



LGBTQ-Parent Immigrant Families: We're Here, We're Queer, We're Invisible

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In 2018, I was invited to be part of a conference panel on LGBTQ families. The facilitator asked us to speak about an experience of discrimination we had encountered related to being part of an LGBTQ family. I was asked to speak first, and I talked about the role that discriminatory immigration policies played in my family formation. My wife and I are a same-sex binational couple, and she had been in the USA on a variety of visas for many years. We did not see a way to a green card for her since, at the time, we could not obtain it through marriage. Thus, she interviewed for a job in Canada and, when she got the job, was able to sponsor me (a US citizen) as her common law spouse. I had just received my PhD, and this move to another country meant putting my career on hold or at least off track for the foreseeable future. We decided that we could not have any serious conversations about having children until we could sort out our immigration challenges. Mentally and emotionally, it felt like there were too many balls in the air and too much uncertainty. We lived in Canada for 4 years before she was able to serendipitously return to the USA through an intercompany transfer, which eventually led to her green card. Once she got her green card, we started talking in earnest about building our future family and took the necessary steps

less than a year later. After conveying that experience, the facilitator turned to me and said, “Okay, so can you tell us about an experience of discrimination? What about in school? Do your kids ever get asked questions about having two moms?” I was taken aback because I had just shared what, to me, was the most impactful form of discrimination that affected whether, when, how, and if my wife and I were even going to become parents. My experience did not fit the assumed narrative of what LGBTQ-parent families experience, and therefore it was dismissed as a valid experience of discrimination.

In considering LGBTQ-parent families, it is necessary to approach the topic with an intersectional lens. Intersectionality theory was originally conceptualized to consider the experiences of Black women who faced oppression based on both race and gender (Crenshaw, 1989). Intersectionality recognizes “how multiple social identities such as race, gender, sexual orientation, SES, and disability intersect at the micro level of individual experience to reflect interlocking systems of privilege and oppression (i.e., racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism) at the macro social-structural level” (Bowleg, 2012, p. 1267). Intersectionality asserts that lives cannot be explained by taking into account single categories (e.g., gender, race, and socioeconomic status), that lived realities are shaped by different factors and social dynamics operating together, that people can experience privilege and

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oppression simultaneously, and that it depends on what situation or specific context they are in (Hankivsky, 2014).

Unfortunately, the vast majority of the psychological literature on immigration assumes that immigrants are cisgender and heterosexual (Nakamura, Kassan, & Suehn, 2017; Nakamura & Pope, 2013) and LGBTQ immigrant families are nowhere to be found in the literature. By not considering LGBTQ immigrant families, scholars overlook the systems of oppression, such as racism, xenophobia, heterosexism, and transphobia that may be impacting these families. Since there is no research base to draw from, this chapter relies on an inadequate additive model to describe this understudied group's experiences and highlights the need for intersectional research. This chapter first provides a brief overview of how immigrant populations to the USA have changed over time as a result of immigration policy. Next, the literature on LGBTQ immigrants is reviewed. Since there is little mention of LGBTQ-parent immigrant families in the psychological literature, relevant themes from the broader immigrant family literature are presented. Finally, research on LGBTQ immigrant families without children is reviewed with mention of LGBTQ-parent immigrant families where appropriate. Recommendations for future research and implications for practice are provided.

Immigrants

Immigration has been part of the fabric of the USA from its inception. Today, immigrants account for 13.9% of the US population (Radford & Budiman, 2018). Of those, the majority (76%) are in the country legally, with 44% as naturalized US citizens, 27% as permanent residents, and 5% as temporary residents, while 24% of all immigrants are undocumented. Laws and policies shape who has had access to immigration and citizenship and have historically excluded non-European and LGBTQ immigrants.

Before 1965, US immigration policy explicitly favored immigrants from Europe (American Psychological Association, 2012). Many previous laws and policies, such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, banned immigrants from non-European countries from immigrating to the USA. For example, in 1960, 84% of immigrants came from Canada and Europe, with the remainder coming from Mexico (6%), South and East Asia (3.8%), the rest of Latin America (3.5%), and other areas (2.7%) (Radford & Budiman, 2018). This meant that the majority of these immigrants could assimilate to US culture and their offspring could claim the identity of "American" without any prefix or adjective to explain their ethnic origin.

Since the 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act, there has been a shift in where most immigrants to the USA have come from (Radford & Budiman, 2018). In 2016, Europeans and Canadians made up only 13.2% of immigrants, while as of 2018, South and East Asians account for 26.9%, Mexicans account for 26.5%, and other Latin Americans account for 24.5% of the US immigrant population, with 8.9% from other regions (Radford & Budiman, 2018). About 68% of all green cards in 2016 were family based, meaning that a family member sponsored the immigrant (Krogstad & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2018). Unlike immigrants from Europe who became American after a generation by assimilating, the majority of today's immigrants and their offspring are perpetually marked as "foreign" by their racial features. Many immigrants experience discrimination rooted in racism and xenophobia. For example, in a study of 1387 immigrants from Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia to the Midwest, 30% reported experiencing discrimination in the past year and race/ethnicity or country of origin were the most frequently cited reasons for discrimination (Tran, Lee, & Burgess, 2010). Perceived discrimination, in turn, has been linked to negative mental health outcomes and substance use among immigrants (Tran et al., 2010; Yip, Gee, & Takeuchi, 2008).

LGBTQ Immigrants

The USA has a long history of excluding groups from immigration based not only on race and ethnicity but also gender and sexual orientation (Heller, 2009; Howe, 2007; Reynolds, 1980). In 1990, US immigration law changed to no longer deny entry to individuals based solely on their sexual orientation (Rank, 2002). However, other obstacles have made immigration especially difficult for sexual minority individuals. “Family reunification” has been a cornerstone of US immigration since the 1950s when the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 began to allow US citizens and permanent residents to sponsor spouses, children, siblings, and parents for immigration (Human Rights Watch/Immigration Equality, 2006). However, same-sex spouses were not considered family under the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) (US General Accounting Office, 2004). In June 2013, the US Supreme Court overturned Section 3 of DOMA. Section 3 barred the US federal government from recognizing same-sex couples as married, which denied them over 1000 federal rights of marriage, including immigration rights (US General Accounting Office, 2004). Since DOMA was struck down by the Supreme Court in 2013, same-sex binational couples have the same access to spousal-based immigration that different-sex couples do. However, barriers still exist that are unique to LGBTQ immigrants. For example, in many countries, it is not safe to be openly LGBTQ and same-sex couples may be very private and secretive about their relationship in order to not draw attention to themselves. This can complicate proving the validity of a same-sex couple’s relationship to immigration officials, who will expect couples to have evidence to substantiate their relationship (Carron, 2014). Such evidence is essentially a paper trail of the relationship such as photos, letters, joint ownership of property or other joint financial liability, and affidavits from family and friends attesting to knowledge of the relationship. These types of requirements can be a significant barrier for those who are coming from countries that are hostile to LGBTQ people.

There were an estimated 904,000 LGBTQ foreign-born adults in the USA in 2013 (Gates, 2013). Of those, an estimated 70% were documented, while 30% were undocumented (Gates, 2013). Among undocumented LGBTQ immigrants, 71% were Latinx, 15% were Asian Pacific Islander, 8% were White, and 6% were Black. Among documented LGBTQ immigrants, 30% were Latinx and 35% were Asian Pacific Islander. While the estimates on LGBTQ immigrants are likely underreported, it appears that they represent more ethnic diversity and are more likely to be undocumented, younger, and male compared to non-LGBTQ immigrants (Gates, 2013).

LGBTQ immigrants have a variety of reasons for migrating from their countries of origin. One reason that LGBTQ immigrants come to the USA is the desire to live as an “out” LGBTQ person (Bianchi et al., 2007). Carrillo (2004) introduced the concept of sexual migration, which refers to “international relocation that is motivated, directly or indirectly, by the sexuality of those who migrate” (p. 59). Bianchi et al. (2007) conducted qualitative interviews with Brazilian, Colombian, and Dominican immigrant men who have sex with men to understand their motivations for migration and their sexual behavior post-migration. Common reasons given were to improve their economic situation, further their education, join family members, escape political instability, escape homonegativity in their home country, and have more sexual freedom. In a quantitative study, Nieves-Lugo et al. (2019) examined a sample of Brazilian, Colombian, and Dominican immigrant men who have sex with men to understand the relationship between sexual migration and HIV risk. The top five reasons that they endorsed as reasons to migrate to the USA were to improve their financial situation (49%), to affirm their sexual orientation (40%), to study (37%), came with family (not participant’s decision) (33%), and came as a tourist but decided to stay (20%).

LGBTQ immigrants may feel that moving to another country will protect their family of origin from stigma (Adames, Chavez-Dueñas, Sharma, & La Roche, 2018). However, this can come at a cost to the LGBTQ immigrant, including

separation from social support and family back in their home country. Adames et al. (2018) present a case study of a young, dark-skinned, cisgender, queer man of Afro-Colombian descent who left Colombia because of heterosexism and was greeted in the USA by racism, as well as other forms of discrimination, including heterosexism. LGBTQ immigrants may experience psychological distress from not being able to escape systematic oppression no matter where they go. It can be especially isolating when homophobia occurs within immigrant communities as it can cut LGBTQ immigrants off from a source of support that non-LGBTQ immigrants are able to access.

LGBTQ Asylum Seekers

While immigrants leave their home countries for a host of reasons such as family reunification or better educational or occupational opportunities in another country, asylum seekers are a type of immigrant who flee their home country for protection in another country. Some LGBTQ people flee their home countries as a result of persecution. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (2016) defines a refugee or asylee as a person:

owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself the protection of that country. (p. 2)

In 1994, US asylum policy changed to include persecution based on sexual orientation (Rank, 2002). The Department of Homeland Security does not record applicants' sexual orientation or gender identity (McGuirk, Niedzwiecki, Oke, & Volova, 2015). However, the Organization for Refuge, Asylum, and Migration estimates it is about 5% of US asylum claims (UNHCR, 2013). The numbers are likely higher today. For example, Immigration Equality (2019), an LGBTQ immigrant rights organization that handles asylum cases, reports a record caseload due to the worldwide persecution of LGBTQ people. In many countries, including Jamaica, Iran, and

Sudan, LGBTQ people experience persecution, imprisonment, and, in some cases, death sentences based on their sexual orientation or gender identity (International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association [ILGA], 2019). Transgender people may be subjected to forced sterilization or castration, so-called corrective rape, forced sex work, and persecution at the hands of the police throughout the world including Central America and Africa (American Psychological Association, 2019; Bach, 2013; Jagmohan, 2018; Morales, Corbin-Gutierrez, & Wang, 2013; Nakamura & Morales, 2016; Reading & Rubin, 2011). In response to this persecution and violence, LGBTQ people may leave their country of origin to seek asylum.

Compared to their heterosexual, cisgender asylum-seeking counterparts, LGBTQ asylum seekers have experienced higher rates of sexual violence, persecution in childhood, persecution by family members, and suicidal ideation (Hopkinson et al., 2017). Alessi, Kahn, and Chatterji (2015) conducted a study on 26 LGBTQ refugees and asylum seekers in the USA and Canada from countries in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, Eastern Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East in order to understand their experiences of violence. Participants reported that they had experienced severe verbal, physical, and sexual abuse throughout their youth at home, in school, and in the community with no protections available to them. Notably, participants made a connection between their experiences of abuse and their later depression, anxiety, traumatic stress, and suicidality.

Piwowarczyk, Fernandez, and Sharma (2017) conducted a retrospective chart review of 50 patients self-identified as lesbian, gay, or bisexual who were asylum seekers or refugees seen through a program for survivors of torture between 2009 and 2014. Three-fourths of the participants were from Uganda where homosexuality is criminalized, 74% had been in the USA for less than a year at the time of intake, and the average age of the participants was 30. Almost all (98%) experienced persecution due to their sexual orientation and 84% were survivors of torture (see chapter "LGBTQ-Parent Families in Non-

Western Contexts”). All presented with symptoms of depression and anxiety, and 70% had a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Persecution by the police, arrest or detention, and history of torture were all significantly associated with a PTSD diagnosis. Three quarters were with a partner in the year prior to fleeing their home country. These relationships often had tragic endings. In six cases, partners disappeared; in three cases, partners were killed; in two cases, partners were detained; and in one case, the partner committed suicide. After fleeing the country, only four of the participants were in contact with their partner, while the remaining were unsuccessful in being able to reach their partners. Some participants had children, but no additional information about this aspect of the participants’ life was provided.

Unfortunately, many LGBTQ asylum seekers also experience violence when they arrive in the USA. Gorwin, Taylor, Dunnington, Alshuwaiyer, and Cheney (2017) conducted a study with 45 transgender women asylum seekers from Mexico. All had experienced some type of threat of harm, physical assault, and/or sexual assault while still living in Mexico, most by multiple perpetrators as well as unstable environments and fear for their safety. Participants also experienced verbal and physical assaults in the USA from community members and strangers, employers, significant others, and family members. In addition, they faced unstable living environments, extreme stress related to their undocumented status, and economic insecurity. All of the participants had a PTSD diagnosis and 93% had a diagnosis of depression, highlighting the unique and serious mental health needs of transgender asylum seekers.

Despite their high need for services, LGBTQ immigrants often do not utilize them due to various barriers. In Gorwin et al.’s study (2017), participants reported little or no use of health or social services due to shame, fear of government entities, or language or transportation barriers. Some reported having experienced abuse, includ-

ing harassment and physical or sexual assault within programs by staff or other members. Those who accessed services often withheld information from providers or did not follow through with treatments. Chavez (2011) conducted a needs assessment of LGBTQ immigrants and refugees in Southern Arizona through interviews with 32 service providers, LGBTQ migrants, and their supporters. Results indicated a lack of formal support services for LGBTQ immigrants and refugees. Barriers to health care included cultural insensitivity, lack of discreet services, and fear of having their legal status revealed. Participants also had a number of concerns related to housing, including challenges with finding and keeping housing, particularly for those who are undocumented and lack of adequate housing resources. Participants also identified legal concerns related to fear of deportation. The need for culturally sensitive services across the board was highlighted as a major need for this population.

Three things are clear from reviewing the literature on LGBTQ immigrants. First, the literature on LGBTQ immigrants is scarce, which makes it difficult to paint an adequate picture of this population. Second, this population is very diverse. Documentation status and reason for coming to the USA vary and have a major impact on the experiences of LGBTQ immigrants. Their language skills, race and ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, and family structure are also varied. Third, many LGBTQ immigrants, particularly those who are undocumented or have sought asylum, have experienced a great deal of stress and trauma. More research is necessary in order to have an adequate understanding of the experiences of LGBTQ immigrants. In particular, there is virtually no literature on LGBTQ immigrant families. Therefore, I provide a brief overview of presumably heterosexual, cisgender immigrant families before reviewing the very limited literature on LGBTQ immigrant couples and the literature where there are brief mentions of LGBTQ-parent immigrant families.

Immigrant Families

Just as LGBTQ families are incredibly diverse, so are immigrant families. Age of immigration, as well as length of time since immigration, makes a huge difference when considering how immigration is experienced (APA, 2012). Recent immigrants will have different challenges than those who have been living in the USA for most of their lives. Some immigrants will have come to the USA for educational or financial opportunities, while others will have come to escape violence in their country of origin. When it comes to families, some may have children who are US citizens, while others have children who immigrated with their parents (Menjívar, 2012). Children of immigrants make up 11.9% of the US population (Radford & Budiman, 2018). By 2020, one in three children under the age of 18 is projected to be the child of an immigrant (Mather, 2009).

Acculturation, which is defined as one of “cultural change and adaptation that occurs when individuals with different cultures come into contact” (Gibson, 2001, p. 19), can be stressful as it involves losses of community ties, jobs, customs, and social ties (Falicov, 1998, 2009; García Coll & Magnuson, 1997; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). It is a multidimensional process of adjustment to a new culture that involves language acculturation, behavioral acculturation, and understanding and possibly adjusting one’s cultural and ethnic identity (APA, 2012). The acculturation experience of an immigrant is often influenced by experiences in their country of origin and reasons for immigration, as well as the environment of their receiving country (Gibson, 2001). Those who are fleeing persecution and seeking asylum are likely to have a very different experience with acculturation than those who immigrate for economic reasons, for example. Those who leave their countries as refugees often intend for their stay to be temporary and may be less inclined to put down roots. Whether the immigrant lives in a community with many people from their country of origin can also impact their acculturation process. Acculturative stress

can be a byproduct of the acculturation process and can be exacerbated by experiences of discrimination (APA, 2012).

Children tend to have an easier time acculturating, as they are immersed in the new culture through school and have an easier time acquiring a new language. While there are many benefits to acculturation for children, such as being able to speak more than one language and being able to help the family, there can also be challenges. There are often acculturation gaps between parents and their children, where children become translators and cultural brokers for their parents, and this can negatively impact parent-child relationships (APA, 2012). For example, in a qualitative study of 25 Latino parents and adolescents on language brokering by Corona et al. (2012), one participant spoke of her experience as a language broker for her parents saying:

It is hard. I think what takes a hit is the pecking order in the family. Because you know that link into the world through language and through knowledge and through understand what’s going on around you suddenly becomes this child’s. That’s how it was for me anyway. And um it’s a little hard when you’re little you want your parents to guide you but that’s sort of flips around and you find yourself guiding your parents.

Language brokering can be especially difficult for children when this takes place in medical settings where children may not understand medical terms that they are translating and may worry about not conveying important information correctly.

Whether immigrants are documented or undocumented will have an enormous impact on their experience. Brabeck, Sibley, and Lykes (2016) conducted structured interviews with 178 families with an immigrant parent from Mexico, Central America, and the Dominican Republic and a child (aged 7–10 years) born in the USA; they found that 49% of the participants were undocumented. Undocumented participants had less education, greater poverty, and greater stress during migration, compared to documented participants. Once in the USA, undocumented participants experienced higher job-related stress, lower access to/use of social services, lower

social support, greater obstacles to learning English, higher experiences of discrimination, and the fear of discovery and deportation. One of the biggest stressors for undocumented immigrants is the possibility of deportation, which can lead to familial separation.

In 2012 there were an estimated 4.5 million US citizen children in families where one or more of their parents were undocumented (Satinsky et al., 2013). The threat of deportation alone puts children at risk for distress, with parents reporting anxiety in almost half of children and PTSD symptoms in nearly 75% (Satinsky et al., 2013). Fear of deportation contributes to a decrease in accessing public places including school and health and social services (Rodriguez & Hagan, 2004), as well as community events, churches, restaurants, stores, libraries, and parks (Hagan, Rodriguez, & Castro, 2011). Children whose families live under threat of detention or deportation will finish fewer years of school and have challenges focusing on their studies (Satinsky et al., 2013). One example of this comes from an undocumented mother with three sons who, as part of a focus group, said:

Now, when he is doing his homework I notice that he loses concentration a lot. I've noticed that he is thinking all the time. He is distracted. With his homework, he used to have very good grades. He went down a bit. It is more difficult for him now to concentrate. (Satinsky et al., 2013, p. 16)

This quote demonstrates that children with undocumented parents are impacted by the stress created by the threat of deportation. Poor education can have lifelong impacts on health and occupational outcomes (Satinsky et al., 2013).

In a report on detention and deportation in California, Human Rights Watch (2017) found that 42% of those detained and 47% of those deported were parents to at least one US citizen child. According to Satinsky et al., in 2012 there were an estimated 152,426 US citizen children whose parents had been deported. US immigration law bars the reentry of people who have been deported for up to 10 years (Thronson, 2008). Separation from parents has major impacts on the psychological and physical health of children (Chaudry et al., 2010). Children of detained and

deported parents suffer in a myriad of ways. Chaudry et al. (2010) interviewed 87 parents from families that had been impacted by parents being arrested; this led to deportation of a parent in 20 of the 87 families. Data indicated that 6 months or less after arrest, about two-thirds of children had eating and sleeping changes and more than half of children cried more often and were more fearful, and more than a third experienced increases in anxiety, anger, or aggression or were more withdrawn or clingy after a parent's arrest. Many families also experienced loss of income, housing instability, and food insecurity. Partners of deported parents will have a shorter lifespan related to the stress they experience (Satinsky et al., 2013). In this way, we can see how family separation leads to both psychological trauma and economic devastation.

LGBTQ Immigrant Couples

Given that much of the research on immigrants focuses on families and children, there seems to be an understanding that immigration is intricately connected to the context of families. Therefore, the dearth of accounts of LGBTQ immigrant families' experiences in the psychological literature is striking. While there is a small body of literature on LGBTQ immigrant couples, the focus of this research is on couples, most of whom do not have children.

The little research that has focused on LGBTQ immigrant families has examined the experiences of same-sex binational couples who immigrated to Canada in order to remain with their partners before DOMA was overturned in the USA. Kassan and Nakamura (2013) conducted a qualitative study with 17 such individuals in same-sex binational relationships. These couples were comprised of one partner who was an American citizen and one partner who was a citizen of a different country. While most participants were not parents, those who were had adult children and thus children were not a focus of the research. Results indicated that participants felt forced to immigrate to Canada because the US partner was unable to sponsor their partner for US immigration.

As a result, participants faced challenges related to their careers both during their time in the USA on temporary visas and in Canada due to lack of networks, problems with transferability of credentials, and experiences of discrimination. Nakamura, Kassan, and Suehn (2015) examined the impact that immigrating to Canada had on these 17 participants' relationships. Friendships were often strained as friends did not often fully grasp why immigration to Canada was necessary and did not understand the injustice that same-sex binational couples were experiencing. Familial relationships were also similarly strained with the added element of guilt, worry, and sadness about leaving ill or aging parents behind. Despite the struggles they faced, some participants indicated that the immigration experience brought them closer emotionally to their partners and solidified their commitment. Finally, Nakamura et al. (2017) examined the role of resilience with the same sample. One theme that emerged was the process of building a life in Canada. Some participants approached Canada as a temporary place to live but eventually began to view it as a place that they wanted to settle in for the long term. They also noted a shift as they developed a stronger sense of stability in terms of their careers, sense of home, and social support networks, which impacted their identity.

Nakamura and Tsong (2019) conducted a study on the experiences of same-sex binational couples living in the USA. This quantitative study examined a sample of 183 individuals in same-sex binational relationships who were living in the USA in June 2013 before the Supreme Court overturned DOMA. More than half of the participants (61.2%) were US citizens and 33% had a partner living outside the USA. Participants reported higher levels of perceived stress in comparison to the general population normative data found in previous studies, as well as a severe level of anxiety and the presence of significant depressive symptoms. Perceived stress significantly contributed to both depression and anxiety, while resilience had a moderating and buffering effect on the negative impact perceived stress had on depression. This study suggests that in addition to the minority stress (Meyer, 2003)

that all LGBTQ people experience, discriminatory immigration laws added stress on many same-sex binational couples.

LGBTQ-Parent Immigrant Families

Unfortunately, a review of the psychological literature gives the impression that LGBTQ immigrants do not have children, which is not the case. In 2013, it was estimated that there were 33,500 LGBTQ couples with at least one foreign-born partner who were raising 41,000 children under the age of 18 in the USA (Gates, 2013). This represents 25% of same-sex couples with a foreign spouse or partner who are raising children, which is lower than the 58% of different-sex couples with a foreign spouse or partner who are raising children. These data represent the landscape in the USA before DOMA was overturned, so it is possible that discriminatory immigration laws contributed to the depression in family formation among same-sex binational couples. Post-DOMA data do not exist to be able to draw any definitive conclusions. Same-sex binational couples are also facing institutional discrimination regarding the recognition of birthright citizenship for children born abroad when they are not biologically related to the US citizen parent (Sacchetti, 2018).

While the immigration literature has explored the issue of familial separation, it has not examined this issue with LGBTQ immigrant families. Nakamura and Morales (2016) conducted a case study with "Scarlett," a Central American transgender woman who sought asylum in the USA after receiving death threats from gang members when she would not agree to sell drugs for them. While her family was not the focus of the interview, she shared that she had been caring for her nieces and nephews—the children of her sister—who had left for the USA before her. When she fled her home country, she left those children, whom she considered her own children at that point, behind. This case raises many questions about what happens to children when their caretakers flee for their lives due to LGBTQ-related persecution. In another example of how

LGBTQ families might be impacted by familial separation, Morales (2013) wrote about Latino LGBTQ immigrants in the USA and mentioned gay men having children in Latin America. However, this was in the context of concealing their gay identity by stating that they have children in order to present as heterosexual. It is not known what becomes of the parent-child relationship when these men immigrate to the USA.

Future Research Directions

More research on LGBTQ-parent immigrant families is clearly needed in order to examine the unique stressors that these families face in addition to the many other stressors that immigrant families experience. Another unexplored topic related to LGBTQ immigrant families relates to rejection they might experience from their families of origin. The research on LGBTQ family acceptance suggests that many ethnic minority families are accepting of their LGBTQ youth. For example, Kane, Nicoll, Kahn, and Groves (2012) surveyed almost 2000 Latino youth and found that more than half said their families accepted LGBTQ people. However, this report did not address the issue of immigration, so it is unknown how many of the youth surveyed were immigrants themselves or whether acculturation or generation status factored into family acceptance. The lack of information on immigration status is yet another example of LGBTQ immigrants being overlooked.

Another angle that is understudied is immigrant families who have LGBTQ children. Cruz and Perez-Chavez (2017) provide a case example of a Central American gay man who came to the USA when he was 3 years old with his family. He was “outed” by a cousin to his family. While his family did not reject him, they were not completely accepting either. His mother, for example, was very religious and prayed for him to become heterosexual. Despite this, he still spoke to her several times per week. He was married to a man, but his mother did not know this and had not met his husband. This example demonstrates how LGBTQ people negotiate their relationships with their families of origin and with their

spouses/partners and children. Research is needed to understand how LGBTQ-parent immigrant families negotiate acceptance with their families of origin.

Implications for Practice

The lack of literature on LGBTQ-parent immigrant families highlights how invisible this population is. Invisibility is a form of marginalization and demonstrates that LGBTQ immigrant families are not prioritized, understood, or even considered. There is a great need for research on this population, particularly because LGBTQ immigrants are more likely to be undocumented and are more likely to be people of color compared to their non-LGBTQ counterparts, suggesting that LGBTQ immigrants experience multiple forms of oppression. It is important for clinicians to expand their view of LGBTQ families in order to not inadvertently further marginalize this population, particularly in the therapeutic context. Likewise, it is important for practitioners to not assume that all members of immigrant families are heterosexual. In order to be truly culturally responsive and to not further alienate LGBTQ immigrant clients and their families, therapists must be able to recognize their clients’ multiple marginalized identities and how they are impacted by heterosexism, racism, xenophobia, and other systems of oppression (Adames et al., 2018).

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