



Effects of Family Demographics and the Passage of Time on Parents' Difficulty with Their Lesbian, Gay, or Bisexual Youth's Sexual Orientation

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Abstract

Parents' responses to a child's sexual orientation are critical to shaping lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) adolescents' health, but we know little about which families struggle most with having an LGB child. This study explored how parent responses to their LGB child varied by parent characteristics, child characteristics, and time passing. Parents of LGB youth aged 10–25 years ($n = 1195$) completed questions about themselves, their children, and their difficulty with having an LGB child. Parents with older children and African American and Latino parents reported the most difficulty. Parents who had known about a child's sexual orientation for more time reported less difficulty. However, these decreases in difficulty were only observed after 2 years, and parents reporting they had known for between 2 months and 2 years all reported similarly high levels of difficulty. Findings point to families most in need of intervention to improve parent responses and reduce adolescent risk.

Keywords Lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth · Parenting · Family reactions · Family support · Sexual orientation

Introduction

The degree to which parents are able to accept their child's sexual orientation can have profound effects on lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) youth, a group with elevated risks for poor health and psychosocial outcomes (Institute of Medicine, 2011). Greater parental acceptance of a child's sexual orientation promotes youth's positive health outcomes, whereas rejecting parental behaviors toward LGB children predict poor outcomes, including depression, suicidality, substance use, and sexual risk behaviors (Bouris et al., 2010; Ryan, Huebner, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2009; Ryan, Russell, Huebner, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2010). Despite the salience of parental responses to their LGB child's sexual orientation, little systematic research has identified factors that predict variability in these responses. In the present study, we seek to identify how parents' difficulty with their LGB child's

sexual orientation varies by (1) key child and parent demographic attributes—age, gender, and race/ethnicity, and (2) the amount of time parents have to adjust to their child's sexual orientation. By identifying factors predicting parental difficulties in accepting the news of having an LGB child, it is possible to better target interventions to the families most likely in need of support.

Possibly due to the challenge of recruiting parents of LGB youth in research studies, remarkably little systematic research has focused on these parents' experiences. Research on this topic primarily has been qualitative, exploring parents' reactions and processes around their LGB child's sexual orientation. Given the rapidly changing nature of societal acceptance toward LGB individuals, it is difficult to generalize heavily from past qualitative studies to the experience of a parent at this exact historical moment. Nevertheless, a common finding in the literature over the years has been that parents' initial reactions generally are characterized by significant negative affect, such as shock, sadness, and/or confusion—feelings that can last for months and possibly years (Beeler & DiProva, 1999; Bernstein, 1990; Goodrich, 2009; Phillips & Ancis, 2008; Saltzburg, 2004; Wakeley & Tuason, 2011). Although some parents report immediate acceptance of their LGB child, this was not the norm when much of this qualitative work was being conducted (Saltzburg, 2004). Some more recent qualitative research suggests that greater proportions of parents are

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now accepting (Newcomb, Feinstein, Matson, Macapagal, & Mustanski, 2018), whereas other continues to suggest that the most common initial parent reaction is negative (Campbell, Zaporozhets, & Yarhouse, 2017). Unfortunately, the limitations inherent in qualitative samples make it difficult to fully appreciate these evolving dynamics.

Despite the common emotional challenges to initially hearing about a child's LGB status, findings from the qualitative literature suggest that parents do gradually adjust to the news of their child being LGB. Time may enable parents to receive social support from other parents of LGB children, from formal or informal support groups, and/or from LGB friends (Goodrich, 2009; Phillips & Ancis, 2008; Wakeley & Tuason, 2011). Time also yields opportunities for parents to gain more information by reading books, searching online resources, and increasing contact with LGB individuals and communities (Beeler & DiProva, 1999; Phillips & Ancis, 2008; Wakeley & Tuason, 2011). Parents who ultimately come to support their children often re-conceptualize their political, moral, and spiritual beliefs regarding homosexuality and may become vocal proponents of LGB rights (Beeler & DiProva, 1999; Phillips & Ancis, 2008; Wakeley & Tuason, 2011). As time continues to pass, parents may have increasingly positive experiences, facilitating parents' commitment to new values, greater compassion and sensitivity, expanded social networks, and improved family relationships (Gonzalez, Rostosky, Odom, & Riggle, 2013; Phillips & Ancis, 2008; Wakeley & Tuason, 2011).

Beyond this qualitative literature, we identified only five quantitative studies that utilize samples of parents of LGB youth to examine any aspect of parents' experience. Of the five studies, we identified utilizing samples of parents of LGB youth, four of them had samples with only 50–90 participants, and included limited representation of fathers and ethnic minority participants, leaving them underpowered to examine the effects of many demographic characteristics on parent attitudes. However, integrating these limited findings with studies of LGB individual's reports of their parents' responses, as well as research on broader societal attitudes toward LGB individuals, we can begin to speculate that the degree to which parents struggle with having an LGB child might vary by child and parent gender, family ethnicity, and the ages of parents and youth. In addition, consistent with qualitative research, we have reason to expect that parents' reactions to youth's sexual orientation status will vary by the length of time that a parent has to adjust to their child's LGB status.

Parent and Child Gender

One study of 273 mothers and 54 fathers recruited from support groups run by the Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) provides some initial insight into how parent and child gender might relate to parent attitudes (Conley, 2011). In this study, researchers identified three primary

parental concerns: (1) concern about their child's physical and emotional well-being, (2) concern about society's reaction to them as parents, and (3) concern about rejection from loved ones. These concerns were more prevalent among mothers, than fathers, and among parents of sons, compared to daughters. It is unclear how parental "concerns" for their child align with parents' actual positive or negative response to having an LGB child, as the act of being concerned could reflect either care for a child and/or negative attitudes about sexual orientation. Research on youth reports of parents' behaviors might provide further insight. However, two studies of youth reports suggest conflicting patterns. In a study of Israeli LGB youth, participants reported that their mothers were more accepting of their sexual orientation than their fathers (Bebes, Samarova, Shilo, & Diamond, 2015), whereas a study of Italian youth found that mothers were perceived to be more rejecting than fathers (Baiocco et al., 2016). Research on the general population generally finds that men hold more negative attitudes about homosexuality than women (Herek, 2002; Holland, Matthews, & Schott, 2013; Woodford, Silverschanz, Swank, Scherrer, & Raiz, 2012), suggesting that father might be more likely to have a difficult time when a child comes out. With respect to gender of the LGB child, no studies of parents could be identified, but young LGB men themselves report more perceived parental rejection than young women (Ryan et al., 2009). Finally, some research suggests that parent and child gender might interact, such that men have more negative attitudes toward gay males, whereas women hold more negative attitudes toward lesbian women (Herek & Gonzalez, 2006).

Ethnicity

One study of 90 parents of LGB youth found that ethnic minority parents reported more negative attitudes toward homosexuality and engaging in more rejecting behaviors, relative to white parents (Richter, Lindahl, & Malik, 2017). However, because of sample size limitations, all minority families had to be combined for analysis, leaving open the question of whether specific differences exist among ethnic minority groups. One study of Latino and white young LGB adults found no ethnic differences in the amount of parent rejection participants perceived (Ryan et al., 2009).

Parent and Child Age

No studies of parents of LGB youth have indicated how the age of the parent or child might be related to parent responses to a child coming out. However, it stands to reason that younger parents would have less difficulty in accepting their LGB youth's sexual orientation than would older parents, given demographic research suggesting that successive generations of parents tend to be more progressive about social issues than previous generations

(Witeck, 2014). With respect to child age, younger youth might elicit different parent responses from older youth, given the changes observed in parent–child relationships over the course of adolescence, particularly the trend toward increased conflict that comes with the onset of puberty (Paikoff & Brooks-Gunn, 1991). Moreover, among younger children, sexual orientation is less clearly tied to sexual behavior, and thus, parents of younger children might be more comfortable with a minority sexual orientation because they do not have to grapple as explicitly with same-sex sexuality.

Time Since Coming Out

Finally, with respect to the passage of time, one study of 55 parents of LGB individuals observed that knowing about a child's sexual orientation for a longer period of time was associated with less homophobia (Holtzen & Agresti, 1990). This is highly consistent with themes from the qualitative research on the development of parents' responses over time. Interestingly, it is also possible that the influence of time varies somewhat by parent and adolescent gender. Among a sample of Israeli adolescents, youth reported that mothers were significantly more accepting of their own sexual orientation over time than were fathers. In that same study, improvements in youth's perceptions of parental acceptance over time (i.e., from the time the young person initially came out to the time the study was conducted) did not extend to bisexual girls as it did for other sexual orientation and gender pairings (Samarova, Shilo, & Diamond, 2013).

Given the scarcity of research informative about this topic, there is a critical need for additional quantitative studies examining predictors of parents' reactions to their LGB youth. Based on the very limited evidence we have from studies of parents themselves, it appears that ethnic minority families might struggle more than white families, although more it is critical to explore specific ethnic differences in larger samples. Findings regarding the effects of parent and child gender have been mixed and similarly limited by small sample sizes. Nothing is known about the effects of parent or child age on these processes, although ancillary research hints that younger parents and younger children might face fewer challenges. Finally, no quantitative literature has examined how much time must pass in order for parental improvements in their attitudes to unfold, or how that varies as a function of other family characteristics.

The Present Study

This study aimed to validate and extend the largely qualitative literature on parents' experiences with having an LGB child by examining some of the first-ever quantitative data from a large sample of these parents. We sought to examine how family demographic characteristics and the passage of time were related to parent difficulty with having an LGB child with the hope of identifying families most in need of intervention. Specifically,

we aimed to address the following questions: (1) Does the degree to which parents have difficulty vary as a function of parent gender, age, and ethnicity? (2) Does parent difficulty vary as a function of child gender and age at coming out? (3) Do parent and child gender interact to predict parent difficulty? and (4) Does parent difficulty improve over time and improve differently for boys and girls? Informed by adjacent literatures, we expected that parents' difficulty with an LGB child's sexual orientation would be greater for older parents, ethnic minority parents, parents of older children, and for fathers reporting about their sons and mothers reporting about daughters. Moreover, we predicted that parents who had known for longer periods of time would generally report less difficulty. Given limited initial research from youth reports suggesting possible gender differences in this process (Samarova et al., 2013), we further explored without hypotheses whether the effects of time would be different for boys versus girls.

Method

Participants

Data from the present study come from a larger evaluation of a film-based resource designed to support parents of LGB youth through the process of learning they have an LGB child. The film was made available for anyone to view for free online on a Web site we constructed. Parents of LGB youth learned about the film through a variety of means. The film received widespread media coverage in both the mainstream media (e.g., New York Times, USA Today, ABC's *The View*) and more specialized outlets (e.g., Dan Savage's weekly Savage Love podcast). We complemented this media coverage with a social networking campaign on Facebook so that friends could refer others to our site. For the present study, we report data only from individuals who indicated that (1) they were the parent of an LGB child, and (2) their child was between the ages of 10 and 25. We selected parents of teens and young adults because of the salience that parental responses to their child's sexual orientation has during this developmental period (Ryan et al., 2009). We limit our focus of this paper to parents' experience of their children's sexual orientation, and not gender identity; we do this both because sexual orientation and gender identity are distinct phenomena, likely to elicit unique parent responses, and because our recruiting tool (our film) was created to help parents understand sexual orientation, and did not contain content relevant to parents of gender minority youth (meaning few parents of gender minority youth found us and viewed our resource). Data presented here were acquired from parents between January and December 2011.

Individuals who visited our Web site and chose to view the film were first directed to a consent information page and then to a series of questions assessing various aspects of their

identity and experiences. Electronically managed skip-patterns directed individuals to different sets of questions appropriate to their circumstances (e.g., parents of LGB youth received different questions from other adults). The survey we constructed was necessarily extremely brief, relying primarily on single-item assessments. Pilot work with parents suggested that many were hesitant or unwilling to answer personal questions about their experiences having an LGB child, particularly those that had only very recently heard the news and were in an emotionally vulnerable place. Thus, we asked parents only ten questions prior to viewing the film, recognizing that sacrifices to our assessment would be offset by the benefits of gaining access to parents who have never before been studied in research of this kind.

We obtained data from 1205 individuals who indicated they were parents of LGB youth between the ages of 10–25. We excluded $n = 10$ participants because they reported ages for themselves and their children that were implausible (e.g., a 23-year-old parent with 21-year-old son). Analyses were conducted on the remaining 1195 parents. Using data on location and family demographics, we were able to identify 48 participants who were partnered with another participant and therefore reporting on the same child. To ensure that this interdependence of a small number of our observations did not affect the results, we conducted sensitivity analyses, randomly excluding one member of each of these 24 dyads. We identified no change in any results; therefore, findings are presented for the full sample.

Measures

Parent Difficulty with Having an LGB Child

The primary dependent variable for this study was a single, face-valid item asking, “How hard is it for you, knowing that your son or daughter is gay, lesbian, or bisexual?” Parents responded using a 5-point scale of magnitude anchored with descriptors recommended by Krosnick (1999) because of research indicating the increments of magnitude between the adjectives are nearly equivalent: “not at all hard,” “a little bit hard,” “moderately hard,” “very hard,” and “extremely hard.” Given that we were using a single item to assess an important outcome for our study, we conducted a separate validity study administering a longer battery to 25 parents of LGB youth to demonstrate the concurrent criterion validity of the single item with other important parenting variables. In this validity study, the single-item measure of parent difficulty had moderate to large associations with self-efficacy to parent an LGB child ($r = -.39$, $df = 23$), with the beliefs that LGB is a sin ($r = .57$, $df = 23$), a choice ($r = .71$, $df = 23$), and the result of parental error ($r = .50$, $df = 23$), as well as with

parenting behaviors known to have a negative impact on child well-being (Ryan et al., 2009), such as telling a child that being LGB is a choice ($r = .44$, $df = 23$) or a phase ($r = .50$, $df = 23$), and crying in front of one’s child about their being LGB ($r = .45$, $df = 23$; data available from first author).

Parent and Child Demographic Characteristics

Parents reported on their age in years and gender (0 = male; 1 = female). We asked parents to report “gender” rather than “sex assigned at birth” given confusion parents expressed with the later term during our pilot phase. Thus, we use the term “gender” to describe results, recognizing that this was imperfectly assessed. Parents also reported their race/ethnicity, and because of the distribution of the sample, we collapsed parents into four categories: non-Hispanic white, African American, Latino, and “other.” Parents also provided reports for their child’s age in years and gender (0 = male; 1 = female).

Length of Time Knowing About Child’s Sexual Orientation

Parents utilized an ordinal scale to indicate how long ago they had learned about their child’s sexual orientation (i.e., “less than 1 month ago,” “1–2 months ago,” “2–6 months ago,” “6 months to 1 year ago,” “1–2 years ago,” “2–5 years ago,” “5 or more years ago”). This variable was left as categorical for analysis.

Analysis

We used SAS Proc GLM to conduct a linear regression analysis predicting parent difficulty from parent characteristics (gender, age, ethnicity), child characteristics (gender, age), and the categorical variable representing the amount of time parents had known about their child’s sexual orientation. We explored the interaction between parent and child sex, given research suggesting that parents of different sexes might react differently to sexual minority boys versus girls. We also explored the interaction between child gender and time parents had known about sexual orientation, given research suggesting that the process of sexual orientation identity development differs among men and women (Diamond, 2009; Savin-Williams & Diamond, 2000) as well as studies showing some differences in the trajectories of parent response to boys’ versus girls’ sexual orientation (Samarova et al., 2013). To reduce the collinearity in interaction terms, predictors were mean centered prior to calculation of interaction terms (Aiken & West, 1991). Nonsignificant interaction terms were dropped prior to reporting of the final model. Finally, to further explore the pattern of effects of time parents had known on parent difficulty, we computed the means of parent difficulty across each of the categories representing different amounts of

time known about sexual orientation, adjusted for other variables in the model. We then conducted post hoc pairwise comparisons of those means using the Tukey method.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

On average, parents were 49.5 years old (Range 30–77; $SD=6.9$). More mothers than fathers were represented (76.0% of parents identified as female; 24.0% identified as male). Parents identified their race/ethnicity as: white, non-Hispanic (75.3%), African American (5.7%), Latino (12.0%), Asian or Pacific Islander (4.2%), Native American (0.5%), or mixed ethnicity (2.3%); the latter three groups were combined into “Other” for analyses. The sample was widely geographically dispersed, with parents representing 48 different states. (Alaska and Delaware were not represented.) Parents reported that their children were on average 19.4 years old ($SD=3.4$) and that 63.6% were boys and 36.4% were girls. We obtained data from parents who had known about their child’s sexual orientation for varying amounts of time, including less than 1 month (26.3%), 1–2 months (8.0%), 2–6 months (11.8%), 6–12 months (11.7%), 1–2 years (14.8%), 2–5 years (17.8%), and more than 5 years (9.5%). With respect to how difficult parents felt it was for them to have an LGB child, a fairly even distribution of parents was represented by responses including “not at all” (17.4%); “a little bit” (27.6%); “moderately” (19.4%); “very” (18%); and “extremely” (17.7%; ($M=2.9$, $SD=1.36$).

Effects of Parent Characteristics, Child Characteristics, and Time Known

We first predicted parent difficulty from parent age, parent gender, parent race/ethnicity, child age, child gender, the categories of time known about sexual orientation, as well as the interactions of child gender with both parent gender and time known about sexual orientation. The interaction of parent and child gender was nonsignificant ($b=-0.13$, $SE\ b=0.19$, ns), as was the interaction of child gender and time known ($F(6, 1173)=1.18$, ns), and therefore these terms were dropped from the analysis. Table 1 presents the results of the final model. African American and Latino parents reported significantly greater difficulty with their LGB adolescents’ sexual orientation than did white, non-Hispanic parents. In addition, parents of older youth reported greater difficulty than did parents of younger adolescents. There were no significant effects of parent age. Fathers and mothers reported comparable difficulty, as did parents of boys and girls.

With regard to time known, relative to parents who had known for less than a month, parents who had known for any longer amount of time (e.g., 2 months to greater than 5 years) reported less difficulty. To further explore this phenomenon, Table 2

presents parents’ mean reported degree of parent difficulty (adjusted for other model variables), for each category representing different amounts of time parents had known. Inspection of the means suggests that parents who had known for greater periods of time reported generally lower levels of difficulty. Post hoc significance tests of these differences revealed that parents who had known for 5 years or longer reported less difficulty than all other groups representing parents who had known for shorter amounts of time. Parents who had known for 2–5 years also reported less difficulty than all other groups representing parents who had known for less than two years. However, there were no significant differences between parents in the following categories of time known: less than a month, 1–2 months, 2–6 months, 6 months to a year, or 1–2 years.

Discussion

These data provide novel insights into the characteristics of parents who struggle most in response to having an LGB child and how parents’ difficulties regarding their child’s sexual orientation unfold over time. Among this sample of diverse parents from across the U.S., the degree of difficulty in handling the news of a child’s sexual orientation was significantly greater for those with older children, as well as for African American and Latino parents. On the other hand, parents who had more time to adjust to knowledge of their child’s sexual orientation appear to have less difficulty with their child’s sexuality, although this

Table 1 Model predicting parent difficulty with having an LGB child from parent and child characteristics, and time known about sexual orientation ($n=1193$)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>
Parent gender (male = 0)	0.14	0.09
Parent age	0.00	0.01
Parent race/ethnicity		
Non-Hispanic Caucasian (ref)	–	–
African American	0.40*	0.16
Latino	0.27*	0.12
Other ethnicity	0.28	0.15
Child gender (male = 0)	0.11	0.08
Child age	0.08***	0.02
Amount of time out to parent		
Less than 1 month (ref)	–	–
1–2 months	–0.33*	0.14
2–6 months	–0.32*	0.13
6 months–1 year	–0.36**	0.13
1–2 years	–0.33**	0.12
2–5 years	–1.06***	0.12
5 or more years	–1.73***	0.15

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. Ref = reference group

Table 2 Post hoc comparisons of parent difficulty scores, adjusted for parent and child demographics

Time known about sexual orientation	Mean parent difficulty (range 1–5)
Less than 1 month	3.56 ^a
1–2 months	3.23 ^a
2–6 months	3.24 ^a
6 months–1 year	3.20 ^a
1–2 years	3.23 ^a
2–5 years	2.50 ^b
5 or more years	1.83 ^c

All means are adjusted for parent age, parent gender, parent ethnicity, child age, and child gender. Means not sharing a common superscript are different using Tukey adjusted test at $p < .05$

effect primarily appears only after 2 years. Surprisingly, parent and child gender, and the interaction between each, were unrelated to parental difficulty. The lack of a gender effect shown among this sample is inconsistent with some population-based research on social attitudes toward LGB individuals which suggests that men hold more negative attitudes toward sexual minorities (Herek, 2002; Holland et al., 2013; Woodford et al., 2012). The difference in our findings for parents might reflect variability in how people feel about LGB individuals in the abstract versus how they feel about a member of their family being LGB, given abundant research showing that actual contact with minority group members facilitates acceptance (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006).

The differences in difficulty we see between parents who have known for varying amounts of time likely reflects a developmental process where, over time, parents are gradually adjusting to the news that they have an LGB child. This is consistent with the qualitative literature which shows that families do adapt and become more accepting with the passage of time (Beeler & DiProva, 1999; Goodrich, 2009; Phillips & Ancis, 2008; Saltzberg, 2004). In understanding these time-related variations in parental responses, it is helpful to consider the developmental process entailed by any novel, potentially challenging situation a parent may face. Research on childhood illness, for example, has shown that even in the case of life-threatening illness, parents' emotional distress about the situation does dissipate over time (Mastroyannopoulou, Stallard, Lewis, & Lenton, 1997). Indeed, an abundance of theory and research across a variety of domains indicates that families do adapt to stress, although the process and timing of that adaptation might vary according to the type of stressor and other characteristics of the family (Hill, 1949; Hobfoll & Spielberger, 1992; McCubbin & Patterson, 1983). Consistent with this notion, our research also suggests that in the case of this specific stressor—learning about a child's minority sexual orientation—parent difficulty might not dissipate for up to 2 years following disclosure of sexual orientation. Indeed,

parents who had known for as little as 2 months, and parents who had known for as long as 2 years, all reported that on average, having an LGB child was somewhere between “moderately” and “very” hard for them. Only after 2 years did values drop to a point between “moderately” and “a little bit” hard, and only after five or more years, did they drop just below “a little bit” hard.

Our finding that parents with older children reported greater difficulty, even after adjusting for the amount of time parents had known, is interesting and should be the subject of future research. It is possible that with older children, parents have invested more time in imagining a traditional, heterosexual future for their child, making it more challenging to adjust to a different reality. Alternately, for younger children early in their pubertal development, parents may be less inclined to think about the implications of their child's LGB identity for their sexual behavior, which could result in less discomfort. Younger children might elicit more sympathetic responses from parents simply because of their relative vulnerability compared to older children.

Findings from the present study must be qualified by a number of limitations to our methods. First, as a way of minimizing participant burden, we utilized only a single-item assessment of “parent difficulty” and omitted other variables potentially of interest (e.g., parent report of child sexual orientation). Although the item has good face validity and strong concurrent validity with related parent constructs (e.g., rejecting parent behaviors), a multiple-item scale would improve reliability and could more thoroughly capture varied manifestations of parental struggle with sexual orientation. Moreover, some degree of “difficulty” could simply reflect concern for a child's well-being, rather than signaling parent rejection. Another limitation is that this sample is a self-selected subset of parents visiting a Web site to view an educational video for parents of LGB youth. As a result, we might have failed to capture parents who were so decidedly anti-gay or pro-gay that they were uninterested in any support at all. It is important, however, to consider that this recruitment method facilitated our success in recruiting this sample. By advertising a resource for parents of LGB youth and then administering an extremely brief, one-time questionnaire, we were able to recruit the largest sample of parents of LGB young people of which we are aware, including parents rarely seen in research studies (i.e., those who have only learned days or weeks ago about their child's sexual orientation). Despite obtaining a large, diverse sample, we did not have enough representation from smaller U.S. ethnic groups (e.g., Asian or Pacific Islanders) to examine effects specifically for those groups, and future research should prioritize extending our findings to those populations. Our results are also limited by the cross-sectional nature of our data; in particular, our findings regarding the effects of time parents had known involve comparisons of different families who had known about their child's sexuality for varying amounts of time, rather than following the same families over time. Future longitudinal studies are needed to confirm the effects of time shown

in this study. Finally, as social acceptance of LGB individuals evolves quickly (e.g., with same-sex marriage now legal), parents responses to a child's sexual orientation are likely changing rapidly as well, suggesting the need to update findings from studies on sexual orientation as rapidly as possible.

While each of these limitations tempers the conclusions we can draw from our data, these data provide some of the first quantitative insights into how challenges following coming out unfold for families. Our results suggest that parents might benefit from support and guidance after a child comes out and that these needs may be greater for parents of older adolescents and families of color. Moreover, for some families, the process of adjusting to having an LGB child appears to take a considerable amount of time. One or two years is a long time in the life of an adolescent, and family stressors that endure for such an extended period of time likely exact a toll on parent–child relationships and the health of parents and children alike. Interventions to support these families might decrease the duration and intensity of such challenges. Indeed, attachment-based family therapy has shown some promise in increasing parent acceptance of a child's sexual orientation (Diamond et al., 2013; Levy, Russon, & Diamond, 2016), as has at least one less intensive film-based intervention designed to be delivered online at scale (Huebner, Rullo, Thoma, McGarrity, & Mackenzie, 2013). Future quantitative studies of parents of LGB youth, including dyadic studies that follow parents and children together over time, are urgently needed to more deeply examine the phenomena we observed in this study and to build a foundation for future family-focused interventions.

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