Published in final edited form as:

J Fam Theory Rev. 2016 March ; 8(1): 30–59. doi:10.1111/jftr.12124.

Identity Transformation During the Transition to Parenthood Among Same-Sex Couples: An Ecological, Stress-Strategy-Adaptation Perspective

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Abstract

This article reviews the current research on the potential stressors associated with identity transformation experienced by same-sex couples during the transition to parenthood and the coping strategies they employ. By integrating disparate findings into an ecological, stress-strategy-adaptation framework, we demonstrate that the identity transformation experiences among same-sex couples during the transition to parenthood (a) involve various adaptive processes of navigating different stressors via their human agency within multiple nested contexts; (b) are products of the intersections of individual characteristics, relational dynamics, LGBT community culture, and heterosexual sociostructural norms; and (c) are complicated by social contextual factors such as social class, race/ethnicity, family structure, and the sociocultural environment associated with geographic location. Last, several avenues for future inquiry are suggested.

Keywords

Identity; same-sex couple; stress; strategy; transition to parenthood

A substantial body of research has demonstrated that becoming parents for the first time is a challenging life transition for different-sex couples, particularly as it involves a process of renegotiating their repertoire of roles and identities to accommodate that of “parent” (Cast, 2004; Cowan & Cowan, 2000). Specifically, this is a formative period when the traditional gendered division of labor is often manifested and/or amplified (Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2004), and a time when the new parental identities are integrated into identity hierarchies within which multiple roles and identities (e.g., spouse, worker) already exist (Katz-Wise, Priess, & Hyde, 2010; Strauss & Goldberg, 1999). Furthermore, it also is a restructuring period during which new parents often experience changes in their social networks (e.g., friendships) and associated social identities (Bost, Cox, Burchinal, & Payne, 2002). Despite decades of research on this transition among different-sex couples, we know relatively little about these processes among same-sex couples (Goldberg, 2012).

From a proliferation of studies about sexual minority parents over the past two decades (Moore & Stambolis-Ruhstorfer, 2013), we know that same-sex couples are more likely than their different-sex counterparts to encounter some stressors associated with identity transformations when starting families with children. Given their multiple-minority identity

status as (a) gay men or lesbian women within the heterosexual parenting community and (b) parents within the LGBT community (Armesto, 2002; Demo & Allen, 1996; Murphy, 2013; Stacey, 2006), new same-sex coparents are likely to face challenges from both the majority heterosexual community and the minority LGBT community. The former challenges include the prevailing concerns stemming from a heteronormative model of family and parenthood (Berkowitz & Marsiglio, 2007; Goldberg & Smith, 2011; C. J. Patterson & Riskind, 2010; Warner, 1993) that question the appropriateness of a same-sex coparenting environment for children's "proper" development (Brooks & Goldberg, 2001; Goldberg, 2010). The latter challenges refer to the potential rejection and isolation from within the LGBT community because of lingering beliefs that parenthood is incompatible with homosexuality (Benson, Silverstein, & Auerbach, 2005; DeBoehr, 2009; Goldberg, Downing, & Moyer, 2012) and that sexual minority parenthood may represent accommodation or assimilation to mainstream heterosexual values (Murphy, 2013; Stacey, 2006). Thus, new same-sex coparents likely face great tension between the marginalized sexual minority identity (historically viewed as childless) and the revered parental identity (historically regarded as heterosexual privilege). The process of developing a sense of self that conjugates these two "conflicting" identities may involve considerable stress and anxiety, as they are tied to social groups with "oppositional" role expectations, identity standards, and self-relevant meanings for members, and same-sex coparents are likely to hold roughly equivalent commitments to both identities (Burke, 1991; Stryker & Burke, 2000).

It also is likely that factors within the family influence the processes related to the establishment, consolidation, and maintenance of each sexual minority partner's parental identity during the transition to parenthood. There are multiple pathways through which same-sex couples become parents, such as prior heterosexual relationships, adoption, donor insemination, surrogacy, and foster care (Berkowitz & Marsiglio, 2007; Goldberg & Gartrell, 2014; C. J. Patterson & Riskind, 2010), with each producing variations in biological and associated legal and social statuses (in regard to parental rights) between partners (Almack, 2005; Ciano-Boyce & Shelley-Sireci, 2002; Moore, 2008). All these issues may pose challenges (e.g., jealousy, competition, conflicts between partners) for parental identity acquisition across the transition to parenthood (McKelvey, 2013; Reimann, 1997; Wojnar & Katzenmeyer, 2014).

Furthermore, considering that parental identities are embedded in caregiving roles and are constructed through interactions in day-to-day life (Pasley, Petren, & Fish, 2014; Stryker & Burke, 2000), same-sex couples must navigate these issues in the absence (for the most part) of the sex- and gender-based, institutionalized caregiving roles for each parent (Biblarz & Savci, 2010; Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2007; Hequembourg, 2004; Tasker, 2013). At the same time, potential tensions between the increased specialization in division of labor between partners during the transition to parenthood and the prevailing egalitarian ethics in many same-sex relationships (Dunne, 2000; Goldberg, 2013; Horne & Biss, 2009; Kurdek, 1995) may pose further challenges for new same-sex coparents.

Thus, it seems warranted to propose that the identity transformation processes during the transition to parenthood among same-sex couples should be products of the intersections of

individual characteristics (e.g., gender and sexual orientation), relational dynamics (e.g., division of labor between partners in the same-sex relational context), the LGBT community culture (e.g., the homonormativity characterized by childlessness and egalitarian ethic), and heterosexual sociostructural norms (e.g., the heteronormative model of family and parenthood). Successful adaptations to these dynamics results from same-sex couples' negotiation of the full range of micro-level couple interactions to macro-level sociocultural influences via their own human agency (Oswald, Kuvalanka, Blume, & Berkowitz, 2009). Indeed, most new same-sex coparents successfully navigate this transition to parenthood, which suggests that they possess and utilize critical strategies to adapt and thrive in their new roles (e.g., Benson et al., 2005; Brinamen & Mitchell, 2008; Goldberg & Allen, 2007; Goldberg, Downing, & Sauck, 2008; Hequembourg & Farrell, 1999; McKelvey, 2013; Rawsthorne & Costello, 2010).

In addition, although most of what we know about same-sex coparenthood to date is still predominantly based on samples of White, middle-class, and highly educated same-sex coparents living in urban areas (Biblarz & Savci, 2010; Demo & Allen, 1996), recent analyses based on US Census data suggest that families headed by same-sex coparents are considerably heterogeneous in social class, race/ethnicity, family structure, and geographic locality (e.g., Gates, 2011 2012, 2013a, 2013b, 2015). It is noteworthy that these contextual factors, independently and intersectionally, may further complicate same-sex partners' identity transformation processes across the transition to parenthood by influencing family formation pathways, couple relational dynamics, and the social contexts in which same-sex coparents are situated (e.g., Boggis, 2001; Moore & Brainer, 2013; C. J. Patterson, 2013). For example, becoming parents through adoption or assisted reproductive technologies is often prohibitively expensive for low-income sexual minority individuals and couples (Badgett, 2001).

However, findings relevant to all the aforementioned issues are scattered throughout the literature and remain unintegrated into a coherent framework. Thus, to systematically synthesize the extant literature and to identify gaps in the current knowledge base, this article seeks to provide a nuanced conceptual model of the stressors associated with the identity transformation processes same-sex couples often encounter across the transition to parenthood and the strategies they adopt to cope with these stressors. Guided by identity theory (e.g., Stryker & Burke, 2000), family stress and coping theory (e.g., McCubbin & Patterson, 1983), and the ecological model of human development (e.g., Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006), we propose a heuristic conceptual model of dominant heteronormative and LGBT subcultural norms, intrafamily relational dynamics, and several social contextual factors (e.g., race/ethnicity) that influence parental identity transformation among same-sex coparents (see Figure 1). As Figure 1 shows, the model primarily presumes that same-sex partners' experiences of identity transformation during the transition to parenthood (a) involve a series of adaptive processes of navigating different stressors via their human agency (i.e., developing and employing various coping strategies) within multiple nested contexts in which they are situated; (b) are products of complex intersections of individual characteristics, couple relational dynamics, LGBT community culture, and heterosexual sociostructural norms; and (c) are further complicated by social contextual factors such as

social class, race/ethnicity, family structure, and social environment associated with geographic location.

Before proceeding to a detailed review of theoretical and empirical literature supporting the proposed model, three important points should be noted. First, we acknowledge that, in addition to the stressors mentioned already, new same-sex coparents also may experience several additional stressors during the transition to parenthood, including declines in relationship satisfaction (e.g., Goldberg & Sayer, 2006), declines in individual emotional and physical well-being (e.g., Goldberg & Smith, 2008), and sleep deprivation and other increased fatigues (e.g., Gianino, 2008). In the current review, we selectively, rather than comprehensively, focus on stressors that have previously been associated with identity transformation processes during this life transition.

Second, some of the stressors we review are not unique to same-sex coparents. For example, different-sex couples also confront stressors associated with negotiations over division of labor (e.g., Yavorsky, Kamp Dush, & Schoppe-Sullivan, 2015); asymmetrical biological, legal, and emotional connectedness with the child between partners (e.g., Lansford, Ceballo, Abbey, & Stewart, 2001; Smock & Greenland, 2010); and social network changes, such as losing contact with childless friends (e.g., Bost et al., 2002; Gameiro, Boivin, Canavarro, Moura-Ramos, & Soares, 2010). Although the science of family transitions may be better served by a frame that presents both similarities and differences of experiences across the transition to parenthood between same- and different-sex couples, we do not provide extensive elaboration of this issue here because (a) it is beyond the scope of the present review; (b) several comprehensive reviews of different-sex couples' experiences of individual, relational, and structural stressors across the transition to parenthood have already been published (e.g., Cowan & Cowan, 1995, 2000; Demo & Cox, 2000; Guedeney & Tereno, 2010; Kline, Cowan, & Cowan, 1991; Kluwer, 2010; Michaels & Goldberg, 1988); and (c) simple comparisons between the experiences of same-sex and different-sex coparents may be misleading, because same-sex coparents likely live in contexts in which the heteronormative meaning systems surrounding couple relationship, family, and parenthood might be (at least partly) transformed (Goldberg, 2013; Oswald, Blume, & Marks, 2005; Oswald et al., 2009).

Finally, it also is important to lay out the demographic background for our analysis, given that the demography of same-sex coparent-headed households has experienced considerable changes in recent decades (e.g., Gates, 2013a, 2013b, 2014). As we will discuss, these changing trends highlight the relevance of considering identity transformations for same-sex couples as they enter parenthood now more than ever.

Changing Demographic Trends for Families Headed by Sexual Minority Parents

Based on 2010 US Census estimates, the number of same-sex couple households increased by more than 80% from 358,390 in 2000 to 646,464 in 2010 (Gates, 2012). Data from the 2013 American Community Survey (ACS) suggest that approximately 225,000 children younger than age 18 were living in households headed by same-sex couples (Payne &

Manning, 2015). It is noteworthy that these estimates do not include single or noncustodial sexual minority parents. When considering all possible structural and custodial arrangements, there may be millions of children living, at least part-time, in families including at least one LGB parent (Gates, 2014).

Until recently, children of same-sex coparents were still primarily conceived from previous heterosexual unions in which sexual minority individuals (likely before coming out) produced a child through sexual intercourse with different-sex partners (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Gates, 2012; Goldberg, Gartrell, & Gates, 2014). However, with the rapid shifts of cultural norms in the United States toward greater acceptance of sexual minority individuals, more sexual minority young adults tend to openly acknowledge their sexual orientation, which may contribute to the declining rate of prior heterosexual conception as a means of later sexual minority family formation (Floyd & Bakeman, 2006; Tornello & Patterson, 2014). Furthermore, with the development of reproductive technologies and the shifting legal barriers to parenthood for same-sex couples, increasing numbers of same-sex couples choose to become parents through pathways such as adoption, surrogacy, donor insemination, and foster care (Berkowitz, 2013; Berkowitz & Marsiglio, 2007; Goldberg & Gartrell, 2014; Moore & Stambolis-Ruhstorfer, 2013; C. J. Patterson & Riskind, 2010).

The rapidly increasing visibility of families headed by same-sex coparents highlights the importance of research examining parenthood experiences within these families. Moreover, the macro-level societal influences reflected in shifting sociopolitical climates are changing both the rates and the types of family formation among same-sex couples. This may, in turn, hold significant implications for the diversity within these families regarding family dynamics and functioning, particularly the establishment and consolidation of each parent's biological, legal, social, and emotional bond with the child and the development of each parent's caregiving roles and parental identities during the transition to parenthood (e.g., Ciano-Boyce & Shelley-Sireci, 2002; Goldberg, 2005; Goldberg, Moyer, & Kinkler, 2013; Moore, 2008).

Theoretical Foundation: A Brief Introduction

A brief exposition of the theoretical perspectives that guided us when constructing the proposed conceptual model may help set the stage for understanding how these theories inform our synthesis of existing findings. Although a full elaboration of these theories is beyond the scope of this review, we particularly focus on the specific concepts and propositions from these theories that may have the most critical implications for the stress and coping processes associated with identity transformation during the transition to parenthood.

Identity Theory

Historically rooted in the structural version of symbolic interactionism, identity theory primarily focuses on (a) the linkages between social structures and individuals' identities and behaviors, (b) the internal dynamics within the self that influence individuals' identities and behaviors, and (c) how these two processes relate to and complement each other (for reviews, see Burke, 1991; Burke & Stets, 2009; Stets, 2006; Stets & Serpe, 2013; Stryker &

Burke, 2000). On the basis of work by Stryker, Burke, and colleagues, we herein define the concepts and state the propositions within this theory that hold the most critical implications for our analysis (e.g., Burke, 1991; Burke & Stets, 2009; Stryker & Burke, 2000).

Among the numerous key concepts of identity theory, those that are particularly relevant to the current review include identity, identity salience, identity commitment, and identity verification. An identity is a set of meanings attached to roles that individuals occupy in the highly differentiated societies (i.e., role identity), groups they identify with and belong to (i.e., group identities), and unique ways they see themselves (i.e., person identities). Identity salience is defined as the probability that a specific identity will be invoked and that the behaviors related to that identity will be enacted across situations. From the structural perspective, identity commitment is reflected in both the extensiveness (i.e., the number of others to whom one is connected and the number of interactions one has with those people) and the intensity (i.e., how others see the actors' behaviors within an identity and the affective cost associated with the loss of relationships to others if forgoing that identity) of network ties as a result of possessing a particular identity.

From the internal dynamics perspective, identity commitment is represented by the efforts actors tend to make to verify a given identity. When an identity is activated in a situation, a feedback loop is correspondingly established. The key components for this loop include (a) the identity standard defined as the set of self-meanings individuals attached to an identity; (b) the input of self-relevant meanings from the situation (i.e., how one sees oneself and feedback from others); (c) a process of comparing input from the situation with the identity standard; (d) the emotions signaling the degree of correspondence between input meanings and the identity standard; and (e) output to the environment (i.e., the actual behaviors), which varies as a function of the comparison outcomes (Burke & Stets, 2009; Stets, 2006; Stets & Serpe, 2013). Thus, on the basis of such a perceptual control system, identity verification can be defined as the process of bringing one's perceived self-relevant meanings in a situation into agreement with the actual self-meanings one holds in identity standards by modifying one's output to the environment.

Related to these key concepts, the following propositions within identity theory are especially important for the present review (Burke, 1991; Burke & Stets, 2009; Stets, 2006; Stets & Serpe, 2013; Stryker & Burke, 2000): (a) individuals typically embedded in different role relationships in various groups often hold multiple identities; (b) various identities within the self are organized in a salience hierarchy, and the salience of one identity is primarily contingent on the extent to which one is committed to that identity; (c) considerable distress is likely to be generated when structural or interactional barriers prevent actors from enacting or verifying their highly salient or committed identities and/or when multiple identities involving high and roughly equivalent salience or commitment conflict with one another and thus cannot be simultaneously verified; and (d) individuals tend to employ a series of strategies to cope with the negative feelings associated with the identity-nonverification state. In addition, this theory also assumes that an identity is susceptible to changes when individuals experience persistent problems with the verification of a particular identity, take on new roles, or hold multiple identities whose verifications require opposing meanings to manifest in behaviors.

In applying these concepts and propositions to the identity transformation processes during the transition to parenthood for same-sex couples, it becomes clear that one of the most challenging tasks for new same-sex coparents is to develop a sense of self that conjugates the “conflicting” identities as parents and as gay men or lesbian women. Specifically, the selves of same-sex coparents are composed of identities tied to their participation in networks of social relationships or in groups with traditionally “oppositional” role expectations and identity standards (i.e., sexual minority community vs. parent community). The prevailing heteronormative model of family and parenthood likely interrupts their identity verification processes when same-sex coparents attempt to confirm their sexual minority identity and parent identity at the same time (e.g., negative feedback from others, including some LGB individuals or nonparents and some heterosexual individuals). As a result, for new same-sex coparents a great amount of tension is likely to be generated between their marginalized sexual minority identity (historically viewed as childless) and the revered parental identity (historically regarded as heterosexual privilege), and this tension may in turn produce considerable distress and anxiety, which is likely to be further augmented by same-sex partners’ strong commitments to both their sexual minority identities and their burgeoning parenting identities. Then, as the identity theory has suggested, new same-sex coparents will adopt and/or develop various coping strategies via their human agency to alleviate these negative feelings and to achieve the identity verification state.

Family Stress and Coping Theory

The family stress and coping theory (e.g., the Contextual Model of Family Stress by Boss, 2001; the ABC-X model by Hill, 1958; the Double ABC-X model by McCubbin & Patterson, 1983; and the Family Adjustment and Adaptation Response model by J. M. Patterson, 1988, 2002) provides a major framework for understanding how families negotiate and navigate their way through hardships associated with both normative and nonnormative life transitions or events. Specifically, this theory emphasizes that family transitions or events over the life span predictably create stress and often move the family system into a state of crisis, and that family adjustments or adaptations to these stressful transitions or events are primarily determined by the dynamic interactions among three critical factors: family demands, family adaptive resources for meeting the demands of stressors, and the definitions and meanings that a family makes of the stressors. On the basis of work by Hill, McCubbin, J. M. Patterson, and Boss, we define each of the three concepts and related propositions within this theory that may be particularly relevant for our subsequent analysis.

Family demands not only involve the initial normative and nonnormative stressors and the perceived hardships brought on by these stressors but also comprise the pile-up of stressors and strains over time that stem from multiple sources: (a) an initial stressor and its continuing hardships; (b) additional normative (e.g., growth and development of the child) and nonnormative (e.g., wars) transitions and events; (c) prior strains as a result of unresolved hardships from earlier stressors or that are inherent in ongoing roles (e.g., parents, employers); (d) consequences of efforts to cope (e.g., coping by getting a second job may become another source of strain); (e) intrafamily ambiguity (e.g., boundary ambiguity

in family system) and social ambiguity (e.g., unclear social prescriptions for crisis resolution); and (f) daily hassles of family life.

Family adaptive resources are the family's ability to prevent an event or a transition from creating a crisis, and they are one part of the family's capabilities for meeting demands and needs that emerge in the context of crisis. These resources primarily include family members' personal resources (e.g., emotional well-being), the family system's internal resources (e.g., family cohesion and adaptation), and social support (e.g., support from kinships).

Family definitions and meanings are the family's subjective perceptions of the seriousness of the experienced stressors, which reflect the family's values and previous experiences in dealing with change and meeting crises. When families are able to redefine a stressful situation and give it positive meanings (e.g., opportunity for growth), they likely facilitate family adaptations by clarifying issues, alleviating emotional burdens, and boosting morale, which indicates that family definitions and meanings form a component of family coping.

Furthermore, as J. M. Patterson (2002) noted, family demands, family adaptive resources, and family definitions and meanings all can emerge from different levels of ecosystems, including individual family members, the family as a unit, and various community contexts. Work by Boss (e.g., Boss, 2001) has particularly emphasized that we cannot understand family stress and coping processes without considering the community and culture contexts in which the family resides. As Boss (2001) stated, (a) the broader cultural context provides the "canons and mores" by which families define their lives and thus affect not only how the family perceives a stressor but also the way they respond to the stressor; (b) cultural context holds implications for the available resources families can access to cope with stressor events; (c) minority families such as families of color and families headed by same-sex coparents often encounter stress associated with stigmas and discriminations, which may further compound the normative stress they experience; and (d) it is important to consider the broader historical climate and economic context because they likely influence the meanings a family assigns to a stressor and the resources available in a time of crisis.

From the perspective of family stress and coping theory, the transition to parenthood is challenging because it involves extensive changes in various domains, such as individual roles and identities, family relationships and interactive patterns, family structures, family rules, family rituals, and family social networks. All these changes likely create considerable demands on the family. For same-sex couples, such a transition can be even more stressful, considering their same-sex relational context within the family and also the prevailing heteronormative model of family and parenthood within the broader social context. Despite this, family stress and coping theory suggests that new same-sex coparents may not necessarily experience a full-blown crisis during the transition to parenthood because their various family resources, family definitions, and other coping strategies can operate in a synergistic fashion to help them deal with stressors from different sources and eventually arrive at a level of family adjustment or adaptation.

Ecological Theory of Human Development

Bronfenbrenner's theory of human development had experienced several alterations, revisions, and extensions from an ecological to a bioecological theory (for a review, see Rosa & Tudge, 2013). Rather than using the whole "mature" version of this framework (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) as a guide, we borrow only some basic ideas from this theory regarding contextual influences on human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1993, 1999) to inform our model construction. Although family stress and coping theory also emphasizes the contextual influences on families, Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory is unique in highlighting the interrelatedness of different contexts and the reciprocal interactions between human beings and the contexts in which they are situated.

Specifically, the following theoretical propositions with respect to the contextual influences on human development are especially useful for our analysis: (a) human development emerges from the interactions between individuals and contexts in which they are situated; (b) the environment in which human beings develop can be conceived as a set of nested structures involving four interrelated systems (i.e., microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem); (c) there are reciprocal interactions between an active, developing person and the properties of the immediate settings in which that person lives, and this process is affected by relations between these settings and by the larger contexts in which these settings are embedded.

From an ecological perspective, new same-sex coparents' experiences of identity transformation cannot be fully understood without considering the multiple social contexts in which they are embedded. Family, the sexual minority community, and heteronormative society at large represent three important living contexts for new same-sex coparents. Stressors influencing new same-sex coparents' identity transformation processes can emerge from each of these contexts. Moreover, new same-sex coparents' identity transformation processes are influenced not only by the stressors emerging from different contexts but also by how they respond to these stressors. It is through dynamic, reciprocal interactions between new same-sex coparents and their living contexts that individuals achieve identity transformation tasks (e.g., integrating sexual minority identity and parental identity) across the transition to parenthood.

With the demographic and theoretical backgrounds we have introduced, we proceed to a detailed review of the empirical literature that supports the proposed conceptual model (see Figure 1). Specifically, we first summarize same-sex couples' adaptive processes of navigating different stressors during the transition to parenthood via their agency within the multiple nested contexts in which they are situated, and then describe how these processes are complicated by social contextual factors such as social class, race/ethnicity, family structure, and geographic location. Last, we suggest avenues for future inquiries of our model.

Sexual Minority Parental Identities in a Heteronormative Society

We live in a socially constructed world in which heterosexual norms and parenthood are heavily intertwined. Parenthood is often regarded as an exclusive privilege of heterosexual

couples (Benson et al., 2005; Berkowitz & Marsiglio, 2007; C. J. Patterson & Riskind, 2010), even though this paradigm continues to be challenged by accumulating evidence that there are no sex-exclusive parenting abilities and few to no significant differences in developmental outcomes between children raised by different-sex coparents and same-sex coparents (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Golombok et al., 2014; C. J. Patterson, 2013). The historical monopoly that heterosexual couples have had on childbearing has resulted in a highly visible and ever-present heteronormative model of parenthood and family in which being brought up by two different-sex, married, resident, and biological parents is regarded as optimal for children's development, with other family forms being viewed as disadvantaged or deficient (Warner, 1993). This cultural norm can be a source of stress for same-sex couples when starting families with children (Bos, Van Balen, Van den Boom, & Sandfort, 2004; Goldberg & Smith, 2011), given (potentially heterosexist) concerns about the adequacy of same-sex coparents for children's development (Brooks & Goldberg, 2001; Goldberg, 2010) (in Figure 1, this is represented by Arrow A). For same-sex couples, heteronormative concerns and stigmas likely augment the fears and anxieties they experience during the transition to parenthood and may even undermine their parental identity formation, parenting efficacy, and caregiving role enactment (Goldberg & Allen, 2007).

To date, research has demonstrated that same-sex couples develop multiple strategies for coping with such stressors, represented by Arrow B in Figure 1. One strategy has been to actively seek the involvements of different-sex adults to compensate for the absence of a female or a male figure (Downing, Richardson, Kinkler, & Goldberg, 2009; Dunne, 2000; Erera & Segal-Engelchin, 2014; Goldberg & Allen, 2007). A second strategy involves expanding the definitions of conventional caregiving roles by integrating both masculine and feminine nurturing behaviors into parenting practices (Benson et al., 2005; Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Brinamen & Mitchell, 2008; Doucet & Lee, 2014; Goldberg, Smith, & Perry Jenkins, 2012; Wells, 2011). Finally, a third strategy involves assessing social feedback and managing the impressions same-sex couples give regarding their parenting abilities to signal that same-sex coparents still can be "good parents" (Collett, 2005; Hequembourg & Farrell, 1999; Lassiter, Dew, Newton, Hays, & Yarbrough, 2006).

Involvement of Different-Sex Adults in Same-Sex Coparenting

A common strategy for coping with heteronormative pressures is to actively increase different-sex adults' involvement in children's life (Chabot & Ames, 2004; Dunne, 2000; Gartrell et al., 1996; Goldberg & Allen, 2007). This strategy partially negates a common stereotype that families headed by same-sex coparents are either fatherless or motherless (Goldberg, 2010). The first national longitudinal study of lesbian families conducted by Gartrell et al. (1996) explicitly inquired about lesbian mothers' ideas about male involvement in their families and reported that most mothers were concerned about having a male role model for their children and that more than 75% of mothers hoped their children could have contact with high-quality male father figures. Goldberg and Allen (2007) found that lesbian mothers often involved their brothers, fathers, male friends, sperm donors, and others (e.g., colleagues, neighbors), as well as biological fathers when available, in the family system during the transition to parenthood.

It should be noted that most of this research has focused on the involvement of males who were known sperm donors (Chabot & Ames, 2004; Gartrell, Rodas, Deck, Peyser, & Banks, 2006; Goldberg & Allen, 2013; Tourni & Coyle, 2002). Furthermore, it also is important to note the understudied complexity of male involvement in same-sex female households in the following four ways. First, the nature of male adults' involvement (i.e., the roles of the male adults defined or perceived by lesbian mothers and their children) and the role they play in the family can range from father figure to friend of the family (Gartrell et al., 2006; Goldberg & Allen, 2013; Goldberg & Gartrell, 2014; Goldberg, Kinkler, Richardson, & Downing, 2011; Haines & Weiner, 2000; Tourni & Coyle, 2002). Second, there is great variability in the extent to which male adults are involved in children's lives (i.e., the intensity or quality of male adults' involvement). Whereas some men provide regular child care and visitations, others see the child occasionally and provide minimal support (Gartrell et al., 2006; Goldberg & Allen, 2013; Tourni & Coyle, 2002).

Third, there is variability and fluidity in lesbian parents' perceptions and intentionality surrounding male adults' involvement in their children's lives. Goldberg and Allen (2007) identified three groups of lesbian mothers from their responses regarding perceptions and intentions of male involvement in their families: (a) a "deliberate" group, including women who thought male involvement was very important and intended to make efforts to ensure that their children were exposed to men; (b) a "flexible" group, including women who believed that male involvement was important but were relatively relaxed about and open to male involvement; and (c) an "ambivalent" group, including women who appeared to be somewhat unsure about the importance of male involvement and who did not intend to actively pursue male involvement. Moreover, some of these perceptions changed over time, with some mothers becoming more deliberate across the transition to parenthood and others becoming more flexible. Finally, the underlying forces influencing same-sex comothers' decisions to seek male adults' involvement can be complex. Some may just want their child to know his or her biological father, some may have concerns about the potential scrutiny and stigma their child may encounter without a father present, and some may be anxious, consciously or unconsciously, about possible negative effects of the lack of male involvement within the household on child development (Chabot & Ames, 2004; Goldberg & Allen, 2007; Tourni & Coyle, 2002).

Although all the aforementioned findings about male adults' involvement in same-sex female households also may apply to female involvement in same-sex male households, very little research is currently available on this topic. However, because of the societal discourse that women are better suited to caretaking roles than men and the more salient societal concerns about mother absence than about father absence, same-sex cofathers may feel even greater pressure and anxiety to have a female parental figure involved in their child(ren)'s life than do same-sex comothers (Berkowitz & Marsiglio, 2007; Doucet & Lee, 2014; Goldberg & Allen, 2007; Goldberg et al., 2011).

A slim body of research has examined the contact between gay open adoptive fathers and their children's birth mothers. Downing et al. (2009) examined factors influencing gay men's decision-making process in choosing a particular type of adoption and found that some gay men chose private domestic open adoption (whereby various levels and forms of

contacts with children's birth mothers are allowed) because of a desire for a mother figure in their child(ren)'s life. Goldberg et al. (2011) replicated this finding and further reported that (a) birth mothers who wished to maintain contact with their children also preferred choosing gay couples as adoptive parents because it would give them more opportunities to get involved in the child(ren)'s life post-placement, and (b) gay adoptive fathers perceived boundary crossing from birth mothers (e.g., requesting to accompany the family on vacations) more frequently, but they were not very bothered by them because they felt their parental identities were not likely to be threatened. However, one factor related to gay adoptive fathers' limiting contact with birth mothers was the mother's use of drugs or alcohol during pregnancy (Farr & Goldberg, 2015; Goldberg et al., 2011), which may suggest that gay fathers also hope that their children have contacts with women they consider "safe."

Some gay male couples also choose to become parents via surrogacy (e.g., Bergman, Rubio, Green, & Padrón, 2010; Murphy, 2013). Although some scholars (Berkowitz & Marsiglio, 2007) have pointed out that "for many gay fathers, especially those who used surrogacy and open adoption, the birth mother of their child ... was an integral part of their lives, and her identity was woven into their elaborate web of procreative, father, and family identities" (p. 378), no study that we are aware of has examined the involvement of surrogate mothers in same-sex coparent-headed families. However, recent studies investigating changes in the social networks of same-sex male couples who used surrogacy to start families with child(ren) reported that the new parents gravitated toward building friendships with heterosexual parents during this transition, which may reflect their belief that positive female role models (even in other families) can positively influence their children's development (Bergman et al., 2010; Brinamen & Mitchell, 2008).

In addition, a recent study has demonstrated that some same-sex male couples donated their sperm to same-sex female couples and then shared child rearing with them in kinship arrangements (Bos, 2010). Although this study did not focus on issues related to different-sex adults' involvements in same-sex coparent-headed households, it highlighted an understudied way same-sex coparents might involve different-sex parental figures in their child rearing by conceiving children without intercourse, then sharing parenting (Berkowitz & Marsiglio, 2007). However, it also is important to note that the participants of this study were from the Netherlands, and given the unique demographic, legal, and social statuses of sexual minority people in the Netherlands, the easiest way for gay men to become fathers is to enter such a kinship arrangement (which also highlights the significance of considering cultural contexts when examining the involvement of different-sex adults in families headed by same-sex coparents). In addition to such kinship arrangements, some same-sex male couples choose to conceive and raise children jointly with heterosexual women outside of marriage (Erera & Segal-Engelchin, 2014; Segal-Engelchin, Erera, & Cwikel, 2012), possibly because of beliefs in the value of mothers and the benefits of having different-sex parental figures. This also is an understudied but potentially increasing subpopulation of families, and more research on these family structures and processes is needed before conclusions can be made regarding their effects on parental identity transformation or family functioning.

Expansion of Conventional Caregiving Roles

As Spence and Helmreich (2014) stated, masculinity and femininity involve clusters of social attributes commonly considered to differentiate males and females to some degree and thus to define the psychological core of masculine and feminine personalities: the ideal woman tends to be described as expressive, emotional, sensitive, and concerned with others, whereas the ideal man tends to be described as competitive, independent, dominant, and instrumental. Such a distinction also is reflected in the heteronormative model of parenthood in which parenting practices conducted by fathers and mothers are highly gendered: the father is often a disciplinarian, problem solver, and playmate who primarily provides masculine parenting characterized by high instrumentality and low expressiveness, whereas the mother primarily provides feminine parenting characterized by nurturance, warmth, and caretaking.

Although the conventional gendered division of parenting practices between fathers and mothers (i.e., masculine parenting by fathers vs. feminine parenting by mothers) may have some biological bases, it is fundamentally a socially constructed phenomenon and thus susceptible to contextual influences (Ambert, 1994; Belsky, 1984; Doherty, Kouneski, & Erickson, 1998). The historical analysis by LaRossa (1997) clearly demonstrated that changing cultural expectations during the first part of the 20th century led to more active and nurturing paternal involvement. More recent neuroscience research also has suggested that both men and women are biologically prepared to parent, but social experiences (e.g., contacts with the baby) play a crucial role in triggering the biological basis for parenthood, and social norms and expectations may serve to diminish men's responses and heighten women's responses (Feldman, Gordon, Schneiderman, Weisman, & Zagoory-Sharon, 2010; Storey & Walsh, 2011). In addition, we acknowledge that the biological processes underlying human parenting practices may not only be simply triggered or suppressed by contextual influences; they also may be changed or reshaped by them. All these collectively suggest that the interactive effects between biological and contextual factors in determining parenting practices (for both different-sex couples and same-sex couples) deserve more attention in future research.

There also is evidence from the existing literature concerned with same-sex coparenting that parenting skills and abilities are not gender exclusive. That is, LGB coparenthood may allow for alternative masculinities and femininities and the transformations of fathering and mothering to integrate masculine and feminine caregiving behaviors (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Doucet & Lee, 2014). This actually provides same-sex coparents with another strategy for dealing with concerns stemming from the heteronormative model of parenthood.

The very limited yet growing research on gay fathers' parenthood experiences suggests that these fathers reconstructed and transformed the heteronormative fathering role by integrating more feminine nurturing characteristics into their parenting practices instead of providing only masculine parenting (Benson et al., 2005; Brinamen & Mitchell, 2008; Goldberg, Smith, & Perry Jenkins, 2012; Schacher, Auerbach, & Silverstein, 2005). This is consistent with qualitative studies' findings that gay fathers tended to consider themselves as both "dads" and "moms" when interviewed about their parenting practices (Brinamen & Mitchell, 2008). Moreover, compelling neuroscience evidence has been found to support that gay

fathers do have the potential to simultaneously be competent “dads” and “moms” because the brain responses that primary-caregiving gay fathers exhibited to infant stimuli (i.e., the videotaped parent–child interactions) not only had characteristics similar to primary-caregiving heterosexual mothers but also had characteristics comparable to secondary-caregiving heterosexual fathers (Abraham et al., 2014). Although research also has indicated that lesbian mothers try to integrate masculine caregiving behaviors (e.g., disciplinary roles) into their parenting practices (Goldberg, Smith, & Perry Jenkins, 2012), most of the evidence suggests that lesbian mothers tend to raise their children in more feminine ways, characterized by lower levels of disciplinary practices (e.g., control and limit setting) and higher levels of warmth and parent–child interactions than among their heterosexual counterparts (Bos, Van Balen, & Van den Boom, 2007; MacCallum & Golombok, 2004).

Thus, it is obvious that same-sex male and same-sex female coparents have tried to expand the definitions of conventional gendered parenting roles by integrating both masculine and feminine nurturing behaviors into their parenting practices. However, it might be useful to also examine the subtle differences between the parenting practices of same-sex male and same-sex female coparents. First, it seems that the gay male relational context has not further enhanced gay fathers’ masculine parenting behaviors, whereas the lesbian female relational context has further enhanced lesbian mothers’ feminine parenting behaviors (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Goldberg, 2010). Second, same-sex male couples may confront more challenges than same-sex female couples during the transition to parenthood, as women are generally regarded as primary caregivers with natural nurturing abilities (Berkowitz & Marsiglio, 2007; Doucet & Lee, 2014; Goldberg et al., 2011), and gay fathers’ reconstruction of the traditional fathering roles has simultaneously challenged the prevailing heteronormative values regarding both masculinity and parenthood (Goldberg, Downing, & Moyer, 2012; Stacey, 2006).

Third, comothers in same-sex couples are more likely to confront competition with each other during parenthood than cofathers in same-sex couples, as partners in same-sex female couples place more emphases on role equality and sensitivity to (un)fairness in relationships (Horne & Biss, 2009; Kurdek, 1995). Perhaps as a result, comothers in same-sex couples report a higher likelihood of engaging in conflicts induced by asymmetrical legal, biological, and emotional bonds with children than do cofathers in same-sex couples (Pelka, 2009). In addition, it also should be noted that same-sex coparents’ own (masculine or feminine) gender identities may play important roles in shaping their parenting practices. For example, Stacey and Biblarz (2001) mentioned in their review that same-sex coparents may tend to desire gender traits in children that resembled those they saw in themselves, which suggests that same-sex coparents’ own gender identities may mediate the connection between their sexual orientations and their parenting practices, through which they shape their children’s characters and behaviors.

Although parents, especially fathers, in heterosexual couples experience the expansion of the parenting role as well, it is noteworthy that this may be more passively driven by “top-down” social forces resulting from the trend of increasingly more women choosing to enter the labor market rather than staying at home to look after children. In contrast, same-sex coparents’ reconstructions of parenting roles may result from “bottom-up” family processes,

suggesting that they are active agents in their parental identity formation as they experience unique challenges and pressures stemming from the dominant heteronormative parenting culture (Stacey, 2006).

Impression Management in the Private and Public Spheres

When same-sex couples claim parenthood in a society dominated by the heteronormative model of parenthood and family, they inevitably encounter doubts and concerns about the legitimacy of their families from multiple sources, including other family members, social institutions, and even themselves (Brooks & Goldberg, 2001; Goldberg, 2010; Goldberg & Allen, 2007; Oswald et al., 2005). Although scientific evidence supporting same-sex coparenting has been accumulating over the past several decades (e.g., Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; C. J. Patterson, 2013), social demands and pressures continuously offer an additional incentive for same-sex coparents to enact behaviors that signal that they are still “good parents” (Moore, 2008). Furthermore, given the socially constructed nature of parental identities, it also is important for same-sex coparents to enact and confirm identities as “good parents” and to protect and enhance their own self-concept during the course of everyday interactions with others (Burke, 1991; Collett, 2005; Lassiter et al., 2006; Stryker & Burke, 2000). On the basis of work by Goffman (1959), self-presentation and impression management offer same-sex coparents opportunities to appear as the parents they would like to be or to be seen as. For this they are required to “demonstrate role embracement—to declare attachment to the role, to demonstrate the qualities and capacity they have for performing it, and to be actively engaged or involved in appropriate role activities” (Collett, 2005, p. 330).

However, to our knowledge, almost no research has particularly examined how same-sex coparents manage the impressions they give to others about their parenting identities and abilities in both the private and the public spheres. The only exception that may have implications for this topic is a qualitative study conducted by Hequembourg and Farrell (1999), in which they interviewed lesbian mothers regarding their strategies to gain acceptance for their “marginal-mainstream identity” (i.e., being lesbian women and mothers at the same time) within their nuclear and extended families. Specifically, they reported that for lesbian mothers, especially lesbian non-birth mothers, the validations from their partners and extended family members played crucial roles in the establishment and consolidation of their parental identities. Furthermore, “once the lesbian mothers in this study took on their marginal-mainstream identities, they constantly assessed the feedback cues and readjusted the impressions they gave off so as to provide evidence of their ability to be both lesbians and ‘good’ mothers” (Hequembourg & Farrell, 1999, p. 553).

In addition, we should note a potential problem related to this strategy. Same-sex coparents’ strong motivations associated with prevalent pressures of social evaluation to present themselves as “good” parents may sometimes lead them to underreport their parenting stress and children’s problems and may even increase their reluctance to seek help outside of the family (Crowl, Ahn, & Baker, 2008; Fitzgerald, 1999).

Sexual Minority Parental Identities in the LGBT Subculture

In addition to the demands of living in a heteronormative society, some same-sex couples are likely to experience tensions within the LGBT community during their transition to parenthood (Armesto, 2002; Demo & Allen, 1996; Murphy, 2013; Stacey, 2006). These tensions are represented by Arrow C in Figure 1. Exposed to the prevailing heteronormative model of family and parenthood, some gay men and lesbian women may have internalized the ideology that parenting is a heterosexual privilege and that parenthood is incompatible with homosexuality, even though this view is dated and a stereotype (Benson et al., 2005; DeBoehr, 2009). However, some may still believe that one of the most defining and unique features of LGBT subculture is its non-procreative nature, and thus that becoming parents may represent an accommodation or assimilation into mainstream heterosexual values and violate the perceived homonormativity of childlessness (Armesto, 2002; Demo & Allen, 1996; Goldberg, 2012; Murphy, 2013; Stacey, 2006). In addition, some people in the LGBT community may have concerns that same-sex couples' getting legally married and becoming parents might create status hierarchies or promote stratification within the community and further stigmatize or pathologize those who choose not to get married or have children (Doucet & Lee, 2014; Lannutti, 2005; Seidman, 2013). All these factors are likely to increase the stress and anxiety same-sex couples experience during the transition to parenthood by inducing a sense of alienation and isolation within the LGBT community (Benson et al., 2005; Brinamen & Mitchell, 2008). Therefore, another important aspect of identity transformation during the transition to parenthood is managing pressures from within the LGBT community.

Indeed, the possible rejection same-sex coparents may experience from the LGBT community has been corroborated by several empirical studies. In a qualitative study of gay fathers who conceived children in the context of a heterosexual marriage and later established a gay identity, Benson et al. (2005) found that these men expressed "feelings of alienation and isolation from both the gay and non-gay communities" and that "some other gay men could not relate to their concerns as parents, and many heterosexual parents responded to them with homophobia" (p. 14). Bergman et al. (2010) examined the experiences of gay men who became parents via gestational surrogacy during their transition to parenthood and reported that more than half of the new fathers indicated that they had lost some of their friendships with childless gay friends partially because of their disagreements in values regarding children. Some gay parents described in the qualitative study by Brinamen and Mitchell (2008), "There is a certain dichotomy in the gay community between gays and gays who are parents.... [W]e feel like we're outsiders because most people think that so you're gay[,] you're not going to have kids" (p. 553).

Similar changes in friendship networks associated with being parents also are evident among lesbian mothers. For example, the first national longitudinal study of lesbian women who became parents through donor insemination revealed that some had lost friendships with childless lesbian friends since becoming parents (Gartrell et al., 1999; Gartrell et al., 2000). Gabb (2004) found that many lesbian mothers reported feeling "that their parental status had ruptured past lesbian friendship networks and that their family focus did not fit within a lesbian lifestyle culture" (p. 169).

Many same-sex couples employ various strategies to cope with these social tensions, as symbolized by Arrow D in Figure 1. First, same-sex coparents may reconfigure their friendship network boundaries during the transition to parenthood by bringing closeness among those affirming of sexual minority parenthood while creating distance from those who are rejecting. As noted already, several empirical studies have found that, after having children, same-sex coparents tended to surrender relationships with people who held negative beliefs regarding sexual minority parenthood and focus instead on friendships with other same-sex and heterosexual parents (e.g., Bergman et al., 2010; Brinamen & Mitchell, 2008; Gartrell et al., 2000). Second, some same-sex coparents may choose to participate in sexual minority parenting groups for support and belongingness to ameliorate the anxiety and sense of isolation they may feel within both the LGBT and the larger heteronormative communities. As Benson et al. (2005) found, these parenting groups “provided support by defining a specific niche” (p. 20) for same-sex coparents and solidified their sense that simultaneously being sexual minority adults and parents was possible.

In addition, the meaning of parenthood may be reconstructed by same-sex coparents in response to tensions from within the LGBT community. Such redefinition strategies (e.g., reimagining and reconfiguring the meaning of some behavior or activity in the same-sex family context), noted in reviews by Oswald (2002) and Goldberg (2013), suggest that same-sex couples transitioning to parenthood should not be viewed by others as simply mirroring or accommodating heterosexual culture norms. Instead, same-sex coparents may view their desires for pursuing parenthood as human rather than heterosexual, and they tend to regard parenthood as an important part of the natural life, independent of sex, gender, and sexual orientation (e.g., Berkowitz & Marsiglio, 2007; Goldberg, Downing, & Moyer, 2012; Siegenthaler & Bigner, 2000).

Sexual Minority Parental Identities With Asymmetrical Connectedness to the Child

There are multiple pathways for same-sex couples to become parents, although currently it is not possible for both parents to be biological parents (Berkowitz & Marsiglio, 2007; Goldberg & Gartrell, 2014; Moore & Stambolis-Ruhstorfer, 2013; C. J. Patterson & Riskind, 2010). For example, one member of the couple might have a child from a previous different-sex (or same-sex) relationship while the other serves in the role of stepparent. Alternatively, same-sex couples may transition to parenthood together via donor insemination (for female couples) or surrogacy (for male couples). Because both parents cannot be fully biological parents, sometimes one member, if not both, experiences challenges stemming from the asymmetrical biological (and associated legal and social) status of joint parenthood (Almack, 2005; Ciano-Boyce & Shelley-Sireci, 2002; Goldberg et al., 2008; Moore, 2008). These challenges are represented by Arrow E in Figure 1. Such tensions not only may place same-sex couples at greater risk of interparental competition, jealousy, conflicts, and even relationship dissolution (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Gabb, 2004; MacCallum & Golombok, 2004; Pelka, 2009) but also likely influence the establishment and consolidation of each partner’s parental identity (e.g., Lynch, 2004a, 2004b). This is especially true for nonbiological parents (Bos, Van Balen, & Van den Boom, 2004; McKelvey, 2013; Wojnar &

Katzenmeyer, 2014), particularly during the transition to joint parenthood (Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2007; Reimann, 1997).

Same-sex coparents, however, have employed several strategies to minimize, offset, or even prevent the possible negative effects of biological inequity to children (see Arrow F in Figure 1; Bergen, Suter, & Daas, 2006; Goldberg et al., 2008; Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2007; Hequembourg, 2004; Hequembourg & Farrell, 1999; Pelka, 2009). These strategies can be classified into four categories: behavioral, symbolic or linguistic, legal, and reproductive technology strategies.

Behavioral Strategies

By interviewing same-sex female couples who became parents via alternative insemination, Goldberg and colleagues identified several behavioral strategies they used to counterbalance their biological inequity in relation to the child(ren) (Goldberg et al., 2008; Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2007). First, nonbiological mothers sought to compensate for their lack of biological connection (and often lack of breast-feeding relationship) with children by establishing unique roles for themselves by being primarily responsible for other essential caregiving activities (e.g., putting the baby to bed, bathing the baby). Second, nonbiological mothers tried to participate in parenting work equally with their partners in order to assume an equal parental role and further affirm their maternal identity. Third, some nonbiological mothers made work-related adjustments (e.g., reduced work hours, altered work schedules) to make sure that they could spend more time with their children. Moreover, the biological mother also plays an important role in supporting her partner's relationship with the child, engaging in parental roles, and establishing a maternal identity. For example, to ensure the uniqueness of activities nonbiological parents engaged in with the child, biological mothers would seldom participate in these activities; and to mitigate nonbiological mothers' feelings of jealousy or exclusion, biological mothers would breast-feed the child and then her partner would have the opportunity to bottle-feed the child.

Symbolic or Linguistic Strategies

Given that the process of identity construction can be traced in the use of language during daily life, the terms family members within households headed by same-sex coparents use to refer to the biological and nonbiological parents during the course of their everyday interactions are likely to influence the establishment and development of each partner's parental identity, especially for nonbiological parents (Bergen et al., 2006; Brown & Perlesz, 2007; McKelvey, 2013). For example, same-sex couples may consciously avoid using language and making distinctions that may invoke biological inequality between partners. Bergen et al. (2006) found that most same-sex comothers in their study used parallel address terms (e.g., Mommy and Mama) for both biological and nonbiological mothers in order to promote equal parental identities between partners in the eyes of the child(ren), nonbiological mothers themselves, and other extended family and nonfamily persons. Also, children's surnames can be a symbolic way same-sex coparents attempt to promote equal parental identities for nonbiological parents. As Almack (2005), Bergen et al. (2006), and McKelvey (2013) found, children's last names can function as a linguistic tool linking nonbiological parent and child whereby the parents hyphenate both biological and

nonbiological parents' last names as a shared family name or use just the non-birth parent's name for the family name.

Legal Strategies

It should be noted that not all the legal strategies summarized here may apply to families headed by same-sex coparents after the US Supreme Court decision legalizing same-sex marriage nationwide in June 2015. However, the overview of these strategies is still meaningful because it not only provides a summary of the research in this field within a particular historical period but also has implications for same-sex coparents living outside of the United States.

Because nonbiological parents in families headed by same-sex coparents have difficulty claiming a parental identity largely because of their lack of legal recognition (at least in some locales before the national legalization of same-sex marriage in the United States), the legal system can play an important role in the way that nonbiological parents construct their parental identities (Hequembourg & Farrell, 1999). Second-parent adoption is widely perceived as an important means for nonbiological parents in same-sex households to achieve recognition and further counterbalance the biological inequality between partners, at least in those states allowing second-parent adoption prior to the nationwide legalization of same-sex marriage in the United States (Bergen et al., 2006; Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2007; Hequembourg, 2004; Hequembourg & Farrell, 1999). As Goldberg and Perry-Jenkins (2007) noted, "Something shifted for them once they were granted second-parent adoptions; that is, they felt a sense of relief as well as an enhanced sense of security in their parental role" (p. 310). In addition, listing the nonbiological parent's name on the child's birth certificate is another legal way to offset the unequal biological relatedness to the child between partners (Bergen et al., 2006; McKelvey, 2013). Bergen et al. (2006) also identified other "legal moves" same-sex female couples employed to promote a legitimate parental identity for the nonbiological mother, including (a) obtaining nonbiological mothers' medical power of attorney for their children, (b) stating in a will that the nonbiological mother is to have custody of the child in the event of the death of the biological mother, (c) legally formalizing a document stating that both parents consider themselves the parents of their child, with all the legal rights and responsibilities that come with that position, and (d) creating a paper trail (e.g., receipts from the sperm donor) that documents the nonbiological mother's parental identity in the event of future legal action.

Reproductive Technology Strategies

The asymmetrical biological ties to children between same-sex partners may be alleviated by using advanced reproductive technologies when conceiving children. As Pelka (2009) pointed out, increasing numbers of same-sex female couples now choose to become parents via in vitro fertilization (i.e., using the eggs of one partner, which are externally fertilized with donor sperm and implanted into the womb of the other partner). In this scenario, one partner is the genetic biological mother and the other is the gestational birth mother, thus creating biological ties that "feel" more balanced for parents. Similarly, some same-sex male couples are able to blend their individual sperm samples together prior to fertilizing the egg

of the surrogate (or the egg to be implanted in the surrogate), which allows them not to know the actual paternity of the child and thus raise the child as biological equals.

Sexual Minority Parental Identities When Renegotiating Division of Labor

Regardless of sexual orientation, with the arrival of the first child, couples will start their coparenting process, defined as the dyadic coordination of parenting roles, primarily including the division of child care and household labor (Cowan & Cowan, 2000; Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2004; Farr & Patterson, 2013; C. J. Patterson & Farr, 2011). Thus, during the transition to parenthood, each partner's sense of self is altered because of integrating the new caregiving and household labor roles into their repertoire of identities (Cast, 2004; Cowan & Cowan, 2000). Most current research on this topic is based on different-sex couples and reports that heterosexual couples often use specialized sex role scripts as guidelines for this transition, whereby men undertake the breadwinner and secondary caregiver roles and women take on the housekeeper and primary caregiver roles (Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2004). Moreover, even among the more egalitarian heterosexual couples before childbearing, with the introduction of the first child they also tend to adopt more traditional gendered division of parenting roles between partners than they had when they were childless (Katz-Wise et al., 2010).

Only a modest body of research has investigated the division of child care and household labor in the same-sex couple context, but existing studies have consistently found that, in general, both same-sex female and same-sex male nonparent couples tend to share unpaid labor (i.e., housework) and paid labor (i.e., employment) much more equally than their heterosexual counterparts (e.g., Kurdek, 2007). When same-sex couples become parents, they continue to divide labor more evenly than do their heterosexual counterparts (Chan, Brooks, Raboy, & Patterson, 1998; Farr & Patterson, 2013; Goldberg, Smith, & Perry-Jenkins, 2012; C. J. Patterson, Sutfin, & Fulcher, 2004). However, like heterosexual couples, data also suggest an increased tendency toward specialization in both paid and unpaid labor between same-sex coparents, especially when there is asymmetrical biological relatedness to the child between partners (Goldberg et al., 2008; Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2007; Moore, 2008; Reimann, 1997). In these cases, biological parents in same-sex couples tend to perform more unpaid work and primary caregiver roles, whereas nonbiological parents undertake more paid work and secondary caregiver roles.

When negotiating the labor division between partners during the transition to parenthood, same-sex coparents are likely to encounter some unique internal and external stressors. These are represented by Arrow E in Figure 1. Although it may be inappropriate to assume that the labor arrangement negotiation process of same-sex coparents is unaffected by the dominant heteronormative gendered rules (Goldberg, 2013; Goldberg & Gartrell, 2014), same-sex coparents still need to make particular efforts to work out their personal unique rules surrounding labor division as a result of the incompletely institutionalized nature of same-sex coparenthood (Biblarz & Savci, 2010; Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2007; Hequembourg, 2004; Lynch, 2004a, 2004b; Tasker, 2013).

Given that same-sex couples (particularly female couples) tend to place more emphasis on fairness and equality within the relationships than do heterosexual couples (Dunne, 2000; Goldberg, 2010; Horne & Biss, 2009; Kurdek, 1995), an increased specification of labor between partners during the transition to parenthood may be more likely to induce tension, conflicts, and distress for couples. New same-sex coparents may need to develop strategies to offset the potentially negative effects of the disproportionate share of child care and housework. Furthermore, it also is possible that some sexual minority individuals who have internalized the social narratives that relate heterosexuality to specialized labor division and homosexuality to egalitarian labor arrangement may view same-sex couples' increased specification in labor during the transition to parenthood as assimilation into the mainstream heterosexual norms and violation of the prevailing egalitarian ethic within the LGBT community. This may incur resistance from the LGBT community and further increase the stress (e.g., anxiety, sense of isolation, guilt or shame) that same-sex coparents experience during this period (Armesto, 2002; Demo & Allen, 1996; Gabb, 2004; Goldberg, 2012, 2013).

In addition, considering that gendered meanings have been historically attached to different household tasks within the society dominated by heteronormative values (i.e., feminine tasks vs. masculine tasks), engagements in particular household tasks likely represent important ways that individuals express and assert their masculinity and femininity. Although previous research suggests that sexual minority people tend to have more flexible gender identities than their heterosexual counterparts (Lippa, 2008), gender identities are still highly associated with division of labor between partners in same-sex relationships and have important implications for same-sex partners' perceptions of their labor division (Goldberg, 2013). As might be expected, more feminine-identified partners tend to perform more housework than do more masculine-identified partners. However, some studies (e.g., Carrington, 1999; Haddock, 2002) indicate that some same-sex partners may feel that their (masculine or feminine) gender identities are challenged in the same-sex relational context (e.g., gay men engage in a lot of domestic work and lesbians undertake the primary breadwinner roles) and that they need to deal with the stigma related to violating heteronormative gender expectations regarding division of labor.

Previous research identifies several strategies same-sex couples employed to protect their identity transformation from the potential stresses associated with the renegotiation of child care and household labor (see Arrow F in Figure 1). First, without the prescribed specialized sex and gender norms of labor division between men and women, same-sex coparents start from a less gender-centric position when it comes to labor assignment than heterosexual parents. Consequently, they may choose to divide their child care and housework on the basis of degendered factors, such as each partner's work schedule, salary or income, career importance, personal strengths, interests or preferences, motivations to have the child, and biological parenthood (Ciano-Boyce & Shelley-Sireci, 2002; Goldberg, Smith, & Perry-Jenkins, 2012; C. J. Patterson et al., 2004; Rawsthorne & Costello, 2010; Reimann, 1997). Thus, by having a more egalitarian starting point, same-sex couples may experience a less dramatic change in labor division during the transition to parenthood than do different-sex couples.

Second, compensatory strategies (Moore, 2008) and value-enhancing strategies (e.g., Rawsthorne & Costello, 2010; Reimann, 1997) can be used to counterbalance or alleviate potential tensions induced by disproportionate child care and housework between partners. The compensatory strategy is defined as behaviors that are adopted by same-sex coparents in an attempt to reduce or neutralize the work inequality between partners. No study that we are aware of has particularly investigated this issue in families headed by same-sex coparents, but some evidence can be found in a study by Moore (2008). On the basis of an examination of the division of labor in a sample of Black, lesbian stepfamilies, Moore (2008) found that biological mothers undertook more household chores, which was used as a trade-off for their greater authority over family finances and child rearing. Moore (2008) concluded that “without the gender structure of explicit male privilege or the material advantage of high income, lesbian families associate control over some forms of household labor with greater relationship power” (p. 353). It seems that these biological mothers were using their maternal status to bolster their power (e.g., their superior cleaning and organizational skills gave them final say over the way they ran their households), which suggests a special sorting mechanism to create hierarchies within same-sex couple relationships.

Moore’s (2008) interpretations are very insightful, but it is noteworthy that this study also may have implications for the processes through which same-sex couples navigate the tensions induced by disproportionate housework arrangements. As Moore (2008) reported, African American biological mothers in her study often complained about the imbalance in household work and expressed frustration about the unequal amounts of time that their partners allotted to household chores. However, they also somewhat accepted this arrangement because mastery of the housework gave them the final say over the way they ran their households. Thus, we speculate that in addition to Moore’s (2008) explanations, it might be possible that granting greater power in household and child-rearing domains to mothers who undertake more responsibilities in these areas could function as a compensatory strategy for relieving their resentment surrounding the labor inequality.

From a slightly different perspective, the value-enhancing strategy refers to same-sex coparents’ adjusting their representations of the value of child care and household labor by acknowledging the importance (and recognizing the historically devaluation) of unpaid domestic labor. For example, Rawsthorne and Costello (2010) found that, among some same-sex comothers, “the ‘heat’ was taken out of performing household tasks through acknowledging these tasks as ‘important work,’ including child rearing,” and “the drudgery of household tasks was reduced or diminished through recognition of their value” (p. 200).

Third, according to the redefinition strategies proposed by Oswald (2002) and meaning transformation strategies reviewed by Goldberg (2013), the meaning of increased specialization in the division of labor during the transition to parenthood can be reconstructed by same-sex coparents so as to reduce stress associated with the notion that they may be viewed as mirroring a heteronormative division of labor. For example, new same-sex coparents may tend to view their increased specialization in labor from a more pragmatic perspective as the optimal or most efficient arrangement of the household rather than as accommodation to the heteronormative norms.

Finally, in terms of gender identity challenges in the same-sex relational context and the stigma stemming from violating heteronormative gender expectations regarding labor division, two coping strategies have been summarized in a review by Goldberg (2013), which is based on several previous studies (e.g., Carrington, 1999; Haddock, 2002; Khor, 2007): the gender-deviance neutralization strategy and the strategy of seeking external paid help. The former refers to same-sex partners' narrative efforts in minimizing (in the case of gay couples) or exaggerating (in the case of lesbian couples) their housework contributions as a means of deflecting attacks on their own and their partners' gender identities. For example, the masculine gender identity of gay men who engage in domesticity could be protected from stigma by concealing or minimizing the kinds of domestic labor that they do when discussing this topic with others. The latter refers to same-sex partners', typically gay male partners, paying a housekeeper to "help preserve both partners' masculine gender identities so that neither partner feels disempowered or even feminized as a function of taking on more of the (routine, repetitive, female-associated) housework" (Goldberg, 2013, p. 90).

Social Class, Race/Ethnicity, Family Structure, and Geographic Location

Notably, data from the US Census have consistently suggested that families headed by same-sex coparents are heterogeneous in race/ethnicity, social class, family structure, and geographic location (Gates, 2015). As Gates (2013b) reported in his analyses based on multiple national data sources, same-sex coparents are more likely to be racial/ethnic minorities and more likely to face economic hardships than their non-LGBT counterparts: an estimated 39% of partners in same-sex couples who have children younger than age 18 in the home are people of color, compared to 36% of those in different-sex couples who are non-White; and the median annual household income of same-sex couples with children younger than age 18 in the home is lower than for comparable different-sex couples (\$63,900 vs. \$74,000, respectively). The various routes to parenthood greatly contribute to the variability within the configurations of families headed by same-sex coparents (Goldberg & Gartrell, 2014; C. J. Patterson & Riskind, 2010). Drawing on recent census data, children's relationships to the householder in families headed by same-sex coparents are quite diverse, including "biological children," "adopted children," "stepchildren," "grandchildren," and "other nonrelatives" (e.g., Compton, 2013; Gates, 2013b). The census data also indicate that households headed by same-sex coparents are not limited to specific communities or geographic areas, but rather are represented in both urban and rural communities and in socially progressive and conservative states (Gates, 2013a).

However, despite this variability in demographic characteristics and backgrounds, most of what we know about LGB parenthood is still predominantly based on samples of White, middle-class, highly educated same-sex parents living in urban areas (Biblarz & Savci, 2010; Demo & Allen, 1996). As a result, it remains unclear the extent to which we can generalize from the results of existing studies to the larger population of same-sex coparents. Examining how the aforementioned social context factors may interact with sexual orientation to shape parenthood experiences among same-sex coparents could be a promising field for future research.

Social Class

Although family formation methods are becoming increasingly diverse for sexual minority people as a function of recent societal shifts and technological advances (Goldberg & Gartrell, 2014; C. J. Patterson & Riskind, 2010), becoming parents through adoption or assisted reproductive technologies (e.g., surrogacy, in vitro fertilization, and alternative insemination) is still often prohibitively expensive for low-income sexual minority individuals and couples (Badgett, 2001; Black, Sanders, & Taylor, 2007; Boggis, 2001). Instead, sexual minority people with lower incomes and lower levels of education (as compared to individuals with higher incomes and higher levels of education) may be more likely to have children at younger ages from prior different-sex relationships before coming out as sexual minority individuals (Gates, 2011, 2015). Furthermore, it should be noted that family formation pathways highly influenced by economic factors hold implications for same-sex coparents' biological and emotional connectedness with children, as well as arrangement of their caregiving roles and consolidation of their parental identities during the transition to parenthood (e.g., Ciano-Boyce & Shelley-Sireci, 2002; Goldberg, 2005; Goldberg et al., 2013). Existing research also has shown that sexual minority individuals or couples with high incomes can often afford to move to more socially progressive parts of the nation or even the world (e.g., same-sex friendly adoption policies and agencies), which is almost unimaginable for their counterparts with low incomes (e.g., Lewin, 2006). In addition, financial resources may influence the division of labor between same-sex partners during parenthood. For example, affluent same-sex couples (as compared to their counterparts with low income) are more likely to employ paid help to alleviate conflicts related to labor division, which may in turn facilitate the equal sharing of the remaining labor tasks between partners (Risman, 1998), whereas same-sex couples with less flexible work schedules and lower income (e.g., working-class couples) may have difficulty establishing an equal sharing of labor.

Race/Ethnicity

Compared to their White counterparts, same-sex couples of color are more likely to be raising children. According to Gates's (2011) analyses, based on ACS data 2009, African Americans in same-sex couples were 2.4 times more likely than their White counterparts to be raising children (40% vs. 16%, respectively), Latinos and Latinas (28%) were 1.7 times more likely, and American Indians/Alaska Natives (24%) were 1.5 times more likely. Despite these notable demographic estimates, only a limited body of research to date has investigated the parenthood experiences of non-White lesbian and gay coparent-headed families (e.g., Cahill, Battle, & Meyer, 2003; Hicks, 2011; Moore, 2008, 2011a, 2011b; Moore & Brainer, 2013). As Moore (2008, 2011a, 2011b) highlighted in her research, the parenthood experiences for same-sex coparents who are also racial/ethnic minorities are shaped not only by gender and sexuality but also by constructions of race, racism, and intraracial group dynamics, and existing findings based on samples of White same-sex coparents may not apply to families headed by same-sex coparents of color. For example, Moore (2008) found that Black lesbian mothers emphasized financial independence, labor-work participation, and shared provider role more than shared child care, which was very different from White, middle-class lesbian parents' egalitarian ideology, characterized as shared paid work, shared housework, and shared child care. In addition, it is noteworthy that

children younger than 18 living with same-sex couples are more likely to be racial/ethnic minorities (Gates, 2013b), which suggests that it might be necessary to investigate the parenthood experiences of White same-sex couples who adopt racial/ethnic-minority children (Richardson & Goldberg, 2010).

Family Structure

As noted already, families headed by same-sex coparents are often formed through various pathways (Goldberg & Gartrell, 2014; C. J. Patterson & Riskind, 2010). Families with “complex” structures may face considerable challenges during parenthood. Some families formed through surrogacy or donor insemination may incorporate surrogate mothers or sperm donors into their lives (Berkowitz & Marsiglio 2007; Chabot & Ames, 2004; Gartrell et al., 2006; Goldberg & Allen, 2013; Tourni & Coyle, 2002). Sexual minority individuals who have children conceived from prior heterosexual relationships before coming out may get repartnered or remarried with same-sex partners and start stepfamilies headed by same-sex couples (Ciano-Boyce & Shelley-Sireci, 2002; Moore, 2008). Some same-sex male couples may donate their sperm to same-sex female couples and then share the child rearing with them in kinship arrangements (Bos, 2010). Some same-sex male couples may choose to conceive and raise children jointly with heterosexual women outside of marriage (Erera & Segal-Engelchin, 2014; Segal-Engelchin et al., 2012).

In addition, as some scholars (e.g., Gates, 2013b; Moore & Brainer, 2013; Tasker, 2005) have suggested, many gay and lesbian adults become single parents and may face more challenges (e.g., economic disadvantage) during parenthood than do couples. Kinship arrangements such as multigenerational family structures as well as other types of extended family households should be considered more in future research (Orel & Fruhauf, 2013), especially for sexual minority people of color, as they may take on, to some extent, “parenting” responsibilities for their grandchildren, younger siblings, nieces and nephews, and other children, which suggests that the traditional definition of “same-sex coparenting” is relatively narrow (e.g., Cahill et al., 2003; Mays, Chatters, Cochran, & Mackness, 1998).

Geographic Location

According to Gates (2013a), households headed by same-sex coparents are not limited to specific communities or geographic areas within the United States; they are represented in both urban and rural communities and in socially progressive and conservative states. However, child rearing is more common in the socially conservative states, which can be partly attributed to the fact that the vast majority of same-sex coparents are raising biological or stepchildren, and these parents often have far fewer economic resources, are more likely to be racial/ethnic minorities, and are more likely to live in the more socially conservative regions (as compared to same-sex coparents who are raising adopted children). Therefore, despite the recent national legalization of same-sex marriage in the United States, it is still imperative to systematically examine whether and how the geographic location and associated societal and cultural factors influence the rates and types of family formation among same-sex couples and have implications for intrafamily dynamics and functioning, especially for parenthood experiences. In addition, it should be noted that a great number of families headed by same-sex coparents live outside of the United States, and there are

considerable variations across nations in the social and legal contexts affecting same-sex partnerships, marriages, and parenthood (Moore & Brainer, 2013; Tasker, 2005). Studies of same-sex coparents in international contexts may generate unique insights into the diversity inherent in sexual minority families globally and for the ongoing political, judicial, and social dialogues surrounding sexual minority parenthood.

Intersectionality

Although each of the aforementioned social context factors has important implications for same-sex coparenthood, it is unlikely that any of them operates independently of the others in shaping same-sex coparenthood because multiple interlocking identities complicatedly intersect in same-sex coparents' lives. For example, lesbian and gay individuals or couples who have a biological child or stepchild are more likely to be racial/ethnic minorities and more likely to live in rural areas of socially conservative regions and face economic disadvantages (Gates, 2013b; Moore & Brainer, 2013). However, the intersectionality of social class, race/ethnicity, family structure, geographic location, and same-sex coparenting processes is often not captured in current research (for exceptions, see Moore, 2008; Oswald & Masciadrelli, 2008).

Major Trends and Issues for Future Research

Although we have suggested several possible avenues for future inquiry over the course of this review, numerous additional topics that are central for moving forward research in this field need to be noted. These include theoretical consideration and reexamination of existing research findings, methodological limitations and advancements in empirical studies, as well as policy and practice implications.

Theoretical Implications

From a theoretical perspective, this review suggests that an integrated comprehensive model based on identity theory, family stress and coping theory, and the ecological theory of human development may provide an effective lens for contemplating same-sex coparents' identity transformation processes during the transition to parenthood. However, as depicted in the proposed model, the complexity of such processes cannot be fully captured without considering cross-level interactions, feedback loops, and changes over time. Thus, in addition to the proposed ecological, stress-strategy-adaptation framework, future research on this topic also should adopt a synergistic, transactional, and dynamic perspective.

Moreover, this review has suggested that the entrenched heteronormative meaning systems surrounding parenthood may be challenged and even transformed in the same-sex relational context, which in turn suggests the potential utility of integrating queer theories (Goldberg, 2013; Oswald et al., 2005; Oswald et al., 2009) into our proposed conceptual model. By pushing researchers to "examine gender, sexuality, and family as interdependent binaries to be negotiated through human agency in the face of heteronormative power" (Oswald et al., 2009, p. 45), queer theories not only can help reveal insights into how and under which conditions same-sex coparents reconfigure the heteronormative model of parenthood but also can help identify which parts of the commonly accepted meaning system surrounding

parenthood are universally applied to both same-sex couples and different-sex couples. Thus, researchers will be more able to avoid drawing overly simplistic conclusions about same-sex coparenthood.

In other words, although the experiences (at least part of them) of same-sex couples during the transition to parenthood may appear to be comparable to the experiences of different-sex couples, they may in fact be unique to same-sex couples, who filter these experiences through a sexual minority identity and may not ascribe the same heteronormative meaning to them as different-sex couples do. However, it is important to test these hypotheses in future research.

Another theoretical issue this review raises is the need to consider how social structural factors such as social class, race/ethnicity, family structure, geographic location, and associated social and cultural contexts, independently and intersectionally, shape the identity transformation processes for new same-sex coparents (as depicted in Figure 1), which encourages researchers to pay more attention to the understudied diversity inherent within families headed by same-sex coparents (Goldberg, 2010). Furthermore, intersectionality theories should be particularly useful for investigating this issue because they emphasize the need to consider how individuals' multiple interlocking identities intersect, and how those intersections influence and shape individuals' collective identities and life experiences (Crenshaw, 1991; Ferguson, Carr, & Snitman, 2014; Parent, DeBlaere, & Moradi, 2013).

It also should be noted that in the current review we do not deal much with the idea that the transition to parenthood, like other family life transitions, involves various "losses" or "pains" (e.g., loss of relationships with some childless friends) as well as potential "gains" or "pleasures" (e.g., emotional benefits resulting from the joy and fun that accompany child care) in different domains (e.g., Nelson, Kushlev, English, Dunn, & Lyubomirsky, 2013; Nelson, Kushlev, & Lyubomirsky, 2014). However, to depict a more complete picture of same-sex couples' experiences of identity transformation during the transition to parenthood, it seems that scholars need to adopt a broader perspective in future research.

Last, most new same-sex coparents successfully navigate the transition to parenthood, which suggests that they possess and utilize critical resources to adapt and thrive in their new roles, including family members' intrapersonal resources (e.g., emotional well-being), couple relational resources (e.g., commitment), the family system's internal resources (e.g., family cohesion), and social contextual resources (e.g., social support from kinships). These resources (i.e., resilience factors that the family enters life transitions with and that emerge during the process of coping with transitions) likely determine the family's capabilities to prevent an event or a transition from creating a crisis and are likely to influence the specific strategies (i.e., how the family uses these resources) that the family adopts to cope with life transitions. Although in the current review we have preliminarily touched this issue (e.g., how the financial resources influence same-sex coparents' strategies during the transition to parenthood), future research needs to systematically examine how the family resilience factors or resources interact with family coping strategies to influence same-sex coparents' identity transformation processes during the transition to parenthood, and how to integrate

the family resilience factors or resources of different levels into our proposed conceptual model.

Methodological Implications

From a methodological perspective, the most important implication of our review is that researchers need to be particularly cognizant of how methods and sampling have shaped what we know and what we do not know about LGB parenthood experiences. As noted already, in terms of sampling bias, most of the available findings to date have been based on White, middle-class, and highly educated samples of same-sex couples living in urban areas within the United States. The identity transformation experiences during the transition to parenthood for LGB parents in the following groups merit special attention in future research: (a) families of racial/ethnic minorities, (b) low-income families or working-class families, (c) families living in rural areas, (d) families living outside the United States, (e) families with complex structures (e.g., stepfamilies, multigenerational families), (f) families headed by single parents, and (g) families with an intersectionality of multiple social groups.

In addition, although recent scholarship has begun to examine transgender families, transgender fathers' and mothers' identity transformation experiences during the transition to parenthood remain noticeably absent from the current research (Biblarz & Savci, 2010). However, studying transgender couples' identity transformation experiences during the transition to parenthood may reveal new insights into "gender and social life, including our understandings of mothering and fathering" (p. 364, Doucet & Lee, 2014), considering that "transgender families are uniquely situated socially and institutionally because they can subvert or maintain legal and social norms" (Moore & Stambolis-Ruhstorfer, 2013, p. 501).

Furthermore, it is imperative to collect data with longitudinal, multiple-method, and multiple-informant designs and based on large, representative samples. Although some studies have used large national samples of lesbian mothers to longitudinally examine same-sex coparents' experiences during the transition to parenthood (e.g., Gartrell et al., 1996; Gartrell et al., 1999; Gartrell et al., 2000; Gartrell et al., 2006), most existing studies in this field are cross-sectional and draw their conclusions from interviewing small convenience samples of same-sex coparents. New emerging advanced quantitative methods (e.g., multilevel modeling approaches) should be used for analyses in this field when usable data are available, which has great implications for capturing complexity in LGB parenthood experiences (Smith, Sayer, & Goldberg, 2013).

In addition, the importance of conducting qualitative or mixed-methods studies should be particularly highlighted when investigating same-sex coparents' identity transformation experiences during the transition to parenthood, as this is a relatively understudied topic in a relatively understudied population (Gabb, 2013), and qualitative and mixed-methods studies not only allow researchers to capture the full range of same-sex coparents' experiences but also enable them to probe these experiences much more deeply, especially how same-sex coparents make meaning of their experiences. Finally, in addition to the already-mentioned traditional methods, applying the newly developed neuroscience methods to research of sexual minority parenthood may be particularly promising, given that neuroscience research can provide strong evidence for some critical questions related to same-sex coparenthood

(e.g., Are both men and women biologically prepared to parent?; Abraham et al., 2014; Feldman et al., 2010).

Policy and Practice Implications

The highly politicized nature of questions about families headed by sexual minority parents has sparked ongoing political, judicial, and social dialogues during the past several decades (C. J. Patterson, 2013). It should be noted that all the studies reviewed here were conducted within a particular historical period when legal and policy contexts for lesbian and gay parents and their children were remarkably varied across the United States (C. J. Patterson, 2013; Swan, 2015). However, with the US Supreme Court decision, *Obergefell v. Hodges*, legalizing same-sex marriage nationwide in June 2015, it is important to investigate how this landmark legal decision influences same-sex coparents' identity transformation processes across the transition to parenthood.

We believe that there are at least two mechanisms whereby the Supreme Court's decision on marriage equality may affect same-sex coparents' identity transformation processes during the transition to parenthood. The first possibility is the comprehensive package of economic and social protections that marriage equality affords families headed by same-sex coparents (Badgett, 2001; Cahill et al., 2003), given the noted importance of economic resources in shaping same-sex coparenthood (e.g., choosing the family formation method; Boggis, 2001; Lewin, 2006). The second pathway could be the legal recognition of second-parent adoption, widely perceived as an important means for same-sex coparents, especially for the nonbiological parents, to achieve legal recognition and to counterbalance biological inequality between coparents (Bergen et al., 2006; Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2007; Hequembourg, 2004; Hequembourg & Farrell, 1999).

In addition, the cultural-lag phenomenon needs to be kept in mind (e.g., Ogburn, 1966) when discussing the influences of the US legalization of same-sex marriage on sexual minority parenthood. Culture or society does not evolve as an integrated or synchronized whole; cultural lag occurs when one part of a culture or society changes faster than another. From this perspective, same-sex couple relationships and sexual minority parenthood may be caught in such a cultural lag: Although the macro-level social changes are creating a historical context in which same-sex relationships and sexual minority parenthood are more accepted than previously, cultural ideals, values, and attitudes related to the ideology of heteronormativity may persist and/or change more slowly than the legal context itself. This suggests that we may still have a long road to follow before achieving genuine marriage equality, which is similar to the pattern experienced by other marginalized groups trying to achieve social justice (e.g., racial minority groups).

Last, the present review clearly demonstrates that the identity transformation process across the transition to parenthood may be much more stressful and complicated for LGB parents than for their heterosexual counterparts, which highlights the necessity and importance of clinical consultations and interventions for new LGB parents to cope with this stressful life transition (e.g., Lev & Sennott, 2013). Whereas a substantial body of research has been devoted to developing intervention programs for new different-sex coparents (e.g., Cowan & Cowan, 1995; Doherty, Erickson, & LaRossa, 2006; Piquart & Teubert, 2010),

little has been done for new same-sex coparents, and this is a promising direction for future efforts.

Conclusion

In summary, by reorganizing the existing literature into an ecological, stress-strategy-adaptation framework, the current review indicates several gaps in our knowledge of same-sex couples' identity transformation experiences during the transition to parenthood, showing that such experiences (a) are products of the cultural tensions between the dominant heterosexual sociostructural norms and the LGBT subcultural norms and expectations, as well as the intra- and interpersonal dynamics in the sexual minority family system; (b) involve various adaptive processes of navigating different stressors via human agency within multiple nested contexts; and (c) are complicated by contextual factors such as social class, race/ethnicity, family structure, and sociocultural environment associated with geographic location.

Furthermore, the aforementioned processes are likely to have far-reaching implications for the future development of human families and societies, given that individual and collective coping processes affect not only the immediate situation but also the larger sociocultural environment, including cultural mores and/or institutional structures (e.g., the legalization in the United States of same-sex marriage) (Aldwin, 2007). As the boundaries, meanings, contents, and contexts of family and parenthood are renegotiated and transformed within LGBT subcultures, the broader society is challenged to reevaluate the heteronormative model of family and parenthood that historically has been taken for granted. As Wells (2011) pointed out, sexual minority parents are not only expanding their own beliefs about who they are and what they can do; they also are expanding the prevailing societal beliefs about what sexual minority parents can do—and indeed what all parents, including heterosexual parents, can do and can be within the modern family system.

Acknowledgments

This manuscript was supported, in part, by funding from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, Grant 1K01 HD075833-01 (PI: Mills-Koonce).

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Figure 1.
The Heuristic Conceptual Model of Same-Sex Couples' Identity Transformation During the Transition to Parenthood: An Ecological, Stress-Strategy-Adaptation Perspective.