# "Why Isn't It the Same as Any Other Family?": Understanding Emergent Family Narratives and Early Education Experiences Among LGBTQ+ Parents

# “Why isn’t it the same as any other family?”: Understanding Emergent Family Narratives and Early Education Experiences Among LGBTQ+ Parents

Timothy Joseph Matthews

Catherine E. Snow
Meredith L. Rowe
Sabra L. Katz-Wise

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With thanks for, and in memory of my parents,
William and Jane,
who supported my lifelong quest to explore and to learn,
and whose sense of empathy taught me to look out for others;

To my stepmother, Helen, and aunt, Sue
whose love for children and passion for early education
showed me how excellent teachers spark curiosity that lasts a lifetime;

To my grandparents,
Phyllis, Harry, Helen, William, and Esther,
whose hard work, sacrifices, and love
empowered me to aspire toward something greater;

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who inspired my interest in this research
and teach me more every day
about love, kindness, and perseverance.

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## Abstract

Research on LGBTQ+ parenting experiences has recently proliferated. Further examination is required to understand these families' encounters with early education, when their first sustained exposure to the Bronfenbrennerian (1977) "microsystem" outside the family takes place. Infants enter "storied worlds"; the families' sharing over time underpins a co-constructed family narrative (Fivush & Merrill, 2016, p. 308), which encompasses the family's origin story, any stories they tell that span across time and generation, and an ongoing process of co-construction, integrating children's questions and experiences into a shared whole. Before kindergarten entry, parents and children weave together unique narratives to make sense of everyone's evolving identities. Understanding how all family members make meaning of that co-constructed narrative enriches our understanding of LGBTQ+ parents' family formation.

The present, exploratory study used a mixed-methods approach to paint a portrait of LGBTQ+ parents with children enrolled in early education settings outside the home. Study 1, an online survey of 241 relatively well-educated and well-resourced LGBTQ+ parent families with at least one child under 6 years old, assessed associations between family-school relationships and measures of stress, social support, and family functioning. Study 2's four case studies explored same-gender parents' experiences through the preschool years, as their family narrative evolved.

As has been found among families with opposite-gender parents, perceived social support was positively associated and parental stress negatively associated with family functioning and school engagement. Reports of minority stress via heterosexist experiences were occasional, but minority stress related to such reports was not

associated with family functioning or school engagement. This survey also found that LGBTQ+ parents were generally highly engaged in their child's learning environment, both within and outside the home, as would be expected given the participants' social class and educational background.

Case studies revealed how same-gender parents built a narrative about the family's identity as an LGBTQ+ family. At home, varying levels of preparation commonly started before birth or adoption, as parents purchased books, forged relationships with like-minded LGBTQ+ parents, and discussed as a couple how they might explain the complex story of reproduction or adoption. High levels of parental engagement with their children's supportive early educators allowed parents to problem-solve for uncomfortable, narrative-challenging heteronormativity when necessary. This research identifies important drivers of family narrative and engagement in early education systems among same-gender parent families.

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*[W]hen I went to go tour the school that [our son] is currently at, they were like, "Oh, well, we've never had a gay family, but why isn't it the same as any other family?" And I was like, "That's the answer I needed to hear. I needed to have full disclosure and I needed to tell you, we are a lesbian family, this is new to us, we're a little bit concerned, we don't know how to do this." But I needed them to be like, "So? How is it different?" And then that's the other reason we chose [a cooperative preschool], [it's] because we had better control around the narrative, like around the narrative of the family. We could hear what they were saying in the classrooms, and we had more hands-on experience. And we felt comfortable because the teacher…she used to say "moms" and "dads" and then she started saying "parents" or "guardians." Like, we could see those changes at the school.* (Study 2, Female Parent).

## CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

Family formation has been historically difficult for LGBTQ+[1] couples in the United States. However, recent scientific, cultural, and political transformations have begun to remove barriers for LGBTQ+ individuals hoping to create families. Specifically, legal constructs regarding the parental rights of a non-biological or non-gestational parent in a same-gender relationship, marriage equality, and the changes in the regulation of adoption and surrogacy all have accelerated rates of family formation over the past twenty years (Harris, 2017). As a result, a burgeoning generation of same-gender parents with new legal rights has emerged—and with that generation's expansion, important

[1] During the course of this research, I have debated which term most appropriately describes the population of individuals who participated in this study. Initially, I recruited "same-sex parents," which is consistent with the "same-sex couples" measured federally in the United States. A more appropriate term, however would be "same-gender parents," which more accurately encompasses the transgender individuals in same-gender relationships who heeded survey invitations. Additionally, 8 couples in which both were assigned female at birth had one partner who now identifies as genderqueer or nonbinary. Ultimately, I chose to include those couples in analysis of the survey as it was clear from a review of their open-response items that they face many of the same questions and concerns as same-gender couples. To be precise, I will therefore use the term "LGBTQ+ parents" to refer to quantitative (Study 1) participants and "same-gender parents" to refer to the interview (Study 2) participants, who were all cisgender couples identifying as male-male and female-female at the time this research was conducted.

questions have emerged regarding not only parenting, but also the creation of family narratives and parent engagement with childcare and education.

**The Unique Experience of LGBTQ+ Families**

The 2013 National Health Interview Survey estimated that 690,000 same-gender couples were living in the U.S. with 19% estimated to be raising children. Census data from 2017 identified an increase in the number of same-gender couples living in the U.S. (935,229 same-gender couples compared to over 57 million opposite-gender couples), with 16.4% of same-gender couples reporting children in the household (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). However, the children reported in such samples who are welcomed into a family headed by a same-gender couple represent a minority of the 2 - 3.7 million children with at least one parent who identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ+). Many of these children have either a single parent or a parent who was once in or continues to be part of a different-sex relationship (National Health Interview Survey, 2013). Because the U.S. Census only gathers data on the existence of same-gender households and not individuals' sexual orientation, substantial debate has been raised about the fidelity of these Census counts of LGBTQ+ citizens in various family forms (Tasker & Patterson, 2007).

A 2008-2014 study of LGBTQ+ headed families in Australia and New Zealand identified six divergent family typologies: first, the two-parent same-gender couple, either male or female; second, lesbian couples who are primary caregivers but have a known sperm donor who maintains involvement with the child(ren); third, families in which a lesbian or gay man serves as co-parent with an ex-partner from a different-gender relationship; fourth, families in which same-gender parents whose relationship is

now dissolved continue to co-parent with their former partner; fifth, parents who identify as LGBTQ+ but are parenting alone; and sixth, families in which two couples (most often one gay and one lesbian) share parenting responsibilities across more than one household (Power et al., 2010). A notable wave of children entering the two-parent, same-gender family, characterized by the first category above, came from the "lesbian baby boom," in the late 1980s-1990s, when lesbian couples began to access sperm banks (Patterson, 1995). The expansion of parenting among same-gender couples continued into the 2000s, when legislation in some states allowed adoption by same-gender female couples and later expanded that to include same-gender male couples (Bos, Knox, van Rijn-van Gelderen, & Gartrell, 2016).

Family-building options for the LGBTQ+ community have rapidly evolved, particularly over the past decade, as the historic connection between heterosexual marriage and parenting was severed (Patterson, Riskind, & Tornello, 2014). Previously, discrimination and antipathy towards LGBTQ+ individuals and public opposition to same-gender marriage rights made family formation challenging. At the time, many children in LGBTQ+-headed households were conceived as part of prior different-sex relationships or marriages. Over time, adoption and foster care options increased, although regional differences in legal protections for LGBTQ+ couples pursuing such routes persist. Additionally, significant advances in assisted reproductive technologies (ART), including in-vitro fertilization (IVF) and intra-uterine insemination (IUI) have increased the possibilities for same-gender couples to pursue biological parenting options, and options for gestational surrogacy have increased in the U.S. as well (Berkowitz, 2013; Patterson, Riskind, & Tornello, 2014).

While the U.S. Supreme Court legalized equal marriage nationally in 2015, a "patchwork" of laws regarding parenting still exists, with some states now (re-) enacting various "religious freedom" exemptions that may restrict adoption for LGBTQ+ couples (Harris, 2017). In response, LGBTQ+ families increasingly need to consider options for securing co-parents' legal rights through the use of mechanisms such as co-parent adoption; however, at the present time fewer than twenty states allow for this option (Katz-Wise, 2020). Despite this creeping, state-level unevenness in policies aimed at curtailing the parenting rights of LGBTQ+ Americans, family structures across the U.S. have diversified beyond the "traditional" cisgender, heterosexual, two-parent household. Whatever their family configuration, children raised by one or more parents identifying as LGBTQ+ have been shown to have comparable outcomes to the population at large on measures of health and psychological well-being in the U.S. and across multiple international settings (Farr, Forssell, & Patterson, 2010; Lavner, Waterman, & Peplau, 2012; Golombok et al., 2014; Bos, Knox, van Rijn-van Gelderen, & Gartrell, 2016). Households headed by same-gender male and female couples likewise demonstrate similar levels of parenting competency to the population at large (Golombok et al., 2014).

Although outcomes for children within same-gender parent families are not a source of concern, we know that family processes (that is, behavior resulting from parents' stress) are more strongly related than family type to healthy child development (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Golombok, 2000, 2013; Golombok et al., 2014; Lansford et al., 2001; Patterson, 2006, 2009; Power et al., 2010). It also seems likely that same-gender parents might experience at least some different sources of stress than heterosexual parents (including minority stress, as discussed below; Meyer, 2003). Therefore,

understanding the impact of stress, as well as how same-gender parents are able to minimize or combat such stress could be informative.

In general, prior research paints a portrait of a minority group whose parenting is producing developmental outcomes comparable to the population at large, but relatively few studies have attempted to push beyond these psychosocial outcomes to understand nuances of daily life or to probe the impact of an ever-changing policy landscape on stress reported by same-gender couples with children, particularly as they first grapple with their role as parents, right after a child's birth, and then confront systems for early childhood education up to kindergarten entry. Other work also highlights the notable differences in educational attainment and occupation when comparing same-gender parent couples to different-gender parent couples. In one study, 42% of same-gender v. 23% of heterosexual couples possessed a Bachelor's or higher degree, labor force participation was 89% of same-gender v. 69% of heterosexual couples, and same-gender couples were more frequently employed in managerial or professional roles when compared to their heterosexual peers (Dempsey, 2013). Due to inconsistency in parental leave policies across the U.S., many working, same-gender parents face the prospect of a condensed leave (provided for non-gestational parents) prior to their return to work, and in a much shorter timeframe face the need for childcare, perhaps as soon as a few weeks after birth.

## Stressors Affecting (LGBTQ+) Parents and Children

**Parental stress.** The effect of stress on parents and their children is well documented across research in the overlapping domains of education, psychology, and medicine. In general, children whose parents face higher levels of stress within any

family structure or household experience negative neurological and psychological effects throughout the life course, with disproportionate impact experienced by those from lower SES backgrounds and/or historically marginalized racial/ethnic groups (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Additionally, high quality preschool programs have the capacity to benefit children as they grow and develop (McCoy et al., 2017).

**Minority stress.** While enjoying an expansion of rights, LGBTQ+ individuals still face discrimination, which they often experience in day-to-day life; this is a phenomenon which can be particularly acute for same-gender parents (Perrin et al., 2019). Those who identify as LGBTQ+ might also experience identity-related prejudice that leads to negative, measurable outcomes related to mental health (see, e.g., Mays & Cochran, 2001; Meyer, 1995). In broad terms, this may result in feelings of *minority stress*, which refers to the excess physical, emotional, or mental pressures faced by individuals within stigmatized populations (Meyer, 1995). As Meyer (2003) notes, the concept of minority stress emerged from a collection of theories spanning social psychology and sociology; this integration of perspectives assumes that particular stressors are unique to a specific population and are based on different experiences or pressures to which an individual in a minority group might be exposed. The minority stress model has been widely studied amongst women, immigrants, and members of minority racial and ethnic populations (Meyer, Schwartz, & Frost, 2008), and has been used extensively among sexual minority populations (see, e.g., Meyer, 1995; 2003). For those who are LGBTQ+, minority stress may stem from socio-cultural attitudes resulting in discrimination, social isolation, and bullying. Such minority stress processes are thought to increase adverse mental health outcomes in LGBTQ+ individuals (Meyer,

2003); in addition, these life events and stresses could lead to alienation from social structures including early care and education.

Meyer's (2003) minority stress model, referring to minority stress processes in lesbian, gay and bisexual populations, is based on factors associated with various stressors and coping mechanisms unique to the LGB population (Meyer, 1995; Meyer, 2003); this model has since been adapted for the transgender population (Hendricks & Testa, 2012). This research has identified significant health-related disparities, particularly with respect to increased rates of mental health conditions in LGB individuals. Social stressors including incidents of homophobia, social isolation, violence, and discrimination can result in adverse impacts to physical health exacerbated by the resulting minority stress (Frost, Lehavot, & Meyer, 2015). LGBTQ+-associated minority stress also has negative impact on mental health across different domains, including the workplace, requiring attention by clinicians in outpatient treatment (Alessi, 2013; Velez, Moradi, & Brewster, 2013). Among those same-gender couples who have solved the adult challenges of establishing a stable romantic relationship and undertaking parenthood, then, whether we might see the same disparities manifest themselves therefore merits examination.

In a study of a group of lesbian women in Italy, LGBTQ+-related minority stress, in particular prejudice and heterosexism, has been hypothesized as a factor that might hinder someone's pursuit of parenthood; perceived prejudice was associated with lower parenting desire (Amodeo et al., 2018). Interestingly, internalized heterosexism (possessing a negative conception of one's own minority sexual orientation or identity; Puckett, Levitt, Horne, & Hayes-Skelton, 2015; Szymanski, Kashubeck-West, & Meyer,

2008) was associated with increased desire for parenting among lesbians, supposedly explained by the theory that if a woman perceives heterosexism, she might wish to conform to societal norms for heterosexual women by becoming a mother (Amodeo et al., 2018).

What is known about minority stress among same-gender couples who have become parents? A cross-sectional study of lesbian mothers measured minority stress in relation to social support and depression and found that general stress was more significantly related to depressive symptoms, and that positive social support can offset the effect of minority stress on depressive symptoms (Mosovsky, Nolan, Markovic, & Stall, 2016). A second study found that lesbian mothers experiencing higher levels of prejudice had more parental stress and felt more pressure to justify their motherhood qualities, and that lesbian mothers with higher levels of internalized heterosexism tended to more commonly defend their position as mothers (Bos, van Balen, van den Boom, & Sandfort, 2004). There is a paucity of existing published literature on similar topics regarding the experiences of gay fathers.

**Social support.** Evaluating social support from multiple sources provides a window to the various inputs an LGBTQ+-identified individual might have in their lives. In particular, social support could improve well-being, but in populations at risk of external stress or discrimination, social support could also buffer against negative impacts of such stress. In a study that included both gay and lesbian married couples, social support from family and friends was directly related to well-being and relationship quality; support provided by a romantic partner was another protective factor from the negative impact of stress. In the same study, family support was unrelated to relationship

quality in same-gender couples, suggesting a unique contribution to social support in same-gender relationships (Graham & Barnow, 2013). In a more recent study of perceived social support that included gay and lesbian adoptive parents, parents in same- and different-gender couples reported receiving equivalent social support from family, friends, and significant others (Sumontha, Farr, & Patterson, 2016). Additionally, perceived social support, particularly from family members, was positively associated with a stronger co-parenting alliance in all family types in this study. It does not appear that the extant literature has evaluated social support among same-gender parents with families formed through ART.

**Family Functioning Among LGBTQ+ Parents**

Family functioning refers broadly to the underlying properties of a family environment, including the interactions and relationships within a family. Facets of functioning include the quality of communication, mechanisms for approaching conflict, organization and cohesion of a family unit, and adaptability of the family unit particularly during periods of stress. Maladaptive family functioning has been associated with greater conflict and decreased overall psychological well-being. In contrast, a well-functioning family system can provide strong support through cohesion and communication. Whereas children raised in highly functional family units often receive greater parental support, research has shown that poor family functioning is associated with depressive symptoms and poor educational outcomes among children and adolescents (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). As more families headed by same-gender and LGBTQ+ couples more broadly are formed, understanding the factors that promote or impede family functioning in these families is important.

With respect to LGBTQ+ parents, the literature is replete with studies showing that a child's psychological well-being and overall educational and behavioral development is largely unaffected by having a parent in a healthy, same-gender relationship (see, e.g., the long-running longitudinal data presented by Bos, Knox, van Rijn-van Gelderen, & Gartrell, 2016). In a recent retrospective review of same-gender parenting, Reczek (2020) argues that, over two decades, this type of study on LGBTQ+ relationships well-being among children of same-gender parents, has left other vital areas unexamined. The advances (marriage equality, increased social acceptances of LGBTQ+ individuals and relationships) and setbacks ("bathroom bills," ban on transgender service members, "religious freedom" exemptions) will persist in U.S. policy. Yet in this era of greater societal protections—most notably marriage equality across the country—more research evaluating LGBTQ+ families across types of family formation will enrich and add nuance to society's understanding. In the current study, the relationships among parental stress, minority stress, social support, and socio-demographic characteristics were explored in a group of parents in same-gender relationships with children in early childhood (0-6 years old). The hypothesis underlying this examination was that high functioning within a family with same-gender parents would be associated with reduced stress and increased support, and that specific stress related to LGBTQ+ identity might negatively impact functioning and cause families to make adaptive choices regarding information sharing and education about their unique family type.

**The Development of Family Narrative in LGBTQ+ Headed Families**

Parents and children work together as a family throughout their lives to knit a coherent narrative about the seminal moments of emotional significance in their shared

history. Fundamentally, narratives *create* meaning in "socially and culturally conventionalized forms" (Bohanek, Marin, Fivush, & Duke, 2006, p. 39), not just serving as a basic memory of events that transpire, but rather allowing self-understanding and how to present our lives to others (Haden, Haine, & Fivush, 1997). While through the earliest years, parents scaffold the creation of narratives for their children—and later, the family enters a period of co-construction—it is not until adolescence that children are motivated to develop the capacity to craft coherent life narratives on their own, which represents an inflection point from childhood into adulthood (Habermas & Bluck, 2000; Habermas & Reese, 2015). In families with different-gender parents, the task of family narrative creation and curation falls largely on parents from birth through children's elementary and middle school years (Ochs & Taylor, 1992), while the absence of a male-female dyad leaves uncertainty about how the roles typically played by different-gender parents might be divided. Families who exhibit routine sharing of narratives recounting both past and present tend to produce adolescents with higher levels of emotional health and well-being (Fivush, Bohanek, & Zaman, 2010). Additionally, cultural and sociodemographic factors influence variability in the creation of family narratives. One example of such variation was described by Blum-Kulka and Snow (1992), who compared narrative formation amongst Israeli and Jewish American families. The content of conversations within a family structure in this study reflected different patterns of both parental and child involvement in family storytelling based on cultural macrosystem and socioeconomic status (SES). Among American families, children from middle class families' level of participation was highest, with children most likely to play the role of *initiating* a narrative; among working class American families, children would participate

in narratives *in response to* cues from adults. However, among Israeli families, children did not necessarily participate in the narratives much at all (Blum-Kulka & Snow, 1992). These intersecting, culturally-rooted factors could influence patterns of narrative across demographically distinct same-gender couples.

With the growing number of children being raised from birth within families headed by same-gender parents (rather than starting life with parents who come out as LGBTQ+ after becoming parents in a different-gender relationship), parents in same-gender relationships are less likely to be seen as an anomaly than in the past (Berkowitz, 2007). Giving voice to how LGBTQ+ parents form and develop their family narrative—a coherent representation of who they are as a unit and how they fit into society—for themselves, with their children, and to share with society over time, is a vital task. Norms that shape relationships among family members differ across opposite- and same-gender parented families, and societal suspicion of "non-normative" relationships persists (Goodfellow, 2015), despite the current legal status afforded to same-gender relationships in the U.S. Questions continue to be raised about who can be defined as a "parent" and what constitutes "kinship" as non-dominant family forms experience elevated visibility; simultaneously, evolution in access to reproductive technology (which grows in sophistication over time) adds new pathways to family building (Strathern, 2005). This means that families' own creation processes—most of which, in the earliest days of same-gender couples becoming parents, involved adoption—are now so diverse that each family narrative typically has unique facets. For that reason, outsiders' assumptions about how a family was formed always have potential to be flawed.

Goodfellow (2015) argues that neither courts—with their unevenness in legal precedent and policy across individual U.S. states—nor the diversification from adoption to various reproductive technologies are dispositive of the most central question in LGBTQ+ families' narrative formation: how LGBTQ+ parents and their children confront an "uncertainty of kinship", rooted as it is in society's suspicion, at the heart of their family story. Indeed, "the affective qualities of kinship also invite one to consider how parents and children in gay [i.e., same-gender] families come to recognize and know each other as kin in the terrains of everyday life" (Goodfellow, 2015, p. 31). In view of this context, the task of developing and sharing a family narrative has a host of challenging dimensions for LGBTQ+ parents and their children. After all, parents in a same-gender relationship who identify as LGBTQ+ already face a certain level of societal disapprobation about their relationship; their children, then, face risks rooted in the same sources of ambient bias. Because of differences in parents' own experiences growing up and coming out as LGBTQ+, as well as in how same-gender couples become parents (e.g., through adoption, surrogacy, etc.), these couples must consider and choose how to weave together and disclose their family narrative both inside and outside the context of their family unit, often beginning even during the adoption or ART processes. They begin to engage with dominant societal narratives: namely, that "typical" families are headed by two parent, different-gender couples who are cisgender and heterosexual, and have conceived "naturally" (i.e., via sexual intercourse between parents).

How this ongoing, developmental process of family definition intersects with and influences choices families make about early care and education is also salient, particularly since the landscape of early childhood education is fragmented and

unstandardized compared to the relatively structured and established nature of (public or private) K-12 education. Preschool represents a time when children first understand the importance of shared reminiscence and weave their experiences and memories into a web that allows them to comprehend themselves and others; in addition, parents differ in the extent to which they engage preschoolers in reminiscence and those who elaborate more lead their children to possess an increased capacity for autobiographical memory (Fivush, Haden, & Reese, 2006). The shared narrative across parents and children in LGBTQ+ parented families may be particularly important in negotiating contact within childcare or preschool settings, where educators or other families may be curious (justifiably or not) about the same-gender couple's reproductive strategies and the child's origin. Additionally, how minority stress influences same-gender couples—and may then lead to differences in engaging with normative institutions, such as preschools—remains unclear and merits investigation.

**Factors Influencing Choice of Childcare/Preschool Among LGBTQ+ Parents**

It is evident that high-quality early childhood experiences have an impact on later educational outcomes and achievement; as a result, parental choices around childcare and preschool arrangements have the potential to influence children's later development (McCoy et al., 2017; Weiland & Yoshikawa, 2013). Despite increasing agreement about the vital role of quality early education in strengthening development and, more broadly, increasing opportunity, the landscape of varied types of childcare and preschool settings remains expansive (many types of settings and philosophies), fragmented (especially compared to K-12 education), and uneven (in quality). A family's choice of childcare settings is inherently driven by their own context. Cost, parental values, convenience,

type of childcare/preschool environment, waiting lists, and curricular philosophy are some of the many possible factors that parents might need to consider—and even among families who attempt to make informed choices on behalf of their children, these may present a litany of decision points and possible challenges. Childcare preferences also relate to parental cultural, financial, and employment factors. For instance, a household with two working parents would face specific needs due to schedules and availability of flexible childcare or preschool options. Their needs may also evolve over time, as the child's development unfolds (i.e., needing more structure, challenge, etc.) or family circumstances change (i.e., relocating, changing jobs, adjustment in work hours).

Prior research on parental choice of childcare and preschool has focused on many of the parent, family, and community factors mentioned above, centering on lower-SES families and those facing various forms of systemic societal discrimination, as these families often are constrained to less choice of high-quality options (see, e.g., McWayne, Foster, & Melzi, 2018; Weiland & Yoshikawa, 2013). Other research has focused on parental philosophy regarding such choices. An analysis of the 2005 National Household Education Survey of Early Childhood Program Participation identified four distinct classes of parents based on indicators of priorities for childcare (Kim & Fram, 2009). The major distinction in this analysis was an emphasis on practicality factors versus learning and quality-focused factors. With regards to childcare choice, parents focused on learning factors were more likely to choose center-based care for their young children rather than other options such as in-home childcare (i.e., a family member, nanny, or au pair) or a home-based daycare. Preschool choice is also often made on the basis of practical or quality focused reasoning. Practical factors include cost, flexibility of hours, and location,

whereas quality factors include curriculum, educational philosophy, training of staff/caregivers, and warmth of caregivers. For some families, the experience with early education among other same-gender parents within their social networks may also influence the choices they make regarding childcare or preschool. Not surprisingly, parents who generally emphasize quality-focused factors are often from more advantaged social situations (Kim & Fram, 2009).

Choices around childcare and preschool for young children in LGBTQ+-headed families have not previously been described. In the current study, survey participants were asked to rate various factors related to childcare and preschool choices as well as to rank factors that were most important to them as parents. Since many same-gender couples who choose to parent are necessarily more advantaged (because of economic, educational, and societal factors, and because they have the positive self-image, supportive networks, and social and cultural capital to access the necessary tools to welcome a child; Mezey, 2008; 2013), it was hypothesized that quality-based factors would be most important to the current study participants. Given the potential for discrimination or isolation, however, there was a possibility that social network driven factors, particularly a specific experience with or exposure to same-gender parents or LGBTQ+ individuals more broadly, would be important as well.

**LGBTQ+ Parent Engagement in Early Care and Education Settings**

A child's experience in educational settings is in part influenced by the quality and type of interactions that parents have with a school. *Family engagement* in schools encompasses parents' or caregivers' communication with schools, collaboration on decision making, support of the school environment, and efforts to extend learning into

the home (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). While higher levels of family engagement have been linked to improved educational outcomes for students, family-school relationships are known to be shaped by social factors such as race, class, social capital, and the influence of social networks or contacts (Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003), with lower levels of engagement typically observed among families who experience stigma or discrimination (Warren et al., 2009; Miller et al., 2016). In more recent work in a largely upper middle class elementary school community, the existence of extremely involved parents provided "ample opportunities for conflict" (Lareau & Muñoz, 2012, p. 215). Perhaps this is attributable to higher income parents' propensity to act collectively as a group (in some cases to counter the preferences of teachers and administrators) or to class-based differences in parenting strategies (Lareau & Muñoz, 2012).

The ways in which parents interact with their children's school communities can impact overall family well-being and children's school performance. Indeed, parent relationships with caregivers and preschool teachers support a child's social-emotional and cognitive readiness for school, among other outcomes (Powell et al., 2010). In broad terms, parent engagement in schools encompasses several areas, ranging from how parents support their children's education and learning in the home to how they directly interact with schools, teachers, and the broader educational community. The parental behaviors that encompass family-school engagement can significantly impact a child's overall achievement in schools. In the K-12 school setting, there is ample research showing that higher levels of parent engagement lead to improved educational outcomes. For many reasons, parent engagement during the preschool years is just as crucial.

Efforts to broaden educators' understanding of what constitutes effective parent engagement have moved schools to grasp that not only traditional, in-building mechanisms for involvement are dispositive of whether families can be considered to be engaged (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). While educators have been encouraged to listen to and integrate the wisdom of parents, particularly as they seek to contextualize specific children's patterns of learning and behavior (Ferlazzo, 2011), a host of barriers to effective engagement have still been identified. These may include impaired communication between school and families (Lawson, 2003), language barriers between school and parents with limited English proficiency (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011), and race/ethnicity (Cabrera, Hofferth, & Chae, 2011). Therefore, understanding the level of parent-school engagement during early childhood and how to support and improve it among different family types, including LGBTQ+ families, could help early education systems enhance school readiness overall.

As noted above, Lareau and Horvat (1999) posit that social factors such as race or social and cultural capital shape key interactions between parents and schools. The increasing number of same-gender parent households suggests that sexual minority status could be another social factor that merits examination for its relation to family engagement. Indeed, the choice of an early childcare or early education setting can pose challenges for families headed by same-gender parents due to substantial variability in perceived acceptance of parents who identify as LGBTQ+, just as same-gender parents have been shown to face substantial variation in opportunities for family engagement across K-12 settings (Watson & Russell, 2015). Same-gender adoptive parents tend to select school settings perceived to be "affirming" of their family type (Goldberg, 2014),

though it is likely this would also apply to same-gender parents who use reproductive technology.

There have only been a few studies directly evaluating parent-school engagement within families headed by same-gender parents. Threats to parent-school engagement include marginalization, discrimination, and lack of knowledge among caregivers or teachers about specific LGBTQ+ experiences. Absence of school policies and resources for same-gender families may serve as a barrier to parental engagement. Goldberg, Black, Sweeney, and Moyer (2017) interviewed 45 same-gender and different-gender couples with adopted children in kindergarten on topics related to school inclusivity and responsiveness to their particular family structures; most same-gender parents reported engaging in proactive discussions about their family structure, and many noted that their child's school did provide a sense of inclusivity to their family. A subsequent study using the same population of same-gender adoptive parents found that they were more likely to participate directly in leadership roles with school committees than different-gender adoptive families (Goldberg, Black, Manley, & Frost, 2017). Same-gender fathers in particular reported high levels of involvement in schools, particularly if they had flexibility in their work schedules. This study also highlighted that same-gender parents' concerns over discrimination and inclusivity shaped their proclivity toward school involvement.

Because families not headed by a two parent, cisgender, heterosexual couple may experience marginalization in schools (Allen & Jaramillo-Sierra, 2015), schools' attempts to stifle or empower LGBTQ+ parents and families through shared cultural norms or decisions about whether to take concrete actions to break down LGBTQ+-related barriers

(e.g., all-gender washrooms) carry weight in same-gender parents' school selection and comfort (Russell, Day, Ioverno, & Toomey, 2016). Two-mother families in school communities where they report experiencing visible minority status feel hampered by a complex, nested web of barriers, including sexual orientation, race, and class differences (Goldberg, Frost, Manley, & Black, 2018).

**Evidence from international contexts.** Though this research focuses on the U.S. context, researchers across the globe are also striving to document the experiences same-gender families have in schools more generally, as well as the concrete solutions they propose to remove barriers. While each context possesses its own local context, families in other countries where same-gender parenting is permitted share many of the same basic concerns faced by U.S. LGBTQ+ parents. For example, a recent study of U.K. same-gender parents and their children across primary (including 'nursery') and secondary schools reported that, while they felt generally comfortable with the school settings in which their children were enrolled, a variety of awkward or uncomfortable incidents occurred. For example, around holidays such as Mother's or Father's Day, teachers undertook activities such as making cards for parents who may not exist in a given child's family; at parent-teacher conferences, a teacher could not understand why two parents of the same gender presentation were at his table; and other parents reported being exhausted by the burden of having to come out repeatedly to unaware staff with whom they came into contact (Cocker, Hafford-Letchfield, Ryan, & Barran, 2019).

In Alberta, Canada, the need for more inclusivity around different family forms permeates the recommendations made by same-gender parents to researchers, which included updated policies and procedures, a more inclusive curriculum, and more

opportunities for teachers to learn from LGBTQ+ individuals (Michaud & Stelmach, 2019). Ongoing work in Australia centers on the experience of lesbian parents in early education settings, and has highlighted the need for more culturally responsive and salient curriculum that includes the increasing number of parents and students who identify as LGBTQ+ (Cloughessy, Waniganayake, & Blatterer, 2019). In Israel, while educators were seen to possess a shared sense of the importance of social justice education in the early childhood sphere, which spawned efforts to incorporate both multicultural awareness and religious tolerance components into teacher training at the university level, this did not include any mention LGBTQ+ identity or exploration around gender (Shai, 2011).

Overall, the evidence is strong that LGBTQ+ parents with school-age children both in the United States and abroad too often encounter difficulties associated with their family structure. If same-gender parents of children over the years from pre-K to high school graduation reported these feelings and experiences, what might the newest same-gender parents, who are navigating through their first decisions about childcare and education, experience? It is possible that their family might encounter instances where society's narrative about "normative" families conflicts with the expansive and accommodating definition that they created within their family unit.

**Conceptual Framework for the Current Studies**

Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1977) provides a relevant framework for understanding families' interaction with societal and cultural norms. As depicted in **Figure 1**, surrounding each individual or family is a *microsystem* within which institutions such as extended family, school or care settings, and peers (among

many other networks and institutions) are embedded. Bronfenbrenner argues that a variety of institutions and cultural norms interact with individuals' development and infuse their learning from birth.

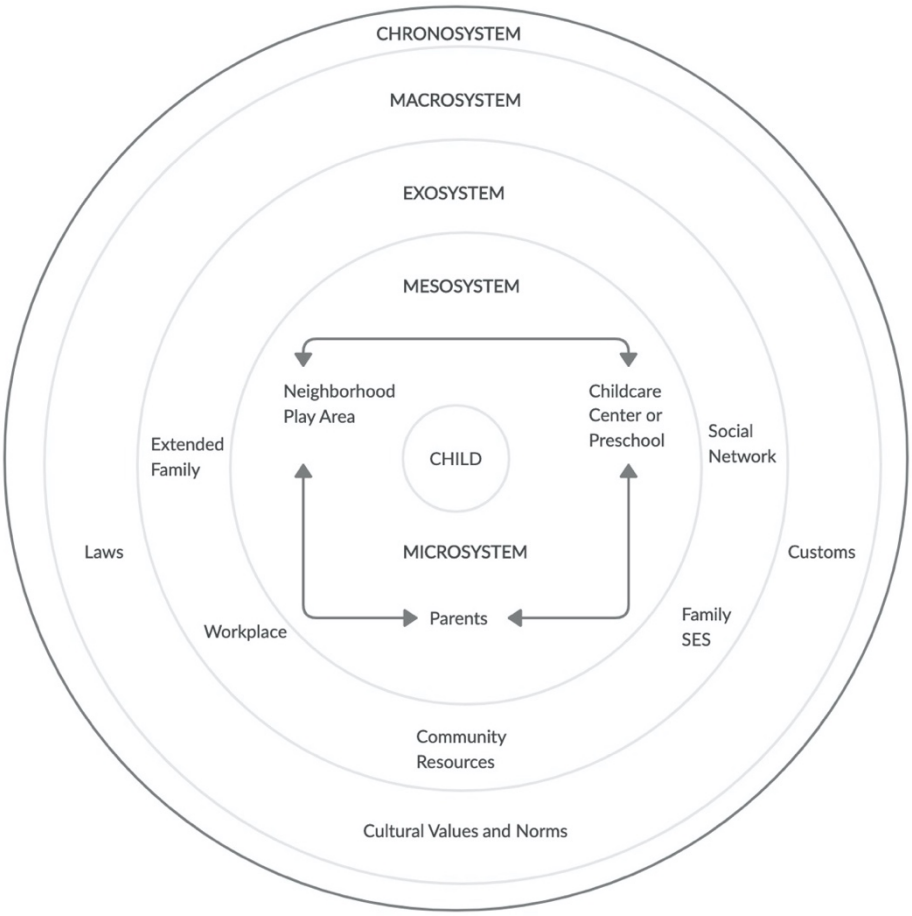


***Figure 1.*** *A graphical depiction of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory.*

The *microsystem* represents the closest and most directly impactful set of influences with which individual children interact. From the *macrosystem* flow norms and ideals that act on caregivers' and students' daily experiences in the networks or institutional settings to which they are exposed.

Because LGBTQ+ couples may possess heightened awareness of the extent to which individuals with whom they interact are guided by their own (sometimes

conflicting) beliefs regarding LGBTQ+ individuals and families—or, more broadly, how institutions (such as early childcare or education settings) can inculcate values in children that may conflict with a same-gender parent family narrative—they may choose to enroll their children in institutions or employ childcare providers who are like-minded. Alternately, they may increase or decrease their engagement with an institution (e.g., communication with caregivers, participation in events, volunteerism, extended family gatherings) based on higher or lower levels of perceived comfort and support. During the early childhood years, same-gender parents might even choose not to engage with external systems, particularly if they are in a socially or financially stable position to continue at-home care for their children.

Fivush and Merrill (2016) argue for the utility of understanding the advent and collaborative construction of family narrative through Bronfenbrenner's ecological lens:

> Infants are born into storied worlds. From birth, stories are told to and around infants—stories of the family, fables, and fairy tales. These form the exo-system and macro-system that surround the micro-system of the immediate… [I]t is important to note that this is the niche within which shared family narratives emerge. Focusing on the microsystem, parents and children begin to engage in co-constructing narratives of shared experiences virtually as soon as children begin to talk (p. 308).

Same-gender parents' narratives possess—even initially—a level of complexity not shared by other families. They bring with them their own processes of coming out as LGBTQ+, which carries weight even before their decision to create families. This may alter the extent to which parents integrate stories of their own childhood, parents, or relatives into the new family they choose to create. Families headed by same-gender parents provide a unique opportunity to examine the effects of different systems on the origin narratives they weave—and the extent to which these narratives may influence

choices they make in telling those stories inside and outside the family, such as with childcare providers or preschools.

**Human Development as Contextual**

Vygotsky (1978) posits that development of the human mind across the life course cannot be separated from the context in which that development takes place. Borrowing from dynamic systems theories (Thelen & Smith, 2006), the developmental cascades approach theorizes that human development is not linear. Rather, inter-relatedness of experience unfolds episodically over time, as particularly salient experiences form iterating relationships; these developmental changes cascade from one domain to another and change the developmental course for the individual (Masten & Cicchetti, 2010). Each parent who welcomes children into the context of a same-gender relationship, then, would experience a new dimension of the process of "coming out" — beyond the first step of acknowledging to oneself, and the later step of revealing their identity to family and others. Their new role makes parents in a same-gender relationship more visible to the casually curious (such as an airline employee who comments on how a gay male parent is "so brave" to be traveling without his "wife" while the second father trails just behind with the stroller) and key microsystemic actors (such as a preschool director, who needs a family's story to impact educators' practice in salient ways) alike. Within the contextual, evolving environment in which development takes place, the unique experience of each LGBTQ+ family member across the life course will clearly differ from different-gender parents and their children.

The mixed-methods approach of the current research, with its combination of a quantitative survey and qualitative case studies, was designed to illustrate how both

shared and distinctive life experiences among LGBTQ+ parents might lead to processes such as the development of unique family narrative and origin stories that in turn cascade into decisions about and relationships with their children's care and education settings. For example, while LGBTQ+ parents might all have had to come out as LGBTQ+ to family members, they may have experienced varying levels of acceptance over time from those family members. Additionally, there could be substantial differences in the levels of societal homophobia each LGBTQ+ individual faces over time. For that reason, the overarching conceptual framework for this research puts these elements into dialogue for the LGBTQ+ parents of preschoolers:

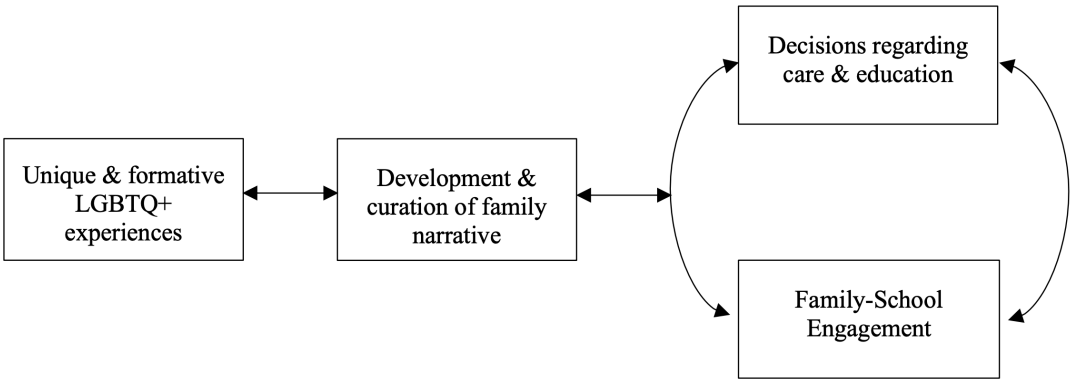


***Figure 2.*** *Conceptual framework for the present studies.*

Based on findings from this study, and cognizant of how development progresses in a non-linear, episodic way over time that cascades across domains, Chapter 6 will offer an enriched model of family narrative formation.

**Research Questions**

The two exploratory studies undertaken here are connected by their shared focus on the overarching choices that parents in LGBTQ+ couples make—and the experiences their families have—in early childcare and education settings during the earliest period

that these families are working intensively to create, evolve, and share their narrative within the microsystem and beyond. Study 1, through its survey-based approach, examines stress, social support, family functioning, and key experiences and characteristics of LGBTQ+ couples' family engagement with early childcare and education settings. Study 2, through its descriptive case study approach, elicits greater detail on family narratives and origin stories, childcare needs, selection processes, and experiences with individual children in specific childcare or early education settings. Taken together, these two approaches offer both breadth and depth in our understanding of parents who choose to have children in the context of their same-gender relationship.

The specific research questions addressed in these two, interrelated studies were:

**Study 1**

- **Research question 1a.** To what extent are family-based social factors such as minority stress, parental stress and social support associated with family functioning among parents in LGBTQ+ couples?
- **Research question 1b.** To what extent are these family-based social factors associated with family engagement among parents in LGBTQ+ couples who enroll their children in childcare or preschool outside their home?

**Study 2**

- **Research question 2a.** What are the family narratives developed by parents raising children in same-gender couples, how do they arise, and what life experiences influence them?

- **Research question 2b.** How might family narratives play a role in families' varying choices of and experiences with selecting childcare and early childhood education settings?

# CHAPTER 2

## Research Methods

These studies represented an exploration of the experiences LGBTQ+ parents have across gender identities and across methods of family formation (i.e., adoption vs. assisted reproductive technology, or ART) at the earliest moments where their evolving development first integrates a new role of "parent," and in one of the first places where they may come into contact with microsystemic societal norms and expectations about their family—namely, the fragmented space of early childcare and education. Children of working parents in the U.S. often inhabit this sector in variable and evolving ways from birth until kindergarten entry. Depending on their child(ren)'s age(s), the family's SES, and where they live, parents may choose from a multitude of private and public options—(pre)schools, day care centers, home daycare, nannies, *au pairs*, or family members as caregivers. Family-based research on the children of LGBTQ+ parents more broadly has to account for numerous confounding factors such as separation, divorce, timing of coming out, and single parenting. For that reason, these studies focused *intentionally* on experiences of families with children being raised by those who chose to become parents within the context of a same-gender relationship. Study 1 was a cross-sectional online survey study of participants recruited via various online forums with a goal of reaching a diverse sample of over 200 LGBTQ+ parents. Study 2 used a case study approach of interviews from a small sub-sample of respondents to the questionnaire.

### Researcher Identity

A researcher's sense of reflexivity, particularly when integrating qualitative research into a study, becomes particularly salient when s/he is positioned at the locus

between insider and outsider (Villenas, 1996). As I embarked on this project, I was forced to interrogate the influence my own identity as a gay-identified Caucasian man, married to another Caucasian man, who is currently raising a Caucasian child welcomed into our family through the use of IVF and a gestational carrier. Villenas's (1996) struggle with her insider/outsider identity as a Latina researcher engaging in ethnography of a Latino immigrant population resonated deeply as I found myself similarly positioned relative to the community of same-gender parents. Like Luttrell (2010), I continue to grapple with issues of representation and self-representation within this research; I, too, must commit to undertaking the reflexive posture necessary to produce work that is "authentic" and "reciprocal" (p. 162), centering the relationships with research participants along with the research inquiry itself.

My husband and I, who both identify as gay men, first became parents in 2016; at the time of writing, our son is nearly four years old. He was conceived using IVF with a known-donor oocyte and our sperm, and carried to a pre-term delivery by a known gestational carrier with whom we continue to maintain a relationship. Our son now attends preschool at an independent school that has programs stretching from age 3 to grade 8; we selected the school for its high-quality educators and culture, which centers around an internally-developed anti-bias curriculum. We recently moved from an urban area close to Boston and now reside in a suburban community outside the city, where there are other families headed by two-mother or two-father couples. My husband works full time as a physician; accordingly, we also have additional hours of childcare support from a shared nanny.

Therefore, as a gay parent with direct experience—who has struggled with the emotion and cognition that surrounds creation of a coherent family narrative in his own nuclear family—the dual role of researcher and observer has at times begun to feel disconcerting (or even uncomfortable). I have had to actively consider the extent to which my dichotomous insider/outsider status might impact the research participants who entrust me with their stories, as well as in my framing of interview questions. While I will always "speak the language" of other same-gender parents, and some of our experiences may echo across the space between us, my role as researcher also sets me apart from the experiences they share. Throughout this project, I attempted to contemplate what an entirely neutral observer might think coming into this setting, and how they might make meaning from my interactions with research participants. Additionally, I have previously worked and conducted research in different early childhood and early elementary settings: first, as a graduate student intern at a preschool; and later, during my time employed in a large, urban public school district that offers preschool for children ages 3 and 4 years. In both roles, I worked closely with early childhood teachers; as a focus group facilitator and analyst in a district setting, I strove to understand teachers' experiences and aspirations around the district's literacy curriculum and its grant-funded leadership initiatives.

Maxwell (2010) believes that interviews by nature might never have the opportunity to be fully shielded from the threat of reactivity on the researcher's part. Instead, the researcher must understand the threat and use it in a productive manner. In analyzing participants' interview data, I have used two types of guardrails to mitigate the impact of my personal experience on interpretation of the data: first, validation of my

thematic analysis with my research participants; second, reconciliation of the emergent (emic) themes drawn directly from these data with a rough set of etic themes culled from other researchers' work (e.g., Averett, Hegde, & Smith, 2017; Goldberg, 2014; Goldberg et al., 2018; Goldberg, Black, Sweeney, and Moyer, 2017; Goldberg & Smith, 2014; Cocker, Hafford-Letchfield, Ryan, & Barran, 2018); and third, double-coding with a second reader, followed by comparison of codes and discussion to increase overall agreement on the major themes in each interview. To me, this produced a comfortable balance between an approach which is at its core deeply constructivist, allowing the data to speak for themselves, while using the more positivist etic codes as a form of verification against any potential conflict or bias I may carry as a researcher who is also a gay parent.

**Study 1 Procedure**

Internet recruitment of participants is a common method to reach sexual minority populations for whom recruitment can otherwise represent a challenge (Meyer & Wilson, 2009). As such, survey participants were recruited online by contacting sexual minority specific social media groups focused on LGBTQ+ parenting. An invitation to complete a one-time anonymous online survey was posted to the following Facebook groups: *Gay Dads, Double Daddies, Queer Parenting, Queer Academic Parents, Gay Fathers, Rainbow Dads, Boston and New England Queer Families, LGBTQ+ Parents RI, Boston + New England Queer Families, Queer Parents Network, Queer Parents, APHA LGBTQ Health Caucus, My Fertility Coach- LGBTQ and ttc, Queer Family Building & Parenting Support, Queer Liquid Gold, Queer Woman-Identified Parents of Male-Identified Children,* and *Family Week (hosted by Family Equality)*. The administrators for each of

the groups approved posting of a recruitment message, and three separate posts were completed for each site over an approximate 3-week period. Survey responses were collected over a 3-month time frame from October to December, 2019. Inclusion criteria were: (1), identifying as a LGBTQ+ parent to at least one child 0-6 years old (2), welcoming that child into a same-gender relationship, (3) being English speaking, and (4) currently living in the U.S. (which has a unique policy context surrounding reproduction and LGBTQ+ issues). The survey was comprised of three main sections: (1) questions on demographics of the respondent, their spouse/partner, and family/children; (2) validated survey measures assessing parental stress, minority stress, social support, and family functioning; and (3) questions on choices regarding childcare, including scales taken from a validated family-school relationships survey. All potential participants received a link to the data collection website, where they provided informed consent and completed the online survey. The survey was hosted on a Qualtrics platform and is provided in its entirety in the Appendix. The study and all associated materials were approved by the Harvard University Area Institutional Review Board (IRB).

**Study 1 Participants**

The final survey sample included 241 adults (assigned sex at birth: 52 [22%] male, 188 [78%] female; gender identity: 51 [21%] male, 164 [68%] female, 19 [8%] genderqueer, and 6 [2%] identifying with another nonbinary identity), age 27 to 56 years (mean = 38.7 years; SD = 5.2). In terms of reported sexual orientation, 191 (79%) identified as gay or lesbian and 43 (18%) as bisexual. The sample was predominantly White (94%) and highly educated with 94% of participants having received a college degree or higher. Demographic characteristics reported by participants about their spouse

or partner were similar, with mean age 39.3 (SD 6.7), 87% White, and 91% with a college degree or higher. Eighty-two respondents (34%) reported an annual family household income of $200,000 or greater; only 12 (5%) reported an annual household income of less than $50,000. Participants lived in 36 U.S. states, with 127 (57%) in the Northeast, 24 (10%) in the South, 41 (17%) in the Midwest, and 48 (20%) in the West. The states with the highest percentage of survey respondents were Massachusetts (27%), California (8%), Connecticut (7%), Pennsylvania (7%), and New York (6%). The complete set of participant-reported demographic information is shown in Table 1. Among the 241 participants, 115 (48%) had one child in their family, 113 (47%) had two children, and 13 (5%) had three children. Of those with multiple children, 36 had only one child 6 years of age or less, whereas 90 had two or more children in that age range. For participants with more than one child in the target age range, data on the child (demographic characteristics and childcare/school-related questions) was collected for their oldest child in the range. The demographic characteristics reported about the children are shown in Table 2. One hundred thirty-three (55%) children were male, 170 (71%) were White, and 139 (58%) were between the ages of 2-5 years. Thirty-two (13%) children were adopted into their family. The majority of parents (193) reported having children via assisted reproduction: 82 (34%) were born through gestational surrogacy, assisted reproductive technology, or IVF, and 111 (46%) through intra-uterine insemination.

**Study 1 Measures: Stress, Social Support, and Family Functioning**

All participants were surveyed with a series of validated measures of parental stress, social support, family functioning, and minority stress.

**Parental Stress Scale (PSS)**. The Parental Stress Scale (PSS) was developed in 1995 to measure stress unique to parenting and captures both the joys and demands of parenting (Berry & Jones, 1995). The PSS assesses how parents rate various aspects of parenting, both positive and negative, and broadly describes how individuals perceive stress, satisfaction, affection, worry, and flexibility in the context of their role as parents. The scale was developed for the assessment of parental stress for both mothers and fathers and for parents of children with and without clinical problems. Prior research using this measure has identified associations between parental stress and overall quality of life and mental health outcomes in diverse populations of parents of both healthy children and those with health conditions such as prematurity and autism (Louie, Cromer, & Berry, 2017).

The PSS is a self-report 18-item scale that evaluates positive components of parenthood (emotional benefits, self-enrichment, personal development) and negative components of parenthood (demands on resources, opportunity costs and restrictions) (Berry & Jones, 1995). Respondents are asked to think about their typical relationship with their child or children as a basis for rating each item on a 5-point Likert scale: 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (undecided), 4 (agree), 5 (strongly agree) with sample items including "I am happy in my role as a parent" and "my child(ren) is an important source of affection for me." In validation studies, the Parental Stress Scale demonstrated satisfactory levels of internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha 0.83), and test-retest reliability (Cronbach's alpha 0.81) (Berry & Jones, 1995). Prior research has also shown that the scale demonstrates satisfactory convergent validity with various measures of stress, including overall family quality of life, anxiety, guilt, marital satisfaction, job

satisfaction, and social support (Louie, Cromer, & Berry 2017; Lovisotto, Caltabiano & Hajhashemi, 2015; Hsiao et al., 2017). The 8 positive items of the PSS are reverse scored, and the overall scale is calculated as the sum of each item. Possible scores on the scale can range between 18-90. Higher scores on the scale indicate greater levels of parental stress.

**Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)**. The measure chosen to evaluate social support was the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS; Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, & Farley, 1988). This measure was first described by Zimet et al. (1988) and validated in a group of undergraduate students. Three subscales are derived from the MSPSS, each measuring a distinct component of social support: namely, from family, friends, and significant other. In prior studies, high levels of perceived social support were associated with decreased symptoms of anxiety and depression. Subsequent research utilizing this measure has confirmed this association in diverse populations of individuals (Bruwer et al., 2008; Dambi et al., 2018).

This 12-item self-reported scale measures social support from three sources: family, friends, and significant others (Zimet et al., 1988). This survey instrument was originally developed in a young adult population to address several subjective factors underlying social support as well as to capture perceived support from both family and non-family members. In its validation study, the internal reliability of the MSPSS was good (Cronbach's alpha 0.85), with convergent validity with measures of depression and anxiety (Zimet et al., 1988). A sample item from this scale reads as follows: "There is a special person who is around when I am in need." Response options were on a 7-point Likert scale: 1 (very strongly disagree), 2 (strongly disagree), 3 (mildly disagree), 4

(neutral), 5 (mildly agree), 6 (strongly agree), 7 (very strongly agree). Scale scores are calculated as the mean across the items, producing an overall MSPSS score (possible scores range between 1-7) and three subscale scores. Higher scores indicate more perceived support.

**Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scale (FACES-IV)**. The measure of family functioning chosen for the current study was the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Scale, Fourth Edition (FACES-IV), a global set of measures evaluating multiple dimensions of family interactions (Olson et al., 1985). The FACES scale was developed as a measure of family cohesion and flexibility. It has often been used in research to help identify 'problem' v. 'non-problem' family systems (Olson, Gorall, & Tiesel, 1985). The family communication subscale has 10 items which address many of the most important aspects of communication in a family system. Sample item: "Family members are very good listeners." Response options were on a 5-point Likert scale: 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (generally disagree), 3 (undecided), 4 (generally agree), 5 (strongly agree). The family satisfaction subscale has 10 items assessing the satisfaction of family members in regard to family cohesion, flexibility and communication. A sample item reads: "The degree of closeness between family members." Response options were on a 5-point Likert scale: 1 (very dissatisfied), 2 (somewhat dissatisfied), 3 (generally satisfied), 4 (very satisfied), 5 (extremely satisfied). Scale scores are calculated by summing the items, with higher scores indicating better family communication and higher family satisfaction. Scores are converted to percentiles, which were used for the primary analyses of family functioning.

**Daily Heterosexist Experiences Questionnaire (DHEQ).** Measures of LGBTQ+-associated minority stress have only recently been developed. For this study, The Daily Heterosexist Experiences Questionnaire (DHEQ) was chosen as a minority stress measure for the current study. This measure was developed by Balsam et al. in a series of three mixed-methods studies among a group of LGBT adults in Washington State (Balsam, Beadnell, & Molina, 2013). The sample in the DHEQ validation studies included a group self-identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender. The sample was predominantly White, and mean age was over 38 years. The overall composition of the current study's participants is quite similar, therefore, to the DHEQ validation cohort. The strengths of the DHEQ scales include the assessment of a wide range of stresses uniquely experienced by what the measure's authors call LGBT individuals, a clear time frame to assess the stressors (12 months), and the specific questions asking individuals to distinguish between the experience of a stressor and the perceived distress that it caused if experienced (the DHEQ Occurrence and DHEQ Distress subscales for each domain). In the validation study, DHEQ scores were correlated with measures of psychological distress and with measures of general LGBTQ+ discrimination (Balsam, Beadnell, & Molina, 2013).

The DHEQ is a 50-item total questionnaire composed of nine subscales. In the DHEQ validation study, internal reliability of subscale scores was in the acceptable range ($\alpha$ 0.76 – 0.87; Balsam, Beadnell, & Molina, 2013). The questionnaire lists various statements about stressors and asks the question: "How much has this problem distressed or bothered you during the past 12 months?" The response items are: 0 (did not happen / not applicable to me), 1 (It happened, and it bothered me ***not at all***), 2 (It happened, and it

bothered me ***a little bit***), 3 (It happened, and it bothered me ***moderately***), 4 (It happened, and it bothered me ***quite a bit***), 5 (It happened, and it bothered me ***extremely***). For this study, 5 subscales were included (Meyer, 2003; Balsam, Beadnell, & Molina, 2013): Harassment and Discrimination (6 items), Isolation (3 items), Parenting (6 items), Vigilance (4 items), and Victimization (4 items). Each subscale is scored in two ways: (1) *DHEQ Occurrence*: Responses are recoded 0 = 0 (did not occur) and 1 through 5 = 1 (did occur). Items are then summed for a total score indicating how many of these experiences participants have had. (2) *DHEQ Distress*: Responses are recoded so that 0 and 1 = 1 (did not bother) and the rest of the responses remain the same. A mean across items in each subscale is then computed for responses to all items, indicating the mean level of distress participant feels related to these experiences. Although descriptive statistics were used to characterize all of the measured DHEQ subscales in this population of parents in LGBTQ+ couples, the DHEQ parenting subscale (sample item: "Being treated unfairly by parents of other children because you are LGBT") served as the primary indicator of minority stress in relation to parent-school engagement outcomes.

**Study 1 Measures: Childcare Choices, Settings, and Family-School Relationships**

A screener question was embedded in the online survey asking whether the respondent's child was attending a daycare or preschool outside the home. Only those who answered "Yes" proceeded to the remainder of the questions on school or childcare choices (n=201).

**Parental decision-making around childcare/preschool**. A series of questions created for this study assessed the perceived importance of various factors in a respondent's choice for their child's daycare or preschool. For each of 20 potential

factors (examples include: Cost, Proximity to home, Curriculum, Accreditation, Knowledge of LGBTQ+ issues), the participant was asked how important each factor was in making their choice for a preschool or daycare. Responses were rated as “Not at all important”, “Slightly important”, “Moderately important”, and “Very important”). Respondents were then asked to select and rank the top three factors that influenced their choice of a daycare or preschool setting from amongst the same list of provided factors. In addition, a series of agreement questions were developed on general perceptions and experiences with childcare arrangements for their child. These statements were: (1) I did a lot of research (online or through word-of-mouth) before choosing a childcare setting, (2) My family was warmly received as a same-sex parent family in the first childcare setting where our child received care, (3) I consider one or more of my child’s caregivers/teachers to be homophobic, and (4) I am a frequent volunteer or helper where my child receives childcare.

**The Family-School Relationships Survey**. The Family-School Relationships Survey was developed as a modular set of questionnaires for use by researchers, schools, and school systems to measure parent attitudes on various aspects of their relationships with individual schools (Panorama Education, 2015; Schueler et al., 2014; Schueler, McIntyre, & Gehlbach, 2017). These measures were developed and tested in a diverse set of K-12 school settings. Although the surveys have not been studied among parents with children in preschool or other early childhood settings, many of the questions and constructs are relevant to the experience of parents in their relationships with these settings as well. For this study, four scales were chosen as outcome variables on family-school engagement. These four subscales of the Family-School Relationships Survey

were: (1) Family Engagement (6 items, 5-point Likert scale), which measures the degree to which families become involved with and interact with their child's school. [Sample item: "How often do you meet in person with teachers at your child's school?]" (2) School Fit, (7 items, 5-point Likert scale), which measures families' perceptions of how well a school matches their child's developmental needs. [Sample item: "How well do you feel your child's school is preparing him/her for his/her next academic year?"] (3) Family Support (7 items, 5-point Likert scale), which identifies families' perceptions of the amount of academic and social support that they provide their child with outside of school. [Sample item: "How often do you help your child engage in activities which are educational outside the home?"] (4) Family Efficacy (13 items, 5-point Likert scale), measuring how confident families are with regard to key parenting skills [sample item: "How confident are you in your ability to connect with other parents?"] (Panorama Education, 2015). The wording of items was minimally modified to reference the types of early childhood education in which participants' children are currently enrolled. To compute each subscale score, a mean across items was calculated. In the current study, internal reliability for each of the four scales was excellent, with Cronbach's alpha values as follows: School Fit 0.86, Family Support 0.77, Family Efficacy 0.75, and Family Engagement 0.82.

**Study 1 Sociodemographic Characteristics**

Sociodemographic characteristics were assessed for both the survey respondent as well as by asking the participant the same questions about their spouse/partner. Sex assigned at birth was assessed with one item: "What was your assigned sex at birth?" (Response options: female, male), and current gender identity was assessed with one

item: “What is your current gender identity?” (Response options: male, female, trans male/trans man, trans female/trans woman, genderqueer/gender non-conforming, different identity [open-ended]). Using the best practice approach described by the Williams Institute at UCLA (Park, 2016), an additional group of transgender participants who provided discordant responses for assigned sex and gender identity was then identified and a new variable was created which was inclusive of all trans participants. Race/ethnicity was assessed with two items “Which category best describes your race?” (Response options: White, Black or African American, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, American Indian or Alaska Native, other (open-ended)). Participants could check all that apply. The second item asked “Are you Hispanic, Latinx, or of Spanish origin?” Responses from the two questions were recoded into: White, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latinx, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, American Indian or Alaska Native, another race/ethnicity. As it was expected that the sample would include a high percentage of individuals with higher socioeconomic status, the item assessing annual household income included response options for greater than $200,000 in $100,000 increments up until $500,000. One item assessed the respondent’s current state of residence, and responses were coded into the four U.S. Census Regions (Northeast, South, Midwest, West).

At the completion of the questionnaire, four open-ended questions were asked: (1) What does your child's daycare or preschool do to create a positive social climate for enrolled children? (2) What, if anything, concerns you about how your child’s daycare or preschool handles your family’s identity as having same-sex parents? (3) Please explain why you selected the daycare or preschool setting(s) where your child(ren) have been

enrolled, and (4) Is there anything else that you would like to share about your experience as a same-sex parent?

**Study 1 Data Analysis**

**Quantitative data.** Of the 333 surveys that were initiated on the Qualtrics site, 241 were included for the analysis. Surveys not included for analysis were incomplete (n=85) or were completed by respondents who did not meet the inclusion criteria, in particular not having children in their families in the appropriate age range (younger than age 6 years; n=7). All analyses were conducted using SPSS. P-values $<0.05$ were considered statistically significant.

Descriptive statistics, including frequency (for categorical variables), and mean/SD (for continuous variables) were derived for all demographic data. For demographic data, key respondent predictors in the analysis were categorized as follows: respondent sex at birth (male v. female), current gender identity (male v. female v. non-binary/genderqueer/transgender), respondent age (less than 40 v. $\geq$ 40 years), respondent education (less than college v. college degree or higher), household income (3 categories), U.S. census region (4 categories), number of children in the family (one v. more than one), how child entered the family (adoption v. other), child sex (male v. female), child race (white v. non-white).

Scale and subscale scores for the PSS, MSPSS, DHEQ, and FACES measures were calculated as described above. Descriptive statistics including means, medians, and standard deviations were derived for each scale. Internal reliability for each scale was calculated using Cronbach's alpha. Correlation analysis using Pearson correlation coefficients was conducted for each of the subscales across the 4 measures. Bivariate

associations of respondent demographics and family characteristics with the stress, support, and family functioning measures were also conducted via paired t-test or analysis of variance as appropriate. The two-family functioning scales (FACES-Communication and FACES-Satisfaction) were the primary dependent variables in the final multiple regression analysis evaluating the association of parental stress, minority stress, and social support with family functioning. A separate regression model was developed for each of the two outcomes, including the stress and support scales as primary variables, then including separate blocks of variables including respondent demographic and child demographic characteristics. Model fit was assessed via the R-squared statistic.

The primary outcome variables for family engagement were drawn from four subscales of the Family-School Relationships Survey as described above: Family Engagement, School Fit, Family Support, and Family Efficacy. Descriptive statistics were calculated for each of the four subscales. Inter-item correlation coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) assessed subscale reliability. Bivariate correlation analysis using Pearson's correlation, t-tests, or ANOVA was conducted to evaluate the association between respondent demographics (as outlined above) and child demographics with each of the subscales of the Family-School Engagement Survey.

Analysis of parental stress (PSS), social support (MSPSS), minority stress (DHEQ) and family cohesion (FACES-IV) was conducted via bivariate correlation analyses with family-school engagement scales. A separate multivariable regression model was developed for each of the four Family-School Relationship Survey subscales, and models controlled for key respondent demographic factors. For each of the linear

regression models, 3 blocks of variables were entered: 1) scale scores, 2) respondent sociodemographic factors, 3) child demographic factors. Model fit was assessed via the R-squared statistic.

**Qualitative data: Open-ended survey items.** Four open-response questions were included at the conclusion of the Qualtrics survey. These questions, written by the researcher for specific use in this study, were as follows: (1) What does your child's daycare or preschool do to create a positive social climate for enrolled children? (2) What, if anything, concerns you about how your child's daycare or preschool handles your family's identity as having same-sex parents? (3) Please explain why you selected the daycare or preschool setting(s) where your child(ren) have been enrolled. (4) Is there anything else that you would like to share about your experience as a same-sex parent? Of the 241 survey participants, 75% (n=181) responded to one or more of the open response items; 23% (n=56) of the total sample provided a response to all four items, 26% (n=63) to three items, 17% (n=42) to two items, and 8% (n=20) to one item. Participants' likelihood to respond did not exhibit major differences across gender identity, racial/ethnic background, or number of children in the family.

The goal in including these questions was to elucidate, across a broader participant population, more nuance about the issues families confront when engaging with the early education settings in which their children are enrolled. In addition, open-ended questions allowed participants to elaborate on their experiences in a way that could not be captured by the norm-referenced measures in the survey. The participants' responses pointed toward examples of the kinds of experiences for which family narrative could be used to protect or buffer children from heterosexist societal beliefs,

expectations, or microaggressions. Finally, the analysis of these data also informed refinements to the interview protocol for Study 2 (Appendix 2).

Because of the brief nature of these responses and the varying levels of detail offered by each survey participant, grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006) offered the best fit for identifying representative themes and quotes from these data. I began coding each of the four questions individually, by focusing on areas of commonality across multiple parents within the set of responses to that item. However, I quickly realized the utility of trying to draw thematic connections across all four responses, as it became apparent that clusters of parents sometimes expressed similar sentiments in response to different question prompts. After completing this first round of coding, I changed focus, highlighting insightful or thought-provoking exemplars for the theme that emerged with some frequency across a cluster of parent participants. I then selected one or more of these quotes to illustrate each key theme described in Chapter 4, with additional parents' responses offered when important nuances emerged. In some cases, these responses stretched along a spectrum; for others, the parents highlighted different facets of a theme.

**Study 2 Methods**

Case study research seeks to provide a robust, nuanced picture of an issue in context so that the research participants' perspectives are well-understood (Yin, 2014). The descriptive case study approach used in Study 2 allowed for an in-depth investigation of four sets of parents, providing color and nuance to a complex phenomenon within the bounds of its own context (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Crabtree and Miller (1999) view the co-construction of meaning as participants' stories are lifted up as a distinct benefit of this approach. Using qualitative inquiry in the form of semi-structured interviews, this work

roots itself in the constructivist approaches of Merriam (1998, 2009) and Stake (1995, 2006), hewing to Stake's concept that the interpreted reality of the particular case emerges from the context, time period, and interactivity of the researcher. Different cases may be interesting on their own and/or may offer understanding and insight of a broader issue (Stake, 2006). The point is to select cases because they have the capacity to reveal something about a context or situation (Yin, 2014; Merriam, 2009).

These four case studies offer illustrative examples that complement the findings unearthed from the online survey conducted in Study 1; additionally, the qualitative interviews in Study 2 examined how same-gender parents and their nuclear families develop a family narrative, and then how these families navigate interactions with childcare and/or preschool settings. These topics were not amenable to examination in the survey study.

**Study 2 Interview Procedure**

At the conclusion of Study 1, families indicated whether they would participate in a semi-structured interview of approximately 60 minutes by providing a contact e-mail address. The goal was to include same-gender families with differences across a number of key demographic factors, including gender, household income, and race of both parents and children. A first wave of recruitment yielded only one participant couple; the remaining three couples were recruited after continued follow-up, resulting in a convenience sample that was balanced on gender and included one family with both parents and children of color, but did not include families outside of large metropolitan areas on the East coast of the U.S.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each family between December, 2019, and March, 2020. One interview was done in-person and the three were completed over the telephone. Interview locations were private and quiet, and pseudonyms have been used to protect participants' identity. An interview guide was developed for the parent interviews, establishing the key questions and topics to be explored. All participants were provided information about the research study and provided informed consent to participate. Interviews lasted approximately sixty minutes; as part of the consent form signed by each participant, permission was obtained to record audio of the interviews.

**Study 2 Interview Topics**

While the parent quoted at the outset of this paper questioned why LGBTQ+ headed families should be different than any other family, the reality is that families headed by same-gender individuals must necessarily incorporate many complex, interwoven dimensions into their shared story: the parents' own LGBTQ+ coming out processes and resultant relationships with their family of origin; how they met their spouse; how the couple decided to pursue parenting; the choice of how to bring a child into the relationship; the extent to which they face(d) barriers to becoming parents; the experience of being same-gender parents in their family/community; the extent to which being a same-gender parent requires continuous "coming out" as being LGBTQ+ in a variety of (sometimes unexpected) settings; how parents talk to their kids over time about "where they came from," among numerous other factors. They have to navigate how to do this in developmentally appropriate ways throughout a child's life course—something that can be particularly challenging in the preschool years, as imagination and questions

start to emerge and blossom. They are forced to interpolate any negative reactions or experiences to which any member of the family is exposed, trying as best they can to mitigate any distress.

To understand the forces at play for each participant family, I explored the following topics and questions:

- **LGBTQ+ family narrative creation/disclosure.** What do parents in same-gender couples who created their family through adoption, IUI, or IVF (plan to) say to their children about their family structure? Have these conversations taken place? To what extent have outside forces influenced the amount of information provided?
- **Adaptation to societal norms/influences.** To what extent do LGBTQ+ parents respond to societal norms or influences external to their family unit around gender and parenting? How do parents report their (positive or negative) experiences with coming out as LGBTQ+ in their own families influenced their own family's narrative?
- **Selection of childcare/preschool.** What factors have parents considered when selecting a childcare or preschool setting for their children? Did they face any roadblocks, ignorance, and/or other discriminatory experiences?
- **Experiences with childcare/preschool.** How have childcare providers and/or preschool settings supported the parents and their children? What, if anything, have parents and teachers done to integrate and accommodate their children?

**Study 2 Analysis**

To analyze data from the four case studies, I integrated two methodologically rigorous approaches to coding thematically: grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006), the emic approach used for gleaning insight from the open-response items in Study 1, and Boyatzis (1998), who attempts to balance positivist and constructivist schools of thematic qualitative analysis. With both approaches, the aim is to condense and categorize codes into a series of themes; these themes begin to offer an understanding of what research participants are communicating to the researcher.

Within a few days of completing each interview, I began by listening to the recording in its entirety, which is key to the process of being open to what interview participants are telling the researcher (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). During a single sitting, I took listening notes, which captured a first set of impressions and began to unearth notable moments in each interaction with participants. These notes represented my first step in what Dryden-Peterson (2018) describes as "triangulat[ion] and compar[ison]" of a variety of data sources (p. 490); this adds richness and nuance to thematic analysis. Subsequently, interviews with parents from each of the four family units were transcribed in full by an outside service which uses secure protocols to transmit audio and transcript files. After each interview was transcribed, I reviewed them for fidelity to the original conversations.

Based on an initial reading of the transcripts, provisional codes were generated. Data were first coded descriptively; these emergent (emic) codes were then checked for resonance against a list of etic codes drafted using a subset of prior studies that focused quite specifically on same-gender parents' preschool experiences (Goldberg et al., 2018;

Goldberg, Black, Sweeney, & Moyer, 2018; Cocker, Hafford-Letchfield, Ryan, & Barran, 2018). A second coder used this integrated list of both emic and etic codes and exemplars to analyze the interview data; the coders then worked collaboratively to increase agreement and refine codes. Ultimately, a set of shared themes emerged from this process, covering each of the two primary areas of interest covered in the research questions above: namely, the characteristics of each family's origin story and the influence they report that their family experiences had on the selection of and experience with early education settings.

# CHAPTER 3

## Stress, Social Support, and Family Functioning Among LGBTQ+ Parents

### Parental Stress

Overall, responses to items in the Parental Stress Scale (PSS) indicated a low level of parenting-related stress among this group of same-gender parents (Table 3). There was a high level of agreement for positively worded items such as "I am happy in my role as a parent" (97% agree or strongly agree) and "I enjoy spending time with my child(ren)" (98% agree or strongly agree). Similarly, there was general disagreement amongst the participants towards the negatively worded items including "If I had to do it over again, I might decide not to have child(ren)" (92% disagree or strongly disagree) and "having children has meant having too few choices and too little control over my life" (84% disagree or strongly disagree). Items in which some participants did indicate sources of parent-related stress included those regarding overall worry ["I sometimes worry whether I am doing enough for my child(ren)"] (67% agree or strongly agree), challenges with parenting responsibilities ["I feel overwhelmed by the responsibility of being a parent"] (47% agree or strongly agree), and financial burdens of parenting ["Having child(ren) has been a financial burden"] (40% agree or strongly agree).

The mean PSS score in the survey sample was 38.1 (SD 7.8, range 19-74), Guidance for the PSS suggests that scores between 18-42 on the PSS reflect mild stress and scores greater than 67 indicate significantly elevated stress (Berry & Jones, 1995), therefore these results indicate fairly low levels of parental stress in the sample overall. Internal reliability of the PSS was high (Cronbach's alpha = 0.82). Differences in mean PSS scores based on key sociodemographic characteristics are shown in Table 4. Mean

PSS scores were higher among respondents with higher levels of education (college education or higher, mean 38.7 [SD 8.0] v. less than college, mean 36.4 [SD 6.6], p=0.05). Unsurprisingly, mean PSS scores were also significantly higher among those with more than one child in their family (39.2 v. 37.0, p=0.02) and those with children 3 years of age and older (39.4 v. 37.3, p=0.04). There were no significant differences in the mean PSS score based on respondent age, gender identity, race, or household income, nor based on child race or on the method used for family building.

**Social Support**

In the survey, social support was measured by the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS). Overall, responses indicated fairly high levels of social support in all domains measured in the MSPSS, including family, friends, and significant other(s) (Table 5). For example, 97% of respondents agreed, strongly agreed or very strongly agreed with the statement “there is a special person with whom I can share my joys and sorrows”, 88% agreed, strongly agreed or very strongly agreed with the statement “I have friends with whom I can share my joys and sorrows, and 83% agreed, strongly agreed, or very strongly agreed with the statement “My family really tries to help me.” Additionally, there was no statement in the MSPSS that garnered more than 5% participant disagreement.

The means and standard deviations of the MSPSS scales (overall and 3 subscales) are presented in Figure 3. Internal reliability, measured by Cronbach’s alpha, of the overall MSPSS scale was excellent (Cronbach’s alpha 0.90).

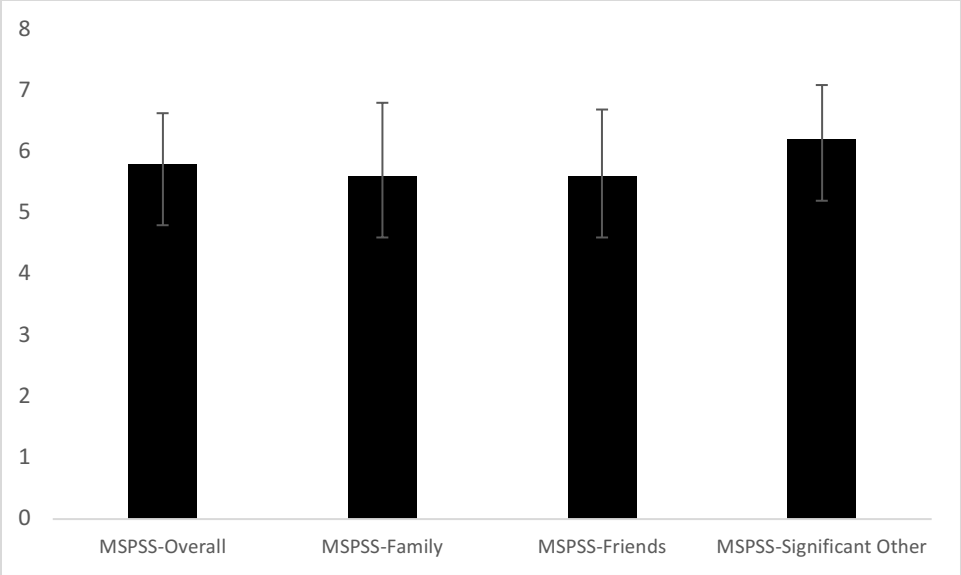


***Figure 3**: Overall MSPSS Scale Scores. (Each bar depicts the mean MSPSS scale score ± SD.)*

Differences in mean overall MSPSS scale scores based on key sociodemographic characteristics are shown in Table 6. While the mean overall MSPSS score did not differ based on the number of children in the family, the MSPSS-Friends score was lower among respondents with a child 3 years old or more (5.9 v. 5.6, p=0.009). In general, perceived social support did not differ based on most measured respondent or family characteristics. Specifically, there were no significant differences in the mean MSPSS overall or subscale scores based on respondent age, gender identity, race, or household income, region of residence, nor based on child race or by how the child was brought into the family.

Therefore, in this study, perceived social support was quite high for all three MSPSS subscales, congruent with the hypothesis that parents in same-gender relationships who pursue parenting also feel highly supported in their roles as parents and members of a community and family. Interestingly, the highest subscale score was for

support from significant others, likely hinting at higher levels of relationship quality among the recruited participants.

**Minority Stress**

In the survey, minority stress specific to the experiences of being a member of the LGBTQ+ community was measured using five subscales of the Daily Heterosexist Experiences Questionnaire (DHEQ). Responses to the individual items for each of the DHEQ subscales as well as scale scores are shown in Table 7. For each subscale, two values are calculated: an occurrence score and a distress score. Among survey participants, the minority stress experiences assessed in this measure did occur; interestingly, though, very few of the minority stress experiences included in the DHEQ scales were endorsed as having occurred by >50% of respondents. Some of the minority stress experiences reported by a majority of respondents included “difficulty finding LGBT friends” (59%), “watching what you say and do around heterosexual people” (65%), and “people staring at you when you are out in public because you are LGBT” (53%). Since participants were all LGBTQ+ parents, it was unsurprising that the selection of stressors included in the DHEQ Parenting scale occurred most commonly. A large majority (88%) reported that people assumed they were heterosexual because they had children, with 62% reporting that this bothered them at least a little bit. Similarly, 68% reported difficulty finding other same-gender families to socialize with, with 64% reporting that this bothered them at least a little bit. However, for the other two items in the DHEQ Parenting scale, the majority did not report that the stressors had happened to them. Interestingly, these were the items that assessed experiences with other parents or with schools. Only 7% reported that they had been treated unfairly by teachers or

administrators at their children's school because they were LGBTQ+, only 13% reported being treated unfairly by parents of other children because they were LGBTQ+. This descriptive data suggests that, although participants perceived some heterosexism within their broader social context, they did not experience the same number of stressors within their closer social circle of fellow parents or staff at schools (possibly because they had some degree of agency in choosing the latter two groups of individuals to interact with).

In evaluating the DHEQ subscales, average scores for the study population were low, again indicating a low level of perceived minority stress. The mean DHEQ Parenting occurrence score was 1.9 (SD 1.0, range 0-4) and the mean DHEQ Parenting distress score was 1.5 (SD 0.5, range 0-5). Mean occurrence scores were highest for the DHEQ Vigilance scale (mean 2.2, SD 2.0, range 0-6) and lowest for the DHEQ Victimization scale (mean 0.03, SD 0.3, range 0-4). In fact, for the 4 items included in the Victimization scale, no more than one to three respondents even indicated that the particular stressor had occurred for them. On the DHEQ Vigilance scale, 65% indicated that they watched what they said and did around heterosexual people, but only 20% reported ever pretending to be heterosexual, and 33% reported hiding their relationship from other people. The DHEQ Harassment occurrence score was also low overall (occurrence mean 1.2, SD 1.4); for instance, 82% of respondents indicated that "being verbally harassed by strangers because you are LGBT" did not happen to them. Mean DHEQ distress scores were also lowest for the Victimization scale (mean 1.0, SD 0.1) and highest for the Vigilance scale (mean 1.6, SD 0.8). Inter-item reliability was highest for the Vigilance (Cronbach's alpha 0.86) and the Harassment (Cronbach's alpha 0.74) scales, but was lower for the Parenting (Cronbach's alpha 0.59), Isolation (Cronbach's

alpha 0.57), and Victimization (Cronbach's alpha 0.57) scales. All of the DHEQ Occurrence subscales were significantly correlated with each other (Table 8), with the strongest correlations between the Isolation and Parenting subscales ($\rho$=0.441, p<0.001) and Harassment and Vigilance subscales ($\rho$=0.397, p<0.001).

Differences in mean DHEQ occurrence scale scores based on key sociodemographic characteristics are shown in Table 9. The mean DHEQ Parenting Occurrence score was lower (that is, indicated less minority stress) for respondents with higher educational attainment (mean 1.8 v. 2.0, p=0.04), higher household income, and for those who adopted their child (mean 1.4 v. surrogacy/IVF/IUI mean 1.9, p=.007). Otherwise, there were no other significant differences across any of the other DHEQ occurrence scales based on respondent age, gender identity, race, or household income, region of residence, nor based on the number of children in the family, child race, or child age.

**Associations Among Parental Stress, Minority Stress, and Social Support**

Table 10 presents the results of the correlation analysis of the three stress and support measures in the study. There were significant associations found between all three of the measures. The PSS score was inversely correlated with the overall levels of social support (as measured by the MSPSS) ($\rho = -0.28$, $p < 0.05$) as well as all three of the MSPSS subscales, supporting the expected notion that those with higher reported levels of parental stress would report lower levels of social support. Supporting the hypothesis that differing types of stress are linked within individuals, there were notable associations between parental stress and minority stress in this population. There was a positive correlation between PSS scores and the DHEQ Vigilance occurrence score

($\rho = 0.15$, $p < 0.05$) and the DHEQ Parenting occurrence score ($\rho = 0.15$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that those with higher levels of reported parental stress also had higher levels of perceived minority stress, particularly around parenting. MSPSS scores were negatively correlated with four of the five DHEQ occurrence scores: Isolation ($\rho = -0.23$, $p < 0.05$), Parenting ($\rho = -0.19$, $p < 0.05$), Harassment ($\rho = -0.15$, $p < 0.05$), and Victimization ($\rho = -0.14$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that higher levels of perceived social support was associated with lower perceived minority stress.

**Family Functioning**

Family functioning was measured in 2 subscales of the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Scale (FACES-IV): the Family Communication Scale and the Family Satisfaction Scale. Responses to the individual items in the two scales are presented in Table 11. In general, family communication was reported at a high level; for example, 94% agreed with the statement "family members discuss their ideas and beliefs with each other" and 91% agreed that "family members express affection towards each other." Disagreement with any of the statements presented in the FACES Communication scale was rarely endorsed by respondents. On the satisfaction scale, 51% were extremely satisfied with family members concern for each other and 42% were extremely satisfied by their family's ability to share positive experiences. Dissatisfaction with any of the items assessed in the FACES Satisfaction scale was quite rare among the study participants.

For both scales, individual scores are converted to percentile scores. For the communication scale, the mean percentile score was 72.9% (median 74%, SD 20.1), and for the satisfaction scale, the mean percentile score was 53.8% (median 51%, SD 27.7).

Correlations between the PSS, MSPSS, and DHEQ scales are presented in Table 12. As expected, parental stress and social support scales were significantly correlated with both of the family functioning scales in the expected directions—namely less stress or greater perceived support were correlated with higher elements of family functioning. Conversely, there was no significant correlation between most of the minority stress scales with either family functioning scale. The only exception was a weak inverse correlation with the DHEQ Victimization scale and the FACES Communication scale.

Differences in the mean percentile scores for the 2 FACES scales based on respondent, family, or child characteristics are shown in Table 13. In general, there were no significant differences in either the family communication nor family satisfaction scale scores based on respondent factors such as age or gender identity. However, those with older children (age 3 years or greater) and those with White children had significantly higher mean scores on both the family communication and family satisfaction scales. There were no differences in either scale score based on how a child entered the family nor the number of children in the respondent's family.

Even though on average the study participants reported low levels of parental stress, this was a key factor observed in the correlational analyses with family functioning. PSS scores were nearly always associated with the family-related outcomes of interest.

**Linear Regression Analysis for Family Functioning Scales**

Two separate linear regression analyses were conducted to explore the independent associations between measures of stress and social support with the measured family functioning scales. The regression models also evaluated the

associations of various parent and family characteristics with the two outcomes. The FACES Communication or FACES Satisfaction percentile scale scores were the dependent variables for the models, and predictor variables were entered into each model in three distinct blocks: stress and social support scale scores, respondent characteristics, and child characteristics. Results from the two regression models are shown in Tables 14 and 15.

There were significant associations in the expected directions between the PSS score and MSPSS overall score with the FACES Communication score. In a model not adjusted for any respondent or child characteristics, higher perceived parental stress was associated with decreased family communication ($\beta = -0.13$, $p=0.03$) and higher levels of social support were associated with better family communication ($\beta = 0.52$, $p<0.001$). In this model, there was no significant association between any of the minority stress (DHEQ) scales and the family communication scale. The adjusted R-square for this model was 0.30 (SE 16.7). By adding in respondent gender identity, household income, respondent age, and the presence of more than one child into the model, the adjusted R-square increased to 0.32 (SE 16.6). The only respondent demographic factor that was significantly associated with family communication in this model was respondent age category; being older than 40 years was associated with decreased family communication scores ($\beta = -0.13$, $p=0.03$). In a final model also including child characteristics (age category, race, and how the child entered the family), the significant associations between family communication and parental stress and social support remained but the association between parental age and communication was no longer significant. Not surprisingly, in this final model, having a child older than 3 years was significantly associated with lower

family communication scores (β = -0.15, p=0.01). The adjusted R-square for this model was 0.35.

Regression models for the FACES Satisfaction score also identified significant associations in the expected directions with both the PSS score and MSPSS overall score. In the model not adjusted for any respondent or child characteristics, higher perceived parental stress was associated with decreased family satisfaction (β = -0.22, p<0.001) and higher levels of social support were associated with higher family satisfaction (β = 0.46, p<0.001). In this model, there were no significant associations between any of the minority stress (DHEQ) scales and the family communication scale. The adjusted R-square for this model was 0.294 (SE 23.3). None of the respondent characteristics added to the model (respondent gender identity, household income, respondent age category, and the presence of more than one child) were significantly associated with family satisfaction, thus the adjusted R-square for this model remained at 0.294 (SE 23.3). In the final model including child characteristics (age category, race, and how the child entered the family), the parental stress and social support were still significantly associated with family satisfaction scores. Certain child characteristics were also associated with decreased family satisfaction. In this full model, having a child older than 3 years was significantly associated with lower family satisfaction scores (β = -0.15, p=0.02). In addition, having a non-White child (regardless of parental race) was associated with lower levels of family satisfaction (β = -0.15, p=0.01). The adjusted R-square for the complete model was 0.326.

**Summary**

Based on the analyses presented above, the overall hypothesis that parenting stress and social support are linked to family functioning was confirmed within this specific study sample. For both the communication and satisfaction scales, scores on the PSS and MSPSS scales were significantly associated with the two FACES-IV scale scores, even when adjusting in regression models for multiple parent-reported demographic characteristics and family-level characteristics. As expected, higher levels of parental stress were associated with lower family communication and family satisfaction scores, and higher levels of perceived social support were associated with higher family communication and satisfaction scores.

By contrast, in the study sample, LGBTQ+-specific minority stress did not seem to have any systematic association with family functioning. This finding is contrary to what was initially hypothesized, but may be in part due to the overall low levels of minority stress reported by the participants. Additionally, for both the family communication and satisfaction scales, parent characteristics including age, gender identity, sexual orientation, and race/ethnicity, had no association with overall functioning. The only family demographic factor that was associated with family functioning in the regression models was child's age; in both regression analyses, parents with children over age 3 years on average had lower scores in both family functioning scales, when compared to those with younger children This is not entirely surprising, since the challenges of parenting an older child, particularly during a period when they enter an early childhood education setting for the first time, could introduce greater tension in the family unit.

Results from this set of analyses therefore suggest that the factors that influence components of family functioning in this population of LGBTQ+-parented families with young children do not seem to differ from factors that would be expected to impact the same outcomes in other family structures.

# CHAPTER 4

## LGBTQ+ Parent Experiences with Childcare and Preschool Settings

*I feel like they've been really great...and they have us bring in photos every couple of months because they make boards at the school of all the families. It's nice walking in there and seeing the picture of the three of us right next to the picture of the straight couple and their child, or the single mom and her child, whatever the case may be. So I feel like this daycare also has been even more kind of welcoming, is what it seems. (Study 2, Male Parent).*

### Childcare or Preschool Arrangements Reported by Same-Gender Parents

Among the 241 overall survey responses, 173 (72%) reported that their child received at least 10 hours per week of childcare outside of their home at the time of the survey. Among this group, reported childcare or school arrangements included: center-based daycare (47%), private preschool (35%), home-based daycare (6%), public preschool (3%), and cooperative daycare (1%). The remainder (8%) reported relying on a nanny or other type of arrangement outside of their home. Among the total sample, 187 (77%) answered the global questions developed for the survey on their childcare arrangements. Eighty-five percent agreed with the statement "I did a lot of research before choosing a childcare setting", and 89% agreed that "my family was warmly received as a same-sex parent family in the first childcare setting where our child received care." Participants also did not report much perceived homophobia in their chosen childcare settings, with 92% disagreeing with the statement "I consider one or more of my child's caregivers/teachers to be homophobic" (Table 16).

### Factors Influencing Choice of Childcare / Preschool

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of a series of factors in determining their choice of childcare setting or preschool for their child. For this series of questions, 201 (83% of survey sample) provided responses as they reported currently

having a child in a preschool or childcare setting outside of the home. The complete descriptive data for this series of questions is shown in Table 17. The factors rated as very important by the largest percentage of respondents included cost (76%), proximity to home (60%) and proximity to work (50%). Other factors related to convenience were also rated as very important by respondents, including opening hours (47%) and availability of extended hours (45%). Curriculum was rated as very important by only 29% of respondents, and 16% reported that curriculum was not an important factor at all. Only 18% reported that education level or credentials of teachers was very important. A large majority (77%) reported that child/teacher(caregiver) ratio was not at all important. Only 26% reported that knowledge of LGBTQ+ issues was very important; a similar percentage (22%) reported that this was not at all important. Participants were also asked to choose their top three factors in their choice of childcare/preschool setting (Figure 4). The factors most often included in the top 3 choices were warmth of caregivers/teachers (58%), proximity to home (41%), and cost (27%).

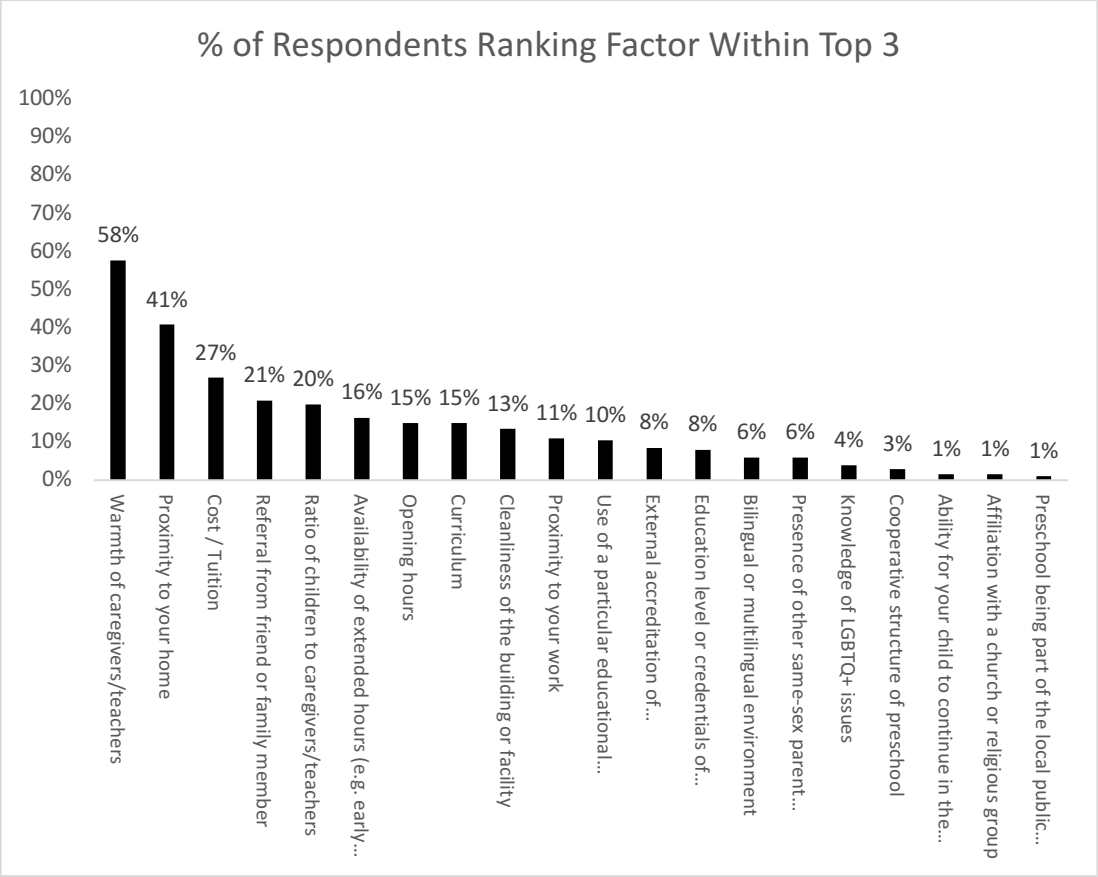


***Figure 4:*** *Commonly ranked factors influencing parental choices for childcare.*

**Family-School Relationships Survey: Descriptive Data**

Four subscales of the Family-School Relationships Survey were completed by 201 respondents and were included in the final analysis. Two of the scales (School Fit and Family Engagement) assess direct parental engagement in the school setting, whereas the two other scales (Family Efficacy and Family Support) measure parents' engagement with their child's learning at home. The Family Support Scale measures perceptions of the amount of academic support provided by parents to their child outside of school and the Family Efficacy Scale measures the confidence that parents may have regarding overall parenting skills.

Descriptive data on the individual questions within the four scales are presented in Table 18. Based on individual responses, there was variability in the reported frequency of parental engagement activities assessed by the Family Engagement scale. Whereas 50% of respondents reported meeting in person with teachers or caregivers monthly or more, 73% reported only rarely helping out at their child's preschool or childcare setting. Responses to the questions on the School Fit scale suggested a general sense that a school setting fit their child's developmental needs. For instance, 87% of respondents felt that activities offered at their child's school matched their interests, and 86% responded that their child felt quite a bit of or tremendous belonging at their school. On the Family Support scale, 86% reported having conversations with their child frequently or more and 76% reported engaging their child in educational activities outside the home. In the Family Efficacy scales, respondents in general expressed confidence about their parenting skills; 72% were quite or extremely confident that they could make sure that their child's school or childcare setting met their child's learning needs and 75% reported being quite or extremely confident in their ability to make choices about their child's schooling.

As shown in Figure 5, the highest mean score was School Fit [mean 4.2 (SD 0.6, range 1-5)], followed by Family Efficacy [mean 3.9 (SD 0.6, range 1-5)], Family Support [mean 3.7 (SD 0.6, range 1-5)], and Family Engagement [mean 2.7 (SD 0.9, range 1-5)].

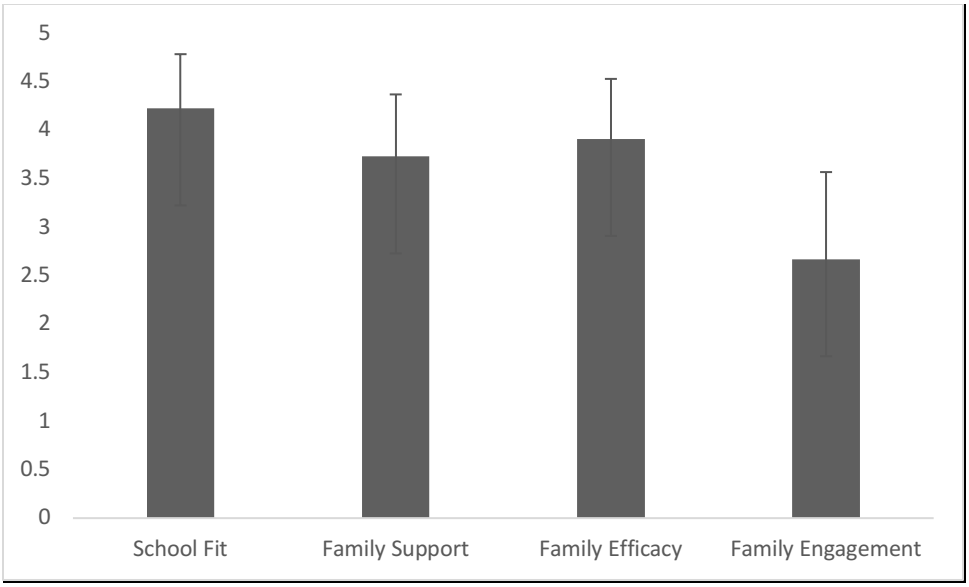


***Figure 5:*** *Mean scores for Family-School Relationship Scales.*

**Family-School Engagement: Associations with Parent and Family Characteristics**

Potential associations between scores on the 4 scales of the Family-School Relationship surveys and respondent and child characteristics were tested via t-test and ANOVA, and results are shown in Table 19. There were no significant characteristics associated with the School Fit scale. Respondents with a child older than 3 years had higher scores on the Family Support scale (3.9 v. 3.6, p=0.001), but no other family characteristics were associated with this scale. Respondents with a White child (independent of parental race) had higher scores in the Family Efficacy scale (4.0 v. 3.8, p=0.02), but no other characteristics were significantly associated with this scale score. Respondents with more than one child had significantly higher mean scores (2.8 v. 2.5, p=0.005) on the Family Engagement scale, as did those whose child was less than 3 years old (2.9 v. 2.6, p=0.001). No other characteristics were associated with Family Engagement scores.

**Associations with Stress, Social Support, and Family Functioning Scales**

Table 20 presents data on the Pearson correlation analysis of the four Family-School Relationship scales and the parental stress, social support, and minority stress scales. Higher reported levels of parental stress were associated with lower School Fit ($\rho$=-0.32, $p<0.01$), Family Support ($\rho$=-0.15, $p<.05$), and Family Efficacy ($\rho$=-0.31, $p<0.01$) scores. Social support as measured by the MSPSS was positively associated with the Family Efficacy scale scores, but not Family Support scores. The overall MSPSS score was also significantly associated with the School Fit score ($\rho$=0.15, $p=0.05$). Higher scores on some of the minority stress scales (DHEQ-Harassment and DHEQ-Isolation) were associated with lower Family Efficacy scores, but no associations were identified between minority stress scale scores and School Fit or Family Engagement scores. There also was a significantly positive correlation between Family Functioning (as measured by the FACES-Communication and FACES-Satisfaction scales) with Family Efficacy scores (Table 21). FACES-Satisfaction scores were weakly correlated with School Fit scores ($\rho$=-0.19, $p=<0.05$). Higher scores on the FACES-Communication scale was weakly associated with the Family Engagement score ($\rho$=-0.16 $p<0.05$) as well, but not with other Family-School scales measured.

Overall, these correlational analyses showed that parental stress was a factor associated with family-school engagement, particularly and as expected in the subscales assessing parental involvement and efforts towards education in their homes (Family Efficacy and Family Support scales). Higher levels of family functioning similarly were associated with higher Family Efficacy. In this population, minority stress seemed to be less impactful with respect to parent-school engagement. Having a younger child was

associated with higher scores on the Family Engagement scale yet lower scores on the Family Support scale. These results suggest a divergence in factors influencing the scales assessing relationships with the school setting (Family Engagement and School Fit) and those assessing family engagement in education in the home setting (Family Efficacy and Family Support).

**Linear Regression Models for Family-School Engagement Scales**

To further elucidate the independent influence of stress, social support, and family characteristics on reported family-school engagement, separate linear regression models were developed for each of the four parent-school engagement scales (scale score as dependent variable). Predictor variables were entered into each model in three distinct blocks: stress, social support, family functioning scale scores, respondent characteristics, and child characteristics. Model fit did not change when comparing models including all variables with those with reduced number of variables. In general, the R-squared for each of the models was low, indicating that the majority of variance in scale scores is explained by unmeasured factors. The results from the regression models including all scales and respondent/child characteristics are shown in Table 22.

Parental stress was the only measured variable associated with scores on the School Fit scale. In the model adjusted for all included respondent or child characteristics, higher perceived parental stress was associated with decreased perception of school fit ($\beta = -0.33$, $p<0.001$). In this model, there were no significant associations observed between social support (MSPSS), any of the minority stress (DHEQ) scales, family functioning (FACES) scales, or respondent and child characteristics with School Fit scores. The adjusted R-square for this model was 0.117.

Similarly, parental stress was the only variable significantly associated with scores on the Family Efficacy scale. In the model adjusted for all included respondent or child characteristics, higher perceived parental stress was associated with decreased perception of family efficacy ($\beta = -0.31$, $p<0.001$). There were no significant associations observed between social support (MSPSS), any of the minority stress (DHEQ) scales, family functioning (FACES) scales, or respondent and child characteristics with Family Efficacy scores. The adjusted R-square for this model was 0.16.

In contrast, none of the parental stress, minority stress, social support, nor family functioning scales were significantly associated with Family Engagement scale scores in the regression model. Respondent (parent) characteristics also were not associated with Family Engagement scores. However, having a child who was 3 years old or older was independently associated with higher Family Engagement scale scores ($\beta = 0.18$, $p=0.03$). Since older children are more likely to be in more formal preschool settings as compared to childcare/daycare settings, it is possible that this association reflects differences in how parents engage overall with preschool teachers or programs compared to how they engage with childcare providers in daycares. The model R-squared for the Family Engagement model was overall, quite low (R-squared 0.074).

For the Family Support scale, three variables were significantly associated with scale scores in a regression model. Higher parental stress was associated with lower Family Support scores ($\beta = -0.16$, $p=0.05$) and older respondent age (being over 40 years old) was associated with higher Family Support scores ($\beta = 0.15$, $p=0.05$). Similar to the results of the Family Engagement scores, having an older child ($\geq$ 3 years old) was also

associated with higher Family Support scores (β = 0.26, p=0.001). The model R-squared for the Family Support model was also quite low (R-squared 0.058).

**Open-Ended Survey Responses on Parental Experiences with Early Care/Education**

Four optional, open-response questions included at the conclusion of the online survey allowed participants the chance to provide additional observations of their overall experiences as parents and to explain factors that influenced their choices around daycare or preschool; additionally, participants were asked to describe positive experiences and concerns that they may have had with childcare or preschool settings. The questions were as follows: (1) Please explain why you selected the daycare or preschool setting(s) where your child(ren) have been enrolled; (2) What does your child's daycare or preschool do to create a positive social climate for enrolled children?; (3) What, if anything, concerns you about how your child's daycare or preschool handles your family's identity as having same-sex parents?; and (4) Is there anything else that you would like to share about your experience as a same-sex parent?

Thematic variation in these responses identified important distinctions among the survey participant families, and ultimately shaped the contours of Study 2's qualitative, in-depth approach to capture more texture and nuance about the family narratives LGBTQ+ parents and their children have woven together. In a sense, the brief responses from Study 1 survey participants presaged many of the themes that would later emerge in Study 2. For that reason, as described in Chapter 2, I coded these data using an emic approach, rooted in grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006), to capture emergent themes that hinted at the emergence of family narrative among survey participants.

While the majority of responses suggested that families exhibited interest in finding an early education environment that aligned with their identity as LGBTQ+ parents, families' success in doing so varied along a spectrum. At one end of the spectrum, a participant reported that:

> *We chose a preschool where LGBT identities are affirmed as our top priority. Half of our kiddos['] teachers are queer! Our main concern for our assigned-male-at-birth child is the potential poisonous force of toxic masculinity/the patriarchy in his life, so we are doing everything we can to protect him from that! Choice of school/school community was largely about that. (Also the school has amazing educational philosophies, and many friends with older kids have highly, highly recommended it)* (Study 1, Female Parent).

Similar to this family, the mention of a recommendation from trusted friends about a particular preschool became a theme throughout for those parents who fell on the end of the spectrum when their sociodemographic position offered more agency and choice. And as another participant put it, "[w]e live (purposefully) in a very diverse and queer friendly neighborhood, which certainly [has] shaped our experiences" (Study 1, Female Parent). Among this group of parents, the presence and attitudes of LGBTQ+ caregivers or educators in the preschool setting, which leads to substantially heightened awareness, was consistently highlighted:

> *In general, the preschool is amazing at encouraging prosocial behavior and social development (e.g., teaching the children to check in with each other when there is a problem). Specific to our family, even though we're the only queer family at the preschool, there are several queer teachers, and everyone goes above and beyond to make sure our child is safe and comfortable. They also make sure our family is represented in books they get from the library, change the parental honorifics in some stories so the character has a GNC [gender nonconforming] parent, and keep track of our preferences around Mother's/Father's Day. Our child is also pretty gender-fluid / doesn't appear to have noticed much about gender, and his teachers are super supportive of our child and other AMAB [assigned male at birth] kids coming to school in dresses or nail polish* (Study 1, Genderqueer Parent).

The high socioeconomic status of survey participants hints at the well-resourced context in which many LGBTQ+ families are situated. As Mezey (2013) highlights, a variety of privileges most often interact, providing the necessary underpinning for same-gender couples to accomplish their parenting goals despite societal, legal, and financial obstacles. For many of these parents, sufficient protective factors exist such that societal heteronormativity fails to make an impact on their day-to-day lives:

> *Zero of my parenting stress is about being a same-sex parent. It is all about the behavioral and psychological needs of my children and spouse. Overall we have had the exact experience that all other families have had, and that is what we want* (Study 1, Male Parent).

At the other end of the spectrum from those most privileged and satisfied families, another participant explained the limitations some parents face—those barriers that, among other impacts, might hinder them from finding a school aligned with their priorities:

> *We would love to select a school based on their philosophy, curriculum, etc. but the hard truth is we're extremely limited in our area by (a) who has an opening (especially when kid was an infant) and (b) what we can afford* (Study 1, Female Parent).

Cost, proximity, and geography were three limiting factors cited most commonly across participants, such as the family who wanted to remain at a more open-minded and "queer-friendly" preschool, but they "no longer work nearby and it costs more than we can afford on one income" (Study 1, Female Parent). These kinds of logistical barriers that families confront in picking a school can lead to uncomfortable day-to-day experiences:

> *Very few of the admin[istrators] / teachers have been exposed to gay couples and [have a low] comfort level in referring to us as a family. Also, kids being known as the ones with 2 dads. Still lists "mother/father" vs "guardian" [on*

> *paperwork]. Lack of proactive teaching about different types of families…gay, single parent, grandmother, etc. outside of hetero[sexual]* (Study 1, Male Parent).

Most families fell somewhere in between these two poles, reporting a mix of positive and challenging experiences. Stories in this group emerged of parents' need to provide course-correction along the way due to caregivers' or teachers' lack of forethought or knowledge:

> *We are the very first set of same-sex parents to enroll our child in this childcare center. Broadly, we have been well-received but have had to do some educating of the childcare center staff about my spouse's parent name (we are "Mama and Baba"), how to handle Father's Day (we have no fathers in our family), etc. The staff has been open, warm, professional, and willing to learn though we suspect some individual staff may have some personal discomfort with our family… We do wish that the staff made more of an effort to be proactively inclusive -- for example, using different parent names besides "Mommy and Daddy" when singing children's songs, or offering LGBTQ-inclusive or single parent inclusive books…* (Study 1, Female Parent).

In contrast to the examples above, another group of parents focused, when queried about the positive attributes of their child(ren)'s school, on the school environment's warm sense of community and the developmental and psychosocial benefits their child(ren) are reaping:

> *From the minute we arrive everyone acknowledges our daughter by name. All the kids say hello and goodbye and are encouraged to pay attention to others. The activities the children take part in are social in nature, they are all supportive of one another, say each other's names, do activities together - paint, draw, sing, dance, catch bubbles, take buggy rides, play in the park and on their playground together. It is a happy place for the children, they feel like they belong and like it there. Our daughter is so excited to go into the building and say HI! The children are encouraged to be positive and supportive of each other and everyone says goodbye by name when we leave. It feels like family there* (Study 1, Female Parent).

In response to the same prompts, this group of parents chose not to highlight the aspects of their experience that revolved around LGBTQ+ identity; instead, themes that emerged

from this category of responses centered on the presence and importance of (primarily classroom-level) love, positivity, support, and welcome:

> *Our childcare center staff are warm and open with the children, and show them love and care every day. They are encouraging and available for the children's feelings. They offer space for play, creativity, etc. They allow children to play independently or with each other. Things feel consistent, clean, comforting, and calm. The staff is welcoming to parents* (Study 1, Male Parent).

The data illustrated that foci among survey participants can differ substantially in substance and tone when responding to the same questions about their choice of and experience with early education.

Another important consideration that emerged for a subset of parents concerned intersectional identities within families—for example, those who also have one or more transgender or gender nonconforming/nonbinary parent, or who have children from a different racial/ethnic background. These families occasionally saw another component of their family's narrative and identity as more challenging to teachers or caregivers than sexual orientation:

> *They see our LGBT identity as separate and distinct from our children's racial identities. We see them as interrelated; part of why we are white parents with black children is because we are gay men. We experience much more challenge with lack of support for our children's racial identities than we do for our LGBT identities per se, but we see these things as interconnected* (Study 1, Male Parent).

When asked whether there was anything else they would like to share about their experience as a same-gender parent, the most universal theme of all emerged: namely, about the perceived difficulties of life as a family with LGBTQ+ parents situated in a prevailing, heteronormative context. Numerous families commented about the panoply of banal, daily stresses involved with being an LGBTQ+ parent:

> *I find myself "coming out" MUCH more frequently these days than I needed to in the decade my husband and I were together before having kids. Not because I*

> *ever concealed my sexuality in that decade - I did not - but because it is so salient now that we are around young children (who ask!) so much* (Study 1, Male Parent).
>
> *At first, others making us feel like a novelty was exciting and perhaps fun since it was new. We don't like feeling like novelties. We just want to be treated like another family. As far as we have come, there is much work to be done. That work will come via our examples as LGBT parents* (Study 1, Female Parent).
>
> *Endlessly explaining that we are a two mom household is exhausting. Having to cross out Dad on the forms, new teachers asking about my "husband", what to do about father's day, etc. I wish that being gay wasn't such a challenge. Our son is only starting to realize his family is different, and it breaks my heart that he has to go through more hardships in life because of us* (Study 1, Female Parent).
>
> *Thankfully we have experienced more micro aggressions than outright discrimination. Straight people never want to assume you are not straight. It's worse when you have children. No one ever assumes you are both the moms. People seem to think it's appropriate to ask who gave birth to our child. People refer to our child's donor as "father" or "dad." That[']s the one that is the most upsetting* (Study 1, Female Parent).
>
> *It's very isolating & lonely. We are only queer family in our circle of support of those who have kids. Our kids are not exposed to other queer families. We feel awkward asking for special needs or interests in a heteronormative world and don't want to be the educators of queerness* (Study 1, Genderqueer Parent).

Issues around navigating a family's identity weave through most of the open-ended responses from survey respondents. LGBTQ+ parents find themselves in the awkward position of *being labeled and defined* according to their sexual identity or identities, while family studies as a discipline has traditionally minimized the *discussion of sexuality* both between parents and in interactions with their children (Gabb, 2013). Consider the queries, mentioned above by a survey participant, about who gave birth to a particular child or references to a sperm donor as the child's "dad." It is perhaps due to these queries that the alienating process of "endlessly explaining" family structure was familiar across most survey participants. It speaks to the unique importance of family narrative in making sense of the confusing duality these parents face: of being notable

because of their sexual minority status while also engaging in the "heteronormative world" of parenting, as one parent participant noted above. Research shows that, even at an early age, a cohesive narrative possesses power to partially buffer children who are "only starting to realize [their] family is different" from the effects their family's "novelty" might otherwise have.

**Summary**

Overall, the examination of parents' responses to the survey has illuminated the experiences of LGBTQ+ identified parents of younger children and focused on two distinct, yet related outcomes: family functioning and parent-school engagement. In general, the participants reported low stress, high levels of social support, and were generally found to have high degrees of family functioning. Minority-based stressors specific to LGBTQ+ individuals, however, were less prevalent or influential among the participant group in this study, perhaps because this cohort appears quite high functioning and includes parents who pursued parenthood as a deliberate choice. Conceivably, among those who do *not* choose to become parents, the presence of minority-status based stressors could (among other factors) influence their decision not to have children—and this merits attention in future research. The results from validated scales assessing family communication and family satisfaction revealed high levels of family functioning. The survey results also identify that LGBTQ+ parents make choices on childcare and preschool based on both practical and quality-based factors, and in general are highly engaged in their child's learning environment, both within and outside the home. Levels of parental stress and social support, but not perceived minority stress, were found to be the most influential factors in the primary outcomes assessed, and thus should be

considered when evaluating challenges that same-gender parents may face within their families or with relationships with childcare or preschool settings. Finally, open-response items offered a window into the crucial themes around family narrative, guiding analysis and interpretation for the four case studies presented in the next chapter.

# CHAPTER 5

## The Emergence of Family Narratives During the Preschool Years Among Same-Gender Parents and their Children

*[The preschool teacher] would create worksheets that had at the top, "my family, my mom, my dad…" It was making assumptions about what our family structure was like. And so, we had to have a conversation with her about that...[W]e've talked to [our daughter] about this stuff, and really tried to have her be proud of her family structure. So it was a good moment in that…she asked the teacher to white out "my daddy" and made it "my mama." So she had responded to the teacher and said, "This isn't my family. I don't have a daddy. What can we do about this worksheet?"...[W]e talked about it with [our daughter] as, "Hey, so this happened. And this is probably going to happen again. And just like sometimes people assume you have a daddy and ask you about your daddy and you have to correct them, that's going to happen at school some, too* (Study 2, Female Parent).

### Research Questions and Study Design

Families headed by same-gender parents represent a population among whom the creation and evolution of family narrative has not been explored more deeply. As indicated in the conceptual framework (Figure 2), the qualitative inquiry presented here aimed to obtain significant texture and nuance on the diverse processes of co-creation and evolution around family narrative, something that—beyond the few open response items interpreted thematically at the end of Chapter 4—Study 1 was not capable of illuminating. Using a case study approach, Study 2 therefore explored the following questions:

- **Research question 2a.** What are the family narratives developed by parents raising children in same-gender couples, how do they arise, and what life experiences influence them?

- **Research question 2b.** How might family narratives play a role in families' varying choices of and experiences with selecting childcare and early childhood education settings?

The emergence and evolution over time of family narrative within each family headed by same-gender parents is a complex and unique process. These case studies center on the experiences of four couples, recruited as described in Chapter 2, who live outside major metropolitan areas in the eastern United States. Anecdotes of thoughts, interactions, and experiences over time—from the earliest discussions of whether to engage in family formation until the present—allowed for thorough exploration of participants' specific experiences as LGBTQ+ parents.

In two of the four interviews, I collected data dyadically in a single interview session, as described by Morgan et al. (2013; 2016). Dyadic data has shown a higher likelihood to result in connections between the two participants' statements, as well as higher levels of agreement across the two participants (Morgan et al., 2013); this approach presents an opportunity to stimulate deeper thematic substance due to cross-partner interaction (Morgan et al, 2016). For the remaining two interviews, one parent was able to participate due to schedule limitations and child care needs.

**Case Study Participants**

As reported in Chapter 2, the four families who participated in this study represent a convenience sample that was recruited from among those who completed the online Qualtrics survey described in Study 1. Data for Study 2 were collected using 60 to 90 minute, semi-structured interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) with four sets of same-gender parents: two male, gay-identified couples, and two female, lesbian-identified

couples. As noted above, two members of one male couple were interviewed together in person, another couple was interviewed together by telephone, and one parent from each of the remaining two couples participated via telephone. All families had one or more children who at the time of interview were attending a center-based preschool in major cities on the East coast of the U.S.

**Family 1.** Oliver and Keith (pseudonyms) are a married, same-gender gay male couple (both age 39 years) living in an affluent suburban community outside a major eastern city. Their adopted assigned male child, age 4 years, attends a private Montessori preschool, and a second assigned male child, age 6 months, born via a gestational surrogate, is currently cared for by an au pair in their home. Oliver is an immigrant to the United States from Northern Europe and Keith grew up in a relatively rural setting in the Midwest U.S. with religious parents. Both have completed doctorates and both are working fathers with jobs in academia. Prior to exploring daycare and preschool options after becoming parents, neither Oliver nor Keith had recent exposure to pre-K through twelfth grade education; because he grew up outside the U.S., Oliver also lacked familiarity with the U.S. educational landscape. Their children are being raised in a bilingual home; their primary spoken language from birth has been Oliver's native tongue (which Keith now also speaks somewhat fluently), while English is the language of instruction at school and with the family's au pair.

**Family 2.** Karen and Laura (pseudonyms) are a married, same-gender, lesbian-identified couple (ages 40 and 39 years) living in a somewhat more socioeconomically and racially diverse suburban community, when compared to Oliver and Keith. They have two children, an assigned female child, age 6 years, who attends first grade at a

public elementary school; and an assigned male child, age 3 years, who attends a private preschool. One of the mothers underwent the process of home-based insemination to conceive both children in cooperation with the same known sperm donor, who is a friend. They each completed graduate degrees (one Master's and one doctorate) and are both working mothers. As a result of prior K-12 teaching experience, Karen and Laura are invested in and understand the landscape of American education.

**Family 3.** Thomas and John (pseudonyms) are a married, same-gender, gay-identified couple (ages 40 and 39) living in a first-ring suburb outside a major East coast city. Thomas is African-American and John is Caucasian. Their area has substantial racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity; they purchased a home in their area of town because they knew of other same-gender parents nearby and were comfortable with the presence of multi-racial/ethnic families both in their immediate neighborhood and at the preschool they ultimately selected for their daughter. Presently, they have two children, both of whom were initially placed with them as foster children, with the intent to progress to adoption: a 4 year old who was assigned female at birth, and a 1 year old who was assigned male at birth. While their daughter's adoption is now finalized, they are acting as foster parents for their son while waiting for finalization. Both parents are university educated and work full time outside the home.

**Family 4.** Jamie and Rosa (pseudonyms) are a married, same-gender, lesbian-identified couple (ages 42 and 35) living in a suburban area more distant from the center of a large city on the East coast. Rose grew up in the neighborhood where they currently live, and her mother currently lives in the house with their family. They have one biological child, who was assigned male at birth and is now 5 years old; he will enter

kindergarten at the beginning of the next school year. Rosa carried the pregnancy after conceiving via IUI at a local fertility clinic in collaboration with a known sperm donor, who is a friend of the couple. Both parents are university educated and work outside the home.

Overall, this group of families represented some of the differences among LGBTQ+ parents among those who participated in Study 1—in gender, in residence, in the method of family building they used, and in one case, the family members' racial/ethnic identity.

**Emergent Themes**

**Theme 1: Each family initially used literature to make their children comfortable with the family's structure and identity.** An overarching consideration common to all four couples is that they report having taken steps to foster an ecosystem in which their children are engaged in learning, often with the intention to expose the children to themes that reflect the nature of their families. The use of children's literature in particular as a tool for exposing children to diversity in sexual orientation, gender identity, and family structures is a strategy advocated by Morgan & Kelly-Ware (2016).

Oliver and Keith discussed how they added certain types of books to their library at first, including books about LGBTQ+ families and a selection in Oliver's native language, which they speak at home a majority of the time. Reading is now part of their older son's nightly bedtime routine and has evolved to the point that he drives the choice of content:

> *We've just started reading chapter books to [our older son, age 5 years]. He's very excited and always trying to make us read more than one chapter, especially when we need to go or it's before bedtime.*

Similarly, Karen and Laura have read to their children from the time they were babies, using early selections to buttress the emergence of a coherent family narrative:

> *[F]rom [our daughter] being really young – I think even as a one year old, I was reading her* Mommy, Mama, and Me [*which is about two lesbian mothers parenting a child*], *and* And Tango Makes Three [*which is about two male penguins who raise a baby penguin*]. *We were reading a lot of books about differently structured families…*

Jamie and Rosa have extended their passion for books—particularly those with themes that resonate for their son—outside the home. They ensured that his preschool classroom had a selection containing themes about LGBTQ+ individuals and families:

> *[T]hey have the materials in [our son's] classroom, like the different family books—now, I did buy them some of the family books, I will have to admit. And I do consistently buy them stuff because children's lit[erature] is a passion of mine. I feel that there's so many things that you can teach through children's literature. And I did lecture at [a university] once about not just having the families in the books, but the characters in the background are so helpful. Like, it doesn't have to be a book about families. There's one book, The Hugging Lion, which is the true story about the gay couple in England who adopted a lion. And it's a great story about a lion, but it has a gay couple in the background, not even like, ooh, it's just a family story [about same-gender parents].*

For nightly reading at home with their daughter, Thomas and John also selected books that include characters who reflect their family, both in terms of sexual orientation and racial identity:

> *[A] large percentage of our books are same-sex families, or books with little black girls on them, or books with interracial families so that [our daughter] can understand what her family makeup is and she can understand what her family looks like.*

In addition to introducing a sense of normalcy around different types of family structures, a broader global citizenship is important to Oliver and Keith. Because he grew up outside the U.S., Oliver reports curating opportunities for their children to develop a sense of the culture and language of his home country:

> *[F]or my side of the family, we definitely have had a lot of people come visit, especially some of…my nieces have been visiting a lot. But we basically have decided that we will go to [my country of origin] every other year for Christmas, every other year for summer. That way we get the connection there. I've also made a strong point out of making sure they get…citizenship and I speak [the language] and read to them. So I'm definitely passing on sort of–I don't think of it so much as my family culture as I think of it as my national identity, I guess.*

Ultimately, these families' orientation toward learning at home and integrating cultural breadth from a very young age is consistent with their high levels of university education and SES—both factors that also characterized the larger survey sample. What is notable is that each shared a story of how they planned—even before their children became verbal—to use shared moments as a family to reinforce the normality and importance of the traits that might otherwise be considered "non-normative" by society at large. In the case of Jamie and Rosa, they took a step further, ensuring also that their son's teachers and classmates would also have access to books that dealt positively with issues of LGBTQ+ identity and families.

**Theme 2: Same-gender parents must negotiate a range of complex logistics and emotions throughout family formation and their children's early life course.** Among same-gender couples interested in having children, the process of family formation places a substantial burden that is logistical, emotional, and financial on aspirant parents. Procreation would rarely be accidental or taken for granted. Within the context of each family, the process of expanding the family narrative to include a child can be difficult. A host of questions are likely to arise: Would we feel comfortable with the uncertain outcome of a foster placement? What if the birth mother changes her mind about a private adoption placement? Who will carry a pregnancy if we use IUI or IVF?

Who will be the biological parent? Will I feel differently if I am not the biological parent and my spouse is? What will we tell the children?

Participants reported that these experiences and questions continue to refine their family's story and require periodic conversations that ebb and flow based on children's interest, attention, and curiosity, as well as what they perceive as developmentally appropriate for their children. The four participant couples' family building processes spanned almost all methods currently available to LGBTQ+ couples, including foster-to-adopt, private adoption, home-based insemination, IUI, and IVF. In their own ways, each offered a window into the complex emotions behind their family formation processes.

For Karen and Laura, who agreed for financial reasons to attempt home-based insemination with a male friend (i.e., known donor), they began by engaging lawyers for each party to ensure that both they and the sperm donor were legally protected. This process ensured that practical and emotional implications of genetic half-siblings were considered for the donor's wife and his future children. Additionally, one of the parties (in this case, the intended mothers) had to travel across the country to attempt a pregnancy. This helped to codify their family narrative even before insemination was attempted:

> *[W]e had a known donor. And we were really open with the kids. So, he's a friend of ours… We see him and his wife, and now his kid once a year at least. And so, we actually did a home insemination in [the Western U.S.]… Now I get to be the only one of – I'm probably the only person you've talked to who that is true of!*

However, even with their curation of literature on diverse family forms at home, their social justice orientation, and their transparency in communication about pregnancy and family formation, Karen and Laura's family has still experienced some awkward conversations:

> *[Our son] has definitely said before, "I wish I had a daddy." I think he very much sees his classmates, who happen to be other little boys who he hangs out with a lot, and whose daddies will throw them up into the air, throw their sons up into the air or wrestle with them. And I think that there's a piece of him that is jealous of that. And so, I'll tease him. He'll say, "I wish I had a daddy." And I was like, "Well, what do you want to do with a daddy?" And he'll say something, and I'll be like, "I'll do that with you." And he usually drops it. But he'll definitely go there, and [our daughter] hasn't ever.*

Oliver and Keith's adopted son also started talking about "mommy" after school one day. They assumed that it came from something that happened at their son's Montessori school, whether during an activity (either self-directed or with an educator present) or due to an interaction with a peer. However, Keith indicated that the school claimed to be similarly perplexed at the source:

> *One day, [our son] came home from school and wanted to know why he didn't have a mommy. We explained about his birth mother and have always been open about that part of his life. We still think it could have to do with something at the school, either a classmate or something he heard.*

Similarly, Thomas and John's daughter has discussed with them the different-gender parents found in the majority of literature read at her school:

> *[O]bviously they're teaching her there's a mommy at school, she sees in the books a mommy and a daddy. So she knows what that means. She knows that she has two daddies…*

In contrast to the other participant families, Thomas and John had not yet chosen to explicitly address the topic of adoption with their daughter when it came up at school. They had read books about adoption, but without connecting it to their own family formation process when talking with their daughter:

> *So [my husband] was reading one of our nighttime books to [our daughter]… just last week actually [and] I think the character in the book was adopted… And [she was] like, "Oh, kind of like me." And [he said], "Uhh." [laughter] Which was great, but like I said, we haven't had that full conversation. So I'm assuming that one of her teachers…said that to her. So now that that conversation has clearly happened, which I'm okay with, now that gives us an opening to talk more freely*

> *with her about it because it seems like she is starting to understand or will be able to understand what it all means… She knows…that people come into your life in other ways than just mom giving birth to the child.*

Additionally, while their daughter and her younger brother are related biologically, they also have two older siblings who were adopted by another family. Our discussion explored in depth how she makes meaning of those relationships. One challenge Thomas and John report facing is that the other siblings' adoptive family has chosen not to disclose in any way that an adoption has taken place; in part, it seems that their decision not to connect explicitly the pieces of their own family's narrative is because of the other family's continuing choice not to discuss anything with their children. Thomas ultimately concluded that:

> *I feel like we are ready to tell her so that she can, in turn, ask anything she wants to ask, or so she can fully understand what the big picture now, especially now that she is seeing her sisters more often…*

Jamie and Rosa have included books about human reproduction along with those about LGBTQ+ families when reading to their five year old son. He is now starting to exhibit more curiosity, and in preparation, they chose to participate in a social media forum for children who are donor-conceived. The perspectives from that forum have challenged the way in which they have constructed their family's narrative so far, and led them to second-guess how they want to talk about their sperm donor:

> *[W]e don't use the word "father" or "dad," but now we're thinking that maybe we will. We're on this…group about donor-conceived people. And it's donor-conceived people, donors and parents of donor-conceived people. And it's talking about the vernacular and different things, and it's all sorts of people who didn't know that they were donor-conceived, or did… They are having a very interesting conversation about the differences between a father and a dad…and about how people can have fathers, but not have dads… [I]t's something that [we] have had many different conversations about. Because [our son] does say at school, "I don't have a dad; I have two moms, I don't have a dad." But does he have a*

> *father? It's interesting, it's something that's evolving. It's something that we haven't quite figured out how we are handling ourselves.*

Across these stories, a number of layers of complexity inherent in negotiating the "origin story" of the family's narrative emerged. In particular, it is possible to see that not all choices are ultimately in the parents' hands; children and educators—as well as unrelated outsiders—all have the power to shape, change, or even derail the carefully-constructed work of families to build a sense of comfort and ease inside the family's ecosystem.

**Theme 3: Having more choices for preschool (v. being assigned by residence and/or limited by financial constraints to one option) can reduce stress and allow for management of family narrative.** Because they now have children in two different schools—one a private preschool in which one of their children has been enrolled now for almost six years, the other a public elementary school, Karen and Laura have direct exposure to public elementary school in a way other participant parents did not at the time of this study. Karen contrasted the experience they have had at the preschool with the neighborhood public school their older daughter currently attends:

> *The other positive is [the preschool doesn't] celebrate any holidays. Nothing. They don't do Halloween. So they'll let kids talk about their celebration of a holiday, but they won't do any kind of craft or activity for any holiday. Which again, I didn't know what my feelings were one way or the other going into it. But then when we hit Father's Day and Mother's Day and there was nothing, it was so relieving because we've had the opposite happen at elementary school. And we've had to completely coach [our daughter] through it for both Mother's Day and Father's Day and had to have emails to teachers and blah, blah, blah…*

Oliver also reported on the lack of celebrations at their school, sharing that they have had no notable "missteps" with teachers or staff regarding their family structure. In large part he wonders whether that resulted because another family paved the way for them

(incidentally, an experience Kate and Laura also reported benefiting from at their children's preschool):

> *We followed a recommendation from my work mentor, whose kids attended the [pre]school [our son now attends]. They were also two dads. And their child was also adopted. There aren't any other adopted kids in the school right now that we know of, but there is one other child with gay dads. So the school really stays away from celebrations that might be awkward for the kids. Maybe it's just for us, but who knows?*

Thomas and John shared positive feelings about a different kind of experience at their daughter's second preschool, after they had…

> *[m]oved up to [their new community], that was one of the things that was really great… [T]hey knew early on that we were a gay couple, and it's just funny because on Mother's Day they had all of the kids working on these little bags, these little tote bags…"I love you, Mom," this and that. And they had [our daughter] do one for her Daddy and her Baba. It was just cute because it's like obviously she's not coming home to a mom, so I like the fact that they did that.*

Unlike at the other children's schools, the presence of Thomas and John's family did not cause celebrations to be eliminated; as parents, they were satisfied that teachers acknowledged their daughter's two fathers, and scaffolded an alternate activity for her in the same spirit. It is possible that this caused discussion among teachers or children, either including Thomas and John's daughter or not. It would be interesting to understand the teachers' and children's perceptions of this situation—did teachers hear any conversation about how Thomas and John's daughter had a different activity? How many of the children already knew about her family structure? Did she (need to) do anything to explain or celebrate her two fathers?

**Theme 4: Being assured that educators are warm and well-intentioned was of paramount concern for these families; they complimented teachers' willingness to glean knowledge from same-gender parents and to adjust practices accordingly.** At

first, Karen and Laura's daughter, and later their younger son, was placed in a home daycare, in part because of cost (as Laura was at the tail end of her graduate education), but also due to a positive sense they had upon visiting:

> *[W]e put [our daughter] in daycare after twelve weeks. And she was initially in a home daycare, a family home daycare that had about eight kids in it at a woman's house. And I think that decision was mostly an economic one. It was, what can we afford and what place have we felt most comfortable… as we toured different potential daycare sites. So we ended up in a home daycare... And then she was there until she was not quite three.*
>
> *[S]he very much struck me like a grandma. She was so loving towards all of her kids. So especially, I think, when looking for a place to leave our three month old infant, in both cases, I think a piece of it was just who is going to love my kid as much as I do? … There was also always a very calming feel to her center. It never felt – the kids always seemed very, very content. But it was a very calm place, which sounds funny to have had that be something that I was really attracted to. But yeah, it felt peaceful. And then I had had a number of colleagues send their kids to her, and really speak super highly of her and feel that they were both really happy there and trusted her deeply with their children.*

As noted, Karen and Laura's perception about the nurturing environment was supported by recommendations from colleagues. For that reason, they did not ask explicitly at first about whether the daycare provider was comfortable with or knowledgeable about the needs of same-gender families. At that moment, while their children were still babies in the earliest stages of development, they agreed that their primary concern was different—needing to have deep trust in the caregiver.

Since their older son was born, Oliver and Keith have employed a live-in au pair who works a fixed number of hours per week. They decided to enroll their son in preschool in large part because they wanted him to have socialization opportunities outside the house:

> *He started at the school at two years old more because of the socialization needs — we wanted him to get out of the house and have interaction with other kiddos. But we also had an au pair we liked. We didn't know a lot about the Montessori*

> *method. We were initially attracted to it because it was self-directed and the classrooms were always quiet but kids seemed happy and the teachers were nice... In the end, maybe it wasn't the best match for [our son] specifically. It's a hard place to get someone to work toward a diagnosis of [a learning difference].*

A gay couple who were friends and colleagues previously had a child at the same preschool and recommended it; because those friends vouched for the school's quality, due to its proximity to their home (meaning that the au pair could easily do drop-off and pick-up), and since Oliver and Keith's son would not be the first child of gay parents at the school, they felt comfortable there. However, it is clear in retrospect that they believe the school might not have been the best fit for their son's particular needs. In fact, Oliver explained that the school typically would have children continue onto kindergarten before leaving for another public or private school; however, their son was "not invited" back for the following year due to his perceived learning differences. Out of a desire to maintain a relationship with the school for their younger son's benefit, they decided not to challenge the teachers and director about their decision, but it was clear they are unhappy with the way things were handled—though in this case, for a reason unrelated to their sexual orientation.

Finally, I want to highlight a factor that was specifically salient for Thomas and John: namely, their status as an interracial couple who adopted children with a racial identity that does not align with one father. Woven throughout the interview, there were moments where Thomas highlighted the complexity inherent in their intersectional identities. In talking about a visit to John's rural hometown, shortly after they began fostering their daughter, he described their visit to a local restaurant:

> *I remember walking into this restaurant and I'm pretty sure the entire restaurant turned and looked at us. I may be exaggerating a little bit, but it was funny because even [John] mentioned it–which is something that I'm kind of used to as a*

> *six-foot-three black man, I'm used to people turning and looking, for whatever reason. But we walked in, it was [John] and I. I think he might have been carrying [our daughter]. And it's like a movie, where the entire restaurant kind of turned and looked to see what was going on because, again, for a number of reasons – one, they don't have a lot of black folks that come through there, they don't have a lot of white guys carrying black children in there, they don't have two men coming in there together. There was a lot of reasons I'm sure they were looking. So I always think about that.*

While at that developmental stage, it might have been less obvious for their daughter to perceive what was happening, as their daughter has grown, Thomas related other stories with the potential to have more noticeable impact on their daughter:

> *And then there was a time we were flying back from somewhere… And we were about to go…through TSA, and [our daughter] was running around. And she was with me at first, and then she kind of ran– so I went through TSA and then she kind of ran back at the last second to where [John] was. And the TSA agent was so confused why [our daughter] was standing next to [John]. She's like, "No, little girl, your dad is up here," pointing at me. And I'm like, "He's her dad, too!" [laughter] And the TSA agent didn't mean anything by it. And she was totally fine. But it was just…one of those moments where it's like, she just assumed that it's not right or not possible that [John] is [also]…the dad to this little girl.*

**Conclusions**

The case studies presented here provide the opportunity to further delimit the landscape of experience among different same-gender families, offering questions to guide future studies. By illustrating the varying choices these LGBTQ+ parents made for their children's early care and education, we better understand how their own life experiences and perceptions influenced the type of setting they chose for their child(ren) at different ages; by discussing their particular experiences with daycare or preschool, it is possible to have a view into the unexpected experiences and decisions they made along the way. Finally, these cases provide data on the 'nuts and bolts' that go into creating and curating individual families' narratives over time. In particular, we learned that couples start to strategize about formation of their family's narrative even before having children;

in all cases, the participants' "chosen family" (that is, their primary network of social support) evolved over time to reflect their new status as parents and to affirm their family's structure for children's benefit. These families with economic means ultimately gravitated toward early education settings where overt bias was not present and educators were perceived to be warm and welcoming. However, it is possible to see that the aggregate impact of microaggressions, particularly in the institutional setting of a school, may be more of an annoyance than psychologically damaging to parents or children—but the experiences of these four families point to concrete, practice-based solutions that could be implemented among in-service early educators to ameliorate this challenge.

# CHAPTER 6

## Discussion

*When [our son] was born and they put him on that warming thing, from that moment on I never felt like he was not my child. And I was the one who had to stay at home with him first; [my husband] had to go back to work first and so I did the first…eight weeks or so of taking care of him at home… By the end of that time I didn't want to go back to work. It was like I and this baby had fully bonded and I felt like I could take better care of him than anyone else in the world* (Study 2, Male Parent).

### Overview

The confluence of increased legal protections for the LGBTQ+ population, decreased societal stigma towards the LGBTQ+ community, and improved access to reproductive technology has led to a new wave of LGBTQ+-headed families in the U.S. Research into the complex relationships among family creation, family functioning, childhood outcomes, school relationships, and family narrative in these "new" LGBTQ+-headed families is sparse. The exploratory survey (Study 1) and case studies (Study 2) were designed to describe characteristics of same-gender parent families in the U.S. at this historical moment, with a focus on parental stress, family functioning, and engagement with early childcare or preschool settings. Specifically, the research questions addressed by the two studies were:

**Study 1:**

- **Research question 1a.** To what extent are family-based social factors such as minority stress, parental stress and social support associated with family functioning among parents in same-gender couples?
- **Research question 1b.** To what extent are these family-based social factors associated with family engagement among parents in same-gender

couples who enroll their children in childcare or preschool outside their home?

**Study 2:**

- **Research question 2a.** What are the family narratives developed by parents raising children in same-gender couples, how do they arise, and what life experiences influence them?
- **Research question 2b.** How might family narratives play a role in families' varying choices of and experiences with selecting childcare and early childhood education settings?

In general, Study 1 showed that in a geographically diverse sample of relatively affluent and educated LGBTQ+ parents, factors common to all parents of young children, including general parental stress and social support, are related to overall family functioning and family engagement with childcare and preschool settings. Contrary to what was expected, in this population LGBTQ+-specific minority stress appeared neither prevalent nor influential in these outcomes. Additionally, only a few family characteristics appeared to be associated with family functioning or parent-school engagement.

The four case study families in Study 2 had similar levels of education, income, and urbanicity. Nonetheless, individual, contextual factors differentiated the families in the development of their unique narratives; 'family narrative' here is defined to encompass the family origin story, the stories they tell that bridge time and generation, and how they integrate their children's questions and experiences into the larger story. While some priorities (particularly around the need for parents and children to 'educate

the educators' regarding their family form within a heteronormative context) echoed across the families (and, indeed, across the survey respondents' free-text responses as described in Chapter 4), their unique family formation journeys through adoption and/or ART revealed nuances over time, particularly as each first child's curiosity evolved with age—and, in three cases, as they welcomed a new sibling into their family. Ultimately, as the parent quoted above says, each couple that participated in these case studies shared a common aspiration for their family: namely, providing a healthy, nurturing environment in which their children could grow up.

**LGBTQ+ Families: A Growing and Changing Population**

Over the past two decades, there has been both a rise in the number of LGBTQ+-headed families and an expansion in the ways in which such families can be created. Spurred in part by expansion of marriage equality laws, culminating with the legalization of same-gender marriage throughout the U.S. in 2015, a rapid change within the LGBTQ+ community in family-building desires and prospects seems to have occurred. In 2013, a study from the Pew Research Center reported that 35% of LGBT adults were parents, compared with 74% of non-LGBTQ adults (Pew Research Center, 2013). More recently, the 2018 LGBTQ Family Building Survey documented a growing interest in parenthood among 18-35 year-old members of the LGBTQ+ community, with 77% of respondents in this age range either reporting already being a parent or expressing a desire to become a parent (Family Equality, 2019).

How do the participants in the current studies reflect the overall composition of same-gender and, more broadly, LGBTQ+ families? The sample recruited for the present study seems to exemplify the rapidly changing demographics among same-gender parent

households relative to their pathways to parenthood. As opposed to raising children who were born as part of prior heterosexual relationships, participants in these two studies universally reported having children via adoption, IUI, IVF, or gestational surrogacy; in fact, a large majority of parents in Study 1 reported using some kind of assisted reproductive technology. This is in contrast to prior studies of LGBTQ+ parents of preschool aged children which focused primarily on families created via adoption. (Goldberg, 2014; Goldberg et al., 2018; Goldberg, Black, Sweeney, and Moyer, 2017; Goldberg & Smith, 2014). The majority of the participants in the current studies were also highly educated, and many were from quite affluent households. In part, this is a reflection of the skewed demographic to whom adoption and ART options are accessible, since both methods require significant financial resources that may range between $40,000 to 200,000 USD (Family Equality, 2019). The sampling and recruitment procedure for the current studies also likely contributed to this particular composition of study participants. Online recruitment did enable a more geographically and gender diverse sample to be collected, but this methodology also seems to have led to a disproportionately engaged and higher SES set of respondents. Recruitment was done primarily via social media groups targeting LGBTQ+ families and parents, and respondents to such solicitations may be more likely to be highly engaged in parenting, willing to share experiences, and willing to self-identify as LGBTQ+ parents. Such individuals would likely be both more comfortable with their identities and less insecure about their overall parenting abilities.

Even with these caveats, the overall socio-demographic characteristics of the current sample is quite similar to samples included in prior research on LGBTQ+ parents.

For example, in a study of same-gender adoptive parents in the U.S. with children in kindergarten, average family income was well over $100,000 and nearly 80% had a college degree or higher (Goldberg, 2016). A more recent study of male same-gender parent families formed through gestational surrogacy also recruited an affluent participant group, with 90% of the study's participants reporting an income of >$150,000 per year (Golombok et al., 2018). The participants recruited for the current studies show remarkably similar demographic characteristics to both of these other study cohorts and perhaps this suggests the need to employ alternate recruitment strategies such as those described by Moore (2011); these would focus on the "populations that traditional methods of data gathering will not capture" (p. 15). Though I attempted recruitment strategies to reach underrepresented groups, these were not effective in recruiting a cohort that was more diverse in both racial/ethnic identity or socioeconomic status.

## Stress and Social Support Among LGBTQ+ Parents

**Parental Stress.** There is ample evidence that parenting, regardless of family composition or structure, can lead to significant psychological distress. Parental stress is one component of such distress and is by definition influenced by specific family and personal life experiences. Overall parental stress is increased with difficult life situations including single parenting, parental separation, and economic hardship. Conversely, parental stress might be decreased in some families due to strong elements of family functioning, including communication, love, and trust. Koeske and Koeske (1990) found an association between parental stress and both lower self-esteem and higher occurrence of psychological symptomatology among mothers; however, social support seemed to act as a buffer. Additionally, higher levels of maternal education seemed associated with a

lower level of parental stress (Koeske & Koeske, 1990), which is relevant given the highly-educated sample recruited in Study 1.

Parenting stress evaluated in a study of adoptive male same-gender parent families in the U.K. In one study, male same-gender parents were found to have less parental stress compared to heterosexual male and female parents (Golombok et al., 2014). The authors postulated that this finding reflected the rigor of the screening process for adoption in selecting gay fathers, who would thus have had baseline higher levels of psychological well-being. In the current study, a similar dynamic could apply, leading to the hypothesis that overall parental stress would be lower in the surveyed population, as family formation for the vast majority of LGBTQ+ parents, particularly for those who choose adoption or ART as the path to parenthood, is intentional, deliberate, and voluntary. As such, LGBTQ+ parents could be expected to experience less parental stress in part due to having overall less stress in their own personal lives or relationships, particularly among couples who have the financial means and social support to pursue those expensive family-building options.

Most of the prior literature on the Parental Stress Scale (PSS), the measure used in Study 1, has focused on heterosexual mothers, and this particular scale does not appear to have been used previously in evaluating stress within LGBTQ+ parents. The results of Study 1 support the hypothesis of low overall parenting stress in this population. Although overall parental stress was low, it was not surprising that parental stress scores were slightly higher for parents of more than one child. Heightened stress in families with multiple children is not unexpected, and this observation does not appear to be unique to a family headed by LGBTQ+ parents. Additionally, parental stress was slightly higher for

those who had older children. Prior research with a national cohort of families (primarily comprised of different-gender parents) confirms that parental stress rises as children progress from birth to the teenage years (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2014).

Fundamentally, there are factors that raise stress in all families (e.g., more kids, less money, less extrafamilial support), and these are the same no matter who the parents are, but the data collected in Study 1 suggest that LGBTQ+ individuals who become parents are subject to selection pressures (i.e., the cost of adoption/ART, the vetting process for adoption) that might put them at less risk of experiencing those factors, particularly in a durable way that persists as the children grow older. Although the present study supports this overall conjecture, a deeper understanding of sources of parental stress, particularly in this subpopulation, would require more in-depth research, guided by the family resilience model described by Prendergast and MacPhee (2018).

**Minority Stress.** It was hypothesized that Study 1 would evince from participants some degree of minority stress related to being LGBTQ+, and that elevated stress would be associated negatively with the outcomes of family functioning and parent-school engagement. Surprisingly, in the current study, overall levels of LGBTQ+-related minority stress as measured by the DHEQ were lower than those identified in prior research using the measure. Compared to the scores reported in the DHEQ validation study (Balsam, Beadnell, & Molina, 2013), the participants in Study 1 reported less vigilance, isolation, harassment, and victimization, as well as less frequent occurrence of parenting related heterosexist experiences.

These findings suggest two possibilities: possibly, the stressors assessed in the DHEQ measure may be less applicable to Study 1 participants; alternately, the prevalence of minority stress in the participants is lower than was expected. For the first potential explanation, the current study included only parents of younger children, a group who likely have very different current experiences than would be present for unmarried or childless LGBTQ+ individuals. Given the limited recall window in the measure (12 months), the study's participants may have experienced stressors in the past, but by forming a family and being in a stable, highly-functional relationship (as evidenced by the high levels of social support and low levels of parental stress in part), they could have overcome or been more shielded from some of the LGBTQ+ stressors assessed in the DHEQ. Even the parenting-related questions in the measure might be less applicable to same-gender parents who intentionally create families through adoption or ART. Based on survey data alone, one cannot determine whether the measure itself is less relevant (perhaps due to rapid societal acceptance of LGBTQ+ populations in many parts of the U.S.) or whether minority stress is truly lower in this particular recruited study population; further mixed-methods research is required to more accurately assess other unique drivers of minority stress among families headed by coupled LGBTQ+ parents.

Although there were low reported levels of minority stress overall in the current study, the results did identify several interesting patterns regarding sociodemographic and social factors related to minority stress in this sample. There was minimal variation in minority stress scores based on sociodemographic characteristics (gender identity, age, race/ethnicity, income) or family characteristics in the current sample. There were significant correlations in the sample between the DHEQ scales and social support, all in

the expected directions, with higher levels of social support associated with lower reported minority stress in all DHEQ scales measured. This again strengthens the finding that social support for coupled LGBTQ+ parents is a key driver for improved overall well-being. Interestingly, higher levels of adverse heterosexist experiences related to parenting were associated with higher levels of parental stress, suggesting that even infrequent or incidental occurrences of heterosexism in particular might play a role in increasing parental stress among those LGBTQ+ parents who do experience stress.

**Social Support.** Social support is a key factor in promoting wellness, psychological well-being, and cohesion. In the LGBTQ+ population, disapproval and a lack of legal recognition for relationships created additional barriers to achieving more positive societal outcomes, so support networks through friends, partners, family, or the community at large have historically played a significant role in overcoming the pressures of non-normativity in the context of the dominant cultural paradigm. While this will change for future generations, the current generation of parents came out and lived as young adults in the context of a more hostile society. As such, it was hypothesized that among LGBTQ+ parents, higher levels of social support would be associated with less stress, improved family functioning, and greater engagement with childcare or preschool settings. The results of the survey study overall did confirm this hypothesis.

Although the current study did not include any direct measures of psychological well-being, existing research suggests that the high level of social support reported among Study 1 participants reflects an overall high level of well-being. This is also indirectly borne out by the findings within the study of strong associations between higher perceived social support and better scores on family functioning and parent-school

engagement scales. Future research is needed to further characterize how social support in a family with two LGBTQ+ parents might impact other outcomes, including child well-being, educational attainment, and whether social support networks persist or vary over time in these families.

**Family Functioning Among LGBTQ+ Parents**

Family functioning broadly encompasses family structure, communication, and relationships amongst family members. In Study 1, the outcomes of interest within family functioning were communication and satisfaction, as measured by a well-validated instrument (FACES-IV). In Study 1, the overall level of family functioning among the study participants appeared high. This study did not include a comparative different-gender parent cohort, but comparisons can be drawn from published data that offer prior validation and use of the FACES-IV scales. The average family communication percentile score was 73%, which is in the range of "high communication" as described by the FACES-IV developers. Such a high communication score suggests that family members feel good about their overall communication and have few concerns. The average family satisfaction percentile score was 53%, closer to average compared to reference populations cited by the measure developers (Olson et al., 1985). Scores in this range are interpreted as showing moderate levels of family satisfaction, indicating that same-gender parents are somewhat satisfied with and enjoy some aspects of their family.

What insight does the finding of relatively high levels of family communication and satisfaction found in Study 1 participants provide about LGBTQ+ parents in general? Although the study results may simply be a reflection of the participants that completed Study 1: a relatively high-functioning, high-SES group with overall lower perceived

social stressors, these results may also illustrate unique characteristic of LGBTQ+ individuals who choose to pursue parenting. Given the continued societal and financial barriers to adoption (whether through a public or private agency), gestational surrogacy, or other forms of IVF, it is clear that those who do manage to start a family do so intentionally and potentially with years of planning, whereas those who are less committed or qualified have been screened out of access to parenting. Thus, they may embark upon family-building with fewer pressures, more resources, and more support, and in turn demonstrate high levels of functioning within their family unit.

Future research including a comparison group of well-resourced families with different-gender parents would be informative in evaluating whether indeed there is little difference among LGBTQ+ parents with respect to predictors of family functioning. Finally, in a cross-sectional analysis such as this, no causality can be inferred; additionally, no directionality can be assigned among parenting stress, social support, and family functioning. Future longitudinal studies following such families over time would be informative in evaluating the interplays between these constructs as children grow older and as parenting and family organization and communication continues to evolve and to respond to new challenges.

**LGBTQ+ Parent Engagement in Early Childhood Care Settings**

In this study, “center-based childcare” and “private preschool” were the most commonly reported settings for children of survey participants. This is yet another reflection of the higher socioeconomic status and educational attainment of the recruited sample. A large majority of participants reported being quite involved in making a childcare or preschool choice. Additionally, participants overwhelmingly reported that

their family was warmly received by their child's caregiver(s). With respect to possible homophobia in a caregiver or teacher, this was reported rarely among participants, likely due in part to vigilance and information gathering completed by parents prior to choosing a childcare setting; participants reported an ability to make informed choices that aligned with their family structure and values. In addition, this finding may also be due to the nature of the logistically complex decision-making involved in adopting or pursuing ART to form a family. Given the amount of planning required for these processes—including selection of an agency and/or IVF clinic, psychological screening, and legal preparation—it would not be surprising that similar emphasis on making choices for childcare and preschool among the participants in this study would emerge.

With regard to factors important in childcare or preschool choices, I had anticipated that LGBTQ+ parents would aim to seek out settings that were specifically welcoming to their family structures or include other LGBTQ+ families. Contrary to this expectation, factors related to LGBTQ+-specific concerns did not appear to be among the most important factors in parental choices. In Study 1, the factors rated important by the largest group of survey respondents were actually those in practicality-focused categories: cost, proximity to home, and opening/extended hours. Quality-focused factors including curriculum, educational philosophy, and child-caregiver ratios were rated as important by a smaller percentage of participants in this study. However, when asked to rank the *top* factors involved in parental choice, it was warmth of caregivers that was included in the top three ranked factors by the largest group of respondents, though practical factors such as cost and proximity were also ranked highly by study participants. Overall, these results show that most LGBTQ+ parents surveyed here do not prioritize

concerns specific to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity when selecting an early childhood care or education setting for their child(ren), perhaps because most participants in Study 1 were embedded into communities with infrastructure to support the LGBTQ+ population; additionally, their generally high levels of SES and education gave most both the social capital and resources to select into supportive communities. Future research around school choices for LGBTQ+ parents could focus specifically on comparisons around decision-making between same- and different-gender parents, as well as the extent to which this may vary based on a variety of sociodemographic characteristics.

These results were substantially underscored in Study 2. In the case studies, the warmth and openness of caregivers was a consistent topic of discussion; it became viewed as balm for perceived missteps in any educator's or caregiver's cultural awareness and understanding of same-gender families. Additionally, while convenience factors were the ostensible cause driving the participants' selection of the preschools which their children attend (for one family because of proximity to home, and for the other family because it is affiliated with one of the parents' employers), the ultimate imprimatur for each set of parents was the fact that trusted friends and/or colleagues within their social network, and particularly those *who were same-gender parents themselves,* previously sent their children to that school and felt comfortable. This is not entirely surprising; from young adulthood, LGBTQ+ individuals may forge relationships with trusted friends who face similar challenges around coming out. These friends coalesce into a supportive network (or "chosen family") that acts as a protective factor against the risk of family rejection, loss, or misunderstanding as a result of the coming

out process (Snapp et al., 2015). In the context of parenting, then, we would not be surprised to see that these networks evolve over time—as some members welcome children, while others do not—to transition into a new form of social support that reflects LGBTQ+ parents' current place in the life course.

**LGBTQ+ Parent Engagement with Early Childhood Settings**

The present studies expand on Goldberg's work on school experiences of LGBTQ+ families formed via adoption in two ways. First, the two studies examined parent-school engagement in LGBTQ+ families formed via a broader set of pathways now available for family building (i.e., adoption, ART/IVF, home-based approaches). Second, the focus was on a population of parents with younger children and focused on engagement in preschool or childcare settings. It was hypothesized that both parent-related factors (parental stress, social support), child factors, and sociodemographics would impact levels of parental engagement with early childhood care and educational settings.

In Study 1, two aspects of parent-school engagement were assessed using subscales from the Family-School Relationship Survey (Panorama Education, 2015). The first construct was direct parental engagement with a childcare or preschool setting (School Fit and Family Engagement Scales), and the second was parental engagement with their child's learning in the home environment (Family Support and Family Efficacy Scales). Although these particular measures were developed to assess engagement across educational settings starting with elementary school, the constructs are clearly relevant to early childhood settings as well. Among Study 1 participants, the average School Fit score was higher than scores reported in the studies in which the School Fit survey scale

was developed (Bahena, Schueler, McIntyre, & Gehlbach, 2016). which used data from parents recruited via a national online platform but was predominantly a group of parents with older children in later elementary, middle, and high school. In the report of the School Fit scale presented by Bahena et al. (2016), higher scores were seen among those with higher income, and thus the findings of the current study may be in part a reflection of the demographic makeup of the LGBTQ+ parent sample recruited. High scores on the School Fit scale could also reflect the nature of this group of LGBTQ+ parents, who may spend more time researching options and choosing childcare or preschool settings that match their family's and child's needs.

The cross-sectional nature of the current study means that this possibility can be considered a hypothesis that needs further elucidation through longitudinal or qualitative assessments among similar same-gender-parented families to explore their school choice and perceptions of overall school fit. Lower parental stress was associated with higher School Fit scores, but neither minority stress, social support, nor any parent or child related factors seemed to impact School Fit scores. This finding is similar to what was seen with the current study's analysis of family functioning, but importantly, family functioning scores were not associated with School Fit scores at all. This suggests that family functioning, at least as measured in the present study, is not the pathway through which parent stress and social support affect a parent's perception of school fit.

In contrast to the relatively high scores in the School Fit scale, scores for the Family Engagement Scale in Study 1 were lower. In fact, many respondents reported not being involved in parent groups and the majority reported visiting their child's school less than every few months. This level of direct engagement is lower than has been

described in other studies of same-gender adoptive families (Goldberg, 2014). In this study, however, this finding may reflect the nature of relationships with center-based childcare or preschool, particularly among couples who may both be working parents. In addition, because the measure was designed for K-12 schools, where parent engagement drops as children age, it may not adequately capture the forms of engagement present during the preschool years.

In this study, there also were no associations identified between stress, social support, or parent characteristics with the Family Engagement scales. The only association identified was higher scores among parents who had a child older than age 3 years, which is likely a proxy for having a child in a structured preschool as opposed to a center-based or other type of daycare. In some ways, this is expected, as a preschool would likely have greater structured opportunities for parent engagement (committees, fundraising, etc.) than a daycare setting for younger children, which at the earliest ages is focused more on attentive care than integrating educational activities. Clearly, there are other factors that would be likely to affect Family Engagement that were not measured in the survey administered as part of the current study, such as general parenting style.

Parental engagement in their child's learning at home, as reported by Study 1 participants, was high. Participants reported having good parenting skills and providing a lot of support. This may be indicative of a variety of factors including overall level of confidence they have in advocating for and supporting their children, particularly if their child was brought into their family via deliberate processes like adoption or IVF and gestational surrogacy. As expected, higher levels of parental stress and decreased perceived social support were significantly associated with lower Family Efficacy scores.

Family communication and family satisfaction were also highly correlated with Family Efficacy scores, but in the regression model including all of the stress, support, and family functioning scales, only parental stress scores continued to show a significant association. As family functioning and parental stress are highly correlated, this result suggests that parental stress may serve as the common pathway through which confidence in parenting skills and academic support may arise. No parent or family characteristics were found to be associated with Family Efficacy scores, and the only parent or family characteristic that was associated with Family Support was having a child older than age 3 years. Again, this may reflect having greater realization among the parents for the need for academic support at home for a child in a preschool compared to other daycare arrangement. This is unsurprising since for many families, daycare is more likely a setting that requires no additional academic or learning support at home, whereas a preschool is often parents' first opportunity to participate more concretely (whether as school volunteers, by attending conferences with teachers, or by inquiring about the activities done on a particular day).

**Family Narrative Formation Among LGBTQ+ Parented Families**

Because of the dearth of data on the internal workings of "non-traditional" families, Study 2 added additional clarity about the experiences of same-gender parents and their children, on how they make choices around early childcare and education, and on what factors influence how they engage within settings where their children receive care. By integrating the Bronfenbrennerian ecological systems framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1977), work on the development and evolution of family narratives (Fivush & Merrill, 2016; Blum-Kulka & Snow, 1992), the broader literature on family

engagement (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Warren et al., 2009; Miller et al., 2016), research on the parenting journeys of same-gender couples (Blake et al., 2016; Golombok, 2013; Golombok et al., 2018; Golombok et al., 2014), and work on school-based early childhood experiences for children specifically parented by same-gender couples (Goldberg, 2014; Goldberg et al., 2018; Goldberg, Black, Sweeney, and Moyer, 2017; Goldberg & Smith, 2014), findings from this study highlight the crucial interplay between nascent, evolving family narratives shared within the families and broader microsystems of families headed by same-gender parents and the early childcare and education settings which parents choose for their children. Indeed, the case studies presented illustrate the importance of curating a family narrative that cuts across multiple spheres from the family microsystem to the macrosystem of school and beyond; same-gender parents and even young children may be called upon or even required to engage in education and self-advocacy about their family structure within the (pre)school environment.

**Toward an Ecological Model of LGBTQ+ Parenting**

Based on findings spanning both Study 1 and 2, I began to understand better the process of family narrative formation among participants. In Figure 6 below, I have endeavored to depict graphically the relationships linking key parts of the family's ecology. In a sense, family narrative, at the center of this Bronfenbrennerian model, is what binds the LGBTQ+ family unit together, grounding it in a common experience of "otherness" that research participants in both studies reported. It is in this (somewhat protected) core where individual members of the family make meaning from the interactions they have with all that surrounds them—from the day-to-day experiences

with school and social support in the microsystem, all the way through to the cultural values and norms of the macrosystem. A combination of these forces serve to situate their family as everything from the benign to the malignant—as "the same as any other family," as "unique," as a "non-normative" entity. This shone through for one gay father in Study 2, as he described his biracial family's experiences with their first daycare; it was the only option approved by social services with available space while they worked through the foster-to-adopt process. Neither he nor his husband was sure where their family stood with caregivers at the classroom level during that first year, in part because they were unsure whether the neighborhood's cultural and religious norms led to disapproval of their family structure. A move from an apartment to a larger home in a different county allowed them to select a new preschool from an expanded list of options, after querying directors and teachers about accommodating a bi-racial, same-gender family.

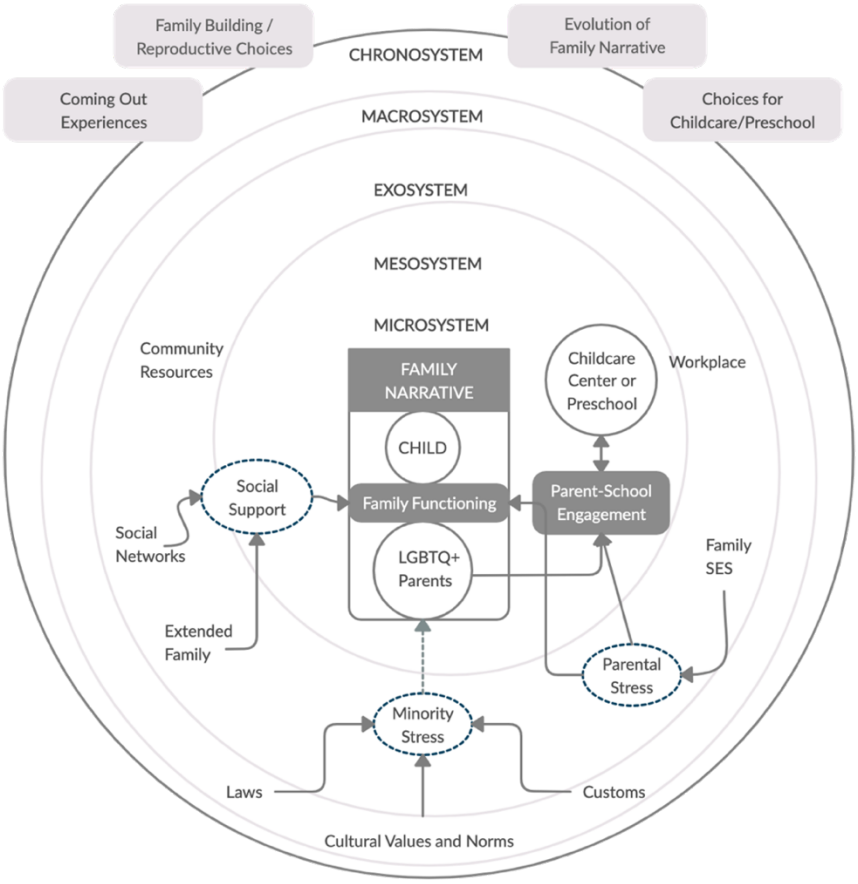


***Figure 6.*** *An adaptation of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory through the lens of Studies 1 and 2.*

While laws, customs, and cultural values fuel the sense of minority stress identified among some LGBTQ+ parents in this study, they share with different-gender, single-parent, and other types of families the parental stress that everyone with children faces. Social support serves as a protective factor for both parents, and is particularly relevant for foster families like the one described, whose resilience against bureaucratic, emotional, and relational challenges embedded in the foster system relies on social support that cuts across different levels of their ecological context (Piel, Geiger, Julien-Chinn, & Lietz, 2017). Though not examined explicitly here, future research could uncover the role that other exosystemic factors, such as community resources or the

characteristics of parents' workplaces, might have on the family unit and how that might alter the family narrative.

Over time, parents interpolate their experiences—from the earliest days of coming out, at whatever age—through to the choices around early education that manifest themselves in children's first five years of life. If indeed we accept that development cascades over time (Masten & Cicchetti, 2010), then, as shown in Figure 7, this pair of studies has focused on the center of this figure, from coupling to the early days of children's education, elucidating all the processes through which LGBTQ+ parents travel along the way.

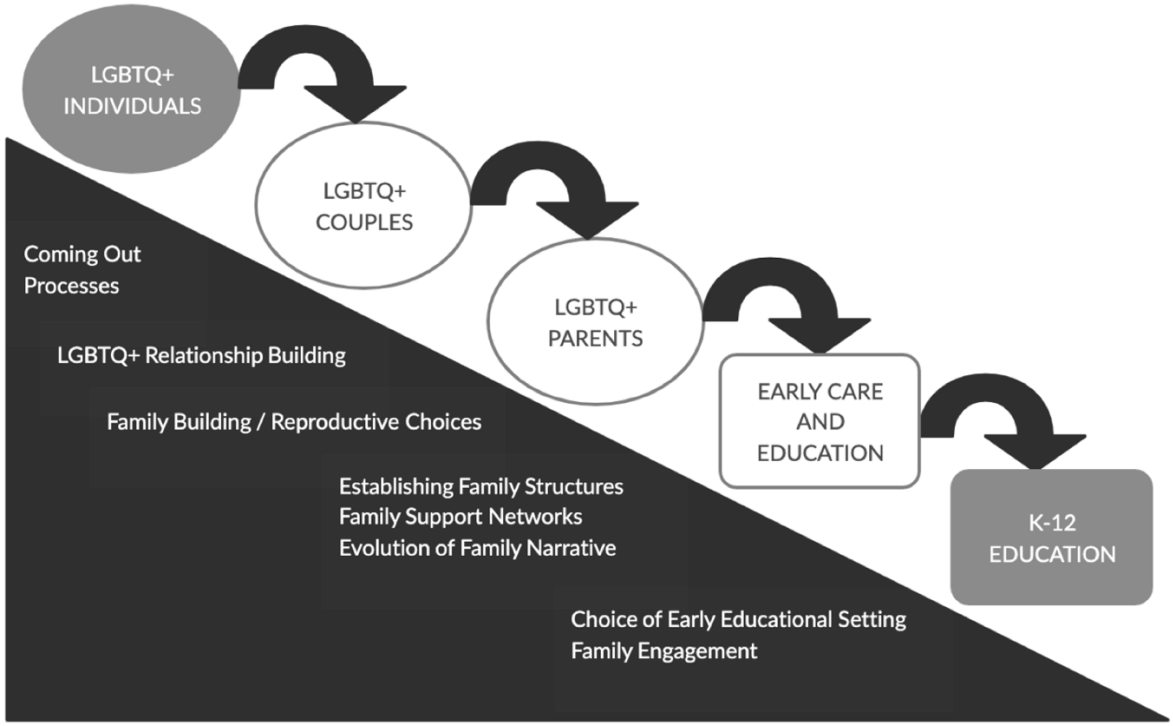


***Figure 7.*** *A graphical representation of cascading development over time for LGBTQ+ parented families.*

## Limitations

**Limitations of an Online Survey.** First, the recruitment and sampling procedure for the survey was done via online social media groups focused on LGBTQ+ family formation and support. Although this strategy allowed for a broad, national sample, it also resulted in a group of self-selected participants that may be more involved or successful in terms of parenting in general. The participants also skewed to being more affluent and less racially diverse. This could potentially mean that these parents were in positions to make more informed choices about childcare/preschool settings, and therefore provide a positive portrait of family engagement as a result. In several ways, the demographics of the sample do match other samples of recent research into LGBTQ+ families (Goldberg, 2014), particularly adoptive families, but as a result the findings may not be generalizable to LGBTQ+ families more broadly. In particular, the number of transgender and nonbinary participants was small, not allowing for accurate comparisons across gender identities in this group. Future studies could include more diverse samples across the gender identity, SES, and race/ethnicity spectrum.

Second, all survey data was self-reported and anonymous. As such, responses may have been affected by factors including openness to (honest) disclosure of personal information and beliefs, social desirability bias, and inaccurate or poor recall. Additionally, the group of parent participants who chose to participate in the survey may at baseline have higher than average levels of engagement and could be particularly involved with the selection of an early childcare setting and more engaged once immersed in that community.

Third, the study did not include a comparison group of non-LGBTQ+ parent families. Thus, the results may have little to do with parent sexual orientation and simply reflect the nature of high functioning families with access to higher quality preschool or childcare options. However, it is still an important set of findings that explore the experiences of LGBTQ+ families achieving parenthood in the current era. In many ways, these parents are experiencing parenthood as any coupled, different-gender parent might, and the data suggests that LGBTQ+-related minority stress is not as influential as might have been expected.

Fourth, as a cross-sectional exploratory study, the descriptions of LGBTQ+ parents' family functioning and parent-school engagement can only describe associations and not allow for inferences on a causal pathway to improved family-based outcomes. Longitudinal studies of LGBTQ+ families, particularly those formed through ART, would be able to further test the hypotheses generated in this study. Finally, given the limitations inherent to a one-time survey study, many important family and child related factors were not assessed, including direct assessments of parent or child well-being, nor outcomes related to preschool or later student achievement.

**Limitations of the Family-School Relationship Measures.** Since the Family-School Relationship Survey was developed to assess engagement among parents with children in K-12 settings, this survey may not be an adequate measure of engagement for parents of younger children, particularly in a preschool setting. In Study 1, although the reliability statistics of the chosen scales were excellent, the regression model fit statistics were quite poor, suggesting that the vast amount of variance in scores in the current sample was unexplained by the factors measured in the models. Future research would

need to focus on other factors that might affect a LGBTQ+ parent's overall abilities to support their child's learning in the home, from basics such as time constraints (e.g., work schedules) to more complex factors such as parents' mental health (e.g., depression, anxiety), parental beliefs around the importance of early education to later development, and an alignment between the school's methodology or philosophy and parents' priorities.

**Limitations of Case Studies.** The case studies reported here represent only a small number of research participants that engaged in the work with the researcher. For that reason, they lack generalizability and focus on specific experiences that may not be relevant outside of the narrow sphere inhabited by the participants. Because these four case studies provided insight into only four family experiences in relatively affluent and educated suburban communities outside major cities, it is not possible to generalize the interpretations to a broader group of LGBTQ+ parents. Experiences in other areas or in other families could be quite different. Though the families' SES differed, each was able to purchase a home within a community in which they desired to live. These case studies also involved parents who could be somewhat selective about where their children received childcare or attended preschool. Additionally, their high educational and relatively high SES may have entitled them to pursue parenthood in ways that other LGBTQ+ couples may not. Despite these limitations, the themes uncovered in these cases are worthy of further exploration in larger samples of families headed by parents of the same gender.

**Summary.** Despite these limitations, this pair of studies does provide insight into a set of important considerations about how LGBTQ+ parented families interact with

early childhood settings, as well as what factors influence improved family functioning and engagement with school settings. The data illuminate certain contours of the process by which some same-gender parents might engage with their children to co-create family narratives that have potential to endow all family members with a certain meta-interpretive capacity about the nature of interactions. This may protect children from the forces of inadvertent and intentional questions about their LGBTQ+ parents—even at a young age, when their understanding of the societal forces and the uniqueness of their family's structure and story remains nascent.

**Implications and Future Directions**

Within the context of the evolving landscape of family formation within the LGBTQ+ community, the current research raises additional questions for future study within the larger framework of studies on diverse family structures and experiences. Whereas prior studies of same-gender families focused more on children who were either adopted or were conceived in the context of prior different-gender relationships, this study provides an initial look at the experiences of a broader cross-section of same-gender parents, including those who have formed a family structure through the deliberate processes of ART. Prior research has also examined outcomes including relationship quality, psychological well-being, and education-related outcomes for older children raised by same-gender parents; however, there have been fewer studies surrounding same-gender parenting during early childhood.

Similar to the ongoing longitudinal evaluations of same-gender adoptive parents (Goldberg, 2014; Goldberg et al., 2016), a natural extension of the current study would be to develop a longitudinal study of various types of same-gender-parented families,

capturing the diversity within the current population. This would require sampling of LGBTQ+ parents across the spectrum of gender identity and sexual orientation, and also successfully recruiting more diverse participants relative to age and SES, as well as racial and regional diversity. Similar to prior studies into same-gender families, however, economic diversity would be the most challenging as both private adoption and ART require significant financial commitments, making them inaccessible to many families. With such a diverse cohort, more direct comparisons could be made regarding parent experiences based on gender identity, sexual orientation, and based on how a child is brought into a family. In particular, evaluating the impact on same-gender parents of a biological connection to a child—specifically as it relates to family narrative—could represent an important next step.

The current research also identified parental stress and perceived social support as important determinants of better family functioning and overall parent-school engagement. Further study of the impacts of these constructs with respect to overall psychological well-being of both parents and children would be important. Specifically, one would hypothesize that lower stress and better social support would similarly improve well-being for all members of a same-gender parented family. Other outcomes of interest would be child achievement and success in preschool settings, which would potentially open a window into investigations of the correlates of later academic success in these children as well.

The present study also looked at the potential impact of LGBTQ+-specific stressors through the lens of minority stress theory. Among the current participants, there did not seem to be a large amount of minority-based stress, and thus the impact of

minority stress on the outcomes studied was minimal. Future research could evaluate whether minority stress plays a greater role in the decision to pursue parenthood among same-gender couples, such that once that decision is made, those who choose to pursue parenthood are in fact less prone to such stress.

**System- and school-level research.** Research is needed that focuses on early childhood educators, seeking to uncover how center-based daycare settings and preschools prepare for and interact with LGBTQ+ parented families. This would involve further exploration across geography, type of childcare center or preschool, and public/private nature, among other factors. The present study only aimed to define further the space for this type of inquiry, linking narrative and experiences with early education, using parent-reported data. Further investigation using mixed-methods tools could continue to assess what promotes and impedes daycare or preschool settings to achieve high levels of LGBTQ+ parent engagement and inclusivity. By lifting up exemplars of outstanding practice, and by integrating them into concrete curricula as described in the next section, the path LGBTQ+ parents and their children travel may be smoothed out to some extent.

**Improving practice through professional learning.** Finally, this study offers a potential framework for engaging early childhood educators in practice-oriented professional learning to improve the experience of kids with LGBTQ+ parents in daycare or preschool. Casper et al. (1996) detailed efforts stretching back to the 1980s to gauge the attitudes of elementary educators toward issues of parent sexual orientation and children's sexuality more broadly; they report efforts at including these topics in the graduate level curriculum of the prominent early education graduate programs with

which they were affiliated. Eight years later, Szalacha (2004) reported that the incorporation of LGBTQ+ issues into pre-service teacher education and in-service professional learning was still at very early stages (if it was done at all), and focused primarily on children's safety in same-gender parented families and on the basic issues of equity presented by the presence of these families in schools. Averett and Hegde (2012) found that pre-service early childhood teachers had generally positive attitudes toward LGBTQ+ parents, but felt they could be more prepared with strategies for incorporating them into the life of the classroom; in large part this seems due to a pervasive silencing of LGBTQ+ issues from teacher education programs (Souto-Manning & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2008). However, this can be remedied through thoughtful additions to these programs' content; a group of teachers exposed directly to material on LGBTQ+ parents showed overall improvement in their knowledge and attitudes toward this group (Kintner-Duffy, Vardell, Lower, & Cassidy, 2012).

Though the education level of adults who work in early childhood education is highly variable, teachers or caregivers have often been exposed to (at least basic) curriculum on family studies as part of their training or university-level studies. However, teaching and learning about families is typically still rooted in a heteronormative perspective that centers on the experience of two-parent, different-gender couples and their children; it is unlikely that what might be missing from this curriculum is obvious to or even noted by most faculty or students (Few-Demo, Humble, Curran, & Lloyd, 2016). This is consistent with the experiences of participants in Study 2, who each reported instances where otherwise open-minded and well-meaning educators either lacked

experience with the children of same-gender parents or engaged in one or more activities which were insensitive to their particular family.

As the population of LGBTQ+ parents continues to grow, introducing additional knowledge about how to understand the unique, nested set of concerns facing each family—even as parents experience evolution and potentially internal conflict in negotiating the multiple identities they may possess—becomes ever more vital (Kuvalanka, Goldberg, & Oswald, 2013; Yuval-Davis, 2006). In fact, when LGBTQ+ parents direct their meaning-making efforts both inwardly and outwardly (Greenwood, 2008), as suggested above, the results of these efforts cascade over time, weaving threads through the development of both parents and children.

Acknowledging the persistent dominance of heteronormative thinking in the formal education and preparation to which early childhood educators and administrators are exposed, a professional learning curriculum aimed at in-service early educators would broaden cultural competence and sensitivity, allowing them to respond appropriately to same-gender parents and their children. Based on key findings from the present studies, such a curriculum would need to include topics such as communication with LGBTQ+ parents, embracing and supporting LGBTQ+ family narrative, thinking through how to make school-based events such as holidays and celebrations more inclusive, broadening the use of materials in the classroom that highlight the rich variety of different family structures (e.g., books with different family forms and embracing diversity in sexual orientation and gender identity, pictures celebrating single parent families, LGBTQ+ families, etc.). Moreover, in the same vein and spirit as mindfulness, anti-bullying, and anti-bias curricula, teachers could acquire skills to address and confront comments—even

if they are curiosity-induced—that might otherwise have the potential to be hurtful or confusing to the child of LGBTQ+ parents.

Effecting this kind of change on a school or system level would benefit from early educators engaging in different kinds of leadership and advocacy. For Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001), teacher leadership is "lead[ing] within and beyond the classroom…contribut[ing] to a community of teacher learners and leaders, and influenc[ing] others towards improved educational practice" (p. 315). Through individual decisions or broader efforts at partnership building, early educators' work could stretch from efforts with individual children in their classroom all the way to influencing policy at the local, state, or federal levels. Parents also can choose to play a role in 'educating the educators,' though this requires a certain amount of discretion. Obviously, if parents perceive bias rooted in religious, political, or cultural convictions (as described in Church et al., 2018), certain conversations may prove futile or distressing.

For those parents who have opportunities to effect change, two concrete resources are provided as appendices to this research. First, given the frequency with which Study 2 participant parents reported using literature to help children make meaning of their family structure and to co-construct narratives that celebrate their same-gender parents, Appendix 3 offers a list of recommended books for schools and parents to consider reading or acquiring. The list is organized thematically, and offers brief summaries of exemplary books and suggestions on a few books to avoid. From the diversity of family structures that one may encounter in preschool communities to ways in which children can be free to express their identity, these books' presence in classrooms or libraries would be a valuable tool for supporting efforts by teachers, parents, and caregivers to

celebrate individuality and diversity. Shared reading of topical books in the early childhood classroom is often seen as a promising locus for discussion that allows preschool children to grapple with and make meaning through "critical conversations." However, Beneke and Cheatham (2019) found that teachers may use their prerogative to steer away from meaningful interactions when confronted with challenging topics such as race. Educators' rationale for doing so varies, from those who maintain strict adherence to teaching the mechanical building blocks of reading in this era of standards-based education to those who are genuinely uncomfortable with or ill-equipped to preside over critical discussion of fraught issues in American society.

While not solving for all the reasons teachers avoid critical conversations, Appendix 4 offers a one page summary that integrates data from this study and prior research by other authors on how instructional practice and family/school engagement efforts can tailor a more sensitive approach to variability in family structure at the classroom level. We know that the default in early childhood settings still remains persistently heteronormative, while innovative approaches that support a more diverse range of family strucutres are suppressed (Cloughessy & Waniganayake, 2014). For that reason, data from this study and prior research by other authors are combined to offer ideas about how instructional practice and family/school engagement efforts can tailor a more sensitive approach to variability in family structure at the classroom level. Though LGBTQ+ parents in the present study reported overall low levels of minority stress and high social support, they also highlighted disappointing microaggressions and frustrations at their children's daycares or preschools. Farr et al. (2019) showed that elementary-age children already exhibit a more positive affect toward children whose parents are

different-gender. Additionally, Church et al. (2018) reported that, while early childhood administrators (in their North Carolina-based sample) felt generally positive toward LGBTQ+ parents, their particular level of education or training did not correlate with the administrator's comfort with families headed by LGBTQ+ individuals.

The resource offered in Appendix 4 could plausibly be shared with caregivers, teachers, and administrators; LGBTQ+ parents could use it as a conversation starter, fostering efforts the school might make to increase all families' comfort—including those with single parents, those with different racial/ethnic backgrounds, those with adopted children, etc. Wheeler et al. (2018) report that only 22% of their national, U.S.-based sample of LGBTQ+ parents (n=454) engaged in "education" strategies where they "provide information to others regarding their family in order to facilitate understanding or perception of them as legitimate parents" (p. 204). While this type of conversation can be taxing on the LGBTQ+-identified parent(s)—especially since the school environment is not the only ecological site for such potential discussions—it is clear that many otherwise well-meaning educators will respond positively. A possibility of effecting meaningful change results—and that change could also make those with other family structures more comfortable.

**Conclusion**

The decisions any family makes about the childcare or preschool environment to which they send their children can be highly dependent on income, agency, and family engagement; both parents and children might experience discomfort when SES or residence limit their choices. For the children of LGBTQ+ parents, society's heteronormative orientation can create a host of additional, overarching challenges and

questions around both individual and family identity that lead parents to inculcate a sense of pride and preparedness in their children, similar to the efforts of parents in other minority groups which experience hardship and discrimination (see Scott, Pinderhughes, & Johnson, in press, for a discussion of this process among African-American parents and children). As one male parent in Study 1 said, his family's life is:

> *[n]ever perfect, but [we are] always attempting to do right by our kids and teach them the social and academic lessons they need, and to be PROUD of their unique family structure—and that different is OK.*

Some of this participant's hopes are universal and could be shared by any same- or different-gender parent. Yet a wide range of caregivers and educators still exist, from those who actively tackle the challenge of supporting and celebrating diverse types of families to those who still see increasing diversity (and "difference") in family forms as a major challenge (Emfinger, 2007). With society's continued evolution, the growth of acceptance, and more LGBTQ+ parents having children in the context of their same-gender relationship, a real opportunity exists. As interest in parenting and opportunities for family creation expand for the LGBTQ+ population, systems of childcare and preschool must prepare for the increased occurrence of diverse family structures, which encompass family forms beyond same-gender parented households.

By illuminating how the experiences of LGBTQ+ parents vary, and the work that goes into building and sustaining a family narrative against the backdrop of society, this research takes a first step toward further efforts at enacting concrete changes in the classroom, (pre)school, and system levels to support students whose parents are LGBTQ+. Curriculum, professional learning, and a general understanding of these families' diverse experiences and narratives all have the power to make change locally.

Ultimately, the challenges faced by LGBTQ+ parents raising children may in some respects parallel those faced by single biological or adoptive parents, as well as grandparents or other family members raising children. Each family narrative is unique, and by challenging existing assumptions about what constitutes a "normative" family, educators have the power to smooth over classroom-level experiences of discomfort or confusion for the children of LGBTQ+ that arise of out of daily interaction with peers.

Numerous research participants in prior studies about "gay parents" are LGBTQ+ identified individuals who came out after having children in the context of a different-gender relationship. The population studied here (same-gender parents who brought a child *into the context of that same-gender relationship*) is consequently unique. This research augments existing literature on families parented by same-gender and LGBTQ+ couples; it buttresses the consistent findings of others that, while LGBTQ+ family dynamics and functioning share some similarities with heteronormative family structures, the experiences of parents illuminated here underscore the urgent need for more sensitive and informed support among early childhood caregivers and preschool teachers. Although further research is needed to evaluate child-level outcomes in preschool and throughout early childhood, this study suggests that children in the U.S. who are brought into "modern" and "non-traditional" families headed by LGBTQ+ parents are likely to develop in thoughtful, supportive contexts where parents possess the capacity to shape and guide family well-being despite some challenges and incongruities along the way.

## Tables

Table 1

*Study 1 Participant Demographics*

| | Survey Respondent (*N* = 241) | Spouse/Partner (*N* = 241)* |
|---|---|---|
| Age (*M*/SD) | 38.7 years (5.2) | 39.3 years (6.7) |
| Sex Assigned At Birth (*%*) | | |
| Male | 52 (22%) | 54 (23%) |
| Female | 188 (78%) | 184 (76%) |
| Current Gender Identity *(%*) | | |
| Male | 51 (21%) | 52 (22%) |
| Female | 164 (68%) | 167 (69%) |
| Genderqueer | 19 (8%) | 14 (6%) |
| Genderqueer transgender female | 1 (0.4%) | |
| Genderqueer transgender male | 1 (0.4%) | 2 (0.8%) |
| Nonbinary transmasculine | 1 (0.4%) | |
| Transgender male | 2 (0.8%) | 1 (0.4%) |
| Transgender female | 1 (0.4%) | 2 (0.8%) |
| Sexual Orientation *(%*) | | |
| Gay or Lesbian | 191 (79%) | 202 (84%) |
| Bisexual | 43 (18%) | 32 (13%) |
| Race/Ethnicity *(%*) | | |
| White, non-Hispanic | 226 (94%) | 209 (87%) |
| Hispanic | 13 (5%) | 13 (5%) |
| Black | 2 (1%) | 6 (2%) |
| Asian | 6 (3%) | 9 (4%) |
| American Indian /Alaskan Native | 2 (1%) | 3 (1%) |
| Native Hawaiian | 1 (0.5%) | 3 (1%) |
| Other / Mixed | 5 (3%) | 9 (4%) |
| Highest level of education *(%*) | | |
| Less than High School | 0 (0%) | 1 (0.4%) |
| High School | 2 (1%) | 5 (2%) |
| Some college | 11 (5%) | 12 (5%) |
| 2 year degree | 4 (2%) | 7 (3%) |
| 4 year degree | 45 (18%) | 62 (26%) |
| Master's degree | 113 (47%) | 102 (42%) |
| Doctorate | 65 (27%) | 49 (20%) |
| Household income *(%*) | | |
| < $35,000 | 5 (2%) | |
| $35,000 - $49,999 | 7 (3%) | |
| $50,000 – $74,999 | 6 (3%) | |
| $75,000 - $99,999 | 22 (9%) | |
| $100,000 - $149,999 | 70 (29%) | |
| $150,000 - $199,999 | 47 (20%) | |
| $200,000 - $299,999 | 48 (20%) | |
| $300,000 + | 34 (14%) | |
| Primary language in the home *(%*) | | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| English | 231 (96%) | 228 (95%) |
| Spanish | 5 (2%) | 4 (2%) |
| Other | 4 (2%) | 6 (3%) |
| Census Region of Residence *(%)* | | |
| Northeast | 127 (53%) | |
| Midwest | 41 (17%) | |
| South | 24 (10%) | |
| West | 48 (20%) | |

*Responses for spouse/partner were reported by the survey participant

Table 2

*Child Demographics* Reported by Study 1 Survey Participants*

| Measure | n = 241 |
|---|---|
| Child Assigned Sex | |
| Male | 133 (55%) |
| Female | 108 (45%) |
| Age of Child | |
| 6 years | 20 (8%) |
| 5 years - < 6 years | 35 (15%) |
| 4 years - < 5 years | 42 (17%) |
| 3 years - < 4 years | 54 (22%) |
| 2 years - < 3 years | 43 (18%) |
| 1 year - < 2 years | 36 (15%) |
| Less than 1 year | 10 (4%) |
| Gestational Age of Child at Birth | |
| Full Term, No NICU | 176 (73%) |
| Full Term, +NICU | 18 (7%) |
| Pre-Term, No NICU | 23 (10%) |
| Pre-Term, +NICU | 22 (10%) |
| How Child Entered Family | |
| Adoption | 32 (13%) |
| Closed | 2 |
| Open, and WITH an option for future contact | 27 |
| Open, but with NO option for future contact | 3 |
| Gestational surrogacy / assisted reproductive technology / IVF | 82 (34%) |
| Intra-uterine insemination (IUI) or intra-cervical insemination (ICI) | 111 (46%) |
| Sperm or Egg Donor | |
| Anonymous | 85/193 (44%) |
| Known, a friend or family member | 29/193 (15%) |
| Known, and WITH direct contact established during the IVF process | 5/193 (3%) |
| Known, and WITH an option for future contact through the donor-sibling registry | 17/193 (9%) |
| Known, and WITH the possibility of future direct contact | 22/193 (11%) |
| Known, but with NO option for future contact | 4/193 (2%) |
| Other | 31/193 (16%) |
| Other | 16 (7%) |
| Child Race/Ethnicity | |
| White, non-Hispanic | 170 (71%) |
| Hispanic | 30 (12%) |
| Black | 11 (5%) |
| Asian | 4 (2%) |
| American Indian /Alaskan Native | 0 |
| Native Hawaiian | 1 (0.04%) |
| Other / Mixed | 13 (5%) |

**Data presented for child demographics of oldest child in the participant's family that was 6 years old or younger*

Table 3

*Parental Stress Scale, Individual Item Responses*

| Parental Stress Scale | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I am happy in my role as a parent. | 3 (1%) | 1 (0.4%) | 4 (2%) | 63 (26%) | 170 (71%) |
| There is little or nothing I wouldn't do for my child(ren) if it was necessary. | 0 | 2 (0.8%) | 2 (0.8%) | 49 (20%) | 187 (78%) |
| Caring for my child(ren) sometimes takes more time and energy than I have to give. | 7 (3%) | 53 (22%) | 22 (9%) | 117 (49%) | 42 (17%) |
| I sometimes worry whether I am doing enough for my child(ren). | 10 (4%) | 52 (22%) | 19 (8%) | 108 (45%) | 52 (22%) |
| I feel close to my child(ren). | 0 | 0 | 4 (2%) | 35 (15%) | 200 (83%) |
| I enjoy spending time with my child(ren). | 0 | 0 | 5 (2%) | 63 (26%) | 173 (72%) |
| My child(ren) is an important source of affection for me. | 0 | 14 (6%) | 14 (6%) | 102 (42%) | 111 (46%) |
| Having child(ren) gives me a more certain and optimistic view for the future. | 5 (2%) | 18 (8%) | 50 (21%) | 88 (37%) | 80 (33%) |
| The major source of stress in my life is my child(ren). | 41 (17%) | 112 (47%) | 38 (16%) | 44 (18%) | 5 (2%) |
| Having child(ren) leaves little time and flexibility in my life. | 3 (1%) | 53 (22%) | 39 (16%) | 114 (47%) | 32 (13%) |
| Having child(ren) has been a financial burden. | 18 (8%) | 79 (33%) | 47 (20%) | 77 (32%) | 20 (8%) |
| It is difficult to balance different responsibilities because of my child(ren). | 11 (5%) | 75 (31%) | 38 (16%) | 101 (42%) | 16 (7%) |
| The behavior of my child(ren) is often embarrassing or stressful to me. | 92 (38%) | 99 (41%) | 27 (11%) | 20 (8%) | 3 (1%) |
| If I had it to do over again, I might decide not to have child(ren). | 191 (79%) | 32 (13%) | 13 (5%) | 5 (2%) | 0 |
| I feel overwhelmed by the responsibility of being a parent. | 71 (30%) | 95 (39%) | 31 (13%) | 41 (17%) | 71 (30%) |
| Having child(ren) has meant having too few choices and too little control over my life. | 84 (35%) | 117 (49%) | 19 (8%) | 19 (8%) | 2 (1%) |
| I am satisfied as a parent. | 0 | 1 (0.4%) | 6 (3%) | 103 (43%) | 131 (54%) |
| I find my child(ren) enjoyable. | 0 | 0 | 3 (1%) | 52 (22%) | 186 (77%) |

Table 4

*Differences in Parental Stress Scale Scores Based on Respondent Characteristics*

| | PSS Score *M* (SD) | p |
|---|---|---|
| Respondent Characteristics | | |
| Respondent Age | | 0.5 |
| <40 years | 38.4 (7.3) | |
| ≥ 40 years | 37.7 (8.7) | |
| Current Gender Identity | | 0.2 |
| Male | 37.3 (7.6) | |
| Female | 38.0 (7.6) | |
| Other non-binary | 40.8 (9.2) | |
| Race/Ethnicity | | 0.6 |
| White | 38.2 (7.9) | |
| Non-White | 37.4 (6.2) | |
| Highest level of education | | 0.05 |
| Less than College Degree | 36.4 (6.6) | |
| College Degree or Higher | 38.7 (8.0) | |
| Household income | | 0.27 |
| Less than $100,000 | 39.6 (9.7) | |
| $ 100,000 - $ 200,000 | 38.0 (8.0) | |
| ≥ $200,000 | 36.7 (5.8) | |
| Census Region of Residence | | 0.04 |
| Northeast | 38.2 (7.2) | |
| Midwest | 37.1 (7.5) | |
| South | 35.6 (8.5) | |
| West | 40.3 (8.0) | |
| Family / Child Characteristics | | |
| Number of Children in Family | | 0.02 |
| One | 36.9 (6.8) | |
| More than One | 39.2 (8.5) | |
| Child Race | | 0.7 |
| White | 38.0 (7.7) | |
| Non-White | 38.4 (7.9) | |
| Child Age | | 0.04 |
| < 3 years | 37.3 (6.5) | |
| ≥ 3 years | 39.4 (9.1) | |
| Child Sex | | 0.5 |
| Male | 37.8 (7.9) | |
| Female | 38.5 (7.6) | |
| How Child Entered Family | | 0.3 |
| Adoption | 39.2 (10.0) | |
| IVF/IUI/Surrogacy | 38.0 (7.4) | |

Table 5

*Perceived Social Support as Measured by the MSPSS*

| MSPSS | Subscale | Very Strongly Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Mildly Disagree | Neutral | Mildly Agree | Strongly Agree | Very Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| There is a special person who is around when I am in need. | Significant Other | 0 | 3 (1%) | 5 (2%) | 6 (3%) | 39 (16%) | 91 (38%) | 97 (40%) |
| There is a special person with whom I can share my joys and sorrows. | Significant Other | 1 (0.4%) | 1 (0.4%) | 3 (1%) | 4 (2%) | 31 (13%) | 88 (37%) | 113 (47%) |
| I have a special person who is a real source of comfort to me. | Significant Other | 1 (0.4%) | 2 (1%) | 8 (3%) | 4 (2%) | 35 (15%) | 81 (33%) | 110 (46%) |
| There is a special person in my life who cares about my feelings. | Significant Other | 1 (0.4%) | 2 (1%) | 2 (1%) | 2 (1%) | 22 (9%) | 88 (37%) | 124 (52%) |
| My family is willing to help me make decisions. | Family | 5 (2%) | 7 (3%) | 4 (2%) | 23 (10%) | 47 (20%) | 89 (37%) | 65 (27%) |
| I can talk about my problems with my family. | Family | 3 (1%) | 5 (2%) | 20 (8%) | 17 (7%) | 58 (24%) | 78 (32%) | 60 (25%) |
| My family really tries to help me. | Family | 2 (1%) | 5 (2%) | 13 (5%) | 20 (8%) | 44 (18%) | 79 (33%) | 78 (32%) |
| I get the emotional help and support I need from my family. | Family | 4 (2%) | 4 (2%) | 14 (6%) | 16 (7%) | 62 (26%) | 87 (36%) | 54 (22%) |
| My friends really try to help me. | Friends | 4 (2%) | 3 (1%) | 15 (6%) | 32 (13%) | 71 (30%) | 76 (32%) | 40 (17%) |
| I can count on my friends when things go wrong. | Friends | 3 (1%) | 5 (2%) | 12 (5%) | 30 (12%) | 58 (24%) | 78 (32%) | 55 (23%) |
| I have friends with whom I can share my joys and sorrows. | Friends | 0 | 4 (2%) | 12 (5%) | 13 (5%) | 51 (21%) | 87 (36%) | 74 (31%) |
| I can talk about my problems with my friends. | Friends | 0 | 1 (0.4%) | 8 (3%) | 17 (7%) | 61 (25%) | 88 (37%) | 66 (27%) |

Table 6

*Comparison of MSPSS Scores by Respondent Characteristics*

| | MSPSS Overall | p | MSPSS Family | p | MSPSS Friends | p | MSPSS SO | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Respondent Characteristics | | | | | | | | |
| Respondent Age | | 0.5 | | 0.2 | | 0.8 | | 0.06 |
| <40 years | 5.8 (0.8) | | 5.6 (1.1) | | 5.6 (1.1) | | 6.3 (0.9) | |
| ≥ 40 years | 5.7 (0.9) | | 5.7 (0.9) | | 5.4 (1.3) | | 6.0 (0.9) | |
| Current Gender Identity | | 0.4 | | 0.5 | | 0.4 | | 0.8 |
| Male | 5.6 (1.0) | | 5.5 (1.3) | | 5.4 (1.2) | | 6.1 (0.9) | |
| Female | 5.8 (0.8) | | 5.6 (1.2) | | 5.6 (1.0) | | 6.2 (0.9) | |
| Other Non-binary | 5.7 (0.7) | | 5.4 (1.0) | | 5.5 (1.1) | | 6.2 (0.9) | |
| Race/Ethnicity | | 0.95 | | 0.4 | | 0.3 | | 0.9 |
| White | 5.8 (0.8) | | 5.6 (1.2) | | 5.6 (1.1) | | 6.2 (0.9) | |
| Non-White | 5.8 (0.7) | | 5.4 (1.2) | | 5.8 (0.9) | | 6.2 (0.7) | |
| Highest level of education | | 0.5 | | 0.3 | | 0.9 | | 0.98 |
| Less than College Degree | 5.7 (0.9) | | 5.4 (1.3) | | 5.6 (1.1) | | 6.2 (0.9) | |
| College Degree or Higher | 5.8 (0.8) | | 5.6 (1.1) | | 5.6 (1.1) | | 6.2 (0.9) | |
| Census Region of Residence | | 0.9 | | 0.95 | | 0.9 | | 0.75 |
| Northeast | 5.8 (0.8) | | 5.6 (1.1) | | 5.6 (1.0) | | 6.2 (0.8) | |
| Midwest | 5.9 (0.9) | | 5.7 (1.2) | | 5.6 (1.1) | | 6.4 (0.8) | |
| South | 5.8 (1.0) | | 5.6 (1.4) | | 5.6 (1.2) | | 6.2 (1.2) | |
| West | 5.7 (0.7) | | 5.5 (1.1) | | 5.5 (1.1) | | 6.2 (0.7) | |
| Family / Child Characteristics | | | | | | | | |
| Number of Children in Family | | 0.6 | | 0.8 | | 0.3 | | 0.7 |
| One | 5.8 (0.9) | | 5.6 (1.2) | | 5.6 (1.0) | | 6.2 (0.9) | |
| More than One | 5.8 (0.8) | | 5.6 (1.1) | | 5.5 (1.2) | | 6.2 (0.9) | |
| Child Race | | 0.1 | | 0.2 | | 0.6 | | 0.06 |
| White | 5.8 (0.9) | | 5.6 (1.2) | | 5.6 (1.1) | | 6.3 (0.9) | |
| Non-White | 5.7 (0.8) | | 5.4 (1.1) | | 5.5 (1.0) | | 6.0 (0.8) | |
| Child Age | | 0.009 | | 0.08 | | 0.2 | | 0.001 |
| < 3 years | 5.6 (0.9) | | 5.4 (1.2) | | 5.5 (1.0) | | 5.9 (1.0) | |
| ≥ 3 years | 5.9 (0.8) | | 5.7 (1.2) | | 5.6 (1.0) | | 6.4 (0.8) | |
| Child Sex | | 0.8 | | 0.2 | | 1.0 | | 0.3 |
| Male | 5.8 (0.8) | | 5.7 (1.1) | 0.2 | 5.6 (1.0) | 1.0 | 6.1 (0.9) | |
| Female | 5.8 (0.8) | | 5.5 (1.2) | | 5.6 (1.1) | | 6.3 (0.8) | |
| How Child Entered Family | | 0.98 | | 0.8 | | 0.6 | | 0.7 |
| Adoption | 5.8 (0.9) | | 5.6 (1.1) | | 5.7 (1.1) | | 6.2 (0.9) | |
| IVF/IUI/Surrogacy | 5.8 (0.9) | | 5.5 (1.3) | | 5.5 (1.1) | | 6.1 (0.9) | |

*Notes:* All means are reported with SD in parentheses.

Table 7

*Individual Item Responses to the DHEQ Measure*

| DHEQ Question | Subscale | Did not happen/not applicable to me | It happened, and it bothered me NOT AT ALL | It happened, and it bothered me A LITTLE BIT | It happened, and it bothered me MODERATELY | It happened, and it bothered me QUITE A BIT | It happened, and it bothered me EXTREMELY |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Being called names such as "fag" or "dyke" | Harassment | 193 (80%) | 6 (3%) | 16 (7%) | 3 (1%) | 14 (6%) | 8 (3%) |
| People staring at you when you are out in public because you are LGBT | Harassment | 114 (47%) | 36 (15%) | 52 (22%) | 19 (8%) | 18 (8%) | 2 (0.8%) |
| Being verbally harassed by strangers because you are LGBT | Harassment | 197 (82%) | 5 (2%) | 11 (5%) | 13 (5%) | 9 (4%) | 6 (3%) |
| Being verbally harassed by people you know because you are LGBT | Harassment | 219 (91%) | 2 (1%) | 5 (2%) | 4 (2%) | 6 (3%) | 4 (2%) |
| Being treated unfairly in stores or restaurants because you are LGBT | Harassment | 212 (88%) | 3 (1%) | 10 (4%) | 4 (2%) | 6 (3%) | 5 (2%) |
| People laughing at you or making jokes at your expense because you are LGBT | Harassment | 221 (92%) | 3 (1%) | 6 (3%) | 2 (1%) | 3 (1%) | 4 (2%) |
| Difficulty finding a partner because you are LGBT | Isolation | 221 (92%) | 3 (1%) | 6 (3%) | 7 (3%) | 3 (1%) | 1 (0.4%) |
| Difficulty finding LGBT friends | Isolation | 98 (41%) | 17 (7%) | 63 (26%) | 34 (14%) | 22 (9%) | 3 (1%) |
| Having very few people you can talk to about being LGBT | Isolation | 152 (63%) | 13 (5%) | 36 (15%) | 28 (12%) | 8 (3%) | 3 (1%) |
| Feeling like you don't fit in with other LGBT people | Isolation | 122 (51%) | 20 (8%) | 63 (26%) | 24 (10%) | 11 (5%) | 0 |
| Your children being rejected by other children because you are LGBT | Parenting | 224 (93%) | 0 | 8 (3%) | 3 (1%) | 5 (2%) | 1 (0.4%) |
| Your children being verbally harassed because you are LGBT | Parenting | 234 (97%) | 0 | 4 (2%) | 0 | 2 (1%) | 1 (0.4%) |
| Being treated unfairly by teachers or administrators at your children's school because you are LGBT | Parenting | 223 (93%) | 1 (0.4%) | 3 (1%) | 7 (3%) | 4 (2%) | 2 (1%) |
| People assuming you are heterosexual because you have children | Parenting | 28 (12%) | 62 (26%) | 75 (31%) | 37 (15%) | 28 (12%) | 10 (4%) |
| Being treated unfairly by parents of other children because you are LGBT | Parenting | 210 (87%) | 6 (3%) | 8 (3%) | 9 (4%) | 3 (1%) | 3 (1%) |
| Difficulty finding other LGBT families for you and your children to socialize with | Parenting | 77 (32%) | 13 (5%) | 64 (27%) | 47 (20%) | 28 (12%) | 12 (5%) |
| Being punched, hit, kicked, or beaten because you are LGBT | Victimization | 237 (98%) | 1 (0.4%) | 1 (0.4%) | 0 | 1 (0.4%) | 0 |
| Being assaulted with a weapon because you are LGBT | Victimization | 239 (99%) | 0 | 1 (0.4%) | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Being raped or sexually assaulted because you are LGBT | Victimization | 239 (99%) | 0 | 1 (0.4%) | 0 | 0 | 1 (0.4%) |
| Having objects thrown at you because you are LGBT | Victimization | 237 (98%) | 0 | 2 (1%) | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Avoiding talking about your current or past relationships when you are at work | Vigilance | 161 (67%) | 9 (4%) | 36 (15%) | 19 (8%) | 10 (4%) | 6 (3%) |
| Hiding part of your life from other people | Vigilance | 132 (55%) | 11 (5%) | 44 (18%) | 26 (11%) | 14 (6%) | 12 (5%) |
| Pretending that you have an opposite-sex partner | Vigilance | 180 (75%) | 6 (3%) | 24 (10%) | 8 (3%) | 14 (6%) | 8 (3%) |
| Pretending that you are heterosexual | Vigilance | 192 (80%) | 3 (1%) | 22 (9%) | 7 (3%) | 11 (5%) | 6 (3%) |
| Hiding your relationship from other people | Vigilance | 160 (67%) | 6 (3%) | 35 (15%) | 14 (6%) | 16 (7%) | 9 (4%) |
| Watching what you say and do around heterosexual people | Vigilance | 85 (35%) | 17 (7%) | 79 (33%) | 35 (15%) | 18 (8%) | 6 (3%) |

Table 8

*Correlations between DHEQ Occurrence Subscales*

| | DHEQ-Isolation | DHEQ-Vigilance | DHEQ-Parenting | DHEQ-Harassment |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| DHEQ-Vigilance | .194** | | | |
| DHEQ-Parenting | .441** | .212** | | |
| DHEQ-Harassment | .279** | .397** | .297** | |
| DHEQ-Victimization | .141* | .133* | .220** | .247** |

*Notes:* Showing Pearson correlation coefficients, *p<.05, ** p<0.01

Table 9

*Differences in DHEQ Occurrence Scores based on Respondent Characteristics*

| | DHEQ-Isolation | p | DHEQ-Vigilance | p | DHEQ-Parenting | p | DHEQ-Harassment | p | DHEQ-Victimization | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Respondent Characteristics | | | | | | | | | | |
| Respondent Age | | 0.6 | | 0.1 | | 0.2 | | 0.7 | | 0.7 |
| <40 years | 1.5 (1.1) | | 2.4 (2.1) | | 1.9 (1.0) | | 1.2 (1.4) | | 0.02 (0.1) | |
| ≥ 40 years | 1.4 (1.4) | | 1.9 (1.9) | | 1.7 (0.9) | | 1.1 (1.2) | | 0.01 (0.1) | |
| Current Gender Identity | | 0.8 | | 0.9 | | 0.4 | | 0.5 | | 0.2 |
| Male | 1.6 (1.0) | | 2.1 (2.0) | | 1.7 (1.0) | | 1.3 (1.4) | | 0.1 (0.6) | |
| Female | 1.5 (1.2) | | 2.3 (2.0) | | 1.9 (1.0) | | 1.1 (1.4) | | 0.02 (0.1) | |
| Other Non-binary | 1.5 (1.1) | | 2.1 (2.0) | | 1.8 (1.2) | | 1.4 (1.4) | | 0.0 (0.0) | |
| Race/Ethnicity | | 0.6 | | 0.3 | | 0.6 | | 0.9 | | 0.3 |
| White | 1.5 (1.1) | | 2.1 (2.0) | | 1.8 (1.0) | | 1.2 (1.3) | | 0.01 (0.1) | |
| Non-White | 1.4 (1.0) | | 2.6 (1.8) | | 1.9 (1.0) | | 1.1 (1.4) | | 0.04 (0.2) | |
| Highest level of education | | 0.2 | | 0.8 | | 0.04 | | 0,06 | | 1.0 |
| Less than College Degree | 1.6 (1.1) | | 2.1 (1.7) | | 2.0 (1.1) | | 1.4 (1.4) | | 0.02 (0.1) | |
| College Degree or Higher | 1.5 (1.5) | | 2.2 (2.1) | | 1.8 (0.9) | | 1.1 (1.3) | | 0.02 (0.1) | |
| Household income | | 0.9 | | 0.8 | | 0.03 | | 0.7 | | |
| Less than $100,000 | 1.5 (1.1) | | 2.4 (2.1) | | 2.2 (1.2) | | 1.3 (1.6) | | 0.00 (0.00) | |
| $ 100,000 - $ 200,000 | 1.5 (1.1) | | 2.2 (2.0) | | 1.8 (0.9) | | 1.1 (1.3) | | 0.02 (0.1) | |
| ≥ $200,000 | 1.6 (1.1) | | 2.0 (1.8) | | 1.7 (1.0) | | 1.1 (1.5) | | 0.03 (0.2) | |
| Census Region of Residence | | 0.09 | | 0.8 | | 0.2 | | 0.5 | | 0.7 |
| Northeast | 1.4 (1.1) | | 2.1 (2.0) | | 1.7 (0.9) | | 1.1 (1.4) | | 0.02 (0.2) | |
| Midwest | 1.7 (1.1) | | 2.4 (2.1) | | 2.0 (1.0) | | 1.0 (1.0) | | 0.00 (0.00) | |
| South | 1.5 (1.1) | | 2.3 (1.9) | | 2.0 (1.1) | | 1.1 (1.5) | | 0.00 (0.00) | |
| West | 1.8 (1.1) | | 2.3 (2.0) | | 2.0 (1.1) | | 1.4 (1.2) | | 0.02 (01) | |
| Family / Child Characteristics | | | | | | | | | | |
| Number of Children in Family | | 0.3 | | 0.4 | | 0.1 | | 0.5 | | 0.4 |
| One | 1.6 (1.1) | | 2.1 (2.0) | | 1.7 (0.8) | | 1.2 (1.5) | | 0.02 (0.1) | |
| More than One | 1.4 (1.1) | | 2.3 (2.0) | | 2.0 (1.1) | | 1.1 (1.3) | | 0.05 (0.4) | |
| Child Race | | 0.7 | | 0.8 | | 0.8 | | 0.2 | | 0.09 |
| White | 1.5 (1.1) | | 2.2 (2.0) | | 1.9 (1.0) | | 1.1 (1.3) | | 0.01 (0.1) | |
| Non-White | 1.5 (1.1) | | 2.2 (2.0) | | 1.8 (1.0) | | 1.3 (1.5) | | 0.08 (0.5) | |
| Child Age | | 0.7 | | 1.0 | | 0.5 | | 0.3 | | 0.4 |
| < 3 years | 1.5 (1.1) | | 2.2 (2.0) | | 1.8 (0.8) | | 1.3 (1.4) | | 0.02 (0.1) | |
| ≥ 3 years | 1.5 (1.1) | | 2.2 (2.0) | | 1.9 (1.3) | | 1.1 (1.3) | | 0.05 (0.4) | |
| Child Sex | | 0.4 | | 0.7 | | 0.5 | | 0.6 | | 0.5 |
| Male | 1.6 (1.2) | | 2.2 (1.9) | | 1.9 (1.0) | | 1.1 (1.3) | | 0.02 (0.2) | |
| Female | 1.5 (1.1) | | 2.3 (2.1) | | 1.8 (1.0) | | 1.2 (1.5) | | 0.05 (0.4) | |
| How Child Entered Family | | 0.9 | | 0.8 | | 0.007 | | 0.98 | | 0.5 |
| Adoption | 1.5 (1.0) | | 2.1 (2.0) | | 1.4 (0.8) | | 1.2 (1.4) | | 0.04 (0.3) | |
| IVF/IUI/Surrogacy | 1.5 (1.1) | | 2.2 (2.0) | | 1.9 (1.0) | | 1.2 (1.4) | | 0.00 (0,00) | |

Table 10

*Correlations Between Parental Stress, Minority Stress, and Social Support*

| | PSS | DHEQ-Vigilance-Occ | DHEQ-Harassment-Occ | DHEQ-Parenting-Occ | DHEQ-Victimization-Occ | DHEQ-Isolation-Occ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| PSS | | 0.15* | 0.01 | 0.15* | 0.11 | 0.07 |
| MSPSS-TOTAL | -0.28** | -0.09 | -0.15* | -0.19** | -0.14* | -0.23** |
| MSPSS-SO | -0.17* | -0.03 | -0.05 | -0.15* | -0.15* | -0.16* |
| MSPSS-FAMILY | -0.28** | -0.05 | -0.17** | -0.15* | -0.09 | -0.17** |
| MSPSS-FRIENDS | -0.21** | -0.12 | -0.12 | -0.14* | -0.1 | -0.22** |

*Notes:* Showing Pearson correlation coefficients, *p<.05, ** p<0.01

Table 11

*Item-level Responses to the FACES Communication and Satisfaction Scales*

| FACES-IV Communication Scale | Strongly disagree | Generally disagree | Undecided | Generally agree | Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Family members are satisfied with how they communicate with each other. | 2 (0.8%) | 26 (11%) | 33 (14%) | 155 (64%) | 23 (10%) |
| Family members are very good listeners. | 1 (0.4%) | 11 (5%) | 38 (16%) | 148 (61%) | 41 (17%) |
| Family members express affection to each other. | 1 (0.4%) | 5 (2%) | 13 (5%) | 83 (34%) | 137 (57%) |
| Family members are able to ask each other for what they want. | 0 | 4 (2%) | 13 (5%) | 143 (59%) | 79 (33%) |
| Family members can calmly discuss problems with each other. | 1 (0.4%) | 13 (5%) | 19 (8%) | 138 (57%) | 68 (28%) |
| Family members discuss their ideas and beliefs with each other. | 1 (0.4%) | 1 (0.4%) | 11 (5%) | 117 (49%) | 109 (45%) |
| When family members ask questions of each other, they get honest answers. | 0 | 2 (0.8%) | 9 (4%) | 141 (59%) | 87 (36%) |
| Family members try to understand each other's feelings. | 0 | 5 (2%) | 9 (4%) | 110 (46%) | 115 (48%) |
| When angry, family members seldom say negative things about each other. | 6 (3%) | 43 (18%) | 40 (17%) | 102 (42%) | 48 (20%) |
| Family members express their true feelings to each other. | 0 | 6 (3%) | 21 (9%) | 129 (54%) | 82 (34%) |
| **FACES-IV Satisfaction Scale** | **Very dissatisfied** | **Somewhat dissatisfied** | **Generally satisfied** | **Very satisfied** | **Extremely satisfied** |
| The degree of closeness between family members. | 2 (0.8%) | 15 (6%) | 50 (21%) | 2 (0.8%) | 81 (33%) |
| Your family's ability to cope with stress. | 3 (1%) | 24 (10%) | 105 (44%) | 3 (1%) | 2 (0.8%) |
| Your family's ability to be flexible. | 1 (0.4%) | 17 (7%) | 100 (42%) | 1 (0.4%) | 30 (12%) |
| Your family's ability to share positive experiences. | 1 (0.4%) | 3 (1%) | 38 (16%) | 95 (39%) | 102 (42%) |
| The quality of communication between family members. | 2 (0.8%) | 18 (8%) | 67 (28%) | 105 (44%) | 47 (20%) |
| Your family's ability to resolve conflicts. | 2 (0.8%) | 20 (8%) | 74 (31%) | 96 (40%) | 47 (20%) |
| The amount of time you spend together as a family. | 1 (0.4%) | 20 (8%) | 62 (26%) | 107 (44%) | 49 (20%) |
| The way problems are discussed. | 2 (0.8%) | 22 (9%) | 83 (34%) | 91 (38%) | 40 (17%) |
| The fairness of criticism in your family. | 3 (1%) | 21 (9%) | 102 (42%) | 75 (31%) | 38 (16%) |
| Family members concern for each other. | 1 (0.4%) | 5 (2%) | 33 (14%) | 75 (31%) | 123 (51%) |

Table 12

*Correlations Between Parental Stress, Social Support, Minority Stress, and Family Functioning Scales*

| | PSS | MSPSS-TOTAL | MSPSS-SO | MSPSS-FAMILY | MSPSS-FRIENDS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| FACES-COMMUNICATION | -0.27** | 0.54** | 0.62** | 0.43** | 0.27** |
| FACES-SATISFACTION | -0.33** | 0.50** | 0.55** | 0.45** | 0.21** |

| | DHEQ-Vigilance | DHEQ-Harassment | DHEQ-Parenting | DHEQ-Victimization | DHEQ-Isolation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| FACES-COMMUNICATION | -0.12 | -0.05 | -0.03 | -0.16* | -0.07 |
| FACES-SATISFACTION | -0.06 | 0.003 | -0.03 | -0.10 | -0.06 |

*Notes:* Showing Pearson correlation coefficients, *p<.05, ** p<0.01

Table 13

*Differences in FACES Scales Based on Respondent Characteristics*

| | FACES Communication Percentile M (SD) | p | FACES Satisfaction Percentile M (SD) | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Respondent Characteristic | | | | |
| Respondent Age | | 0.9 | | 0.4 |
| <40 years | 75.1 (18.7) | | 54.7 (27.0) | |
| ≥ 40 years | 67.6 (21.7) | | 50.6 (29.3) | |
| Current Gender Identity | | 0.2 | | 1.0 |
| Male | 69.3 (23.3) | | 53.6 (26.6) | |
| Female | 73.2 (19.2) | | 53.7 (26.6) | |
| Other Non-binary | 77.6 (18.4) | | 54.8 (31.1) | |
| Race/Ethnicity | | 0.9 | | 0.4 |
| White | 73.2 (20.1) | | 54.5 (27.7) | |
| Non-White | 72.6 (18.4) | | 49.6 (27.8) | |
| Highest level of education | | | | |
| Less than College Degree | 73.7 (20.3) | | 57.1 (28.3) | |
| College Degree or Higher | 72.8 (19.8) | | 52.8 (27.5) | |
| Household income | | 0.05 | | 0.4 |
| Less than $100,000 | 71.8 (19.9) | | 53.9 (27.5) | |
| $ 100,000 - $ 200,000 | 75.0 (19.3) | | 55.2 (27.6) | |
| ≥ $200,000 | 65.8 (21.6) | | 48.6 (28.6) | |
| Census Region of Residence | | 0.5 | | 0.6 |
| Northeast | 71.9 (20.3) | | 52.6 (28.3) | |
| Midwest | 78.7 (19.6) | | 59.3 (28.6) | |
| South | 74.1 (19.5) | | 57.1 (26.1) | |
| West | 72.6 (19.4) | | 51.8 (27.4) | |
| Family / Child Characteristics | | | | |
| Number of Children in Family | | 0.5 | | 0.5 |
| One | 73.9 (21.1) | | 55.0 (27.5) | |
| More than One | 72.0 (19.2) | | 52.6 (28.0) | |
| Child Race | | 0.007 | | 0.002 |
| White | 75.2 (20.1) | | 57.4 (27.5) | |
| Non-White | 67.6 (19.3) | | 45.7 (26.8) | |
| Child Age | | <.001 | | 0.001 |
| < 3 years | 66.6 (20.8) | | 46.5 (27.2) | |
| ≥ 3 years | 77.1 (18.6) | | 58.9 (27.1) | |
| Child Sex | | 0.9 | | 0.6 |
| Male | 72.7 (19.8) | | 52.9 (27.8) | |
| Female | 73.1 (20.6) | | 54.8 (27.8) | |
| How Child Entered Family | | 0.06 | | 0.7 |
| Adoption | 66.7 (23.6) | | 51.9 (29.8) | |
| IVF/IUI/Surrogacy | 73.8 (19.4) | | 54.0 (27.4) | |

Table 14

*Multivariable Regression Models for FACES Communication Scale*

| Model 1 | | | | Model 2 | | | Model 3 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Adjusted R-Square | 0.302 | | | 0.323 | | | 0.351 | | |
| Variable | Standardized Coefficient (β) | t | p | Standardized Coefficient (β) | t | p | Standardized Coefficient (β) | t | p |
| PSS | -0.129 | -2.2 | 0.03 | -0.147 | -2.5 | 0.01 | -0.133 | -2.3 | 0.02 |
| MSPSS-Overall | 0.517 | 8.7 | <.001 | .509 | 87 | <.001 | 0.489 | 8.4 | <.001 |
| DHEQ-Parenting | 0.125 | 2.0 | 0.05 | .122 | 1.9 | 0.06 | 0.108 | 1.7 | 0.1 |
| DHEQ-Isolation | 0.008 | 0.12 | 0.9 | .003 | .06 | 0.96 | 0.011 | 0.2 | 0.9 |
| DHEQ-Vigilance | -0.112 | -1.8 | 0.07 | -0.117 | -1.9 | 0.06 | -0.118 | -2.0 | 0.05 |
| DHEQ-Harassment | 0.071 | 1.1 | 0.3 | .06 | 0.97 | 0.3 | 0.056 | 0.9 | 0.4 |
| DHEQ-Victimization | -0.015 | -0.27 | 0.8 | -0.008 | -0.15 | 0.9 | -0.013 | -0.24 | 0.8 |
| Respondent Gender Identity | | | | 0.10 | 1.8 | 0.07 | 0.13 | 2.3 | 0.03 |
| Household Income | | | | -0.069 | -1.2 | 0.2 | -0.049 | -0.8 | 0.4 |
| Respondent Age >40 Years | | | | -0.13 | -2.23 | 0.03 | -0.084 | -1.4 | 0.2 |
| Family with >1 Child | | | | -0.014 | -0.25 | 0.8 | 0.022 | 0.4 | 0.7 |
| Child Is White | | | | | | | -0.09 | -1.5 | 0.2 |
| Child is 3 Years or Older | | | | | | | -0.151 | -2.57 | 0.01 |
| Child is Adopted | | | | | | | -0.06 | -1.04 | 0.3 |

Table 15

*Multivariable Regression Models for FACES Satisfaction Scale*

| Model 1 | | | | Model 2 | | | Model 3 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Adjusted R-Square | 0.294 | | | 0.294 | | | 0.326 | | |
| Variable | Standardized Coefficient (β) | t | p | Standardized Coefficient (β) | t | p | Standardized Coefficient (β) | t | p |
| PSS | -0.218 | -3.7 | <.001 | -0.31 | -3.9 | <.001 | -0.229 | -3.9 | <.001 |
| MSPSS-Overall | 0.463 | 7.7 | <.001 | 0.467 | 7.7 | <.001 | 0.439 | 7.4 | <.001 |
| DHEQ-Parenting | 0.098 | 1.5 | .13 | 0.098 | 1.5 | 0.2 | 0.107 | 1.6 | 0.1 |
| DHEQ-Isolation | 0.002 | .03 | 0.98 | 0.005 | .008 | 0.9 | -0.002 | -0.03 | 0.97 |
| DHEQ-Vigilance | -0.048 | -0.78 | 0.4 | -0.043 | -0.7 | 0.5 | -0.047 | -0.78 | 04 |
| DHEQ-Harassment | 0.074 | 1.2 | 0.2 | 0.061 | 1.0 | 0.3 | 0.058 | 0.9 | 0.4 |
| DHEQ-Victimization | -0.052 | -0.92 | 0.4 | -0.043 | -0.76 | 0.5 | -0.038 | -0.68 | 0.5 |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| Respondent Gender Identity | | | | 0.089 | 1.5 | 0.1 | 0.1 | 1.8 | 0.07 |
| Household Income | | | | -0.07 | -1.3 | 0.2 | -0.056 | -1.0 | 0.3 |
| Respondent Age >40 Years | | | | -0.013 | -0.23 | 0.8 | 0.02 | 0.35 | 0.7 |
| Family with >1 Child | | | | 0.00 | 0.004 | 0.99 | 0.058 | 0.096 | 0.3 |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| Child Is Non-White | | | | | | | -0.147 | -2.5 | 0.01 |
| Child is 3 Years or Older | | | | | | | -0.148 | -2.5 | 0.02 |
| Child is Adopted | | | | | | | 0.054 | 0.9 | 0.4 |

Table 16

*General Perceptions of Childcare/Preschool Choices and Settings*

| | N | Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I did a lot of research (online or through word-of-mouth) before choosing a childcare setting for my child(ren). | 187 | 4 (2%) | 14 (7%) | 11 (6%) | 63 (34%) | 95 (51%) |
| My family was warmly received as a same-sex parent family in the first childcare setting where our child(ren) received care. | 186 | 4 (2%) | 1 (0.05%) | 15 (8%) | 34 (18%) | 132(71%) |
| I consider one or more of my child(ren)'s caregivers/teachers to be homophobic. | 187 | 150 (80%) | 22 (12%) | 9 (5%) | 6 (3%) | 0 (0%) |
| I am a frequent volunteer or helper where my child(ren) receive(s) childcare. | 187 | 69 (37%) | 36 (19%) | 39 (21%) | 25 (13%) | 18 (10%) |

Table 17

*Importance Rating of Factors in Parental Choice of Childcare/Preschool*

| *How important was each of the following factors in your choice of your child's daycare or preschool?* | *Not at all important* | *Slightly important* | *Moderately important* | *Very important* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Cost / Tuition* | 14 (7%) | 43 (21%) | 77 (38%) | 67 (33%) |
| *Proximity to your home* | 4 (2%) | 37 (18%) | 65 (32%) | 95 (47%) |
| *Proximity to your work* | 44 (22%) | 47 (23%) | 57 (28%) | 53 (26%) |
| *Opening hours* | 27 (13%) | 43 (21%) | 40 (20%) | 91 (45%) |
| *Availability of extended hours (e.g. early morning, later afternoon)* | 53 (26%) | 36 (18%) | 39 (19%) | 73 (46%) |
| *Ability for your child to continue in the same school beyond preschool* | 143 (71%) | 31 (15%) | 17 (8%) | 10 (5%) |
| *Cleanliness of the building or facility* | 0 (6%) | 12 (6%) | 68 (34%) | 121 (60%) |
| *Preschool being part of the local public school system* | 157 (78%) | 22 (11%) | 15 (7%) | 6 (3%) |
| *Curriculum* | 12 (6%) | 46 (21%) | 83 (43%) | 60 (30%) |
| *Bilingual or multilingual environment* | 87 (43%) | 59 (29%) | 34 (17%) | 21 (10%) |
| *Knowledge of LGBTQ+ issues* | 39 (19%) | 69 (34%) | 57 (28%) | 36 (18%) |
| *Warmth of caregivers/teachers* | 1 (0.5%) | 14 (7%) | 34 (17%) | 152 (76%) |
| *Education level or credentials of caregivers/teachers* | 9 (4%) | 53 (26%) | 82 (41%) | 57 (28%) |
| *Ratio of children to caregivers/teachers* | 3 (1%) | 26 (13%) | 71 (35%) | 101 (50%) |
| *Affiliation with a church or religious group* | 154 (77%) | 9 (4%) | 14 (7%) | 24 (12%) |
| *Cooperative structure of preschool* | 98 (49%) | 44 (22%) | 35 (17%) | 22 (11%) |
| *Referral from friend or family member* | 49 (24%) | 47 (23%) | 58 (29%) | 46 (23%) |
| *External accreditation of daycare/preschool (e.g., NAEYC, APPLE, etc.)* | 33 (16%) | 45 (22%) | 64 (32%) | 59 (29%) |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Presence of other same-sex parent families* | 70 (35%) | 79 (39%) | 36 (18%) | 16 (8%) |
| *Use of a particular educational philosophy (e.g., Montessori, Reggio Emilia, Waldorf)* | 84 (42%) | 60 (30%) | 45 (22%) | 12 (6%) |

Table 18

*Family-School Relationship Scales*

| Family Engagement | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | Almost never | Once or twice per year | Every few months | Monthly | Weekly or more |
| How often do you meet in person with teachers at your child's school? | 201 | 9 (4%) | 41 (20%) | 51 (25%) | 18 (9%) | 82 (41%) |
| In the past year, how often have you visited your child's school? | 200 | 47 (24%) | 47 (24%) | 54 (27%) | 32 (16%) | 20 (10%) |
| In the past year, how often have you discussed your child's school with other parents from the school? | 201 | 36 (18%) | 22 (11%) | 46 (23%) | 56 (28%) | 41 (20%) |
| In the past year, how often have you helped out at your child's school? | 200 | 103 (52%) | 42 (21%) | 24 (12%) | 26 (13%) | 5 (3%) |
| | | Not at all involved | Slightly involved | Somewhat involved | Quite involved | Extremely involved |
| How involved have you been with a parent group(s) at your child's school? | 167 | 52 (31%) | 40 (24%) | 30 (18%) | 27 (16%) | 18 (11%) |
| How involved have you been in fundraising efforts at your child's school? | 160 | 85 (53%) | 35 (22%) | 20 (13%) | 16 (10%) | 4 (3%) |

| School Fit | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | Not well at all | Slightly well | Somewhat well | Quite well | Extremely well |
| How well do you feel your child's school is preparing him/her for his/her next academic year? | 201 | 1 (0.5%) | 2 (1%) | 24 (12%) | 91 (45%) | 83 (41%) |
| At your child's school, how well does the overall approach to discipline work for your child? | 199 | 1 (1%) | 6 (3%) | 31 (16%) | 101 (51%) | 60 (30%) |
| How well do the activities offered at your child's school match his/her interests? | 201 | 0 (0%) | 4 (2%) | 21 (10%) | 99 (49%) | 77 (38%) |
| | | No belonging at all | A little bit of belonging | Some belonging | Quite a bit of belonging | Tremendous belonging |
| How much of a sense of belonging does your | 201 | 0 (0%) | 6 (3%) | 22 (11%) | 77 (38%) | 96 (48%) |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| child feel at his/her school? | | | | | | | |
| | | Not good at all | Slightly good | Somewhat good | Quite good | Extremely good | |
| Given your child's cultural background, how good a fit is his/her school? | 199 | 1 (0.5%) | 9 (5%) | 18 (9%) | 92 (46%) | 79 (40%) | |
| | | Not comfortable at all | Slightly comfortable | Somewhat comfortable | Quite comfortable | Extremely comfortable | Don't Know |
| How comfortable is your child in asking for help from school adults? | 201 | 0 (0%) | 5 (2%) | 16 (8%) | 55 (27%) | 94 (47%) | 31 (15%) |
| How well do the teaching styles of your child's teachers match your child's learning style? | | Not well at all | Slightly well | Somewhat well | Quite well | Extremely well | Don't Know |
| | 201 | 0 (0%) | 7 (3%) | 15 (7%) | 92 (46%) | 59 (29%) | 28 (14%) |
| Family Support | | | | | | | |
| | | Almost never | Once in a while | Sometimes | Frequently | Almost all the time | |
| How often do you have conversations with your child about what his/her class is learning at school? | 196 | 11 (6%) | 3 (2%) | 13 (7%) | 78 (40%) | 91 (46%) | |
| How often do you help your child engage in activities which are educational outside the home? | 200 | 3 (2%) | 5 (3%) | 41 (21%) | 101 (51%) | 50 (25%) | |
| How often do you help your child understand the content s/he is learning in school? | 197 | 20 (10%) | 21 (11%) | 69 (35%) | 59 (30%) | 28 (14%) | |
| How often do you and your child talk when s/he is having a problem with others? | 190 | 20 (11%) | 10 (5%) | 32 (17%) | 79 (42%) | 49 (26%) | |
| | | Almost no effort | A little bit of effort | Some effort | Quite a bit of effort | A tremendous amount of effort | |
| How much effort do you put into helping your child learn to do things for himself/herself? | 201 | 0 (0%) | 3 (1%) | 37 (18%) | 117 (58%) | 44 (22%) | |
| | | Not at all | A little bit | Somewhat | Quite a bit | A tremendous amount | |
| To what extent do you know how your child is doing socially at school? | 200 | 1 (0.5%) | 11 (6%) | 43 (22% | 102 (51%) | 43 (22%) | |

| | | Not well at all | Slightly well | Somewhat well | Quite well | Extremely well |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| How well do you know your child's close friends? | 197 | 15 (8%) | 43 (22%) | 66 (34%) | 50 (25%) | 23 (12%) |

Family Efficacy

| | | Not confident at all | Slightly confident | Somewhat confident | Quite confident | Extremely confident |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| How confident are you in your ability to connect with other parents? | 201 | 14 (7%) | 32 (16%) | 64 (32%) | 59 (29%) | 32 (16%) |
| How confident are you in your ability to support your child's learning at home? | 201 | 0 (0%) | 4 (2%) | 16 (8%) | 67 (33%) | 114 (57%) |
| How confident are you that you can help your child develop good friendships? | 201 | 4 (2%) | 14 (7%) | 43 (21%) | 94 (47%) | 46 (23%) |
| How confident are you in your ability to make sure your child's school meets your child's learning needs? | 200 | 2 (1%) | 8 (4%) | 46 (23%) | 84 (42%) | 60 (30%) |
| How confident are you in your ability to make choices about your child's schooling? | 201 | 2 (1%) | 12 (6%) | 36 (18%) | 74 (37%) | 77 (38%) |
| How confident are you in your ability to help your child deal with his/her emotions appropriately? | 200 | 2 (1%) | 9 (5%) | 51 (26%) | 86 (43%) | 52 (26%) |

Table 19

*Bivariate Analysis of Family-School Engagement Scales*

| | Family Support | p | Family Efficacy | p | Family Engagement | p | School Fit | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Respondent Characteristics | | | | | | | | |
| Respondent Age | | 0.05 | | 0.4 | | 0.06 | | 0.2 |
| <40 years | 3.7 (0.6) | | 3.9 (0.6) | | 2.6 (0.9) | | 4.2 (0.6) | |
| ≥ 40 years | 3.9 (0.6) | | 4.0 (0.6) | | 2.9 (0.9) | | 4.3 (0.6) | |
| Current Gender Identity | | 0.99 | | 0.5 | | 0.2 | | 0.07 |
| Male | 3.7 (0.6) | | 3.9 (0.7) | 0.5 | 2.8 (0.9) | | 4.3 (0.5) | |
| Female | 3.7 (0.7) | | 3.9 (0.6) | | 2.6 (0.9) | | 4.2 (0.6) | |
| Other Non-binary | 3.7 (0.7) | | 3.8 (0.6) | | 2.8 (0.8) | | 4.0 (0.6) | |
| Race/Ethnicity | | 0.08 | | 0.9 | | 0.1 | | 0.3 |
| White | 3.7 (0.7) | | 3.9 (0.6) | | 2.6 (0.9) | | 4.2 (0.6) | |
| Non-White | 4.0 (0.4) | | 3.9 (0.5) | | 3.0 (1.0) | | 4.3 (0.4) | |
| Highest level of education | | 1.0 | | 0.4 | | 0.5 | | 0.6 |
| Less than College Degree | 3.7 (0.7) | | 3.8 (0.8) | | 2.8 (1.0) | | 4.2 (0.6) | |
| College Degree or Higher | 3.7 (0.6) | | 3.9 (0.6) | | 2.6 (0.9) | | 4.2 (0.6) | |
| Census Region of Residence | | 0.6 | | 0.02 | | 0.3 | | 0.8 |
| Northeast | 3.7 (0.7) | | 3.9 (0.6) | | 2.7 (0.8) | | 4.2 (0.5) | |
| Midwest | 3.7 (0.5) | | 4.0 (0.7) | | 2.3 (0.9) | | 4.1 (0.6) | |
| South | 3.8 (0.7) | | 4.1 (0.6) | | 2.8 (1.0) | | 4.2 (0.7) | |
| West | 3.7 (0.5) | | 3.9 (0.6) | | 2.6 (0.9) | | 4.2 (0.6) | |
| Family / Child Characteristics | | | | | | | | |
| Number of Children in Family | | 0.9 | | 0.8 | | 0.005 | | 0.6 |
| One | 3.7 (0.7) | | 3.9 (0.6) | | 2.5 (0.8) | | 4.2 (0.6) | |
| More than One | 3.7 (0.6) | | 3.9 (0.6) | | 2.8 (0.9) | | 4.2 (0.6) | |
| Child Race | | 0.5 | | 0.02 | | 0.2 | | 0.5 |
| White | 3.7 (0.6) | | 4.0 (0.6) | | 2.6 (0.8) | | 4.2 (0.6) | |
| Non-White | 3.7 (0.6) | | 3.8 (0.7) | | 2.8 (1.0) | | 4.2 (0.6) | |
| Child Age | | 0.001 | | 0.8 | | 0.001 | | 0.1 |
| < 3 years | 3.6 (0.7) | | 3.9 (0.6) | | 2.9 (0.8) | | 4.2 (0.6) | |
| ≥ 3 years | 3.9 (0.5) | | 3.9 (0.6) | | 2.6 (0.9) | | 4.3 (0.5) | |
| Child Sex | | 0.8 | | 0.4 | | 0.3 | | 0.5 |
| Male | 3.7 (0.6) | | 3.9 (0.6) | | 2.7 (0.9) | | 4.2 (0.6) | |
| Female | 3.7 (0.6) | | 4.0 (0.6) | | 2.6 (0.9) | | 4.3 (0.5) | |
| How Child Entered Family | | 0.8 | | 0.8 | | 1.0 | | 0.2 |
| Adoption | 3.7 (0.6) | | 3.9 (0.7) | | 2.7 (1.0) | | 4.3 (0.5) | |
| IVF/IUI/Surrogacy | 3.7 (0.6) | | 3.9 (0.6) | | 2.7 (0.9) | | 4.2 (0.6) | |

Table 20

*Correlations Between Family-School Engagement Scales and Stress/Social Support*

| | School Fit | Family Engagement | Family Support | Family Efficacy |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| PSS | -0.32** | -0.03 | -0.15* | -0.31** |
| MSPSS-TOTAL | 0.15* | -0.10 | 0.03 | 0.28** |
| MSPSS-SO | 0.06 | -0.17* | -0.07 | 0.17* |
| MSPSS-FAMILY | 0.13 | -0.05 | -0.00 | 0.24** |
| MSPSS-FRIENDS | 0.15* | -0.04 | 0.12 | 0.24** |
| DHEQ-Vigilance (O) | -0.05 | -0.13 | -0.08 | -0.08 |
| DHEQ-Harassment (O) | -0.07 | -0.001 | 0.02 | -0.19** |
| DHEQ-Parenting (O) | -0.11 | -0.01 | 0.0 | -0.12 |
| DHEQ-Victimization (O) | 0.03 | 0.11 | 0.15* | -0.11 |
| DHEQ-Isolation (O) | -0.05 | -0.10 | -0.12 | -0.19** |

*Notes:* Showing Pearson correlation coefficients, *p<.05, ** p<0.01

Table 21

*Correlations Between Family-School Engagement Scales and Family Functioning*

| | School Fit | Family Engagement | Family Support | Family Efficacy |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| FACES-Communication | 0.1 | -0.16* | -0.01 | 0.24** |
| FACES-Satisfaction | 0.19* | -0.06 | 0.05 | 0.32** |

*Notes:* Showing Pearson correlation coefficients, *p<.05, ** p<0.01

Table 22

*Multivariable Regression Models for Parent-School Engagement Scales*

| | School Fit | | | Family Engage-ment | | | Family Support | | | Family Efficacy | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Adjusted R-Square | .117 | | | .074 | | | .058 | | | .160 | | |
| Variable | Standardized Coefficient (β) | t | p | Standardized Coefficient (β) | t | p | Standardized Coefficient (β) | t | p | Standardized Coefficient (β) | t | p |
| PSS | -0.332 | -4.3 | <.001 | -0.076 | -1.0 | 0.3 | -0.158 | -2.0 | 0.05 | -0.305 | -4.0 | <0.001 |
| MSPSS-Overall | 0.076 | 0.9 | 0.4 | -0.021 | -0.2 | 0.8 | 0.047 | 0.5 | 0.6 | 0.123 | 1.5 | 0.1 |
| DHEQ-Parenting | -0.102 | -1.3 | 0.2 | 0.06 | 0.7 | 0.5 | 0.066 | 0.8 | 0.4 | 0.043 | 0.5 | 0.6 |
| DHEQ-Isolation | 0.037 | 0.5 | 0.7 | -0.121 | -1.4 | 0.2 | -0.136 | -1.1 | 0.2 | -0.128 | -1.6 | 0.1 |
| DHEQ-Vigilance | 0.027 | 0.3 | 0.7 | -0.134 | -1.7 | 0.1 | -0.085 | -1.1 | 0.3 | 0.009 | 0.1 | 0.9 |
| DHEQ-Harassment | -0.072 | -0.9 | 0.4 | 0.026 | 0.3 | 0.8 | 0.032 | 0.4 | 0.7 | -0.130 | -1.7 | 0.1 |
| DHEQ-Victimization | 0.015 | 0.2 | 0.8 | 0.134 | 1.9 | 0.07 | 0.081 | 1.1 | 0.3 | 0.018 | 0.3 | 0.8 |
| FACES-Communication | -0.020 | -0.2 | 0.9 | -0.119 | -1.0 | 0.3 | 0.037 | 0.3 | 0.7 | 0.001 | 0.01 | 0.99 |
| FACES-Satisfaction | 0.102 | 0.9 | 0.3 | 0.048 | 0.4 | 0.7 | -0.038 | -0.3 | 0.7 | 0.119 | 1.1 | 0.3 |
| Respondent Gender Identity | -0.045 | -0.6 | 0.5 | 0.136 | 1.8 | 0.07 | 0.021 | 0.3 | 0.8 | -0.015 | -0.2 | 0.8 |
| Household Income | -0.079 | -1.1 | 0.3 | -0.086 | -1.2 | 0.2 | -0.099 | -1.3 | 0.2 | -0.086 | -1.2 | 0.2 |
| Respondent Age >40 Years | 0.045 | 0.6 | 0.5 | 0.069 | 0.9 | 0.4 | 0.152 | 2.0 | 0.05 | 0.111 | 1.5 | 0.1 |
| Family with >1 Child | 0.073 | 1.0 | 0.3 | 0.135 | 1.8 | 0.08 | -0.078 | -1.0 | 0.3 | 0.020 | 0.3 | 0.8 |
| Child Is Non-White | -0.094 | -1.3 | 0.2 | 0.022 | 0.3 | 0.8 | -0.083 | -1.0 | 0.3 | -0.128 | -1.8 | 0.08 |
| Child is 3 Years or Older | 0.140 | 1.9 | 0.07 | 0.172 | 2.2 | 0.03 | 0.263 | 3.4 | 0.001 | 0.055 | 0.7 | 0.5 |
| Child is Adopted | 0.145 | 1.9 | 0.07 | -0.046 | -0.6 | 0.6 | 0.00 | 0.0 | 1.0 | 0.121 | 1.6 | 0.1 |

**Appendix 1: Survey Instrument**

# Same-Sex Parents' Experiences with Early Childcare and Education Survey

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Start of Block: Consent statement and agree to participate

Q108 Survey Informed Consent

The purpose of this research study is to learn about the experiences and attitudes of parents in same-sex couples raising children under the age of 6 years. For that reason, we are surveying parents across the country via a confidential 20-30 minute survey.

If you are willing to participate, our survey will ask about your background (e.g. age, race, education), your family, and your experiences with schools or other childcare settings. The only risk associated with this project may be potential discomfort with answering some survey questions. There are no direct benefits.

The answers to your survey will remain confidential. Your participation is voluntary. If you feel uncomfortable answering any of the questions, you can skip questions, you can stop taking the survey at any time, and you can stop being in this study at any time. Any answers entered before you decide to stop being in the study will be collected and continue to be analyzed. There is no compensation provided for completing the survey.

Researchers will view your survey data. Also, your nonidentifiable data may be shared with other researchers in the future. If you would be willing to participate in an interview, please provide contact information on the final page of the survey. Should you provide contact information, we may follow up with you after this survey to determine your interest in scheduling an interview time.

The primary researcher for this study is Timothy Matthews, MA, EdM, from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. If you have any questions, he can be reached at timothy_matthews@gse.harvard.edu.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Harvard University Area

Institutional Review Board ("IRB"). You may talk to them at (617) 496-2847 or cuhs@harvard.edu if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research subject.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.
- Please indicate whether you are willing to participate in this research study.

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

*Skip To: End of Survey If Survey Informed Consent The purpose of this research study is to learn about the experiences a... = No*

**End of Block: Consent statement and agree to participate**

---

**Start of Block: Number of Children in Family**

Q84 How many children are in your family?

○ 1 (1)

○ 2 (2)

○ 3 (3)

○ 4 or more (4)

Q107 How many children in your family are under the age of 6 years?

- ○ 0 (1)
- ○ 1 (2)
- ○ 2 (3)
- ○ 3 (4)
- ○ 4 or more (5)

**End of Block: Number of Children in Family**

---

**Start of Block: PSS**

Q34 The following statements describe feelings and perceptions about the experience of being a parent. Think of each of the items in terms of how your relationship with your

child or children typically is. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following items.

| | Strongly disagree (1) | Disagree (2) | Undecided (3) | Agree (4) | Strongly agree (5) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I am happy in my role as a parent. (1) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| There is little or nothing I wouldn't do for my child(ren) if it was necessary. (2) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Caring for my child(ren) sometimes takes more time and energy than I have to give. (3) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I sometimes worry whether I am doing enough for my child(ren). (4) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I feel close to my child(ren). (5) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I enjoy spending time with my child(ren). (6) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| My child(ren) is an important source of affection for me. (7) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Having child(ren) gives me a more certain and optimistic view for the future. (8) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The major source of stress in my life is my child(ren). (9) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Having child(ren) leaves little time and flexibility in my life. (10) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Having child(ren) has been a financial burden. (11) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| It is difficult to balance different responsibilities because of my child(ren). (12) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| The behavior of my child(ren) is often embarrassing or stressful to me. (13) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| If I had it to do over again, I might decide not to have child(ren). (14) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I feel overwhelmed by the responsibility of being a parent. (15) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Having child(ren) has meant having too few choices and too little control over my life. (16) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I am satisfied as a parent. (17) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I find my child(ren) enjoyable. (18) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

**End of Block: PSS**

---

**Start of Block: MSPSS**

Q32 We are interested in how you feel about the following statements. Read each statement carefully. Indicate how you feel about each statement.

| | Very Strongly Disagree (1) | Strongly Disagree (2) | Mildly Disagree (3) | Neutral (4) | Mildly Agree (5) | Strongly Agree (6) | Very Strongly Agree (7) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| There is a special person who is around when I am in need. (1) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| There is a special person with whom I can share my joys and sorrows. (2) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| My family really tries to help me. (3) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I get the emotional help and support I need from my family. (4) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I have a special person who is a real source of comfort to me. (5) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| My friends really try to help me. (6) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I can count on my friends when things go wrong. (7) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I can talk about my problems with my family. (8) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I have friends with whom I can share my joys and sorrows. (9) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| There is a special person in my life who cares about my feelings. (10) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| My family is willing to help me make decisions. (11) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I can talk about my problems with my friends. (12) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

End of Block: MSPSS

Start of Block: FACES

Q35 Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements:

| | Strongly disagree (1) | Generally disagree (2) | Undecided (3) | Generally agree (4) | Strongly agree (5) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Family members are involved in each others lives. (1) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Our family tries new ways of dealing with problems. (2) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| We get along better with people outside of our family than inside. (3) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| We spend too much time together. (4) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| There are strict consequences for breaking the rules in our family. (5) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| We never seem to get organized in our family. (6) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Family members feel very close to each other. (7) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Parents equally share leadership in our family. (8) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Family members seem to avoid contact with each other when at home. (9) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Family members feel pressured to spend most free time together. (10) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| There are clear consequences when a family member does something wrong. (11) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| It is hard to know who the leader is in our family. (12) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Family members are supportive of each other during difficult times (13) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Discipline is fair in our family. (14) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Family members know very little about the friends of other family members. (15) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Family members are too dependent on each other. (16) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Our family has a rule for almost every possible situation. (17) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Things do not get done in our family. (18) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Family members consult other family members on important decisions. (19) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| My family is able to adjust to change when necessary. (20) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Family members are on their own when there is a problem to be solved. (21) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Family members have little need for friends outside the family. (22) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Our family is highly organized. (23) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| It is unclear who is responsible for things (chores, activities) in our family. (24) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Family members like to spend some of their free time with each other. (25) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| We shift household responsibilities from person to person. (26) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Our family seldom does things together. (27) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| We feel too connected to each other. (28) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Our family becomes frustrated when there is a change in our plans or routines. (29) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| There is no leadership in our family. (30) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Although family members have individual interests, they still participate in family activities. (31) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| We have clear rules and roles in our family. (32) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Family members seldom depend on each other. (33) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| We resent family members doing things outside the family. (34) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| It is important to follow the rules in our family. (35) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Our family has a hard time keeping track of who does various household tasks. (36) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Our family has a good balance of separateness and closeness. (37) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| When problems arise, we compromise. (38) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Family members mainly operate independently. (39) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Family members feel guilty if they want to spend time away from the family. (40) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Once a decision is made, it is very difficult to modify that decision. (41) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Our family feels hectic and disorganized. (42) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Family members are satisfied with how they communicate with each other. (43) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Family members are very good listeners. (44) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Family members express affection to each other. (45) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Family members are able to ask each other for what they want. (46) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Family members can calmly discuss problems with each other. (47) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Family members discuss their ideas and beliefs with each other. (48) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| When family members ask questions of each other, they get honest answers. (49) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Family members try to understand each other's feelings. (50) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| When angry, family members seldom say negative things about each other. (51) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Family members express their true feelings to each other. (52) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Q36 How satisfied are you with:

| | Very dissatisfied (1) | Somewhat disatisfied (2) | Generally satisfied (3) | Very satisfied (4) | Extremely satisfied (5) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The degree of closeness between family members. (1) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Your family's ability to cope with stress. (2) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Your family's ability to be flexible. (3) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Your family's ability to share positive experiences. (4) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| The quality of communication between family members. (5) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Your family's ability to resolve conflicts. (6) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| The amount of time you spend together as a family. (7) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| The way problems are discussed. (8) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| The fairness of criticism in your family. (9) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Family members' concern for each other. (10) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Q29 The following is a list of experiences that LGBT people sometimes have. Please read each one carefully, and then respond to the following question: How much has this problem distressed or bothered you during the past 12 months?

| | Did not happen/not applicable to me (1) | It happened, and it bothered me NOT AT ALL (2) | It happened, and it bothered me A LITTLE BIT (3) | It happened, and it bothered me MODERATELY (4) | It happened, and it bothered me QUITE A BIT (5) | It happened, and it bothered me EXTREMELY (6) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Difficulty finding a partner because you are LGBT (1) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Difficulty finding LGBT friends (2) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Having very few people you can talk to about being LGBT (3) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Watching what you say and do around heterosexual people (4) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Being called names such as "fag" or "dyke" (5) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Your children being rejected by other children because you are LGBT (6) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Your children being verbally harassed because you are LGBT (7) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Feeling like you don't fit in with other LGBT people (8) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Pretending that you have an opposite-sex partner (9) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Pretending that you are heterosexual (10) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Hiding your relationship from other people (11) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| People staring at you when you are out in public because you are LGBT (12) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Being verbally harassed by strangers because you are LGBT (13) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Being verbally harassed by people you know because you are LGBT (14) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Being treated unfairly in stores or restaurants because you are LGBT (15) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| People laughing at you or making jokes at your expense because you are LGBT (16) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Avoiding talking about your current or past relationships when you are at work (17) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Hiding part of your life from other people (18) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Being treated unfairly by teachers or administrators at your children's school because you are LGBT (19) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| People assuming you are heterosexual because you have children (20) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Being treated unfairly by parents of other children because you are LGBT (21) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Difficulty finding other LGBT families for you and your children to socialize with (22) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Being punched, hit, kicked, or beaten because you are LGBT (23) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Being assaulted with a weapon because you are LGBT (24) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Being raped or sexually assaulted because you are LGBT (25) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Having objects thrown at you because you are LGBT (26) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

**End of Block: DHEQ**

**Start of Block: Respondent Demographics**

Q74 What is your current age in years?

▼ 18 (1490) ... 65 and older (1537)

Q75 What sex were you assigned at birth, on your original birth certificate?

- ○ Male (1)
- ○ Female (2)

Q76 What is your current gender identity?

- ○ Male (1)
- ○ Female (2)
- ○ Trans male/Trans man (3)
- ○ Trans female /Trans woman (4)
- ○ Genderqueer / Gender non-conforming (5)
- ○ Different identity (please specify): (6)

_____

Q77 Do you think of yourself as (please check all that apply):

- ☐ Straight (1)
- ☐ Gay or lesbian (2)
- ☐ Bisexual (3)
- ☐ Transgender or transsexual, male to female (4)
- ☐ Transgender or transsexual, female to male (5)
- ☐ Gender non-conforming (6)

Q78 Are you Hispanic, Latinx, or of Spanish origin?

- ○ No, not of Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish origin (1)
- ○ Yes, Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano (2)
- ○ Yes, Puerto Rican (3)
- ○ Yes, Cuban (4)
- ○ Yes, another Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish origin (5)
- ○ Yes, two or more of the groups above (6)
- ○ Unknown, prefer not to say (7)

Q79 Which category best describes your race? (Choose all that apply)

- ☐ White (1)
- ☐ Black or African American (2)
- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native (3)
- ☐ Asian (4)
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (5)
- ☐ Other (please specify): (6) _____

Q80 What was the primary language spoken in your childhood home?

- ○ English (1)
- ○ Spanish (2)
- ○ Other (please specify): (3) _____

Q81 What is the primary language you speak with your child(ren) at home currently?

- ○ English (1)
- ○ Spanish (2)
- ○ Other (please specify): (3) _____

Q82 Select the highest level of education you have completed:

- ○ Less than high school (1)
- ○ High school graduate (2)
- ○ Some college (3)
- ○ 2 year degree (4)
- ○ 4 year degree (5)
- ○ Master's or Professional degree (6)
- ○ Doctorate (7)

Q83 Which of the following best describes your family's approximate yearly household income?

- ○ Less than $35,000 (1)
- ○ $35,000 - $49,999 (2)
- ○ $50,000 - $74,999 (3)
- ○ $75,000 - $99,999 (4)
- ○ $100,000 - $149,999 (5)
- ○ $150,000 - $199,999 (6)
- ○ $200,000 - $299,999 (7)
- ○ $300,000 - $399,999 (8)
- ○ $400,000 - $499,999 (9)
- ○ $500,000 or more (10)

Q147 In which state do you currently reside?

▼ Alabama (1) ... I do not reside in the United States (53)

Q84 What is your current zipcode?

_____

**End of Block: Respondent Demographics**

**Start of Block: Partner demographics**

Q103 What is your spouse/partner's current age in years?

▼ 18 (1) ... 65 and older (48)

Q104 What sex was your spouse/partner assigned at birth, on their original birth certificate?

- ○ Male (1)
- ○ Female (2)

Q105 What is your spouse/partner's current gender identity?

- ○ Male (1)
- ○ Female (2)
- ○ Trans male/Trans man (3)
- ○ Trans female /Trans woman (4)
- ○ Genderqueer / Gender non-conforming (5)
- ○ Different identity (please specify): (6)

_____

Q106 Does your spouse/partner think of themselves as (please check all that apply):

- ☐ Straight (1)
- ☐ Gay or lesbian (2)
- ☐ Bisexual (3)
- ☐ Transgender or transsexual, male to female (4)
- ☐ Transgender or transsexual, female to male (5)
- ☐ Gender non-conforming (6)

Q107 Is your spouse/partner Hispanic, Latinx, or of Spanish origin?

- ○ No, not of Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish origin (1)
- ○ Yes, Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano (2)
- ○ Yes, Puerto Rican (3)
- ○ Yes, Cuban (4)
- ○ Yes, another Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish origin (5)
- ○ Yes, two or more of the groups above (6)
- ○ Unknown, prefer not to say (7)

Q108 Which category best describes your spouse/partner's race? (Choose all that apply)

- ☐ White (1)
- ☐ Black or African American (2)
- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native (3)
- ☐ Asian (4)
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (5)
- ☐ Other (6) _____
- ☐ Unknown / Prefer not to answer (7)

Q109 What was the primary language spoken in your spouse/partner's childhood home?

- ○ English (1)
- ○ Spanish (2)
- ○ Other (please specify): (3) _____

Q110 What is the primary language your spouse/partner speaks with your child(ren) at home currently?

- ○ English (1)
- ○ Spanish (2)
- ○ Other (please specify): (3) _____

Q111 Select the highest level of education your spouse/partner has completed:

- ○ Less than high school (1)
- ○ High school graduate (2)
- ○ Some college (3)
- ○ 2 year degree (4)
- ○ 4 year degree (5)
- ○ Master's or Professional degree (6)
- ○ Doctorate (7)

**End of Block: Partner demographics**

**Start of Block: Child 1 Demographics**

Q62 What is the assigned sex for your first child?

- ○ Male (1)
- ○ Female (2)

Q151 What is your first child's month and year of birth?

| | Month | Year |
|---|---|---|
| Please select: (18) | ▼ January (1 ... December (12) | ▼ 2003 or earlier (1 ... 2019 (17) |

Q63 Was your first child born:

- ○ Full term WITHOUT a stay in a special care nursery or neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) (1)
- ○ Full term WITH a stay in a special care nursery or neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) (5)
- ○ Pre term WITHOUT a stay in a special care nursery or neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) (2)
- ○ Pre term WITH a stay in a special care nursery or neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) (3)
- ○ Don't know (4)

Q64 How did your first child enter your family?

- ○ Adoption (1)
- ○ Gestational surrogacy / assisted reproductive technology / IVF (2)
- ○ Intra-uterine insemination (IUI) or intra-cervical insemination (ICI) (3)
- ○ Other (please specify) (4)

_____

*Display This Question:*

*If How did your first child enter your family? = Gestational surrogacy / assisted reproductive technology / IVF*

*Or How did your first child enter your family? = Intra-uterine insemination (IUI) or intra-cervical insemination (ICI)*

Q65 Was your sperm or egg donor:

- ○ Anonymous (1)
- ○ Known, but with NO option for future contact (2)
- ○ Known, and WITH an option for future contact through the donor-sibling registry (3)
- ○ Known, and WITH the possibility of future direct contact (7)
- ○ Known, and WITH direct contact established during the IVF process (4)
- ○ Known, a friend or family member (5)
- ○ Other (please specify) (6)

_____

*Display This Question:*

*If How did your first child enter your family? = Adoption*

Q66 Was your adoption:

- ○ Open, but with NO option for future contact (1)
- ○ Open, and WITH an option for future contact (2)
- ○ Closed (3)

Q67 Which category best describes your first child's race? (Choose all that apply)

- ☐ White (1)
- ☐ Black or African American (2)
- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native (3)
- ☐ Asian (4)
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (5)
- ☐ Other (6) _____
- ☐ Unknown / Prefer not to answer (7)

Q68 Is s/he Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish origin?

- ○ No, not of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin (1)
- ○ Yes, Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano (2)
- ○ Yes, Puerto Rican (3)
- ○ Yes, Cuban (4)
- ○ Yes, another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin (5)
- ○ Yes, two or more of the groups above (6)
- ○ Unknown / Prefer not to say (7)

Q220 Is your first child under the age of 6 and s/he has not yet entered kindergarten?

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

*Skip To: End of Block If Is your first child under the age of 6 and s/he has not yet entered kindergarten? = No*

Q69 Does your first child receive childcare **outside of your home** for more than 10 hours/week?

- ○ Yes, they do currently (1)
- ○ Not now, but they did in the past (2)
- ○ No (3)

*Skip To: End of Block If Does your child receive childcare outside of your home formore than 10 hours/week? = No*

*Skip To: Q71 If Does your child receive childcare outside of your home formore than 10 hours/week? = Not now, but they did in the past*

*Display This Question:*

*If Does your child receive childcare outside of your home formore than 10 hours/week? = Yes, they do currently*

Q70 Which of the following best describes the type of setting(s) in which your first child is CURRENTLY enrolled? (Choose all that apply)

- ☐ Nanny, only for your family (1)
- ☐ Nanny, shared with other families (2)
- ☐ Home-based daycare with less than 5 children (3)
- ☐ Cooperative daycare (4)
- ☐ Center-based daycare (5)
- ☐ Private preschool (6)
- ☐ Public preschool (7)
- ☐ Other (please specify) (8) _____
- ☐ Prefer not to answer (9)

Q71 Which of the following represent the type of setting(s) in which your first child was enrolled IN THE PAST? (Choose all that apply)

- ☐ Nanny - for your family (1)
- ☐ Nanny - shared with other families (2)
- ☐ Home-based daycare with less than 5 children (3)
- ☐ Cooperative daycare (4)
- ☐ Center-based daycare (5)
- ☐ Private preschool (6)
- ☐ Public preschool (7)
- ☐ Other (please specify): (8) _____
- ☐ Prefer not to answer (9)

Q72 At what age did your first child first enter a childcare setting outside the home?

- ○ < 6 months (1)
- ○ 6 months - (2)
- ○ 12 months - (3)
- ○ 18 months - < 2 years (4)
- ○ 2 years - (5)
- ○ 3 years - (6)
- ○ 4 years - (7)
- ○ > 5 years (8)

Q73 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the childcare arrangement for your first child?

| | Strongly disagree (1) | Somewhat disagree (2) | Neither agree nor disagree (3) | Somewhat agree (4) | Strongly agree (5) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I did a lot of research (online or through word-of-mouth) before choosing a childcare setting for my child(ren). (1) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| My family was warmly received as a same-sex parent family in the first childcare setting where our child(ren) received care. (2) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I consider one or more of my child(ren)'s caregivers/teachers to be homophobic. (3) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I am a frequent volunteer or helper where my child(ren) receive(s) childcare. (4) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

**End of Block: Child 1 Demographics**

**Start of Block: School Questions - Child 1**

Q168 Is your first child under the age of 6 and attending a daycare or preschool outside the home?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

*Skip To: End of Block If Is your first child under the age of 6 and attending a daycare or preschool outside the home? = No*

Q202 How important was each of the following factors in your choice of your first child's daycare or preschool?

| | Not at all important (33) | Slightly important (31) | Moderately important (32) | Very important (30) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cost / Tuition (1) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Proximity to your home (2) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Proximity to your work (3) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Opening hours (4) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Availability of extended hours (e.g. early morning, later afternoon) (5) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Ability for your child to continue in the same school beyond preschool (6) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Cleanliness of the building or facility (8) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Preschool being part of the local public school system (10) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Curriculum (11) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Bilingual or multilingual environment (13) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Knowledge of LGBTQ+ issues (14) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Warmth of caregivers/teachers (15) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Education level or credentials of caregivers/teachers (16) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Ratio of children to caregivers/teachers (17) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Affiliation with a church or religious group (18) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Cooperative structure of preschool (19) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Referral from friend or family member (21) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| External accreditation of daycare/preschool (e.g., NAEYC, APPLE, etc.) (24) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Presence of other same-sex parent families (25) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Use of a particular educational philosophy (e.g., Montessori, Reggio Emilia, Waldorf) (26) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Other: (22) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Q203 Please select the TOP THREE factors that influenced your choice of a childcare or preschool setting for your first child.

- [ ] Cost / Tuition (1)
- [ ] Proximity to your home (2)
- [ ] Proximity to your work (3)
- [ ] Opening hours (4)
- [ ] Availability of extended hours (e.g. early morning, later afternoon) (5)
- [ ] Ability for your child to continue in the same school beyond preschool (6)
- [ ] Cleanliness of the building or facility (7)
- [ ] Preschool being part of the local public school system (8)
- [ ] Curriculum (9)
- [ ] Bilingual or multilingual environment (10)
- [ ] Knowledge of LGBTQ+ issues (11)
- [ ] Warmth of caregivers/teachers (12)
- [ ] Education level or credentials of caregivers/teachers (13)
- [ ] Ratio of children to caregivers/teachers (14)
- [ ] Affiliation with a church or religious group (15)

☐ Cooperative structure of preschool (16)

☐ Referral from friend or family member (17)

☐ External accreditation of daycare/preschool (e.g., NAEYC, APPLE, etc.) (18)

☐ Presence of other same-sex parent families (19)

☐ Use of a particular educational philosophy (e.g., Montessori, Reggio Emilia, Waldorf) (20)

☐ Other: (21) _____

Q217 Please RANK the three factors you selected in terms of importance to you:
_____ Cost / Tuition (1)
_____ Proximity to your home (2)
_____ Proximity to your work (3)
_____ Opening hours (4)
_____ Availability of extended hours (e.g. early morning, later afternoon) (5)
_____ Ability for your child to continue in the same school beyond preschool (6)
_____ Cleanliness of the building or facility (7)
_____ Preschool being part of the local public school system (8)
_____ Curriculum (9)
_____ Bilingual or multilingual environment (10)
_____ Knowledge of LGBTQ+ issues (11)
_____ Warmth of caregivers/teachers (12)
_____ Education level or credentials of caregivers/teachers (13)
_____ Ratio of children to caregivers/teachers (14)
_____ Affiliation with a church or religious group (15)
_____ Cooperative structure of preschool (16)
_____ Referral from friend or family member (17)
_____ External accreditation of daycare/preschool (e.g., NAEYC, APPLE, etc.) (18)
_____ Presence of other same-sex parent families (19)
_____ Use of a particular educational philosophy (e.g., Montessori, Reggio Emilia, Waldorf) (20)
_____ Other: (21)

Q37 How often do you or your partner/spouse meet in person with caregivers or teachers at your child's daycare or preschool?

- ○ Almost never (1)
- ○ Once or twice per year (2)
- ○ Every few months (3)
- ○ Monthly (4)
- ○ Weekly or more (5)

Q38 How involved have you or your partner/spouse been with (a) parent group(s) at your child's daycare or preschool?

- ○ Not at all involved (1)
- ○ Slightly involved (2)
- ○ Somewhat involved (3)
- ○ Quite involved (4)
- ○ Extremely involved (5)
- ○ Not applicable (6)

Q39 In the past year, how often have you or your partner/spouse visited your child's daycare or preschool (i.e., not just for pickup)?

- ○ Almost never (1)
- ○ Once or twice per year (2)
- ○ Every few months (3)
- ○ Monthly (4)
- ○ Weekly or more (5)

Q40 In the past year, how often have you or your partner/spouse discussed your child's daycare or preschool with other parents from the daycare/preschool?

- ○ Almost never (1)
- ○ Once or twice per year (2)
- ○ Every few months (3)
- ○ Monthly (4)
- ○ Weekly or more (5)

Q41 How involved have you been in fundraising efforts at your child's daycare/preschool?

- ○ Not at all involved (1)
- ○ Slightly involved (2)
- ○ Somewhat involved (3)
- ○ Quite involved (4)
- ○ Extremely involved (5)
- ○ Not applicable (6)

Q42 In the past year, how often have you or your partner/spouse helped out at your child's daycare/preschool?

- ○ Almost never (1)
- ○ Once or twice per year (2)
- ○ Every few months (3)
- ○ Monthly (4)
- ○ Weekly or more (5)

Q43 How well do you feel your child's daycare/preschool is preparing him/her for his/her next year?

- ○ Not well at all (1)
- ○ Slightly well (2)
- ○ Somewhat well (3)
- ○ Quite well (4)
- ○ Extremely well (5)

Q44 How much of a sense of belonging does your child feel at his/her daycare/preschool?

- ○ No belonging at all (1)
- ○ A little bit of belonging (2)
- ○ Some belonging (3)
- ○ Quite a bit of belonging (4)
- ○ Tremendous belonging (5)

Q46 At your child's daycare/preschool, how well does the overall approach to discipline work for your child?

- ○ Not well at all (1)
- ○ Slightly well (2)
- ○ Somewhat well (3)
- ○ Quite well (4)
- ○ Extremely well (5)

Q47 Given your child's family structure, how good a fit is his/her daycare/preschool?

- ○ Not good at all (1)
- ○ Slightly good (2)
- ○ Somewhat good (3)
- ○ Quite good (4)
- ○ Extremely good (5)

Q48 How well do the activities offered at your child's daycare/preschool match his/her interests?

- ○ Not well at all (1)
- ○ Slightly well (2)
- ○ Somewhat well (3)
- ○ Quite well (4)
- ○ Extremely well (5)

Q49 How comfortable is your child in asking for help from caregivers or teachers ?

- ○ Not comfortable at all (1)
- ○ Slightly comfortable (2)
- ○ Somewhat comfortable (3)
- ○ Quite comfortable (4)
- ○ Extremely comfortable (5)
- ○ Don't know (6)

Q50 How well do the teaching styles of your child's caregivers or teachers match your child's learning style?

- Not well at all (1)
- Slightly well (2)
- Somewhat well (3)
- Quite well (4)
- Extremely well (5)
- Don't know (6)

Q51 How often do you have conversations with your child about what his/her class is learning/doing at daycare/preschool?

- Almost never (1)
- Once in a while (2)
- Sometimes (3)
- Frequently (4)
- Almost all the time (5)

Q52 How much effort do you put into helping your child learn to do things for himself/herself?

- Almost no effort (1)
- A little bit of effort (2)
- Some effort (3)
- Quite a bit of effort (4)
- A tremendous amount of effort (5)

Q54 How often do you help your child engage in activities which are educational outside the home?

- ○ Almost never (1)
- ○ Once in a while (2)
- ○ Sometimes (3)
- ○ Frequently (4)
- ○ Almost all the time (5)

Q55 To what extent do you know how your child is doing socially at daycare/preschool?

- ○ Not at all (1)
- ○ A little bit (2)
- ○ Somewhat (3)
- ○ Quite a bit (4)
- ○ A tremendous amount (5)

Q56 How often do you help your child understand the content s/he is learning in daycare/preschool?

- ○ Almost never (1)
- ○ Once in a while (2)
- ○ Sometimes (3)
- ○ Frequently (4)
- ○ Almost all the time (5)

Q57 How well do you know your child's close friends?

- ○ Not well at all (1)
- ○ Slightly well (2)
- ○ Somewhat well (3)
- ○ Quite well (4)
- ○ Extremely well (5)

Q58 How often do you and your child talk when s/he is having a problem with others?

- ○ Almost never (1)
- ○ Once in a while (2)
- ○ Sometimes (3)
- ○ Frequently (4)
- ○ Almost all the time (5)

Q59 How confident are you...

| | Not confident at all (1) | Slightly confident (2) | Somewhat confident (3) | Quite confident (4) | Extremely confident (5) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| in your ability to connect with other parents? (1) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| in your ability to support your child's learning at home? (2) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| that you can help your child develop good friendships? (3) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| in your ability to make sure your child's school meets your child's learning needs? (4) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| in your ability to make choices about your child's schooling? (5) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| In your ability to help your child deal with his/her emotions appropriately? (6) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

**End of Block: School Questions - Child 1**

**Start of Block: Child 2 Demographics**

Q86 Do you have a second child?

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

*Skip To: End of Block If Do you have a second child? = No*

Q91 What is the assigned sex for your second child?

- ○ Male (1)
- ○ Female (2)

Q158 What is your second child's month and year of birth?

| | Month | Year |
|---|---|---|
| Please select: (6) | ▼ January (1 ... December (12) | ▼ 2003 or earlier (1 ... 2019 (17) |

Q92 Was your second child born:

- ○ Full term WITHOUT a stay in a special care nursery or neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) (1)
- ○ Full term WITH a stay in a special care nursery or neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) (5)
- ○ Pre term WITHOUT a stay in a special care nursery or neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) (2)
- ○ Pre term WITH a stay in a special care nursery or neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) (3)
- ○ Don't know (4)

Q93 How did your second child enter your family?

- ○ Adoption (1)
- ○ Gestational surrogacy / assisted reproductive technology / IVF (2)
- ○ Intra-uterine insemination (IUI) or intra-cervical insemination (ICI) (3)
- ○ Other (please specify) (4) _____

*Display This Question:*

*If How did your second child enter your family? = Gestational surrogacy / assisted reproductive technology / IVF*

*Or How did your second child enter your family? = Intra-uterine insemination (IUI) or intra-cervical insemination (ICI)*

Q94 Was your sperm or egg donor:

- ○ Anonymous (1)
- ○ Known, but with NO option for future contact (2)
- ○ Known, and WITH an option for future contact through the donor-sibling registry (3)
- ○ Known, and WITH the possibility of future direct contact (7)
- ○ Known, and WITH direct contact established during the IVF process (4)
- ○ Known, a friend or family member (5)
- ○ Other (please specify) (6) _____

*Display This Question:*

*If How did your second child enter your family? = Adoption*

Q90 Was your adoption?

- ○ Open, but with NO option for future contact (1)
- ○ Open, and WITH an option for future contact (2)
- ○ Closed (3)

Q96 Which category best describes your second child's race? (Choose all that apply)

- ○ White (1)
- ○ Black or African American (2)
- ○ American Indian or Alaska Native (3)
- ○ Asian (4)
- ○ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (5)
- ○ Other (6) _____
- ○ Unknown / Prefer not to answer (7)

Q97 Is s/he Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish origin?

- ○ No, not of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin (1)
- ○ Yes, Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano (2)
- ○ Yes, Puerto Rican (3)
- ○ Yes, Cuban (4)
- ○ Yes, another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin (5)
- ○ Yes, two or more of the groups above (6)
- ○ Unknown / Prefer not to say (7)

Q169
Is your second child under the age of 6 and s/he has not yet entered kindergarten?

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

*Skip To: End of Block If Is your second child under the age of 6 and s/he has not yet entered kindergarten? = No*

Q98 Does your second child receive childcare **outside of your home** for more than 10 hours/week?

- ○ Yes, they do currently (1)
- ○ Not now, but they did in the past (2)
- ○ No (3)

*Skip To: End of Block If Does your second child receive childcare outside of your home for more than 10 hours/week? = No*

*Skip To: Q100 If Does your second child receive childcare outside of your home for more than 10 hours/week? = Not now, but they did in the past*

Q99 Which of the following best describes the type of setting(s) in which your second child is CURRENTLY enrolled?

- ☐ Nanny, only for your family (1)
- ☐ Nanny, shared with other families (2)
- ☐ Home-based daycare with less than 5 children (3)
- ☐ Cooperative daycare (4)
- ☐ Center-based daycare (5)
- ☐ Private preschool (6)
- ☐ Public preschool (7)
- ☐ Other (please specify) (8)

_____

- ☐ Prefer not to answer (9)

Q100 Which of the following represent the type of setting(s) in which your second child was enrolled IN THE PAST? (Choose all that apply)

- ☐ Nanny, only for your family (1)
- ☐ Nanny, shared with other families (2)
- ☐ Home-based daycare with less than 5 children (3)
- ☐ Cooperative daycare (4)
- ☐ Center-based daycare (5)

- [ ] Private preschool (6)
- [ ] Public preschool (7)
- [ ] Other (please specify) (8) _____
- [ ] Prefer not to answer (9)

Q101 At what age did your second child first enter a childcare setting outside the home?

- ○ < 6 months (1)
- ○ 6 months - (2)
- ○ 12 months - (3)
- ○ 18 months - < 2 years (4)
- ○ 2 years - (5)
- ○ 3 years - (6)
- ○ 4 years - (7)
- ○ > 5 years (8)

Q102 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

| | Strongly disagree (1) | Somewhat disagree (2) | Neither agree nor disagree (3) | Somewhat agree (4) | Strongly agree (5) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I did a lot of research (online or through word-of-mouth) before choosing a childcare setting for my child(ren). (1) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| My family was warmly received as a same-sex parent family in the first childcare setting where our child(ren) received care. (2) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I consider one or more of my child(ren)'s caregivers/teachers to be homophobic. (3) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I am a frequent volunteer or helper where my child(ren) receive(s) childcare. (4) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

**End of Block: Child 2 Demographics**

**Start of Block: School Questions - Child 2**

Q170 Is your second child under the age of 6 and attending a daycare or preschool outside the home?

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

*Skip To: End of Block If Is your second child under the age of 6 and attending a daycare or preschool outside the home? = No*

Q213 How important was each of the following factors in your choice of your second child's daycare or preschool?

| | Not at all important (33) | Slightly important (31) | Moderately important (32) | Very important (30) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cost / Tuition (1) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Proximity to your home (2) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Proximity to your work (3) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Opening hours (4) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Availability of extended hours (e.g. early morning, later afternoon) (5) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Ability for your child to continue in the same school beyond preschool (6) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Cleanliness of the building or facility (8) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Preschool being part of the local public school system (10) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Curriculum (11) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| External accreditation of daycare/preschool (e.g., NAEYC, APPLE, etc.) (12) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Bilingual or multilingual environment (13) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Knowledge of LGBTQ+ issues (14) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Warmth of caregivers/teachers (15) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Education level or credentials of caregivers/teachers (16) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Ratio of children to caregivers/teachers (17) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Affiliation with a religious group (18) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Cooperative structure of preschool (19) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Referral from friend or family member (21) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Use of a particular educational philosophy (e.g., Montessori, Reggio Emilia, Waldorf) (24) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Presence of other same-sex families (25) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Other: (22) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Q214 Please select the TOP THREE factors that influenced your choice of a childcare or preschool setting for your second child.

- [ ] Cost / Tuition (1)
- [ ] Proximity to your home (2)
- [ ] Proximity to your work (3)
- [ ] Opening hours (4)
- [ ] Availability of extended hours (e.g. early morning, later afternoon) (5)
- [ ] Ability for your child to continue in the same school beyond preschool (6)
- [ ] Cleanliness of the building or facility (7)
- [ ] Preschool being part of the local public school system (8)
- [ ] Curriculum (9)
- [ ] Bilingual or multilingual environment (10)
- [ ] Knowledge of LGBTQ+ issues (11)
- [ ] Warmth of caregivers/teachers (12)
- [ ] Education level or credentials of caregivers/teachers (13)
- [ ] Ratio of children to caregivers/teachers (14)
- [ ] Affiliation with a church or religious group (15)

☐ Cooperative structure of preschool (16)

☐ Referral from friend or family member (17)

☐ External accreditation of daycare/preschool (e.g., NAEYC, APPLE, etc.) (18)

☐ Presence of other same-sex parent families (19)

☐ Use of a particular educational philosophy (e.g., Montessori, Reggio Emilia, Waldorf) (20)

☐ Other: (21) _____

Q218 Please RANK the three factors in terms of importance to you:
_____ Cost / Tuition (1)
_____ Proximity to your home (2)
_____ Proximity to your work (3)
_____ Opening hours (4)
_____ Availability of extended hours (e.g. early morning, later afternoon) (5)
_____ Ability for your child to continue in the same school beyond preschool (6)
_____ Cleanliness of the building or facility (7)
_____ Preschool being part of the local public school system (8)
_____ Curriculum (9)
_____ Bilingual or multilingual environment (10)
_____ Knowledge of LGBTQ+ issues (11)
_____ Warmth of caregivers/teachers (12)
_____ Education level or credentials of caregivers/teachers (13)
_____ Ratio of children to caregivers/teachers (14)
_____ Affiliation with a church or religious group (15)
_____ Cooperative structure of preschool (16)
_____ Referral from friend or family member (17)
_____ External accreditation of daycare/preschool (e.g., NAEYC, APPLE, etc.) (18)
_____ Presence of other same-sex parent families (19)
_____ Use of a particular educational philosophy (e.g., Montessori, Reggio Emilia, Waldorf) (20)
_____ Other: (21)

Q190 How often do you or your partner/spouse meet in person with caregivers or teachers at your child's daycare or preschool?

- ○ Almost never (1)
- ○ Once or twice per year (2)
- ○ Every few months (3)
- ○ Monthly (4)
- ○ Weekly or more (5)

Q191 How involved have you or your partner/spouse been with (a) parent group(s) at your child's daycare or preschool?

- ○ Not at all involved (1)
- ○ Slightly involved (2)
- ○ Somewhat involved (3)
- ○ Quite involved (4)
- ○ Extremely involved (5)
- ○ Not applicable (6)

Q192 In the past year, how often have you or your partner/spouse visited your child's daycare or preschool (i.e., not just for pickup)?

- ○ Almost never (1)
- ○ Once or twice per year (2)
- ○ Every few months (3)
- ○ Monthly (4)
- ○ Weekly or more (5)

Q193 In the past year, how often have you or your partner/spouse discussed your child's daycare or preschool with other parents from the daycare/preschool?

- ○ Almost never (1)
- ○ Once or twice per year (2)
- ○ Every few months (3)
- ○ Monthly (4)
- ○ Weekly or more (5)

Q194 How involved have you been in fundraising efforts at your child's daycare/preschool?

- ○ Not at all involved (1)
- ○ Slightly involved (2)
- ○ Somewhat involved (3)
- ○ Quite involved (4)
- ○ Extremely involved (5)
- ○ Not applicable (6)

Q195 In the past year, how often have you or your partner/spouse helped out at your child's daycare/preschool?

- ○ Almost never (1)
- ○ Once or twice per year (2)
- ○ Every few months (3)
- ○ Monthly (4)
- ○ Weekly or more (5)

Q196 How well do you feel your child's daycare/preschool is preparing him/her for his/her next year?

- ○ Not well at all (1)
- ○ Slightly well (2)
- ○ Somewhat well (3)
- ○ Quite well (4)
- ○ Extremely well (5)

Q197 How much of a sense of belonging does your child feel at his/her daycare/preschool?

- ○ No belonging at all (1)
- ○ A little bit of belonging (2)
- ○ Some belonging (3)
- ○ Quite a bit of belonging (4)
- ○ Tremendous belonging (5)

Q198 At your child's daycare/preschool, how well does the overall approach to discipline work for your child?

- ○ Not well at all (1)
- ○ Slightly well (2)
- ○ Somewhat well (3)
- ○ Quite well (4)
- ○ Extremely well (5)

Q199 Given your child's family structure, how good a fit is his/her daycare/preschool?

- ○ Not good at all (1)
- ○ Slightly good (2)
- ○ Somewhat good (3)
- ○ Quite good (4)
- ○ Extremely good (5)

Q200 How well do the activities offered at your child's daycare/preschool match his/her interests?

- ○ Not well at all (1)
- ○ Slightly well (2)
- ○ Somewhat well (3)
- ○ Quite well (4)
- ○ Extremely well (5)

Q201 How comfortable is your child in asking for help from caregivers or teachers ?

- ○ Not comfortable at all (1)
- ○ Slightly comfortable (2)
- ○ Somewhat comfortable (3)
- ○ Quite comfortable (4)
- ○ Extremely comfortable (5)
- ○ Don't know (6)

Q202 How well do the teaching styles of your child's caregivers or teachers match your child's learning style?

- ○ Not well at all (1)
- ○ Slightly well (2)
- ○ Somewhat well (3)
- ○ Quite well (4)
- ○ Extremely well (5)
- ○ Don't know (6)

Q203 How often do you have conversations with your child about what his/her class is learning/doing at daycare/preschool?

- ○ Almost never (1)
- ○ Once in a while (2)
- ○ Sometimes (3)
- ○ Frequently (4)
- ○ Almost all the time (5)

Q204 How much effort do you put into helping your child learn to do things for himself/herself ?

- ○ Almost no effort (1)
- ○ A little bit of effort (2)
- ○ Some effort (3)
- ○ Quite a bit of effort (4)
- ○ A tremendous amount of effort (5)

Q205 How often do you help your child engage in activities which are educational outside the home?

- ○ Almost never (1)
- ○ Once in a while (2)
- ○ Sometimes (3)
- ○ Frequently (4)
- ○ Almost all the time (5)

Q206 To what extent do you know how your child is doing socially at daycare/preschool?

- ○ Not at all (1)
- ○ A little bit (2)
- ○ Somewhat (3)
- ○ Quite a bit (4)
- ○ A tremendous amount (5)

Q207 How often do you help your child understand the content s/he is learning in daycare/preschool?

- ○ Almost never (1)
- ○ Once in a while (2)
- ○ Sometimes (3)
- ○ Frequently (4)
- ○ Almost all the time (5)

Q208 How well do you know your child's close friends?

- ○ Not well at all (1)
- ○ Slightly well (2)
- ○ Somewhat well (3)
- ○ Quite well (4)
- ○ Extremely well (5)

Q209 How often do you and your child talk when s/he is having a problem with others?

- ○ Almost never (1)
- ○ Once in a while (2)
- ○ Sometimes (3)
- ○ Frequently (4)
- ○ Almost all the time (5)

Q210 How confident are you…

| | Not confident at all (1) | Slightly confident (2) | Somewhat confident (3) | Quite confident (4) | Extremely confident (5) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| in your ability to connect with other parents? (1) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| in your ability to support your child's learning at home? (2) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| that you can help your child develop good friendships? (3) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| in your ability to make sure your child's school meets your child's learning needs? (4) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| in your ability to make choices about your child's schooling? (5) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| In your ability to help your child deal with his/her emotions appropriately? (6) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

**End of Block: School Questions – Child 2**

Start of Block: Free text

Q85 What does your child's daycare or preschool do to create a positive social climate for enrolled children?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q86 What, if anything, concerns you about how your child's daycare or preschool handles your family's identity as having same-sex parents?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q87 Please explain why you selected the daycare or preschool setting(s) where your child(ren) have been enrolled.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q88 Is there anything else that you would like to share about your experience as a same-sex parent?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

**End of Block: Free text**

**Start of Block: Invitation to Interview study**

Q105
As a follow-up to the survey study, we are looking for parents willing to participate in a 30-60 minute telephone interview about their experiences raising children in a same-sex family.

If you are interested in participating in an interview, please provide your email address below and a researcher may contact you in the future.

Are you interested in being contacted to participate in an interview study?

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

*Skip To: Q109 If As a follow-up to the survey study, we are looking for parents willing to participate in a 30-60... = Yes*

*Skip To: End of Survey If As a follow-up to the survey study, we are looking for parents willing to participate in a 30-60... = No*

Q109 Please enter an email address at which you can be contacted about the interview study:

_____

## Appendix 2: Interview Questions for Case Studies

1. To start, could you tell me about the decision-making around your family formation process?
    a. When in your relationship did you first broach the idea of having children? Consider it seriously?
    b. At what point was this in your relationship?
    c. Ultimately, how did the decision to become parents come about?
2. Could you talk more about how each of your children was born—which method was used, where was the child born, what was the experience with the hospital and/or courts like?
3. At what point did each of your children start childcare/preschool? What research did you do? What motivated your decision on the setting you chose?
4. What does daycare or preschool do that is good or bad in terms of your child and family? Have they done anything in particular or different knowing you are LGBTQ+?
5. When is the first time you talked with your child about how your nuclear family came into being?
    a. When is the first time (if at all) that they asked something about your family structure/form?
    b. Do they distinguish your family form from other families? What language do they use?
    c. What have you discussed about adoption / surrogacy?

   d. What is the status of your family's relationship with the birth parent(s), sperm/egg donor(s), or gestational carrier(s)?
   e. What have you discussed about human reproduction or assisted reproductive technology (ART)?

6. Do you tell stories about your larger family / family history? How often? In what settings?
7. What is the best thing about being a parent? What's the most challenging experience you've had along the parenting journey?

## Appendix 3: Children's Literature Resources for LGBTQ+ Families

While children of LGBTQ+ parents increasingly see their family structures represented in heteronormative society (Goldberg & Kuvalanka, 2012), relatively few of the books in the traditional canon for children ages 0 to 5 portray LGBTQ+ parents and children—or children who are questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity. The list of books offered below covers a range of different topics in developmentally appropriate ways for children throughout the preschool years. I have also included a section that offers perspective on books that I would not recommend due to factors described in the summaries. I have also included the rating of each book if reviewed by the *Horn Book Guide* (HBG), which is a leading U.S. reviewer of books for children. Expert ratings range from 1 to 4 as follows: "1 = Outstanding, noteworthy in style, content, and/or illustrator; 2 = Superior, well above average; 3 = Recommended, satisfactory in style, content and/or illustration; 4 = Recommended with minor flaws. Books not rated by the HBG are indicated with "N/A." More information can be found at the Horn Book website: https://www.hornbookguide.com/site/

**Books on Family Structure and Composition**

- *Families* by Shelley Rotner and Sheila M. Kelly. 2016. Holiday House. Keywords: Nonfiction, Information Book, Photographs, Family Structures, Diversity. Grades: Preschool-Grade 2. HBG: 3.
    - Distinctive for its use of real photographs of family life in lieu of illustrations, this book showcases families of all shapes, colors, sizes, and composition, allowing even the youngest child to see images celebrating diversity and love; it offers enrichment, allowing children to see that, if you look closely enough, "differences" can be found in any family. The basic text complements the portraits as a springboard for discussions with young children about their own families.

- *The Family Book* by Todd Parr. 2003. Megan Tingley Books. Keywords: Nonfiction, Information Book, Family Structures, Diversity. Grades: Preschool-Grade 1. HBG: 4.

    - Illustrated in fantastical colors and employing a style that mirrors young children's drawings and handwriting, this book possesses the power to engage a young reader while presenting examples of many differing family structures. Pointing out similarities and differences in what families can do, the book provides a way to celebrate diversity using simple language accessible to those children taking early steps toward reading more independently.

- *A Family is a Family is a Family* by Sara O'Leary. Illustrated by Qin Leng. 2016. Balzer + Bray. Keywords: Fiction, Picture Book, Family, Diversity, Family Structures. Grades: Preschool-Grade 2. HBG: N/A.
    - Each page in this book, intricately illustrated in soft tones, uses simple language to portray individual children sharing the story of their family to their class at school. The examples provided highlight the diversity of family composition, including adoptive, same-sex, single, and divorced parents. The stage is set for the final story, that of a foster child accepted fully by her foster mother, leading the reader to understand that "family is family," regardless of structure.

- *Stella Brings the Family* by Miriam B. Schiffer. Illustrated by Holly Clifton-Brown. 2015. Chronicle. Keywords: Fiction, Picture Book, Family, Two Dads, Two Moms, Schools, Holidays, Celebrations, Love. Grades: Kindergarten-3. HBG: 4.
    - In a school holding an upcoming celebration of Mother's Day, Stella, a student with two dads, worries about who (if anyone) she'll bring and how her guests will be received. Stella shares her anxiety with family and classmates, who want to know who in Stella's family fills the many roles their mothers play in their lives—reading books, doing laundry, putting them to bed—allowing Stella to explain the roles of her dads and family members. Using expressive illustrations with soft colors, illuminating the characters' varied emotions, the book uses mild humor to suggest a path to assert confidence and individuality for children whose family structure might make them feel left out of some conversations and holidays.

- *Who's in My Family?* by Robie H. Harris. Illustrated by Nadine Bernard Westcott. 2012. Candlewick Press. Keywords: Fiction, Families, Outings, Multicultural, Diversity. Grades: Preschool-3. HBG: 4.
    - This book highlights the diversity of family composition by following along through a day at the zoo with central characters Nellie and Gus. Identifying different structures of parents and children in both human and animal form, the characters' experiences speak to the vast array of families present—shown clearly in the illustrations—all of whom are experiencing their day in contrasting, yet fundamentally similar ways.

**Books on LGBTQ+ Family Experience**

- *And Tango Makes Three* by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell. Illustrated by Henry Cole. 2005. Simon & Schuster. Keywords: Picture Book, LGBTQ+ Couples, Animals, Zoo, Adoption, Love. Grades: Kindergarten-3. HBG: 4.
    - Based on a true story of two male penguins at the Central Park Zoo who behaved as any other opposite gender penguin couple except for their inability to lay their own eggs. Through the help of the zookeeper, they are given an egg to care for, leading to the hatching of their very own chick, whose name is Tango, to complete their own family. The story showcases how nontraditional families can occur (even in the animal world)—and be formed, accepted, and celebrated in society.

- *Donovan's Big Day* by Lesléa Newman. Illustrated by Mike Dutton. 2011. Tricycle Press. Keywords: Fiction, Picture Book, LBTQ+ Mothers, Wedding, Celebration. Grades: Kindergarten-3. HBG: 3.
    - Excitement, joy, and immediacy are palpable throughout this beautifully illustrated book that follows Donovan as he prepares to take on a big task—being ring bearer at his mothers' wedding. The book highlights the love of family and friends participating in the wedding, and serves as a vehicle to discuss marriage equality. The text—a series of long, breathless sentences connected by conjunctions; the illustrations capture the chaos of a wedding day, which can feel exasperating, like one thing after another (after another…).

- *Heather Has Two Mommies* by Lesléa Newman. Illustrated by Laura Cornell. 2015. Candlewick Press. Keywords: Fiction, Picture Book, LGBT Mothers, Family Structure, School. Grades: Preschool-2. HBG: 3.
    - Heather's favorite number is two, and—conveniently—in her family she has two mommies. Chronicling her first day of school, the book highlights how Heather is seemingly like every other child in her classroom—until a discussion of family structure begins. With this, the book launches into a lesson in family diversity ending with a commentary that the most important building block for every family is love.

- *Mommy, Mama, and Me* by Lesléa Newman. Illustrated by Carol Thompson. 2009. Tricycle Press. Keywords: Fiction, Picture Book, LGBTQ+, Family Routine, Mothers. Grades: Preschool-2. HBG: 2 (shared with companion title below).
    - Through straightforward rhymes, colorful illustration, and text showing varied ways in which mothers cater to the needs of their children, this board book depicts a two-mom family going through the daily routine of raising a young child. The book normalizes life within this family structure in an approachable manner that would benefit all children learning about family diversity and ends with the mothers tucking their child into bed.

- *Daddy, Papa, and Me* by Lesléa Newman. Illustrated by Carol Thompson. 2009. Tricycle Press. Keywords: Fiction, Picture Book, LGBTQ+, Family Routine, Fathers. Grades: Preschool-2. HBG: 2 (shared with companion title above).
    - A companion volume to the title above, this rhyming board book highlights everyday activities of a family with two fathers and a child. The illustrations of routine family activities are interspersed with images of a loving same-sex couple engaged in typical family activities and fully accepted by their child. In contrast to the companion book above, it's the *fathers* who are exhausted at the end of this story; *they* are tucked into bed by their child. (Notably, in both of Newman's two companion books, the child is not gendered.)

- *King and King* by Linda de Haan and Stern Nijland. 2003. Tricycle Books. Keywords: Fiction, Picture Book, Foreign-Netherlands, Royalty, Wedding, Marriage, Gay Couple. Grades: K-3. HBG: 2.
    - This book recounts the story of the unmarried Prince Bertie and his sometimes cranky Mother, the Queen, who desperately tries to marry off Bertie to a succession of women so that he may succeed her as King. The efforts appear futile until the prince finds love with another prince (the brother of one woman chosen by his mother), and the kingdom rejoices for their new Kings. The rich collage illustrations provide emotion and depth to a 2001 story originally written in Dutch, which was a true forerunner among books depicting LGBTQ+ relationships.

- *Uncle Bobby's Wedding* by Sarah S. Brannen. 2008. Putnam. Keywords: Fiction, Picture Book, Extended Family, Wedding, Celebration, Skepticism, Jealousy. Grades: Kindergarten-3. HBG: 3.
    - In this family of guinea pigs, young Chloe fears that her beloved Uncle Bobby may play less of a role in her life after becoming engaged to his boyfriend, Jamie. It takes Chloe building a relationship with Jamie to convince her that he's a fitting companion for her uncle. The beautiful and detailed illustrations underpin and bring to life the emotions of the story.

- *Worm Loves Worm* by J. J. Austrian. Illustrated by Mike Curato. 2016. Balzer + Bray. Keywords: Fiction, Picture Book, Wedding, Love, Animals, Gender. Grades: Preschool-3. HBG: 3.
    - This is a whimsical tale of two worms who fall in love and decide to get married. They receive support from other insect friends who plan a wedding according to "how it's always been done," offering to play traditional roles such as the best man and bridal attendants. Through a series of questions, the assumed traditions of a wedding are gradually unpacked, leading to the worms declaring that their wedding will "change how it's done" as they both choose to serve as brides and grooms. The book offers examples of how traditional wedding customs can be adapted to allow any two creatures in love to marry.

**Books that Celebrate Uniqueness and Diversity**

- *The Different Dragon* by Jennifer Bryan. Illustrated by Danamarie Hosler. 2006. Two Lives Publishing. Keywords: Fiction, Picture Book, Bedtime Story, Two Mothers, Fantasy, Dreams. Grades: Preschool-3. HBG: N/A.
    - In this book, Noah asks one of his two moms to recount a bedtime story of an adventure leading to a fierce dragon. The story unfolds into the child facing his own fears and helping the dragon become happy and kind. Although not a book explicitly about Noah's non-traditional family structure, the book showcases his two mothers and demonstrates how Noah's family tales and bedtime stories are just like those of any other family.
- *Red: A Crayon's Story* by Michael Hall. 2015. Greenwillow Books. Keywords: Fiction, Picture Book, Identity, Acceptance, Finding a Place. Grades: Preschool-3. HBG: 2.
    - This story of Red, a crayon who struggles to find a place among his peers because his exterior label (red) and interior core (blue) don't match, teaches the important lesson that those around us sometimes can't see our inner potential and beauty unless we and others look beyond our label and see what's truly inside. This exquisitely illustrated book about identity teaches even early readers that we have the power to lift up those who are "different," emboldening them to find acceptance in society and to live truthfully.

**Books Not Recommended**

- *This Day in June* by Gayle E. Pitman. Illustrated by Kristyna Litten. 2014. Magination Press/American Psychological Association. Keywords: Nonfiction, Picture Book, Pride Celebrations, Families, Children, LGBT, Community. Grades: Kindergarten-3. HBG: 5.
    - While the illustrations in this book depict the energy and joy of a gay pride celebration, the text consists of simple rhyming phrases. The pictures make the book suitable for young children, but the groups depicted provide an incomplete portrait of pride celebrations' vibrancy and diversity. Instead, the book relies on the more notable (and perhaps stereotypical?) aspects of pride, neglecting the full panoply of families and organizations that now march.

- *The Sissy Duckling* by Harvey Fierstein. Illustrated by Henry Cole. 2002. Aladdin Paperbacks/Simon & Schuster. Keywords: Fiction, Picture Book, Animals, Fairy Tale Adaptation, Rejection, Resilience, Acceptance. Grades: Kindergarten-3. HBG: 5.
    - Based on the timeless story of the Ugly Duckling, this book tells the tale of Elmer, a duckling, and his parents, Mama and Papa Duck. The illustrations, which show detailed facial expressions and body language of the main and supporting characters, suitably complement the text, which

uses some complex language that could be more accessible to an elementary reader. Despite having heartwarming aspects, Fierstein's story of how unique talents need to be supported is perhaps too simplistic, formulaic, and steeped in tired stereotypes.

## Appendix 4: A Quick Reference for Early Educators and Parents on Diversity in Family Forms

*[W]hen I went to go tour the school that [our son] is currently at, they were like, "Oh, well, we've never had a gay family, but why isn't it the same as any other family?" And I was like, "That's the answer I needed to hear…this is new to us, we're a little bit concerned, we don't know how to do this…" We could hear what they were saying in the classrooms… And we felt comfortable because the teacher…used to say "moms" and "dads" and then she started saying "parents" or "guardians." Like, we could see those changes at the school.* (Female Parent).

- **The United States has witnessed a shift in the visibility of diverse family forms, including single parent families, families who used adoption or reproductive technology to welcome children, those with mixed race/ethnicity, and LGBTQ+ couples.**
    - Family formation has been historically difficult for LGBTQ+s, who still face scientific, cultural, and political barriers to family creation.
    - Parental rights of a non-biological or non-gestational parent in a same-gender relationship, marriage equality, and the changes in the regulation of adoption and surrogacy all have accelerated rates of family formation over the past twenty years (Harris, 2017).
- **Even LGBTQ+ parents with low levels of parental stress, strong social support, and minimal impact of heterosexist behavior still reported on the (cumulative) impact of microaggressions over time (Matthews, 2020).**
    - Educators can be another layer of support, rather than the source of additional microaggressions.
- **Regardless of whether the school knows that a "diverse family form" is enrolled, practical actions can be taken to foster a sense of welcome.**
    - Re-consider your enrollment forms, financial paperwork, brochures, website/social media, etc.
        - Do forms, worksheets, or activities refer to a "father" and "mother?"
        - Are the library and classrooms stocked with books that celebrate diversity in all its forms? (See Appendix 3 for further details.)
        - How do you mark or celebrate holidays, particularly when discomfort could arise among children (i.e., a religious celebration they don't share, making cards for Father's Day when no father is present in the home, etc.)?
        - Are different family forms represented on committees?
        - Are public photos reflective of the diversity in your student and parent populations?
- **Talk proactively to parents. What are they seeing and hearing about school?**
    - What changes could make children more comfortable?
    - What interactions and conversations are happening among the children?
- **How are teachers working toward "critical literacy?" (Beneke & Chetham, 2019)**
    - Do they hold space for rich dialogue with texts around issues of race, gender identity, sexual orientation?
    - What opportunities exist for teachers' professional learning around facilitation?

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