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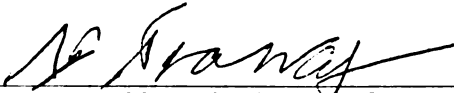
PARENT PRACTICES & HOME-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS: A
DIFFERENTIAL EFFECT FOR CHILDREN WITH SAME-SEX
PARENTS?

presented by

ALICIA LYNN CROWL

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PARENT PRACTICES & HOME-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS: A DIFFERENTIAL
EFFECT FOR CHILDREN WITH SAME-SEX PARENTS?

By

Alicia Lynn Crowl

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ABSTRACT

PARENT PRACTICES & HOME-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS: A DIFFERENTIAL EFFECT FOR CHILDREN WITH SAME-SEX PARENTS?

By

Alicia Lynn Crowl

Parents are an integral component of optimizing the success of their children. When parents have strong links to schools, their children perform better and have higher rates of long-term academic and social outcomes (Beveridge, 2005; Henderson & Berla, 1994). Despite the fact that it is the school's responsibility to ensure safe and welcoming climates for families, there are a substantial proportion of parents, namely same-sex parents, who feel disconnected and unwelcome in schools (Jeltova & Fish, 2005). Understanding the role of home-school collaboration in children's academic and social adjustment outcomes—particularly for children with same-sex parents—would guide policy in regards to anti-discrimination laws and issues of school climate within American schools. Creating positive home-school ties for children from diverse families will likely optimize their chance for academic success. In order to extend the research supporting parent practices and strong family-school collaboration, the present study used the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten Cohort (ECLS-K) dataset to examine: 1.) How same-sex families compare to heterosexual families with respect to the parental practices of *Helping* and *Communicating*; 2.) How home-school partnerships compare across same-sex and heterosexual families; and 3.) Whether a strong home-school partnership is more important for the academic achievement and social adjustment of children with same-sex parents given the societal context in which these children are embedded. Results indicated that same-sex and heterosexual parents did not differ with

respect to their parent practices or home-school partnerships. Further, home-school partnerships were not differentially important for children with same-sex parents.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

There is a great political and social divide on the topic of same-sex parenting (Herek, 2006). Given that schools reflect the culture of our society, this divide inevitably permeates into classrooms, affecting those children who are raised by gay and lesbian individuals (Epstein, 1999). It is difficult to obtain accurate estimates of children raised by gay and lesbian parents (also referred herein as “lesbigay” or “same-sex” parents) due to the social stigmatization of being a sexual minority, and therefore studies range in their estimates from approximately 1.5 million to 14 million children who have at least one gay or lesbian parent (Falk, 1989; Gibbs, 1988; Patterson, 1992; Stacey & Biblarz, 2001; Turner, Scadden & Harris, 1990). Same-sex parents are becoming increasingly visible, with more gay and lesbian couples choosing to have children through means of donor insemination, adoption, and surrogacy (Herek, 2006; Martin, 1993; Weston, 1991). An increase in the number of gay and lesbian parents creates a need to understand the lives of children who are raised in a society at odds with the appropriateness of same-sex parenting.

The benefits of strong home-school partnerships on children’s developmental outcomes have been documented extensively in the research (Esler, Godber, & Christenson, 2002). When ties between children’s families and schools are firmly established, children’s academic and social competencies flourish (Beveridge, 2005; Christenson, 1995). The importance of building and maintaining this home-school connection stems from the theoretical understanding that both contexts exert significant socializing influence on the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Esler et al., 2002;

Scott-Jones, 1995). Thus, the greater the overlap among these contexts, the higher probability for children's success in school.

Despite the fact that schools shoulder the primary responsibility for making families feel welcome and connected to the school, a large number of parents—particularly same-sex parents—feel isolated, invisible, and disrespected in the school culture (Jeltova & Fish, 2005; Ryan & Martin, 2000). For a number of same-sex parents, schools are merely institutions that reinforce the traditional family structure of a mother, father, and 2.5 children (Coontz, 1992). For many children growing up with gay or lesbian parents, schools may be their first experience with persistent messages about traditional families that run counter to that which they have been accustomed. Both parents and children often feel invisible and insignificant as their identities dissolve in a heterosexist environment (Casper, Schultz, & Wickens, 1992). Further, although schools are the primary social institutions outside of the family where students should feel welcomed and safe, many aspects of the school environment fail to meet the needs of gay and lesbian youth or children with lesbian parents. Studies have documented numerous incidents of peer harassment, bullying, and aggression directed towards gay and lesbian students in which few, if any, efforts were made to combat them (D'Augelli, Pilkington, & Hershberger, 2002; Russell, Franz, & Driscoll, 2001). Researchers have also uncovered common themes regarding same-sex parents' negative experiences in schools due to their sexual orientation, including high levels of anxiety associated with disclosing their sexual orientation, fears of being “outed” and the stress created through frequent interactions

with a negative school climate (Casper et al., 1992; Epstein, 1999; Kozik-Rosabal, 2000).

Although reports of hostile school environments are frequently cited in the literature, research documenting the outcomes of children with same-sex parents provides a more positive message. The existing research comparing gay and lesbian parents with heterosexual parents has consistently shown that parent sexual orientation is not related to negative psychological adjustment or overall negative developmental outcomes in children (Allen & Burrell, 1996; 2002; Anderssen, Amlie, & Ytterou, 2002; Cowl, Ahn, & Baker, in press; Lambert, 2005; Stacey & Biblarz, 2001). These findings are supported from a well-established literature base supporting the importance of parental process variables (e.g., warmth, discipline practices, support) as opposed to parental status variables (e.g., race, gender, income). The evidence in support of what parents *do* with their children as compared to the social *category* to which they belong, has accumulated over the past two decades of research (Baumrind, 1991; Scott-Jones, 1995; Wentzel, 2002). Specifically, with respect to children's academic achievement, numerous studies have cited the importance of parents' helping and communicating with their children (see Mandara, 2003; Patrick et al., 2005; Scott-Jones, 1995). In other words, parents who actively help with their children's homework, spend time engaged in educational activities, and encourage conversations, have children with higher levels of achievement. Thus, although parent sexual orientation is the key variable that incites concerns regarding the well-being of children raised by same-sex parents, researchers have consistently demonstrated the importance of parental style when predicting children's psychological, social, and

academic outcomes (Baumrind, 1991; Khaleque & Rohner, 2002; Steinberg & Silk, 2002).

Despite the consistent message borne out by these studies, however, most lesbian parents frequently face discrimination, both within and outside of schools (Jeltova & Fish, 2005; Ryan & Martin, 2000), and gay and lesbian parents continue to lose custody of their children (see Stacey & Biblarz, 2001). Thus, there continues to be a considerable disconnect between the socializing contexts of home and school. Given the importance of home-school partnerships for children's success in school, it is imperative that all parents feel included and connected to their child's school, as children's outcomes benefit significantly from positive home-school collaboration. With the increased visibility in the number of same-sex parents (Tasker, 2005), it is necessary to explore the role of this home-school partnership as well as key parental practices that support children's outcomes. The purpose of this study was to therefore examine the following questions:

- 1.) How do same-sex families compare to heterosexual families with respect to the parental practices of *Helping* and *Communicating*?
- 2.) How does the home-school partnership compare across same-sex and heterosexual families?
- 3.) Is a strong home-school partnership more important for the academic achievement and social adjustment of children with same-sex parents, compared to children with heterosexual parents, given the societal context in which these children are embedded?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Home-School Collaboration

The benefits of strong home-school partnerships (referred here also as home-school collaboration or home-school connection) on children's developmental outcomes have been documented extensively in the research. When ties between children's families and schools are firmly established, children's academic and social competencies flourish (Beveridge, 2005; Christenson, 1995; Esler et al., 2002; Hara, 1998; Jeynes, 2007). That is, schools and families that act as a team and communicate and exchange information have children whose academic achievement thrives. Research examining the effects of strong home-school collaboration consistently documents positive child outcomes (Christenson, 1995; Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Cooper & Lindsay, 2000; Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2005, 2007; Sheridan, Cowan, & Eagle, 2000; Swap, 1993). In two meta-analyses investigating the relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement among urban elementary school students (Jeynes, 2005) as well as urban secondary school students (Jeynes, 2007), parental involvement was associated with all academic variables for both studies, regardless of race, ethnicity, or gender. Both studies did show, however, that the effect of parent involvement (defined as parental participation in the educational processes and experiences of their children) was stronger for elementary students, most likely due to parents being more involved in their children's schooling while they are younger (see Jeynes, 2007). Further research has confirmed that active parental involvement at the early childhood level is associated with higher literacy

skills, including vocabulary, writing, and reading comprehension (Marcon, 1999; Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman, & Hemphill, 1991).

In addition to positive child outcomes, strong family-school partnerships also benefit parents and teachers. As a result of family-school collaboration, parents report feeling a stronger sense of competence as a parent and having increased feelings of self-efficacy in helping their children learn (Davies, 1993; Parker, Boak, Griffin, Ripple, & Peay, 1999). Teachers report better relationships with parents, increased job satisfaction, and lower incidents of job burnout and transfer rates (Christenson, 1995).

The importance of building and maintaining this home-school connection stems from the theoretical understanding that both contexts exert significant socializing influence on the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Esler et al., 2002; Gregory & Weinstein, 2004; Scott-Jones, 1995). Thus, the greater the overlap among these contexts, the higher probability for children's success in school. For many families, however, there is a great disconnection between the home and school contexts. Whether this home-school disconnection hinges on differences in beliefs about family involvement in school or misunderstandings regarding the role families play in their child's schooling (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Swap, 1993), a divide between contexts serves as one of many barriers identified to forming effective family-school partnerships (Christenson, 2003). Additional barriers outlined in more detail by Christenson (2003) include: linguistic and cultural differences resulting in confusion about the educational process; families' suspicion about treatment from educators; parental feelings of inadequacy or perceived lack of school responsiveness to parental

needs; schools' stereotypical views about families that attribute blame to parents; schools' doubting parental abilities to address academic concerns, and failure for schools to view family differences as strengths. In addition to these barriers, research has documented factors such as a lack of time and knowledge about what children are learning in school, as well as negative school environments (unwelcoming school climate, "deficit view" of families) that create almost impenetrable walls that form between home and school contexts (McCarthy, 2000; Patrikakou, Weissberg, & Rubenstein, 1999).

Despite the multitude of barriers to forming effective home-school partnerships, there are a number of factors that serve to bridge families and schools. Thus, in addition to those factors that impede family-school collaboration, researchers have also identified characteristics and strategies of families and schools that facilitate the development of effective relationships. Understanding the cultural background and values of families (McCarthy, 2000) as well as inviting parents to school functions and sharing important events and information about their child (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997) are ways in which schools can create ties with families. Similarly, parents who value their child's education and perceive themselves to be efficacious in helping with their child's schooling will be more involved and connected to schools (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Thus, this bidirectional relationship is critical in establishing and maintaining an effective home-school partnership.

School Climate

Although both families and schools are accountable in creating a mutual partnership, schools shoulder the primary responsibility of making families and children feel welcome. A critical component of forging positive school relationships is school climate. When researchers speak of school climate, they are typically referring to a number of different factors that color an individual's perception of the school environment. School climate has been defined as the values, cultures, safety policies, and organizational structures that determine how a school will operate (McBrien & Brandt, 1997). Thus, school climate is a multidimensional construct that has been shown to be influenced by a number of different factors, including the frequency and quality of student-teacher interactions (Kuperminc, Leadbeater, & Blatt, 2001), both students' and teachers' perceptions of their school environment (Johnson, Johnson, & Zimmerman, 1996), physical features of the school (e.g., building quality and structure, school size, classroom size and arrangement, instructional materials and amount of resources), students' academic performance (Johnson & Johnson, 1993), students' and teachers' feelings of safeness (Freiberg, 1998), and the degree of trust and respect between students and teachers (Manning & Saddlemire, 1996).

Research consistently shows beneficial outcomes for both students and teachers who are members of a positive school climate. Students who have positive interpersonal relationships with their peers and teachers, regardless of their demographic background, have increased achievement levels and reduced incidents of maladaptive behaviors (McEvoy & Welker, 2000). Moreover, positive perceptions

of school climate have been found to serve as protective factors in boys (Haynes, 1998; Kuperminc, Leadbeater, Emmons, & Blatt, 1997) as well as urban students (Haynes & Comer, 1993) who may be at-risk for behavioral problems, resulting in the prevention of antisocial behaviors. In addition to the beneficial outcomes for students, studies on school climate also have yielded positive results for teachers and other school personnel, finding that a positive school climate is associated with increased job satisfaction (Taylor & Tashakkori, 1995).

Just as positive school climate has been associated with positive academic, behavioral, and psychological outcomes, a negative school climate has been shown to be detrimental to students' learning and development (Freiberg, 1998; Johnson & Johnson, 1993, 1997; Kuperminc et al., 1997; Kuperminc et al., 2001; Manning & Saddlemire, 1996). Compared to students who are a part of a positive school climate, students whose climate is not positive, supportive, and safe have been found to exhibit greater levels of maladaptive behaviors, leading to reduced academic achievement levels (McEvoy & Welker, 2000). Thus, if students do not feel they can trust their teachers or other adults at their school, do not feel as if their school is a safe and welcoming environment, and do not feel as if they are respected or cared for, they are unlikely to perceive school as a positive context for learning, and their educational and psychological development will be negatively affected.

Thus, it is the responsibility of schools to create positive learning environments for their students, making them feel welcome, safe, and, respected. Unfortunately, for a number of gay or lesbian youth or students with lesbian parents, this is not always the case, for "safe and inclusive learning spaces in classrooms

become sites where gay families become invisible and disappear in a heterosexist curriculum” (Kozik-Rosabal, 2000, p. 369). The issue of school climate thus becomes particularly salient for those children whose fears of being ostracized or bullied because of their or their parents’ sexual orientation are often kept undisclosed.

For many same-sex couples, schools are merely institutions that reinforce the traditional family structure of a mother, father, and 2.5 children (Coontz, 1992, as cited in Kozik-Rosabal, 2000). Further, for a number of children growing up with lesbigay parents, schools may be their first experience with persistent messages about traditional families that run counter to that which they have been accustomed. Children read books and hear stories about parents that are not similar to their “mommies” or “daddies”, and may feel left out and atypical compared to peers (Casper & Schultz, 1999). In their qualitative work with gay and lesbian parents in the schools, Casper and her colleagues (1992) expanded on the ways in which lesbigay parents feel ostracized from schools. According to Casper, the “misrepresentation and underrepresentation in early childhood curricula of children who fall outside the cultural and the socially created gender norm has the effect of delegitimizing their present lives and limiting their possibilities for the future” (1992, p. 115). While this study did not specifically look into the effects of school climate and open parent-teacher communication on the child, both parents and teachers were interviewed regarding the dialogues (or lack thereof) between them in order to get a clearer picture of how same-sex parents experience schools. Results indicated that the 30 gay and lesbian parents interviewed in Casper’s (1992) study felt more comfortable in disclosing their sexual orientation if there was a climate of diversity

and respect already apparent within the school. However, not all parents have the luxury of choosing a school that is accepting of sexual minority families, and thus there are many parents whose sexual orientation is kept undisclosed. Many gay and lesbian parents, as well as their children, live in fear of being “outed” (Kosik-Rosabal, 2000). The effects of having to hide one’s sexual orientation is apparent, for it not only creates stress and anxiety among families, but also sends a negative message to children regarding the acceptability of homosexuality (Casper, 1992).

Casper’s (1992) study also reported the stress that parents have from not only hiding one’s sexual orientation, but also disclosing it to the school. Many parents feared negative consequences for both them and their child, and were unsure as to how the teacher would react. However, the stress and anxiety associated with revealing one’s sexual orientation is not only experienced by parents, but also to the children. The literature reveals that the primary stressor for children with gay and lesbian parents centers on their feelings of isolation due to keeping their parents’ sexual orientation a secret (Fitzgerald, 1999; Vanfraussen, Ponjaert-Kristoffersen, & Brewaeys, 2002). Similarly, gay and lesbian youth often struggle with feelings of isolation regarding their own sexual identity and decision to disclose, often facing verbal and physical harassment for being a sexual minority (Russell et al., 2001). Results from the 2005 National School Climate Survey indicated that approximately 75 percent of students heard derogatory remarks such as “faggot” or “dyke” frequently or often at school, and nearly nine out of ten (89.2%) reported hearing “that’s so gay” or “you’re so gay”—used synonymously as stupid or worthless—frequently or often. Further, almost 64 percent of gay and lesbian students reported

being verbally harassed because of their sexual orientation and gender expression, while nearly 18 percent of students had been physically assaulted because of their sexual orientation (GLSEN, 2005).

The statistics related to the derogatory comments and assaults on gay and lesbian youth are shocking, illustrating the frequency with which these youth, as well as same-sex parents, experience a negative social environment at school. Not only are students hearing degrading homophobic comments, but they also report that teachers are frequently not doing anything about these comments, and that they often feel unsafe at school (GLSEN, 2005). The quality of student-teacher relationships, the degree to which students feel they can trust their teachers and other school personnel, and families' feelings of safety are all integral components of school climate.

Clearly many gay and lesbian youth and families are embedded in a school context that is anything but positive, and the impact of these stressors is inevitably felt by sexual minority youth and families. Same-sex parents are less likely to "come out" to schools if there is a climate of intolerance and hostility, particularly because these parents do not want their children to be discriminated against (Lamme & Lamme, 2002). Although there have been no studies to date documenting the relationship between same-sex parents' home-school partnerships and children's outcomes, there is little debate that these children are often embedded in a context that is hostile toward sexual minority youth *and* families, and that this relationship will invariably influence children's outcomes. The present study examined the outcomes of children with same-sex parents and sought to understand if these

children were differentially affected by a strong home-school partnership, particularly given the social context with which these children are embedded.

Children with Same-Sex Parents

The major areas of study of children with same-sex parents have compared children with same-sex and heterosexual parents with respect to their gender, emotional, and social development. Studies in the literature involve both single and coupled gay and lesbian parents, with the participants having had their children through a variety of means (e.g., adoption, donor insemination, product of heterosexual relationships, etc.). More commonly today, one or both partners of lesbian couples are choosing to have their children through known or unknown donor insemination, while gay men are serving either as sperm donors, sharing parental responsibilities with the mother, or choosing to use a surrogate mother (Herek, 2006; Morningstar, 1999).

Adoption is yet another means through which lesbian and gay couples are becoming parents. However, the adoption of children by gay and lesbian individuals remains a controversial subject, with Florida continuing to ban gay and lesbian adoption entirely, and two states denying gay *couples* from adopting (Laird, 2003). Yet, there are a number of means through which gay and lesbian couples can get around these legal statutes. In some cases, one partner will adopt the child without disclosing his or her sexual orientation, and in other instances, social service workers are desperate enough for the child to be adopted that they overlook the couple's sexual orientation and allow for the child's adoption (Ricketts & Achtenberg, 1989).

Finally, there is the option of adopting children overseas, for this not only avoids many of the legal hurdles gay and lesbian couples encounter in the United States, but many foreign countries ask few questions with respect to the parents' sexual orientation (Laird, 2003). In sum, there are a variety of channels through which gay or lesbian couples create families and, therefore, the research conducted involves a mixture of subjects (e.g., single and coupled, co-habiting and non-cohabiting couples) as well as a number of means through which the participants became parents.

Given the varying diversity that exists in participant backgrounds, studies typically do not distinguish among the many means through which lesbian parents create their families. Instead, the most common themes underlying the research with gay and lesbian parents are the developmental outcomes of their children. Thus, in order to organize the literature in this area the following review will be divided according to the three primary developmental outcome areas most commonly addressed: gender development, emotional development, and social development.

Gender Development. One of the primary issues regarding children of gay and lesbian families is gender development. When addressing this issue, researchers often distinguish among gender identity, gender-role behavior, and sexual orientation (Tasker, 2005). Gender identity concerns the degree to which the child identifies him/herself as male or female. Gender-role behavior, on the other hand, refers to the extent to which the child *behaves* according to culturally appropriate standards of female and male behavior—that is, do girls and boys act as girls and boys are supposed to act (i.e., do girls play with dolls and boys with trucks as is expected in traditional American culture)? Lastly, sexual orientation is defined as an individual's

sexual attraction to others. An individual is considered to be homosexual, heterosexual, or bisexual, respectively, depending on whether the person has a sexual attraction for members of the same-sex, opposite sex, or both (Golombok & Tasker, 1994).

Of the research to date on the gender identity of children raised by gay and lesbian parents, no evidence has been found to support the notion that these children develop in an atypical manner. In a study conducted by Kirkpatrick, Smith, and Roy (1981), children raised by lesbian mothers were compared to a group of children raised by single heterosexual mothers. The children were evaluated using *WISC* scales, the Holtzman Inkblot technique, the Human Figure Drawing Test, and a developmental history. In this study, the children's history of play preferences (e.g., the types of toys with which children typically chose to play), their behavior in the playroom, and the sex of their primary parental figure were all evaluated and no significant differences were found between the two groups of children. In another study, children reared by lesbian mothers were found to be no different in their gender identity development than children raised by heterosexual mothers (Golombok, Spencer, and Rutter, 1983). Using interviews and parent and teacher questionnaires regarding 37 single lesbian mothers and 38 single heterosexual mothers, Golombok et al. (1983) found no gender identity confusion for those children who were raised by lesbian mothers. Similar findings have been detected by other researchers, and thus combined, the research support the conclusion that having same-sex parents does not lead children to have conflicted gender identities (Golombok et al., 2003; Green, 1978; Hotvedt & Mandel, 1982; Schwartz, 1986).

Researchers who have investigated children's gender role development have gathered similar findings—namely, having same-sex parents does not cause children to exhibit behaviors atypical for their gender (Golombok et al., 1983; Gottman, 1989; Green, 1978; Green et al., 1986; Hotvedt & Mandel, 1982; Kirkpatrick et al., 1981; Schwartz, 1986). For example, Hoeffler (1981) examined the sex-role behavior of 40 six to nine year-old children (20 lesbian and 20 heterosexual mothers). The mothers were matched according to their level of education and occupation type, and the children were matched by gender and age. Using the Toy Preference Test, the author assessed children's preferences for sex-typed masculine, feminine, and gender-neutral toys. The study found no significant differences among the two groups of children in toy preferences, but noted a substantial difference between girls' and boys' preferences in both groups, with girls scoring higher on feminine sex-typed toys and boys on masculine toys. In sum, the studies conducted on children of gay and lesbian parents support the general conclusion that there are no differences with the children's acquisition of sex-role behavior.

The third and final dimension of the research conducted on gender development is sexual orientation. A commonly-voiced concern is that children of gay and lesbian parents will themselves grow up to be homosexual. Research with respect to this issue is conflicted. Several studies have found an increased correlation between same-sex parenting and child sexual orientation (Cameron & Cameron, 1996; Hays & Samuels, 1989), while other studies have shown that children who are raised by lesbian parents are no more likely to be gay or lesbian themselves (Bailey, Bobrow, Wolfe, & Mikach, 1995; Gottman, 1989; Green, 1978; Green et al., 1986;

Huggins, 1989; Miller, 1979; Schwartz, 1986; Tasker & Golombok, 1995). Yet other research findings indicate otherwise. For example, Gottman's (1989) study with adult daughters of lesbian and heterosexual mothers illustrated an equal proportion of daughters in each group who identified themselves as lesbian. Furthermore, in one of the few extensive longitudinal studies focusing on this issue with children of same-sex parents, Golombok and Tasker (1996) followed 25 children of lesbian mothers and 21 children of heterosexual mothers for 15 years. The average age of the children at the start of the study was 9.5 and 23.5 years at the end of the study. Using standardized interviews to obtain information on the children's sexual orientation, these researchers found that the great majority of the children self-identified as being heterosexual. What was even more interesting with respect to the authors' findings, however, was that young adults raised in lesbian families were more likely to consider having a same-sex relationship than children raised in heterosexual families. Thus, while many of the children raised by same-sex couples did not identify themselves as gay or lesbian, they had more open and accepting attitudes towards a nontraditional sexual identity than did children who were raised by heterosexual families.

However, results must be interpreted with caution. Given the small sample sizes in all of the previous studies, it is not surprising that there are mixed results with respect to children growing up with same-sex parents being gay or lesbian themselves. Although many researchers claim sexual orientation is likely not learned or modeled from parents (Golombok et al., 1983; Marciano, 1985), more research on

larger, random samples is needed in order to make general claims about children's sexual orientation after being raised in same-sex households.

Emotional Development. Much like the studies conducted on children's gender development, the literature investigating the emotional development of children with gay and lesbian parents has produced consistent evidence that the psychosocial well-being of children is not negatively affected by their parents' sexual orientation. Researchers who have studied in this area have commonly examined children's self-esteem, the quality of the relationships they have with their parent (and/or co-parent), and the prevalence of depression or anxiety.

Huggins (1989) administered the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory to 36 children, equally divided according to their gender and mother's sexual orientation, in order to assess their level of self-esteem. Huggins concluded that there were no significant differences between the two groups and that daughters of coupled heterosexual mothers had the highest mean score, and boys of single heterosexual mothers had the lowest mean score. An interesting finding in this study, however, was that adolescent daughters of lesbian mothers had higher overall scores if their mother was either married or living with her partner. Similar results have been found with respect to the idea that children in lesbian families establish closer relationships with their mother's partner than do children of heterosexual families whose mother or father has a new partner (Tasker & Golombok, 1995). Thus, although there may be difficulties for the child with parental separation, it is theorized that it may be easier for children of lesbian families to accept their mother's new partner. The new lesbian partner is often viewed not as a replacement, but as a supplemental parent, and thus

many of the children continue to have a close relationship with their father as well (Golombok & Tasker, 1996).

Golombok et al. (1983) examined the prevalence of psychiatric disorders among children with lesbian parents. In a series of interviews, a child psychiatrist, unaware of the family's situation, assessed 75 children, 37 in lesbian-led families, and 38 in heterosexual families. There was no significant difference in psychological functioning between children raised by lesbian mothers and children brought up by heterosexual mothers. Further, research findings regarding children's psychiatric states are also consistent with this study. For example, Kirkpatrick et al. (1981), using a child psychiatrist to assess information elicited from the child's mother, discovered that children with lesbian mothers are no more likely to exhibit a psychiatric problem than are children of heterosexual mothers. Overall, emotional development occurs normally for children with same-sex parents, and there have been no studies thus far to date that have indicated otherwise (Golombok et al., 1983; Gottman, 1989; Green et al., 1986).

Social Development. A common concern regarding the developmental outcomes of children raised by same-sex parents relates to their relationships with peers and potential for stigmatization. Studies of the social development of children with gay or lesbian parents have consistently shown that these assumptions are unfounded. For example, Golombok et al. (2003) conducted one of the most extensive and recent studies on children of lesbian parents. To address the need for a more representative sample (i.e., one not consisting primarily of volunteers), the authors used a geographic population study in Bristol, England (The Avon

Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children), comprised of 14,000 individuals, to obtain a sample of lesbian-mother families. The sample included 114 heterosexual families and 39 lesbian families—both groups were a mixture of two-parent and single-parent families. Children in all of the families were approximately 7 years of age when the study began. Primary questions addressed included quality of parent-child relationships, children's socioemotional development (self-esteem, social acceptance, cognitive competence), and gender-role behavior. Data were gathered through standardized questionnaires from both mothers and the child's teachers, as well as through observations made by researchers in the family's home. Child outcomes were assessed through various standardized scales, including the *Pictorial Scale of Perceived Competence and Social Acceptance for Young Children* (the Harter scale; Harter & Pike, 1984), the *Children's Peer Relations Scale* (Crick, 1991), and the *Preschool Activities Inventory* (PSAI; Golombok & Rust, 1993a, 1993b). Results indicated that children raised by lesbian mothers were psychologically- and socially-adjusted similar to that of children with heterosexual parents. Thus, even with a general population sample of lesbian mothers, the results were consistent with previous research conducted with volunteer lesbian families.

Additional studies also have demonstrated that children raised in gay or lesbian families experience positive social relationships with their peers (Golombok et al., 1983; Green et al., 1986; Hotvedt & Mandel, 1982; Schwartz, 1986). Research conducted by Tasker and Golombok (1995), using interviews with children of lesbian parents, assessed children's memories of being teased or bullied by their peers. Results demonstrated that children with lesbian mothers were no more likely to be

teased or ostracized by their peers than children with heterosexual parents. The main difference, however, was that when both groups of children were teased, the children of lesbian families were picked on in regards to their mother's sexual orientation, whereas the other children would be bullied with respect to their appearance, religion, or race. Therefore, although children of lesbian mothers were teased about their mother's sexual identity, their experiences of bullying were no more frequent than that experienced by the children with heterosexual parents.

Green et al. (1986) further supported the findings that children with gay or lesbian parents do not experience significantly more harassment and stigmatization than do children with heterosexual parents. With a total of 37 children, the authors examined whether there were group differences with respect to the children's perceptions of their popularity with peers, or their mother's ratings of the children's social acceptance. There were no statistically significant differences, suggesting that stigmatization by peers is not a problem captured in the research for children with gay or lesbian parents.

Although the body of literature investigating outcomes of children with same-sex parents has found no statistically significant differences with respect to children's experiences of stigmatization and bullying, school climate research on sexual minority youth and families, as described earlier, has demonstrated otherwise. These conflicting findings can likely be reconciled by taking into consideration contextual and cultural factors that have influenced results. Such variables include the climate of the school, the supportiveness of school staff with sexual diversity, and the presence of LGBT clubs and organizations to name a few (Jeltova & Fish, 2005). These factors

influence parents' "coming out" to the school, in turn influencing their children's comfort and desire to also be open about their parents' sexual orientation. However, these factors are hardly exhaustive in terms of the multitude of influences that hinder same-sex parents' from disclosing and feeling comfortable with their sexual orientation. Larger systemic barriers such as societal prejudice and negative stereotypes of same-sex parents come into play, and thus it is difficult to capture these larger scale influences in the research. Thus, although there are discrepant findings with respect to children's experiences of bullying and discrimination within schools, it is not surprising when these findings are interpreted through a societal lens that views same-sex parenting as both acceptable and divisive. Whether the culture and climate of the school supports or denies the rights of same-sex parents will inevitably influence the home-school relationship between parents and school personnel. In turn, the school experiences of same-sex parents and their children will depend largely on the relationship established between the school and home. Yet, children's academic and social outcomes do not depend solely on the relationship established between the school and their parents, as parents play a significant part in their children's development.

Parent Practices & Child Outcomes

Based on the foregoing review of the literature, the empirical research surrounding children of gay and lesbian parents has focused mainly on the developmental differences between children of heterosexual parents and children of gay and lesbian parents. Traditionally, developmental theories have emphasized the

importance of male and female parental figures in contributing to the healthy psychosocial development of the child (see Patterson, 1997). Thus, predictions regarding the development of children from lesbian parents are often negative when conceived through this framework. For example, social learning theory (e.g., Huston, 1983) posits that children acquire sexual identities through the modeling of their same-sex parent. Thus, daughters model their mothers and are rewarded for their feminine behavior, while boys model after their fathers and are likewise rewarded for their masculine behavior. Furthermore, from a psychoanalytic perspective (e.g., Chodorow, 1978), children's healthy development is dependent upon their resolution of the Oedipus complex: Boys must overcome the desire for their mother through fear of castration, whereas girls resolve the complex through a desire for the male sex organ (Freud, 1931). In sum, any child who does not overcome the oedipal stage will become neurotic and be unable to develop normally. In other words, when viewed in the context of these two developmental theories (see Patterson, 1997 for a more detailed account of these theories), children of gay and lesbian parents will not experience the type of family environment deemed optimal for healthy development—hence, children reared by gay and lesbian parents will develop atypically.

Yet, there have been challenges to these positions regarding the need for a strictly opposite-sex parental influence on the child. Although parent sexual orientation is the key variable that incites concerns regarding the well-being of children raised by same-sex parents, researchers have consistently demonstrated the importance of parental style when predicting children's psychological, social, and

academic outcomes (Baumrind, 1991; Khaleque & Rohner, 2002; Steinberg & Silk, 2002). In fact, the past two decades of research has built a considerable body of literature establishing the importance of parent process variables (e.g., warmth, control, discipline practices) over those of parental status variables (e.g., socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, parent sexual orientation; see Scott-Jones, 1995). One well-known contributor to the importance of parental style is Baumrind's (1991) typology, where high levels of two parental characteristics (demandingness and responsiveness) result in children who are high in self-esteem, are well-mannered, and are optimally competent. On the other hand, other combinations of these two dimensions result in children who are either less achievement-oriented, less independent, or are high in hostility and dominance (Baumrind, 1989). Thus, children reared by so-called authoritative parents (those parents high on both demandingness and responsiveness) are more likely to be high functioning, both academically and socially. Children who experience Baumrind's dual characteristics of parental warmth and control are thought to adapt better to their environment and hence possess these positive outcomes because they are socialized in a context that both accepts them as individuals and yet establishes boundaries to aid in their own self-regulation. Moreover, these parental dimensions—also termed support, monitoring, and discipline—have been associated in subsequent studies with positive child outcomes across diverse family backgrounds (Amato & Fowler, 2002). Thus, these parental processes appear to exert its influence despite categories of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status.

Although there have been a number of studies confirming Baumrind's parental typology (Chen, Liu, & Li, 2000; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Weiss & Schwarz, 1996), researchers have begun to use a number of additional dimensions to study parental style. In addition to warmth, characteristics such as cohesion, conflict, and expressiveness have also shown to be reliable indicators of further parental styles and their relationship with child outcomes (see Mandara, 2003). More specifically to educational outcomes, parent practices termed *Valuing*, *Monitoring*, *Helping*, and *Doing*, have been conceptualized in a model to organize the existing research regarding the effect of parent practices on children's academic achievement (Scott-Jones, 1995).

Valuing is a broad term encompassing high parental expectations for children's educational attainment, the importance parents place on effort as opposed to ability, and the provision of educational materials (e.g., books, computers). Parents who have high educational values tend to have children who have high academic achievement and educational aspirations. The second parental practice, *Monitoring*, also encompasses a number of measures. Whereas *Valuing* refers to parents' beliefs about the importance of education, *Monitoring* is defined more in terms of the interactions between parents and children. It refers to the rules parents set with respect to amount of time devoted to homework, restriction of television or computer time, or the style parents use to develop their children's self-management strategies (i.e., authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, or neglectful). When parents restrict television or computer time, research shows that children have higher test scores and grades. Further, as indicated earlier in Baumrind's (1991) research, parents who have

an authoritative parenting style tend to have children who perform better in school and have higher levels of self-competence. The third parental practice, known as *Helping*, is characterized by the support parents give to children in promoting their academic skills. *Helping* comprises actions such as reading to children, acting as tutors in helping with children's homework, learning new skills or subject areas together, or invoking the help of someone else if parents are unable to help with their child's academics (i.e., tutoring). The final parental practice, termed *Doing*, refers to parents' over involvement in their children's schooling. This parental over-control has been associated with lower levels of student achievement, motivation, and grades. All of these practices form a well-known conceptual model that integrates the literature regarding parent-child interactions and children's academic and social outcomes (for a more detailed description of this model see Scott-Jones, 1995).

In addition to the parental process constructs outlined above, researchers have documented the importance of parental communication for children's successful outcomes. Communication is often subsumed under the construct of *Monitoring*, as parental communication entails parents seeking knowledge of children's activities and interests (Patrick et al., 2005). Parent communication in early childhood, however (defined as parents' solicitation of information regarding children's activities, friends, and school), has been associated with children's willingness to disclose information and maintain an open relationship with their parents in later childhood and early adolescence (Kerns et al., 2001). Further, parental communication has consistently predicted the prevention of conduct problems, aggression, early sexual activity, substance abuse, and poor academic achievement (see Patrick et al., 2005).

Given the limitations of using an existing dataset for this study, only two key components could be extracted that reflected the literature on parental processes. *Helping*, as explained above, represents parents' active promotion of their child's academic skills. *Communicating*, as also reflected in the literature, represents parents' encouragement of discussion and child expressiveness with respect to such topics as friends, activities, school, interests, and troubles. Parental *Helping* and *Communicating* thus serve as the framework for the questions addressed in the present study. Both constructs have consistently predicted positive outcomes for children (Mandara, 2003; Patrick et al., 2005; Scott-Jones, 1995).

Limitations of Research with Children of Same-Sex Parents

Research on the welfare of children in the context of same-sex parents has been on the upsurge, largely in response to the legal battles of gay and lesbian parents, for many lesbian mothers have lost custody of their children in the midst of divorces from heterosexual partners (Falk, 1989; Golombok, 1999; Herek, 2006; Patterson, 1992; 1995). Assumptions continue to plague decisions made by politicians, judges, professionals, and the overall general public in relation to the issue of lesbian parents raising children. For many people, the tenet is: children should be raised in a family comprised of a mother and a father, for without this gender-balanced structure, children would be wrought with developmental disadvantage. Many of the issues underlying these assumptions include the concern that children raised by same-sex parents will be adversely affected in their gender and socioemotional development, that children will be ostracized and rejected by their

peers, and that children will likely grow up to be homosexual as well. However, as research concerning the mental health and developmental outcomes of children with gay and lesbian parents expands, assumptions such as these are being demonstrated as empirically unsound. In addition to the studies elaborated on in the previous sections, three extensive literature reviews (Anderssen et al., 2002; Fitzgerald, 1999; Lambert, 2005) on the outcomes of children from gay and lesbian families support the view that there are no substantial differences in the development of children with same-sex parents when compared to children with heterosexual parents. Furthermore, three meta-analyses (Allen and Burrell, 1996; 2002; Crowl et al., in press) reported no statistically significant differences with respect to children's emotional well-being or sexual orientation when raised with a gay, lesbian, or heterosexual parent.

Yet, despite the consensus of research findings that suggest the development of children with gay or lesbian parents is just as typical and healthy as that of children with heterosexual families, there are limitations inherent in this area of study. In a critique of the studies done on the outcomes of children with homosexual parents, Schumm (2004) provided several limitations that underlie this line of research, and that he believes should lend caution to researchers and policy makers when interpreting the absence of significant differences between children raised by same-sex and heterosexual parents.

First, it is difficult to obtain a random, representative sample of gay and lesbian parents. Because many same-sex parents are not open about their sexual orientation, it is often necessary to rely on volunteer participants, who may differ in important ways from gay and lesbian individuals unwilling to expose their sexual

identities, resulting in biased samples. Second, much of the research conducted in this area is based on small sample sizes, since it is difficult to obtain subjects that are willing to participate in studies assessing the impact of their sexual orientation on their children's development. Because the samples tend to be small, they also tend to look fairly homogeneous: white, middle-class, urban, female, and well-educated. Little research has included a diverse group of individuals, whether by race, class, or gender. The majority of the research conducted on children with same-sex parents is conducted primarily with lesbian mothers, because they tend to have not only custody of the child, but are often the primary caregivers as well. Gay fathers are much less likely to be custodial parents (Bozett, 1987). A small sample necessarily leads to low statistical power, increasing the likelihood of failing to reject null hypotheses (Schumm, 2004). Other critics also have argued that there *are* meaningful differences, especially with respect to gender development, when children are raised by same-sex parents, and that researchers have downplayed the importance of the differences to appease the courts (Stacey & Biblarz, 2001). Although it has also been argued that Stacey and Biblarz (2001) overemphasized these differences (Golombok et al., 2003), there are definite criticisms of the "no differences" consensus in this area of research. Thus, although the literature suggests there are no real differences between children's development when raised with same-sex or heterosexual parents, critics argue there is not enough statistical power to provide strong evidence that these findings are true (Cameron, 1999; Cameron & Cameron, 2003; Schumm, 2000, 2004). Clearly there is a need to address these limitations by examining the outcomes of children with gay and lesbian parents from a random, national sample. The present study will address

this limitation in the research through the use of an extant, public-use dataset in which a random sample of children with same-sex and heterosexual parents will be drawn.

Purpose of Present Study

There is little doubt that what parents do matter in terms of influencing their child's academic and social outcomes. Further, given the importance of home-school partnerships for children's success in school, it is imperative that all parents feel included and connected to their child's school, as children flourish when strong connections are established. However, as the research literature has shown, many same-sex parents and sexual minority youth experience an unwelcoming and often hostile climate. Given the importance of a strong home-school partnership for children's outcomes, as well as the literature supporting the influence of various parental practices, the present study addressed three questions:

- 1.) How do same-sex families compare to heterosexual families with respect to the parental practices of *Helping* and *Communicating*? Given the absence of significant differences between same-sex and heterosexual parents as demonstrated in the literature, it was predicted that there would be no differences between families' parental practices.
- 2.) How does the home-school partnership compare across same-sex and heterosexual families? Because of the school climate literature which indicates that same-sex parents often feel unsafe and unwelcome in their schools, it was hypothesized that same-sex parents would not have as

strong a relationship with their child's school as would heterosexual parents.

- 3.) Is a strong home-school partnership more important for the academic achievement and social adjustment of children with same-sex parents, compared to children with heterosexual parents, given the societal context in which these children are embedded? Because same-sex parents often face discrimination and harassment not only within but also outside of the school, it was hypothesized that a strong home-school partnership would likely be more beneficial to children with same-sex parents, and would serve as a buffer for negative outcomes.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Participants

The sample for this study was drawn from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten Cohort (ECLS-K), a national sample of kindergarteners attending public and private schools, as well as early childhood programs, in the fall of 1998. Approximately 22,000 randomly-selected children enrolled in about 1,000 kindergarten programs during the 1998-1999 school year comprised the sample for the ECLS-K dataset. Although the children are meant to be nationally representative of kindergarteners from various racial-ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, the design purposively oversampled Asian children, private kindergarteners, and private school kindergarteners. *

Data were collected in eight waves. Baseline assessments of the children were conducted in the fall of 1998 while the children were in kindergarten. Waves 2, 3, and 4, were collected in the spring of 1999, the fall of 1999, and the spring of 2000, respectively. The final waves were conducted in the spring of third grade (2002), fifth grade (2004), and eighth grades (2007). Data collected during the fourth wave (spring of 2000), when most of the children were in first grade, were used for the purposes of the present study, because home-school partnerships have been shown to be stronger in the early elementary-school years (Marcon, 1999). In addition to child assessments during these data collection periods, parents and guardians, teachers, and school administrators, were also administered questionnaires and interviews regarding

* Statistical base and replicate weights included in the analysis allow for the data to be generalized to the overall population

information about their children, their own backgrounds, and the physical, organizational, and fiscal characteristics of their schools (Tourangeau, Nord, Lê, Pollack, & Atkins-Burnett, 2006).

Although same-sex parents were not explicitly identified in the data set, the ECLS-K user manual specified how same-sex parents could be indirectly extracted from the data set. First, households in which more than one person identified as the “father” or “mother” to the focal child and were living together with the child were categorized as “same-sex” couples. Second, because not all same-sex partners identified themselves as the “mother” or “father” to the child, households in which the respondent is the child’s guardian, and the respondent’s spouse or partner is the same sex as the respondent, were also identified as “same-sex” couples (Tourangeau et al., 2006). After using both approaches to identify these couples, a total of 40 same-sex parents and their children out of the 22,000 participants were selected for use in the present study. A randomly-selected 40 heterosexual couples and their children were chosen as a comparison group. No exclusionary criteria was applied in generating this comparison sample, as it was intended to be an entirely random selection of children raised by a mother and father figure. Following data compilation, five cases were excluded from each of the same-sex and heterosexual parent groups due to missing data. Thus, a total of 70 couples and their children (35 in the same-sex parent group and 35 in the heterosexual parent group) comprised the sample used for the current study. The children in the total sample were 51% female, 56% Caucasian, 23% African-American, 12% Hispanic, 4% Asian, and 5% “Other.” Demographics of the families and children in the sample are presented in Table 1.

Comparisons between families were made using independent samples t-tests. As indicated in Table 1, a significant difference between families emerged with respect to the location of the child's school (urban, suburban, or rural), with heterosexual parents schooling their children in significantly more rural type settings. Although a statistically significant difference was found with respect to the location of the child's school, it was not necessary to incorporate this variable as a statistical control given that this difference was not meaningfully significant (location of child's school, $r^2 = .06$; Cohen, 1988; Green, 1991).

Given that both gay male fathers as well as lesbian mothers were included as part of the same-sex parent group, statistical comparisons were made within the same-sex parent group to evaluate any demographic differences between gay male fathers and lesbian mothers. As shown in Table 2, no statistically significant differences were found. However, because parent gender may play a more significant influence with respect to children's outcomes (Stacey & Biblarz, 2001), implications for collapsing gay male fathers and lesbian mothers into one group will be discussed in relation to the present study's findings.

Table 1
Sociodemographic Information of Sample

	Same-Sex Parents		Heterosexual Parents		Same-Sex vs. Heterosexual
Variable					
Child's age (years)					t < 1, n.s.
<i>M</i>	6.8 (.32)		6.7 (.28)		
Range	6.4 to 8.0		6.5 to 7.9		
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	
Child's sex					t = 1.937, n.s.
Boy	13	37	21	60	
Girl	22	63	14	40	
Child's race					t = 1.522, n.s.
African-American	10	29	6	16	
Asian	1	3	2	6	
Caucasian	15	43	24	69	
Hispanic	6	17	2	6	
Mixed/Other	3	8	1	3	
Census Region ^a					t <1, n.s.
Northeast	4	12	5	15	
Midwest	5	15	5	15	
South	18	53	19	54	
West	7	20	6	16	
Type of Child's School ^a					t = -1.254, n.s.
Public	32	94	30	86	
Private	2	6	5	14	
Type of Private School					t <1, n.s.
Catholic	2	100	1	25	
Private (Other)	0	0	4	75	
Location of Child's School ^a					t = -2.130*
Urban	4	31	6	21	
Suburban	6	46	9	31	
Rural	3	23	14	48	
Family Socioeconomic Status ^b					t < 1, n.s.
First Quintile (lowest)	4	11	11	31	
Second Quintile	14	40	6	17	
Third Quintile	9	26	6	17	
Fourth Quintile	5	14	5	15	
Fifth Quintile (highest)	3	9	7	20	

Note. Standard deviations are given in parentheses. ^aIndicates missing data for one or both groups. ^bSocioeconomic status is a combined measure of parents' education, occupation, and income. *p < .05

Table 2
Sociodemographic Information of Same-Sex Parents

	Gay Male Fathers		Lesbian Mothers		Gay Male vs. Lesbian Parents
Variable					
Child's age (years)					t = 1.179, n.s.
<i>M</i>	6.9 (.31)		6.8 (.34)		
Range	6.0 to 7.3		6.0 to 7.1		
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	
Child's sex					
Boy	3	38	10	37	t < 1, n.s.
Girl	5	62	17	63	
Child's race					t < 1, n.s.
African-American	3	38	7	26	
Asian	1	12	0	0	
Caucasian	3	38	12	44	
Hispanic	1	12	5	19	
Mixed/Other	0	0	3	11	
Census Region ^a					t < 1, n.s.
Northeast	1	12.5	3	12	
Midwest	2	25	3	12	
South	4	50	14	54	
West	1	12.5	6	22	
Type of Child's School ^a					t < 1, n.s.
Public	7	88	25	96	
Private	1	12	1	4	
Type of Private School					t < 1, n.s.
Catholic	1	100	1	100	
Private (Other)	0	0	0	0	
Location of Child's School ^a					t < 1, n.s.
Urban	1	33	3	30	
Suburban	2	67	4	40	
Rural	0	0	3	30	
Family Socioeconomic Status ^b					t < 1, n.s.
First Quintile (lowest)	1	12	3	11	
Second Quintile	2	25	12	44	
Third Quintile	3	61	6	22	
Fourth Quintile	1	12	4	15	
Fifth Quintile (highest)	1	12	2	8	

Note. Standard deviations are given in parentheses. ^aIndicates missing data for one or both groups. ^bSocioeconomic status is a combined measure of parents' education, occupation, and income. *p < .05

Measures

Parent Practices. Parents answered questions regarding their child's development and experiences at home through Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (or Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing if the parents did not have a phone). Interviews lasted approximately 44 minutes and included approximately 330 questions covering children's school experiences, child care, parent characteristics, and child health. Of the 330 questions, 19 items reflecting parents' involvement in their children's lives (reflecting the *Valuing*, *Monitoring*, *Helping*, and *Doing* parental practice constructs) were subjected to principal components analysis (PCA) by the researcher. Inspection of the correlation matrix revealed the presence of a number of coefficients exceeding the .3 level (most were in the .4 range). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .72, while Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was statistically significant, thus meeting the assumptions for factor analysis. PCA revealed the presence of two components with eigenvalues over 1, explaining 16 and 9 percent of the variance. These two components reflected two core parent practices: *Helping & Communicating*.

The parent *Helping* dimension was comprised of five items reflecting parents' active involvement in aiding their child's education. Examples included such items as how often parents read to children, help children with homework, and practice numbers with their child (Cronbach's $\alpha=.60$). In a three item scale, *Communicating* measured parents' tendency to encourage their child's talk about troubles, discuss friends and activities, and listen to the child when they were busy (Cronbach's $\alpha=.67$; see Appendix A for the specific questionnaire items reflecting these two dimensions).

Due to the small sample size of the present study, restrictions on the number of predictor variables were necessary to maintain power in the analyses (Green, 1991). Thus, a summative total of the items comprising *Helping* and *Communicating* were created to form one scale of overall *Parental Practices*. The internal consistency for this combined scale was higher than the two factors considered separately (Cronbach's $\alpha=.78$).

Home-School Collaboration. The researcher used a similar set of procedures through PCA in order to extract the items that represented *Home-School Collaboration*. Out of the 330 questions in the parent interview, 18 were subjected to PCA using the entire dataset, as they were items reflecting parent' relationship with the school or teacher. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .73, while Bartlett's Test of Sphericity reached statistical significance, meeting the assumptions for factor analysis. PCA revealed two components (with a total of eight items) for *Home-School Collaboration*: parent-initiated involvement with the school, and school-initiated involvement with parents, confirming the literature that suggests a bidirectional nature of home-school partnerships. With eigenvalues over 1, these two components explained 19 and 12 percent of the variance, respectively. The parent-initiated scale for *Home-School Collaboration* was comprised of five items measuring such things as parents' involvement with PTA, volunteering activities at the school, and attending school functions (Cronbach's $\alpha=.60$). The school-initiated scale consisted of three items and measured things such as the school's ability to provide parents information on their child, help parents understand their child, and provide parents the chance to volunteer at school (Cronbach's $\alpha=.60$). Similar to the combined measure for the

Parent Practices scale, the two factors representing Home-School Collaboration were also combined to reflect a summative total of the eight items. Collapsing the items allowed for a higher predictive power by minimizing the number of independent variables in the analyses. The internal consistency for the combined scale remained the same (Cronbach's $\alpha=.60$). For all eight questions reflecting *Home-School Collaboration*, see Appendix A.

Child Outcomes. Parents were asked to assess their children's social skills during the interview. These 24 questions were adapted from the *Social Skills Rating Scale* (SSRS; Gresham & Elliott, 1990). Topics consist of the child's social interaction, approaches to learning, self-control, loneliness, and impulsivity. Example items include "is sensitive to the feelings of others," "forms and maintains friendships," "respects the property rights of others," "comforts or helps other children," "shows low self esteem," "worries about things," "expresses own opinion or ideas without putting down those of others," and "controls temper." Parents rated whether each item was "not at all true," "a little bit true," "mostly true," or "very true" for their child. For the purposes of the present study, two of the scales (loneliness and impulsivity) were reverse coded by the researcher to allow for the mean on the above items to be collapsed as a measure of the child's "social adjustment." The internal consistency reliability for this scale was acceptable (Cronbach's $\alpha=.88$).

To measure children's academic achievement, direct academic tests were administered to the first grade children in the domains of reading, mathematics, and knowledge of the social world (for the purposes of the current study, only the reading

and mathematics scores were used to reflect children's academic achievement).

Easels with items printed on one side and administration instructions for the assessor on the other side were used to assess children's academic abilities. The first-grade assessments asked children to point or orally respond to questions.

The reading test measured the following skills, with the range in difficulty from basic to more advanced skills: print familiarity; letter knowledge; beginning and ending sounds; recognizing common sight words; vocabulary; and reading words in context. Scores on the reading test ranged from 0-186, with a mean of 70.4 and standard deviation of 21.9 for all first graders in the national dataset. Items in the first-grade mathematics test measured the following, ranging from basic facts and concepts to higher levels of proficiency: identifying one-digit numerals, recognizing geometric shapes, counting up to ten objects; reading all one-digit numerals, counting beyond ten, recognizing a sequence of patterns, and using nonstandard units of length to compare the size of objects; reading two-digit numerals, recognizing the next number in a sequence, identifying the ordinal position of an object, and solving a simple word problem; solving simple addition and subtraction problems; and solving simple multiplication and division problems and recognizing more complex number patterns. First-grade scores for the mathematics test ranged from 0-153, with a mean of 57.2 and a standard deviation of 16.5.

Children's performance on the academic tests was calculated in a variety of means, one of which was Item Response Theory (IRT), which is based on the child's pattern of correct and incorrect responses. IRT scores reflect an overall criterion-referenced measure of academic ability and are useful in identifying cross-sectional

subgroup differences in overall achievement level as well as in correlational analysis with status variables. Moreover, because IRT scores use the overall pattern of right and wrong responses and the characteristics of each item to estimate a child's ability, IRT scores represent estimates of the number of items students would have answered correctly at each point in time if they had taken all of the 186 questions in all of the first- and second-stage reading forms administered, as well as all of the 153 questions in the mathematics forms. It is therefore a more comprehensive measure of a child's academic ability and will serve as the academic achievement measures for the present study. Internal reliability was .93 for the Reading IRT scale score and .94 for the Mathematics IRT scale score. The child's mean score for the Reading and Mathematics scales were combined and calculated as the outcome measure for academic achievement.

Analysis. Before analyses were conducted, appropriate weighting techniques were applied to the data in order to generalize to the larger population (Tourangeau et al., 2006). Further, as described earlier, comparisons between families were made using independent t-tests to ensure similarity among groups. Although a statistically significant difference was found with respect to the location of the child's school, it was not necessary to incorporate this variable as a control given that the difference was not meaningfully significant due to its small effect size (Cohen, 1988; Green, 1991). Subsequent to these steps, the first two questions regarding how same-sex parents compare with heterosexual parents in their parent practices and home-school partnerships were answered using independent sample t-tests to compare groups by family type (Pallant, 2001). All assumptions for group comparisons were met,

namely: continuous dependent variables, independence of observations, normal distribution of the dependent variables, and homogeneity of variance (Pallant, 2001).

For the third question examining whether children with same-sex parents are differentially affected by the strength of their family's home-school partnership, a moderating relationship between home-school partnership and children's outcomes was assessed with family type (sexual orientation of the parent) serving as the moderator. Before regression techniques were used, statistical strategies were employed to test the following assumptions for regression analyses: adequate sample size; low multicollinearity; the exclusion of outliers when necessary; and an adequate distribution related to normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and independence of residuals (Pallant, 2001). Further, both the independent and moderator variables were centered to reduce multicollinearity (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The results of the analyses are presented in several steps. First, descriptive statistics regarding mean differences on the independent variables of *Parent Practices* and *Home-School Partnership*, as well as the outcome variables of child *Academic Achievement* and *Social Adjustment*, are presented across same-sex and heterosexual parent groups. Further, correlations between the predictors and child outcomes are presented. Second, the hypotheses regarding the three questions of the present study are tested. Third, given the importance of parental gender with respect to child rearing (Stacey & Biblarz, 2001), as well as the few documented differences between gay male fathers and lesbian mothers (Bozett, 1989; Gottman, 1990), exploratory analyses were conducted within the same-sex parent group to ascertain any mean differences between these two groups on *Parent Practices* and *Home-School Partnership*. There were not enough participants in the same-sex parent group to explore the relationship between the predictor variables and children's outcomes.

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics for Independent Variables and Child Outcome Variables

Parent Measure	Same-Sex Parents N=35		Heterosexual Parents N=35	
	Mean (SD)	Range	Mean (SD)	Range
Parent Practices	17.3 (4.1)	6-24	17.7 (3.3)	11-23
Home-School Partnership	7.4 (2.2)	0-11	7.7 (2.0)	3-11
Child Measure				
Academic Achievement	41.1 (8.5)	23.8-55.7	42.4 (9.6)	19.3-60.0
Social Adjustment	3.1 (.33)	2.3-3.9	3.1 (.39)	2.3-3.8

Table 4
Correlations between Independent Variables and Child Outcome Variables

	Parent Practices	Home-School Partnership	Social Adjustment	Academic Achievement
Parent Practices	1	.224	.291*	.087
Home-School Partnership		1	.234 [#]	-.068
Social Adjustment			1	.293*
Academic Achievement				1

* $p < .05$ (two-tailed)

[#] Approaching Significance ($p < .054$)

Question 1: How do same-sex families compare to heterosexual families with respect to the parent practices of Helping and Communicating?

It was hypothesized that there would be no differences between families' parental practices based on the literature documenting similar parental processes, irrespective of parent sexual orientation. Results supported this hypothesis, in that no significant differences between same-sex and heterosexual parents on levels of parent practices were found. Thus, with a total possible score of 24 on the *Parent Practices* combined scale, both groups of families averaged a score of approximately 17, indicating that they were similarly active in their children's lives with respect to helping with homework and discussing topics such as school, friends, and activities (mean of 3 to 4 times per week).

Question 2: How does the home-school partnership compare across same-sex and heterosexual families?

Based on the school climate literature indicating that same-sex parents often feel unsafe and unwelcome in their schools, it was hypothesized that same-sex parents would not have as strong a relationship with their child's school as would heterosexual parents. The results, however, indicated that the level of home-school partnership across same-sex and heterosexual parents was virtually the same. Thus, contrary to prediction, both parent groups indicated that they had a strong home-school partnership, represented by mean scores of 7.4 (same-sex) and 7.7 (opposite-sex) out of a total possible score of 16. Further, no mean differences were found with respect to levels of school-initiated versus family-initiated home-school involvement across family types, indicating that both family groups perceived their level of active involvement with the school to be equally bidirectional.

Question 3: Is a strong home-school partnership more important for the academic achievement and social adjustment of children with same-sex parents compared to children with heterosexual parents?

Given the societal context in which children with same-sex parents are embedded, and because same-sex parents often face discrimination and harassment within the school, it was hypothesized that a strong home-school partnership would be more beneficial to children with same-sex parents, and would serve as a buffer for negative outcomes. Using regression analysis with home-school partnership as the predictor and family-type (same-sex and opposite sex parents) as the moderator.

analyses were conducted to examine whether children with same-sex parents were more positively influenced in their academic achievement and social adjustment outcomes with a strong home-school partnership than children with heterosexual parents. Results indicated that a home-school partnership was not differentially important for children with same-sex parents for academic achievement ($F(3, 64) = .38$, Adj $R^2 = -.03$) or social adjustment ($F(3, 66) = 1.65$, Adj $R^2 = .03$; see Table 5).

Although home-school partnership explained a significant amount of variance for children's social adjustment ($p < .04$), it was not a significant predictor of children's academic achievement ($p < .93$). However, because the overall regression model was not significant in predicting academic achievement ($p < .77$) and social adjustment ($p < .19$), the role of home-school partnership in predicting outcomes for children in both families was found to be minimal.

Table 5
Regression Analyses Predicting Child Outcomes

Models	Child Outcomes					
	Academic Achievement			Social Adjustment		
	β	SE	p	B	SE	p
Family Type	-.080	2.238	.526	.029	.086	.811
H-S Partnership	.016	.834	.933	.370	.031	.042
Interaction	-.122	1.093	.526	-.179	.041	.320

Comparisons between Gay Male Fathers & Lesbian Mothers

Descriptive statistics of both independent and child outcome variables were calculated in order to examine within-group differences for same-sex parents (see Table 6). Although there were not enough participants to run mean group

comparisons, the data illustrate differences with respect to levels of *Parent Practices* and *Home-School Partnership*. On a surface level it appears that lesbian mothers have a higher level of *Helping* and *Communicating* behaviors compared to gay male fathers. However, there was also significantly more variation in the levels of *Parent Practices* for lesbian mothers than there was for gay male fathers, likely due to the larger sample size for lesbian mothers. Similarly, although levels of home-school partnerships were slightly higher for lesbian mothers, the range was also much wider, indicating perhaps more variation within- than between-groups of parents. Child outcome variables, however, were similar. These results are presented for descriptive purposes and conclusions are limited due to the small and unequal sample size for the two groups.

Table 6
Descriptive Statistics for Gay Male Fathers and Lesbian Mothers

	Gay Male Fathers (N = 8)		Lesbian Mothers (N = 27)	
Parent Measure	Mean (SD)	Range	Mean (SD)	Range
Parent Practices	13.5 (2.9)	9-18	18.5 (3.8)	6-24
Home-School Partnership	6.8 (2.3)	4-10	7.6 (2.2)	0-11
Child Measure				
Academic Achievement	41.7 (8.5)	30.2-54.4	40.8 (8.6)	23.8-40.9
Social Adjustment	3.0 (.49)	2.3-3.9	3.1 (.29)	2.6-3.8

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The present study examined the differences between same-sex and opposite-sex parents' parenting practices and home-school partnerships. In addition, the relationship between parents' home school partnerships and children's outcomes were assessed in order to examine whether children with same-sex parents were differentially affected by a strong home-school partnership. The results are discussed in relation to previous research. In addition, limitations and implications of the present study for subsequent work in this area are described.

Based on the literature reporting low predictive power of parent sexual orientation on children's outcomes (Allen & Burrell, 1996; 2002; Anderssen, Amlie, & Ytterou, 2002; Crowl, Ahn, & Baker, in press; Lambert, 2005; Stacey & Biblarz, 2001), it was expected that parent practices would not differ across groups. This hypothesis was supported by the sample data, as levels of *Helping* and *Communicating* did not differ across same-sex and heterosexual parents. Similar results have been documented in the literature, which have noted the importance of family dynamics and parental processes rather than parental sexual orientation (Patterson, 2006; Stacey & Biblarz, 2001; Wainright & Patterson, 2006). Thus, the data suggest that both types of families exhibited similar types of *Helping* and *Communicating* behaviors with their children, and that these practices did not differ as a function of parent sexual orientation.

The second question posed in the current study concerned the differences in home-school partnerships across same-sex and heterosexual parents. Similar to the

results with *Parental Practices*, levels of home-school partnerships did not differ between same-sex and heterosexual parents. This finding was contrary to what was hypothesized, as there has been a wealth of literature documenting the negative school experiences of same-sex parents (see Jeltova & Fish, 2005; Kozik-Rosabal, 2000; Lamme & Lamme, 2002). However, research in this area is minimal (Jeltova & Fish, 2005), and thus there is much to learn with respect to same-sex parents' experiences with schools. As research with families of all backgrounds show, creating a climate that encourages parental involvement (celebrating diversity, offering family involvement and social activities, establishing informal contacts, having volunteer opportunities, etc.) leads to strong home-school partnerships (Esler et al., 2002). Thus, there are a number of school climate variables that influence the partnership between home and school. For same-sex parents, factors such as the exclusion or prohibition of sexual diversity topics in the curriculum, stereotypical views of gay and lesbian individuals, heterosexist parental assumptions (assuming all parents are heterosexual), and a lack of communication and respect for their role as parents have all been shown to negatively influence their relationship with the school (see Jeltova & Fish, 2005).

Given the limitations of the sample data in the present study, it was not possible to measure such factors and their influence with the families' home-school partnerships. It is therefore unclear what factors lead both groups of families and their schools to develop working home-school partnerships. It is possible that sample bias influenced the results, as participants in this dataset were required to engage in a number of assessments over years of study. Thus, these parents could be

fundamentally different than parents who did not participate in the study. Further, it was not possible to determine whether same-sex parents had even disclosed their sexual orientation to schools, as many parents choose not to do so in order to avoid harassment and discrimination (Lamme & Lamme, 2002). All of these factors would inevitably play a role in establishing effective home-school partnerships, and thus serve as an important line of future research. Qualitative research aimed at identifying specific experiences and perspectives from parents and teachers regarding these questions have been suggested as a fruitful means of collecting data for complex questions such as these, as there are a multitude of factors that influence same-sex parents' feelings of comfort, disclosure, and relationships with others (Hicks, 2005).

The final research question examined whether a strong home-school partnership exerted a differential effect for children with same-sex parents given the social climate in which sexual minority families are embedded. Contrary to the hypothesis, the importance of a home-school partnership was not differentially important for children with same-sex parents. However, given that both families exhibited similar levels of home-school partnerships, it was not surprising that a strong home-school partnership was not shown to be more beneficial for children with same-sex parents. In other words, given that both families exhibited similar levels of home-school partnerships, indicating that both groups of families participated in activities and received information from the school about their child at relatively similar rates, it was unlikely that a differential effect for children with same-sex parents would be found. Given that little research has been conducted on same-sex parents' relationships with schools, there is much to be learned about home-

school partnerships with same-sex parents. As previously mentioned, the issue of school climate plays a critical role in same-sex parents' willingness to forge relationships with the school (Jeltova & Fish, 2005). It is therefore possible that the school climates in which same-sex parents were engaged were welcoming and respectful of their families. However, it is also possible that same-sex parents had not disclosed their sexual orientation and were therefore treated like "other" parents (Lamme & Lamme, 2002), which could have affected their perceived level of home-school partnership. In sum, although it is unclear why both families had similar levels of home-school partnerships, it helps explain why there was not a differential effect for children with same-sex parents, as both families perceived similar relational levels with their schools.

Of notable importance in this study was the inclusion of both gay male fathers and lesbian mothers, as there is a dearth of research on the outcomes of children with gay fathers (Patterson, 2006). However, although the inclusion of gay male fathers in the same-sex parent group is of interest due to the scarcity of research on gay male fathers (Gottman, 1990), comparisons could not be made within the same-sex parent group due to limited sample size. In future studies, caution must be taken when collapsing both sets of parents in the same category, as gender is thought to play a more influential role than sexual orientation in parenting processes (Stacey & Biblarz, 2001). Although research on gay male fathers is extremely limited relative to that done with lesbian mothers, what little data has been collected serves as frame of reference for the present study in comparing the two groups of same-sex parents.

Most of the research to date on gay male fathers is comprised of either a comparison between single gay male fathers and single heterosexual fathers, or the parenting practices and well-being of gay male fathers without a control group (Gottman, 1990). Currently there have been two published studies (Turner, Scadden, & Harris, 1990; Wyers, 1984) that have compared gay male fathers with lesbian mothers. The combined sample size for both studies was 42 gay male fathers and 45 lesbian mothers. The results of these small studies indicated few differences between parent groups with respect to parenting styles and relationships with children, although there were some exceptions. First, gay fathers appeared to have more difficulty disclosing their sexuality to their children compared with lesbian mothers. Fathers therefore waited longer to disclose their sexual orientation to their children. Second, more “untoward” reactions of parents’ disclosure of their sexual identity stem from children with gay fathers compared to children with lesbian mothers. In other words, children of gay fathers had more negative reactions and feelings to their father’s sexual orientation than did children with lesbian mothers. Lastly, gay fathers report that their children have more peer relationship problems due to their sexuality than are reported by lesbian mothers (see Bozett, 1989).

Although these differences were found between gay fathers and lesbian mothers, it is difficult to ascertain the magnitude of these differences given the limitations of these studies (Bozett, 1989). Yet, it is important to continue to keep these differences in mind with respect to the current study’s findings, as gay male fathers may have fundamentally different experiences than lesbian mothers given the heightened stigma of being a gay male parent (Gottman, 1990). With the small

number of gay fathers in the present study, it was not possible to ascertain meaningful differences between gay fathers and lesbian mothers on the measures of *Parent Practices* and *Home-School Partnerships*. However, based on descriptive statistics alone, it was clear there were differences on the measure of *Parent Practices*, although it is not clear whether these findings represent true differences between parenting styles and involvement with the children, or if these differences were due to unequal sampling groups between gay fathers and lesbian mothers. Given the preliminary differences between gay male fathers and lesbian mothers in both the current study as well as the two previous studies, it would be beneficial for future research to examine in more depth the parental processes across a number of different types of same-sex families (i.e., gay fathers and lesbian mothers; coupled, single, and married partners; adopted, biological, and step-children).

Limitations

While the present study contributes important information to the literature base on children with same-sex parents, there are a number of limitations that must be accounted for when interpreting results. First, the present study involved the collection of data from parents who did not explicitly state their sexual identity. That is, data were collected from same-sex couples, but this cannot account for other aspects of sexual identity, such as behaviors or fantasies. Indirect extraction of same-sex parent participants poses the possibility that these parents would not identify as gay or lesbian if explicitly asked. Similar difficulties have been reported in previous

research (Wainright et al., 2004) and must be accounted for as a limitation in the present study.

Second, given the small sample size in the present study, a limited number of predictor variables were included in an equation that would account for the variance in children's outcomes. Thus, predictor variables had to be collapsed in order to retain power for statistical analyses. This process likely limited the degree to which specific aspects of *Parent Practices* and *Home-School Collaboration* contributed to children's academic achievement and social adjustment. Collapsing specific components of each scale minimized the opportunity to understand what particular parental practices and aspects of the home-school relationship are important in relation to children's outcomes.

Third, a low internal consistency reliability index for the *Home-School Collaboration* scale could have contributed to the lack of difference observed between same-sex and opposite-sex parents. It is unclear whether the "no difference" result between families was due to low reliability of the *Home-School Collaboration* scale, or was a reflection of a meaningful similarity among same-sex and heterosexual parents' home-school partnerships. Future research is needed to examine this question with a psychometrically strong measure of home-school partnerships, taking into account salient school climate factors that would influence how parents' perceived their relationship with the school.

Fourth, inherent in this study is the use of solely parent data to inform perceptions of their own parental practices and relationships with the school. Including both teacher and child data would provide a more comprehensive picture of

parent-child relationships and practices as well as interactions and communication between home and school contexts.

The final limitation concerns the methodology employed in the present study. Although the analytical techniques employed for this study are relatively robust in regards to statistical violations (Pallant, 2001), there were a number of limitations that must be taken into account when interpreting results. The most notable limitation stems from the small sample size obtained from the dataset, as the small number of participants inherently creates low predictive power (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1989). This limitation has been pervasive throughout research with sexual minority parents, given the difficulty in obtaining large samples in this area (Tasker, 2005). Although “rule of thumb” formulas have been developed that estimate the required number of participants dependent on the number of predictors to be used in analyses (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1989), other researchers argue for the inclusion of effect size in determining the total number of needed participants (Green, 1991). Thus, with the case of a small to medium effect size, Green (1991) concluded that $N \geq 50 + 8p$ resulted in a more accurate estimate of sample size than earlier rules-of-thumb. For the purposes of the present study, therefore, it was necessary to have at least 74 participants in order to incorporate all 3 predictors (*Parent Practices*, *Home-School Partnership*, and *Family-Type (Same-Sex or Heterosexual)*). Further, conventional standards for internal scale consistency suggest a Cronbach alpha cutoff of .60. Given that the *Home-School Partnership* scale bordered on the .60 level (calculated from the entire dataset), the low internal consistency of the scale items could have affected the results of the present study. Further research is needed with a pre-established *Home-*

School Partnership scale in order to further examine the relationship between home-school partnerships and children's outcomes with same-sex parents.

Future Directions

The results of the present study suggest a number of important research directions. A wealth of research exists regarding what factors contribute to strong home-school partnerships among families of a variety of backgrounds. However, there is little known about the features that influence a strong partnership between home and school for same-sex parents. School climate has been shown to play a critical role in helping same-sex parents feel comfortable and welcome in the school (Jeltova & Fish, 2005), but more research is needed to help clarify specific aspects of school climate, as well as how these factors are related to children's outcomes. Second, the low levels of variance and internal consistency of the Home-School Partnership scale could have affected whether there were significant differences between family types and whether or not this relationship was more important for children with same-sex parents.

In sum, the present study assessed the differences between same-sex and opposite-sex parents' practices and home-school partnerships, as well as the relationship between parents' home school partnerships and children's outcomes. The results are consistent with the existing literature that emphasizes the importance of parent-child interaction variables in lieu of parent sexual orientation. Despite parent sexual orientation, there were no differences with respect to levels of *Helping* and *Communicating* behaviors across families, although these behaviors were associated

with children's outcomes. Further, there were no differences with respect to levels of *Home-School Partnerships* across family types, and children with same-sex parents were not differentially affected by a strong home-school partnership. Subsequent work in this area is needed to substantiate these findings, as previous research has documented differences among the relationships same-sex parents have with schools.

Appendix A

Questions Elicited from the ECLS-K Parent Interview Reflecting Parent Practices and Home-School Collaboration

Parent Practices

Helping

- 1.) During this school year, how often did you help with your child's reading, language arts, or spelling homework? Would you say . . .

Never.....1
1 to 2 Times a Week.....2
3 to 4 Times a Week.....3
5 or More Times a Week.....4
Not Ascertained.....-9

- 2.) In a typical week, how often do you or any other family member tell stories to the child? Would you say . . .

Not at all.....1
Once or Twice a Week.....2
3 to 6 Times a Week.....3
Everyday.....4
Not Ascertained.....-9

- 3.) In a typical week, how often do you or any other family member sing songs to the child? Would you say . . .

Not at all.....1
Once or Twice a Week.....2
3 to 6 Times a Week.....3
Everyday.....4
Not Ascertained.....-9

- 4.) In a typical week, how often do you or any other family member practice reading, writing, or working with numbers? Would you say . . .

Not at all.....1
Once or Twice a Week.....2
3 to 6 Times a Week.....3
Everyday.....4
Not Ascertained.....-9

5.) In a typical week, how often do you or any other family member read books to the child? Would you say . . .

Not at all.....	1
Once or Twice a Week.....	2
3 to 6 Times a Week.....	3
Everyday.....	4
Not Ascertained.....	-9

Communicating

1.) Even if I'm really busy, I make time to listen to my child.

Never.....	1
Sometimes.....	2
Often.....	3
Very Often.....	4
Not Ascertained.....	-9

2.) I encourage my child to talk about his/her troubles.

Never.....	1
Sometimes.....	2
Often.....	3
Very Often.....	4
Not Ascertained.....	-9

3.) I encourage my child to talk about his/her friends and activities.

Never.....	1
Sometimes.....	2
Often.....	3
Very Often.....	4
Not Ascertained.....	-9

Home-School Collaboration

Parent-Initiated

- 1.) Since the beginning of this school year, have you or other adults in your household attended an open house or back to school night?

Yes.....1
No.....2
Not Ascertained.....-9

- 2.) Since the beginning of this school year, have you or other adults in your household volunteered at the school or served on a committee?

Yes.....1
No.....2
Not Ascertained.....-9

- 3.) Since the beginning of this school year, have you or the other adults in your household attended a school or class event, such as a play, sports event, or science fair?

Yes.....1
No.....2
Not Ascertained.....-9

- 4.) Since the beginning of this school year, have you or other adults in your household attended a meeting of a PTA, PTO, or Parent-Teacher Organization?

Yes.....1
No.....2
Not Ascertained.....-9

- 5.) Since the beginning of this school year, have you or other adults in your household participated in fundraising for the child's school?

Yes.....1
No.....2
Not Ascertained.....-9

School-Initiated

1.) The school helps to understand what children are like at my child's age.

Does this very well.....1
Just okay.....2
Doesn't do this at all.....3
Not Ascertained.....-9

2.) The school makes you aware of chances to volunteer at school.

Does this very well.....1
Just okay.....2
Doesn't do this at all.....3
Not Ascertained.....-9

3.) The school provides workshops, materials, or advice about how to help the child learn at home.

Does this very well.....1
Just okay.....2
Doesn't do this at all.....3
Not Ascertained.....-9

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