PARENTS OF LESBIAN, GAY, AND BISEXUAL YOUTH: UNDERSTANDING PARENT REACTIONS TO COMING OUT

By

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ABSTRACT

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Despite shifts towards inclusivity of the lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) community, many LGB young people still report not feeling accepted in their families and communities (Human Rights Campaign, 2012). Research shows that parental acceptance can have a positive effect on LGB young adult's mental and physical health (Espelage, Aragon, & Birkett, 2008; Ryan, Russell, Huebner, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2010). Therefore, how parents react to their child coming out as LGB can have an effect on their child's wellbeing. Using a newly developed conceptual model that captures the diverse experiences of parents who have a LGB child, this dissertation examined *why* parents react the way they do when their child comes out as LGB. The purpose of this study was to 1) validate and refine a portion of a newly developed conceptual model that focuses on parental reactions to LGB disclosure and 2) conduct a content validity study that refines a newly developed measure that captures parents' perceptions about their LGB child's sexual identity development.

The first manuscript examined the findings from an exploratory, phenomenological study, which consisted of two phases. The first phase included a focus group of six LGB college students who discussed their coming out experiences. The results from the focus group and conceptual model informed the development of a parent interview protocol used during the second phase of the study. The second phase included semi-structured interviews with twenty Midwest parents. Results from the deductive thematic analysis demonstrated that the newly developed conceptual model mapped onto the experiences of parents who have a LGB child.

The second manuscript used a mixed method design. The first phase of the study used an inductive thematic approach to examine parents' perceptions of their child's sexual identity development. Findings from the first phase were then used to create a measure that captured parents' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors related to their LGB child's sexual identity development. A panel of nine content and lay experts provided substantive feedback on the measure, which included having them rate each measure item as to whether it was clear and representative of the content domain. Item-level and scale-level content validity index averages were calculated. Based on the results from the content validity study, along with experts' qualitative feedback, various items were refined.

Taken together, the findings from both studies demonstrate that parents' reactions are complex. Their reactions depend on their environment, current relationships, and even past experiences. Even among accepting parents, their reactions are often filled with fear rather than excitement for their child's future. Therefore, it is critical that parents explain that their emotional response do not mean they do not love and support their child but rather are rooted in the fear they have about how the child will be treated by a heteronormative society. Additionally, parents possess misconceptions about sexual identity development. Thus, there is a need for more resources and supports that educate parents about sexual identity development and how to become a stronger advocate in their local community. Having such supports is vital to promoting supportive and healthy family relationships especially between LGB youth and their parents.

"Don't cry because it's over. Smile because it happened." – Dr. Seuss

This dissertation is dedicated to Deb Carlson. Words can't express how much I miss you and how losing you put a permanent whole in my heart. Your excitement for life was contagious, and you helped me recognize my love for art, especially photography. When I took a photography class in college, we went to Dr. Evermor's Forevertron to take photos for my final project. We found ourselves wandering over to Delaney's Surplus, a glorified junkyard. Why take photos of junk? You looked at the photos I had taken in my camera viewfinder and were giddy with excitement. You were right—the piles of leftover machinery parts told a story. In that moment, I learned how to see the beauty in absolute chaos.

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I can only hope that one day, I will be half the mother and educator you were.

Miss you Magoo.

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So with that, thank you. I made it. I finally made it.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

"All young people, regardless of sexual orientation or identity, deserve a safe and supportive environment in which to achieve their full potential." -Harvey Milk

Background

Over the last 50 years, the social and political climate towards lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) people in the United States has shifted. In the late 70s, 56% of Americans believed that being gay or lesbian was due to upbringing and environment (Gallup, 2015). Today, 51% of Americans believe that individuals are born gay or lesbian (Gallup, 2015). There has also been a dramatic shift in the awareness and visibility of LGB people. Thirty years ago, 25% of Americans reported a friend, relative, or coworker disclosing their sexual orientation; whereas, three years ago, 75% of Americans reported a similar experience (Gallup, 2015). From the repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell to the Supreme Court ruling in favor of marriage equality, the country has witnessed a shift in the legal treatment of LGB people.

Despite the movement toward equal rights, LGB youth continue to experience obstacles within their communities and families related to their identity. Forty-two percent of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth live in communities that are not accepting of LGBT people (Human Rights Campaign, 2012). Additionally, one in four LGBT youth do not feel accepted by their families (Human Rights Campaign, 2012). Prior research studies have examined how acceptance and rejection of family members affects the wellbeing of LGB youth.

Literature Review

A small body of literature focuses on how LGB youth benefit from family acceptance, primarily among siblings and parents. However, most research studies use a deficit-approach and focus on the negative outcomes associated with parental rejection among LGB youth (Bouris et al., 2010).

Family Reactions

Sibling acceptance. Siblings often serve as a key support person before and after the LGB young person comes out to a parent (Savin-Williams, 1998). Within some families, siblings are more accepting than parents and even take an active role in redirecting the parents' negativity away from the LGB sibling (Oswald, 1999). Some siblings find themselves becoming more protective of their LGB sibling and even challenging heteronormativity within their own lives and society (Hilton & Szymanski, 2011). Though these studies provide insight into how siblings can offer support to their LGB family member, research that focuses on the relationships of LGB young people and their siblings *prior* to disclosure and how their relationship plays a role in sibling and/or other family member acceptance is needed (Rothblum, 2010).

Parental acceptance. In addition to sibling support, parental acceptance can have a positive effect on LGB young people. Parents' acceptance of their child's sexual orientation has a positive effect on the young adult's self-esteem and overall health (Ryan, Russell, Huebner, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2010). Parental acceptance also acts as a protective factor against depression, risky behaviors, and suicidal thoughts and attempts (Ryan et al., 2010). Parental support has been linked to reduced drug use and reports of depressive symptoms among LGB adolescents (Espelage, Aragon, & Birkett, 2008; Padilla, Crisp, & Rew, 2010). In other studies, positive parent-child connectedness and having caring adults present in the lives of LGB adolescents acts as a protective factor against negative outcomes among these young people (Eisenberg & Resnick, 2006; Williams & Chapman, 2012). Though parental acceptance can have a positive effect on young people's wellbeing, parental rejection has been tied to negative outcomes among LGB adolescents and emerging adults.

Parental rejection. Though researchers have examined how family support can aid in the healthy development of LGB youth, there is a body of literature that focuses on the negative outcomes associate with parental rejection. The overreliance on the negative portrayals of LGB young people's family experiences sends a message that family rejection is something to expect. However, it is unclear if parental rejection is the norm (Savin-Williams, 2005). Whether or not parental rejection is the common experience of LGB youth, it is still important to understand that when LGB young people are rejected by their parents, they may engage in risky behaviors and/or experience depression, suicide, and/or homelessness.

Risky health behaviors. When compared to their heterosexual peers, LGB young people abuse substances (e.g., alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other illegal drugs) at higher rates (Balsam, Molina, & Lehavot, 2013; Goldbach, Tanner-Smith, Bagwel, & Dunlap, 2013; Marshal et al., 2008; Marshal, Friedman, Stall, & Thompson, 2009). Within the context of family rejection, LGB emerging adults who experience high family rejection are three times more likely to engage in unprotected sexual intercourse and to use illegal substances than youth who experience low family rejection (Ryan, Huebner, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2009).

Depression and suicide. LGB youth also experience more depressive symptoms and suicidal thoughts and attempts (Almeida, Johnson, Corliss, Molnar, & Azrael, 2009; Balsam, Beauchaine, Mickey, & Rothblum, 2005; Marshal et al., 2013; Russell & Joyner, 2001; Safren & Heimberg, 1999; Silenzio, Pena, Duberstein, Cerel, & Knox, 2007) when compared to their heterosexual peers. Family rejection further increases the risk of depression and suicidal behaviors among LGB young people (D'Augelli et al., 2005; Liu & Mustanski, 2012; Mustanski & Liu, 2013; Ryan et al., 2009). After disclosure, LGB youth experience verbal and physical abuse from their parents and siblings (D'Augelli, Hershberger, & Pilkington, 1998), which may

lead to increased suicidal thoughts. Parents' rejection of their child's sexual orientation, such as discouraging atypical gender behaviors are contributing stressors that lead LGB young people to attempt suicide (D'Augelli et al., 2005). Perceptions of low social support among LGB youth have been linked to higher rates of suicidal ideation (Liu & Mustanski, 2012; Mustanski & Liu, 2013). Furthermore, LGB young people who experience high family rejection are about six times more likely to report depressive symptoms and eight times more likely to attempt suicide when compared to their heterosexual peers (Ryan et al., 2009).

Homelessness. As a result of parental rejection, many LGB young people are kicked out of their homes (Bearss, 2013; Ray, 2006). Currently, there is a disproportionate number of LGB young people who are homeless (Keuroghlian, Shtasel, & Bassuk, 2014). In one study, almost half of LGB youth experienced homelessness at one point in their life, which in turn leads to increased reports of depressive symptoms and substance abuse (Rosario, Schrimshaw, & Hunter, 2012). Among homeless LGB young people, they report higher rates of victimization, depressive symptoms, substance abuse, post-traumatic stress, and suicidal behaviors when compared to their heterosexual peers (Cochran, Stewart, Ginzler, & Cauce, 2002; Ray, 2006; Whitbeck, Chen, Hoyt, Tyler, & Johnson, 2004).

Based on the literature, it is clear that parental rejection can have detrimental effects on the wellbeing of LGB young people. Though the literature explains *how* parents respond to disclosure and the effects it can have on LGB young people, these studies do not accurately explain *why* parents react the way they do.

Parental Experiences

Over the last 15 years, a number of studies have examined parents' experiences and reactions to having a child who is LGB (e.g., Aveline, 2006; Gottlieb, 2000; LaSala, 2010). In

these studies, parents often discuss their experiences before, during, and after disclosure. Though these studies provide a foundation for understanding parental experiences, there are various limitations to this body of research.

Before disclosure. Research interviews often begin with parents discussing whether they did or did not suspect their child's LGB identity at an early age (Aveline, 2006; Freedman, 2008; Goodrich, 2009; Grafsky, 2014; Lopata, 2003). Suspicions arise based on the child's gender atypical interests and behaviors, lack of dating experiences with the opposite sex, and/or close relationships with same-sex peers (Aveline, 2006; Goodrich, 2009; Gottlieb, 2000; Grafsky, 2014; LaSala, 2010; Lee & Lee, 2006; Pearlman, 2005; Saltzburg, 2004). Lack of suspicion is due, in part, to the child dating someone of the opposite sex (Aveline, 2006; Goldfried & Goldfried, 2001).

During disclosure. Parents learn about their child's sexual identity either directly or indirectly. For example, some youth tell their parents they are LGB (Baptist & Allen, 2008; Freedman, 2008; Goldfried & Goldfried, 2001; Goodrich, 2009; Gottlieb, 2000; Grafsky, 2014; Hom, 2003; LaSala, 2000, 2010; Lee & Lee, 2006; Lin & Hudley, 2009; Lopata, 2003; Philips & Ancis, 2008), while other parents may learn about the child's LGB identity from a spouse or family member or assume their child is LGB based on their observations (Gottlieb, 2000; Grafsky, 2014; LaSala, 2010; Lin & Hudley, 2009). Parents then respond to this new information in a variety of ways. Some parents are indifferent after learning that their child is LGB (Freedman, 2008; Gottlieb, 2000), while other parents report feelings of acceptance, love, admiration, and relief surrounding their child's disclosure (Freedman, 2008; Gonzalez, Rostosky, Odom, & Riggle, 2013; Goodrich, 2009; Gottlieb, 2000; Maslowe & Yarhouse, 2015; Wakeley & Tuason, 2011). The most common reactions, however, tend to include feelings of shock,

anxiety, embarrassment, confusion, doubt, sadness, devastation, loss, fear, anger, guilt, shame, and regret (Aveline, 2006; Baptist & Allen, 2008; Butcher, 2014; Fields, 2001; Freedman, 2008; Goldfried & Goldfried, 2001; Goodrich, 2009; Gottlieb, 2000; Grafsky, 2014; Hom, 2003; LaSala, 2000, 2010; Lee & Lee, 2006; Lin & Hudley, 2009; Lopata, 2003; Maslowe & Yarhouse, 2015; Pearlman, 2005; Philips & Ancis, 2008; Saltzburg, 2004; Wakeley & Tuason, 2011).

After disclosure. After learning their child is LGB, parents engage in a variety of behaviors. Some parents report that their relationship with their child continues on as normal (Freedman, 2008; Goodrich, 2009; Gottlieb, 2000). For many parents, however, it takes time for them to engage in behaviors that demonstrate their acceptance. After parents learn their child is LGB, they have to let go of certain expectations for their child (e.g., marrying someone from the opposite-sex) (Philips & Ancis, 2008; Wakeley & Tuason, 2011), as well as work through their own homophobia and stereotypes (Baptist & Allen, 2008; Gottlieb, 2000; Hom, 2003; LaSala, 2010; Lee & Lee, 2006). Parents also report re-evaluating religious and cultural beliefs surrounding same-sex relationships (Gonzalez et al., 2013; Goodrich, 2009; Hom, 2003; LaSala, 2000; Philips & Ancis, 2008). As parents become more comfortable with their child's LGB identity, they demonstrate their support for their child by attending LGB events, educating others, standing up for their child and other LGB people, distancing themselves from rejecting people, and showing unconditional love to their child (Baptist & Allen, 2008; Freedman, 2008; Gonzalez et al., 2013; Goodrich, 2009; Gottlieb, 2000; Lee & Lee, 2006; Maslowe & Yarhouse, 2015; Philips & Ancis, 2008). Therefore, the experiences of parents are both complex and diverse.

Limitations of existing literature. Among the studies that have investigated parents' experiences, there are significant limitations. First, past studies tend to use a deficit-approach when examining how parental reactions negatively affect health outcomes of LGB young people (Bouris et al., 2010). Thus, few studies focus on the strengths of parents and families and how to utilize their assets to promote family acceptance. Second, few studies place an emphasis on the mechanism that leads parents away from rejection and closer to acceptance (Merighi & Grimes, 2000). Last, theoretical frameworks have not been consistently used to explain parental reactions when young people come out as LGB (Potoczniak, Crosbie-Burnett, & Saltzburg, 2009; Willoughby, Doty, & Malik, 2008). Past studies have applied Kübler-Ross's grief model (Anderson, 1987; DeVine, 1984; Robinson, Walters, & Skeen, 1989), social-cognitive-behavioral models (Crosbie-Burnett, Foster, Murray, & Bowen, 1996), family stress theory (Glennon, 2012; Willoughby et al., 2008; Willoughby, Malik, & Lindahl, 2006), and stigma theory (Glennon, 2012). Though each model captures the unique experiences of some parents, these models do not capture the experiences of *all* parents. Rather, most models focus on the experiences of parents who have a difficult time accepting their youth's identity. Therefore, it is unclear why some parents are more accepting than others.

Theoretical Framework

A newly developed conceptual model that captures the experiences of parents who have a child[1] that comes out as LGB[2] guides this dissertation study. At the core of this conceptual model is the assumption that the parental experience cannot be captured by a single theory. Rather, this integrative model pulls theories from various disciplines to provide a more nuanced understanding of the parental experience. For this dissertation, the portion of the model that deals

[1] The term "child" includes an individual ranging in age from birth to adulthood.
[2] The newly developed model addresses sexual orientation and not gender identity.

with parents' experiences during and after disclosure is used. Thus, the two theoretical frameworks that inform this part of the conceptual model are discussed, and a brief overview of the model is provided.[3]

Underlying Theories

Stress and coping. When faced with new information, individuals have to decide whether it is worthy of attention. Information appraisal depends on the meaning placed on the new information based on the individual's beliefs, values, and experiences (Lazarus, 1991, 2001; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Once the new information is appraised, an emotional response follows (Arnold, 1960; Brashers, 2001; Roseman, 1984).

Emotional responses can be grouped into four categories: neutral, positive, negative, and combined (Brashers, 2001; Lazarus, 1991). Neutral responses, or feelings of indifference, generally follow appraisals where the new information is viewed as a non-threat to the individual (Brashers, 2001). Low threat appraisals may also result in positive emotional responses, including happiness (Brashers, 2001; Lazarus, 1991; Roseman, 2001). However, when the new information is appraised as threatening, a negative emotional response, such as fear or anger is triggered (Brashers, 2001; Lazarus, 1991; Roseman, 2001). Additionally, individuals can experience combined emotional responses where two emotions (e.g., relief and sadness) are experienced concurrently (Brashers, 2001; Lazarus, 1991). Neutral and positive emotional responses often elicit "business as usual" behaviors; whereas, negative and combined emotional responses trigger behaviors aimed at reducing the perceived stressor (Lazarus, 1981, 1991, 2001). As individuals cope with this new information through approach or avoidance techniques (Holahan, Moos, & Schaefer, 1996; Krohne, 1996; Roth & Cohen, 1986), they create a new

[3] For a more detailed explanation of the development of the model, see (Chrisler, under review).

relational meaning surrounding the perceived stressful event (Lazarus, 2001).

Ecological systems model. Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1986, 1992) proposed an ecological systems model, which consists of a series of nested systems. At the center of the model is the developing individual. Next is the microsystem where the individual engages in day-to-day interactions. This includes interactions with family members, peers, neighbors, and colleagues. The mesosystem is next which includes interactions and relationships between two microsystems that include the individual. Next is the exosystem, which includes relationships between a microsystem and another system. The relations in the exosystem indirectly affect the individual. The macrosystem is the broadest of the systems and includes cultural and societal influences in which the other systems operate. Last is the chronosystem, which includes the transition of time and how personal and historical event can influences an individual's development. All of the systems have a bi-directional influence on one another, meaning that the microsystem influences the mesosystem and the mesoystems influence the microsystem.

Proposed Conceptual Model

The conceptual model explains the types of emotional and behavioral processes that influence parental reactions and why some parents become more or less accepting of their youth's sexual identity over time. The portion of the newly developed model used in this dissertation (see Figure 1.1) consists of six core components, beginning with the parent confirming the child's sexual identity. Confirmation of the LGB child's identity is either done directly (e.g., the child tells the parent he/she is LGB) or indirectly (e.g., the parent learns about the child's LGB identity from his/her spouse or assumes a non-heterosexual identity without talking to the child). Once the LGB child has come out, the parent needs to appraise this information, which includes evaluating whether this new information requires attention (primary

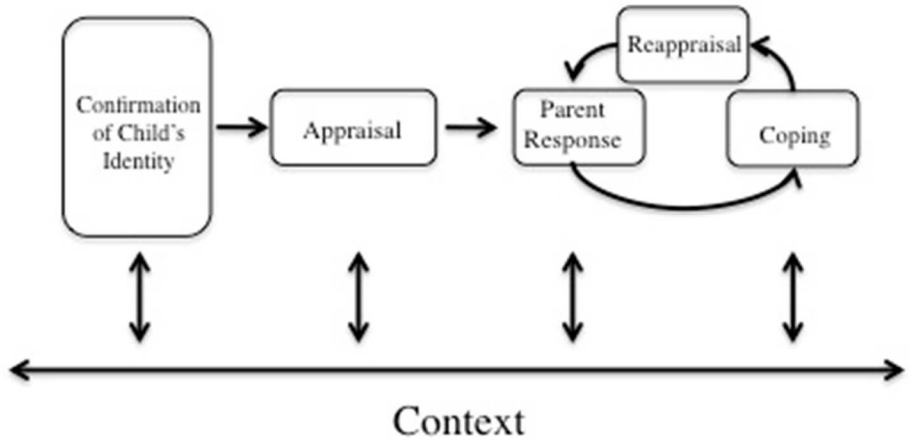

Figure 1.1. Conceptual model of parental reactions to coming out.

appraisal) and if so, what coping strategies should be put into play (secondary appraisal) (Lazarus, 1991, 2001; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Depending on the appraisal, parents offer neutral, positive, negative, or a combined response (Brashers, 2001). Neutral responses are often feelings of indifference towards the new information (Brashers, 2001). Positive feelings include happiness, love, and relief (Brashers, 2001; Lazarus, 1991; Roseman, 2001), and negative responses are often characterized as shock, sadness, loss, fear, and guilt (Brashers, 2001; Lazarus, 1991; Roseman, 2001). Parents may also experience a variety of emotions at once (Brashers, 2001; Lazarus, 1991).

Once parents have provided an initial emotional reaction, they need to make sense of this new information. Parents will either actively approach the situation or use avoidance techniques (Roth & Cohen, 1986). Cognitive approach coping includes internalized thoughts that aim to reduce stress; whereas, behavioral approach coping techniques include parents engaging in proactive observable behaviors, such as seeking support from a loved one (Holahan et al., 1996). Avoidance techniques are used when parents want to deny or distance themselves from the event (Krohne, 1996). Cognitive avoidance coping strategies are internalized thoughts that allow the parent to dissociate or discount the event or reinterpret the stressor before trying to cope with it,

and behavioral avoidance coping strategies include parents physically removing or distracting themselves from the stressful event (Moos & Schaefer, 1993).

As parents are coping with this new information, their beliefs and attitudes are evolving, which in turn leads to the construction of a new relational meaning related to the interpretation of the perceived stressor (Lazarus, 2001). In other words, their beliefs about having a LGB child are changing. For example, parents of a lesbian daughter may state that in the beginning, they were saddened that their daughter would never have children. However, once they talked to other parents who have LGB children, they quickly realized that their daughter could still have a family through adoption or artificial insemination. In this example, parents are gathering more information about their LGB child and creating new meanings surrounding their child's identity.

The last component of the model is context (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986, 1992). At all stages of the model, context is influencing parents' thought and beliefs surrounding their youth's LGB identity. Context is particularly important when considering parental acceptance. For example, at the microsystem level, the relationship the parent has with the LGB child might influence the appraisal of this new information. How extended family members react to the youth's disclosure (mesosystem) or the personal transitions the parent experiences at the chronosystem level may all play roles in the perceived acceptance level of the parent.

Purpose of Dissertation

The purpose of this study is to 1) validate and refine a portion of a newly developed conceptual model that focuses on how parents who have a LGB[4] child experience their child's coming out process and 2) conduct a content validity study that refines a newly developed

[4] This study will exclusively look at sexual identity. Parents who have a transgender child who also identifies as LGB will be included. However, the interview will focus on their child's sexual identity.

measure that captures parents' attitudes of and knowledge about sexual identity development. Because little is known about the experiences of parents after disclosure, this study will fill an important gap in the literature. To systematically examine the experiences of parents who have a LGB child, the study uses a variety of qualitative methodological approaches, including a focus group of LGB youth, in-depth interviews with parents, and a review panel of content and parent experts.

Research Questions

There are three questions guiding this study: 1) what are the experiences of parents after their child comes out as LGB, 2) how do parents' experiences reinforce or challenge the newly developed conceptual framework, and 3) can a valid and reliable instrument be created to collect parents' attitudes of and knowledge about sexual identity development? The first manuscript will answer the first two research questions by using the findings from the focus group and in-depth parent interviews to validate and refine a portion of the model. The second manuscript will answer the last research question through the findings from the inductive thematic analysis of a qualitative study and the content validity study.

Overview of Manuscripts

Manuscript 1

This exploratory, phenomenological study includes a focus group of six LGB college students who discussed their coming out experiences. The results from the focus group, as well as the newly developed conceptual model (see Figure 1.1) informed the development of the parent interview protocol. Twenty parents were recruited from social media outlets (e.g., Facebook) and affirming organizations, primarily Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG). The audio-recorded parent interviews followed a semi-structured format, lasted

about an hour, and were conducted over the phone. During the interview, parents were asked about their experiences related to their child's disclosure and what influenced their level of acceptance of their child's LGB identity overtime.

Upon completion of the interviews, transcripts were imported into Nvivo and analyzed using deductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Results from the thematic analysis demonstrated that the components of the conceptual model that guided the study mapped effectively onto the narratives of the parents in the study.

Manuscript 2

The second manuscript describes the findings from a content validity study. The first phase of the study used the results from an inductive thematic analysis of sexual identity development to develop a measure that captures parents' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors around LGB identity development of their child. To gather feedback about the proposed measure, a panel of nine content and lay experts were selected based on their level of expertise (Davis, 1992; Lynn, 1986). Those who consented to the study were sent a copy of the measure and asked to rate each measure item on a 1 to 4 scale as to whether it was clear and represented the content domain (Davis, 1992; Grant & Davis, 1997; Rubio, Berg-Weger, Tebb, Lee, & Rauch, 2003).

To analyze the expert feedback, item-level content validity indexes and the scale-level content validity index average were calculated (Davis, 1992; Grant & Davis, 1997; Lynn, 1986). To calculate the content validity index for each item, the number of experts that provided a rating of 3 or 4 for that item was divided by the total number of study experts. Then, the content validity index average for the entire measure was calculated by averaging the item content validity index scores across all items. Based on expert feedback and the findings from the content validity index analysis of each item and the whole measure, various items were refined.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into four chapters. In Chapter One, background on the research topic is provided, including an overview of the existing literature related to the study. Then, the theoretical framework that guides the study is discussed. Last, the purpose of the study, research questions, and an overview of manuscript one and two are provided. Chapter Two consists of manuscript one, which focuses on the findings generated from the focus group and in-depth parent interviews. Chapter Three includes manuscript two, which discusses the findings from the qualitative and content validity study. For Chapter Four, an integrative conclusion of manuscript one and two is provided, including implications for future research.

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ABSTRACT

CHAPTER 2: MANUSCRIPT 1

Because family rejection leads to a number of negative outcomes among lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) youth, understanding parental reactions and how parents process what it means to have a LGB child is critical. The aim of this study is to explore parents' experiences related to learning that their child is LGB. Using deductive thematic analysis, a newly developed conceptual model that explains parental reactions was used to analyze the 20 in-depth, parent interview transcripts. The analysis demonstrated that the components of the conceptual model that guided the study mapped effectively onto each transcript. Limitations and next steps for future studies are discussed.

Introduction

Adolescence is often described as a time of change. Teenagers are learning who they are and who they want to become. As such, they are establishing more autonomy and independence from their families. Though difficult, many parents are prepared for the inevitable shift in the parent-child relationship where their child becomes less dependent on them. During this time of change, however, parents often do not prepare for how they will respond if their child comes out to them as lesbian, gay, or bisexual (LGB).

Even though recent political shifts seem to suggest a changing climate for LGB young people in the United States, coming out to family and friends can be overwhelming. Many LGB youth are fearful that their parents will not be accepting of their identity, which leads them to delay their disclosure (D'Augelli, Hershberger, & Pilkington, 1998; Ryan, 2009; Ryan, Huebner, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2009). Recent studies have found that family support is critical to the physical and emotional wellbeing of LGB youth (Espelage, Aragon, & Birkett, 2008; Ryan, Russell, Huebner, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2010). However, most of the literature focuses on the negative impact parent and family rejection has on the wellbeing of LGB young people (Cochran, Stewart, Ginzler, & Cauce, 2002; D'Augelli et al., 2005; D'Augelli et al., 1998; Keuroghlian, Shtasel, & Bassuk, 2014; Liu & Mustanski, 2012; Mustanski & Liu, 2013; Ray, 2006; Rosario, Schrimshaw, & Hunter, 2012; Ryan et al., 2009; Whitbeck, Chen, Hoyt, Tyler, & Johnson, 2004). Therefore, even though adolescence is a time when youth are becoming more independent, parent and family support is still crucial to the wellbeing of LGB youth. Thus, it is imperative that parents recognize the importance of supporting their youth as they are developing their evolving identity. As such, it is critical that parent support is cultivated in families where youth are coming out.

Though past studies have examined the perspectives of parents who have LGB children, there is still a lack of understanding of *why* some parents are more accepting than others. As a result, there are limited conceptual and theoretical models and frameworks that capture the diverse experiences of parents. Thus, there is a need to create more inclusive models that are grounded in both existing research and theory. By uncovering what contributes to a parents' acceptance of their youth's identity overtime, relevant resources and interventions that promote parental acceptance can be developed.

Proposed Conceptual Model

In the last 30 years, researchers have used existing research and theory to better understand the experiences of parents who have LGB children. Kübler-Ross's grief model was the most commonly used theory to examine parental reactions to coming out (Anderson, 1987; DeVine, 1984; Robinson, Walters, & Skeen, 1989). Rather than focus on grief and loss, other researchers applied different theories to the parental process, including social-cognitive-behavioral models (Crosbie-Burnett, Foster, Murray, & Bowen, 1996), family stress theory (Glennon, 2012; Willoughby, Doty, & Malik, 2008; Willoughby, Malik, & Lindahl, 2006), and stigma theory (Glennon, 2012). New conceptual models that focus on parental adjustment and identity development of parents after learning their child is LGB have also been developed (Goodrich, 2009; Heatherington & Lavner, 2008; Philips & Ancis, 2008).

Though these models describe some aspect of the parental experience after the LGB child comes out, there are several limitations. First, all theoretical assumptions in the proposed models are not validated by empirical research (Willoughby et al., 2008; Willoughby et al., 2006). Second, the data generated theories evolved from studies that used small sample sizes and lacked diversity (e.g., race/ethnicity, income, education, and religious background) (Goodrich, 2009;

Saltzburg, 2004). Last, many of the newly developed theories have not been validated or refined by empirical studies (Anderson, 1987; Crosbie-Burnett et al., 1996; DeVine, 1984; Glennon, 2012; Goodrich, 2009; Heatherington & Lavner, 2008; Philips & Ancis, 2008; Robinson et al., 1989; Saltzburg, 2004).

To address these limitations, a new conceptual model informed by both existing theory and research[5] was developed (see Figure 1.1). The portion of the model that was used in this study consists of six dimensions and begins with parents confirming their child's LGB identity, which is either done through direct or indirect means. Second, the parents engages in primary and secondary appraisal, which consists of parents determining if their child's disclosure warrants attention and if so, how they will cope with any stress that accompanies the disclosure (Lazarus, 1991, 2001; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Third, parents then provide a neutral, positive, negative, or a combined response (Brashers, 2001). Fourth, parents ease their stress by engaging in active or avoidant techniques (Roth & Cohen, 1986). Active or "approach" techniques consist of cognitions (e.g., taking time to think about this new information in order to reduce stress) or behaviors (e.g., gathering more information about a particular event) (Holahan, Moos, & Schaefer, 1996). Avoidance techniques also consist of cognitions (e.g., denying the information) or behaviors (e.g., removing oneself from the interaction) (Krohne, 1996; Moos & Schaefer, 1993). Fifth, while coping with this new information, shifts in the meaning of the event occur (Lazarus, 2001). Last, how contextual factors at various system levels influence parents' experiences throughout the process are considered (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986, 1992).

[5] For a more thorough review of the development of this model, see Chrisler (under review).

Current Study

Theory development as it relates to why parents react the way they do when their child comes out as LGB has been conducted in two ways. The first way consists of researchers who developed a study that generated new theory but then did not connect the data generated theory to existing research and/or theory (Goodrich, 2009; Philips & Ancis, 2008). The second way includes researchers who used prior research and/or theory to propose a new theory but then did not validate it by conducting a subsequent study (Crosbie-Burnett et al., 1996; Glennon, 2012; Heatherington & Lavner, 2008). Therefore, the goal of this study is to validate and refine a portion of a newly developed conceptual model that was informed by both previous research and theory. Thus, the study aims to answer the following research question:

1. What are the experiences of parents after their child comes out as LGB?
2. How do parents' experiences reinforce or challenge a newly developed conceptual model?

Philosophical Assumptions

The study design and analysis are rooted within a postpositivism and constructivism worldview. Post-positivism evolved out of the positivist tradition which relied heavily on experimental methods and quantitative analyses to identify a single objective truth or reality (Philips & Burbules, 2000). However, philosophers Karl Popper (1965) and Thomas Kuhn (1962) noted key epistemological issues with positivism (e.g., falsification and paradigm shifts). Thus, post-positivism asserts that the scientific method consists of value driven research questions and theory-laden observations (Philips & Burbules, 2000). However, this worldview can be challenging to use with qualitative data. Therefore, this study also incorporates a constructivism paradigm in order to uncover the multiple truths and lived realities of all

participants (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Though this study aims to validate a portion of a conceptual model through deductive analysis, the voices of all participants are valued and viewed as multiple truths.

The study employed a phenomenological design and use deductive thematic analysis strategies, which compliment the constructivism and postpositivist tradition, respectively. Phenomenological studies explore the narratives of participants, generally through interviews, who all experienced a particular phenomenon and then by using a systematic analysis approach, commonalities among the gathered experiences are identified (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, for this study, interviews captured the lived experiences of parents and how they came to understand and accept their LGB child's sexual identity. The interviews were then combined and analyzed using a combination of phenomenological and deductive thematic analysis techniques which included using the existing conceptual model to identify communalities among the participants in hopes of explaining the phenomenon (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012; Creswell, 2013).

Methods

Sample Selection and Recruitment

To better understand the experiences of parents who have LGB children, inclusion criteria for this study included the following: 1) currently resided in Wisconsin or Michigan, 2) had a LGB child who came out to the parent being interviewed in the last 10 years; and 3) had a LGB child who was 10 to 30 years old. Additionally, if two parents from the same family wanted to participate in the study, they were allowed to do so. However, separate interviews were conducted.

Recruitment for this study ran from May 2015 to December 2015. Initial recruitment strategies included developing Facebook page with more information about this study (see

Appendix A and B for the recruitment flyers). The Facebook page was then shared with Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) organizations in Michigan and Wisconsin. The local PFLAGS that did not have Facebook pages were contacted via email. Additional outreach to LGB affirmative organizations (e.g., community centers and religious groups) were made via Facebook and email. Study information was also shared on the principal investigator's personal LinkedIn and Facebook account. Due to the sensitive nature of this study, establishing rapport with parents was critical. To promote this trust, working with local organizations and meeting with parents at their support group meetings provided an opportunity to create this relationship. The principal investigator attended two PFLAG meetings to share more information about the study. Snowball techniques were also utilized.

When a parent expressed interest in participating in the study, I scheduled a time for the interview. Before starting the interview, however, I confirmed that they met the inclusion criteria. If so, the interview consent form was read to them (see Appendix C for a copy of the consent form) and the interview was conducted (see Appendix D for the list of interview questions). At the conclusion of the interview, parents were asked a series of demographic questions (see Appendix E). If they did not meet the inclusion criteria, the interview was ended, and they were thanked for their interest in the study.

Description of Sample

Twenty parents participated in this study. Parents ranged in age from 30 to 64 years old. Self-selected gender identity of the parents included male (n = 2), female (n = 16), and gender nonconforming (n = 2). Participants also identified their sexual orientation as heterosexual (n = 17), bisexual (n = 2), and queer (n = 1). In terms of race and ethnicity, parents identified as Caucasian (n = 19) and American Indian (n = 1). More than half of the parents (n = 13) held an

associate's degree or higher. Three-quarters of the sample (n = 15) voted for Obama in both elections, identified with a certain religion, and had a combined household income of $40,000 or more. When asked about their level of religiosity on a scale from 1 (*not religious at all*) to 4 (*highly religious*), the average rating was a 2.5. When asked a similar question about spirituality on a scale from 1 (*not spiritual at all*) to 4 (*highly spiritual),* the average rating of spirituality was a 3.5.

Half of the parents resided in Wisconsin while the other half were from Michigan. The 2013 Rural-Urban Continuum Codes were used to classify the counties in which parents resided (United States Department of Agriculture [USDA], 2013). Three codes are used to delineate metro counties based on population size, and six codes are used to categorize nonmetro counties based on population size and adjacency to metro areas (USDA, 2013). A little over half of the parents resided in metro areas (n = 11) while the others lived in nonmetro counties (n = 9). Further delineation of the metro and nonmetro counties, as well as additional demographic information about the parents can be found in Table 2.1.

Nineteen LGB youth from 18 unique families were referenced in this study. Two sets of couples were interviewed separately, leading to 18 unique families and 18 youth. Additionally, one mother had two children that met the inclusion criteria, which resulted in a total of 19 youth. In regards to the demographics of the LGB children, the age range of the child at the time of the interview was 11 to 30 years old with an average age of 19 years old, and parents reported the average age of the child at the time of disclosure was 15 years old and ranged from 6 to 22 years old. All parents reported their child had come out in the last 10 years. When asked about the gender of the youth, most parents reported having a male son (n = 9). Over half of the parents reported their child's sexual orientation as being gay (n = 12). It is important to acknowledge that

Table 2.1

Parent Demographic Information

Parent Demographics	% (*n* = 20)
Age range	
30-34	5% (1)
35-39	10% (2)
40-44	15% (3)
45-49	15% (3)
50-54	25% (5)
55-59	25% (5)
60-64	5% (1)
Education attainment	
High school graduate	15% (3)
Some college, no degree	20% (4)
Associate's degree	20% (4)
Bachelor's degree	30% (6)
Master's degree	15% (3)
Combined household income	
$20,000 - $29,999	10% (2)
$30,000 - $39,999	15% (3)
$40,000-$49,999	10% (2)
$50,000 - $74,999	20% (4)
$75,000 - $99,999	30% (6)
$100,00 - $150,000	10% (2)
Over $150,000	5% (1)
County classification	
Metro	
Counties in metro areas of 1 million population or more	10% (2)
Counties in metro areas of 250,000 to 1 million population	25% (5)
Counties in metro areas of fewer than 250,000 population	20% (4)
Nonmetro	
Urban population of 20,000 or more, adjacent to a metro area	20% (4)
Urban population of 2,500 to 19,999, adjacent to a metro area	15% (3)
Urban population of 2,500 to 19,999, not adjacent to a metro area	10% (2)
Vote in 2012	
Obama	75% (15)
Romney	5% (1)
Other Candidate	10% (2)
I did not vote	5% (1)
I prefer not to answer	5% (1)
Vote in 2008	
Obama	75% (15)
McCain	10% (2)

Table 2.1 (cont'd)

Other candidate	5% (1)
I did not vote	5% (1)
I prefer not to answer	5% (1)
Do you identify with a certain religion?	
No	25% (5)
Yes	75% (15)
If yes, what?	
Presbyterian	15% (3)
Catholic	20% (4)
Christian	15% (3)
Native American church	5% (1)
Methodist	5% (1)
Unitarian Universalism	5% (1)
Heathen	5% (1)
Protestant	5% (1)

parents self-selected their child's gender identity and sexual orientation. Additional demographic information about the LGB children is located in Table 2.2.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection consisted of four sources: focus group, in-depth interviews, field notes, and data memos. The interview protocol (see Appendix F), which consisted of ten questions based off of the conceptual model, was piloted with a focus group of six LGB college-aged students from the Midwest. A recruitment email was sent to the principal investigators' prior students. Inclusion criteria included coming out to at least one parent in the last 10 years, residing in the Midwest, and currently being 18 to 30 years old. Seven students were screened, and only six met the inclusion criteria. Six participants consented to participate in the focus group (see Appendix G for a copy of the consent form). The focus group was held in a campus classroom. Refreshments were provided and at the conclusion of the focus group, participants filled out a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix H) and were emailed a $20 gift card.

Table 2.2

Child Demographic Information

Child Demographics	**% (*n* = 19)**
Gender	
Male	45% (9)
Female	25% (5)
Transgender male	15% (3)
Transgender	5% (1)
Gender nonconforming	5% (1)
Sexual orientation	
Gay	65% (12)
Lesbian	20% (4)
Bisexual	10% (2)
Bisexual or queer	5% (1)

One third of the focus group members identified as gay men of color ($n = 2$). Two-thirds of the focus group members identified as White bisexual ($n = 2$) or lesbian ($n = 2$) females. The goal of the focus group was to pilot and integrate their feedback into the parent interview protocol. At the conclusion of the focus group, modifications were made to the parent interview protocol.

In-depth interviews allow the researcher to collect information about lived experiences as a way to better understand a phenomenon (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Once parents were recruited, all interviews were conducted over the phone with the exception of one interview being conducted over Facetime. Due to the geographical location of the interviews, phone interviews were the most efficient way to conduct the interviews (Irvine, 2011). One benefit of phone interviewing is that it promotes some level of anonymity especially when sharing sensitive information (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004). However, with that comes the challenge of not being able to respond to facial expressions and body language. Therefore, my role during the interview was to engage in active listening, ask clarifying questions, and allow for pauses (Seidman, 2006).

Participants were asked ten questions that were centered on their experiences before, during, and after their child came out as LGB (see Table 2.3). Additional clarifying or probing questions were asked when necessary. The average interview lasted about 54 minutes with a range of 43 to 70 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded.

Extensive use of field notes was used throughout the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Field notes were written before, during, and after the interview. Such notes included questions and concerns that emerged from the interviews (e.g., some parents didn't know what religiosity was). Comments repeated across several parents were noted. Memoing was also used throughout the data collection process (Creswell, 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Memos were written after that interview was transcribed. Emerging themes and how the data either confirmed or challenged the conceptual model were recorded.

Validation of Data

To establish rigor in the use of qualitative methods, validation of the data needs to be established (Creswell, 2013). Other qualitative methodological experts refer to this as trustworthiness or authenticity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In qualitative data analysis, Creswell (2013) suggests engaging in at least two of the eight suggest validation procedures. For this study, four strategies are used: 1) triangulation, 2) peer review, 3) clarifying researcher bias, and 4) rich, thick description.

Triangulation is achieved when multiple data sources are used and the study findings are corroborated with existing theory and research (Creswell, 2013). This study used a variety of data sources including a focus group, in-depth interviews, field notes, and memos. Additionally, existing theory and research guided the study and were then integrated during the analysis phase of the study. Peer review was used throughout the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The principal

Table 2.3

Interview Questions Mapped onto Conceptual Model

Interview Questions	Dimension of Conceptual Model
1. Tell me about your relationship with your child before he/she came out.	Context
2. Did you suspect your child was LGB? a. If so, tell me about that experience. Tell me why you thought that. b. If not, why do you think you did not suspect?	Context
3. Tell me about the time you confirmed your child was LGB. a. Did you ask your child? Did you confirm through other sources? b. How did you react? Do you remember how you felt?	Confirmation of Child's Identity and Parent Response
4. Once you found out, did you have any concerns or worries for your child? What about for yourself? What about your relationship with your child? a. How did this make you feel?	Appraisal and Parent Response
5. What did you do next to deal with these worries? a. Tell me what has happened since then. b. Did you have to change any expectations for your child?	Coping and Reappraisal
6. On a scale from 1 to 10, how accepting were you when you first found out? How accepting are you now? What contributed to that change? If no change, what contributed to this rating staying the same?	Context
7. How do you think your religious identity has played a role in this process? More generally, what about your cultural identity?	Context
8. Were there other things that influenced your level of acceptance? Supportive people? Resources? a. Looking back, is there anything you would have done differently? b. What advice would you give to other parents? What do other parents need?	Context
9. Has this experience changed you for the better or worse? If so, why? If not, why not?	Context
10. Finally, what are your hopes, dreams, and goals for your child?	Reappraisal and Context

investigator's research assistant and dissertation advisor act as peer debriefers, which included challenging the principal investigator's methodological approaches and interpretation of the data

(Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Before the study was implemented, the principal investigator engaged in personal reflection about her privilege and biases related to the study, which can be found in the following section (Merriam, 1988). Rich, thick descriptions allow the reader to decide whether the whether the data demonstrate "transferability" or in other words, can be applied to other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988). Throughout this study, the themes are highlighted through the use of participants' thoughts and insights related to the phenomenon being explored.

Statement of Reflexivity

As a qualitative researcher, it is critical to examine how my power, privilege, and positionality might influence the study design and findings. As an educated, White cisgender female in a heterosexual marriage, I may seem as an outsider to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) community. As such, I am aware of my ally position and how it may blind me to certain aspects during the interview and analysis. However, I do have a vested interest in the LGBTQ community. When my younger brother came out more than five years ago, I witnessed my family's reactions to his disclosure. Having been raised in a conservative Catholic family in rural Wisconsin, I suspected a negative reaction from my mom. However, this was not the case. As such, I wanted to examine whether this might be the case for other Midwest families and give voice to that lived experience.

What I found throughout this process was that parents wanted to share their stories and were eager to learn "what I found out" through this study. Going into the study, I had concerns that parents would see me as "not one of them" but this was not the case. Parents took comfort in the fact that I was both a student from Michigan State and a Wisconsin native. This shared connection allowed me to build rapport with parents quickly and to ask parents tough questions.

The brutal honesty, both good and bad, that parents shared was humbling and truly brought new light to this line of work.

Data Analysis

In order to analyze the information form the semi-structured interviews, deductive thematic analysis was conducted (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Interviews were transcribed by the principal investigator. After the interviews were transcribed, a memo was created. Memos were used to keep track of ideas and patterns that emerged during the data collection and the coding process (Creswell, 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The transcripts and accompanying memo were then re-read and identifying information was removed, such as names of individuals and towns/cities and notes on a priori themes were recorded.

Because thematic analysis is flexible, it allows for the use of various theoretical frameworks; thus, a deductive or "top down" thematic approach was used (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Using theory-driven data coding, six a priori themes and additional subthemes related to the conceptual model were used during the analysis phase and can be found in Table 2.4. During this phase, the principal investigator used all six a priori themes and subthemes to code the interview transcripts in Nvivo. To ensure clarity of the coding process, a codebook (see Appendix I) was developed and consensus coding was completed for 30% of the interviews (Harry, Sturges, & Klinger, 2005). The principal investigator coded all of the interviews.

Results

Parts of the coded data mapped onto all of the a priori themes. This supports the relevance of the conceptual model and provides a clearer understanding of why parents react the way they do. Excerpts presented in this section do not include the interviewer's comments (e.g.,

Table 2.4

Thematic Map

A Priori Themes	Subthemes
Confirmation of Child's Identity	Direct
	Indirect
Appraisal	Primary
	Ego involvement
	Goal relevance
	Goal incongruence
	Secondary
	Coping potential
	Future expectations
	Blame/credit
Parent Response	Only positive
	Only neutral
	Only negative
	Combined
Coping	Cognitive approach
	Behavioral approach
	Cognitive avoidance
	Behavioral avoidance
Reappraisal	New relational meaning
Context	Microsystem level
	Mesosystem level
	Exosystem level
	Macrosystem level
	Chronosystem level

"right" "mhm," and "okay"). Also, to provide concise examples, […] are used to indicate sections of the transcripts have been excluded.

Confirmation of Child's Identity

When asked about the time they learned about their child's LGB identity, parents discussed direct, indirect, or a combination of both direct and indirect confirmation. The majority of the parents recalled their child directly coming out to them (n = 14). Over 70% of the parents (n = 10) recalled their child initiating the conversation, while the other 30% of the parents (n = 4) recalled being the ones to start the conversation with their LGB child. The parent initiated

conversations varied. One parent asked her son directly if he was gay, another mother caught her son looking at gay pornography, and the other two parents asked questions that skirted around their child's sexuality.

Among the parents (n = 6) that confirmed their youth's identity indirectly, they often learned about their child's LGB identity from other people or sources, including a spouse, the sibling of the LGB child, and Facebook. Of those parents, two-thirds (n = 4) recalled then having a one-on-one conversation with their child after indirectly learning about their child's LGB identity. These conversations then led to the child confirming his/her LGB identity. For these parents, they experience a combination of both direct and indirect confirmation.

Of these six parents, one parent provided a unique disclosure experience related to indirect confirmation. For this mother, she considered her daughter's sexual identity development as a "mutual family process." She recalls the following:

> Every conversation has been ongoing since the beginning of time. So it wasn't, you know, let's talk about this. It was just a constant, ongoing conversation. "Well, maybe I'm gay mom." "Well, maybe you are. I don't know. We'll see what happens." You know? (WI9, Mother of 15-year-old lesbian female)

This mother created a family environment where the daughter felt she could openly discuss her sexual identity development. Therefore, it would make sense that for this mother, she does not recall a single moment where her daughter said she was definitely a lesbian. The mother does, however, recall the moment when her daughter came out to other people. The mother said:

> It wasn't like [our daughter] came out and had told us…I mean we had talked about it on and off for a couple of years…So it was never, there was never really a moment when she said, "By the way I'm gay." We just kinda knew it, and it was such a gradual thing…so it wasn't like she came out to us. It was like she told us she as going to come out to everybody else because we already knew. (WI9, Mother of 15-year-old lesbian female)

This gradual process suggests that for some parents, learning about their child's sexual identity development may not be surprising because it has been discussed throughout the child's life.

Appraisal

Primary appraisal. After the child comes out, parents appraise this new information, which can be done quickly and subconsciously. During this time, they are deciding whether there is something at stake as a result of their child's disclosure. At the time of disclosure, thirty percent of the parents (n = 6) determined that there was nothing at stake with their child's disclosure. However, these parents did report an appraisal of "at stake" at a later point in their process. This was generally indicated by a proceeding positive or neutral response by the parent. The majority of parents (n = 14), however, appraised their child's disclosure as "at stake" because it would interfere with the obtainment of certain goals. Lazarus (2001) classifies primary appraisal into three categories: type of ego involvement, goal relevance, and goal incongruence.

For the parents that appraised their child's identity as "at stake," all parents (n = 14) were concerned with how this new information would 1) affect their child's future wellbeing and/or 2) prevent them as parents from obtaining certain goals, which are all examples of "type of ego involvement." For example, one mother said:

> Well, I think the first initial one was the change in what I thought for my future with my son as far as you know, getting married and having a traditional family... I don't think I really wanted him to come out yet because he was in high school in a relatively conservative town and I was kinda, I was concerned for his safety. You know, would he be bullied? Would he be accepted for who he was? Um, I think those were my biggest fears, you know? (MI9, Mother of 24 year-old gay male)

For this mother, she is appraising her son's disclosure as not only impacting his future safety and wellbeing but also the goals the parent sent for the child.

Several parents (n = 8) felt that their child's disclosure would have a negative effect on their child's wellbeing and future, an example of goal relevance. For example, one parent said:

> 'Cause I know how people who are different get treated. They get treated differently in our society, and they are easier targets for being bullied in school and in life. In general, it's more difficult to find a job for someone who doesn't fit in the box of normality. And,

> I was little scared about what that meant for his future. (WI3, Mother of 13-year-old gay transgender male)

Some parents (n = 4) reported feeling that their child's disclosure would prevent them as parents from obtaining certain goals, an example of goal incongruence. For example, one parent said the following:

> At that moment, my life just, my world stopped. Cause you know, when you're a parent you just, you have a baby and you're like, "Oh my gosh. This is going to happen. These steps, and he's going to get married and he's going to bring a girl home and going to have a baby." (MI1, Mother of 22-year-old gay male)

For this parent, she is discussing how her son's gay identity may prevent her from obtaining certain heteroexpectations and goals that she had envisioned for her son.

Secondary appraisal. One important distinction to be made is that secondary appraisal is not independent of primary appraisal; rather, both go hand-in-hand. Secondary appraisal, however, is concerned with whether the individual has options to cope with this new information (Lazarus, 2001). There are three types of secondary appraisals: coping potential, future expectations, and blame/credit (Lazarus, 2001). Coping potential refers to parents' perception that they cannot alleviate or ameliorate harm or threat directed towards their child (Lazarus, 2001). Future expectations include how parents will change for their child, as well as how the child will change and how the existing social environment may change (Lazarus, 2001). Blame/credit includes who the parent believes is responsible for this information (Lazarus, 2001).

All parents at one point during this process reflected on whether their LGB child or they themselves would have to engage in coping strategies as a result of threat or harm that was directed towards them after disclosure. Parents reported a number of concerns for their child and realized they cannot control how others view or treat their child, which are all examples of

coping potential. The most common concern for parents (n = 13) was the realization that their child would face future prejudice and discrimination from other people. One mother said:

> I want my kids to be happy. Like I said, I want, excuse me if I get a little emotional here, but, my first instinct is what are they going to have to deal with for the rest of their life? Because of society and the way society sees them. They see them as freaks, as it's not natural and it's, you know, it's a choice they have and you know on and on. And, I thought, I was scared. I thought I don't want them to have to go through all that. (WI4, Mother of 26-year-old lesbian female)

Parents acknowledged that because their child identifies as LGB, life might be more challenging and difficult because not everyone in society is accepting of the LGB community. Though some parents acknowledged progress (e.g., marriage equality), one parent specifically discussed how her son's journey might be more difficult. She said:

> I have had somber moments where we, we realize that he's chosen a path that, that's a bad choice of words, his path is going to be a tougher one. He didn't choose the path. He chose to announce it. (MI10, Mother of 16-year-old gay male)

Another common concern for parents was the safety of their child (n = 10). They were concerned that their child might be beat up, a victim of a hate crime, or even murdered for being LGB. One mother said:

> I would say that I was worried about his life, his future. You know, I mean I can't lie. It goes through your mind, "Oh my god. He could be Matthew Shepard." To this day, that scares me. That is an incredibly scary thought that some people out there would think nothing of murdering him just because he is gay. That is probably, that was and still remains probably to be my biggest fear. (Mother of 18-year-old gay male)

Parents also discussed concerns related to their child's school, including whether staff would be supportive and if they would be picked on or bullied by their peers (n = 10). One parent said:

> You know some of the things we started thinking of was the fact that where we're living right now. Are his peers going to accept him because that age is not mature enough to really accept it and in fact, many kids love the opportunity to you know embarrass or make somebody else look bad, you know, and ridiculed. So, our fears became, you know about his peers. (WI8, Father of 18-year-old gay male)

Other concerns included their child's physical and mental health (n = 6), not feeling supported or accepted in their small and/or conservative town (n = 4), ability to date in their small town and find a life partner (n = 5).

Though parents concerns were mostly related to their child's wellbeing, parents often discussed how their child's LGB identity played a role in their own life. Parents often discussed that they had to let go of their heteroexpectations for their child (n = 8). For example one parent said:

> I was thinking about myself, and I have one child and I wanted to be a grandmother—the first thing that hit me. I just thought I always wanted to have another child and we couldn't. And now the kid I have is gay. I'll never have grandkids. I was thinking more about myself. For quite awhile that kind of grieving about that when I think back to it. (WI1, Mother of 24-year-old gay male)

Other parents discussed concerns of what they would tell their extended family members and how they would react to this information (n = 7). One mother said:

> What are Grandpa and Grandma going to say? Who's going tell Grandpa? You know? And, my husband's parents? No big deal to tell Grandma but who's going to have to tell Grandpa, you know? Um, but we muddled through all of that. I don't even know if Grandpa still knows but you know whatever. (WI5, Mother of 26-year-old bisexual female)

For these parents, they were concerned with not only how their extended family members may react to this information but also if it meant that they might have to cut these people out of their lives.

Parents (n = 4) also discussed future expectations related to their coping options. Only one parent discussed a foreseeable challenge on her part, meaning she was concerned with how she was going to be "a better mom for him" so that "he got everything he needed. And, he was never to be treated differently" (MI1, Mother of 22-year-old gay male). The other three parents viewed this new information as benefiting them as a parent or their child. One parent said, "I was

kinda looking forward to not having to deal with drama of a woman if he ever brought one home" (WI2, Mother of 11-year-old bisexual or queer and gender nonconforming child). Therefore, having a LGB child was viewed in a positive light because it alleviated the concerns of having a daughter-in-law. Two other parents saw the disclosure as benefiting the LGB child's future. These parents said the following:

> I thought, maybe she'll be happier. My thoughts were kinda like, this will be an improvement for her. Oh! This is what has been gnawing away at her. (MI3, Mother of 25-year-old lesbian female)

> I just was very looking forward to his life of authenticity. Now he can finally be who he wanted to be. (MI4, Mother of 15-year-old gay male)

These parents realized the benefits associated with coming out primarily as it relates to being able to lead a life of authenticity.

Blame/credit takes the form in parents believing that they may be responsible for their child's LGB identity (n = 3). For example, mothers said the following:

> Well, I thought to myself what did I do? I feel like because I didn't get to play a lot when I was a kid, did I buy too many girl things? Was it me? You know what I mean?… Sometimes I felt like I blamed myself because I bought girl things too because I thought they were pretty but, you know, I'd buy dress up clothes. Jon Smith and Pocahontas, he would always convince his sister to come out as Jon Smith, and he was Pocahontas. (MI1, Mother of 22-year-old gay male)

> There's this societal [belief] that if the son is gay, it's something the mother did. You know? And, you still hear people say that (MI9, Mother of 24-year-old gay male)

For these mothers, they are looking inward and wondering if they are indeed to blame for their child's LGB identity.

One mother had a combination of appraisals relate to both blame and credit. She said:

> I guess I did think, did I do something to cause this? You know during that time? But, you know she's only 18 months older than her sister who is like a guy magnet, and they were pretty much raised the same way as littermates so I don't think so…But I do remember thinking, are there any gifts that I gave when she as a kid that would make it

> better or did she internalize anything that would keep her safe or off the softball diamond? ((MI3, Mother of 25-year-old lesbian female)

In addition to feeling she might be to blame, this mother also considered what gifts she had given to her daughter that would protect her from future harm.

Parent Response

Once parents have appraised this new information, it then leads to an emotion or in this case, a parent response that is driven by emotion(s) (Arnold, 1960; Brashers, 2001; Roseman, 1984). Most parents (n = 17) experienced a combined emotional response where parents reported feeling overwhelmed, surprised, and fearful for their child's future but at the same time reported feeling a sense of relief, neutrality, contentment, indifference, happiness, and pride for their child's honesty. This interaction of multiple emotions—positive, neutral, and negative—demonstrates the complexity of parents' initial reactions. One parent discussed this complexity by saying:

> I don't know to explain it. I think I was just, "Really? You do?" And I just kind of smiled and, I mean, I guess I encouraged it. I tried to be encouraging. And I kind of, it was mixed emotions because I feel bad because I know it's going to be hard for him with certain relationships. I know there are people who are going to have a hard time with it and probably not want to contact us anymore…I was happy he did. I don't know how to explain it. (MI2, Mother of 11-year-old gay male)

One father discussed his mixed emotions as well. This father first found out about his daughter's sexual identity by accident—his wife sent him a text message that was intended for his daughter. When his daughter came out to him, he said this was his reaction:

> She didn't seem to want to talk to me and I didn't feel like I should call her and push her on it so I actually got on the computer and emailed her back. And, basically I said the only thing I am disappointed in is that our relationship isn't where you are comfortable enough to tell me in person. You know makes me think about the things I haven't done right in raising her. (MI8, Father of 22-year-old bisexual female)

This father explained that he has gay friends and having a bisexual daughter does not bother him—how members of the LGB community are treated does bother him, however. Therefore,

the negative emotions related to this disclosure were related to how he felt his daughter viewed their relationship as one where she was not comfortable talking to him about her sexuality.

Very few parents (n = 3) only reported positive emotions related to their child's disclosure, which included feeling of pride, happiness, and relief. One parent even discussed how the positive emotions she felt towards her son disclosure positively reflected on her parenting. She said:

> I was actually not just proud of him but kind of proud of myself and my husband as well to have created that kind of environment where he would feel safe at such a young age to say this is who I am. So, you know, I was proud of him but I also took a little pat on the back for us making it an environment that, you know, I keep saying safe but that is one of those things that the kids need to feel in order to understand that it's going to be okay. You aren't going to be shunned. And, you know, I thought, "Oh! We are doing our job. Good." One of those validation moments, and you know, I really think that from that point forward, [my son] actually showed some sense of relief. You know, being able to say it and understand that he wasn't going to be judged. (MI5, Mother of 13-year-old gay male)

Therefore, positive emotions were not only centered on how the disclosure positively affected the child but also how it put a positive light on the parent.

Coping

To better understand how parents worked through emotions and appraisals that were more negatively skewed, parents were asked what they did to ease their worries and concerns. Lazarus (1991, 2001) distinguishes coping into problem- and emotion-focused coping where problem-focused coping aims to change the environment or oneself and emotion-focused or cognitive coping aims to change one's emotions or thoughts related to the new information. For this analysis, the concept of coping as a behavior or thought was broken down into four categories: cognitive approach, behavioral approach, cognitive avoidance, and behavioral avoidance (Holahan et al., 1996; Krohne, 1996; Moos & Schaefer, 1993; Roth & Cohen, 1986). The first two "approach" categories include behaviors and thoughts that aim to reduce the stress;

whereas, the second two categories of "avoidance" behaviors and thoughts aim to ignore the stressor at hand.

With the exception of one parent that reported not engaging in any coping behaviors, all parents (n = 19) engaged in approach coping strategies that aimed to reduce the stress. There were two different types of approach strategies that parents used—behaviors (n = 19) and thoughts (n = 11). The most common approach behaviors included talking to other people (n = 15), including a spouse, other family members, friends, co-workers, religious community members, and a therapist. This also included talking to other parents of LGB children who were friends or community members they met through online support groups or by attending a local PFLAG group. Other common approach behaviors included increasing interactions with the LGB child (n = 12) and gathering more information about having a LGB child or the LGB community by reading books or doing research on the Internet (n = 9). Interactions with the LGB child included spending more time with him/her, discussing health and safety concerns, checking in about how he/she was doing at school, and asking questions regarding the child's sexual identity. As one mother said, "I think the truth from the horse's mouth is the best" (WI6, Mother of 15- year-old gay transgender male). This act of information seeking allowed parents to better understand where the child was at in his/her identity development. One mother recalled the time when her son came to her after being told that he could not donate blood. She said:

> Just conversations. Talking about it. And, I don't give him the option, like you can't not listen. You don't have to respond to me, but I am going to say this. And, you know, I don't know if you are listening. I don't know if you are singing in your head. You know? But you are going to sit there while I talk….We talked about his feelings and his first experience with being treated differently than his friends by the outside world. We also talked about my concerns with his future, pertaining to a job, family, and safety. (MI6, Mother of 21-year-old gay male)

Other types of approach behaviors included internal or cognitive processes (*n* = 11). Examples of these types of behaviors often included taking time to think and process this new information. For some parents, this was a quick process. For example, one parent said:

> I found it interesting that I thought about it for about a day and I said, you know, I wasn't really surprised anymore. I was pretty much over it. (MI7, Mother of 22-year-old bisexual female)

Other parents, however, reported taking more time to process this information. One parent said:

> There is like a period where you are like digesting that information, coming to grips with the reality of it, and it that was painful for me and traumatic for me. (WI7, Mother of 18-year-old gay male)

Therefore, depending on where parents start in the process, the length of time it takes to process this information varies.

Parents also occasionally engaged in avoidant strategies (*n* = 10). These types of behaviors were also classified further into behaviors (*n* = 6) and thoughts (*n* = 6). Avoidant behaviors included topic avoidance (*n* = 3), denying the fact that the child might be LGB (*n* = 3), and engaging in distraction activities (*n* = 1). One parent recalled her son coming to her when he was young because he had an erection while wrestling with a male peer. She recalled saying the following to her son:

> We said, "Well, you know, that's kinda normal physiology sometimes that it happens with boys. It doesn't mean you are gay and unless you are really sure, I don't think you know you can be absolutely certain"…I just never brought it back up with him. I think it was one of those I'll wait and see what he has to say. (MI9, Mother of 24 year-old gay male)

For this mother, she engaged in a combination of avoidance strategies. First, denying the fact that her son might be gay and then avoiding future discussions related to this topic with her son. One mother recalled getting her nails done after she found out her son was gay which was out of character for her. She said:

> I went and got my nails done which is ridiculous because I'm a hairdresser and don't do that…. Let's face it. I don't know why. I have never done it before. I just figured, I have a gay son, I might as well get some nails on. I thought I was RuPaul or something. I don't know what happened. (MI1, Mother of 22-year-old gay male)

This mother, though seemingly unaware, engaged in an activity that distracted her from the stressor at hand.

As for avoidant thought processes, parents recalled believing or hoping their child's LGB identity was just a phase (n = 5), while another parent (n = 1) believed her son's disclosure was attention seeking. For parents that believed their child's disclosure was a phase, they thought the child was just curious or experimenting with his/her identity. One father said:

> So at that point I wasn't convinced that he was gay. And, [my son] was young and we thought, well maybe he's just confused. [My son] never really stated very clearly. "Mom, Dad, I believe I'm gay." But that went on in my mind. Maybe he's just curious. Because at that age, kids are trying to find who they are, you know? (WI8 Father of 18-year-old gay male)

Reappraisal

As parents are processing their worries and concerns for their child, they are also gathering more information about what it means to have a LGB child. Of the 19 parents that discussed worries and concerns about their child, only a couple (n = 2) reported not being able to alleviate their concerns related to how others will treat their child in the future. The rest of the parents (n = 17) discussed at least one moment when their thinking shifted and led to new relational meaning (Lazarus, 1991, 2001). The most common shift in thinking was how their child would "do family" (n = 7), a phrase that has been used by family scholars (Oswald, Blume, & Marks, 2005; Stiles, 2002). As parents discussed their hopes for grandchildren, almost all of them (n = 6) realized that their LGB child would have to adopt children. A couple parents (n = 2) discussed transracial adoption—one parent said that her son and his fiancé are looking to adopt an African-American baby, while another parent assumed a transracial adoption. She said:

> I tell him all the time that I can't wait for him to marry this beautiful Black man so that I can have beautiful little brown grandchildren and he says to me, "Mom you know that's not how it works. I can marry whatever color person I want to and still give you brown grandchildren." (MI4, Mother of 15-year-old gay male)

Interestingly, none of the parents discussed in vitro fertilization, egg donors, and/or surrogacy, even among parents who had lesbian daughters.

Shifts in religious beliefs were discussed (n = 3). One parent discussed a "moment of weakness" where she believed her son was not going to heaven. She said:

> For one quick minute I was like, you just think, I don't know, you just, I was brought up, I went to Christian church, went to Christian school. It was like I said, very strict, so for one brief moment, I had a, that moment of weakness I guess, where I just wasn't trusting in God….I talked to my girlfriend who's my spiritual go-to-person and she's like, "Jesus loves him. Jesus loves you. Jesus loves me. Jesus died on the cross for all of our sins. We're good." And then I was okay. I just needed some reassure I guess for a moment. (MI4, Mother of 15-year-old gay male)

Parents may also shift religious beliefs or even all together, leave the church because the church and/or community are not accepting of LGB people.

Context

Context plays an important role at all points in the parent process from the moment they learn about their child's identity all the way to when they reappraise what it means to have a LGB child. During the interviews, parents discussed various contextual factors that influenced their process, which can be further examined at the various system levels: micro, meso, exo, macro, and chrono (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986, 1992).

Microsystem level. Throughout the interviews, all parents made at least one mention to a specific interaction they had with at least one microsystem throughout the disclosure process. This may have been an interaction related to their child coming out, how they responded to their child's disclosure, or how they coped with this new information. All parents who reported coping with this new information (n = 19) made mention to at least one microsystem that supported

them through the process, which included their LGB child, family members, and/or peer networks. For some parents, the support of their microsystem furthered their support for their child. For example, one mother recalled telling her co-workers about her son coming out as gay. She said:

> So, by the time I got to work, I've been working with a bunch of girls for a long time and one of my friends has a son who is the same age as [my son]. And, so they were all like "Oh my God. What is the matter with you? What's going on? What happened?" And, I said, "[My son] is gay" and they're like, "Okay. So?" And, I'm like "Oh my God. He told me!" And, she's like, "Dude, everyone knows! What is your problem?" And, I'm like, "I know I knew! But, just hearing it out loud was devastating." So, once they were like, you know, "So what? We all knew it and so did you. I don't know what your problem is?" So, then I kind of like snapped out of it and was like, "Well, you're right. I did know. What is my problem?" (MI1, Mother of 22-year-old gay male)

Hearing her colleagues react positively to this new information eliminated some of her initial negative feelings and altered her perceptions around her son's gay identity. In this example, her colleagues helped her cope and even reappraise her concerns and worries of having a gay son.

Parents (n = 14) discussed interactions with their microsystems, often with less accepting family members, peers, or acquaintances that demonstrated their support for their LGB child. During these interactions, parents recalled either standing up for their child or severing ties with rejecting people. Parents discussed that having a LGB child meant that they had to take a more active role in the LGB community. One parent explained that before her son came out, she would simply ignore homophobic comments made by others. She said:

> I realized now I'm a parent of a gay kid. It's a known thing and so, you know, when you're talking to family members, it used to be, they could make their stupid comments they make when they're conservative. And, you could just like blink and let it go. But now if they make a comment like that, you have to call them out and say, "Guess what? You're not talking like that about my kid, in my house." You have to really just call them out on it. It's kind of a new rule. (MI10, Mother of 16-year-old gay male)

For this mother, she feels a new sense of ownership related to the topic and has to say something rather than ignore homophobic comments. Another parent discussed that when she learned her

child was LGB, she was already accepting and felt the need to reach out and support other parents. Other parents discussed speaking up for other LGB people and even becoming more accepting of members of the trans community. This idea of advocacy and ownership demonstrates parents' personal growth and integration of their new identity and membership in the LGB community.

Mesosystem level. Almost all parents (n = 17) discussed at least one mesoystem interaction at some point in the process of learning, reacting, and coping with their child's disclosure. Mesosystem interactions, where one of the two microsystems consisted of an extended family member (n = 12) and school personnel (n = 6) were often discussed. Among parents who had conversations with extended family members, one parent recalled being present when her son told his grandfather that he was gay. She said:

> We went over early. Everybody was coming over for Christmas and [my son] just said, "Hey Grandpa. I'm gay." And my dad said "[Grandson], that is a good idea. All of the gays are rich. The gays are rich." And [my son] looked at me with this expression on his face, and I just said, "[Son] go with it. That was a gift." You know, it could have gone so many different ways. Was it a little bit twisted in his concept? Yeah, but he never treated [my son] any different. (MI6, Mother of 21-year-old gay male)

For this parent, she acknowledged that the interaction was not ideal but felt it could have gone worse. Other parents took it upon themselves to tell the child's grandparent about the child's LGB identity. Many parents did this out of protection for the child. Because parents were nervous that the grandparent would react negatively, parents wanted to take on the burden of the negative reaction so that the child would not have to have that experience. Once the grandparent reacted, the parent could then take the opportunity to educate the grandparent about the importance of being accepting of the child's identity.

Within the school context, one mother discussed being surprised by the principal's openness yet resistance to starting a Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) in her son's middle school. She

said:

> Yeah we've talked about starting an ally group. The principal is concerned that students in middle school are just beginning to realize their identities and stuff. And, he's afraid that if they started a group that it's going to start outing people that aren't ready to be out whether with family or friends, which is why we discussed having an ally group that way it's not like you have to be gay to come to our group. He's been kinda open to that but he's just not sure again how much of a need there is. (WI3, Mother of 13-year-old gay transgender male)

Another parent discussed in-depth the challenges her child faced with school personnel. Her daughter wanted to start a GSA at her school. However, due to the lack of support at the school level, the daughter and teacher decided to create a school club that was welcoming of all students, including sexual orientation, gender identity, and ability level. In order for the group to be approved, the daughter, mother, and teacher had to go to the school board meeting. The mother said:

> So the school board voted on this club and a woman, a school board member said, "We already have something in our charter, you know, in our list of rules about how we have to accept people. I don't know why people think they need a club too." That's, that's why! Because you think stupid things like that! That's why. I mean, it's just, like this never-ending battle of little things like that. So they voted and it was voted in. Like 4 to 2 or something, which I was surprised by honestly. (WI9, Mother of 15-year-old lesbian female)

This interaction of the many microsystems was stressful for both the mother and child yet demonstrated to the mother the importance of her role as a mother and advocate for her daughter.

Within the context of coping, however, only one parent discussed a mesosystem interaction. She said:

> When we went to [PFLAG] and everybody, it's a very small group here in [our town] anyway. But, [my son] was the only teenager and they were all unbelievably kind and supportive and that helped us and [my son]. Probably helped us more then it helped [my son] because they were all born in our age group. That was so rewarding and just to know that there are a lot of people out there that have your back and are supportive of you. (WI7, Mother of 18-year-old gay male)

Even though parents discussed receiving support from PFLAG and other affirmative community organizations, this was the only example provided which highlighted how the interaction of parents' two microsystems (PFLAG and the LGB child) played an active role in their coping.

Exosystem level. At various times throughout the disclosure process, all parents recalled exosystem level interactions. One interesting theme that emerged at the exosystem level was related to the LGB child's sexual identity development. Parents (n = 11) reported that by observing their LGB child's interactions with peers and partners, they soon began to realize that this LGB identity was formed and not going anywhere. One parent said:

> I realized that his world, his gay world was getting bigger, and he was sharing his story with more people. And, that is his story to share. That's not mine and it never was. That's when it kinda hit me. If that's how he's living his life outside of our family and outside of our circle, this is, this is really it…So, as he got older and he wasn't trying things on…anymore, or never went the girl route, I was just like, "Okay, this is the way it is." (MI6, Mother of 21-year-old gay male)

A few parents (n = 4) also discussed media influences on their youth's sexual identity development. Two parents observed their child being interested in actors and actresses who were the same sex as the child. Another parent reflected on how pop culture might influence her son's sexual identity. She said:

> I'm just wondering if it's not a pop culture kind of fad where you know, let's experience, let's experiment, let's, I don't know. Maybe I am. Maybe I'm not. And, then by the time they are 18 and 19, you start seeing them fade away from that and they go back to you know being interested in the opposite sex. So, and I've noticed that. I'm a teacher, so I have been for about 12 years, and I noticed that almost become the normal thing, the accepting thing and I don't see anything wrong with it. I just sit back and I watch and I just want to see who are the ones who know who they are and who are the ones that are trying to figure out who they are. (WI10, Mother of 16-year-old transgender lesbian child and 16-year-old gay transgender male)

Parents also discussed how religion played a role in coming to understand their child's identity. Half of the parents discussed (n = 10) being members of accepting religious communities and/or already holding religious beliefs that incorporated the acceptance of LGB individuals. Other

parents (n = 7) discussed how religion played little to no role in their process. For example, one parent said:

> Oh probably because my family is like free thinkers. So, I have some religious people that go to church but I have a lot more like either people that are atheist or people that are like spiritual but not religious kind of thing. Again, like if you aren't taught homophobia, I don't think you just come up with it on your own. You know? I was raised with that those kind of values. (WI2, Mother of 11-year-old bisexual or queer and gender nonconforming child)

Other parents (n = 3) discussed their process of redefining their religious beliefs and values and even stopped attending a non-affirming congregation.

Macrosystem level. Most parents (n = 16) discussed macrosystem influences. Parents (n = 10) most often discussed heteronormativity in their community and the larger society. The most common form of heteronormativity included gender expectations and the performance of gender. For example, one mother discussed how she felt the need to forewarn her son that he may be picked on by his peers if he engages in certain gender atypical behaviors. She said:

> We had to have the conversation of, "You know, well that might not be accepted. It doesn't mean you can't do it but you might make your own life harder if you do do it." You know, and of course he didn't like those conversations and I don't like that we live in a world that I have to have those conversations, but it is what it is and sometimes you have to conform just a little. And he's definitely not a conformer. So yeah, that was kind of a difficult thing. (MI5 Mother of 13-year-old gay male)

Other forms of heteronormativity included parents (n = 4) recognizing that coming out is unique to LGB youth because heterosexuality is assumed. A few (n = 2) also acknowledged that life is easier if you are heterosexual. A couple parents (n = 2) also wanted their child to have access to what they had as heterosexuals.

At the macro level, parents also (n = 7) discussed awareness of the political climate related to the acceptance of LGB people, more specifically marriage equality. Parents (n = 7)

were also very aware of the lack of acceptance of LGB people at the societal level. One parent said:

> I get concerned about the sort of culture around me and not just looking at the state of parks and stuff but also looking at you know, just the level of acceptance or understanding of the people around me. I guess it makes me more kind of worried about homophobia in my area. (WI2, Mother of 11-year-old bisexual or queer and gender noncomforming child)

These parents realized that it would not be uncommon for their youth to face bigotry, homophobia, and discrimination.

Chronosystem level. Almost all parents (*n* = 17) made reference to a chronosystem experience throughout the interview. Parents (*n* = 8) discussed generational differences related to the LGB community. Parents specifically discussed how it is better to be LGB today than in prior generations (*n* = 3), especially with the decline of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. A couple parents (*n* = 2) specifically stated that when they were young, no one talked about being LGB.

Within this contextual level, almost all parents (*n* = 17) discussed transitions during their lifecourse that may have contributed to the overall support of their LGB child's identity disclosure. Such events (*n* = 8) included the death of loved ones—three lives were lost to HIV/AIDS, one life was lost to suicide after coming out as gay, one parent discussed the loss of her gay stepbrother, and another parent discussed losing three loved ones at a young age (sister, mother, and husband). A few parents (*n* = 3) discussed being raised in dysfunctional households, primarily in families affected by alcoholism (*n* = 2). Some parents (*n* = 3) discussed being trauma survivors. A couple parents (*n* = 2) discussed the challenges of motherhood, such as becoming pregnant while in high school (*n* = 1) and surviving a high-risk pregnancy. Other parents discussed other life events including having a closeted father, being a breast cancer survivor, having Asperger's, and witnessing a gay friend be ostracized from his family. Though

all of these parents did not report these life transitions as being the reason for their level of support, parents did discuss how these experiences did change how they viewed the world. One parent who had lost three family members said:

> This gay lesbian thing? Those things don't really matter if you are alive and well and enjoying life. It's okay, you know what I'm saying? I think a lot of life experiences have made me, you know, the way I am…. All those life experiences definitely changed how I handle things or feel about things or working at school and seeing at school how they have to deal with whatever. You're much more accepting of their situations as well. (WI5, Mother of 26-year-old bisexual female)

Another parent shared a similar sentiment:

> I think it's just life experiences in general. If you're going to experience trauma or just the different types of experiences you are exposed to, you become more and more accepting of people's differences and in my own spirituality, something that has become more stronger in the last 5 years, it's a very open minded and accepting type of spirituality. And, so I attribute everything—I don't attribute it to one event. Just all of my experiences just keep me more open minded and accepting. (WI10, Mother of 16-year-old transgender lesbian child and 16-year-old gay transgender male)

Parents referred to their ability to rise above adversity as being another possible reason for supporting their child's identity. One parent said:

> Some people can fall into that same pattern. Some people kind of rise above it. I was one that rose about it and knew I wasn't going to live like that and wanted my kids to have every opportunity to be who they wanted to be and do what they wanted to do. (WI4, Mother of 26-year-old lesbian female)

One parent, a breast cancer survivor, noted that because time is not always on her side, she does not have time to not be accepting. She said:

> I could not waste any time or energy or thought into anything negative about any of my children. It doesn't mean that I didn't run a tight ship. I had to run a tight ship. But that was just something ridiculous that could take time away from our life together. And, you know it hasn't been an easy life for my kids... we are fully aware that everyday we have as a unit, as family, is a gift. And I think that has a lot to do with it. (MI6, Mother of 21-year-old gay male)

For these parents, they have experienced and overcome adversity and because of it are better positioned to be accepting of their child's LGB identity.

Discussion

The goal of the study was to examine the experiences of parents after their child comes out as LGB and whether parents' lived experiences reinforced or challenged the newly developed conceptual model. When using a portion of the conceptual framework, the coded data mapped onto all of the a priori themes and provided a more nuanced understanding of the disclosure process for parents.

Confirmation of the Child's Identity

During the confirmation process, it was more common for youth to initiate these discussions rather than have their parents ask them (Baptist & Allen, 2008; Freedman, 2008; Goldfried & Goldfried, 2001; Goodrich, 2009; Gottlieb, 2000; Grafsky, 2014; LaSala, 2010; Lopata, 2003; Philips & Ancis, 2008). Even though many parents suspected their child's LGB identity, parents were comfortable with this uncertainty. They felt it was more important for their youth to come out to them on their own time than to ask them before they were ready.

Some parents also had a difficult time pinpointing a specific conversation where their child told them they were LGB. As one parent mentioned, the sexual identity development process of her daughter was gradual and an ongoing family process. This idea of parents being active participants in their youth's sexual identity development is not commonly discussed in the sexual identity development literature and warrants further discussion.

Appraisal

Primary appraisal. As parents learned about their youth's LGB identity, they had to appraise this information. Ego involvement appraisals are often associated with feelings of shame, and/or embarrassment (Butcher, 2014; Goldfried & Goldfried, 2001; Gonzalez et al., 2013; Maslowe & Yarhouse, 2015; Pearlman, 2005; Philips & Ancis, 2008). However, in this

study, ego involvement appraisals were often tied to feelings of concern and worry for their child's future rather than shame or embarrassment of having a LGB child.

Parents often appraised their child's identity as placing their child at risk of being bullied or victimized, an example of what Lazarus (2001) refers to as goal relevance. For most parents, this appraisal is influenced by their cohort membership (Bengtson & Allen, 1993; Riley, 1973). Because most of the parents are baby boomers, they grew up during the HIV/AIDS epidemic and Stonewall riots and often recalled having closeted friends and family members. Therefore, belonging to this cohort may play a role in how they perceive their child's disclosure and why very few parents reported not having any initial concerns when their child came out.

Parents also discussed how their child's LGB identity prevented them from obtaining certain heteronormative expectations. Heteronormativity is the presumption that heterosexuality is the norm and that individuals must fall into specific binaries and perform certain roles that are assigned to their gender (Oswald et al., 2005; Oswald, Kuvalanka, Blume, & Berkowitz, 2009). Therefore, how parents appraise their youth's disclosure and LGB identity is rooted within this context. When examining what Lazarus (2001) refers to as goal incongruence, the most common appraisal reported by parents within this category was that the family they had envisioned for their child, such as having biological children and marrying someone of the opposite sex, could not be achieved (Fields, 2001; Freedman, 2008; Goldfried & Goldfried, 2001; Goodrich, 2009; Grafsky, 2014; Hom, 2003; LaSala, 2000, 2010; Lopata, 2003; Maslowe & Yarhouse, 2015; Saltzburg, 2004; Wakeley & Tuason, 2011). Therefore, the "psychological family" or the family that existed within the parent's mind was misaligned with the future physical family of their child, leading to feelings of stress (Boss, 1999, 2006).

Secondary appraisal. The most common secondary appraisal, what Lazarus (2001)

refers to as coping potential, included parents being concerned that their child would face future discrimination, prejudice, victimization, and school issues (Butcher, 2014; Conley, 2011; Freedman, 2008; Goodrich, 2009; Grafsky, 2014; LaSala, 2010; Lopata, 2003; Pearlman, 2005; Philips & Ancis, 2008; Wakeley & Tuason, 2011), which are often rooted in heteronormative concerns that arise during primary appraisal. Parents also considered the benefits of the child coming out and how this may allow the child to lead a more authentic life (Gonzalez, Rostosky, Odom, & Riggle, 2013; Pearlman, 2005), which is an example of a future expectations appraisal. The last kind of secondary appraisal was the question of who was to blame or credit for this disclosure (Goldfried & Goldfried, 2001; Gottlieb, 2000; Hom, 2003; LaSala, 2010; Lin & Hudley, 2009; Maslowe & Yarhouse, 2015; Philips & Ancis, 2008; Wakeley & Tuason, 2011). The belief that the mother was to blame may be substantiated by the current culture of "mother blame" where mothers often judge others and themselves if their child engages in nonnormative behaviors (Ladd-Taylor & Umansky, 1998; Singh, 2004). Neither father reported feeling responsible for their child's LGB identity, which contradicts the findings from prior studies (Butcher, 2014; Gonzalez et al., 2013).

Parent Response

Because parents' responses are influenced by both primary and secondary appraisals, this leads to a complex emotional response, which is categorized by a combination of emotions. Therefore, most reactions are not purely positive. However, when parents report negative emotional responses, these often result from the concerns parents have about the wellbeing of their child, not necessarily because they are not accepting of their child's LGB identity. Youth, however, may not know the reasoning for the negative emotional response and therefore assumes the parent is not accepting. Thus, parents need to be more transparent about their feelings and

emotions surrounding the disclosure process so that the LGB child is clearer on the reasoning for the emotional response.

Coping

Once parents appraised the information and noted such concerns for their child's wellbeing, they then engaged in behaviors to reduce those concerns, which often included asking their LGB child questions and seeking support from other close friends, family members, co-workers, and parents who have LGB children (Baptist & Allen, 2008; Conley, 2011; Goldfried & Goldfried, 2001; Gonzalez et al., 2013; Goodrich, 2009; Gottlieb, 2000; Grafsky, 2014; LaSala, 2010; Lee & Lee, 2006; Maslowe & Yarhouse, 2015; Pearlman, 2005; Saltzburg, 2004, 2010; Wakeley & Tuason, 2011). Depending on where parents start in the process, the length of time it takes to understand this information varied as well. Less common coping strategies but still present were avoidance strategies. This often included topic avoidance and denying the fact that their child is LGB (Goodrich, 2009; Maslowe & Yarhouse, 2015; Philips & Ancis, 2008). For many parents, this denial resulted from misunderstandings related to sexual identity development. Parents believed that their child was too young to have a sexual identity or their child could not identify as LGB until he/she had a sexual relationship with someone of the opposite sex.

Reappraisal

Once parents engaged in coping strategies, many reported shifts in their initial thoughts and beliefs, such as letting go of certain held expectations for their child (Philips & Ancis, 2008; Wakeley & Tuason, 2011) and redefining religious teachings that do not align with their personal beliefs and acceptance of their child's identity (Gonzalez et al., 2013; Goodrich, 2009; Hom, 2003; LaSala, 2000; Philips & Ancis, 2008). There was great diversity among parents in the

creation of new relational meaning, which reinforces the belief that the ability to cope and overcome stress is individualized (Walsh, 2002). The most common shift in thought was how their child would "do family" (Oswald et al., 2005; Stiles, 2002). Rather than assume the child would have biological children, parents considered adoption. The most common type of adoption referred to in the study was transracial adoption, which is embedded within a larger historical context in the United States (Lee, 2003). Through this process, parents realigned the psychological and physical family by redefining the psychological family (Boss, 1999, 2006).

Context

There is limited research on how context plays a role in the process of parents who have LGB children (Pearlman, 2005). Most often studies will collect demographic information and use it as a study descriptor. In this study, however, contextual factors were used to examine the reasoning behind parents' reactions and reappraisal.

Micro- and mesosystem level. At the microsystem level, parents discussed how the realization that they were now a parent of a LGB child resulted in them having to engage in more advocacy behaviors, such as starting a PFLAG group, helping their child start a Gay Straight Alliance (GSA), or simply speaking up against people who are homophobic (Freedman, 2008; Gonzalez et al., 2013; Goodrich, 2009; Gottlieb, 2000; Lee & Lee, 2006; Maslowe & Yarhouse, 2015; Philips & Ancis, 2008). This advocacy also flowed over at the mesosystem level where parents took it upon themselves to tell family members about their child's LGB identity, sometimes without the child's permission. For some parents, they engaged in this behavior because they were worried about the extended family member's response. Thus, they would rather have this individual react poorly in front of them than their child. It then gives the

opportunity for the parent to educate this family member and/or cut off ties with the person if they remain unsupportive of the child's LGB identity.

Exo- and macroystem level. When parents were unsure or uncertain about the permanency of their child's LGB identity, many reported that by observing how their LGB child interacted with others at the exosytem level solidified the notion that their child's LGB identity is permanent and formed. At the macrosystem level, heteronormativity was the most prevalent theme that emerged from the interview. Because individuals are embedded within a heteronormative society, individuals are expected to perform certain gender roles that are assigned to them (Oswald, Blume, & Marks, 2005) and deviation from such norms is often viewed as unacceptable. Thus, parents sometimes feel the need to regulate the child's atypical gender behaviors (D'Augelli et al., 2005) in hopes of reducing the likelihood that their child will be a target of bullying or victimization.

Parents also referred to marriage equality during the interviews. Some parents acknowledged that this level of political support led to a more welcoming society for their child. Other parents, however, acknowledged that marriage equality is just one of the many steps that needs to be taken to increase societal support of LGB people.

Chronosystem level. At the chronosystem level, parents discussed significant life transitions in their lives. In one study, Philips and Ancis (2008) found that as parents were coping with their child's LGB identity, they had to change how they saw the world. This act of creating new world views as a result of overcoming personal stress is often referred to as post-traumatic growth (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). However, in this study, overcoming and growing from a prior life transition (e.g., divorce or the death of a loved one) played a role in parents' acceptance of their child's identity. Almost all parents shared an important transition in their life

that occurred before their child came out. Several parents suggested that certain life experiences have changed how they viewed the world, which in turn played an important role in the acceptance of their child's LGB identity.

Limitations

Though the present study provides new insight into the experiences of parents who have LGB children, there are limitations to the study. The perspective most reflected in this study consists of mostly accepting mothers who are Caucasian, educated, and report middle/high income levels. Additionally, parents in this study reported being more spiritual than religious and being members of affirmative-LGB religious communities. Thus, the study findings may not capture the lived experiences of parents of lower socioeconomic status or who are members of different religious communities. Additionally, this study does not capture the intersectionality of race, ethnicity, and class, which may play an important role in the process of parents who have LGB children.

The present study is also cross-sectional which means parents were interviewed at one moment in their life. Thus, if parents had been interviewed right at the time of disclosure or within a year, their narratives may have been different. Recall bias is also possible. Parents' report of being highly accepting at the time of disclosure may be blurred by their current acceptance of their youth's identity.

Because the goal of the study was to better understand the experiences of parents who have a LGB child, their child's perspective was not included. In order to capture the true and raw feelings that parents had when their child came out, it was important that parents be interviewed alone to afford them the opportunity to remain open and vulnerable. However, being able to interview both the parent and LGB child would have provided greater depth to this study.

Narratives could have been compared to one another, and differences and similarities in their perception around the disclosure process could have been identified. This comparison would have provided insight into the breakdowns in communication and the complexity of the family process.

Because the goal of the study was to validate a portion of a newly developed conceptual model, the analysis used in this study was theory driven and deductive. As a result, the study findings may closely represent the theory and not capture nuances in the data. Future analysis of the data may include using inductive thematic analysis or grounded theory to identify new themes or an emerging theory.

Conclusion

Results from this study set a foundation for future work. First, empirical studies are needed to further validate the conceptual model. This would include developing a valid and reliable survey that captures the diverse experiences of parents. Second, future studies on this topic may include designing a study that focuses on system level influences and its influence on parents' acceptance overtime. For example, though macrosystem levels were the least discussed in comparison to the other system levels, it does not necessarily mean it has the least impact on the family's acceptance. Last, future studies need to examine whether the conceptual framework can be applied to gender identity disclosure. For this study, four parents had a youth who identified as both LGB and transgender or gender nonconforming. Because this only constituted 20% of the total sample, comparisons could not be made. Thus, future work needs to investigate how the intersectionality of the child's gender and sexual identity plays a role in parents' experiences.

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ABSTRACT

CHAPTER 3: MANUSCRIPT 2

How parents react to their child coming out as lesbian, gay, or bisexual (LGB) is critical to their youth's wellbeing. The goal of this study is to better understand how parents come to understand their child's LGB sexual identity development. Using the findings from an exploratory study of parents' experiences of having a LGB child, a measure that captures parents' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors around LGB identity development of their child was developed. A content study was conducted by having five parents of LGB children and four experts in the field of LGBTQ research provide feedback on the proposed measure. Item-level and scale-level content validity index averages were calculated, and qualitative expert feedback was reviewed. Based on the analysis, various items were refined. Limitations and next steps for future studies are discussed.

Introduction

When becoming a parent, there are dozens of books and websites that provide advice on how to promote a close parent-child relationship through trust, honesty, respect, and open communication. Parents may even seek advice from other parents or incorporate how they were parented into their own parenting practices. All of these outside influences play a role in the identity of the parent. Without question, parenting is a process that evolves and changes over time to better fit the individual needs of the child.

Because all children are different, parenting can be unpredictable. Expectations parents have may differ from child to child. For parents that have a lesbian, gay, or bisexual (LGB) child, certain adjustments may have to be made. For example, a mother may envision her son getting married to a woman and once her son comes out as gay, she may have to modify her expectations to include another man. Other modifications may include the types of conversations parents have with their child related to sexual identity development, health, and personal safety.

In past studies, parents often discuss that when looking back, they suspected their child might be LGB (Aveline, 2006; Freedman, 2008; Goodrich, 2009; Grafsky, 2014; Lopata, 2003). Despite these suspicions, parents did not discuss talking to their child about his/her LGB identity development prior to coming out. By not having these conversations at home, LGB young people may feel that their LGB identity is not (or will not) be accepted by their parent, leading the child to delay coming out to his/her parents. To date, there are no valid and reliable measures that examine parents' thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes related to their child's LGB identity development before or after disclosure. By better understanding how parents conceptualize their child's sexual identity development, gaps in parents' knowledge can be identified and resources can be developed.

Overview of Measure Development

When developing a new measure, there are various steps to take to ensure the tool is both reliable and valid. Reliability of the measure relates to consistency. In other words, reliability relates to the extent of the random error of a given item when administered a number of times to the same individual. Though reliability is mostly theoretical, there are various ways to estimate reliability including conducting test-retest, test-retest with alternative forms, and split half studies. Results of these studies can then be interpreted through Spearman-Brown formula, Cronbach's alpha, and coefficient alpha. Validity, on the other hand, is concerned with whether the measure is measuring what it is intended to measure, which is determined by the measure's content, criterion, and construct validity. Content validity is often the first step of measure development and focuses on whether the measure is representative of the construct being measured. To ensure content validity, a panel of experts either generates a list of items for the measure and/or rate the relevance of items to the construct being measured. Criterion validity is used to determine whether an individual's score on the measure is related to another measure outcome. For example, the SAT is used to predict a college student's first year grade point average. Construct validity, the strongest form of validity, focuses on whether the measure actually measures the construct at hand. Construct validity is often assessed using factor analysis or multitrait-multimethod matrix. For this study, the focus was on assessing content validity of the proposed measure.

Content Validity

A variety of content validity approaches have been developed over the course of several decades. The first method included calculating an estimated average congruency percentage (Popham, 1978), which consists of identifying a construct, creating a list of items that

demonstrate the construct, having expert reviewers rate whether each item is in congruence with the construct, calculating the percentage of items each expert rates as relevant, and then taking an average of the percentages across experts. The second method is calculating a content validity index (CVI) (Davis, 1992; Grant & Davis, 1997; Lynn, 1986; Martuza, 1977). Two types of CVI are often calculated: item-level content validity index (I-CVI) and scale-level content validity index (S-CVI). Lynn (1986) suggested having 3 to 10 experts review a list of measure items and then have each expert rate each item on a scale from 1 (*irrelevant*) to 4 (*extremely relevant*). The I-CVI percentage is then calculated by taking the number of experts who gave the item a ranking of 3 or 4 divided by the total number of experts. Acceptable I-CVI levels when there are more than five experts is .78 (Lynn, 1986; Polit & Beck, 2006). S-CVI is then calculated by taking the number of items that *all* experts agree on divided by the total number of items. Acceptable S-CVI is .80 (Davis, 1992; Grant & Davis, 1997). However, Polit and Beck (2006) are critical of this calculation because as the number of experts increases, the ability to achieve expert agreement on the items decreases. Therefore, Polit and Beck (2006) proposed a variation of this method, scale-level content validity index average (S-CVI/Ave.), which includes summing the I-CVIs and then dividing the total by the total number of experts. An acceptable S-CVI/Ave. of .90 or higher is recommended (Polit & Beck, 2006).

Current Study

The goal of this study is to better understand how parents' conceptualize sexual identity development. By better understanding how parents perceive LGB identity development, it provides greater insight into parents' reactions to their child's disclosure. Therefore, for this study, a sequential exploratory mixed methods design was used (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The first phase of the study included a qualitative exploration of parents'

attitudes and beliefs related to sexual identity development through the use of parent interviews. The second phase included using the findings from the qualitative study to develop a measure that can be administered to a larger sample.

The strength of using this mixed methods design is that it ensures that the measure items reflect parents' experiences (Onwuegbuzie, Bustamante, & Nelson, 2010). To date, there is a dearth of literature that examines parents' knowledge related to LGB identity development. Therefore, there is a need to develop a measure that captures parents' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors surrounding the sexual identity development of their LGB child. Thus, the study aims to answer whether the proposed measure demonstrates content validity. And if not, what modifications to the measure need to be made before being administered.

Theoretical Framework

A symbolic interactionism lens is used to guide this study. Symbolic interactionism emphasizes the importance of understanding the meaning individuals place on interactions. Mead's (1934) seminal piece suggested that through shared meanings and symbols, individuals are able to communicate with one another. Similarly, how individuals interact with other another results from their interpretation of the encounter (Blumer, 1969). How parents come to understand their child's sexual identity development and the meaning they place on that experience provides insight into the parental process.

Within the context of families, two approaches are most often used: structural and interactional (White & Klein, 2008). Structural symbolic interactionism views individuals as resulting from culture and society; whereas, interactional symbolic interactionism views the interactions of individuals creating culture and society (White & Klein, 2008). Because the focus of the study is on the microsystem, a structural approach is used (Burr, Leigh, Day, &

Constantine, 1979).

Roles consist of a set of shared meanings that are embedded within cultural and societal systems (White & Klein, 2008). With all roles come role expectations; thus, how individuals act is a result of the role they are enacting (Burr et al., 1979). Within families, there is often a consensus of role expectations between the parent and child. For example, the child will often seek out the parent for support and guidance. Therefore, if the child identifies as LGB, the child expects the parent to be knowledgeable on a variety of LGB topics. The parent, however, may view the child as the expert in LGB topics. This misalignment in role enactment may result in the child perceiving the parent as not fulfilling his/her role obligations, which may result in role strain (Burr et al., 1979). Thus, the study will focus on how parents' perceive their role as being an educator on LGB topics.

Method

Qualitative Study

The first phase of this study used a phenomenological approach, which included conducting in-depth parent interviews and then using a systematic analysis approach to identify commonalities among parents' experiences of learning about their child's LGB identity (Creswell, 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). For this study, conducting the qualitative study first was critical to ensure that the proposed measure was representative of the lived experiences of parents.

Participants. Qualitative data collection included in-depth interviews from 20 parents from two Midwestern states. To participate in the study, parents had to have a child who, at the time of the interview was 10 to 30 yeas old and had come out to the parent as LGB in the last 10 years. Data were collected over a 7-month period. Parents were mostly recruited from affirming

LGB organizations (e.g., Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays [PFLAG]), social media outlets (e.g., Facebook and LinkedIn), and snowball techniques (see Appendix A and B for a copy of the recruitment flyer).

Parents ranged in age from 30 to 64 years old. Almost all of the participants identified as heterosexual (*n* = 17), Caucasia (*n* = 19) mothers (*n* = 18). Sixty-five percent (*n* = 13) of the parents held an associate's degree or higher. Seventy-five percent of the parents (n=15) voted for Obama in both elections, identified with a certain religion, and had a combined household income of $40,000 or more. Additionally, 55% of the parents (*n* = 11) resided in a metro area, as defined by the 2013 Rural-Urban Continuum Codes (United States Department of Agriculture [USDA], 2013). As for the children referenced in the study by the parents, 45% of the parents had a male son (*n* = 9), and 60% of the parents (*n* = 12) reported their child identified as gay.

Data collection. With the exception of the first interview being conducted over Facetime, all interviews were completed over the phone due to geographical limitations (Irvine, 2011). The consent form was read over the phone and a copy was also sent to the parents (see Appendix C). The semi-structure interview format included ten questions with additional follow-up questions if necessary (see Appendix D). All questions focused on the experiences or parents before, during, and after their child came out as LGB, which was based off a proposed conceptual model (e.g., see Chrisler, under review). All interviews were audio-recorded and lasted on average approximately 54 minutes with a range of 43 to 70 minutes. At the conclusion of the interview, parents also answered a series of demographic questions (see Appendix E).

Field notes were written before, during, and after the interview, and memos were written after the interview was transcribed (Creswell, 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The goal of the field notes and memos was to record questions and concerns that rose from the interview and to

identity emerging themes that did not fit into the conceptual framework (Creswell, 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Data analysis. Interviews were transcribed, and the principal investigator wrote an accompanying memo. The transcripts and memos were re-read, and identifiers were removed (e.g., names of people and locations). During the second read through, a combination of phenomenological and inductive thematic analysis techniques were used by the principal investigator to identify communalities among parents' perceptions about their child's LGB identity development (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012; Creswell, 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Data validation. To ensure trustworthiness of the data, Creswell (2013) suggests engaging in at least two validation strategies. The two methods used in this study include triangulation and rich, thick descriptions. To establish triangulation in the data, multiple data sources need to be used. For the qualitative study, the themes were created based on the interview transcripts, field notes, and memos from the semi-structured interviews conducted with the participants (Creswell, 2013). Rich, thick descriptions were used to validate the themes and demonstrate "transferability" of the data to other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988). Therefore, in the results section of the qualitative study, each theme includes at least one participant example.

Quantitative Study

The second phase of the study used the findings generated from the qualitative phase to create a measure that captures parents' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors about their child's LGB identity development. Assessing the content validity of a newly developed measure is the first and often forgotten step used when creating a valid and reliable tool. Too often, researchers

generate an instrument and then pilot it on dozens of participants only to find out that several items were unclear or did not fit the constructs being measured in the tool. Thus, resulting in wasted time and resources on its administration. Before piloting the measure, measurement experts urge researchers to assess the content validity of measures by gathering expert feedback on the 1) relevance of its items to specific domain(s) and 2) clarity of the items.

Participants. The content reviewers were selected based off of the guidelines outlined by Grant and Davis (1997). The first group of content reviewers included LGB scholars who currently held a doctoral degree and community experts who worked with LGB youth and/or their parents. Seven experts were identified by the principal investigator and were sent an invitation to participate (see Appendix J for the recruitment letter). Five experts consented to the study, three completed both sections of the survey, one participant only completed the first part of the survey, and another expert did not complete the survey but provided substantive feedback on the measure. The second group of experts included individuals who the measure is targeted towards evaluating. Thus, parents from the first phase of the study were all contacted about participating in the second phase of the study (see Appendix J for the recruitment letter). Of the 20 parents that were emailed to participate, seven parents consented to participate, and five completed both sections of the survey. In total, ine participants completed the first half of the survey, and eight participants completed the second half of the survey.

Data collection. All identified experts were sent a welcome email and a link to access a draft of the survey items on Survey Monkey. After consenting to participate, participants were given information on how to complete the survey (see Appendix K for a copy of the consent form). At the beginning of the survey, the definition of the domain being studied was stated, and participants were reminded that the goal of the content review was not whether they agreed to the

statement but rather if the statement was clear and captured some aspect of sexual identity development. The survey consisted of two sections. In the first half of the survey, experts were given a list of 35 items and asked to rate each item on a scale from 1 (*the statement is not representative of sexual identity development)* to 4 (*the statement is representative of sexual identity development*) on how well the statement represented some aspect of parents' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors related to their child's sexual identity development. In the second half of the survey, experts were given the same set of items and asked to rate each item on its level of clarity on a scale from 1 (*not clear*) to 4 (*clear*). At the end of the survey, an additional space was provided for experts to leave specific feedback about an item or items that were missing (see Appendix L for a copy of the survey). Participants were also asked to leave their email address if they wanted to be included in a raffle for one $20 gift card.

Data analysis. Based on the recommendations outlined by Polit and Beck (2006), the I-CVI and S-CVI/Ave. were calculated. Calculation of the I-CVI included taking the number of experts who rated the item as a 3 or 4, divided by the total number of experts in the study. For example, if 5 of the 7 experts rated the first item as a 3 or 4, the I-CVI of the first item would be .71. The S-CVI/Ave. is calculated by taking the average of the I-CVIs. In other words, the sum of the I-CVIs is taken and then divided by the total number of measure items.

Results

Inductive thematic analysis was used to examine parents' attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge of their child's sexual identity development. Parent narratives presented in this section do not include the interviewer's comments (e.g., "right" "mhm," and "okay"). In order to provide concise examples, […] indicate that sections of the transcripts were excluded.

Qualitative Study

All of the parents (n = 20) discussed at least one of the following themes related to sexual identity development: waiting and not asking, sexual fluidness, too young, sexual intimacy, puberty, and talking about safe sex.

Waiting and not asking. Some of the parents (n = 6) believed they should take their child's lead as it relates to their child's identity disclosure. Therefore, parents did not ask their child about his/her sexual identity even though they suspected their child might be LGB. Reasons for not asking their child included not wanting to pressure the child and wanting to wait until the child was certain. One mother felt that asking her son if he was gay was demeaning. She said:

> I felt it would be demeaning like to ask those questions both to him and me and that he knows who he is and he'll tell us who he is when it happens. (MI10, Mother of 16-year-old gay male)

Therefore, parents felt it was important to allow their child to come out when he/she was ready and to demonstrate continued support by keeping lines of communication open.

Sexual fluidness. Half of the parents (n = 10) discussed the fluidness of their child's identity. For example, several parents (n = 6) discussed how their child's identity might be a phase. Of these parents, some parents (n = 3) hoped their child would grow out of it. For example, one parent remembered thinking this after her daughter came out at the age of 20:

> In my mind I'm thinking yeah she'll just go through this. This will just be a phase and she'll work her way through it and it'll be fine you know? Yeah go ahead, do what ya gotta do….I truly felt it's just a phase she's going through. She'll work her way through it. We'll figure it out. You know, I mean surprised but yet I didn't think it was, I really didn't think it that it would materialize. (WI5, Mother of 26-year-old bisexual female)

Other parents (n = 3), however, acknowledged that their child's LGB identity might be a phase but were not necessarily hoping their child's identity would change. One mother said the following:

> I was just curious as to see where it was gonna head, you know? I really didn't know because like I said, there was nothing leading up to it. It was just kind of one morning she said, "Hey, you know? This is me." And so it was like I was just kind of waiting around to see if it was a phase she was going through or if this was really who she was. (WI10, Mother of 16-year-old transgender lesbian child and 16-year-old gay transgender male)

A few parents were also open to the fluidness of their child's sexual identity (n = 3). One mother said:

> I think it was my way to make sure that the door was always open if he changed his mind. And not have him be embarrassed or not change his mind because you know everybody already thinks I'm this. (MI6, Mother of 21-year-old gay male)

For this mother, she was trying to emphasize to her son that he can have a fluid identity and to embrace any attractions he may have. Another parent said something similar:

> I was just trying to tell him that you know it is okay if you end up being bisexual and not just straight gay. That's kind of an oxymoron. That's funny. Um, but you know, I think he kind of emotionally grew into that understanding that yeah you know we are not being hypocritical and it is, it would be okay. We just, you know like I said very open with our kids and wanted him to know, it would be okay. You are not going against the grain if you choose to do that. (MI5, Mother of 13-year-old gay male)

However, encouraging sexual fluidness might not be perceived positively by the child. This mother said:

> I think maybe at the beginning it was not received well by my son. I think maybe he was kind of blowing that off as maybe a little bit of a lack of acceptance and that really wasn't it. (MI5, Mother of 13-year-old gay male)

This parent acknowledged that when she encouraged sexual exploration, it was perceived by her son as her not being accepting of his gay identity. Thus, there is a fine balance between encouraging sexual fluidness and acceptance of the youth's current sexual identity.

Too young. Almost half of the parents (n = 9) specifically discussed the age of their child and what role that played in their child's disclosure. Parents questioned whether their child was too young to commit to a sexual identity. For example, one parent said:

> So, that whole coming of age, teenage experiences, I think in the back of my mind, I guess disbelief that there is, I just wonder how authentic these identities are because they still are young and they still are trying to figure out who they are. (WI10, Mother of 16-year-old transgender lesbian child and 16-year-old gay transgender male)

Not only do they believe their child is too young, parents often wondered if their identity was part of the exploration phase of adolescence. One parent said:

> I guess I felt like I wasn't, at one point you know after he got to be probably a sophomore or so, I felt like I wasn't as worried as I was when he was in 8th grade, freshman, you know, that era where you're pretty young and they don't know what the hell is going on. And you know a lot of changes, hormones, everything. (WI1, Mother of 24-year-old gay male)

Another parent talked to peers to see if her son's experience was similar to other LGB young people. She said:

> I think I shared it with one or two close friends and one of them has a daughter who is a lesbian, and I said, "How old was your daughter when she knew? When did she come out to you?" Just to kind of find out, you know are there specific dates when kids know. Do they always know? And, she shared with me that her daughter was about 14 or 15 when she came out to her. (MI9, Mother of 24-year-old gay male)

Therefore, parents were conflicted as to whether their child was too young to come out and have a sexual identity.

Sexual intimacy. Other misconceptions around sexual identity development included parents (n = 4) believing their child's LGB identity development could only develop if the child had an intimate or sexual experience with someone of the opposite sex. For example, one parent said:

> I really don't know. You know, I guess when I did talk to [my daughter] and asked, "How do you know you don't like boys?" I do remember her saying "I tried. I tried to date a boy Mom. It just didn't feel right. I knew it wasn't right." After I said, "Have you

> slept with a man?" She said, "Yeah Mom I have. It didn't feel right. It, I'm not supposed to be with a man." (WI4, Mother of 26-year-old lesbian female)

Another parent believed her daughter's late disclosure happened because she only had one serious relationship. The mother said:

> She's only had the one serious relationship so she's never really had the chance to recognize that before…. So, it just never, and like I said, she's just figured it out herself and as she put it, she's still getting used to it herself. (MI7, Mother of 22-year-old bisexual female)

Parents (n = 3) also discussed gender roles in intimate partnerships. One mother said:

> You know we talked a lot about her girlfriends. And we talked a lot about what they did together and what roles she played in the relationship and all those kinds of things…I'll admit, like I said, you are always told that one is the female and one is the male you know? That's not always true. You know, it's not always true. (WI4, Mother of 26-year-old lesbian female)

The parent acknowledged her assumptions about gender roles and how asking her daughter questions helped alleviate those misconceptions. This misconception, however, was only discussed among parents who had lesbian or bisexual daughters.

Puberty. Parents (n = 4) discussed that prior to their child coming out, they were concerned that their child was not reaching puberty. Parents were comparing their LGB child to his/her peers or siblings and noticed they were not developing crushes on individuals of the opposite sex. For example, one parent said:

> I was worried that puberty wasn't happening and I didn't understand why. Cause there, you know, like when boys start to go through puberty they get interested in sex. They get interested in looking at things that they shouldn't look at on the Internet and things like that. [My son] has never ever been interested in looking at anyone without clothes. You know, so I was worried because I thought puberty might get like might still be like that but um, I guess it's not he same for gay boys. (MI2, Mother of 11-year-old gay male)

For these parents, they held certain expectations based on comparisons made with their heterosexual peers, which in turn led them to believe that their child was not developing at the pace of others.

Talking about safe sex. Only one quarter (n = 5) of the parents reported talking to their child about safe sex practices. Most parents seemed to suggest that these conversations were brief and did not include specific safe sex practices, while other parents discussed how these conversations were a mixture of safe sex and abstinence. Some parents also discussed how these conversations were both in the home and within their religious communities. For example, one parent said:

> I guess we did talk about you know it's best to wait until you are married. We would use that terminology then but if you find someone special before then, we talked about appropriate family planning methods but um I don't know. I guess, part of it I think is the kids. We've attended a Unitarian Universalist church for, since they were probably 4 and 6 years old and I think part of it is just a culture of the church. (MI9, Mother of 24-year-old gay male)

One parent recalled not feeling a need to talk to her son about safe sex practices. She said:

> I've got a smart kid. And I guess we have to have the safe sex talk with him but he's had like so many sex talks between church and us talking about it in general that I'm probably gonna do it but I, he's a pretty smart kid. I'm not too worried about that. (MI10, Mother of 16-year-old gay male)

Because this was not a question that was specifically asked of parents, it is unclear how many parents actually had safe sex conversations with their LGB child.

Quantitative Study

A total of nine participants (five parents and four scholars) completed the first half of the survey, and eight participants completed the second half of the survey (five parents and three scholars). Results from their ratings of whether the items were relevant to the sexual identity development construct (rating the item as a 3 or 4) are found in Table 3.1. Similarly, results from their ratings of item clarity are found in Table 3.2.

Table 3.1

Expert Rating of Item Relevance to Sexual Identity Development Construct

	Parents					Scholars					
Item	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	Number in agreement	Item CVI
1. Once my child moves out, his/her sexual practices are none of my business.	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	8	.89
2. A child cannot identify as LGB until he/she has a sexual experience with someone of the opposite sex.	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	7	.78
3. It is important to talk about LGB identities with your child regardless of whether your child identifies as LGB.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	9	1.00
4. I talked about LGB identities with my child *before* he/she came out.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	9	1.00
5. I talked about LGB identities with my child *after* he/she came out.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	9	1.00
6. It is important to ask your child whether he/she is LGB.	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	8	.89
7. I asked my child about his/her sexual identity.	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	8	.89
8. I didn't ask my child about his/her sexual identity because it would have pushed my child to come out before he/she was ready.	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	8	.89
9. I didn't ask my child about his/her sexual identity because it would have been demeaning to ask my child if he/she was LGB.	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	8	.89
10. I didn't ask my child about his/her sexual identity because I didn't think it was important to ask.	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	8	.89
11. I didn't ask my child about his/her sexual identity because my child was too young.	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	8	.89
12. I didn't ask my child about his/her sexual identity because my child didn't have a sexual partner.	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	8	.89
13. I didn't ask my child about his/her sexual identity because it was none of my business.	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	8	.89
14. I didn't ask my child about his/her sexual identity because I wanted to wait for my child to come to me when he/she	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	8	.89

Table 3.1 (cont'd)

was ready.											
15. A child does not have a sexual identity until reaching puberty.	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	7	.78
16. A child will come out as LGB when he/she is ready.	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	7	.78
17. Sexual identity can change over time.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	9	1.00
18. Bisexuality is for those who cannot commit to a sexual identity.	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	8	.89
19. Being gay or lesbian is a choice.	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	7	.78
20. Being bisexual is a choice.	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	8	.89
21. Being attracted to the same sex does not mean you are LGB.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	9	1.00
22. LGB identities are a result of pop culture.	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	7	.78
23. Talking to a child about LGB identities before puberty might sway him/her to identify as LGB.	X	X	X				X	X	X	6	.67
24. Parents should wait to talk to their child about his/her sexual identity until he/she brings it up.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	9	1.00
25. A child that comes out as lesbian or gay before puberty is confused.	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	7	.78
26. A child that comes out as bisexual before puberty is confused.	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	7	.78
27. A child's sexual identity forms after puberty.	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	7	.78
28. Identifying as LGB is a phase.	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	7	.78
29. In a same sex relationship, one person takes on a masculine role.	X	X	X			X			X	5	.56
30. Not having a consistent father figure can play a role in a child's sexual identity.	X	X	X			X		X	X	6	.67
31. Bisexuality is a sexual identity used when youth are trying to figure out if they are gay or lesbian.	X	X	X			X		X	X	6	.67
32. Identifying as LGB before puberty is too young.	X	X	X			X		X	X	6	.67
33. A boy that plays with feminine toys will be gay.	X	X	X			X		X	X	6	.67
34. A girl playing with masculine toys will be a lesbian.	X	X	X			X		X	X	6	.67
35. Trying on different sexual identities during adolescence is common.	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	7	.78
										S-CVI/Ave. =0.83	

Item relevance. Both the I-CVI and S-CVI/Ave. were calculated. The I-CVI ranged from .56 to 1.00. Based on the recommendations of Lynn (1986) and Polit and Beck (2006), acceptable I-CVI levels of more than five experts is .78 or higher. Additionally, the S-CVI/Ave. was 0.83. Acceptable S-CVI/Ave. is .90 or higher (Polit & Beck, 2006). Therefore, seven items required revisions based on the I-CVI. Expert feedback was incorporated in the revisions of the seven items (see Table 3.3).

Additional expert feedback was provided. First, the measure items focused on the parent's LGB child and LGB children in general. Therefore, it was recommended to revise all items to reflect the parent's LGB child. Second, parsing out items that focus on beliefs and items that focus on behaviors was encouraged. Third, it was recommended to separate bisexuality out from lesbian and gay to allow a more nuanced examination of how bisexuality differs from lesbian and gay identity development. Last, one expert felt items 1 and 6 through 14 are less about sexual identity development and more about parents' beliefs around intrusion on their child's privacy. Therefore, more clarification around the purpose of these items was suggested.

One expert also recommended adding in additional items that get at parental guilt ("My child is LGB because of something I did") and parents' perceptions that being gay or engaging in LGB acts are sinful ("Being LGB is a sin" or "Engaging in LGB behaviors are sinful"). Another expert recommended including more items that focus on parent behaviors that socialize children towards non-heterosexual identities, such as reading books or watching movies that have LGB characters.

Table 3.2

Expert Rating of Item Clarity

Item	Parents					Scholars			Number in agreement	Item CVI
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3		
1. Once my child moves out, his/her sexual practices are none of my business.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	8	1.00
2. A child cannot identify as LGB until he/she has a sexual experience with someone of the opposite sex.	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	7	.88
3. It is important to talk about LGB identities with your child regardless of whether your child identifies as LGB.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	8	1.00
4. I talked about LGB identities with my child *before* he/she came out.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	8	1.00
5. I talked about LGB identities with my child *after* he/she came out.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	8	1.00
6. It is important to ask your child whether he/she is LGB.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	8	1.00
7. I asked my child about his/her sexual identity.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	8	1.00
8. I didn't ask my child about his/her sexual identity because it would have pushed my child to come out before he/she was ready.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	8	1.00
9. I didn't ask my child about his/her sexual identity because it would have been demeaning to ask my child if he/she was LGB.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	8	1.00
10. I didn't ask my child about his/her sexual identity because I didn't think it was important to ask.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	8	1.00
11. I didn't ask my child about his/her sexual identity because my child was too young.	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	7	.88
12. I didn't ask my child about his/her sexual identity because my child didn't have a sexual partner.	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	7	.88
13. I didn't ask my child about his/her sexual identity because it was none of my business.	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	7	.88
14. I didn't ask my child about his/her sexual identity because I wanted to wait for my child to come to me when he/she was ready.	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	7	.88
15. A child does not have a sexual identity until reaching puberty.	X	X	X		X	X		X	6	.75
16. A child will come out as LGB when he/she is ready.	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	7	.88
17. Sexual identity can change over time.	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	7	.88

Table 3.2 (cont'd)

18. Bisexuality is for those who cannot commit to a sexual identity.	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	7	.88
19. Being gay or lesbian is a choice.	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	7	.88
20. Being bisexual is a choice.	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	7	.88
21. Being attracted to the same sex does not mean you are LGB.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	8	1.00
22. LGB identities are a result of pop culture.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	8	1.00
23. Talking to a child about LGB identities before puberty might sway him/her to identify as LGB.	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	7	.88
24. Parents should wait to talk to their child about his/her sexual identity until he/she brings it up.	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	7	.88
25. A child that comes out as lesbian or gay before puberty is confused.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	8	1.00
26. A child that comes out as bisexual before puberty is confused.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	8	1.00
27. A child's sexual identity forms after puberty.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	8	1.00
28. Identifying as LGB is a phase.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	8	1.00
29. In a same sex relationship, one person takes on a masculine role.	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	7	.88
30. Not having a consistent father figure can play a role in a child's sexual identity.	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	7	.88
31. Bisexuality is a sexual identity used when youth are trying to figure out if they are gay or lesbian.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	8	1.00
32. Identifying as LGB before puberty is too young.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	8	1.00
33. A boy that plays with feminine toys will be gay.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	8	1.00
34. A girl playing with masculine toys will be a lesbian.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	8	1.00
35. Trying on different sexual identities during adolescence is common.	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	7	.88
								S-CVI/Ave. =		.94

Item clarity. Both the I-CVI and S-CVI/Ave. were calculated for item clarity. The I-CVI ranged from .75 to 1.00. Additionally, the S-CVI/Ave. was 0.94. The S-CVI/Ave. suggests overall clarity of the measure. However, one item did have an I-CVI that fell below the .78 recommendation (Lynn, 1986; Polit & Beck, 2006). Therefore, this item and its suggested

revision by one of the experts are included in Table 3.3. Experts also provided feedback on item clarity for 15 additional items. This feedback is included in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3

Item Feedback

Item	Expert Feedback	Revised Item
7. I asked my child about his/her sexual identity.		7. I asked my child whether he/she was LGB. (Yes/No). If no, because:
8. I didn't ask my child about his/her sexual identity because it would have pushed my child to come out before he/she was ready.	"The 'I didn't because...' questions are double barreled. You should ask did or didn't, then have a separate question to tap the reason(s) why."	• It would have pushed my child to come out before he/she was ready.
9. I didn't ask my child about his/her sexual identity because it would have been demeaning to ask my child if he/she was LGB.	"Do you want to clarify whether this is demeaning to the parents or the child or both?"	• It would have been demeaning to my child.
10. I didn't ask my child about his/her sexual identity because I didn't think it was important to ask.		• I didn't think it was important to ask.
11. I didn't ask my child about his/her sexual identity because my child was too young.		• My child was too young.
12. I didn't ask my child about his/her sexual identity because my child didn't have a sexual partner.		• My child didn't have a sexual partner.
13. I didn't ask my child about his/her sexual identity because it was none of my business.		• It was none of my business.
14. I didn't ask my child about his/her sexual identity because I wanted to wait for my child to come to me when he/she was ready.		• I wanted to wait for my child to come to me when he/she was ready.
15. A child does not have a sexual identity until reaching puberty.	"I wonder about the use of the phrase 'sexual identity' in the questions. Do most parents know	15. A child cannot identify as LGB until reaching puberty.

Table 3.3 (cont'd)

	what this phrase means?"	
19. Being gay or lesbian is a choice. 20. Being bisexual is a choice.	"Perhaps it would help to indicate 'a choice that people make for themselves.'"	19 Being gay or lesbian is a choice that people make for themselves. 20. Being bisexual is a choice that people make for themselves.
21. Being attracted to the same sex does not mean you are LGB.	"I was not fully sure what the question is getting at - attraction versus behavior versus identity?"	21. Being sexually attracted to the same sex does not mean you identify as LGB.
22. LGB identities are a result of pop culture.	"Sure you trying to get at the idea that young people choose LGB identities because that is what they see in pop culture rather than because that is who they really are OR that pop culture facilitates young people in coming to terms with their true identity? My initial read is that you are trying to get at the first of these, and if so, a bit more clarification is needed -- and if not, perhaps even more clarification is needed."	22. People choose LGB identities. Yes/No If yes, because: • That is what they see in pop culture.
23. Talking to a child about LGB identities before puberty might sway him/her to identify as LGB.	"Could be very tricky to interpret from a parental perspective--if you keep this question in the survey you wont be able to decide whether parents think that talking to their children about LGB identities might (1) increase their likelihood of becoming gay or (2) decrease their likelihood of becoming gay. Therefore, you either need two questions or to reword this question so that you can be more sure of your interpretation of the answer."	23. Talking to a child about being LGB before puberty may increase their likelihood of being LGB. 23a. Talking to a child about being LGB before puberty may decrease their likelihood of being LGB.
28. Identifying as LGB is a phase.	"I can understand why you might leave this question open, but maybe some thought about clarifying or extending would be helpful, such as a "phase that they will grow out" of	28. Identifying as LGB is a phase that they will grow out of.

Table 3.3 (cont'd)

	or "a phase that is passing." Just so you know what you are measuring in terms of what they mean as a phase if respondents do indicate affirmative responses to this question. Just a thought."	
29. In a same sex relationship, one person takes on a masculine role.	"Not sure what the masculine role question is getting at." "Some parents may struggle with masculine and feminine." "Should list out the other half of the equation. One person takes on the masculine role and one person takes on the feminine role in a same sex relationship." "I'm confused why there isn't a companion question about 'feminine' roles."	29. In a same sex relationship, one person takes on a masculine role and the other takes the feminine role.
30. Not having a consistent father figure can play a role in a child's sexual identity.	"What about mothers"	30. Not having a consistent father figure can play a role in a child coming out as 30a. LGB. Not having a consistent mother figure can play a role in a child's coming out as LGB.
31. Bisexuality is a sexual identity used when youth are trying to figure out if they are gay or lesbian.		31. When a child comes out as bisexual, it means he/she is not ready to come out as lesbian or gay.
32. Identifying as LGB before puberty is too young.	"Again, I would separate out the LG and B here."	32. Identifying as lesbian or gay before puberty is too young. Identifying as bisexual before puberty is too young.
33. A boy that plays with feminine toys will be gay. 34. A girl playing with masculine toys will be a lesbian.	"Not following up with questions that try to measure attitudes regarding the role of gendered toys for bisexual identified youth may	33. A boy that plays with feminine toys will be gay when he's an adult.

Table 3.3 (cont'd)

	prevent you from being able to use these questions to help identify perceptions and attitudes of parents regarding bisexuality and gender expression." "I bordered between a 3 and 4 rating. Maybe just add at the end "as an adult" -- again so you know more clearly what you are measuring."	34. A girl playing with masculine toys will be a lesbian when she's an adult.
35. Trying on different sexual identities during adolescence is common.	"The term 'trying on' sexual identities is strange to me."	35. Sexual exploration with individuals of the same sex is common during adolescence.

Discussion

Qualitative Study

Results from the qualitative study suggested that parents' misconceptions or lack of knowledge related to sexual identity development played a role in how they came to understand and accept their child's identity. In this study, parents felt that it was important for their child to come out when he/she was ready. Therefore, parents did not want to ask their child whether he/she was LGB because they did not want to "out" their child before he/she was ready. Though the belief that the child should come out on his/her own time is important, the child may perceive this silence as topic avoidance. Therefore, parents might want to consider engaging in conversations with the child affirming their support of people who identify as LGB before the child comes out.

The analysis also revealed that some parents believed their child's LGB identity was a "phase" (Fields, 2001; Philips & Ancis, 2008). Because sexual exploration is often a marker of adolescence (Fortenberry, 2013), parents believed their child was too young to commit to a

single sexual identity before reaching puberty. It is important to recognize that even though parents discussed how identifying as LGB might be a phase, some parents did not necessarily hope that their child would grow out of it. Rather, they acknowledged the prevalence of sexual fluidness in youth today (Katz-Wise, 2015). Therefore, it is important that parents communicate to their child that they are open to the child's sexual exploration and fluidity without invalidating the child's current identity.

Other misconceptions around sexual identity development included believing that sexual identity develops as a result of not enjoying sex with someone of the opposite sex. Parents also discussed gender roles in relationships and assumed that one individual fulfills the masculine role while the other individual plays a more feminine role. These beliefs are rooted in heteronormativity where heterosexuality and gender binaries are viewed as the "norm" (Oswald, Blume, & Marks, 2005; Oswald, Kuvalanka, Blume, & Berkowitz, 2009).

Another interesting theme that emerged was parents' concerns that their child was not reaching puberty. These concerns were based on parents' observations that their child did not express interest in the opposite sex in comparison to their peers (Lee & Lee, 2006). This assessment, however, is rooted in the assumption that heterosexuality is the default. Therefore, it is important for all parents to not assume heterosexuality especially when talking to the child about "crushes" or individuals they find attractive. Additionally, when discussing topics around sex, parents should include how to engage in safe sexual practices with individuals of the opposite sex and same sex. This inclusivity will ensure the child receives the information he/she needs to make healthy sexual choices.

Quantitative Study

Based on their qualitative feedback, a measure was developed and sent to content experts for their review. The findings not only clarified the proposed measure, but also provided invaluable feedback on the revision and addition of new items. Based on the findings of the S-CVI/Ave., the measure did not have an acceptable level of content validity as it related to item relevance. Further analysis of the I-CVI for individual items indicated that seven items required revisions. Based on the feedback provided by the content experts, items were revised.

The S-CVI/Ave. demonstrated an acceptable level of clarity for the measure. Examination of the I-CVI for each item's level of clarity suggested the revision of one item. Upon further analysis of the experts' feedback, the revision of 15 additional items was recommended. The qualitative feedback was then used to revise 22 of the 35 items. Experts also provided general feedback related to item relevance, which will be incorporated in future revisions of the survey.

Though the content validity related to the clarity of the measure was strong, the measure's S-CVI/Ave. related to item relevance fell below the acceptable level. The I-CVI for item relevance and clarity only required the revisions of eight items. However, a more conservative approach was taken to ensure the expert feedback was incorporate throughout the entire measure, which led to the revisions of more than half of the items. Overall, this content validity study provides direction on future revisions of the measure.

Limitations

The findings from this study set the foundation for a measure that enables us to better understand how parents think about sexual identity and the actions in which they engage. However, limitations must be discussed. The sample used in the qualitative sample consisted of

mostly Caucasian, educated, and middle/high income mothers. Therefore, the items generated from the findings of the qualitative study may not be representative of parents from low-income households, from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, and different religious backgrounds. Similarly, the parent and scholar experts included in this study were selected on a convenience sample. Therefore, their feedback may not be representative of the larger population.

Though the study included expert feedback from the recommended number of experts (3 to 10) as outlined by Lynn (1986), there were more parents than scholar experts included in the study. This may have played a role in the low S-CVI/Ave. because parents may have not been clear on what constitutes as an item being relevant to the sexual identity development construct. Even though participants were asked to rate each item on its relevance to the construct and not whether they agreed with the item, it appears that the negatively phrased items received lower ratings from the parents. Having parents only provide a rating for item clarity might alleviate this concern in future studies. Also, having an even balance between parent and scholar expert feedback may provide a more accurate I-CVI and S-CVI/Ave.

Polit and Beck (2006) and Lynn (1986) recommended a second round of expert reviews if the I-CVI and S-CVI/Ave. fell below the acceptable range. Because the experts provided detailed feedback on item revisions, another round of expert did not seem necessary. After another round of revisions are made, the same scholar experts will be contacted and asked to provide general feedback about the measure. This will ensure that all of their feedback was incorporated to their satisfaction.

Conclusion

Qualitative interviews were conducted to gain insight into the lived experiences of parents who have LGB children. Analysis of the interviews suggested that how parents

conceptualize their child's sexual identity development might play a role in how they react and respond to their child's disclosure. As a result, a list of measure items were generated based on the experiences parents shared about their child's disclosure.

Once a draft of the measure was created, an expert review panel was used to critique and provide substantive feedback on the measure's clarity and representativeness of sexual identity development. Though the process is based on the subjective opinions of the reviewers, it adds a level of objectivity (Rubio, Berg-Weger, Tebb, Lee, & Rauch, 2003). Content validity is a critical first step in measure development. Next steps include further revising the items and piloting the measure. Piloting the measure will provide a more thorough analysis of the measure's validity and reliability. Results from the pilot can be used to examine the measure's construct validity, internal consistency, and test-retest reliability. Examination of the measure's psychometric properties will then allow for further measure refinement before being administered to a larger sample.

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CHAPTER 4: INTEGRATIVE CONCLUSION

Contribution to Existing Literature

The purpose of both manuscripts was to fill an important gap in the literature related to *why* parents react the way they do when their child comes out as LGB. To date, there is not a validated theoretical framework that captures the diverse experiences of parents who have a LGB child. Both the qualitative and mixed method studies aimed to fill that gap by 1) testing a theory and research-informed conceptual model of parental reactions to coming out and then 2) using those findings to develop a measure that captures the attitudes and beliefs parents may have about their LGB child's sexual identity development. This exploratory study not only provides the groundwork for a larger-scale study, but also lays the foundation to develop resources and interventions necessary to potentially prevent the negative outcomes associated with parental rejection.

Manuscript 1

The goal of the first manuscript was to use a newly developed conceptual model as a way to better understand the experiences of parents who have LGB children. Though the coded qualitative data mapped onto all of the a priori themes that were generated from the conceptual model, the data also shed new light on each dimension. When asked why parents did not question their child's sexual orientation, parents most often talked about how they wanted to respect their child's privacy and process of identity exploration and formation. The findings suggest there is a certain threshold where parents are comfortable with the uncertainty they have about their child's sexual orientation. Though many parents are actively collecting information about their child through everyday observations, they felt no urgency in confirming their suspicions. However, this finding may be topic specific. For example, parents may be

comfortable with uncertainty surrounding their child's sexual orientation because it does not pose any immediate risk to the child. Whereas, if the parent suspected the child was engaging in risky behaviors (e.g., underage drinking), there may be more urgency in questioning the child in order to reduce uncertainty surrounding that topic.

During the appraisal stage, parents often had concerns for their child. Parents were worried that their child's LGB identity would place the child at risk of discrimination, bullying, or victimization (Butcher, 2014; Conley, 2011; Freedman, 2008; Goodrich, 2009; Grafsky, 2014; LaSala, 2010; Lopata, 2003; Pearlman, 2005; Philips & Ancis, 2008; Wakeley & Tuason, 2011). These concerns are embedded within the larger macrosystem due in part to the fact that LGB young people are a marginalized population in the United States. Therefore, parents were faced with the possibility that their child may encounter bigotry and prejudice as a result of identifying as LGB.

Because emotions are influenced by appraisals, parents often displayed complex emotional responses that resulted from a combination of positive, negative, and neutral emotions (Arnold, 1960; Brashers, 2001; Roseman, 1984). What is important to understand is that parents' negative emotional responses did not result from a lack of acceptance of their child's LGB identity. Rather, parents were overwhelmed with the challenges their child may face as a sexual minority.

To deal with these concerns and worries, parents engaged in a number of coping behaviors. Though some parents used avoidant strategies, the majority of parents actively engaged in information gathering behaviors. Many parents looked to individuals in their microsystem, such as their LGB child, family, friends, and co-workers for support (Baptist & Allen, 2008; Conley, 2011; Goldfried & Goldfried, 2001; Gonzalez, Rostosky, Odom, & Riggle,

2013; Goodrich, 2009; Gottlieb, 2000; Grafsky, 2014; LaSala, 2010; Lee & Lee, 2006; Maslowe & Yarhouse, 2015; Pearlman, 2005; Saltzburg, 2004, 2010; Wakeley & Tuason, 2011). Parents also took the initiative to seek out online resources (Freedman, 2008; Goldfried & Goldfried, 2001; Gonzalez et al., 2013; Goodrich, 2009; Gottlieb, 2000; Hom, 2003; LaSala, 2000; Lee & Lee, 2006; Lopata, 2003; Maslowe & Yarhouse, 2015; Pearlman, 2005; Philips & Ancis, 2008; Saltzburg, 2010; Wakeley & Tuason, 2011) to better understand what they as parents needed to do to better support their child's journey.

As parents gathered more information, they noticed a shift in their thinking. For some parents, they let go of certain expectations for their child and created new ones (Philips & Ancis, 2008; Wakeley & Tuason, 2011). For example, before their child came out, many of the parents envisioned their child would marry someone of the opposite sex and have biological children. However, after their child came out, parents reported expanding their definition of family by including a partner of the same sex and adopted children. Some parents also had to redefine certain religious teachings, such as rejecting the belief that being LGB is both a choice and sinful (Gonzalez et al., 2013; Goodrich, 2009; Hom, 2003; LaSala, 2000; Philips & Ancis, 2008). For these parents, they believed that God made their child who he/she is and therefore, God loved their child unconditionally. This finding, however, may be more common among accepting parents who report being more spiritual than religious. Less accepting parents who report being more religious than spiritual may be less comfortable making these types of accommodations to their religious beliefs.

Contextual factors that influence how parents come to understand and accept their child's LGB identity came to light in this study. At the microsystem level, parents reported engaging in a variety of behaviors that aimed to reduce the concerns and worries they had related to their

child's disclosure. In other words, parents sought support from individuals closest to them. As parents became more comfortable with this information, they reported engaging in various forms of advocacy at both the micro- and mesosystem levels, such as helping their child start a Gay Straight Alliance and speaking up against extended family members who were not accepting of the child's LGB identity (Fields, 2001; Gonzalez et al., 2013; Goodrich, 2009; Wakeley & Tuason, 2011). At the exo- and macrosystem level, parents became more aware of the challenges their child may face as a sexual minority, especially in nonmetro communities where there is a lack of community resources for LGB young people. At the chronosystem level, almost all of the parents had successfully overcome at least one difficult life transition prior to their child coming out. Parents' ability to overcome these life challenge, often referred to as post-traumatic growth (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004), expanded their acceptance of family diversity and positioned the parent to be more accepting of their child's identity.

Manuscript 2

Because misconceptions can prevent a parent from fully accepting their LGB child, the goal of the second study was to develop a measure that could be used in future studies to capture parents' gaps in knowledge. Findings from the qualitative study suggested that parents' misconceptions and lack of knowledge related to sexual identity development played a role in how parents came to understand their child's LGB identity. Some parents reported that their child's LGB identity was a "phase." Parents did not necessarily hope their child would "grow out of" his/her LGB identity. Rather, parents wanted their LGB child to explore his/her sexuality and not feel constrained by one identity. Other misconceptions parents held were rooted in heteronormative assumptions. Parents believed that in order for their child to identify as LGB, they first had to have an intimate experience with someone of the opposite sex. They also

believed that in a same sex relationship, one partner fulfilled the masculine role while the other encompassed a more feminine role in the partnership.

Based on the findings from the qualitative study, a measure was developed to better capture the misconceptions of parents who have a LGB child. Based on the results from the content validity study, the measure did not have an acceptable level of content validity as it related to item relevance but did possess an acceptable level of clarity for the measure. Based on the recommendations of Lynn (1986) and Polit and Beck (2006), only eight items required revision. However, a more conservative approach was taken to revise all items that received feedback by the content experts. Therefore, further examination of all expert feedback resulted in the revision of 22 of the 35 items.

Future Directions

To strengthen the findings from these studies, more emphasis needs to be placed on gathering the diverse experiences of parents. This includes focusing more on the strengths of parents living in rural communities, as well as families of color living in both metro and nonmetro communities (Baptist & Allen, 2008). Because only one parent was in a same sex relationship, comparisons between parents in same sex and heterosexual relationships could not be made. Future studies may want to examine how parental reactions vary among parents who are in same sex and heterosexual relationships. Disentangling how religiosity and spirituality, as well as how membership in various religious communities play a role in parental reactions to disclosure is worth further examination in future studies. Additionally, future work may include using a dyadic analysis approach where both the parent and LGB child are interviewed. By overlaying the narratives, communication alignments and misalignments can be identified and would provide ways in which to improve communication between the LGB child and parent.

Next steps also include piloting the measure to assess the measure's psychometric properties (e.g., test-retest reliability, internal consistency, and construct validity). Results from the pilot study can then be used to further refine the measure before administering it to a larger sample. The purpose of the larger scale study is to better understand misconceptions surrounding sexual identity development among parents. Study findings can then be used to inform the development of tools and resources that aim to educate parents about identity development and the importance of accepting their child's LGB identity.

Implications to Practice

To demonstrate continual support, parents may consider affirming their support for LGB people before the child comes out. By facilitating this type of conversation, the parent is demonstrating support yet is not outing the child before he/she is ready. Parents' misconceptions about sexual identity development also lead to miscommunication between the parent and LGB child. Thus, there is a need for more resources and supports that educate parents about sexual identity development.

Parents should avoid assuming their child is heterosexual. Therefore, when parents are talking to their child about dating and sex, they should be inclusive of both opposite and same sex partnerships. For example, rather than ask a boy if he has a "girlfriend," parents may consider asking their son if he has a "crush" or is interested in anyone at school. Parents may also consider engaging in conversations with the child about their openness to sexual exploration and fluidity. Additionally, discussions around safe sex should also be inclusive to ensure the child receives the information he/she needs to make healthy sexual choices.

For many parents, when they learn their child is LGB, they have concerns and worries that may transpire into sadness and crying. From the perspective of the LGB child, he/she may

perceive the parent's emotional reaction result from a lack of acceptance. Therefore, during the disclosure process, parents may consider being transparent about their concerns and the reasoning behind their emotional response. Additionally, it is important for parents to validate the LGB child and reassure the child that coming out as LGB will not change their relationship or their love for the child.

During the information-gathering phase, parents used a variety of strategies to reduce their concerns and worries related to their child's disclosure. Parents found online resources and also sought support from their friends, family members, co-workers, and parents who had LGB children. Future resources may include how to become a stronger LGB advocate in their community. A more hands-on resources might be include developing an online parent-mentoring program, where parents of LGB youth around the country offer support to one another and share ways to overcome obstacles that are unique to having a LGB child (e.g., my daughter's school will not allow her to start a Gay Straight Alliance student group). These types of resources are critical for parents living in communities where they have limited access to affirmative LGB organizations and may not be able to connect with others who have LGB children. Having access to a network of other supportive parents is invaluable and critical to fostering healthy families and reducing the negative outcomes associated with family rejection.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Qualitative Parent Interview Recruitment Flyer (Michigan)

Share Your Experience!

Do you have a child, teen, or young adult that came out to you in the last ten years as lesbian, gay, or bisexual (LGB)? Is your child between the ages of 10 and 30? Do you currently live in Michigan? Would you be interested in sharing your experience of what it was like to learn your child was LGB?

If so, consider participating in a 1 hour in-person, Skype, or phone interview! All interviews will be kept confidential and those who participate will be given a $20 gift card.

The findings from these interviews will be used to inform a larger study.

Email Alison at chrisler@msu.edu
OR
"Like" our Page on Facebook (http://www.facebook.com/MIparents)
for more information!

Parents at all stages of the process are encouraged to participate!

APPENDIX B

Qualitative Parent Interview Recruitment Flyer (Wisconsin)

Share Your Experience!

Do you have a child, teen, or young adult that came out to you in the last ten years as lesbian, gay, or bisexual (LGB)? Is your child between the ages of 10 and 30? Do you currently live in Wisconsin? Would you be interested in sharing your experience of what it was like to learn your child was LGB?

If so, consider participating in a 1 hour in-person, Skype, or phone interview! All interviews will be kept confidential and those who participate will be given a $20 gift card.

The findings from these interviews will be used to inform a larger study.

Email Alison at chrisler@msu.edu
for more information!

Parents at all stages of the process are encouraged to participate!

APPENDIX C

Qualitative Parent Interview Consent Form

Dear Parent,

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled, "Understanding the Experiences of Parents with Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Children," which examines the experiences of parents who have a youth or young adult that is LGB. In this study, you will be asked questions related to your experiences before, during, and after your child came out as LGB. To participate in this study, you need to:

- Have a LGB child that came out to you in the past 10 years
- Have a LGB child that is 10 to 30 years old
- Currently reside in a Midwestern state (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, or Wisconsin) or the Washington, DC metro area

Participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You have the right to say no. You may change your mind at any time and withdraw. You may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time. You will be provided with a $20 gift card at the conclusion of the interview. Even if you end the interview early, you will still be given your $20 gift card. The interview will take approximately 60 to 90 minutes. You may be contacted for an additional follow-up interview.

This interview will be audio-recorded. At the conclusion of the interview, the audio-recording will be transcribed and analyzed. All data for this project will be kept confidential. Data will be kept up to three years in a locked cabinet in a locked room at the address of the primary researcher below. The researchers, research staff, and the Human Research Protection Program will be the only entities that have access to this information. Information about you will be kept confidential to the maximum extent allowable by law. The results of this study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but the identities of all research participants will remain confidential. Although your participation in this research may not benefit you personally, it will help us understand the experiences of parents who have LGB children.

There are minimal risks associated with participating in this study. When answering questions related to your experiences of having a LGB child, it might trigger psychological distress. If at anytime during the interview you feel uncomfortable, you can choose to not answer the question or end the interview at any time.

If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, or how to do any part of it, or to report an injury (i.e. physical, psychological, social, financial, or otherwise), please contact the researcher Dr. Francisco Villarruel, Michigan State University, Department of Human Development and Family Studies, Human Ecology Building, 552 W. Circle Drive, Room 103, East Lansing, MI 48824, fvilla@msu.edu, 517-432-7298.

If you have question or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact the Michigan State University's Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, fax 517-432-4503, or email irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 207 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

A copy of this consent form has been sent to you via email.

You voluntarily agree to participate by completing this interview.

APPENDIX D

Qualitative Parent Interview Protocol

1. Tell me about your relationship with your child before he/she came out.
2. Did you suspect your child was LGB?
    a. If so, tell me about that experience. Tell me why you thought that.

       If not, why do you think you did not suspect?
3. Tell me about the time you confirmed your child was LGB.
    a. Did you ask your child? Did you confirm through other sources?
    b. How did you react? Do you remember how you felt?
4. Once you found out, did you have any concerns or worries for your child? What about for yourself? What about your relationship with your child?
    a. How did this make you feel?
5. What did you do next to deal with these worries?
    a. Tell me what has happened since then.
    b. Did you have to change any expectations for your child?
6. On a scale from 1 to 10, how accepting were you when you first found out? How accepting are you now? What contributed to that change? If no change, what contributed to this rating staying the same?
7. How do you think your religious identity has played a role in this process? More generally, what about your cultural identity?
8. Were there other things that influenced your level of acceptance? Supportive people? Resources?
    a. Looking back, is there anything you would have done differently?
    b. What advice would you give to other parents? What do other parents need?
9. Has this experience changed you for the better or worse? If so, why? If not, why not?

10. Finally, what are your hopes, dreams, and goals for your child?

APPENDIX E

Parent Demographic Questionnaire

1. What area do you live in?

☐ Michigan
☐ Wisconsin

2. Does your child, teen, or young adult identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual (LGB)?

□ Yes
□ No

3. Did your LGB child, youth, or young adult come out to you in the last 10 years?

□ Yes
□ No

4. What is the gender of your child?

□ Female
□ Male
□ Transgender female
□ Transgender male
□ Gender queer
□ Gender nonconforming
□ I prefer not to answer
□ Other: _____

5. How old is your LGB child, youth, or young adult?

□ Younger than 10
□ 10
□ 11
□ 12
□ 13
□ 14
□ 15
□ 16
□ 17
□ 18
□ 19
□ 20
□ 21
□ 22
□ 23
□ 24
□ 25
□ 26
□ 27
□ 28
□ 29
□ 30

6. How old was your LGB child, youth, or young adult when he/she came out to you?

- □ Younger than 10
- □ 10
- □ 11
- □ 12
- □ 13
- □ 14
- □ 15
- □ 16
- □ 17
- □ 18
- □ 19
- □ 20
- □ 21
- □ 22
- □ 23
- □ 24
- □ 25
- □ 26
- □ 27
- □ 28
- □ 29
- □ 30

7. Now a little bit about yourself! How old are you?

- □ Under 18
- □ 18 – 24
- □ 25 – 29
- □ 30 – 34
- □ 35 – 39
- □ 40 – 44
- □ 45 – 49
- □ 50 – 54
- □ 55 – 59
- □ 60 – 64
- □ 65 – 69
- □ 70+

8. How do you identify?

- □ Female
- □ Male
- □ Gender queer
- □ Gender nonconforming
- □ Transgender female
- □ Transgender male
- □ I prefer not to answer

□ Other: _____

9. How do you identify? (Check all that apply)
□ American Indian or Alaska Native
□ Asian
□ Black/African-American
□ Latino/Hispanic
□ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
□ White
□ I prefer not to answer
□ Other: _____

10. How do you identify?
□ Heterosexual
□ Lesbian
□ Gay
□ Bisexual
□ Queer
□ Questioning
□ I prefer not to answer
□ Other: _____

11. What's your educational level?
□ No high school
□ Some high school
□ Highs school graduate
□ Vocational training (e.g., floristry, beautician)
□ Some college, no degree
□ Associate's degree, occupational
□ Associate's degree, academic
□ Bachelor's degree
□ Master's degree
□ Professional degree (e.g., JD or medical doctor)
□ Doctoral degree
□ I prefer not to answer

12. What is your current household income?
□ Under $10,000
□ $10,000 - $19,999
□ $20,000 - $29,999
□ $30,000 - $39,999
□ $40,000 - $49,999
□ $50,000 - $74,999
□ $75,000 - $99,999
□ $100,000 - $150,00
□ Over $150,000

□ I prefer not to answer

13. Who did you vote for in the 2012 presidential election?

□ Barack Obama
□ Mitt Romney
□ Other candidate
□ I did not vote
□ I prefer not to answer

14. Who did you vote for in the 2008 presidential election?

□ Barack Obama
□ John McCain
□ Other candidate
□ I did not vote
□ I prefer not to answer

15. Do you identify with a certain religion?

□ Yes
□ No
□ I prefer not to answer

15a. If you answered "yes" to the question above, what religion do you identify with?

16. On a scale from 1 to 4 (1 being not religious at all and 4 being highly religious), how would you define your religiosity?

□ 1
□ 2
□ 3
□ 4
□ I prefer not to answer

17. On a scale from 1 to 4 (1 being not spiritual at all and 4 being highly spiritual), how would you define your spirituality?

□ 1
□ 2
□ 3
□ 4
□ I prefer not to answer

18. What are your initials? _____

APPENDIX F

Focus Group Interview Protocol

1. Tell me about your relationship with your mothers prior to coming out as LGB.
2. Tell me about your relationships with your fathers prior to coming out as LGB.
3. Do you think your parents were suspicious of your sexual orientation? Why or why not?
4. Did they do anything to confirm or disconfirm their suspicions? If so, what?
5. Tell me about the first time they learned you were LGB.
6. Have their reactions to your LGB status changed over time? If so, how?
7. Has your mothers' level of acceptance of your LGB status changed over time? If so, how?
8. Has your fathers' level of acceptance of your LGB status changed over time? If so, how?
9. Has your family's religion played a role? If so, how?
10. Has there been specific resources you and your parents have used throughout the coming our process? If so, what?

APPENDIX G

Focus Group Consent Form

Dear Focus Group Participant,

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled, "Understanding the Experiences of Parents with Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Children," which examines the experiences of parents who have a youth or young adult that is LGB. In this study, you will be asked questions related to your coming out experiences, which will be used to inform an interview protocol for parents who have LGB children. To participate in this study, you need to:

- Identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual
- Be at least 18 years old and no older than 30 years old
- Be out to at least one of your parent(s) in the last 10 years

Participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You have the right to say no. You may change your mind at any time and withdraw. You may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time. Participants will be provided with a $20 gift card at the conclusion of the focus group. Even if you decide to end the session early, you will still be given a $20 gift card. The focus group will take approximately 60 to 90 minutes.

You will be audio-recorded during the focus group. At the conclusion of the focus group, the audio-recording will be transcribed and analyzed. All data for this project will be kept confidential. Data will be kept up to three years in a locked cabinet in a locked room at the address of the primary researcher below. The researchers, research staff, and the Human Research Protection Program will be the only entities that have access to this information. Information about you will be kept confidential to the maximum extent allowable by law. The results of this study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but the identities of all research participants will remain anonymous. Although your participation in this research may not benefit you personally, it will help us understand the experiences of parents who have LGB children.

There are minimal risks associated with participating in this study. When answering questions related to your coming out experiences may trigger psychological distress. If at anytime during the focus group you feel uncomfortable, you can choose to not answer the question or leave at any time.

If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, or how to do any part of it, or to report an injury (i.e. physical, psychological, social, financial, or otherwise), please contact the primary researcher Dr. Francisco Villarruel at Michigan State University, Department of Human Development and Family Studies, Human Ecology Building, 552 W. Circle Drive, Room 103, East Lansing, MI 48824, fvilla@msu.edu, 517-432-7298.

If you have question or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact the Michigan State University's Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, fax 517-432-4503, or email irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 207 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

If requested, a copy of this consent form can be sent to you via email.
By participating in the focus group, you voluntarily agree to be in the research study.

APPENDIX H

Focus Group Demographic Questionnaire

Initials: _____

1. What region did you grow up in?
   - ☐ Northeast
   - ☐ Midwest
   - ☐ South
   - ☐ West

2. Age:
   - ☐ Under 18
   - ☐ 18
   - ☐ 19
   - ☐ 20
   - ☐ 21
   - ☐ 22
   - ☐ 23
   - ☐ 24
   - ☐ 25
   - ☐ 26
   - ☐ 27
   - ☐ 28
   - ☐ 29
   - ☐ 30+

3. I identify as:
   - ☐ Female
   - ☐ Male
   - ☐ Gender queer
   - ☐ Transgender female
   - ☐ Transgender male
   - ☐ I prefer not to answer
   - ☐ Other: _____

4. I identify as:
   - ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
   - ☐ Asian
   - ☐ Black/African-American
   - ☐ Latino/Hispanic
   - ☐ Multiracial_____
   - ☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
   - ☐ White
   - ☐ I prefer not to answer
   - ☐ Other: _____

5. I identify as:
   - ☐ Lesbian
   - ☐ Gay
   - ☐ Bisexual
   - ☐ Transgender
   - ☐ Queer

□ Questioning
□ Heterosexual
□ I prefer not to answer
□ Other: _____

6. Of the people listed below, what parent did you first come out to first?

□ Mother (biological, adoptive, or foster)
□ Father (biological, adoptive, or foster)
□ Step-mother
□ Step-father
□ Other: _____

7. How old were you when you first came out to the person listed above? _____

8. What religion do you most closely identify with? _____

9. On a scale from 1 to 4 (1 being not religious at all and 4 being highly religious), how would you define your religiosity?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4

10. On a scale from 1 to 4 (1 being not spiritual at all and 4 being highly spiritual), how would you define your spirituality?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4

APPENDIX I

Codebook For Qualitative Study

Confirmation of Child's Identity
This theme includes parents confirming their child is LGB through *direct* or *indirect* means. *Direct* confirmation would include parents learning about their child's LGB identity from the child. *Indirect* confirmation would include parents learning about their child's LGB identity from a spouse or assuming a non-heterosexual identity without having a conversation with their child.

For this theme, the data are coded as *direct* or *indirect.*

An example of *direct*:
"I asked him directly 'Are you gay?' and he said 'Yes.'"

An example of *indirect:*
"It wasn't like she came out and had told us. But it was last year when she actually said the words. We had talked about it on and off for a couple of years but it was right before she came out official to everybody else and she said, 'I'm going to do this.' There was never really a moment when she said, 'By the way I'm gay.' We just kinda knew it and it was such a gradual thing. But right before she decided to officially come out to her family, she told us she was going to do so. So it wasn't like she came out to us. It was like she told us she was going to come out to everybody else because we already knew."

Appraisal
Once the LGB child has come out, parents need to appraise this information, which includes evaluating whether this new information requires attention and if so, what coping strategies could be put into play.

Primary appraisal includes parents' assessment of whether this new information is relevant to their goals, values, and beliefs. If so, appraisals that include the parent believing this new information 1) is in conflict with their moral values, personal ideals, and/or life goals, or 2) will have an effect on the wellbeing of their child, is an example of *ego involvement.* Parents that appraise this new information as having a negative effect on their child's wellbeing and future, an example of *goal relevance.* Parents who appraise this new information as preventing them as a parent from obtaining certain goals is an example of *goal incongruence.*

For this theme, data are coded as *primary-ego involvement, primary-goal relevance,* and *primary-goal incongruence.*

An example of *primary-ego involvement*:
"I was thinking about myself and I have one child and I wanted to be a grandmother. The first thing that hit me. I just thought, just you know, I always wanted to have another child and we couldn't. And now the kid I have is gay. I'll never have grandkids. I was thinking more about myself. For quite awhile that kinda grieving about that when I think back to it."

"You know some of the things we started thinking of was the fact that where we're living right now. Are his peers going to accept him because that age is not mature enough to really accept it and in fact, many kids loved the opportunity to you know embarrass make somebody else look bad you know and ridiculed so. Our fears became you know about his peers."

An example of *primary-goal relevance:*
"'Cause I know how people who are different get treated. They get treated differently in our society, and they are easier targets for being bullied in school and in life. In general, it's more difficult to find a job for someone who doesn't fit in the box of normality. And, I was little scared about what that meant for his future."

An example of *primary-goal incongruence:*
*"*At that moment, my life just, my world stopped. Cause you know, when you're a parent you just, you have a baby and you're like, 'Oh my gosh. This is going to happen. These steps, and he's going to get married and he's going to bring a girl home and going to have a baby.'"

During this time, parents are also determining whether they can cope with this new information, leading to *secondary appraisal*. *Coping potential* and *future expectations* focus on future events. A secondary appraisal that is labeled as *coping potential* involves stress and anxiety surrounding potential damage that could occur as a result of the child coming out as LGB. A secondary appraisal that is labeled as *future expectations* would include how this new information will change the parent and/or child for the better or worse. A secondary appraisal that is labeled as *blame/credit* has to do with who is responsible for the child's LGB identity.

For this theme, data are coded as *secondary-coping potential, secondary-future expectations,* or *secondary-blame/credit.*

An example of *secondary-coping potential:*
*"*All of a sudden, because my husband has a brother who is gay but he died of AIDS. So, at that moment, that's all I could think of was, you know what I mean. Is this disastrous thing going to happen to my son?"

*"*Um, cause I know how people who are different get treated. They get treated differently in our society and um, they are easier targets for being bullied in school and, and in life in general. More difficult to find a job um for someone who doesn't fit in the box of normality. And I was little scared about what that meant for his future."

An example of *secondary-future expectations:*
"New page to how I was going to handle this and I how I was going to be a better mom for him. How was I going to make sure he got everything he needed. And he was never to be treated differently."

An example of *secondary-blame/credit:*
"Did I do something to her when she was young?"

Parent Response
During the disclosure process, parents report a variety of responses, which can be grouped as *neutral, positive, negative,* or *combined* responses. *Neutral* responses often include indifference. Feelings of acceptance, love, admiration, and relief surrounding their child's disclosure constitute *positive* responses. *Negative* responses include shock, anxiety, embarrassment, confusion, doubt, sadness, devastation, loss, fear, anger, guilt, shame, and regret. Other parents

may experience *combined* responses, such as excitement yet fearful for their child's future or relief that their child came out yet sad because their child waited so long to come out.

For this theme, data are coded as *neutral, positive, negative,* or *combined.*

An example of *neutral*:
"And [my daughter] said, 'I just wanted to see what you would say. I wanted to see how you would react.' And I told her, 'I haven't reacted anyway. Neither one you guys have said anything to me one way or the other so why would I react?' 'Well okay that's my girlfriend.' I said, 'Okay.' It wasn't a big deal."

An example of *positive*:
"I was actually just proud of him."

An example of *negative*:
"You know, obviously I cried."

An example of *combined*:
"It was mixed emotions because I feel bad because I know it's going to be hard for him with certain relationships. I know there are people who are going to have a hard time with it and probably not want to contact us anymore when things are more out in the open. But I was happy he did. I don't know how to explain it. It was kinda a relief too."

Coping
Parents then have to cope with this new information. They will either *approach* the situation or use *avoidance* techniques. *Approach* strategies fall into 2 categories: *cognitive* or *behavior*. *Approach-cognitive* strategies focus on using thoughts to reduce stress. *Approach-behavior* techniques include engaging in observable behaviors that aim to reduce stress associated with the event. Similarly, *avoidance* strategies fall into 2 categories: *cognitive* and *behavior. Avoidance-cognitive* strategies include engaging in thoughts that allow parents to dissociate, discount the event, or reinterpret the stressor before trying to cope with it. *Avoidance-behavior* strategies include engaging in observable behaviors that allow parents to physically remove or distract themselves from the current event.

For this theme, data are coded as *approach-cognitive, approach-behavior, avoidance-cognitive,* and *avoidance-behavior*.

An example of *approach-cognitive*:
"During that time, I thought about who [my daughter] is, and that being a lesbian isn't just about having sex and did I do something to her when she was young that might have made her a better lesbian, a stronger lesbian, a better person who could cope with it. Um, what personal characteristics did she have that might make her more endangered or more likely to be a victim or not a victim. Um, was she brave enough? Was she too vulnerable? What kind of people would she attract?"

An example of *approach-behavior*:
"So, by the time I got to work, I've been working with a bunch of girls for a long time and one of my friends has a son who is the same age of [my son]. And, so they were all like, 'Oh my God. What is the matter with you? What's going on? What happened?' And I said, '[My son] is gay.' And they're like, 'Okay. So?' And I'm like, 'Oh my God. He told me!' And she's like, 'Dude, everyone knows! What is your problem?'"

"I looked a lot on the Internet."

"Yeah, I joined PFLAG….I started talking to people more, just getting advice."

An example of *avoidance-cognitive*:
"So you know I thought oh maybe it's a phase."

An example of *avoidance-behavior*:
"I didn't know what to do. I went and got my nails done which is ridiculous because I'm a hairdresser and don't do that."

Reappraisal
Engaging in a variety of coping strategies allows parents to ease their worries and concerns surrounding this new information, which often includes constructing a new relational meaning of what it means to have a LGB child.

For this theme, the data are coded as *new relational meaning.*

An example of *new relational meaning:*
"And I'm like, 'I know I knew. But just hearing it out loud was devastating.' So once they were like, 'So what? We all knew it and so did you. I don't know what your problem is?' So then I kinda snapped out of it and was like, 'Well, you're right. I did know. What is my problem?'"

Context
For this theme, *micro, meso, exo, macro,* and *chrono* contextual systems will be considered. *Micro* will include any <u>interaction</u> the parent has with individuals. This may include a parent's immediate family members (e.g., spouse and children), ex-spouses, extended family members, school personnel (e.g., teachers, school board members, and principal), the LGB child's friends, the LGB child's boyfriend/girlfriend/partner, the family members of the child's boyfriend/girlfriend/partner, and church members. *Micro* also includes intra-communication, which includes interactions among immediate family members (e.g., child and sibling interactions). *Meso* includes the interactions between two <u>separate</u> mesosystems. One example would be interactions the LGB child has with his/her grandparents. In this example, the immediate and extended family members are coming together and interacting. Another example would include the parent interacting with school personnel. In this example, two microsystems (the home and child's school) are interacting with one another. *Exo* includes settings or interactions where the parent is not present. One example would be the LGB child interacting with peers at school. In this example, the parent is not <u>directly</u> influencing this interaction. *Exo* also includes media influences and religion. For example, the parent may comment on how the

passing of marriage equality played a role in his/her level of acceptance. Within the context of *exo,* the parent is only indirectly influenced by these relationships. *Macro* includes the social and cultural values that influence the parent. This includes widely held beliefs and assumptions as it relates to heteronormativity. For example, a parent may discuss how his/her cultural identity plays a role in coming to under the child's identity and/or what it means to have a LGB child in today's society. *Chrono* includes life transitions and how personal and historical events can influences the parent's development.

For this theme, the data are coded as *micro, meso, exo, macro,* or *chrono.*

An example of *micro:*
"My husband has a brother who is gay but he died of AIDS. So, at that moment, that's all I could think of. Is this disastrous thing going to happen to my son?"

"I think because of the type of high school he went to, they were very accepting. Everybody was very accepting. It was no big deal. So we didn't have to deal with any of that."

"I also got cancer again 2 years ago. And, we have dealt with that…but we are fully aware that everyday we have as a unit, as family is a gift. And I think that has a lot to do with it."

An example of *meso:*
"Grandma would talk about [my children's uncle] and I eventually had to tell them he died of AIDS. It was right in the era where everyone was dying. My mother-in law was from very Catholic. We had to tell people he died of Lou Gehrig's disease. So I was like diligent and told my husband, 'We're never doing that. We're going to tell them what he died of and that's gonna be what it is.'"

An example of *exo:*
"I'm just wondering if it's not a pop culture kind of fad where, you know, 'Let's experience. Let's experiment. Maybe I am. Maybe I'm not.'"

An example of *macro:*
"No matter what your environment is, life is easier if you are heterosexual. He wasn't picking the easy route."

An example of *chrono*:
This gay lesbian thing? Those things don't really matter if you are alive and well and enjoying life. It's okay, you know what I'm saying? I think a lot of life experiences have made me, you know, the way I am…. All those life experiences definitely changed how I handle things or feel about things or working at school and seeing at school how they have to deal with whatever. You're much more accepting of their situations as well.

APPENDIX J

Content Validity Study Recruitment Letter

Dear [Name],

I am developing a survey to capture parents' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors related to their lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) child's sexual identity development. This survey will help us identify what parents know about sexual development and the types of resources they may need in order to support this development. You are asked to serve as a content expert because of your [research on LGBTQ youth OR experiences of having a LGB child]. Your participation in the survey review process is a valuable preliminary step to future studies that investigate parents' understanding of sexual identity development.

The survey consists of a series of questions related to sexual identity development. Each question will be rated on a 4-point rating scale as to whether it is clear and represents parents' parents' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors related to their lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) child's sexual identity development.

If you have any question, I can be reached at chrisler@msu.edu

Thank you,
Alison Chrisler

APPENDIX K

Content Validity Study Consent Form

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled, "Understanding the Experiences of Parents with Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Children," which examines the experiences of parents who have a youth or young adult that is LGB. In this study, you will be asked to provide feedback on a newly developed survey that will be administered to parents who have LGB children.

Participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You have the right to say no. You may change your mind at any time and withdraw. You may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time. If you would like to be entered in the $20 gift card drawing, you may choose to leave your name and contact information at the conclusion of the survey. Completion of this survey will take approximately 15 to 30 minutes.

The data for this project will be kept confidential. Data will be kept up to three years in a locked cabinet in a locked room at the address of the primary researcher below. The researchers, research staff, and the Human Research Protection Program will be the only entities that have access to this information. Information about you will be kept confidential to the maximum extent allowable by law. The results of this study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but the identities of all research participants will remain anonymous. Although your participation in this research may not benefit you personally, it will help us understand the experiences of parents who have LGB children.

There are minimal risks associated with participating in this study. If at anytime during the survey you feel uncomfortable, you can choose to not answer the question or close your browser.

If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, or how to do any part of it, or to report an injury (i.e. physical, psychological, social, financial, or otherwise), please contact the researcher Dr. Francisco Villarruel, Michigan State University, Department of Human Development and Family Studies, Human Ecology Building, 552 W. Circle Drive, Room 103, East Lansing, MI 48824, fvilla@msu.edu, 517-432-7298.

If you have question or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact the Michigan State University's Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, fax 517-432-4503, or email irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 207 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

Please print a copy of this consent form for your records, if you so desire.

You voluntarily agree to participate by completing the survey.

<SUBMIT>

APPENDIX L

Content Validity Study Survey

Thank you for participating in this study!

The left column consists of a series of statements to be used in a survey to gather more information about parents' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors related to their lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) child's sexual identity development.

Just a reminder that you are not rating whether you agree with the statement. Your role is to rate each statement on whether it captures some aspect of parents' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors related to their LGB child's identity development.

On a scale from 1 to 4, how well does this statement represent some aspect of parents' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors related to their child's sexual identity development?

	1 = the item is not representative of the sexual identity development domain.	2 = the item needs major revisions to be representative of the sexual identity development domain.	3 = the item needs minor revisions to be representative of the sexual identity development domain.	4 = the item is representative of the sexual identity development domain.
1. Once my child moves out, his/her sexual practices are none of my business.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
2. A child cannot identify as LGB until he/she has a sexual experience with someone of the opposite sex.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
3. It is important to talk about LGB identities with your child regardless of whether your child identifies as LGB.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
4. I talked about LGB identities with my child *before* he/she came out.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
5. I talked about LGB identities with my child *after* he/she came out.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
6. It is important to ask your child whether he/she is LGB.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
7. I asked my child about his/her sexual identity.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
8. I didn't ask my child about his/her sexual identity	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4

because it would have pushed my child to come out before he/she was ready.				
9. I didn't ask my child about his/her sexual identity because it would have been demeaning to ask my child if he/she was LGB.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
10. I didn't ask my child about his/her sexual identity because I didn't think it was important to ask.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
11. I didn't ask my child about his/her sexual identity because my child was too young.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
12. I didn't ask my child about his/her sexual identity because my child didn't have a sexual partner.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
13. I didn't ask my child about his/her sexual identity because it was none of my business.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
14. I didn't ask my child about his/her sexual identity because I wanted to wait for my child to come to me when he/she was ready.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
15. A child does not have a sexual identity until reaching puberty.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
16. A child will come out as LGB when he/she is ready.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
17. Sexual identity can change over time.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
18. Bisexuality is for those who cannot commit to a sexual identity.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
19. Being gay or lesbian is a choice.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
20. Being bisexual is a choice.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
21. Being attracted to the same sex does not mean you are LGB.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4

22. LGB identities are a result of pop culture.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
23. Talking to a child about LGB identities before puberty might sway him/her to identify as LGB.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
24. Parents should wait to talk to their child about his/her sexual identity until he/she brings it up.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
25. A child that comes out as lesbian or gay before puberty is confused.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
26. A child that comes out as bisexual before puberty is confused.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
27. A child's sexual identity forms after puberty.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
28. Identifying as LGB is a phase.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
29. In a same sex relationship, one person takes on a masculine role.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
30. Not having a consistent father figure can play a role in a child's sexual identity.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
31. Bisexuality is a sexual identity used when youth are trying to figure out if they are gay or lesbian.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
32. Identifying as LGB before puberty is too young.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
33. A boy that plays with feminine toys will be gay.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
34. A girl playing with masculine toys will be a lesbian.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
35. Trying on different sexual identities during adolescence is common.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4

Place additional comments or questions here, including item revisions, if needed.

Just a reminder that you are not rating whether you agree with the statement. Your role is to rate each statement on whether it is clearly written and would be understood by a parent.

On a scale from 1 (not clear) to 4 (clear), how clear is the statement?

	1 = the statement is not clear	2 = the statement needs major revisions in order to be clear	3 = the statement needs minor revisions in order to be clear	4 = the statement is clear
1. Once my child moves out, his/her sexual practices are none of my business.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
2. A child cannot identify as LGB until he/she has a sexual experience with someone of the opposite sex.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
3. It is important to talk about LGB identities with your child regardless of whether your child identifies as LGB.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
4. I talked about LGB identities with my child *before* he/she came out.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
5. I talked about LGB identities with my child *after* he/she came out.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
6. It is important to ask your child whether he/she is LGB.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
7. I asked my child about his/her sexual identity.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
8. I didn't ask my child about his/her sexual identity because it would have pushed my child to come out before he/she was ready.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
9. I didn't ask my child about his/her sexual identity because it would have been demeaning to ask my child if he/she was LGB.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
10. I didn't ask my child about his/her sexual identity because I didn't think it	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4

was important to ask.				
11. I didn't ask my child about his/her sexual identity because my child was too young.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
12. I didn't ask my child about his/her sexual identity because my child didn't have a sexual partner.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
13. I didn't ask my child about his/her sexual identity because it was none of my business.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
14. I didn't ask my child about his/her sexual identity because I wanted to wait for my child to come to me when he/she was ready.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
15. A child does not have a sexual identity until reaching puberty.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
16. A child will come out as LGB when he/she is ready.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
17. Sexual identity can change over time.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
18. Bisexuality is for those who cannot commit to a sexual identity.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
19. Being gay or lesbian is a choice.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
20. Being bisexual is a choice.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
21. Being attracted to the same sex does not mean you are LGB.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
22. LGB identities are a result of pop culture.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
23. Talking to a child about LGB identities before puberty might sway him/her to identify as LGB.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
24. Parents should wait to talk to their child about his/her sexual identity until he/she brings it up.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
25. A child that comes out as lesbian or gay before puberty is confused.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
26. A child that comes out as bisexual before puberty is confused.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
27. A child's sexual identity forms after puberty.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
28. Identifying as LGB is a phase.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
29. In a same sex relationship, one person takes on a masculine role.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
30. Not having a consistent father figure can play a role in a child's sexual identity.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
31. Bisexuality is a sexual identity used	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4

when youth are trying to figure out if they are gay or lesbian.				
32. Identifying as LGB before puberty is too young.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
33. A boy that plays with feminine toys will be gay.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
34. A girl playing with masculine toys will be a lesbian.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4
35. Trying on different sexual identities during adolescence is common.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4

Place additional comments or questions here, including item revisions, if needed.

Do you have any additional comments or questions? If so, please include them below. Also, please include other questions that should be included in the survey.

If you would like to be entered in the gift card drawing, please leave your email below.