The "Second Generation": LGBTQ Youth with LGBTQ Parents

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Do lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ)[1] parents have LGBTQ children? Yes, they do—sometimes—just as heterosexual and gender conforming parents do. Yet, research on the psychosocial development of LGBTQ youth has focused exclusively on adolescents from heterosexual- and gender-conforming-parent families. This line of inquiry has revealed that LGBTQ identity formation can be a lengthy and arduous process for some LGBTQ youth (Savin-Williams, 1996), as they may internalize negative, heterosexist messages from society and, often, family (Morrow, 2004). In turn, some LGBTQ youth experience feelings of isolation (Williams, Connolly, Pepler, & Craig, 2005), which may contribute to increased risk for mental health problems, such as depression and substance abuse (Morrow, 2004). It is unknown, however, whether these findings can be generalized to "second generation" youth—that is, LGBTQ youth with LGBTQ parents. Perhaps having an LGBTQ parent might ease one's own coming out process;

on the other hand, second generation youth may be "doubly marginalized" (Goldberg, 2007, p. 127), as a result of societal discrimination in relation to both their own and their parents' identities.

Youth and young adults who report nonheterosexual and gender nonconforming identities, and who also have LGBTQ parents, have been included in a few existing studies (e.g., Bailey, Bobrow, Wolfe, & Mikach, 1995; Kosciw & Diaz, 2008; Tasker & Golombok, 1997). The experiences of these individuals as second generation, however, have received very little attention in the family and social science literatures, despite calls for research on this population (Goldberg, 2007; Mooney-Somers, 2006). One reason for this lack of attention is, perhaps, that researchers have been wary of highlighting the existence of LGBTQ youth with LGBTQ parents for fear their studies will be utilized as evidence for arguments against LGBTQ parenting (Stacey & Biblarz, 2001). Given that LGBTQ parents face institutionalized discrimination (e.g., some states, such as Mississippi and Utah, continue to deny same-sex couples the opportunity to adopt children; National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2011), these concerns are valid. Furthermore, there are still relatively few studies of children with LGBTQ parents in general, due in part to the challenge of accessing LGBTQ-parent families (Stacey & Biblarz, 2001); thus, recruitment of second generation youth, a subgroup of an already difficult-to-access population, is likely an even greater challenge for researchers.

Although little empirical research exists on their experiences, nonacademic writers and queer

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[1] The labels *LGBTQ* and *queer* are used throughout the chapter to refer to all nonheterosexual and gender nonconforming identities in general, even though social science research has not included all participants with these identity labels equally. More specific terms (e.g., *lesbian*) are used when referring to individual study samples or self-reported labels of study participants.

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activists have been discussing the second generation—and providing many of them with community and support—for more than 15 years (COLAGE, 2010; Garner, 2004; Kirby, 1998). Systematic examination of the experiences of the second generation, however, may be beneficial in that challenges—as well as advantages—that are unique to this population could be revealed (Goldberg, 2007). For example, although second generation youth may face societal discrimination in relation to both their own and their parents' sexual orientation or gender identities, they may have more familial support and role modeling to help them cope than LGBTQ youth with heterosexual parents (Kosciw & Diaz, 2008). Thus, studies focusing on second generation youth could help family professionals understand the needs of these individuals and their families and how to better support them (Mooney-Somers, 2006). Moreover, exploring how the second generation might—or might not—benefit from having LGBTQ parents could provide important lessons for *all* parents of LGBTQ youth, in that there may be certain parental behaviors that prove to be more salient to these youth than their parents' identity as LGBTQ.

In this chapter, I will first present the primary theoretical framework, social constructionism, that has been used to frame this area of study (Kuvalanka & Goldberg, 2009) and that guides my present discussion of the second generation. I will then review what is currently known about the experiences of second generation individuals from both academic (e.g., Kuvalanka & Goldberg, 2009) and nonacademic (e.g., Garner, 2004) sources, including preliminary findings from my current research, based upon in-depth interviews with 30 LGBTQ young adults with LGBTQ parents. Lastly, I will address future research directions for expanding our knowledge and understanding of the second generation and their families.

Theoretical Perspective

A social constructionist approach views families, sexuality, and gender as socially and materially constructed (Oswald, Blume, & Marks, 2005) and contests the heteronormative practice of legitimating only those relationships that are based on biological and legal ties (Dunne, 2000). A social constructionist perspective does not reduce sexual feelings and gender identity to essential qualities with which a child is born; rather, a diverse range of factors are acknowledged as impacting behavior and identity, including biological (Hines, 2004) and social processes (Kitzinger, 1987). According to a social constructionist approach, individuals use their available social context to understand, create meaning out of, and assign labels to their experiences, behaviors, and identities. Sexual identity formation in particular is understood as an interactive and continual process that occurs between the individual and his or her social environment (Horowitz & Newcomb, 2001). From this perspective, some children of LGBTQ parents may ultimately identify as LGBTQ because of shared genetic or biological influences, and/or social processes in their environment that permit gender nonconformity and/or same-sex exploration without fear of punishment or censure (Kuvalanka & Goldberg, 2009). Likewise, the unique familial environment of second generation youth may ultimately influence their coming out processes, such that they may experience coming out as different (i.e., easier or harder) from some LGBTQ youth with heterosexual and gender conforming parents, because of their parents' sexual/gender identities (Kuvalanka & Goldberg, 2009).

According to a social constructionist framework, interpretations are necessarily shaped by individuals' everyday interactions with peers, family members, and others in our immediate social context. Further, the broader historical, cultural, and ideological contexts, and the meanings and ideologies that are dominant within these contexts, also have significant influence in this regard (Crotty, 1998; Schwandt, 2000). Therefore, in understanding how second generation youth develop and make sense of their sexual and/or gender identities, we must consider the dominant—and possibly conflicting—ideologies and institutions that shape their experiences. For example, the dominant cultural narrative is that heterosexuality

and gender conformity is privileged in society, affording heterosexual and gender conforming individuals symbolic and practical benefits, such as greater relationship recognition and support at both interpersonal and institutional levels (Oswald et al., 2005). Second generation youth may internalize this narrative, as they may have perceived and experienced discrimination based on their parents' and their own sexual orientation and/or gender identities. At the same time, they may construct alternative, resistant narratives about sexual orientation and gender identity, insomuch as their parents may have served as positive nonheterosexual and/or gender nonconforming role models. Thus, a social constructionist perspective facilitates theorizing of the ways in which both society and family have an influence on how second generation youth subjectively construct and make meaning of their LGBTQ identities. For example, according to a social constructionist perspective, whether/how parents share expectations for their children's eventual sexual and gender identities, parents' own level of internalized homophobia, and the societal narrative that "gay parents raise gay kids" are all hypothesized to have an influence on the child's ease of identity formation.

What Do We Know About the Second Generation?

The experiences of second generation individuals have been highlighted in newspaper articles (e.g., Kirby, 1998) and queer anthologies (Epstein, 2009; Howey & Samuels, 2000; Sonnie, 2000). Some empirical research has also been conducted (Garner, 2004; Kuvalanka & Goldberg, 2009). Prior to describing some of these diverse sources, I will provide a brief overview of the literature on the gender development and sexual orientation of children with LGBTQ parents in general, as it provides a foundation for inquiry into the experiences of second generation youth. The literature suggests that in many ways, the gender and sexuality development of children from nonheterosexual-parent families appears to unfold similarly to that of children of heterosexual parents, but that in some ways, their development may be uniquely shaped by having LGBTQ parents. The limitations of this literature, however, should be kept in mind, in that it has focused primarily on White, well-educated, lesbian-parent families.

Gender Development of Children with LGBTQ Parents

Parental sexual orientation has not proven to be an effective indicator of successful child development, as studies comparing children with LGBTQ parents and those raised by heterosexual parents have revealed few differences in cognitive functioning and school achievement, behavioral adjustment, and social and emotional development (see Biblarz & Savci, 2010). Researchers have generally explored two aspects of gender development among children with LGBTQ parents: gender identity and gendered role behavior. *Gender identity* concerns self-identification as female or male, and *gendered roles* refers to those behaviors and attitudes that are regarded by a particular culture as appropriately female or male (Bem, 1974). Assessment of gendered role behavior to determine whether or not children are developing satisfactorily assumes there are behaviors and roles that are appropriate and "normal" for females and males, and, therefore, affirms and reinforces gender-role stereotypes (Fitzgerald, 1999). Nevertheless, studies document no differences regarding gender identification between children of lesbian parents and children of heterosexual parents (Golombok, Spencer, & Rutter, 1983; Gottman, 1990; Green, Mandel, Hotvedt, Gray, & Smith, 1986) and have found "appropriate" displays of gendered behaviors/attitudes among children of lesbian parents (Brewaeys, Ponjaert, Hall, & Golombok, 1997; Golombok et al., 2003; Gottman, 1990; MacCallum & Golombok, 2004). A few studies, however, have found some group differences in gendered role behavior and attitudes; for example, Green et al. (1986) reported that girls of lesbian mothers were more likely to prefer some boy-typical activities (e.g., playing with trucks)

and to aspire to male-typed careers (e.g., engineer, astronaut) compared to daughters of heterosexual mothers. Children of lesbian mothers have also been found to hold less traditional gendered role attitudes than children of heterosexual parents, while lesbian mothers have also reported more liberal attitudes about gender than heterosexual parents (Sutfin, Fulcher, Bowles, & Patterson, 2008).

Sexual Orientation of Children with LGBTQ Parents

Some studies that have explored sexual orientation identification of children with LGBTQ parents have done so seemingly in the interest of determining whether these children are more likely to identify as nonheterosexual than children of heterosexual parents. This line of inquiry seems to suggest that it is "bad" if children turn out to be nonheterosexual (Fitzgerald, 1999); indeed, according to the heteronormative cultural ideal, healthy (i.e., "normal") sexuality development is equated with heterosexuality (Oswald et al., 2005). Nevertheless, until studies utilizing large, representative samples are conducted, the question of whether children of LGBTQ parents are more likely to identify as LGBTQ than children of heterosexual and gender conforming parents will remain unanswered. The existing research, however, suggests that the vast majority of youth and adults with LGBTQ parents identify as heterosexual and/or demonstrate no differences from youth and adults with heterosexual parents in regard to experiences of same-sex attraction (Bailey et al., 1995; Gottman, 1990; Tasker & Golombok, 1997; Wainright, Russell, & Patterson, 2004).

One study, however, did reveal complex findings regarding the sexual orientation of children of lesbian parents. Tasker and Golombok (1997) compared 25 young adults with lesbian mothers with 21 young adults with heterosexual mothers. Findings revealed no significant differences between groups with respect to sexual identity or experiences of same-sex sexual attraction. However, young adults from lesbian families

were more likely to have considered the possibility of having a same-sex relationship and to have actually been involved in a same-sex relationship. Tasker and Golombok suggested that having a lesbian mother appeared to broaden young adults' views about their potential sexual relationships (i.e., they were open to the possibility of entering into a same-sex relationship). Indeed, Goldberg (2007) reported in her study of 42 adults with lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) parents that some participants felt that growing up with a nonheterosexual parent led them to develop "less rigid and more flexible notions and ideas about sexuality" (p. 557).

Three studies (Cohen & Kuvalanka, 2011; Gabb, 2004; Mitchell, 1998) examined what lesbian mothers aimed to teach their children about sexuality-related topics, and found that many of the lesbian mothers reported that they intentionally sought to teach diverse notions of sexuality, so that their children would know that there are options beyond heterosexuality. Notably, these findings seem to be distinct from much of the research on heterosexual parents (Heisler, 2005; Martin, 2009). For example, Martin (2009) explored how heterosexuality was reproduced and normalized by 600 mothers (all of whom identified as heterosexual, except for two who identified as bisexual) with very young children. Martin found that most of the mothers in her study assumed their children to be heterosexual, described adult and romantic relationships to children as exclusively heterosexual, and did not discuss with their children the existence of nonheterosexual sexual orientations. LGBTQ parents' experiences of having nonheterosexual and/or gender nonconforming identities may influence their intentions to teach their children more diverse notions of sexual orientation. Further, LGBTQ parents who have experienced stigmatization in relation to their LGBTQ identities may want their children to learn about sexual orientation in a different, more positive and accepting way, devoid of shame and stigma (Mitchell, 1998).

A handful of studies have investigated LGBTQ parents' preferences for their children's sexual orientations and have found that these parents

have diverse perspectives in this regard (e.g., Costello, 1997; Gartrell et al., 2000; Javaid, 1993). Javaid (1993) asked lesbian and heterosexual mothers about their attitudes regarding their children's sexual behavior and life choices. Seven out of 13 lesbian mothers expressed "an acceptance of, but not preference for, homosexual behavior in their children" (Javaid, 1993, p. 241), while three reported homosexuality to be more acceptable for their daughters than their sons, and three preferred that their children be heterosexual. Notably, all of the heterosexual mothers in Javaid's study reported that they preferred their children to be heterosexual and that they would be "disappointed" (p. 241) if their children identified as nonheterosexual. All of the 18 LGB parents interviewed by Costello (1997) said they would accept their children's eventual sexual orientation identities regardless of what they might be, while 4 went on to state a preference for their children to be nonheterosexual, and 4 preferred that their children identify as heterosexual. Those who preferred heterosexuality for their children discussed the societal discrimination that nonheterosexual individuals face.

It seems that LGBTQ parents' experiences as sexual minorities in a society that privileges heterosexuality influence their hopes and fears for their children in regard to sexual orientation. In line with a social constructionist perspective, some LGBTQ parents may create familial environments that are in some ways different from, as well as similar to, the familial environments provided by some heterosexual parents. Sexual minority parents may be more cognizant of the potential for their children to eventually assume a sexual orientation identity other than heterosexual. As in heterosexual-parent families, LGBTQ parents' feelings about this possibility may have implications for their children's own sexual orientation development. Children with LGBTQ parents may internalize their parents' openness to—or possibly anxiety about—the children's anticipated sexual orientation identities (Kuvalanka & Goldberg, 2009).

But what happens when the child of a LGBTQ parent actually does come to identify as nonheterosexual or gender nonconforming? In her self-reflective commentary, Mooney-Somers (2006), a psychology researcher and second generation lesbian daughter of a gay father, asserts that there are ways in which the experiences of the second generation may be sufficiently different from those of the first generation, warranting empirical research on this population.

Defining the Second Generation

The term "second generation" was coined in the early 1990s by Dan Cherubin, a gay man with a lesbian mother (Kirby, 1998). In his coming out about his own and his mother's sexual orientation identities, he encountered negative reactions from others, including lesbian and gay parents themselves (Garner, 2004). For example, when Cherubin marched in a gay pride parade holding a sign that read "Gay Son of Gay Moms," he encountered negative, seemingly homophobic expressions on the faces of LGBTQ parents (Garner, 2004, p. 176). Apparently, Cherubin embodied the opposite of what LGBTQ parents were trying to portray at that time: that LGBTQ parents raised "normal" children—and "normal" meant "heterosexual" (Garner, 2004). Indeed, when Cherubin served on an educational panel about LGBTQ families, a lesbian mother and co-panelist, who had fought for custody of her two young children, said to him: "Nothing personal, Dan, but you're my worst nightmare" (Kirby, 1998, p. 2). As a result of his experiences, Cherubin created an organization for LGBTQ youth and adults with LGBTQ parents and named it "Second Generation." Soon afterwards, he partnered with COLAGE, a national organization run by and for individuals with one or more LGBTQ parents, to expand the network of support for "second gen-ners" (COLAGE, 2010).

Cherubin's and others' experiences as second generation LGBTQ youth are shared in the groundbreaking book by writer and queer family activist Abigail Garner (2004), *Families Like Mine: Children of Gay Parents Tell It Like It Is*. During the course of conducting research for her book, Garner interviewed more than 50 young adults with LGBTQ parents, some of whom also identified as LGBTQ. In her chapter titled

"Second Generation: Queer Kids of LGBT Parents," Garner highlights the diversity of experiences among this group:

> Although "second generation" is an umbrella term for all LGBT kids with LGBT parents, there is no definitive second generation family experience that represents them all …. A lesbian daughter of politically active lesbian mothers, for example, will have a different second generation experience than a daughter raised by a closeted gay dad. (p. 179)

Thus, the term "second generation" refers to all nonheterosexual and/or gender nonconforming individuals with one or more nonheterosexual and/or gender nonconforming parent—the experiences of whom are just beginning to be acknowledged and understood.

Identifying Advantages and Challenges for Second Generation Youth

As stated, empirical literature on this population is scarce but emerging. Kuvalanka and Goldberg (2009), in the first in-depth study of second generation individuals that has been reported in the social science literature, examined the experiences of 18 LGBTQ young adults with lesbian and bisexual mothers. Many of Kuvalanka and Goldberg's (2009) findings echoed and extended those of Garner (2004), lending credence to her pioneering discussion of the diverse experiences of the second generation. Kuvalanka and Goldberg's study was a secondary data analysis, based upon data drawn from two separate qualitative research projects that the authors had each previously conducted. A total of 78 young adults with LGB parents were recruited, 21 of whom happened to identify as LGBTQ by adulthood.[2]

Subsequently, 18 of the 21 second generation participants (ages 18–35 years; $M = 23.2$ years) were deemed eligible for inclusion in the secondary data analysis.[3] Regarding gender, 11 participants identified as female, three as male, three as genderqueer, and one as "gender ambiguous." Regarding sexual orientation, seven participants identified as bisexual, five as queer, three as gay, one as lesbian, one as "mildly bisexual," and one as a "tranny-dyke." Seventeen participants had lesbian mothers and two had bisexual mothers (1 participant had one lesbian and one bisexual mother).

Potential Advantages for Second Generation Youth

Both Garner's (2004) and Kuvalanka and Goldberg's (2009) research revealed that having nonheterosexual parents when one identifies as LGBTQ may be potentially beneficial, in that some participants felt they had a less arduous coming out process than they might have had if they had heterosexual parents. For example, some of Kuvalanka and Goldberg's participants said that they were able to discover their own nonheterosexual or gender nonconforming identities sooner, in that having a nonheterosexual parent allowed them to explore and question their sexual/gender identities at a younger age than other youth, which facilitated their own self-discovery. More generally, participants from both studies believed that having LGBTQ parents had given them broader conceptualizations of the potential sexual or gender identity options available to them, including those that go beyond the traditional binaries of gay/straight and female/male. Furthermore, many of them also did not worry about rejection upon disclosure of their identities to their LGBTQ parents. As Charlie, a gay man with a lesbian mother, explained: "I didn't have that added fear of rejection from my mother,

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[2] These were convenience samples; thus, the relatively high proportion of LGBTQ-identified participants could be attributed to the method of recruitment and the focus of the studies. For example, second generation individuals may be especially inclined to be members of COLAGE, an advocacy organization for children of LGBTQ parents, and to participate in studies that investigate the experiences of LGBTQ-parent families, as they may be interested from multiple perspectives: children of LGBTQ parents and as possible future LGBTQ parents themselves.

[3] Three participants from Goldberg's original study were not included, because (a) after reading through transcripts, it was determined that one participant had participated in both researchers' studies and (b) two participants in Goldberg's subset were considerably older than the rest of the participants (48 and 50 years old; 13 years older than the next oldest participant).

because no matter what, it was always like, there's no way she can reject me" (Kuvalanka & Goldberg, 2009, p. 912).

Perhaps, then, for some second generation individuals, their parents' identification, support, and acceptance may neutralize society's powerful homonegative messages and serve to foster greater self-acceptance and self-esteem. Indeed, for some participants, their uniquely supportive and affirmative familial environments led them to construct their own emergent identities as normal and acceptable (Garner, 2004; Kuvalanka & Goldberg, 2009). Further, some of Garner's interviewees felt they benefited from having a strong connection to the LGBTQ community from a young age, and from having a deep understanding of LGBTQ history and culture. Garner posited that it is beneficial for second generation individuals to grow up with "out" and "proud" parents, who can serve as positive role models, thus lessening the development of internalized homophobia among these youth: "LGBT parents … have the opportunity to pass on a priceless gift to their second generation children: pride in discovering their authentic selves" (p. 192).

Potential Challenges for Second Generation Youth

Several participants in both Garner's (2004) and Kuvalanka and Goldberg's (2009) research discussed the unique challenges they faced as second generation youth. For example, some participants said they felt pressure from their LGBTQ parents and others to be heterosexual and gender conforming, and some delayed coming out as LGBTQ due to fears of fulfilling critics' assertions that "gay parents raise gay kids." David, who identified as bisexual, shared how this stereotype affected his sexual identity formation: "I do feel to some extent I didn't want to be gay because that just proves the stereotype true that gay parents will raise a gay child and shouldn't be allowed to have children" (Kuvalanka & Goldberg, 2009, p. 911). In relation to this, some participants also expressed annoyance and feelings of disempowerment as a result of the commonplace assumption that their sexual or gender identities were necessarily related to their

parents' sexual orientations. Amy, who identified as queer, revealed:

> That's something that's really been pushed on me—like, "You're like this because of your mom," which feels, like, really disempowering in a lot of ways. And I think that is probably the thing that has hurt the most … just this feeling of like, my claim to my identity is being taken away. (Kuvalanka & Goldberg, 2009, p. 911)

Other participants in the Kuvalanka and Goldberg (2009) study reported that they initially did not want to be LGBTQ, or that they had specific concerns related to their own sexual/gender identities, after witnessing the prejudice and discrimination that their parents had endured. For example, Tom, who identified as gay, had grown up hearing his heterosexual father and stepmother make homophobic comments about his lesbian mother, which in turn made Tom wary of coming out to them. Thus, second generation youth are inevitably confronted with the heterosexism their parents have faced (Mooney-Somers, 2006), and some, if not most, understand they may face similar struggles, which may cause ambivalence or fear about coming out to family, friends, and society. These experiences reveal that having a LGBTQ parent is not guaranteed protection against the influence of societal heteronormativity.

Interestingly, Kuvalanka and Goldberg (2009) reported that several of their participants said they did not turn to their lesbian/bisexual mothers for support during their sexual and gender identity formation. In particular, sons of lesbian/bisexual mothers tended to look elsewhere for support. In addition to the obvious gender difference between mothers and sons, sons may also be hesitant to discuss their emerging sexualities with their mothers because of their perception that aspects of gay male culture (e.g., pornography) may clash with their mothers' (lesbian feminist) political sensibilities (Jensen, 2004). Furthermore, it seemed that some mothers' internalized homophobia and shame may have inhibited open discussions about sexual identities, which likely contributed to some participants' lack of comfort. Additionally, a "queer generation gap" (Garner, 2004, p. 181) stemming from differences in social norms and experiences between the first and

second generations also seemed to play a role. For example, some LGBTQ children and LGBTQ parents disagreed about how "out" to be in their communities, and also utilized different language (e.g., *queer* as opposed to *lesbian* or *gay*) to describe their own identities.

Lastly, participants in both Garner's (2004) and Kuvalanka and Goldberg's (2009) research discussed their disappointment upon disclosing their LGBTQ identities to their LGBTQ parents, especially when parents remained somewhat closeted themselves in regard to their own identities. Some LGBTQ parents voiced their fears about potential heterosexist discrimination their children might face or worried that others would "blame" them for their children's LGBTQ identity. Some of the gender variant (i.e., genderqueer, gender ambiguous) participants in Kuvalanka and Goldberg's study especially seemed unhappy with their mothers' reactions to their disclosures, as it seemed the mothers had difficulty comprehending gender variant identities. Thus, gender nonconforming second generation youth may face certain challenges and obstacles in that their gender identities may be stigmatized or misunderstood in the larger societal context (Wyss, 2004) and also, perhaps, within their own families.

Broadening and Deepening Our Understanding of Second Generation Youth

To further examine the experiences and perspectives of second generation individuals through the first empirical study focused solely on this population, I aimed to recruit a larger and more diverse sample than in Kuvalanka and Goldberg's (2009) secondary data analysis. Thirty second generation participants (ages 18–35 years; $M = 25.5$) were recruited via the COLAGE Second Generation listserv, as well as through LGBTQ offices on college/university campuses across the country. Although I sought to answer many questions in this study, in this chapter, I only focus on two: "Who are second generation youth?" and "What do they want us to know about them?"

A description of the study sample deepens what has been previously documented in regard to who second generation individuals are. Similar to the sample in Kuvalanka and Goldberg's (2009) secondary data analysis, the majority of participants ($n = 21$) identified as White, although 4 identified as bi- or multiracial (Native, Chicano, and White; Black/Native American and White; Black and White; African-American and White), 3 as White-Jewish, and 2 as Black/African-American. The majority of participants ($n = 17$) identified as female and 5 identified as male; however, the larger sample size allowed for a greater range of gender identifications, in that 8 participants utilized self-gender labels that fell outside the female/male binary (e.g., "transgenderqueer-fluid;" "male-bodied/genderqueer"). In terms of sexual orientation, the most common self-identification label was queer ($n = 16$), while 5 participants identified as gay, 3 as bisexual, 2 as lesbian, and 4 used "unique" labels, such as "gay-queer-homo" and "queer questioning." The majority of participants ($n = 21$) had one or more lesbian mothers, while 2 reported having a mother who was a "butch-dyke," and 1 participant had a mother described as "queer/gay." In addition, 3 participants had bisexual fathers, 1 had a gay father, 1 had a "female-to-male (FTM) transsexual" parent, and 1 had a "male-to-female transgender" parent. Finally, 11 participants grew up in the Northeast, 7 in the West, 7 in the South, and 5 in the Midwest. This sample begins to illustrate the diversity that exists among second generation individuals in regard to race and ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, parent–child gender and sexual orientation identity combinations, and geographic locale.

This variation that exists in regard to social location undoubtedly contributes to a diverse range of experiences among the second generation—a point made by several participants when answering the question, "What do you want others to know about second generation youth?" One theme that emerged from the interview data was the notion that the second generation is a diverse group, such that no single participant could represent all second generation individuals. Many participants gave voice to this; it is not difficult to

imagine that Maya, a White, queer woman who grew up on the West Coast with her bisexual and lesbian mothers, had a somewhat different second generation experience than Chris, a White, queer FTM transgender man who grew up with a straight FTM transsexual parent in the Midwest. For example, both Maya and Chris discussed how their parents played a role in their gender and sexual identity development and had very different perspectives in this regard. Maya felt that as a result of growing up with nonheterosexual mothers, it was more "natural" for her to also be with women. Maya explained:

> In developing my own identity and reflecting on where I came from, it [having lesbian/bisexual mothers] definitely plays a part in it … . Growing up with so many women around me felt safe … . So, it seems only natural that being with a woman, and being in a women's community, feels safer. It feels, um, familiar. And … it certainly plays a part in my identity.

Chris, on the other hand, said he did not learn about being transgender or being non-heterosexual from his FTM transsexual father (i.e., his "egg" father), who identifies as heterosexual and is married to a woman. According to Chris,

> I learned that gender was you were either a man or a woman, because it seemed like my egg father's transition was so fast that it was you're either male or female, and that's what was acceptable … .When it comes to sexual orientation, (it was) not ever talked about … .For the longest time I hated myself. I thought, why would god make a person that looks one way but feels another way, and whose sexual orientation is apparently an abomination? Why would he do that?

Maya and Chris provide just one of a myriad of examples of how experiences related to gender and sexual identity development can differ between members of the second generation—and many participants were aware of these variations. Jay, a White gay man, who grew up in the Northeast with a lesbian mother and her partner, explained,

> A big thing that I would want people to know is that everyone's story is unique to those people, and what I'm saying to you now will likely be different from the other participants in your study. And I wouldn't ever want people to generalize based on my life story.

A second theme that emerged was the desire to have others realize and acknowledge that second generation individuals exist and deserve respect. For example, Jessica, a White lesbian woman who grew up with lesbian mothers in the Northeast, asserted: "We are here, and we're not going anywhere. We're part of the fabric of queer culture, we're a part of the fabric of American culture, and we're part of this world just as much as anyone else." Some of these participants felt that studies such as the one they were participating in could benefit other second generation youth who do not know other LGBTQ youth with LGBTQ parents, as well as all people who may grow to be more aware and accepting of LGBTQ-parent families. Tina, a White bisexual woman who grew up in the Midwest with a gay mother, explained how she, even now as an adult, knows few other second generation individuals and LGBTQ-parent families:

> I've met a couple of different people, but like here in (my Midwestern state), I don't really know a whole lot of people my age. You know I know people who have younger children, but I don't know anybody my age, and you know people don't walk around and say, "Oh, hey guess what? My dad's gay." Or "My mom's a lesbian" … .You know, it's not usually advertised … .So, I think just the fact that someone's doing a study like this, you know, just to put it out there, whether it ends up in some book somewhere and some high school kid reads it or whatever, I think that's awesome—and, really, any information that's put out there publicly for people.

A final theme, voiced by several participants, was the desire for others to know that "Our queer parents did not cause us to be queer." These participants were concerned about and resisted this assumption. Interestingly, the vast majority of participants discussed the influence that having LGBTQ parents had on them; however, for most, this influence fell short of actually *causing* their "queerness." For example, Kelly, a White, queer woman who grew up with a queer dad in the Northeast, stated:

> People are only influenced by their families up to a certain point. Our sexual orientation, sexuality, and gender identity and expression—while we may learn many things from our parents … we have our

own experiences, and we are growing up in another time than when our parents did. It [our sexual orientation or gender identity] is not a prescribed path, and it's probably more complicated than many people think.

These complexities that influence gender and sexual orientation identity development are yet to be fully explored and understood. Examining the experiences of second generation individuals may provide greater insight into familial factors that influence all youth's gender and sexual socialization. Listening to what members of the second generation want others to know about them provides a solid base from which to begin future systematic study of this population.

Next Steps: What Might We Learn from Further Study of the Second Generation?

Researchers have just begun to explore the experiences of second generation individuals; thus, we still have much to learn from further study of this population. Social constructionism, as previously discussed, has been used to frame these initial investigations and could be useful for further inquiry. For example, a social constructionist perspective might lead one to ask: What factors and processes facilitate and/or impede the second generation's formation of their LGBTQ identities? More specifically, researchers could aim to better understand, describe, and explain how the sexual and gender identity development of LGBTQ youth is influenced by having LGBTQ parents in a heteronormative society. How does, for example, the presence of LGBTQ siblings and other extended family members, as well as affirming or rejecting attitudes from heterosexual and gender-conforming family and community members, play a role in the lives of these youth? Perhaps if heterosexuality is the "minority" identity in one's family or community, LGBTQ individuals would be able to negate the impact of societal homo- and trans-negativity.

Other theoretical perspectives, such as intersectionality (Anderson & McCormack, 2010), would be useful for examining the experiences

of LGBTQ individuals with LGBTQ parents. An intersectionality perspective acknowledges the material ways in which people experience their multiple, socially constructed identities (Crawley, Foley, & Shehan, 2008). Thus, individuals' social locations pertaining to race, ethnicity, and social class—in addition to their nonheterosexual or gender nonconforming identities—are thought to be critical to understanding the full range of experiences of the second generation. This perspective would lead one to ask: How do race, ethnicity, and social class shape queer identity formation (Boykin, 2005) among second generation youth? How do second generation individuals navigate cultural differences in this regard? For example, one African-American female participant in my research reported using the sexual orientation self-identity label of "bisexual" when in the presence of other African-Americans and "queer" when talking with Caucasians. Further, consideration of the ramifications of multiple oppressions is a central tenet of intersectionality (Crawley et al., 2008). Thus, how do ethnic and racial minority families with second generation youth view and cope with racism in addition to, or in conjunction with, heteronormativity? What role does poverty play in the lives of second generation youth? Do economically poor second generation youth and their families have access to queer-supportive resources, such as Gay-Straight Alliances in schools, as well as all that the Internet has to offer, such as basic LGBTQ information and online support groups? Very little is known about LGBTQ people and families of lower socioeconomic status in general—and second generation youth and their families are no exception.

A life course perspective (Bengtson & Allen, 1993) might also be useful for future study of the second generation. This perspective highlights the importance of interpreting second generation individuals' experiences as linked to the lives of others who are close to them and in the context of historical time (Elder & Shanahan, 2006). A factor to be explored is the influence of the timing of parental coming out on children's sexual and gender identity formation and their experience of being a part of the LGBTQ community. Although

it might be assumed that most LGBTQ parents serve as life-long LGBTQ role models for their children, a parent's disclosure of a nonheterosexual and/or gender nonconforming identity might happen later in life—perhaps during a child's questioning of her/his own identity, or even after a child has already come out as LGBTQ. Thus, when a parent comes out is likely to have an influence on second generation youth's exposure to queer identities and communities and, subsequently, on their LGBTQ identity formation (Goldberg, Kinkler, Richardson, & Downing, 2012). For example, having "out and proud" parents from a young age might encourage second generation youth to more readily accept their own queer identities. Having parents come out during their children's adolescence, when these youth may be questioning their own identities and also trying to establish independence from their parents, could perhaps cause some youth to postpone their own LGBTQ identity formation. Further, exploration into the "queer generation gap" as discussed by Garner (2004) could also be pursued. For example, second generation participants have stated that coming out—and being out—is very different now as compared to when their parents were young (Kuvalanka & Goldberg, 2009). How does this generation gap play a role in the first generation's role modeling and provision of support to the second generation? And does the gap remain, widen, or close throughout the life course? Thus, examination of relationships between the first and second (and third, fourth, etc.) generations may reveal intriguing changes over time.

Conclusion

Answers to the questions raised above would provide greater knowledge regarding the variation in experiences among the second generation. Subsequently, family practitioners might gain the necessary tools to better support *all* LGBTQ youth and their families—including heterosexual-parent families. Perhaps, then, a better understanding of *how* these parents provided acceptance, understanding, and broad conceptualizations of gender and sexual orientation would help all parents better support their children. Based upon our findings that not all participants viewed their LGBTQ parents as sources of support (and, thus, being LGBTQ was not a "prerequisite" for parental support), it seems that there are supportive behaviors that all parents can embody (Kuvalanka & Goldberg, 2009).

In conclusion, despite the various factors that likely contribute to the diversity of experiences and perspectives among the second generation, several participants in my most recent study acknowledged that living in a heteronormative society with one or more LGBTQ parents is a commonality that they all shared. And, as one participant posited, this commonality has the potential to provide both unique benefits and challenges to all second generation youth:

> I think that our experience growing up and existing in the world is that much richer … and more difficult as well … . It's outside of the norm and outside of people's expectations and, in some cases, outside of what people find acceptable.

As scholars, we have a role to play in moving the conversation about second generation youth beyond the simplistic—and, often, homophobic—debate about whether or not "gay parents raise gay kids." Indeed, we have a responsibility to articulate the richness and diversity in experiences among this population with the aim of learning more about the second generation and their families, to improve understanding and, ideally, acceptance of all families.

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