobia experienced by participants also varied. More than half (n = 16) of the participants reported that the heterosexism and homophobia they perceived and/or experienced remained somewhat constant throughout their adolescence. For example, when asked to recall specific examples of heterosexism or homophobia that she perceived or experienced during high school, Dana responded: "I feel like it was the same thing as in middle school." Shawn gave a specific example of institutional heterosexism and homophobia that remained constant throughout his adolescence: "We've been dealing with the gay marriage thing here since probably my middle school years." The rest of the study participants, on the other hand, reported shorter duration of exposure to heterosexism and homophobia, as things changed for the most part between middle school and high school. Samantha recalled: "Once you get to high school, there is the Pride Alliance and there's people in high school who are coming out, so it really started to be like less and less of an issue." Kara, who is from a planned family, was home schooled through middle school and, therefore, didn't experience much

homophobia until high school: "I think it was towards the beginning of my school education, and I wasn't so used to hearing the phrase gay. …I hear it so much now."

Perpetrator characteristics. Perpetrator characteristics emerged as another dimension of the causal conditions (i.e., heterosexism and homophobia). More specifically, who the source of the interpersonal heterosexism and homophobia was, seemed to play a role in how participants perceived and experienced the causal conditions. For example, participants' experiences of interpersonal heterosexism or homophobia seemed to be different if it was a stranger who was the source, rather than a friend. Rachel illustrates this point when asked what kind of impact hearing the phrase "that's so gay" had on her:

> I think if it was a person that I didn't know, like if I hadn't heard them say it before, then my immediate thought was usually, like to wonder whether they were actually homophobic, so I would kind of feel like, hurt by the thought that they might be, I guess. But, but if it was someone I did know who was saying that, and I knew that I brought it up with them before, and they had obviously not intended it in that way, I would feel kind of exasperated and annoyed by it.

Sometimes whether or not the perpetrator of interpersonal heterosexism or homophobia appeared potentially dangerous or threatening influenced participants' experience. For example, Heather told the following story:

> There were two football players who were in my class, and they used to…constantly be like "That's so fucking gay." And just like really terrible like, "He's such a fucking fag." …I tried to ignore it at the beginning, but it was so hard, and 'cause it's like I wanted to say something, but I didn't know these kids at all, and they're definitely like, they're the kids, probably because they are insecure, but would like totally get up in your face."

As previously noted, some participants from divorced families talked about having fathers in their lives who they viewed as homophobic, while the vast majority of participants from planned families did not. This experience of having a primary parental

figure who exhibited homophobic behavior seemed to be a significant factor in the lives of some participants from divorced families. For example, when asked about her experiences with homophobia, Rita, whose mother and father divorced when she was two years old, primarily referred to her father and stepmother, who she said made her feel ashamed for having a lesbian mother:

> A lot of it really was my dad and stepmom. They were constantly, like, trying to get me to talk about, you know that I was angry at my mom and I didn't want her to be a lesbian…They would like literally sit [my brother] and I down and they'd ask us questions and then say things like, "You know, that's not normal that you have Laurie (mom's partner)." And they just made me believe that it wasn't normal and that I should be ashamed, and she was a bad person.

Some of these participants from divorced families did not experience their fathers' homophobia until their adolescence. For example, Nora, whose mother and father divorced when she was three years old, explained how her relationship with her father changed when she was 13 years old:

> That year he sent us a letter saying he wasn't going to, he sent me a letter that he wasn't going to call anymore, because he didn't approve of our mother's lifestyle. …He actually developed this brand new homophobia when I was 13. My mom was really shocked when he sent that letter; she was like, "The one thing he was ever good about was when I came out." He never said anything homophobic, and suddenly he's got this new tool.

Dana, whose mother and father divorced when she was six years old, found out about her mother's sexual identity from her father when she was in sixth grade:

> I was spending the night at my dad's, and he had either had too much to drink or something and was asking me all these questions, saying things like, "Why does Sonya (mother's partner) live with you guys? Why do you think she lives with you? Why do you think your mom and I split up?" And I just kept being like, "I don't know. I don't know." He was pretty much just kind of getting to the fact that my mom was gay, and she broke up with him to be with this woman. …It also seemed like it was in a negative context. He wasn't saying it like, "This is what your mother is, and it's fine." He was saying it as if it was something that really was bad and wrong to him and wasn't a good place for me to be in. Everything about it felt very negative.

Some of these participants from divorced families with homophobic fathers noted that their fathers either implicitly or explicitly made connections between the sexual identity of the participant and the sexual identity of the mother. For example, Kevin, whose mother and father divorced when he was three years old, said about his father:

> A lot of funny little shit comes out of him, I've gotta say…all these funny random-ass comments about gays and lesbians, pretty negative. …I definitely feel that he was like, that he felt threatened that I might be too open-minded and think that gay was a better way to go.

When Debra, whose parents divorced when she was two years old, was in high school, she told her father that her mother was a lesbian: "He asked me if I was gay, and I said no. And he's like, 'I don't want you living in some f-ing Rosie O'Donnell family.' So it—it was not a supportive coming out."

Central Phenomena

The causal conditions – the existence of heterosexism and homophobia in the lives of participants with lesbian parents – led to participants' experience of the central phenomena. A *central phenomenon*, according to Strauss and Corbin (1998), (a) emerges from the data, (b) represents the main theme of the research, and (c) integrates all of the other categories to form an explanatory whole. As previously stated, it became evident that participants were doing more than coping with the heterosexism and homophobia they experienced as adolescents – they were coping with the impact that heterosexism and homophobia had on their lives. The central phenomena, which emerged from the data, were that participants were experiencing feelings and perceptions of "marginalization" and "vulnerability" during their adolescence, as a result of heterosexism and homophobia. As previously stated, there was great variation among

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participants in terms of their experience of the central phenomena. For example, the

central phenomenon of vulnerability emerged as a distinct phenomenon that is considered

to be an aspect of the larger concept of marginalization. All participants experienced the

larger central phenomenon of marginalization in some capacity, while about three-fourths

of the participants expressed feelings and perceptions of vulnerability. Furthermore, in

addition to the variation *between* participants in their experience of the central

phenomena, is the change that occurred over time in most participants' *individual*

experiences of the central phenomena throughout adolescence. Following the

descriptions of the two central phenomena is a discussion of this change in individual

participants. The central phenomenon of marginalization is described first, followed by

vulnerability.

Marginalization

The central phenomenon of *marginalization* refers to participants' feelings and

perceptions related to the social process of being relegated to a lower social standing or

"outer edge," as a result of heterosexism and homophobia. All participants described

thoughts and feelings related to marginalization; for example, about half (n = 14) of the

study participants spoke about how their experiences with heterosexism were a constant

reminder that their families were different than most others. When Kim was asked what

kind of impact heterosexism and homophobia had on her, she replied: "I remember just

like every time I would hear something, just like being reminded that my family situation

is different, and just like always having the feeling of difference." Marie, who is from a

planned family and has a sperm-donor father, said:

I just always felt my family was too different to talk about. …I never knew how to explain that my father lived so close by, but I never saw him. You can say a divorce or something, but I know very few divorces where it is that distant.

Melissa had said she sometimes felt embarrassed of her family during middle school; when asked why, she explained:

Just because it's different. Not a lot of kids have lesbian moms. At least not a lot of the kids I hung out with. It was all like, "perfect" home – "Oh, they have a mom and a dad and a swimming pool!"

That feeling of difference could sometimes be a lonely experience for some participants. Heather shared what her feelings were during middle school: "I just felt like, except for my friend Cindy, I just felt like very… not like, I feel like 'alone' is kind of really extreme term – I just felt like nobody understood what I was going through." Michelle described how she felt when the debate regarding same-sex marriage was happening in Massachusetts:

I just like, felt a little bit, not like attacked personally, but it was definitely like, me versus everything else. Everybody else was like on the other side, but I mean, except for like the select few that were on my side, it just made it very much like a two sides kind of thing.

When asked what kind of impact hearing homophobic slurs had on her, Dana, who is from a divorced family, said: "I always remember thinking to myself, 'Why do I have to be the one person in the world with a gay mom?' It just felt like I was the only person in this situation and that it just sucked." Amy, who is from a planned family, explained how it sometimes felt to have a family that was "different" from the idealized heterosexual family: "I think it was…feeling very much as kind of like an outsider of families who had that…like I'm always just going to have, like, this family that isn't, that doesn't look like my friends' families."

More than three-fourths (n = 24) of participants talked about feelings and

perceptions related to how heterosexism and homophobia attempted to devalue LGBT

people and families – by relegating them to a lower social standing and making them

seem "abnormal" or of less worth than others. For example, Terry, who is from a

planned family, said:

> I think I understood that the role of lesbian parents and the value of lesbian
> parents in society was always very tenuous. … In a lot of places it was very clear
> that my family held no value. There were some people who felt that the world
> would be better off if my family didn't exist.

When asked what it meant to her when peers used homophobic slurs, Denise stated:

> The sense that you got was that these people were subhuman, kind of perverse,
> corrupting society, you know…couldn't be seen as being leaders in society, or
> being, you know, being appropriate family members or parents for that matter.
> And that if you were associated with them, that that rubbed off on you poorly.

Samantha, who is also from a planned family, explained the impact that heterosexism and

homophobia can have on adolescents with lesbian parents:

> Even if nobody comes right out and says, "Oh, you're horrible, you're abnormal,
> because you have two mothers," that, you know, just 'cause no one's saying it,
> doesn't mean you don't feel it. And it's not getting said outright, but it's certainly
> getting said in underlying tones. In stuff like the forms that you have to fill out
> and the little "you're so gay" remarks, like all of it as a conglomeration comes
> together as something that makes you feel like you're lesser than or less normal,
> and that's a hard thing to counteract too, you know, have society continually
> telling you that your less than, because you have this "abnormality."

As previously stated, there was great variation among participants in terms of

their experience of the central phenomena. Participants' feelings related to

marginalization ranged from being irritated, annoyed, and frustrated, to being hurt, upset,

and angry. Kendra, who is from a planned family, seemed minimally affected by

heterosexism and homophobia compared to some other participants: "I've never been

ashamed of it (her family), that's for sure. …It's more been bothersome to me – other

people's inability to understand." Samantha, who is from a planned family, also seemed less emotionally affected than some participants; when asked how she thought society viewed lesbian-parent families, she responded: "Well, I think that they think of it as less normal, and …it wasn't so much that I was upset about it, as that I was annoyed that people didn't consider my family part of the norm." Rachel, who is from a divorced family, explained:

> It was more of like a minor every day irritation, and made me feel more like there is something wrong with all these other people, and not really like there was anything wrong with me, I mean I felt like I was right for wanting to change their minds.

Other participants reported more intense emotions related to marginalization in response to heterosexism and homophobia. For example, when Debra was asked what kind of impact hearing homophobic slurs had on her during adolescence, she said: "It bothered me a lot. …To me it was like, 'Oh my god, my parents are like the butt of all these horrible jokes,' you know what I mean?" In response to a similar question about the impact that heterosexism and homophobia had on her, Amy replied:

> I think it was more anger than anything else. None of it ever made me think I needed to be closeted, and I certainly never felt like I needed to be closeted about my mother. …I think it really just made me angry, it was rare that an incident would happen that hurt me more than just making me upset or frustrated.

Heather explained her feelings of hurt, as well as anger:

> I just feel like in those situations when someone would say, "oh, that's so gay," it would, it's usually using "gay" as like a synonym for "stupid" or like "messed up" or something. And it just, you know, I'm not gay, but I feel like gayness is a very big part of, like, my identity, just because it is such a big part of my family identity. I mean, I just, I feel like you would never say like, "that's so Jewish" or like "that's so Black," and so I just felt like they were insulting part of who I was, and like I mean my moms didn't do anything to anybody – they don't deserve to be slandered like that, and it was just really hurtful, because it's like, it would just make me so mad that people were ignorant enough to say things like that.

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Tom also expressed intense feelings in response to heterosexism and homophobia:

> It is unbelievably damaging and hurtful and demeaning when you don't see anyone else represented in any form that has any semblance to yourself or your reality. …And it's hurtful when people express hate and fear of something that they know nothing about.

Vulnerability

The central phenomenon of *vulnerability* refers to how susceptible to verbal and/or physical attack, as well as emotional and/or physical injury or loss, participants felt or perceived themselves and/or their families to be, due to heterosexism and homophobia. More than three-fourths (n = 24) of study participants made references to feelings and perceptions of vulnerability; the majority of these participants discussed their own vulnerability. For example, more than a third (n = 12) of participants were concerned about losing friends and/or being teased if peers found out they had lesbian parents. This concern among participants ranged from feelings of being "worried" to being "terrified." For example, when asked why she was not open with her middle school peers about her mothers, Debra responded: "You just kind of feel like it is something to, you know, be worried about. …You don't know what people's reactions are going to be." Denise shared more intense feelings of concern:

> I mean I was terrified of people knowing about my family. …I mean I was first and foremost in terms of this friend, I was afraid of losing her friendship or of her parents not wanting her to associate with me any more. …And I was afraid of other people finding out. I was probably, I was definitely afraid of people associating my parents' sexuality with my own. I was afraid of being teased.

Some participants who experienced intense vulnerability also spoke about feelings of anxiety. Dana recalled her reactions when peers would say "that's so gay":

> I remember like losing my stomach if I heard those words, because I was like, "Oh, my god," especially in middle school where I was just becoming more aware

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of this, "Are they talking about me?" I was always on my toes and worried that they were going to find out.

Some participants felt vulnerable in relation to their own sexual identities. One-fifth (n = 6) of the participants – all of whom identified as GBTQ – discussed their concerns about others' reactions to their coming out about themselves. Some participants worried about losing or altering their current close relationships. For example, when asked why coming out was sometimes hard, Jason said: "I guess it mainly revolves around the existing relationships I have with people, and I'm afraid of telling them because I don't really want the relationship to change." Others worried about how others' negative reactions would affect their own emotions and self-esteem. Charlie stated the following after being asked how it was for him to know that others had negative attitudes towards LGBT people:

> I think what it eventually meant for me, when I came out in high school, was that I needed to, I needed to know who I was. And I needed to be very prepared for whatever came to me. …Just knowing all these negative connotations that were out there, I really had to start building up my defenses…and first to be okay with myself, and then go, "I'm okay with myself, but these people are not. So, I'm going to have to deal with a lot of shit."

About one-third (n = 9) of study participants discussed feelings and perceptions of vulnerability regarding their families, in addition to themselves. Some participants were aware and/or afraid that their mothers might lose their jobs or custody if others became aware of the mothers' lesbian identity. For example, Marie gave the following response when asked how open she was with peers about her family during middle school:

> Honestly, I wasn't open about it. Primarily because my mom wasn't very open about it. …I think in the sense that she was worried in terms of her job, so she was being very practical. She works with younger children, and she always worried that people would find out.

Charlie, who is from a divorced family, was aware that his mother was concerned about losing custody of him and her job:

> At that time, she was very worried about what my father would do and also about her job. And so, I don't remember when I was told, but I know I was told not to share that (mother's sexual identity) with people because of that, and of course I was like, I don't want my mom to lose her job, so I never shared it with anybody.

Terry, who is from a planned family and born via donor insemination, was aware of proposed anti-LGBT legislation and worried for himself and his family: "I was terrified that like, I know now that the law was just about adoption, but I was convinced that like if enough people voted for it, like the next day the police would come and take me away."

Other participants also had feelings and perceptions of vulnerability related to the emotional and physical safety and well-being of their families. For example, after two of her mother's lesbian friends were attacked, leaving one of them dead, Nora, who is from a divorced family, had the following reaction: "I was like very terrified that if I came out to people they would kill my mother. …I was just really terrified…and feeling the need to protect us." Denise, who is from a planned family, recalled her feelings:

> I mean there were times I was afraid, you know I don't think it was ever rational, but I was afraid for my family and for my parents, if people were to find out kind of thing. I mean it was all, looking back, a lot of it was totally irrational fears, but I just remember being terrified, like just throughout middle school and the beginning of high school.

Samantha, who is from a planned family, talked about how institutional heterosexism and homophobia had an effect on the emotional well-being of her family:

> In high school there was the whole gay marriage battle, which is when it really became an issue, because…before, you know, people said, "that's so gay," it was like personal, but not that personal. The gay marriage issue was, "My parents have been together for 25 years, you're gonna tell them they can't get married?"

Like, that was something that directly affected me and my family and my parents'
happiness.

Change in Participants' Experience of the Central Phenomena

Most participants' experience of the central phenomena (i.e., the impact that

heterosexism and homophobia had on participants) changed throughout adolescence. For

about one-third (n = 11) of participants, their experience of the central phenomena

seemed to stay relatively the same; for example, some participants felt the same

vulnerability or low-levels of marginalization throughout middle and high school.

However, for about half (n = 14) of the study participants, their experience of the central

phenomena seemed to improve from the beginning to the end of adolescence. For

example, many of those who felt vulnerable in middle school expressed less fear later in

their adolescence. When Nora was asked what kind of impact incidents of heterosexism

and homophobia had on her in high school, she responded: "They mostly pissed me off.

Like, in middle school they made me scared, but I think by high school I think they

pissed me off." Denise explained why she was able to come out to her entire high school

about her family, after being closeted in middle school: "I felt comfortable enough in my

situation that like I wasn't, I didn't feel threatened or afraid as much." Although Dana

still was not open with others about her family in high school, she seemed less anxious:

> Yeah, I definitely was. I feel like I wasn't as scared. I feel like in middle school
> there wasn't a day that went by that I wasn't thinking about it, because I had to be
> so aware, I couldn't put myself in a risky situation. In high school I was always
> aware, but I wasn't as convinced that people were going to find out.

Lisa spoke about how and why her feelings of fear changed over time:

> I mean experiencing it in the world was a little scarier when I was younger.
> …When I was younger, we had friends that were concerned about gay bashing in
> the streets, so it was a little scarier than by the time I was sixteen.

The experience of the central phenomena seemed to get harder or worse from middle school to high school, at least in some instances, for one-sixth (n = 5) of the participants. For example, Jason explained how his involvement in political activism, once he got to high school, played a part: "Things really started to get harder when I became more actively involved in politics and the political workings of the school. That's when more attention was being drawn to me when I started a Gay-Straight Alliance." Kara, who was home schooled through middle school, had a difficult time upon entering high school, as she encountered interpersonal heterosexism and homophobia for the first time; when asked what she was like in high school, Kara replied: "Definitely got more angry. Definitely got more angry when I got to high school." Jenny, who is from a planned family, had expressed minor irritation with heterosexism and homophobia throughout most of middle school and high school; however, at a high school family function, Jenny experienced new feelings related to the central phenomena when introducing and "outing" her parents to others:

> It was definitely probably one of the first times where I'd ever felt a sense of shame about being like, "Oh, can I introduce my family?" Because that hadn't been something that I'd ever really felt. I felt just weird in experiencing that and wondering where that came from. You know, knowing why it was happening, because that's just how the world is set up, but just kind of feeling upset that it had finally gotten to me in some way or another when it hadn't before.

A goal of this research is to identify factors that help explain this change in participants' experiences over time, as well the variation *between* participants in their experience of the central phenomena. As previously addressed, it is important to take into account participants' experiences of the pre-intervening conditions (i.e., community climate and visibility of family/self) that influence the causal conditions and which, in turn, appear to have an impact on the central phenomena. Certainly, differences in

participants' experiences of the causal conditions of heterosexism and homophobia, including the types and context, were a factor in participants' experience of the central phenomena. In general, those who perceived and experienced less heterosexism and homophobia felt and/or perceived themselves to be less vulnerable and marginalized than those who perceived and experienced more heterosexism and homophobia. For example, Kendra, who did not report any experiences with direct interpersonal heterosexism and homophobia during adolescence, spoke about the impact the causal conditions had on her:

> It never really bothered me. It bothered me to an extent that I knew my parents were fantastic and in a loving, healthy family and that we worked well together. …Maybe if I felt victimized…I could have taken it harder or the wrong way, but I never really have.

Conversely, as previously mentioned, Kara had more negative feelings related to the central phenomena when she encountered heterosexism and homophobia for the first time in high school:

> I wasn't so used to hearing the phrase "gay." …And it had a combination of it being new, and it being new and so in the face all the time. Like I had never heard it before and all of a sudden I hear it twenty times a day.

However, other factors (i.e., intervening conditions), beyond the types and contextual dimensions of heterosexism and homophobia, seem to be playing a role in the lives of many participants and their experience of the central phenomena. It is thought that these intervening conditions help to explain, for example, why for some participants the causal conditions seemed to remain constant throughout their adolescence, yet the impact of heterosexism and homophobia on these participants seemed to change. Dana responded in the following way when asked about the heterosexism and homophobia she experienced in high school: "I feel like it was the same thing as in middle school. …It

wasn't moving my stomach if I heard it, [but] it definitely still existed." Debra actually

reported witnessing and experiencing more heterosexism and homophobia during high

school, yet felt less vulnerable: "It (her family) became less of something that I had to

hide." Moreover, some participants experienced more frequent heterosexism and

homophobia than others yet, in some cases, seemed less negatively affected. For

example, even though Jason faced frequent and somewhat intense direct interpersonal

heterosexism and homophobia in the form of verbal harassment during middle school, he

responded in the following way:

> I never really got upset with them. I never got angry or got into a fight about it. I
> just listened to what they had to say, and if they asked any questions I told them
> what I thought. I never really cared. I'm not sure why that is.

He went on to say: "Anytime I would have to face homophobia or heterosexism, I just

grew stronger in my beliefs." A goal of this research, then, is to examine factors (i.e.,

intervening conditions) beyond the causal conditions that seem to have an influence on

participants' experience of the central phenomena and their resulting coping strategies.

Intervening Conditions

Intervening conditions are broad structural, contextual conditions that influence

the central phenomena and the coping strategies. These intervening conditions are

thought to play a major role in the variation and change among study participants

regarding their experience of the central phenomena. Six intervening conditions emerged

from the data as seeming to have a direct influence on both the central phenomena and

the coping strategies utilized by study participants: (a) the various sources of social

support available, such as family, friends, and teachers; (b) how participants' lesbian

parents chose to cope with the heterosexism and homophobia their families faced, (c)

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how visible other LGBT people and families were to participants, (d) individual

participant characteristics, such as personality, sibling order, and sexual identity; (e)

participants' pre-adolescent experiences with heterosexism and homophobia; and (f) the

passage of time.

Social Support

The vast majority of study participants discussed sources of social support as

important factors in their lives during adolescence. For example, when Heather was

asked how she was able to be resilient in the face of heterosexism and homophobia, she

replied: "Just really having people that I knew supported me that I could tell if I was

having trouble with something or get advice from. …It was really just my support system

of people who I knew cared about me." These sources of social support provided

companionship, nurturance, care, and emotional, financial, and physical support to

participants, and appeared to have an influence on participants' experience of the central

phenomena, as well as their coping strategies. Denise attributed her change in feelings of

vulnerability to social support:

> The more that I felt like I had a community of people who supported me and, you
> know, who cared about me, and who are, you know, a support base really, the less
> I cared about offending other people, or getting offended, and I could be more
> outspoken.

Rachel explained her perspective on the importance of social support for adolescents with

lesbian parents facing heterosexism and homophobia:

> I guess, you have this hot button topic that exists in your family that you're
> sensitive to, and…if you have support, then you feel like comfortable with
> yourself about that anyway. It can be a really great formative experience, it can
> make you a stronger person, you're able to stand up for anything you believe in.
> …But if there's very little support both by the family itself, by the said lesbian
> parents, or by the community, I think it can be a really negative formative
> experience, just where people, where the kid doesn't feel ok. Or even if they feel

ok about themselves or about their parents, they might perceive other people more negatively and perceive everyone else as being much more antagonistic or unchangeable. And that's not a good thing for anyone.

The primary sources of social support that emerged from the data were: (a) family, (b) friends, (c) other "queerspawn," and (d) school.

Family. A large majority of participants (n = 28) spoke about the importance of familial support in their lives as adolescents. Debra said: "My family supported me in every possible way, financially, emotionally, spiritually, you know any—any way I needed them, they were there." Many participants' families consisted of both biologically and non-biologically related members; some participants spoke about how they were not bound by traditional definitions of family. Jenny, who is from a planned family, was raised primarily by her non-biological mother:

> I mostly just feel so lucky to understand that family is really just who…I don't know how to explain it, but that all the people I'm related to by blood are the ones I'm not the closest to, and how that is just so insignificant of a way to measure the relationship or love in a family sense. I don't really know how to explain it, but I just feel so great that I have this mom who didn't need to be my mom and who just took me in and decided to do that and how her family is my family, even though they don't have to be. I think that that's great.

All but a few participants discussed their parents as sources of familial support; references to parents were most often participants' mothers, however some fathers were mentioned, as well as mothers' partners. When Samantha, who is from a planned family, was asked why she thought she was able to handle heterosexism and homophobia so well during her adolescence, she replied:

> It's probably mostly due to my parents. They're pretty resilient themselves, especially my mommy, my biological mom, is very sort of the quiet one, and Ann is the loud one, so I get my confrontation skills from Ann, and she's always been the one who wanted to call the parents of the kids who were mean to me. …So she has always really stood up for me and stood up for herself and our family in general and not, I guess not really let anybody knock her down. …I really think I

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owe it all to them, because they were, you know, with them being lesbians and just me in general, we're always of the mindset that you know, you don't let anybody talk you out of how amazing you are. I think I owe it all to them.

Siblings and/or extended family members were mentioned as sources of support by almost half (n = 14) of the participants. Rita, who is from a divorced family, spoke about her relationship with her older sibling:

> I'm very close with my brother – very close. I don't know what I would do without him, honestly. Growing up, I didn't tell anyone about my mom, and he was the only person I could talk to. I mean, I remember every time we were at our dad's house, there was nothing to do, so we would just sit in either my room or his room and just talk for hours. He's one of my best friends.

Extended family members, who were identified as sources of social support, included grandparents, cousins, aunts and uncles. Heather explained how her cousins and aunts and uncles were sources of support for her:

> I felt like if I ever needed to talk to them about anything I could, and like I knew that they were really supportive of my family and of me and were always like really encouraging, and you know would always like come to school events when I was in things, and just be there for me in any way that I needed them.

For some participants, their extended families included "aunties" – lesbian friends of participants' mothers, who were especially close to participants throughout their childhoods. For example, Marie, who is from a planned family, described the people in her family: "I primarily lived with my mom, she raised me. …I have this extended and extensive family of aunts, who are all gay women, lesbians. That's my family." Kendra, who is from a planned family, spoke about her "aunties" when describing her sources of social support:

> My parents have a huge support network…this whole mom's group. All the moms from this group, we would get together once a month, and the kids. My parents just have really, really wonderful friends that are just sort of in and around. A lot of them were really connected to my birth and to me when I was younger. Significant things, like when I turned 16, my aunt had this huge party of

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all the women who were involved in my life, and oh my god, there were probably 50 of them there. It was a really amazing thing. They put together this book for me, and they each had a page in it. …As far as just general support, there were a lot of them.

Having a supportive family seemed to be important in helping many participants deal with the impact of the heterosexism and homophobia that existed in their lives. Lisa faced frequent teasing and harassment during middle school; when asked about the impact heterosexism and homophobia had on her during adolescence, she spoke about the influence of her family: "Because I always felt safe and cared for, I think that offset that." Likewise, when asked how she was able to counteract all the negative messages she was getting from others about LGBT people, Dana, who is from a divorced family, replied:

> I knew it (mom being a lesbian) wasn't bad, because my mom was a great mom and really moved mountains to have me and care for me and protect me. There was always a lot of happiness and laughter in our lives, and they (her mom and mom's partner) did everything out of love.

Melissa, who is from a planned family, had a similar response when asked how she was able to deal with heterosexism and homophobia so well during adolescence: "Probably because I was so close with my family, honestly. Even now…I feel like I have an easier time with a lot of things, because I'm so close with my family."

Family members often provided support to participants just by "being there" for them; however, some participants spoke about specific things their family members did, which helped them to deal with heterosexism and homophobia. For example, Nora felt very vulnerable during middle school; she spoke about how her mother's response helped her to cope:

> I think that one of the things that worked best for me during that time was that my mom really didn't lay on me that it was my job to be fine with it. Like when it

was hard, she was like, "I'm sorry that it was hard." She wasn't like, "That's a rejection of me." …She didn't take it personally, she never made it about her, she was like clear that it was about my experience, and I think that's something that a lot of parents have a really hard time doing. …So that was definitely, for me it worked really well.

Amy, who identified as queer in adolescence, explained how her father's support was helpful to her during middle school:

I was, at the time, not very close to my mom but really close to my dad, and he also is very much kind of an alternative-type person, and so he really supported me not conforming. And, you know, like when I would have trouble with my peers, he would basically encourage me and say like, "You're right, they are supporting these things that you disagree with, and you are smarter than them for rebelling against that." So, my dad was really a big influence on me at the time.

Some participants spoke about having the sense that their families were "whole" or "complete" and how that helped them to deal with the impact of heterosexism and homophobia. Kendra, who is from a planned family, said the following when asked for reasons why she was able to cope so well: "In my family, I never felt like I was searching for something that was missing or lost, and that's probably a huge part of it." Jason, who is from a divorced family and who seemed to cope exceptionally well with the direct homophobia he faced, stated something similar: "I've always had everything that I needed as far as a family is concerned." Likewise, Jenny, who is from a planned family, was very close to her immediate family during adolescence; she spoke about why she thought the heterosexism and homophobia that existed in her extended family did not bother her:

I mean I knew why I didn't know my birth mom's parents from early on – I knew that they didn't want to be a part of my life. I knew my dad's family didn't really want to be a part of my life. I knew that existed, but I knew that I didn't need them to exist either. I had other people.

Friends. All study participants (n = 30) reported having close friends at some point in their adolescence. During middle school, however, almost half of study participants said either that they were not close to any friends or, more commonly, that they were close to their friends in some ways, but did not feel comfortable enough to share with them about their families. For example, Denise said:

> I was a socialite in middle school for sure, but in term of close friendships, I only fostered a couple. …And even those close friendships that I made, for the first several months of, I'm thinking of one in particular, I never invited her over to my house, because I was so afraid of her finding out about my family and what the repercussions of that would be.

All study participants reported having close friends by the end of high school. The vast majority of participants said they were close enough to those friends to be open with them about their families. Denise explained how things changed for her:

> There was a huge shift between freshman year and senior year. Freshman year, I was totally closeted still but starting to open up to more and more people who I befriended. And then…definitely after my freshman year, I had a solid group of friends who were really supportive.

> Having supportive friends seemed to be important for helping many participants

deal with the impact of heterosexism and homophobia. For example, Nora said:

> A lot of my friends had become close to my family over time, and so one of my best friends from high school and also a bunch of my other friends from high school kept very, like, connected to my family. So, I felt a very, safety in that – that meant no matter how I responded to other people, like I was doing ok. I knew that other people knew where I came from, and weren't going to let anything terrible happened to me.

When asked what helped him cope with heterosexism and homophobia during adolescence, Terry replied: "I think having supportive friends around me was good."

Samantha elaborated:

I think a combination of having friends that were accepting and friends that talked about it and friends that were coming out themselves, just sort of made it less and less of an issue and more and more something to be proud of.

The "turning point" for many of those participants who were not out to their friends in middle school, but who opened up in high school, seemed to be positive feedback and support from friends. For example, when Tara told her high school friends about her mother, her friends responded well: "In terms of the positive feedback, it made me feel positive and unafraid about my own family. And I think towards the last few years of high school, I didn't feel hesitant about inviting people over to my house." Heather explained how things changed for her:

In high school I like, I started to be more open about it and tell more people. Like really in middle school, I'd only tell somebody if I had gotten to know them really well first and then I would tell them, whereas in high school, like I was more comfortable telling like sort of casual friends. …So I guess the more I started to tell people who I didn't know as well and like it was consistently, I consistently had positive responses from them, the more comfortable I felt being open generally about it. …So I started to be much more comfortable and realized that that it didn't really matter to people, and if it did matter to people, then they weren't worth my time. If they have a problem with me having two moms, then that's not really a person that I wanna have a relationship with, so it got a lot better.

Some participants had friends who exhibited their support by standing up to heterosexism and homophobia. For example, Heather explained:

You'd hear people say "Oh, that's so gay" or like use "fag" or stuff like that in the halls, and like my friends who knew about my parents knew that really upset me when that happened, but I would never say anything, because I didn't want to be singled out. So, sometimes my friends would say something, because they knew that I was upset by it.

This show of social support seemed to have an influence on participants' feelings related to the central phenomena of marginalization and vulnerability. Denise recalled:

I remember at one point during sophomore year, someone, someone said a really, you know, homophobic comment in class. And two of my friends stood up and

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just kind of like yelled at her. And they never related it back to me in the moment. But it just felt like such a relief to have someone standing up for an issue that I cared so much about. And it didn't have to be me but know that I was influential in making that happen, kind of thing. And knowing that part of the reason they stood up was because they cared about the issue, but they also knew that I must have been really hurt by that comment. So that was extremely, it was just amazing to have friends who I could confide in, who then made the issue part of their political identity.

Other "queerspawn." One-third of participants (n = 10) reported that they were

close to other youth with LGBT parents (i.e., "queerspawn[8]") during their adolescence.

Some participants' mothers created support networks for their children early on in

participants' childhoods. For example, David, who is from a planned family, explained:

They (his moms) had a lot of friends who were also lesbians going into child-rearing, so they created a group called a "moms' group." That's pretty cool. All of us got together and were kind of like a family right there. …There's five or six families of lesbian couples who all had one or two kids. So, looking for a support circle, there it was right there.

Jesse, who is from a divorced family, had a similar story:

My mom had started a Jewish lesbian reading group…right around the time we moved to (Name of City), and the kids would all play together, so we met all these queerspawn. …When I was with my friends who had similarly confusing family structures, that was really great.

Likewise, Marie viewed knowing other children with LGBT parents from early in her

childhood as beneficial:

These families of [lesbian] aunts…I kind of identify with their children in a sense, because from these relationships, I think we were kind of raised side by side. It helps to have each other to see, no, this is a normal family unit – for us that was the norm.

Knowing other children with LGBT parents and having them as a source of

support, seemed to influence some participants' experience of the central phenomena

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[8] *Queerspawn* is a label adopted by some people who have one or more LGBT parent and is "an intentionally provocative term to challenge traditional notions of identity and queer pride" (http://damnstraight.oversampled.net/2006/08/14/wikipolitics-and-extinction/).

during adolescence. For example, Jesse, who is from a divorced family, did not seem to

experience feelings of vulnerability related to heterosexism and homophobia and was

always open about her family as an adolescent: "It just didn't occur to me that I should

not say something about it. Yeah, I mean like, I think it…had to do with the fact that we

had friends who had queer parents and queer families." Denise, who is from a planned

family, said her intense feelings of vulnerability changed after meeting other youth with

LGBT parents: "After being involved in COLAGE (organization by and for children

with LGBT parents), I became much more comfortable and much more open about it."

She went on to explain how this change occurred:

> After freshman year, I found COLAGE…and that totally changed my life. Just
> being in a space…with those other teens, was just mind boggling, because we all
> had so much in common. …And since I wasn't the other—only other person out
> there, it was empowering to know that there were other people out there and that
> we could do something about this. …So that's when I started to become a little bit
> more active in my school in terms of voicing, you know bringing the issue up.

School. One-third of study participants (n = 10) said their teachers and/or other

school staff provided them with support during their adolescence. Some of those

participants spoke about how these sources of social support helped them deal with the

heterosexism and homophobia they faced. For example, Denise told this story:

> Sixth and seventh and eighth were probably the hardest years, and I remember
> one of my teachers totally picked up on it. Oh, I had –I had like a really bad
> relationship with another student in our class and we just fought all the time. And
> so one day, my teacher pulled me outside and was just kind of like, "What's going
> on? Like, this isn't you." And I wouldn't tell him, you know I kind of just made
> up all these reasons why I didn't like this kid. And he basically called me on it.
> He was like, "Is it because of the fact that he's so homophobic?" And he
> basically sat me down, he was like, "Yeah, you know, like it bothers me too." I
> think, you know, he had said a couple things in class to this kid or privately or
> whatever, but he basically let me know that he has a lot of friends who are gay,
> just, you know, kind of on a personal level let me know that he would be
> supportive and was all for my family. It was very sweet. It meant the world to
> me. I mean he's still one of my favorite people in the world. Like we – we still

marginally stay in touch kind of thing. But, he was –it was very very—that was a very difficult time for me, and just knowing that there was somebody there, just meant so much.

Jason, who faced extreme direct interpersonal heterosexism and homophobia during high school, such as being physically attacked, said he found support in his teachers, guidance counselor, and the school nurse:

> They would give me encouragement and tell me not to stop just because these people were being idiots. They would always make sure I was okay. They would ask me everyday that I saw them if everything was going okay, if there was anything new to tell them, if anybody had done anything. They worked pretty hard to have action taken anytime it needed to be taken.

Parental Coping

Parental coping was the second intervening condition that emerged from the study data. The way that participants' mothers chose to deal with heterosexism and homophobia seemed to have an impact on some participants' experience of the central phenomena and on their coping strategies. Half of the study participants (n = 15) spoke to this topic; however, as specific questions were not asked about parental coping, it is difficult to assess how many of the participants had parents who coped in one way versus another. However, some broad generalizations, as well as some specific examples from participants will be given, as this intervening condition appeared to be a salient factor in the lives of at least half of the participants during their adolescence.

How "out" mothers decided to be to others in their communities had a direct impact on some participants' experience of the central phenomena and coping. For example, Denise, who is from a planned family, spoke about how her parents were very "out and proud" during her adolescence, although she was not. She explained how this

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played a part in how she coped with her feelings related to vulnerability and

marginalization:

> My family was very out and proud. I mean, they were all activist. So for me, I
> recognized that they would be there for me to talk about things, but…I didn't feel
> like I could discuss or open up to them about feeling ashamed about our family
> and being closeted about our family. And so I didn't, I think I shut down to some
> degree in terms of my family dynamics during middle school.

Marie, who is also from a planned family, spoke about how her mother being closeted

affected how Marie interacted with friends; she recalled:

> [My mother] would say to me, let's say I was inviting someone over to the house,
> once or twice in my life I've heard her say, "I don't want to talk about it if they
> ask." …She didn't want to go into any detail. ...I think I was really dealing with
> the fact that my mom wasn't entirely comfortable, and that for me was the hardest
> thing.

Meanwhile, Melissa, who is from a planned family, was sometimes less comfortable

being open about her family than her mother was. Melissa's mother was willing to adjust

her behavior in order to help Melissa feel more at ease:

> I think it was always, I knew that if something happened at school, or if I didn't
> want maybe her partner coming to something at school, or if I wanted her to not
> say anything to anyone, she would respect that, just because she knew that would
> be tough for me. … My mom was always like if you don't want me to say this or
> don't want so and so to come, I respect that, I'm not going to be mad at you
> because you're embarrassed. That's one talk I can remember having with her a
> lot. If I had friends over she'd be like, "I won't do this," just to make me feel
> more comfortable.

Some participants spoke to the importance of how their mothers talked to them

about their families, and whether or not their mothers contextualized their families in

regard to the rest of society. For example, Rich, who is from a planned family, felt that

his mothers' approach of not stressing how their family was different helped him to cope

with the heterosexism and homophobia he encountered during his adolescence:

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> They never really put any emphasis on the fact that they were different. We were just a family. That's how it was. There never seemed to be any reasons why we couldn't do this or that because of their orientation.

Meanwhile, Jenny, who is also from a planned family, felt that her mothers' approach of being very open with her about their family as "different" helped her to be open with others:

> I think a lot of that had to do with the way that my family from day one always engaged me in conversations about like, "This is your family, some people don't have families like this." I think I definitely got it from my parents being so okay with who they were and knowing that not everyone would be ok with that.

When asked how she was able to cope so well with heterosexism and homophobia, Jenny replied:

> I can't imagine being brought up by lesbian parents who were ashamed of who they were themselves. I think I would be really messed up if my parents hadn't been so open with who they were. So, that is a big part of it, because it was always just put in me that it's okay for them to be the way they are and not everybody approves of that. Definitely just by example; I might have thought something totally different had my parents been gay but really ashamed of that.

Some participants' mothers did not talk as openly with their children about the fact that their families were "lesbian-parent" families, in an attempt to protect their children from heterosexism and homophobia. For example, Kristy, who is from a planned family, did not realize that her mothers were lesbians until she was 11 years old:

> They sort of confused me…when I was a younger kid, because they were afraid that them being gay would not be as acceptable for teachers and other parents at school. So we always labeled Kathy, my non-biological mother, as my aunt, so when she would sign permission slips or something for me for school, she would always write "aunt" next to it. And I always got kind of confused because as a little kid I wasn't sure. And then everybody sort of talked about being gay in a negative manner when you're younger, 'cause I don't think anybody really knows better. And then like when I was in 5th grade, I had this huge traumatic incident, I was like "Are they gay?" because I thought this was something that might be bad. …It was sort of like a realization that sort of hit me, and then I talked to my mom about it, and she sort of looked at me like I was nuts, like I didn't know.

Dana, who is from a divorced family, found out from her father when she was in 6th grade

that her mom and her mom's partner were lesbians; afterwards she talked about it with

her mother and her mother's partner:

> Basically when they just came out with me, they said, "We really don't think that this is something you talk about at school," because the town, it just didn't really exist in our town. … It was always like we had to work around the fact that there were two women raising me and not to acknowledge this is how my family was, because they really wanted to protect me.

When asked if she would have preferred if her mother had been more open with her about

her sexual identity, Dana addressed the complexities involved in parental coping for

lesbian mothers – figuring out how out to be out to their children and to their

communities, while simultaneously protecting their families:

> There are times when I do wish she had just told me, when I was six years old and my parents got divorced and she first met Sandra. I wonder how it would have been if she had just told me then and there as a little girl, what that would have done, and if we could have educated the environment by us being out so early on. That didn't happen, and I understand why she didn't. So, I'm not sure. There are definitely times where I think she should have told me right away, but then I don't know. I did have a really good high school experience in terms of having friends and being involved, even though I was unhappy, because I couldn't really talk about this, and I felt homophobia. Maybe there could have been a total flip to the story. Maybe I wouldn't have been as involved or happy in school, but I would have felt relief in being open about this. I don't know. You can only take so much, and we chose our path. That's how it was in our town and it sucked, but I really can't judge her for it, and I can't say, "You should've done this," because you really don't know how it would have been different.

LGBT Visibility

 LGBT visibility refers to how visible LGBT people and families are to participants

– in schools, in the media, in the community, etc. Half of the study participants (n = 15)

spoke to the importance of LGBT visibility in terms of their experience of the central

phenomena during adolescence. For example, Nora felt extremely vulnerable during

middle school; when asked what she wanted others to know about adolescents with lesbian parents, she spoke to LGBT visibility in schools:

> The invisibility thing is like as hard as the "you're not okay" thing. …Like I don't know I would've talked more about my family if there had been like, if it had been clear that like teachers would've been more supportive. But maybe I wouldn't have needed to, just like being in a place where there were said out loud that there were all these different possibilities, I think would have made a really big difference.

A number of participants spoke about LGBT visibility in their schools. For example, Jesse sometimes felt marginalized in school and like the only one who was out as queer or having queer parents: "In high school nobody was queer. …It was like nobody was queer and there was nobody from queer families." Conversely, Samantha spoke about how high school was better in terms of LGBT visibility and, subsequently, her feelings of marginalization: "Once you get to high school, there is the Pride Alliance and there's people in high school who are coming out, so it really started to be like less and less of an issue." Kendra credited LGBT visibility in her high school classrooms for some of the change she experienced in regards to feelings of marginalization from middle school to high school: "I think I became, well I did become much more open about it. …I think it was probably because it was discussed more in classes." Likewise, Denise felt less vulnerable in high school than in middle school; the actions of some of her high school teachers made a lasting impression on her:

> I remember being impressed by the fact that, for example, when we read *Invisible Man*, that we discussed the fact that the author was gay. Didn't discuss necessarily, but it was at least mentioned, you know, that there were certain famous people, and it was mentioned that they, you know, that they were gay – the kind of thing that – a visibility almost thing, which I was impressed by.

Melissa spoke about how having an "out" lesbian coach in middle school helped her to feel less vulnerable:

I had a lot of friends on the swim team, and it was easier to be like, "Yeah, my mom's a lesbian," just because our coach was a lesbian, and she was very out about it. Basically, if you were on the swim team, you were somewhat accepting of it, so it wasn't as scary.

Some participants said their exposure to LGBT people and families throughout childhood helped them to cope with heterosexism and homophobia during adolescence. For example, David, who is from a planned family, did not feel as marginalized as some other participants; he partly attributed this to the actions of his mothers related to LGBT visibility: "My parents are pretty good about always making sure I had a few gay teachers each year. …Throughout the years, I've always had a good reinforcement that this isn't a straight world, there's always, we're hidden everywhere." Jenny, who is also from a planned family, also did not seem to feel as marginalized as other participants during adolescence; she pointed to LGBT visibility in her elementary school:

I think a lot of it had to do with the alternative school I went to for elementary school, where we would take time to talk about my family or families like mine. So, I was never ever made to feel shameful. Like it was never something to not talk about or not include.

Heather always lived in communities where she was surrounded by LGBT people; she explained the advantage of this:

I was lucky enough that (Name of Town) has a really, I mean like it has a pretty significant lesbian population, so even though not everybody in the town is like really accepting, especially in like middle school, I mean if you say, if you tell somebody in (Name of Town), "I have two moms," they know what you mean. Like last year when I went to Philadelphia, if I'd tell people that, they'd be like, "You have a step mom?" You'd have to explain it, like whereas in (Name of Town), it's not really common, but people understand, so that wasn't really a big issue.

Some participants spoke about having their mothers' LGBT friends around them and how that helped them to feel good about LGBT people and families. For example, when Jenny was asked what helped her to cope with heterosexism and homophobia, she

said: "Being surrounded by all their gay friends and having that be normal for me."

Dana experienced relatively intense feelings of vulnerability and marginalization during adolescence; when asked how she was able to know that the negative messages she got from others about LGBT people were wrong, she said:

> A lot of their (her mother and her mother's partner) gay friends who didn't have kids but loved kids, really took care of me and were really good to me, so I never met a gay person that I thought was evil or bad or disgusting or anything. All their friends were gay too, and they were always around.

Some other participants mentioned LGBT visibility in the media as significant events during their adolescence. For example, Kara, who is out as gender-ambiguous, gave partial credit for coping relatively well with heterosexism and homophobia to LGBT visibility in literature: "I read a lot of books. *Drag King Dreams* and *Stone Butch Blues* changed my life." Kristy described a piece about lesbian- and gay-parent families that aired on a primetime news show:

> They did this special on 20/20 when I was, I can't remember how old I was, maybe in middle school or high school, and they were like, "Children of lesbian and gay parents are exactly like children of straight parents." The only difference that they found was that they were more open to different experiences including sexual experiences with the same sex and that was pretty much… they were open to new things and which I think is an advantage, and so I'm personally glad.

Lisa spoke about how important LGBT visibility on a non-reality television show was for her and her family:

> I do remember when Ellen had her show, when they had the coming out episode, we had a huge party. And I remember watching that episode with like five of my mom's friends, and it was like this huge, huge thing for us. Like, "Oh my God, Ellen just came out on TV!" Like that was the big moment that I remember mainly. …I remember feeling so grateful that now everyone who watched TV knew someone that was gay and knew someone that they thought was funny and great was gay. And I remember feeling just really grateful for that, that she would put herself out there. And I just knew—we all knew the show would go down from there, but it was just such a moment, like this was a really big deal. And we all knew it was like this really big deal.

Individual Characteristics

Almost half (n = 14) of the study participants spoke to the importance of their individual, often innate, characteristics when it came to dealing with heterosexism and homophobia. For example, some participants spoke about their confidence, self-assuredness, and strong will when identifying factors that helped them to cope with heterosexism and homophobia. Kendra explained why she was able to be more open about her family in high school than in middle school: "I think it helps that I was a lot more assured of myself, and so I really didn't care what anybody thought of me." Amy said: "I am a very strong willed person just naturally, and so I can see myself being one of those kids that, even if their parents weren't cool people, would have been really proud and strong and fought really hard." Likewise, David felt that his confidence was an innate characteristic:

> I just kind of have this idea that my shit don't stink. And anybody that has a problem with it, they can deal with it on their own. … I'm sure it's inside of me, because I don't think my sister has the same idea. It's being who you are no matter what, not letting it get to you. For a while I was pretty self-hating, and I went through quite a revolution to come to my current state of affairs. I was pretty depressed in middle school. A lot of that was my lack of social aptitude. But I got tired of being depressed. …I just flicked a switch in my head and said I was done being sad, and if anything bothered me, I was going to fix it. I've just been like that ever since.

Some participants spoke about other individual characteristics that influenced their experience of the central phenomena and their coping, such as sibling birth order and health issues. For example, Nora discussed possible reasons why she and her sibling felt so different in terms of vulnerability:

> Jesse and I were really different about that – Jesse was like really upfront, and I was just really terrified, but, which I think has a lot to do with me being the older sibling and feeling the need to protect us in a way that Jesse never felt.

Heather talked about the different factors in her life that contributed to her hiding her family from her peers in middle school:

> In 6th grade, I was really struggling with ADD and feeling like really unsuccessful and incompetent, and I was pretty depressed in 6th grade. And so I think that and starting a new school and the moms thing, all together were really hard.

Charlie explained how some changes in his individual characteristics in high school translated to a difference in his feelings of vulnerability:

> There's a big difference between sophomore and junior year. …A lot of it also came from the weight loss, like I was just much more confident in who I was. I got contacts, I felt much more confident in the way I looked and who I was as a person, inside and out. And so I was able to be like, "This is who I am, and if you have a problem, then you need to come to talk to me."

Participants' own sexual identity during adolescence emerged as a factor that influenced how some participants experienced the central phenomena, as well as their coping strategies. Almost a third of the study participants (n = 9) identified as GBTQ during their adolescence; specifically, three participants identified as gay, two as bisexual, two as "genderqueer," and two as "queer." Participants who identified as GBTQ themselves during adolescence were experiencing heterosexism and homophobia not only in relation to their parents' sexual identity but also to their own. For example, when Charlie, who identified as gay during adolescence, heard others say "that's so gay," he thought about it more in relation to himself than his mother: "Especially closer to 7th and 8th, when I was really starting to figure out myself, a lot less of it was, it wasn't what does this mean as my mother as lesbian, it was a lot on me." Amy, who identified as queer during adolescence, had a similar reaction; however, she also sometimes utilized her mother's sexual identity to deflect from her own when she heard homophobic slurs:

I never really thought about my mother in those situations. Sometimes I did, and I would use her when I didn't want to out myself. I would say like, "Don't say that, my mom is a lesbian," when I didn't feel comfortable outing myself. I remember at summer camp that happened 'cause I didn't want to be out, because I was in a cabin with a bunch of girls, and I knew how gym locker rooms went, so I didn't really want to experience the "gym locker room scene" for a week. You know, I wanted girls to feel comfortable changing in front of me or just talking around me, and so I wasn't out, and someone was saying, "that's so gay" constantly, and so I told her to stop. I told her that my mom was a lesbian.

About one-quarter (n = 7) of participants, the majority of whom identified as GBTQ during adolescence, spoke about the pressure they felt to be perfect or "straight." For example, Kim, who identified as queer in high school, said: "I think I felt extra pressure around that – since my mom was gay, I had to be very straight." Some of these participants said they did not want to prove the critics of their families right. Terry who identified as genderqueer in high school, explained:

When I was born, there was an article in the paper about it. The (Name of Town) Daily News did a big photo essay journalistic piece, and people wrote angry letters to the editor talking about like how they were going to turn me gay, and I'd be confused about my gender. And like, I think the most difficult thing for me coming out was like dealing with the fact that I was somehow proving them right. And I think that was one of the most difficult things for Jessica (mother) to deal with as well, that like somehow my being trans indicated her failure as a parent and that was something that was always very scrutinized for her.

Amy, who identified as queer during adolescence, also spoke to this theme of feeling pressure to be perfect:

A lot of what has been aimed at me has been your mother made you this way. I've struggled with depression my whole life, and I have definitely sometimes [worried that] like me being kind of screwed up would be attributed to my mom. And honestly some of it probably is her fault and that is something that she and I have dealt with over the years together. But feeling this need to justify her all the time and feeling kind of bad sometimes that I'm not like the perfect kid, so I can be like, "See, lesbian parents do good!" And so, like being told you're going to screw up you're kid, and "Oh, crap. I am the screwed up kid, now what?" I think that's something that's really been pushed on me is like, "You're like this because of your mom," which feels like really disempowering in a lot of ways, and I think

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that is probably the thing that has hurt the most, that I haven't been able to just kind of politicize, is just this feeling of like my claim to my identity taken away.

Pre-Adolescent Experiences with Heterosexism and Homophobia

The experiences that participants had with heterosexism and homophobia prior to their adolescence emerged as an intervening condition that influenced the central phenomena and the coping strategies of some participants. Although no interview questions specifically pertained to pre-adolescent experiences with heterosexism and homophobia, it seemed that these experiences were especially relevant for some participants (n = 7) when discussing their adolescence. For some participants, they seemed to be aware of the existence of heterosexism and homophobia prior to adolescence, yet they had not personally experienced it all that much. For example, Kara was home schooled until high school and was raised in a community with many other children with LGBT parents; therefore, she did not have much, if any, direct experience with heterosexism or homophobia:

> I remember reading a book about a girl who had lesbian parents and who was trying to hide it and who was so upset about it, and I couldn't understand it at all, because it was just—I was part of a crazy hippie group, and they were all perfectly fine with it, so homophobia didn't even really occur to me other than as a word I heard my parents use.

When Kara did finally experience overt heterosexism and homophobia during adolescence, it was a shock for her.

Other participants, however, did experience heterosexism and homophobia prior to entering middle school. For example, Jesse was teased in elementary school:

> Nora (sister) and I both went to a public school when we first moved here to (Name of City), so when I was in grades two, three, and four. And by the end of fourth grade I had to switch. Part of the reason that I left public school is because school was boring and I hated it, and I was telling my mom that really articulately

from age seven. And part of it was because I was getting made fun of a lot, because my mom was "homosexual."

Lisa faced intense teasing and harassment during middle school; her experiences, however, with direct heterosexism and homophobia began in elementary school:

> My second grade teacher was very religious, and at one point, she pulled me aside from class and asked me if Ann (non-biological mom) touched me. And I'm like "Yea, she hugs me all the time. She's awesome!" And she said—clarified and said, "No, does she touch you in a way that makes you uncomfortable, like in the No Zone?" And I was traumatized. I went home and I'm like, "Why did she say that? Why would anybody do that? Why would Ann do that?" And my mom had to say, "No, she's just concerned for you." And it was just like—it didn't even cross my mind that she was concerned that I was being molested. And so yea, even in elementary school other kids would tease me.

Samantha learned in elementary school to hide the fact that she had lesbian mothers:

> The rainbow necklace that I mentioned earlier was like one of the things that I wore like every single day, and there was this girl named Kasey Adler, who I still have not forgiven to this day and despise her and give her nasty looks when I see her when I come home from school. And I had a friend named Dora in elementary school, and one day Dora started getting more popular than me, and there was this incident in the cafeteria where Kasey was like, "Dora, you shouldn't sit with her – look at her necklace, that's so gay. Look at her necklace, she's such a loser, don't sit with her." And they made me sit by myself because of the necklace, and I honestly just bought it because I liked rainbows, not even because I was like, "Woo, I wanna strut my stuff, because my parents are gay." It was like, "No, I like the rainbow. I want to wear the necklace." I think it was stuff like that when I was younger that made me realize it was an issue.

Passage of Time

More than one-third (n = 11) of participants made references to the passage of time regarding: (a) changes in how they themselves dealt with heterosexism and homophobia as adolescents, and/or (b) how things are different today for adolescents presently growing up with lesbian parents. A few participants spoke about how their own growing up and maturing helped them to cope with heterosexism and homophobia. For example, Kendra stated: "I did become much more open about it, but I think that was

partly because I grew into myself. …I don't think it was anything specific. I think it was literally just growing up." Marie represented the sentiments of many participants when she said that middle school is a difficult time; she also spoke about why things got easier for her and her friend, who also had lesbian moms, as they got older:

> Well, I think we got through the pain that is middle school. I think we were much happier as we got older, and we were able to articulate how we felt at that time. I think as you get older you just feel much more free as a person too to do what interests you. I think it was a hard time for both of us.

Other participants said that their feelings of marginalization and vulnerability improved as they got older, because their peers were growing up and maturing as well. Rich said he saw less heterosexism and homophobia in high school: "People matured more and started to see, well the people I talked to, they start to see people as people." Melissa attributed her being more open about her family in high school to other kids growing up: "I feel like kids matured more and wouldn't have such a negative outlook on it if they found out. I feel like they'd be more like, 'all right.'" Samantha credited her change in openness about her family both to having a bigger pool of friends to choose from in high school than in middle school, as well as to the increased maturity level of her peers:

> I think it was more just that like when you get into high school, people stop worrying about that, so it became more acceptable to go [to the Pride Parade]. … I think it was a combination of having a greater range of people and, therefore, finding more accepting people, and also people just growing up in general.

A few participants also spoke about how they think that things are better now for adolescents with lesbian parents than when they were growing up. Participants attributed this change to greater visibility and acceptance of LGBT people and families, as well as greater availability of support. For example, Nora said: "I know it's really different for

kids in middle school now, partly because there is so much more visibility." Kristy felt

that things were different for her younger sister than they were for her as an adolescent:

> I mean all I can really say is that society has changed a lot. I can even tell from, my sister comes home and she thinks it's the coolest thing to have lesbian moms, and I think actually other kids think it is too. They like well, especially around here, they don't see it as a huge problem. Maybe because, so it is a way to sort of celebrate that difference, and I like how now there are more organizations for children of gay parents, like COLAGE. And you know, you have the big celebrations down town. I think we are sort of progressing a little bit, maybe not as fast as we'd like it to.

Some participants felt that they had helped pave the way to make things easier for

adolescents who are growing up today with LGBT parents. Marie was one of the first

youth at her synagogue for LGBT families:

> It's interesting, because I was really one of the first kids to be there. To be there now and see all the children, I feel very nostalgic. I don't feel like they have to traverse things like I felt like [my friends] and I had to. I think it's much easier, I know it's going to be difficult at times, I feel like it won't be as challenging. But it's nice that they have a huge community. It makes me very happy.

Amy thinks that adolescents with lesbian parents and, more specifically, adolescents who

identify as LGBT themselves, will find more readily available support these days:

> I'm one of the last generations that is going to go to high school and have to start their own GSA [Gay-Straight Alliance]. So, that's really cool, and I think that's kind of like mission accomplished in a lot of places – not necessarily in the rural areas, but in the urban areas, it is rare to find a high school that doesn't have at least a small GSA. And so, I think that queer adults are getting involved with queer kids. And kids of queer parents that want to be involved are definitely migrating towards the GSAs more effectively and being very much included in that. I think that is something that has actually been done, and it's like, "Keep doing that, that's good!"

Coping Strategies

The intervening conditions described above had an influence on the coping

strategies utilized by participants in reaction to the central phenomena. Study

participants utilized various coping strategies during their adolescence in response to the

thoughts and feelings related to vulnerability and/or marginalization they experienced.

More than one type of coping strategy typically was used by each participant, and the

types of coping strategies utilized changed over time for most participants. The two main

coping strategies that emerged from the data were: (a) protect and (b) de-marginalize (see

Figure 4).

Figure 4. Strategies of Adolescents with Lesbian Parents for Coping with
Heterosexism and Homophobia
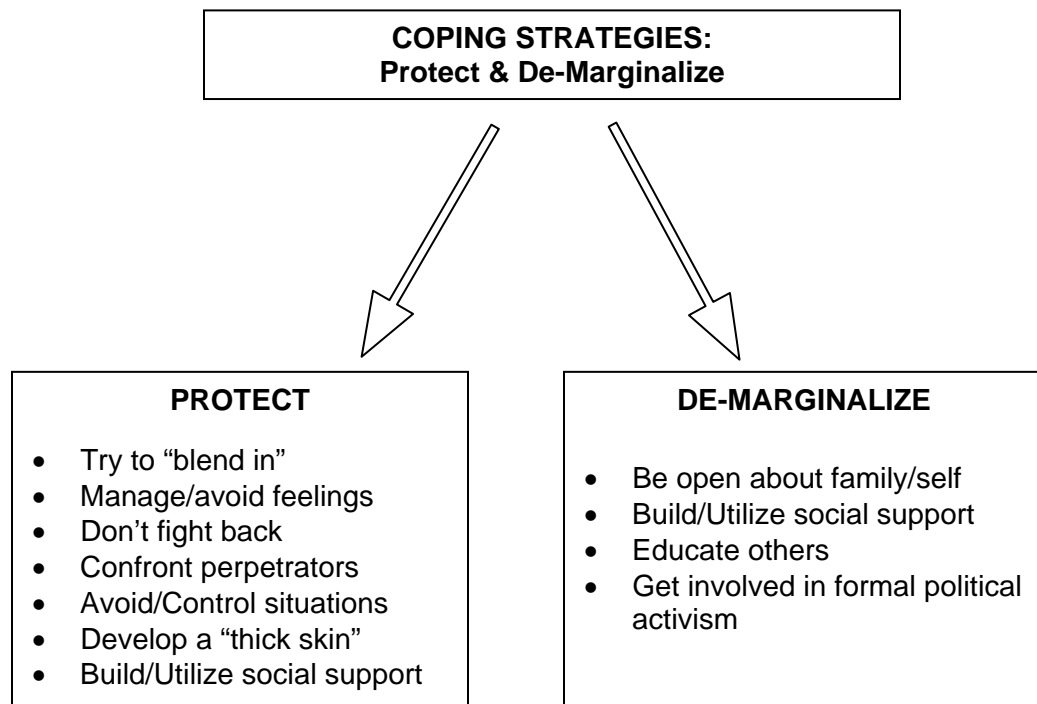
Protect

The first main coping strategy that emerged from the data was "protect."

Participants who utilized protective coping strategies seemed to be attempting to keep

themselves and/or their families from being emotionally and/or physically harmed. Sub-

strategies that emerged under the category of "protect" were: (a) try to "blend in;" (b)

manage/avoid feelings; (c) don't fight back; (d) confront perpetrators; (e) avoid/control "risky" situations; (f) develop a "thick skin;" and (g) build/utilize social support.

Try to "blend in." About two-thirds (n = 21) of study participants who felt or perceived themselves to be vulnerable in the face of heterosexism and homophobia did various things to try to "blend in" with their peers. Attempting to blend in involved trying not to appear different or draw attention to oneself, often times for fear of being teased or harassed in some way. For example, many study participants, at some point in their adolescence, remained silent when they heard someone say "that's so gay" or "fag," because they worried about the repercussions of speaking out. Heather reflected on her middle school experience: "You'd hear people say, 'Oh, that's so gay,' or like use 'fag' or stuff like that in the halls, …but I would never say anything, because I didn't want to be singled out." Denise took a similar approach: "A lot of the times I would just ignore it…and just try and slip by as anonymous as possible." A few participants reported they sometimes pretended to condone the use of homophobic slurs, so that they would not "stick out" amongst their peers. Dana explained what happened for her in middle school: "People will talk about 'fags' and 'dykes,' and I would have to be like, 'Yeah, eww.' I would have to play along, because I didn't want them to think that I could be gay too."

A primary way in which participants attempted to blend in with their peers was by not telling others about their families and/or their own sexual identities; about two-thirds (n = 19) of study participants utilized this strategy at some point during their adolescence. For example, Denise, who is from a planned family, did not tell any of her friends about her family throughout most of her early adolescence: "Middle school was a rough time. It was hard, because I was very closeted from my community in middle school. Like, I

mean I was terrified of people knowing about my family." Tom, who is from a divorced

family, chose not to tell people when they asked him if his mother was a lesbian:

> I would not answer people. I would like get up and walk away from the table, or
> say hold on a second and rummage through my book bag and then talk to
> someone and then, I would not give an answer.

Debra, who is from a divorced family, did not tell her father about her mother's sexual

identity for fear of what her father would do: "I didn't tell my father until I was 17. The

reason I didn't tell him was because I did not want to get into a custody battle, because I

would go nuts if I had to live with him." Even in high school, Dana, who is from a

divorced family, felt that it was safer not to tell her friends about her family: "I feel like I

was always on the verge of telling them, but I was just like I better play it safe and not,

because it could get around."

About one-third (n = 9) of study participants said they attempted to blend in with

their peers by actively hiding their families and/or their own sexual identities. For

example, some participants would not invite friends to their homes. Dana stated: "I

always kind of kept people from coming over. I rarely was like, 'Let's go hang out at my

house,' because then people might know." Other participants would lie when asked

questions about their parents' or their own sexual identities. Rita, who is from a divorced

family, explained how she lied to her peers in high school:

> I remember, I guess my freshman year of high school during marching band
> camp, we were eating lunch and this kid asked me, he's like, "Is your mom a
> lesbian?" And I said, "No, she's not." I mean I just lied, bold-faced lie, because,
> I thought, I don't know, I thought in high school people were even more
> judgmental. And I just didn't, I mean I would make up whatever excuse possible.
> Like, I think I told, like if my friend slept over and she would say, "Well, who's
> that?" I'm like, "That's my mom's business partner, she's staying over." I would
> just, whatever I could think of, because I was just really scared.

Sometimes participants would involve their parents in their attempts to hide their families. For example, Nora would tell her mother "not to do anything obviously lesbian when people came over." Denise, who is from a planned family and grew up with two lesbian moms and two gay fathers, would sometimes try to involve her parents in her attempts to hide their family without their knowledge:

> I don't know if my parents picked up on it or not, but there were times that I would purposefully, I would try to manipulate my parents so that one of them would come or another wouldn't come. There were times even where I would try and have one dad come and one mom come and like pass it off as if I had, you know, a dad and a mom like anybody else.

Manage/avoid feelings. More than one-third of study participants (n = 11) seemed to try to protect themselves from their feelings of vulnerability and/or marginalization by managing their emotions, or avoiding them altogether. For example, Nora, who is from a divorced family, tried to manage her feelings about her father, who had exhibited homophobia:

> I try to grieve when it comes up, so I can have that grief. It doesn't come up that often, but he triggers it, and then I like try to let myself be as upset as I am, so that I can like have the upsetness and not have it continue to play out in my life.

Some other participants tried to manage their feelings that resulted from heterosexism and homophobia by expressing their thoughts and emotions in their journals. For example, when Dana was asked how she felt in middle school about having a lesbian mother and how open she was about it, she responded:

> Not open at all – didn't utter the words. I think I only told my journal, and in my journal I was like, "If anyone reads it, I would just want to die," or something completely over the top. Not open at all, and I didn't really like it.

Some participants seemed to try to protect themselves from their feelings of vulnerability and/or marginalization by avoiding them. For example, some of these

participants spoke about how they internalized their emotions, rather than deal with them. When Rita was asked about the impact that heterosexism and homophobia had on her, she stated: "It was hard for me. …I internalized everything, just kind of bottled it up and let it sit there." Similarly, when Charlie was asked how he dealt with homophobic comments that were either directed at him or said in general, he replied:

> I probably just internalized it. …That's how I processed a lot of stuff, is I internalized it. …I just ignored it, well I say I ignored it by not responding, but really I was just internalizing I think, just adding to that negative connotation of that.

Other participants avoided their feelings by fantasizing and doing other things to mentally and emotionally escape. For example, Denise, who is from a planned family, sometimes daydreamed in middle school that her family was different: "I remember daydreaming that I was an orphan, or that I, you know, that I didn't – that my parents weren't gay, basically. I remember thinking, like, how much easier it would be if I didn't have gay parents." Kim said that her way of dealing with the impact of heterosexism and homophobia during high school was to become an over-achiever in many areas of her life: "I think that like the main reason for why I was so involved and busy in like extra curriculars and like straight A student and everything was like a defense mechanism to not have to deal with it." Tom coped in a similar way: "Throwing myself into everything was a way to easily gain respect among everyone. …It was also a very easy way of not having to deal with anything else at all."

Don't fight back. About one-third of participants (n = 9) protected themselves by not fighting back or responding when they faced heterosexism and homophobia. Not fighting back was different than keeping quiet merely to blend in, in that some of these participants were attempting to prevent further direct interpersonal teasing and

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harassment that they were already experiencing. For example, Lisa, who faced direct

interpersonal heterosexism and homophobia in middle school, said she "just got really

quiet" in reaction to the teasing and harassment. Charlie, who was targeted as gay from a

young age, explained why he did not fight back:

> I didn't feel, I wasn't in a social position to respond to that. …Like, regardless if
> whether it was directed at me or it was the "that's so gay," or whatever, like just if
> I would've said something, I know it would have brought more stuff on me that I
> didn't want to deal with.

It seemed that some other participants chose not to fight back every time they

experienced heterosexism and homophobia in order to conserve and protect their energy

and/or their emotional state of mind. For example, Kristy explained why she did not

always respond when she heard heterosexist or homophobic remarks: "I think you'll start

to realize that you can't fight with everybody, because it would be just exhausting."

Heather is trying to work on accepting that she cannot always fight every battle against

heterosexism and homophobia:

> One of the things that I'm still trying to do, like I'm not very good at this, but one
> of the things that I'm working on is letting things sort of, just like knowing when
> to just let things go and let it be ok. And I'm a pretty argumentative person, I
> mean not like really argumentative, but you know if somebody says something
> that annoys me, I'll generally take the bait and argue with them about it. So, I'm
> just that way in general, so it's really hard for me to just be like, like you can't
> change everybody, you can't say something every single time, and so I'm still
> working on letting that be ok with, like letting me be ok with not saying
> something even though like I feel like I should.

Confront perpetrators. Another protective strategy used by more than half (n =

17) of the study participants was confronting the perpetrators of the heterosexism and

homophobia they perceived or experienced. Participants utilizing this strategy felt that

they and/or their families were being attacked in some way; therefore, they were

attempting to end those attacks. The majority of these participants were responding to

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indirect interpersonal heterosexism and homophobia, primarily in the form of heterosexist and/or homophobic remarks. For example, many participants felt they and/or their families were being attacked or insulted when people used generalized, derogatory remarks, such as "gay" or "fag." Tara said: "I felt like, you know, it wasn't directed at me or my family but, just affinity with the insult." Most participants *verbally* confronted the perpetrators of indirect heterosexism and homophobia. For example, Lisa explained how she handled homophobic slurs in high school:

> If someone said, "That's gay," or if they used "fag," I would most likely tell them, "I'm really uncomfortable with you using the word 'fag.' I would really appreciate it, in front of me, if you don't use that word anymore," and leave it at that.

Other participants sometimes reacted with more anger when verbally confronting indirect heterosexism and homophobia; for example, when Amy heard peers use the term "that's so gay," she responded in the following way:

> I was really pretty confrontational about it, like I would be pretty sarcastic and be like, "Are you sure it's not heterosexual?" …I definitely felt righteously entitled to be mean right back. So I did, I definitely didn't have the capacity at the time to really think about where these people were coming from and just kind of demonized them and just like, "They're homophobes, they're bad people. I don't want to talk to them, I just want to make them stop and do things my way."

The majority of participants who confronted the perpetrators of *direct* interpersonal heterosexism and homophobia also did so verbally. For example, Tom, who is from a divorced family, confronted his father and step-mother after years of listening to them talk badly about his mother: "I remember saying like, 'Don't do it in front of me, I don't want to hear it.' And I was thinking, you're so concerned with my well-being, well this will screw me up, so just don't say it." Lisa, who would usually get

quiet when teased in middle school for having lesbian moms, began to follow her

mother's advice:

> She told me… "No, you don't take that shit. So, when they're giving you a hard time, you just call them a 'needle dick.' That was the only put down I knew too, so I said it like every single day, a couple times a day.

A few participants also used non-verbal forms of confrontation. For example, Chad, who

was targeted for being gay, even though he did not identify that way, recalled how he

coped:

> I can't remember ever, ever actually like fighting about it, but there were, you know, there was – I remember one time where like there was this one kid who was, you know, I was sort of being harassed like in line for lunch, you know. I mean it was like, he got to leaning over and saying stuff in my ear and finally, I just sort of grabbed his tray and up ended him on it, or up-ended it on him. You know, it was chili day, which made it that spectacular.

> *Avoid/control "risky" situations.* One-third of study participants (n = 10)

reported avoiding and/or controlling certain interactions and situations, in order to protect

themselves and/or their families. Some participants avoided people and environments

they perceived as potentially "risky" for heterosexist and homophobic interactions. For

example, Tara was so worried that others would find out about her family that she left

middle school for several months:

> I just had a lot of anxiety about meeting people and forming relationships…and just kind of judgment by association, that I actually ended up stopping going to school and was home schooled for a while. …I kind of made myself sick all the time just unconsciously, because I was so uncomfortable in the school environment.

Other participants took less drastic measures to avoid peers or family members who

exhibited heterosexism or homophobia. For example, when Rita was asked about the

impact her peers' homophobic comments had on her, she said:

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It made me really dislike those people. I really – one of the kids, Billy, in particular, he's just not nice, he makes fun of a lot of people, and I don't want to hang around him, so I just didn't hang around him after that.

Some study participants attempted to control or manipulate how they experienced heterosexism and homophobia in certain situations or contexts. For example, Tom feared his peers' questions about his mother's sexual identity; therefore, he changed his public persona:

I just made a big 180 degree personality change, and I was seen as funny, smart, witty, trustworthy, and powerful. And yeah, that was largely a conscious decision on my part, because when, I feel like when you create a sense of power or control over your situation, no one will feel that they have a right to ask you any questions at all.

Some participants spoke about how they came out to their friends about their families prior to bringing them home, in order to protect their families from potential heterosexist or homophobic reactions. Jenny, who is from a planned family, explained:

I wouldn't have had somebody come to my house unless they had known about it before, because I remember I didn't want to put someone in a position of having them feel weird or just not liking being there. I would've rather stopped being friends with them before I invited them into my home and my family had to see that.

Kim, who is from a divorced family, felt similarly:

I think I just would rather see people's responses like before being in my – because like home has always been like a really safe, like comfort place for me, and I think that I just wanted to protect that space. So, if I knew ahead of time that they were a little uncomfortable or something, then I could prepare for that.

Develop a "thick skin." More than half of study participants (n = 16) talked about acquiring the ability to not let heterosexism or homophobia bother them – i.e., develop a "thick skin." For example, Heather explained her strategy for dealing with heterosexism and homophobia:

> I mean trying to just sort of let it roll off me, my mom always says, like a duck. Like their feathers are waterproof, I guess, so when they get wet, the drops of water just roll off their backs, and she was like, you just have to be like that.

For many of these participants, developing a thick skin involved learning to ignore heterosexism and homophobia. For example, when Charlie was asked how he dealt with the direct homophobia he experienced in high school for being gay, he said: "After a while I just learned to ignore, and I was like, 'You guys just aren't mature enough to understand life.'" Kara described the societal messages she received about LGBT people and families as an adolescent, as well as her ability to ignore them:

> I was told we're home wreckers and that it's a threat to the American family and all the same things we've been hearing and – pretty much I just listen to it and just shrug it, because I—I know it's not true.

Some of these participants alluded to coming to a state of acceptance regarding heterosexist and homophobic attitudes. For example, Melissa described her reaction when her peers would use derogatory language like "gay" and "fag:" "I've never been like, 'Don't use that word around me,' because people are going to use whatever they want. I'd just ignore it and brush it off and be like, they don't even know. They're just ignorant." When Kristy was asked how she is able to deal so well with heterosexism and homophobia, she also described a certain degree of acceptance regarding other people's attitudes:

> I think I'm ok with it, because I realize that people are entitled to their own opinions and they understand – or, and I understand that they are not always going to be tolerant. And so instead of getting angry or upset about it, you just accept it and move on, because it's not going to help anything if you get mad or upset and that could just lead to a lost friendship.

Build/utilize social support. About half of the study participants (n = 14) seemed to build and/or utilize their sources of social support as a protective coping strategy.

Participants talked about building their sources of social support so that others would be there for them, making them less vulnerable. For example, Charlie built up his support network to help guard against heterosexism and homophobia: "I kind of developed this network of close friends that I knew would have my back regardless." Similarly, when Denise found other teens with LGBT parents through COLAGE, she knew that she had found peers who would accept her even if others did not: "We had each other as a support network if all else failed." Likewise, immediately prior to publicly "outing" her parents for the first time at a school function, Jenny, who is from a planned family, quickly scanned the room to see who would be on "her side" if things did not go well:

> I remember thinking like, "ok," and I like surveyed the room, and everyone was White with two parents except my good friend, Rodney, who was Indian, and I was like, "Okay, she's on my side." And then my friend Ashley, her parents had just gotten divorced, and it was like this big scandal. So, I knew that I had like two people on my side, basically because everybody else was like conservative or Christian or what not.

When building their support networks, some participants used the strategy, similar to the one Jenny used, of evaluating who was "safe" to tell about their families and who was not. Marie explained: "I really prided myself on studying people and trying to figure out how they would react. If I didn't think they could handle it, I wouldn't say anything." Terry also utilized this strategy: "I was pretty good at choosing my friends, so it wasn't really an issue for any of them." Charlie talked about the criteria he had used to choose his friends: "Just based on comments that were said and things, like I kind of knew they would be safe."

Some participants discussed how they utilized their sources of social support when they felt vulnerable and/or were in need of protection. For example, Dana, who is

from a divorced family, turned to her mother one night when her father began making

heterosexist and homophobic remarks:

> I called my mom, and I was really upset, because he was freaking me out, and I
> didn't know what he was trying to get at. And he was saying all these things, and
> it was just really confusing to me, so I called her and I was crying, and she was
> freaking out, and she came and picked me up, and she was yelling at him.

After a troubling interaction with some school peers who refused to stop using

homophobic slurs, Heather asked her teacher for help:

> At the end of that day when everybody left, I stayed and I just said to the teacher,
> "I can't do this anymore," and I burst into tears, and I was like, "They sit up there,
> and they make all these comments, and like I just I tried to ignore it but I can't
> anymore."

Kendra talked about how her best friends were her "protection" in middle school, in that

they would confront others who used homophobic slurs, yet they wouldn't "out" her

while doing it:

> It never really brought that issue out into the open. It wasn't like, "Kendra's
> parents are lesbians – you can't say that stuff around her." It was more like
> "totally unkosher word" or something that just put it out there that it wasn't a nice
> thing to be saying.

De-Marginalize

The second main coping strategy that emerged from the data was "de-

marginalize." Participants who utilized de-marginalizing coping strategies seemed to be

attempting to normalize their experiences and/or to alter the social standing of themselves

and their families. Sub-strategies that emerged from the data under the category of "de-

marginalize" were: (a) be open about family/self; (b) build/utilize social support; (c)

educate others; and (d) get involved in formal political activism.

Be open about family/self. About half of the study participants (n = 16) used the

strategy of being open in their communities about their families, and/or their own sexual

identities, as a way of de-marginalizing their families and their experiences. Being more

open about their families in general seemed to be a way for some participants to show

that their families should not be thought of as "different" in a bad way. For example,

after getting involved with COLAGE and meeting other queerspawn, Debra realized she

could be more open and proud of her family: "It made me feel that it's not something that

I have to like hide from people, it's something that I should just, you know, embrace."

Heather seemed to be normalizing the fact that she had lesbian moms by being more open

with her peers:

> In high school, I like, I started to be more open about it and tell more people.
> Like, really in middle school, I'd only tell somebody if I had gotten to know them
> really well first, and then I would tell them, whereas in high school, like I was
> more comfortable telling like sort of casual friends. And, like, I was totally fine
> having people over, and I would just introduce them to my parents the way they
> would introduce me to their parents.

Terry, who is from a planned family, also seemed to be attempting to normalize his

experience when giving a family tree presentation in middle school:

> I presented it like it wasn't an issue that people should dwell on or focus on. It
> wasn't something that I was worried about or something that I expected people to
> harass me about, at least that's how I presented it. And so I think a lot of people
> picked that up, and it was just one more presentation, nothing out of the ordinary.

Some participants were angry that their families were marginalized and expressed that

anger as they attempted to de-marginalize their experience. For example, Amy talked

about how she was somewhat confrontational as she became more open about her family:

> When my mom started dating Pat, I talked about Pat the same way I would have
> talked about her if, I mean I was just really nonchalant about it, kind of purposely
> nonchalant. Like I would talk about my "step-mom," and people would say, "Oh,
> I didn't realize your dad was dating," and I would say, "Oh, he's not." You know,
> just kind of like "fuck you" style and like make people ask and get them really
> confused, or I'd talk about "my mom and my step-mom going out to dinner," and
> they'd be like, "Your mom and your step-mom are going out to dinner?" I'd be
> like, "Yeah, they're together, why wouldn't they go out to dinner?" They're like,

"Oh, I thought you meant your dad's wife." I'm like, "No, my dad doesn't have a wife," you know.

Build/Utilize social support. Another de-marginalizing coping strategy used by more than half (n = 16) of study participants was to build and/or utilize social support. Similar to how participants built and utilized sources of social support as a means of protection, some participants also built and utilized social support as a means of de-marginalization. For example, some participants came out to their friends about their families and/or their own sexual identities, in order to de-marginalize their experience. Denise, who is from a planned family, kept her parents' sexual identities a secret from her best friend, until she felt she needed to share the truth about her family and gain an ally:

> I came out to her sometime during seventh grade and I just—I just finally decided it was enough. Like, I couldn't deal—I couldn't deal with having someone who was as close—like not inviting someone who I was so close to over to my house and not just being able to be open, so I finally got up the courage to call her. And I was sobbing on the phone, like uncontrollably. And she was just like, "Well, what? What is it? What's wrong?" So, I finally, I told her, "I have two moms. They're, you know, my moms are lesbian," kind of thing. It turned out she knew. So, it was huge relief. So then she definitely, to some degree, became a confidant.

Jason came out as gay during his last year of middle school and, as a result, faced some direct interpersonal heterosexism and homophobia. Upon entering high school, he was able to make a good friend who he could talk to about those experiences: "My first year of high school, I met a very good friend. I would talk to her about things that were going on."

Some participants de-marginalized their experiences by finding other queerspawn. When Denise found COLAGE in high school and met other teens with LGBT parents, her base of social support was broadened:

Just being able to be in a space and say things or hear other people saying things that I knew exactly how they felt and what they had been through was validating for one, because none of my feelings had been validated. And, it was also, it created a support network, when I realized I wasn't the only person out there.

Debra had a similar experience when she found COLAGE in high school: "I met my friend Jodi there, who I still talk to all the time and she's, you know, one of the coolest people. And it's—it's just nice to hear other people say, 'Oh yea, I have gay parents too.'"

These participants primarily utilized the support of family and friends to de-marginalize their experience. For example, Jesse did not have many friends to confide in, so she turned to her sister:

I didn't really have anyone who I could tell that would understand except for my sister. And like I would go to her sometimes and be like, "Oh, Danny Green called someone a fag today, and know what I did? This is what I did."

When Kim was asked with whom she shared her thoughts and feelings after she experienced heterosexism and homophobia, she responded: "I talked with my mom a lot about it." Kara tended to talk about the heterosexism and homophobia she perceived and experienced with her friends more than her family: "I don't know that I talked to my parents about it. I know that I probably definitely talked to my best friend about it, Marnie, because I reported everything back to her." Likewise, when Shawn was asked who he would talk to about the frustration he experienced as a result of the heterosexism and homophobia he perceived, he answered: "My close friends of course. Me and my friends were more of an intellectual group where we sit around and have discussions. I've discussed it with them." Heather said talking to her queerspawn friend helped her to feel less "alone:"

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One of my best friends also has two moms, so like we would talk about frustrations, like that, just because we could be like, "Oh my God, I know what you mean, I hate when that happens!" And so, it was just really nice to have somebody who I was close to who I could like identify with about issues like that.

Educate others. Almost half of the study participants (n = 13) sought to de-marginalize their experiences, and/or LGBT people and families in general, by informally educating those around them. For example, Lisa stated:

I just knew that basically it was—it was my duty in a way to educate anyone I came in contact with just for my own well being—that if I'm going to be having contact with this person, they should know that my family is amazing. So, just by taking a friend home, they get it.

Similarly, Jesse also talked about having a responsibility to educate others during middle school: "Me and my sister were the only queerpsawn at camp at that point, and also I was the only queer person at camp…and so like we, it was our job to educate the camp." When Louis was a camp counselor, he also felt responsible for educating others; he would try to explain to the younger kids why they should not use the word gay in a derogatory way: "To them, they were really—there was an emphasis behind those words, like, 'That is gay, that's so negative,' that you know—'gay is bad.' And I didn't want that."

Most of these participants would try to "talk it through" and educate their peers when they were exhibiting heterosexism and/or homophobia. For example, Jesse would take time to try to educate friends:

I remember Chris and Mary, these two people who were really good friends of mine at camp, they just had said, they had all these homophobic things to say, and I just like sat down with them, and I would like process with them, and I would be like "Chris, why do you think that that's weird?"

Samantha would sometimes try to educate even those peers who were not close friends of hers, when they used "gay" in a derogatory manner:

I think it must have been like 8th grade that I started standing up and being like, "Don't say that!" And then they would be like, "Oo, why?" you know "Why can't we say that? What's the problem?" And people always pulled the excuse that like they don't mean gay against like gay "people," they mean it as like in "stupid." And so in my 8th grade mindset, I would try to explain that no matter what, "gay" was still a derogatory term.

Kim would sometimes step in to help educate others when her friends' efforts failed:

I think because most all of my friends knew my family situation and how I advocated for it that like a lot of times I wouldn't even have to say anything, the people around me would. Then if I needed to I could be like, if like the person saying the homophobic slur was confronted and like just wasn't getting why he shouldn't, or why he or she shouldn't be saying it, then I would be like, "Well, because I have a lesbian mom and that like offends me."

Get involved in formal political activism. More than one-third (n = 12) of participants used the de-marginalizing strategy of getting involved in formal political activism. For example, by joining, creating, and/or leading their schools' gay-straight alliances (GSAs), many of these participants provided formal education to others about heterosexism and homophobia, and about LGBT people and families in general. A few participants, such as Kim came out to their entire schools as part of their GSA work:

I was in the GSA, like helped to start it at my high school. …We had, my junior year, my GSA did an all school assembly on…homophobia and gayness, and I had Barb (her non-biological mom) come…and speak in front of the entire school, and she said like, "I'm Kim (last name)'s second parent."

When Jason tried to start a GSA in his high school, he had to educate the school faculty and staff, in addition to the students. After his school and community fought against his starting the GSA, Jason brought in a lawyer to help him. Jason spoke about his work:

The main goal for starting the Gay-Straight Alliance was to help with the school policies – to get an anti-discrimination policy that was reflective of GLBT and Q students. …After two years of fighting, finally my junior year, we got the Gay-Straight Alliance, and we had changes made to the policies of the school.

Some of these students spoke about how getting involved in formal political activism helped with their feelings of marginalization. For example, Amy, who identified as queer during adolescence, explained:

> Being politically involved was my salvation. Being part of the gay-straight alliance and knowing that like not only was this important to me, but this was an actual important struggle and like feeling that value and that justification and being part of something larger than myself. …My sexuality was like a club, and my mom's sexuality was kind of like this thing that made me more queer. …I think that it just heightened that feeling of belonging, and so feeling like I was part of it, part of a movement I guess, was really how I coped, and it was very effective, and it was ultimately a very positive experience for me.

Likewise, Denise, who was also involved in formal political activism as an adolescent, spoke about the importance for her of feeling connected to issues larger than her own:

> I think that's one of the ways that helped me deal with it fast, was seeing it as being part of a larger societal problem, and that homophobia wasn't alone but, you know, that is was part of larger discriminatory institutions that deal with race and gender and religion and nationality and, you know, all of that. So that was really helpful to kind of see it as a bigger picture and not feel like a victim but feel like I can be an advocate, not just for this issue but, you know, for how they're all interconnected.

Conclusion

The result of the data analysis process for this study was the development of a theoretical model that illustrates how adolescents with lesbian parents cope with heterosexism and homophobia, as well as the thoughts and feelings that result from being exposed to these stressors. Seven model components emerged from the data: (a) pre-intervening conditions (i.e., family visibility and community climate), (b) causal conditions (i.e., heterosexism and homophobia – types and contextual factors), (c) central phenomena (i.e., thoughts and/or feelings of marginalization and vulnerability), (d) intervening conditions (i.e., social support, parental coping, LGBT visibility, individual characteristics, and passage of time), (e) coping strategies (i.e., protect and de-

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marginalize), (f) consequences (i.e., validation/empowerment and invalidation/disempowerment), and (g) long-term consequence (i.e., resilience). The pre-intervening conditions, types and contextual factors of the causal conditions, and the intervening conditions all played a role in the variability seen in participants' experience of the central phenomena.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study was to explore the experiences of young adults with lesbian parents during their adolescence, in order to develop a theoretical model for how adolescents with lesbian parents cope with heterosexism and homophobia. The first section of this chapter provides a discussion of the major findings in the context of the initial theoretical framework and the existing literature on adolescent coping and children with lesbian parents. In the second section, limitations of this research are discussed. Lastly, implications of this study for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers are presented.

Summary of Major Findings

Feminist theory applied to a risk-resilience approach provided the framework for this study. Based upon qualitative interview data gathered from 30 participants, a theoretical model was developed to conceptualize how adolescents with lesbian parents cope with heterosexism and homophobia (see Figure 5). The main components of this model were based upon the major categories utilized in the grounded theory approach to qualitative research: causal conditions, context, central phenomena, intervening conditions, strategies, and consequences. Furthermore, the theoretical model is consistent with – although more elaborate than – the risk-resilience conceptual model (see p. 28) that guided the development of the study. "Risk" in the conceptual model is similar to the "causal conditions" in the theoretical model; the "protective" factors of cognitive appraisal, coping strategies, and social support are analogous to the "central phenomena," "strategies," and "intervening conditions" in the theoretical model; and finally, "resilience" in the conceptual model is consistent with the "long-term consequence" in

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Figure 5.
Theoretical Model of How
Adolescents with Lesbian
Parents Cope with
Heterosexism and
Homophobia

Intervening Conditions:
- Social support
- Parental coping
- LGBT visibility
- Participant characteristics
- Pre-adolescent experiences
- Passage of time

**Causal
Conditions:
Heterosexism
&
Homophobia**
Types and
Context

**Central
Phenomena:**
Perceptions and
Feelings of
**Vulnerability
and/or
Marginalization**

Strategies:

**Protect
&
De-Marginalize**

**Consequences:
Validation/
Empowerment
&
Invalidation/
Disempowerment**

**Long-Term
Consequence
Resilience**
Positive well-being
& stronger

**Pre-Intervening
Conditions:**
- Visibility – self
  and family
- Community &
  school climate

Continuous
feedback loop

the theoretical model. It is important to note the challenge of reducing complex processes down to a simplified model, as much of the critically relevant complexity regarding participants' experiences and surroundings seem to be lost in the simplicity of the model depiction. Therefore, the model cannot stand alone and should only be interpreted in combination with participants' own words, as well as the descriptions of participants' backgrounds provided in earlier chapters.

Causal Conditions

Utilizing a feminist/risk-resilience framework, the causal conditions of heterosexism and homophobia were conceptualized as risk factors in the lives of adolescents with lesbian parents. Feminist theorists assert that distal factors, such as heterosexism and homophobia, have an impact on individual family members and, therefore, should be recognized and examined by researchers (Leslie & Sollie, 1994). Similar to previous studies on children and adolescents with lesbian and gay parents (e.g., Tasker & Golombok, 1997; Wright, 1998), participants of the current study perceived and experienced heterosexism and homophobia. While previous studies primarily focused on individual-level homophobia (e.g., teasing and harassment), the current study also assessed participants' experiences of institutional and cultural heterosexism and homophobia, thereby making a unique contribution to the literature. Blumenfeld's (1992) definitions of three types of homophobia (i.e., interpersonal, institutional, and cultural) were adapted to fit the study data. The vast majority of participants experienced both direct and indirect interpersonal heterosexism and homophobia; three-fourths reported perceiving institutional heterosexism and homophobia; and about two-thirds discussed cultural heterosexism and homophobia.

The current study also went beyond previous studies on adolescents with lesbian parents by identifying two categories of contextual factors related to the causal conditions: (a) frequency, intensity, and duration; and (b) perpetrator characteristics. These contextual factors played a role in how participants perceived and experienced heterosexism and homophobia. According to the risk-resilience framework, these contextual factors could potentially enhance the vulnerability of participants to heterosexism and homophobia, thereby playing a role opposite that of the protective factors. For example, the relationship between the participants and the perpetrators of interpersonal heterosexism and homophobia seemed to make a difference in terms of the impact on participants. More specifically, it was found that homophobic remarks made by fathers of participants from divorced families seemed to have a profound impact on participants during adolescence.

Pre-Intervening Conditions

According to feminist theory, it is important to take into account contextual factors when examining individual behavior (Leslie & Sollie, 1994). Pre-intervening conditions are broad contextual factors that pertain to the causal conditions in the model. While analyzing the study data, it became apparent that certain conditions likely influenced the type and amount of heterosexism and homophobia participants experienced during adolescence. The two pre-intervening conditions that emerged from the interview data with study participants were: (a) visibility of family and self, and (b) community climate. How visible the mothers' and the participants' sexual identities were to others, as well as the level of social tolerance of the communities in which the participants lived, seemed to have a direct influence on the causal conditions. These pre-

intervening conditions have not previously been explored in the literature on children

with lesbian and gay parents; certainly, the role of participants' own sexuality in relation

to the heterosexism and homophobia they experienced has not been fully explored in the

previous literature on children and adolescents with lesbian and gay parents.

Furthermore, one of the few instances when a potential difference was seen between

participants from divorced and planned families was when considering the visibility of

the family as a lesbian-parent family; some lesbian mothers who were in previous

heterosexual relationships were sometimes viewed as divorced mothers who had yet to

find new male partners, rather than as lesbian mothers. Previous studies have not

explored the differences and/or similarities between children from divorced lesbian

families and those from planned lesbian families.

Central Phenomena

When analyzing the data, it became clear that participants were doing more than

coping with the heterosexism and homophobia they experienced – they were also coping

with the way those causal conditions made them think and feel. The central phenomena

that resulted from exposure to heterosexism and homophobia were participants' thoughts

and feelings of marginalization and vulnerability; all participants made references to

marginalization, including three-fourths of the participants who made references to

vulnerability. These findings can be understood from a feminist theory perspective,

which asserts that power differentials in society present challenges for members of

marginalized groups (e.g., Cook & Fonow, 1986).

There was great variation in how vulnerable and/or marginalized participants

perceived themselves to be; some were merely "irritated" or "annoyed," while others

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were "terrified" for themselves and their families. When considering the risk-resilience framework, the central phenomena seemed closely tied to participants' *cognitive appraisal* of the causal conditions. Cognitive appraisal is the categorization of stressors in regard to their meaning and significance for well-being – or the ability to perceive a stressful situation as manageable (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Participants, therefore, who perceived themselves to be less vulnerable and/or marginalized than other participants can be thought of as having more positive cognitive appraisal in regards to heterosexism and homophobia. Of course, it must be considered that some participants may have actually been less vulnerable or marginalized than others; however, it certainly seemed that many of the participants faced similar causal conditions, yet their appraisal of their situations varied. Consistent with previous studies (e.g., Wright, 1998), some participants who felt the most vulnerable did not actually experience direct teasing or harassment in regards to their families or their own sexual identities. In addition to variation between participants, it is important to note that for many of the participants, their own experiences of the central phenomena and, thus, their cognitive appraisal of the causal conditions, changed over time. Therefore, participants' cognitive appraisal of the heterosexism and homophobia they experienced was dynamic and, likely, in constant flux depending on contextual factors. The current study goes a step beyond many previous studies on adolescents with lesbian parents by identifying factors (i.e., intervening conditions) that had an influence on the central phenomena and, thus, respondents' cognitive appraisals.

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Intervening Conditions

Six intervening conditions emerged from the data as having a direct influence on the central phenomena of marginalization and vulnerability, as well as the strategies utilized to cope with the central phenomena: (a) social support; (b) parental coping; (c) LGBT visibility; (d) individual participant characteristics; (e) pre-adolescent experiences with heterosexism and homophobia; and (f) the passage of time. Thinking from a risk-resilience perspective, some of these intervening conditions act as protective factors for participants. As expected, social support emerged from the data as a protective factor; participants identified family members (both immediate and extended), friends, other "queerspawn," and school faculty/staff as their main sources of social support during adolescence. These findings support general adolescence research, which showed that support from family and peers assisted in the coping process for adolescents (e.g., Hauser & Bowlds, 1990; Hirsch et al., 1990). The finding that close familial relationships help to promote the well-being of family members is also consistent with the feminist perspective, which emphasizes the importance of loving and caring family relationships, rather than family structure (e.g., Allen & Baber, 1992).

The current study also seems to lend support to the previous finding that the perception that social support is available can have a positive influence on an individual's appraisal of a stressor and ability to cope with it (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Indeed, even if participants did not always turn to their sources of social support when exposed to heterosexism or homophobia, just knowing others were there for them seemed to have a positive influence on participants' experience of the central phenomena. Furthermore, some of the many ways in which these sources of social support were helpful to

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participants were also described, thereby illustrating *how* this protective factor moderates the effect of heterosexism and homophobia. For example, when participants' friends spoke out against homophobia, some participants began to feel less vulnerable and afraid. According to Kaplan (1999), this example of how the protective factor of social support moderates the effect of the risk factors is called a protective *process*.

While parental coping with heterosexism and homophobia was identified as an intervening condition, it is difficult to determine from study data specific styles of parental coping that can be deemed "protective." For example, a general statement cannot be made about how "out" to the community lesbian parents should be when trying to discern what will be best for their children; while being very "out" may instill pride in children in regards to their families, it may also result in teasing from peers. Conversely, remaining "in" may protect children from some harassment; however, they may also learn to feel ashamed of their families. Regardless of how out lesbian parents choose to be, study data did seem to reveal that children benefited from open communication with their parents about their families and about heterosexism and homophobia.

General visibility of LGBT people and families – in the community, schools, and the media – was an intervening condition that emerged as a protective factor for participants. When LGBT people and families were visible, many participants reported a positive influence on their experience of the central phenomena, as well as their ability to cope with heterosexism and homophobia. Knowing other children with LGBT parents was especially helpful for some participants. This finding was consistent with Vanfraussen et al. (2002), who found that half of the children with lesbian mothers in their study felt it was important to know other children with lesbian mothers, "because

these children (did) not laugh at them and (understood) things better" (p.249). Findings from the current study expand our knowledge of how LGBT visibility acts as a protective factor for adolescents with lesbian parents.

Some of the participants' individual characteristics, such as being confident, self-assured, and strong-willed, emerged as protective factors when it came to coping with heterosexism and homophobia. This finding is consistent with the general risk-resilience literature, which identified the intrinsic disposition of a child as a potential protective resource that is especially important for young people facing adversity (Garmezy, 1985). Other individual characteristics, such as sibling birth order, were not necessarily protective factors but still had an influence on the central phenomena and coping. Specifically, the finding that participants' own sexual identities influenced how they perceived, experienced, and coped with heterosexism and homophobia is a phenomenon that has yet to be fully explored in social science research. A feminist approach asserts that our knowledge and experience of the world is a function of different aspects of our social selves, including our sexual identities (Leslie & Sollie, 1994); therefore, participants who identified as LGBTQ during adolescence were dealing with heterosexism and homophobia in relation to themselves in addition to their parents.

Pre-adolescent experiences with heterosexism and homophobia, and the passage of time, emerged as the final two intervening conditions. Participants' pre-adolescent experiences with heterosexism and homophobia did not necessarily play a protective role, although they did have an influence on some participants' experience of the central phenomena and coping strategies. The passage of time, however, did seem to act as a protective influence for some participants, as getting older seemed to make things easier;

sometimes peers became more open-minded and accepting, while sometimes participants themselves grew less afraid as they matured. Moreover, some participants talked about how things are easier now for today's adolescents, as LGBT issues become more visible.

Coping Strategies

Study participants utilized various coping strategies during their adolescence in response to heterosexism and homophobia and the central phenomena. The two main types of coping strategies that emerged from the data were: (a) protect and (b) de-marginalize. According to the risk-resilience framework, effective coping strategies are thought to moderate the impact of heterosexism and homophobia on adolescents with lesbian parents. While some of the protective coping strategies, such as avoiding feelings, may be categorized as "withdrawal" (Seiffge-Krenke, 1993; 1995), the majority of the protective and de-marginalizing coping strategies can be labeled as "active/problem-focused" coping or "internal/emotion-focused" coping (Compas, 1987; Seiffge-Krenke, 1993; 1995). For example, confronting perpetrators, educating others, and avoiding/controlling situations, are primarily active/problem-focused strategies, as the aim was to reduce or eliminate the stressor. Developing a "thick-skin," utilizing social support, and being open about family/self, meanwhile, could be categorized primarily as internal/emotion-focused coping strategies, as the aim was to change the emotional state created by the stressor. Some of the coping strategies, such as building social support and being involved in formal political activism, could be categorized as both active and internal coping, as the goal for utilizing these strategies seemed to be multi-faceted. Furthermore, according to the feminist perspective, many of these coping strategies – especially the de-marginalizing ones – can be viewed as "political," even if

participants were not engaged in formal political activism, as the feminist perspective asserts that the personal is political (e.g., Sollie & Leslie, 1994).

Although the withdrawal coping strategies, such as avoiding feelings and not fighting back, may be considered by some to be dysfunctional (Seiffge-Krenke, 1993; 1995), these coping strategies may sometimes serve an important and functional protective purpose. For example, some participants said that they did not fight back when teased or harassed in order to prevent the situation from getting any worse. Avoiding dealing with feelings, however, seemed to have a negative long-term impact on those participants who utilized the strategy; while avoiding difficult feelings may be protective in the short-term, some participants talked about how this coping strategy came back to hurt them in the long run.

Some of the protective and de-marginalizing coping strategies identified in the current study are consistent with findings from previous studies on children and adolescents with lesbian parents. For example, the protective strategy of trying to "blend in" by hiding their families and/or not telling others about their families was similar to Wright's (1998) findings, as well as to two of the social control strategies identified by Bozett (1987): *boundary control* and *nondisclosure*. Not fighting back against homophobia was also discussed by Wright, whose participants sometimes ignored it when their peers teased them or made derogatory comments. Furthermore, confronting perpetrators, which was both a protective and de-marginalizing strategy identified in the current study, was similar to the reactions of the 10-year-old participants in Gartrell et al.'s (2005) study, who spoke out in response to homophobic comments made by their peers.

The de-marginalizing strategy of being open about family/self was similar to the findings of Bozett (1987) and Gartrell et al (2005); while Bozett identified a third social control strategy of *disclosure*, more than 90% of the participants in Gartrell et al.'s study were open to at least some of their peers about their families. This coping strategy of being open about family/self also builds upon Oswald's (2002) theory that managing disclosure is an "intentionality" strategy utilized by members of LGBT families which fosters resilience. Furthermore, the coping strategy of building social support is similar to Oswald's resilience-fostering strategy of *building community*. Lastly, the de-marginalizing strategy of getting involved in formal political activism is consistent with Oswald's finding that some LGBT family members utilize the "meaning-making" strategy of *politicizing* to link what is happening in their personal lives to the larger heterosexist social context.

While some of the findings of the current study are consistent with previous research, they also make a unique contribution to the literature. This study gives a more detailed and in-depth picture of how adolescents with lesbian parents cope with all types of heterosexism and homophobia. While previous studies primarily examined coping strategies in regard to interpersonal heterosexism and homophobia (e.g. Bozett, 1987; Wright, 1998), the current study is unique in that coping with institutional and cultural heterosexism and homophobia was also explored. Furthermore, coping strategies were categorized in the current study as either "protective" or "de-marginalizing" to indicate why participants utilized certain strategies, which may help to provide more in-depth understanding of coping by adolescents with lesbian parents.

Consequences

The consequences refer to the outcomes of the coping strategies utilized by participants when dealing with the impact of heterosexism and homophobia. "Validation/empowerment" refers to consequences that seemed to (a) validate participants' own feelings and sense of self-worth and (b) enable participants to act in ways that allowed participants to feel further validation. "Invalidation/disempowerment" refers to the consequences for some participants of utilizing certain coping strategies, which was that they did not feel validated or empowered. From the perspective of the risk-resilience framework, it would seem that experiencing more validation/empowerment than invalidation/disempowerment would help to foster resilience in adolescents with lesbian parents. This aspect of the theoretical model – consequences – needs to be more fully developed. However, these initial findings are an addition to the literature, as few studies have explored the immediate consequences of the coping strategies utilized by adolescents with lesbian parents.

Long-Term Consequence: Resilience

The long-term consequence of resilience was identified as an outcome of the coping strategies utilized by study participants. *Resilience* has been defined in this study as the ability of participants to grow stronger as a result of dealing with heterosexism and homophobia and to be psychologically healthy despite exposure to these stressors. All study participants, despite large variations in adolescent experiences with heterosexism and homophobia, exhibited evidence of resilience. Consistent with previous findings (e.g., Buxton, 1999; Fitzgerald, 1999), the majority of participants from the current study said they were more "open-minded" and accepting of differences in others as a result of

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growing up in a lesbian-parent family and having to deal with heterosexism and homophobia. Furthermore, some participants spoke about how their adolescent experiences with heterosexism and homophobia made them stronger and/or prepared them for living in a world that would not always be accepting of them or their families. While previous studies have also shown the resilience of adolescents and young adults with lesbian parents (e.g., Tasker & Golomok, 1997), this aspect of the model – long-term consequences – in the present study needs to be more fully developed. It should also be noted that the findings of the present study do not affirm the notion that all adolescents/young adults with lesbian parents are resilient, only that all of the study participants were resilient individuals. However, the findings add to a sparse literature on adolescents with lesbian parents and provide further evidence of the resilience of this population.

Limitations

While there are many strengths of this study, such as the qualitative nature that allowed for examination of an unexplored topic with an understudied group, there are also limitations that are important to note. First, although several techniques were utilized to establish trustworthiness of the data and findings (e.g., triangulation, peer review and debriefing sessions, and member checks), it is inevitable that my perspectives and biases influenced the coding and data analysis, as I was the sole interviewer and coder of the data. It is more than likely that another researcher taking on the same project would have done some things differently, such as ask different follow-up questions during the interviews and develop different codes and categories during the analysis. While this limitation does not invalidate the study findings, it highlights the importance

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of continuing to examine the study data for new and alternative meanings, and the need for more studies that explore how children and adolescents with lesbian parents cope with heterosexism and homophobia.

Another limitation of the current study is in regards to the sampling methodology. Convenience sampling and snowball sampling were both utilized and present obvious limitations in terms of the results being generalized to a larger population. As participants volunteered for the study, the sample was a self-selected group that is not representative of all young adults with lesbian parents. While theoretical sampling ensured a certain amount of within-sample diversity regarding family type (divorced vs. planned), the sample was limited in its diverse representation of other demographic factors, such as race/ethnicity, gender, and geographic location. Furthermore, while previous studies (e.g., Tasker & Golombok, 1997) found that adolescents/young adults with lesbian parents identified as LGBT no more often than adolescents/young adults with heterosexual parents, a seemingly large proportion (almost one-third) of the current study's sample identified as gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer; this finding may indicate that snowball and convenience sampling – primarily through LGBT advocacy organizations – resulted in a relatively politicized volunteer sample. In addition, while all participants showed evidence of long-term resilience despite exposure to heterosexism and homophobia, it is likely that only resilient individuals self-selected into this study. For these reasons, this study is limited in how much the findings can be generalized to all adolescents with lesbian parents.

It is also important to note the limitations due to the retrospective nature of the study, as the participants were young adults who were asked to think back and reflect

upon their adolescence. The primary reason for choosing young adults rather than adolescents was that being recently beyond adolescence may have provided participants with better perspective than adolescents currently in that stage of development. However, it is important to note that retrospective approaches have potential drawbacks, as participants' memories may be flawed. Furthermore, as participants noted, the passage of time is an important intervening factor; indeed, adolescents with lesbian parents today likely experience a different cultural climate in regard to heterosexism and homophobia than did the study participants. While the current study makes a significant contribution to the sparse literature on adolescents with lesbian parents, the study limitations have important implications for future research.

Implications for Research, Policy, and Practice

Research

The study findings, along with the study limitations, have several implications for future research. First, similar studies on adolescents with gay, bisexual, and transgender parents are needed. Although the social science literature is still lacking in regard to our knowledge about the experiences of those with lesbian parents, we know even less about those with GBT parents and how they perceive and cope with heterosexism and homophobia. Studies that utilize qualitative, grounded theory methodologies to explore the unique experiences of children and adolescents with GBT parents could potentially make significant contributions to the literature.

Second, the current study had limitations in its diversity among participants in regard to demographic variables, such as gender, race/ethnicity, and geographic location. The majority of studies on children and adolescents with lesbian parents have had

participants who are primarily White, and who are primarily from states on the East and

West coasts of the U.S. Although this study did have some diversity in terms of

geographic location, as 30% of the sample was **not** from the Northeast or the West coast,

more participants from the South and Midwest should be sought for future studies.

Moreover, the vast majority (more than 83%) of participants from the current study were

White. It is very likely that children and adolescents with lesbian mothers – who are also

members of a minority racial/ethnic group – perceive and experience heterosexism and

homophobia differently than members of the majority racial/ethnic culture. Therefore,

more studies are needed that explore the experiences of participants from diverse

racial/ethnic groups. Lastly, although there was some diversity in the current study

sample in regard to gender (i.e., four participants identified as transgender), less than

27% of the sample was male. Due to the fact that the coping literature has identified

differences in adolescent coping styles based on gender, it would be interesting to explore

differences and similarities in how adolescent girls and boys with lesbian parents cope

with heterosexism and homophobia. Future studies could recruit more males and explore

this aspect of gender and coping.

Another area for future research would be in regard to familial coping with

heterosexism and homophobia. Findings indicated that parental coping was a factor that

had an influence on how participants experienced the central phenomena and how they

coped with heterosexism and homophobia. Future studies could ask participants about

the coping strategies of different family members, such as parents and siblings.

Important knowledge could be gained about how family members cope similarly or

differently and how families can support each other while dealing with heterosexism and homophobia.

Although theoretical sampling was utilized in the current study to recruit equal numbers of participants from "divorced" and "planned" families, not many differences were found between the two groups. However, this outcome could be due to the fact that participants from divorced families were relatively young when their mothers and fathers divorced/separated and when their mothers came out as lesbian. Future studies could explore whether adolescents with lesbian parents from divorced families, whose parents come out immediately prior to or during adolescence, cope differently with heterosexism and homophobia than participants in the current study.

Study findings did reveal some differences between participants who identified as GBTQ during adolescence and those who did not. Oftentimes participants who identified as GBTQ perceived and experienced heterosexism and homophobia primarily in relation to themselves – and secondarily in relation to their mothers. There is virtually nothing in the social science literature on queer kids of queer parents. However, COLAGE, the primary support and advocacy group for children with LGBT parents, has been providing services to this group, called "Second Gen-ners," for years (http://www.colage.org/programs/2ndgen/faq.htm). Future studies should explore the unique needs, experiences, and strengths of LGBTQ children of LGBTQ parents.

There are many possible directions for future research utilizing the current study data. After receiving feedback from other family scholars on the work I have done thus far, I plan to subsequently go back to the data to reanalyze it with these new perspectives in mind. As previously mentioned, a limitation of the study is that I was the sole coder of

the data. When I did receive feedback about my coding scheme from colleagues in my

qualitative research group, as well as from my dissertation advisor, I was able to see the

data in new ways. In addition to working from this feedback, I could also invite

colleagues to look at the data and develop their own coding schemes, in order to verify

initial findings and to gain additional points of view. Specifically, I would ask for others'

input regarding some themes that arose but that did not make it into this final document.

For example, when recalling specific examples of heterosexism or homophobia, three

participants mentioned that some male peers, upon discovering the mothers' sexual

identities, asked the participants whether the mothers were "hot" and if the participants

had ever seen their mothers having sex with other women. These incidents seemed

related to heterosexism and homophobia in some way, yet I was unable to articulate how.

In addition to doing more reading of others' work related to sexism and homophobia in

hopes of gaining some insight, I also plan to ask for others' input regarding this theme of

"fetishizing" lesbians, and whether/how it relates to heterosexism and homophobia.

Policy

This study also has important implications for policies at the school, community,

state, and federal levels. Findings revealed that institutional heterosexism and

homophobia was at play in schools, churches, and state and federal governments.

Meanwhile, some participants attended progressive schools that openly discussed LGBT

issues and worked to fight oppression in its many forms, including heterosexism and

homophobia – and these participants described the positive impact attending these

schools had on their lives. Faculty and staff in schools should be aware of how their

policies often promote heterosexism and homophobia – and should seek to make

institutional-level changes. For example, administrative forms, such as permission slips, could have a line for "Parent/guardian" instead of "Mother" or "Father," as a way of recognizing various family structures. Other school policies related to school dances should be changed to recognize same-gender couples, as well as heterosexual couples – or at least to not give preference to heterosexual couples in the form of discounted tickets to which same-gender couples would not also have access. Furthermore, information about and acknowledgement of LGBT people and families should be included in classroom curricula. Moreover, policies should be created that advise teachers and staff on how to recognize and stop the heterosexism and homophobia they witness on the part of students, in order to promote a safe learning environment. Lastly, in schools that do not currently have a GSA, funds should be targeted for this purpose, as many participants noted the importance of visible support in schools.

Religious institutions in participants' communities were also a source of institutional heterosexism and homophobia. More than half of participants were associated with a specific religion at the time of the interview; a few other participants who were not associated with a particular religion at the time of the interview did practice a religion during their adolescence. While some participants belonged to religious communities that celebrated and honored LGBT people and families, others described interactions with religious leaders who promoted heterosexist and homophobic views. Religious institutions that want to change their heterosexist and homophobic policies and teachings could begin discussions with church leaders and community members, including LGBT families, about how and what changes could take place. Efforts could be made to review the religion's stance on LGBT issues, such as how sexual orientation

is referred to (or ignored) in religious instruction and whether LGBT individuals are allowed to be religious leaders. To the extent possible, changes should be made in policies to allow for greater visibility and support of LGBT people and families in religious institutions.

Finally, participants spoke about heterosexism and homophobia on the part of state and federal governmental policymakers. Even though governmental policy did not have a direct effect on all participants, some participants spoke about their awareness of anti-LGBT laws and policies and how this knowledge contributed to their thoughts and feelings of vulnerability and marginalization. In order to foster the well-being of children and adolescents with LGBT parents, policymakers at the state and federal levels should abandon efforts to promote heterosexism and homophobia through marriage and adoption laws and policies. Furthermore, the enactment of anti-discrimination laws and policies at both the state and federal levels would help ensure the rights of LGBT parents to keep their jobs and retain custody of their children, regardless of how "out" they are about their sexual identities.

State and federal funds could be utilized to support various programs that would serve to foster the resilience of adolescents with lesbian parents. For example, government funds could be targeted for schools to help them explore ways to become more open and supportive of LGBT people and families, such as by incorporating LGBT issues into class curriculum, creating GSAs, and training all teachers and staff. Community organizations, such as COLAGE, should be funded to expand their successful work of supporting and connecting children and adolescents with lesbian parents, as knowing other queerspawn emerged as an important protective factor for

participants. Lastly, funds could also be utilized for culturally-appropriate mental health services for lesbian-parent families to help them deal with heterosexism and homophobia within and outside of the family and to feel less vulnerable and marginalized.

Practice

Study findings also have important implications for families, friends, teachers, and others who are interested in fostering the resilience of adolescents with lesbian parents. Family practitioners could help lesbian mothers to understand the experience of their adolescent children facing heterosexism and homophobia, as well as the intervening conditions that help to foster resilience. Family practitioners could also work with lesbian parents and their children who are dealing with heterosexism within and outside their families and help foster communication between family members regarding how the family will cope with interpersonal, institutional, and cultural heterosexism and homophobia. Parents can help provide their children with tools to deal with these outside stressors. Furthermore, social support from family members and peers should be encouraged for the well-being of adolescents with lesbian parents; more specifically, information about how friends can stand up against heterosexism and homophobia should be shared with all children and adolescents, as participants spoke repeatedly about how much this meant to them when their friends spoke out. Lastly, family practitioners working with adolescents from "divorced" lesbian families should attempt to educate fathers about the impact of parental homophobic attitudes and how fathers can better support their children; fathers should be made aware of the potential negative impact on their children's feelings of vulnerability and marginalization that interpersonal heterosexism or homophobia, on their part, could have.

Teachers and other school staff should work to make LGBT people and families more visible in schools and create more visible forms of support for adolescents with lesbian parents. Faculty and staff could organize school-wide assemblies to educate students about LGBT people and families, in an effort to help de-marginalize this population. Furthermore, by including LGBT people and families in classroom curriculum, teachers send a signal that they value diversity and are safe people with whom students with lesbian parents can approach. Trainings should also be provided for school personnel, in order to ensure that school faculty and staff are working to become aware of their own heterosexist and homophobic attitudes and actions. Teachers should work to become more aware of heterosexist and homophobic language on the part of students and themselves, and take action to stop it. The importance of this was illustrated by some participants who did not feel supported by their teachers.

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

The current study explored how young adults with lesbian parents perceived, experienced, and coped with heterosexism and homophobia during adolescence, and is a unique addition to the literature on children with LGBT parents in many ways. First, the study is one of the first to explore how different types of heterosexism and homophobia (i.e., interpersonal, institutional, and cultural) have an impact on adolescents with lesbian parents. Second, the study reveals protective factors and processes that help foster resilience among adolescents with lesbian mothers who experience vulnerability and marginalization. Lastly, this study uses grounded theory qualitative methods, thereby allowing the research to evolve from the voices of the young-adult participants who grew

up with lesbian parents – a group whose voices are underrepresented in the social science literature.

This study is a starting point for understanding the experiences of adolescents with lesbian parents, who may face heterosexism and homophobia from extended family members, teachers, peers, religious institutions, and the government. Findings reveal the resilience of the 30 participants, despite varying levels of exposure to the risk factors (i.e., heterosexism and homophobia) and diverse experiences of the central phenomena (i.e, thoughts and feelings of vulnerability and marginalization). Findings also reveal that social support from family members, teachers, and friends, as well as LGBT visibility in schools and communities, have the potential to foster resilience among adolescents with lesbian parents, who utilize various protective and de-marginalizing strategies to deal with the impact of heterosexism and homophobia in their lives.

More studies are needed that explore the unique experiences of children and adolescents with lesbian mothers, as well as children of gay, bisexual, and transgender parents. Participants of the current study had many words of wisdom to share with others about their families and their own experiences of heterosexism and homophobia. This dissertation was a step forward in understanding more about the strengths of children and adolescents with lesbian parents, and LGBT parent-families in general, by allowing participants the opportunity to tell their unique stories. As David said, "I'm pretty aware that I have a unique lens, and that growing up, I had an amazingly different lifestyle than most. So, why not spread that knowledge and that experience?" Study participants did their part by sharing their experiences and perspectives – and I hope I have done my part as the researcher to make their voices heard.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Study Announcement

Research Opportunity for Individuals with Lesbian Parents!
If you are between the ages of 18 to 25 years old and grew up with a lesbian parent or parents, you are eligible to participate in a research study. The study is being conducted by Kate Kuvalanka, a doctoral candidate at the University of Maryland, College Park, and an active member of COLAGE (Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere) for the past 10+ years. The purpose of Kate's dissertation is to explore participants' experiences living with lesbian parents during adolescence. The study also examines the ways in which participants as adolescents dealt with society's homophobia – people's negative attitudes and beliefs regarding lesbian and gay people. If you are interested in participating in Kate's study, please contact her either by email at kkuvalan@umd.edu or by phone at (301) 405-6344. Participants will be given $25 for their time. If you are not eligible to participate but know someone who is, please pass this information on to her/him. Kate really appreciates your help with spreading the word about her study!

Appendix B: Recruitment Letter to COLAGE Chapter Coordinators

<Date>, 2006

Dear COLAGE Chapter Coordinator,

My name is Kate Kuvalanka, and I am the Co-chair of the COLAGE Board of Directors. I am also a graduate student in the Department of Family Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park, and I am asking for your assistance in recruiting young adult COLAGErs who may be interested in participating in a research study for my dissertation. I am looking for young adults (ages 18 to 25 years old) who grew up with one or two lesbian parents. The purpose of this research is to explore participants' experiences of growing up with lesbian parents during their adolescence and to learn more about the ways in which participants perceived and responded to society's homophobia. Interviews will take place either in-person or over the phone and will last approximately 90 minutes. All information will be kept confidential, and participants' privacy will be respected at all times. The Institutional Review Board at the University of Maryland, College Park, has approved this study.

Your help with recruiting participants is greatly appreciated! Please let young adult COLAGErs know about this research opportunity and provide them with my contact information. My phone number is (301) 405-6344 and my email address is kkuvalan@umd.edu.

Thank you for your time and your help! Please contact me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Kate Kuvalanka
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Family Studies
University of Maryland, College Park

Appendix C: Interview Informed Consent Form

INTERVIEW INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Growing Up with Lesbian and Gay Parents:
Young Adults Reflect on Their Adolescence

You are over 18 years of age and agree to participate in a program of research being conducted by Dr. Leigh A. Leslie and Katherine A. Kuvalanka in the Department of Family Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park.

The purpose of this research is to explore participants' experiences of living with lesbian and gay parents during adolescence.

The procedures involve an in-depth individual interview that will either be in-person or over the telephone and will last approximately 90 minutes. During the interview, you will be asked questions relating to your experiences as an adolescent with lesbian and/or gay parents. Examples of questions you will be asked include:

- What was it like to be an adolescent with lesbian/gay parents?
- (How) did you perceive and/or experience homophobia as an adolescent?
- Who and/or what were your sources of support during your adolescence?

The interview will be audiotaped. After the interview, you will be asked to read and comment on the transcript of your interview, as well as the interpretations of the researcher.

You give your permission to have your interview audiotaped, whether the interview is in person or over the phone. Audiotapes will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's office at the University of Maryland, College Park. Only the study investigators will have access to the tapes. Once the study is completed, the audiotapes will be destroyed.

All information collected in this study is confidential to the extent permitted by law. The data you provide will be grouped with data others provide for reporting and presentation and when your data is specifically referred to, a code name will be used in place of your real name.

There are no known risks associated with participation in this research.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. The study is not designed to help you personally, but to help the investigator learn more about the experience of adolescents with lesbian and gay parents. You may decline to answer any of the questions and will not be penalized in any way. You are free to ask questions or withdraw from participation at any time and without penalty. You will receive no compensation for your involvement in this study.

You are welcome to contact the study investigators at any time at:

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Dr. Leigh Leslie, 1204 Marie Mount Hall, Department of Family Studies, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742, Phone: (301) 405-3672; Email: lleslie@umd.edu

Kate Kuvalanka, 1204 Marie Mount Hall, Department of Family Studies, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742, Phone: (301) 405-6344; Email: kkuvalanka@hotmail.com

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact: Institutional Review Board Office, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742; (email) irb@deans.umd.edu; (telephone) 301-405-0678.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT:

_____

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT:

_____

DATE: _____
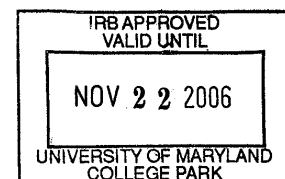
Appendix D: Interview Protocol

Date: _____
Type of Interview: In-person/Phone: _____
Location of Participant (U.S. State):_____
Code #: _____
Code Name: _____

Kate to the participant: Ok, now let me tell you a bit more about the purpose of the study. Through this research, I'm hoping to explore some of the experiences you had as an adolescent with lesbian parents. I'd like you to think about your middle school and high school years. I'm also interested in how you may have perceived, experienced, and responded to homophobia and heterosexism as an adolescent. Homophobia can be described as people's negative attitudes toward lesbian and gay people. Heterosexism can be described as the assumption that people sometimes have that everyone is heterosexual – or that everyone should be heterosexual. I will ask you about 20 questions or so related to your experiences as an adolescent. I want to remind you that what you tell me is confidential, in that I will not use your name or any identifying information when reporting my findings. I also want to assure you that as the daughter of a lesbian mom myself, my purpose is not to take a stand for or against lesbians as parents but to give as accurate a portrayal as possible of adolescents' experiences growing up with a lesbian parent or parents. I am interested in learning more about the unique experiences, strengths, and struggles of kids with lesbian parents, so that we can learn how to make things better and easier for kids growing up with lesbian and gay parents now.

Do you have any questions for me about the purpose of the study or what I hope to do with the results of the study?

Before we begin the interview, I'd like to take a few minutes to get some basic background information about you. If you don't feel comfortable answering any of the questions, just let me know and we can skip them. Ok? Are you ready? Here's the first one…

1. What is your date of birth?: _____

2. What is your gender?:   Female   Male   Transgender

3. What do you consider to be your race/ethnicity? _____

4. If you have a religion, what is your religion? _____

5. In terms of your education, what is the highest grade you completed in school? _____

6. Are you currently employed?   Yes   No

     6a. If yes, what is your occupation? _____

7. In what city and state did you primarily live while you were an adolescent?

_____

8. Would you consider the area in which you lived as an adolescent to be (circle one):

Urban (large city)   Urban (small city)   Rural   Suburban

Ok, great, thank you. Are you ready to start the actual interview?

1. (Give participant a piece of paper and pencil – have them draw diagram of their family) (For interviews over the phone – ask participants to draw ahead of time and fax to me)
       Tell me the story of your family…(PROMPTS: Who's in your family? How did your family come to be?)

(Ask specifically if answers do not come out in story…demographics info continued:)

9. How many lesbian mothers do you have? _____

        11a. If more than one, how old were you when they got together? _____
        11b. If more than one, are your mothers still together?   Yes   No
            11c. If still together, how long have they been together?   _____
            11d. If NOT still together, how long were they together?   _____
                AND how old were you when they separated?   _____

10. What do you consider to be the race/ethnicity of your lesbian mother(s)?
        Mother #1: _____
        Mother #2: _____

11. What is the highest grade that your mother(s) completed in school?

        Mother #1: _____

        Mother #2: _____

12. Other than your lesbian mother(s), do you have other parents?   Yes   No

    12a. If yes, please list who they are in terms of their relationship to you (e.g., father, donor dad, etc.)? _____

    12b. If yes, what do you consider to be the race/ethnicity of your other parent(s)?

        Parent #1: _____

        Parent #2: _____

    12c. If yes, what was the highest grade that your other parent(s) completed in school?

        Parent #1: _____

        Parent #2: _____

13. Were your biological mother and father ever married?   Yes   No

    13a. If yes, how old were you when they were divorced?   _____

14. Which parent(s) was/were your primary caretaker(s) during adolescence?

    _____

15. Do you have any siblings?   Yes   No

    15a. If yes, how many siblings do you have? _____

    15b. If yes, how many sisters do you have? _____

        15c. What are the ages of your sisters? _____

    15d. If yes, how many brothers do you have? _____

        15e. What are the ages of your brothers? _____

16. How old were you when you became aware that your mother(s) was/were lesbian?

    _____

    16b. How did you find out? (e.g., mother told you, sibling told you, you overheard a conversation, etc.)

MIDDLE/JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL:

2. Think back to when you were in middle/junior high school…what were you like? What things were you involved in?

3. Who were you close to during that time? Who was supportive of you? How did they support you?

4. What was your family like back then?

5. How did you feel about having (a) lesbian mom(s) while you were in middle school? How open were you about having lesbian moms? Explain.

6. Can you think of any specific examples of heterosexism or homophobia you experienced during your middle school or junior high years? If yes, please tell me about it. Where did it happen? Who was involved? (Prompts: at school, church, sports team, from extended family, etc.?)

7. If yes, what did these experiences mean to you? What kind of impact did they have on you?

8. If yes, how did you deal with it?

9. Was there anyone you shared the experience with or turned to for help?

10. If yes, how successful do you feel you were in dealing with this?

11. What did you take away from the experience?

HIGH SCHOOL:

12. Think back to when you were in high school…what were you like? What things were you involved in?

13. What was your family like then?

14. How did you feel about having a lesbian mom during those years? How open were you about having a lesbian mom? Explain.

15. Who were you close to when you were in high school? Who was supportive of you? How did they support you?

16. Can you think of any specific examples of heterosexism or homophobia you experienced during your high school years? If yes, please tell me about it. Where did it happen? Who was involved? (PROMPTS: at school, church, sports team, from extended family, etc.?)

17. If yes, what did these experiences mean to you? What kind of impact did they have on you?

18. How did you deal with it?

19. Was there anyone you shared the experience with or turned to for help?

20. How successful do you feel you were in dealing with this?

21. What did you take away from that experience?

22. Thinking back over your middle school and high school years, do you think there were implicit heterosexist and homophobic messages in society (e.g., in the media, in textbooks, from the government) – things you came to know and understand over time – about how society thinks about or values lesbian parents and their families? (PROMPT: If yes, what were the messages that you came to know?)

23. How did you come to learn these things about how society thinks about or values lesbian parents and their families?

24. How have these experiences we've talked about today influenced who you are today? How would you rate your current self? Are you doing well, having a hard time? Explain.

25. Now that you are a young adult, what do you think is important for others to understand about the experiences of adolescents with lesbian parents?

Those are all of the interview questions that I have for you right now. Do you have any (more) questions for me?

Thank you so much for your help. If I have more questions for you that come up for me later, I will be contacting you. Is that ok with you?

If you think of something else that you forgot to say or if you just think of something else you'd like to tell me regarding your experiences as an adolescent, please call or email me – I'd love to hear from you.

I do have two more questions for you:
(a) I will be emailing my study findings – my interpretations and conclusions – to participants to get their feedback and reactions. Would you be willing to read those findings and get back to me with comments?   YES   NO

>   (If Washington, DC area resident: Would you be willing to participate in a group
>   session where you would get together with me and three or four other study
>   participants to discuss the findings?) YES   NO

(b) If in the future I decide to collect some follow-up data through a survey or questionnaire, would you be willing to participate by filling out some forms like that?
          YES   NO

If yes, I will keep your name and contact information in a separate, confidential file.

If yes, it would be very helpful to have the name and contact information of a person in your life who will always know where you are – like a parent or sibling. I will keep that person's information confidential as well. Would you mind giving me that information?

>   Name of second contact: _____
>   Relationship of interviewee to above person: _____
>   Phone number:_____
>   Email address: _____

Appendix E: Family Diagram

Family Diagram (adapted from Oswald, 2006)

Please draw a diagram of your family, as you define it. Put yourself in the center, and then place everyone else around you. Use first names for everyone, along with labels such as "brother" or "friend" so that I will understand whom you are talking about, and how they are connected to you.

Appendix F: Codebook

Code #	Code Label	Code Description
1	FAMILY STORY	Story of who is in family and how family came to be
2	AWARENESS	When and how became aware that mother is a lesbian
21	When	Age at which became aware
211	Always	Always knew/for as long as they can remember
212	Age	Gave specific age
213	Over Time	Became aware of different aspects/meanings over time
22	How	How they became aware
221	Mother	They found out from mother
222	Natural	Just knew because it was "natural" or "normal"
223	Self-realization	Realized on own from observation
224	Others	Found out from other people
225	Family Story	Told a story about how they became aware
3	MS PERSONA	What participants were like as middle schoolers
301	Activities	Activities they did and interests they had
302	Qualities	Adjectives/other descriptors used to describe self
303	Relationships	Relationships with others – especially family and friends
304	Context	Described environment and context to help explain persona and behavior
305	Health	Described physical or psychological health
306	Academics	Described how they did academically
307	Lesbian Mom	Described incidents or interactions with others related to mom being lesbian
31	MS SUPPORT NETWORK	Who was supportive during middle school and how they were supportive
311	Family	
3111	Parents	
3112	Siblings	
3113	Extended family	
312	Friends	
3121	General	
3122	Queerspawn	Other kids with LGBT parents
313	Religious Community	
314	Teachers	
315	Lesbian Community	
316	Other	
32	MS FAMILY	
321	Family Activities	Activities that the family did together
322	Positive Dynamic	Family dynamics interpreted by participant as

		positive
323	Conflict	Participant-Mom dynamic interpreted by participant as negative/challenging
324	Siblings	References to siblings
325	Father	References to fathers
326	Family Stressors	Factors that put stress on family, such as poverty, health problems, death, etc.
327	Extended Family	References to extended family
328	Moms' Partnerships	References to dynamics of mothers' lesbian relationships
329	Lesbian Identity	How mothers' lesbian identity influenced participant and family
33	MS COMFORT LEVEL	How comfortable they were with having a lesbian mom in MS
331	Feelings	Thoughts and feelings about having lesbian mom
3311	General	General neutral or positive comments
3312	"It is what it is"	Just the way it was; didn't change how felt about family; didn't feel ashamed
3313	Feeling "Torn"	Loving family, but struggling with outside world
3314	Uncomfortable	Felt "uncomfortable" about it
332	Threat from Others	Perception of how threatening it would be to let others know about family
3321	Little/No Threat	Not perceived as too threatening
3322	Moderate Threat	Perceived as somewhat-moderately threatening
3323	Large Threat	Perceived as very threatening
333	Openness	How open they were with others about family
3331	Not Open	Did not disclose or disclosed only to a few "safe" people; may have hid family
3332	Somewhat Open	Disclosed in certain contexts or with some people; may not have gone out of way to tell people, but didn't hide
3333	Open	Disclosed to everyone
34	MS HET & HOM	Perceived and experienced heterosexism and homophobia during MS
341	Interpersonal	Individual behavior based on heterosexism and homophobia
3411	Direct	Directly regarding participant or family
34111	Father	Father as perpetrator
34112	Extended family	Extended family members as perpetrators
34113	Peers	Peers as perpetrators
34114	Other	Other people as perpetrators
3412	Indirect	General, not directly regarding participant
34121	Comments/slurs	Heard comments/slurs
34122	Physical attacks	Heard about/witnessed physical attacks
342	Institutionalized	Ways in which government, churches, schools, etc. discriminate

3421	School	School as source
3422	Government	Government as source
3423	Religion	Religious leaders/policies as source
3424	Other	Other sources
343	Cultural	Social norms/standards and codes of behavior that legitimize H&H
35	MS HET & HOM IMPACT	The impact the H&H had on participants while they were in MS
351	Vulnerable Self	References to own actual or perceived vulnerability
352	Vulnerable Family	References to family's actual or perceived vulnerability
353	Different	Awareness/feeling of difference from others
354	"Abnormal"/Devalued	H&H made them feel as if their families were "abnormal" or of less worth
355	Feelings	Feelings reported as a result of facing H&H
3551	Irritated/Annoyed	
3552	Frustrated	
3553	Angry	
3554	Didn't Bother Me	
3555	Other feelings	
3556	Anxious	
356	Discouragement	Felt discouraged after trying to stand up against H&H
357	Preparation	Felt experiences with H&H helped to prepare them for later
358	Positive Impact	Experiences with H&H eventually had a positive result
359	Suicide Attempt	Feeling marginalized contributed to suicide attempt
36	MS HET & HOM COPING	How participants coped with H&H in MS
361	Protect	Tried to protect self and/or family from emotional and/or physical harm
3611	Blend In	Tried to "blend in" with others by not telling others about family, actively hiding family, acting "ok" with homophobia, etc.
36111	Remain silent	Didn't speak out against H&H to protect
36112	Don't tell others	Don't tell others about family/self
36113	Hiding/Lying	Actively hide family/lie about family or self
3612	Don't fight back	Not fighting back or responding when faced with heterosexism or homophobia
3613	Manage/avoid feelings	Tried to protect self from feelings of vulnerability and/or marginalization by managing or avoiding feelings
3614	Avoid/control situations	Tried to avoid or control "risky" situations where could be hurt
3615	Confront	Used when emotionally, verbally, or physically attacked to try to end harm against

		self and/or family
3616	Get "thick skin"	Acquiring ability to not let heterosexism or homophobia bother them
3617	Use social support	References to building and/or utilizing social support as a means of protecting self
362	De-Marginalize	Tried to "normalize" own experiences and/or alter social standing of self/family
3621	Be Open	Attempting to normalize lesbian families
3622	Educate	Informally educated others about LGBT people and families
3623	Political activism	Get involved in formal political activism
3624	Use social support	Build/utilize social support in order to de-marginalize/normalize experiences
37	MS LEARNING	What participant took away from MS experiences
371	Open-minded	Learned to be open-minded and accepting of differences in others
372	Training	Preparation for how to deal with homophobic world
373	Connection	Learned to see homophobia as one of many injustices in world
374	Emotional Response	Emotional reaction to perceiving and experiencing homophobia
375	Awareness	Cognitive awareness of homophobia in the world
4	HS PERSONA	What participants were like as high-schoolers
401	Activities	Activities they did and interests they had
402	Qualities	Adjectives/other descriptors used to describe self
403	Relationships	Relationships with others – especially friends and peers
404	Context	Described environment and context to help explain persona and behavior
405	Health	Described physical or psychological health
406	Academics	Described how they did academically
407	Lesbian Mom	Described incidents or interactions with others related to mom being
408	Identity	Beyond just qualities – referring to larger identity or issues with identity
41	HS SUPPORT NETWORK	Who was supportive during high school and how they were supportive
411	Change	References to how support network changed from middle school to HS
412	Family	
4121	Parents	
4122	Siblings	
4123	Extended Family	
413	Friends	
4131	General	

4132	Queerspawn	Other kids with LGBT parents
414	Religious Community	
415	Teachers	
416	Others	
42	HS FAMILY	
421	Structure	Family make-up; who is in family
422	Family Dynamic	General family dynamic
423	Conflict	Specific references to conflict between participants and parents
424	Siblings	References to siblings
425	Family Stressors	Factors that put stress on family, such as health problems
426	Extended Family	References to extended family
427	Moms' Partnerships	References to dynamics of mothers' lesbian relationships
428	Lesbian Identity	How mothers' lesbian identity influenced participant and family
429	Change	References to how family changed from middle school to high school
43	HS COMFORT LEVEL	How comfortable they were with having a lesbian mom in HS
431	Feelings	Thoughts and feelings about having lesbian mom
432	Threat from others	Perception of how threatening it would be to let others know about family
4321	Little/No Threat	Perceived as not threatening or only a little threatening
4322	Moderate Threat	Perceived as somewhat threatening
4323	Large Threat	Perceived as very threatening
433	Openness	How open they were with others about family
4331	Not Open	Did not disclose or disclosed only to a few "safe" people; may have hid family
4332	Somewhat Open	Disclosed in certain contexts or with some people; may not have gone out of way to tell people, but didn't hide
4333	Open	Disclosed to everyone
434	Cause	Cause or reason for increased comfort
435	Change	References to change/differences in comfort level by end of high school
44	HS HET & HOM	Perceived and experienced heterosexism and homophobia during HS
441	Interpersonal	Individual behavior based on heterosexism and homophobia
4411	Direct	Directly regarding participant or family
44111	Father	Father as perpetrator
44112	Extended family	Extended family members as perpetrators
44113	Peers	Peers as perpetrators
44114	Other	Other people as perpetrators

4412	Indirect	General, not directly regarding participant
44121	Comments/slurs	Heard comments/slurs
44122	Physical attacks	Heard about/witnessed physical attacks
442	Institutionalized	Ways in which government, churches, schools, businesses, etc. discriminate
4421	School	School as source
4422	Government	Government as source
4423	Religion	Religious leaders/policies as source
4424	Other	Other sources
443	Cultural	Social norms/standards and codes of behavior that legitimize H&H
45	HS HET & HOM IMPACT	The impact the H&H had on participants while they were in HS
451	Change	Change over time in terms of how H&H had an impact on participant
452	Marginalized	Being aware and feeling that others do not accept family/self, and of being treated differently, not recognized
453	Vulnerable	Feelings or awareness of vulnerability – self, family, and other LGBT people
454	Pressure	Pressure to be perfect or to be straight
455	Did not bother me	H&H not a problem for participant; never was or learned to not let it be
456	Positive Impact	Positive outcomes of facing H&H
457	Feelings	References to feelings that resulted due to H&H
4571	Angry	
4572	Scared	
4573	Irritated	
4574	Frustrated	
4575	Other feelings	
46	HS HET & HOM COPING	How participants coped with H&H in HS
461	Protect	Tried to protect self and/or family from emotional and/or physical harm
4611	Blend In	Tried to "blend in" with others by not telling others about family, actively hiding family, acting "ok" with homophobia, etc.
46111	Remain silent	Didn't speak out against H&H to protect
46112	Don't tell others	Don't tell others about family/self
46113	Hiding/Lying	Actively hide family/lie about family or self
4612	Don't fight back	Not fighting back or responding when faced with heterosexism or homophobia
4613	Manage/avoid feelings	Tried to protect self from feelings of vulnerability and/or marginalization by managing or avoiding feelings
4614	Avoid/control situations	Tried to avoid or control "risky" situations where could be hurt
4615	Confront	Used when emotionally, verbally, or

			physically attacked to try to end harm against self and/or family
4616	Get "thick skin"	Acquiring ability to not let heterosexism or homophobia bother them	
4617	Use social support	References to building and/or utilizing social support as a means of protecting self	
462	De-Marginalize	Tried to "normalize" own experiences and/or alter social standing of self/family	
4621	Be Open	Attempting to normalize lesbian families	
4622	Educate	Informally educated others about LGBT people and families	
4623	Political activism	Get involved in formal political activism	
4624	Use social support	Build/utilize social support in order to de-marginalize/normalize experiences	
47	HS LEARNING	What participant took away from HS experiences	
471	Open-minded	Learned to be open-minded and accepting of differences in others	
472	Training	Preparation for how to deal with homophobia	
473	Connection	See homophobia as one of many injustices in world	
474	Emotional Response	Emotional reaction to perceiving and experiencing homophobia	
475	Awareness	Cognitive awareness of homophobia in the world	
5	SOCIETAL MESSAGES	Messages participants received from society about LGBT people and families	
51	Illegitimate	Messages that LGBT people and families are illegitimate or invisible	
52	Gay is Bad	Messages that LGBT people and families are bad	
53	Impact of Messages	References to impact that negative societal messages had on participants	
531	Didn't bother me	Participants didn't pay attention, weren't aware, or didn't let negative messages bother them	
532	Understanding	Messages gave participants greater understanding of realities of injustice	
533	Pressure	Felt pressure to be perfect	
534	General	General feelings	
54	Positive messages	Positive messages/images received through media	
6	CURRENT SELF	How growing up in lesbian family had influenced current self AND rating of current well-being	
61	Open minded	Open-minded and aware of differences	
62	Activism	Awareness and action related to injustice	
63	Elastic Idea of Family	Flexible and creative ideas of family and relationships	
64	Other Qualities	Adjectives/used to describe self	

65	Queer	References to how parents' queerness affected own coming out and identity
66	Rating	Rating of Well-Being
661	Good	Good, very good, great
662	Good, but…	Good overall, but going through a challenging developmental phase
7	INFLUENTIAL FACTORS	Factors that affected the impact of H&H and how participants coped w/H&H
71	Social Support	Sources of emotional, financial, and physical support and care
711	Friends	
712	Family	
713	Teachers	
714	School	More general than from a specific teacher; supportive school atmosphere
715	Queerspawn	Other kids with LGBT parents
716	Other source	Other sources of social support
72	Visibility	Visibility of LGBT people and families
721	Family	How visible or "out" the participant's family is to the community
722	General LGBT	How visible LGBT people/families are in general – in schools, media, community
73	Parental Coping	How participants' lesbian parents cope with H&H
74	Political Awareness	Politically active and aware of how H&H is connected to other forms of oppression
75	Community/School Climate	How "liberal" or "conservative" a community is
76	Context	Frequency, intensity, duration of H&H, perpetrator characteristics
77	Time	How passage of time makes coping easier/H&H less
78	Innate characteristics	Age, birth order, confidence, will power
8	WHAT OTHERS SHOULD KNOW	What participants think others should know about teens w/lesbian parents
81	Visibility	Importance of visibility of gay people and families and destructiveness of invisibility
82	Visible Support	Importance of visible sources of support
83	Acceptance	Importance of others accepting gay people and families
84	Difference	References to differences and similarities between gay families and other families
9	CONSEQUENCES	What happened as a result of coping
91	Validate/Empower	Participants had positive outcomes that validated and/or empowered them
92	Invalidate/Dis-empower	Participants had negative outcomes that invalidated and/or disempowered them

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