THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN GENDER-NEUTRAL PARENTING ATTITUDES,

NEGATIVE DIMENSIONS OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION IDENTITY, AND CHILD

OUTCOMES AMONG LESBIAN MOTHERS

by

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May, 2020

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The primary purpose of this study was to explore the correlations between lesbian mothers' gender-neutral parenting attitudes, negative dimensions of their sexual orientation identity, and child outcomes. Participants included lesbian mothers ($N = 40$) with at least one child between the ages of 3 and 8 years-old. Among mothers, 37.5% completed the questionnaire from the perspective of their male-identified child ($n = 15$), while 62.5% completed the questionnaire from the perspective of their female-identified child ($n = 25$). To measure the constructs of interest, participants were assessed via an online survey using three instruments, the Child Gender Socialization Scale, the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Identity Scale, and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire. Four open-ended response questions were additionally analyzed to better support the results. Results indicated factors such as the sex of the child, education level, and internalized homonegativity can play a significant role on gender-neutral parenting attitudes and child outcomes among lesbian mothers. Implications regarding gender-neutral parenting practices and research on lesbian mothers are further discussed.

Keywords: gender-neutral, parenting practices, lesbian mothers, early childhood

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

From the moment parents learn the sex of their child, they begin the life-long process of teaching, enforcing, and monitoring their child's gender. Studies on the interactions between infants and parents show that parents' perception of an infant's gender predicts the treatment the infant will receive (Dumas, 2014). Parents are more likely to speak softly and offer physical touch to a female infant, while they are more likely to use a more direct tone and be playful with a male infant (Eliot, 2009). The gendered ways that parents interact with their children can have significant effects on their child's development and sense of self (Dumas, 2014). Once children have the cognitive capacity to understand gender, they also become active participants in their gendering process, which typically occurs around the age of two (Kane, 2006).

Despite misconceptions that the terms are synonymous, sex and gender have different meanings. Sex is used to refer to the biological nature of being male or female, which is distinguished based on genitalia. Gender refers to the psychological, behavioral, and social conceptions of masculinity and femininity that characterize men and women. While sex considers the biological parts of an individual, gender is a social construct that provides rigid expectations and norms of what constitutes being a man or a woman (Pryzgoda & Chrisler, 2000). Many parents do not understand their children's gender as a performance of the larger social constructions of gender. Rather, they interpret gender as the result of the natural, biological differences between the sexes, and thus continue to socialize children into gendered boxes, limiting their gender possibilities (Kane, 2006).

The notion of a "gender binary" refers to the dominant cultural expectations about sex and gender that enforces a binary relationship between one's biological sex and their gender identity and behaviors. Through this, those with biological male bodies are expected to adhere to

masculine gender norms, just as those with biological female bodies are expected to maintain feminine gender norms. Several scholars have described this concept of the gender binary as a "truth regime", in which individuals perpetuate a larger cultural meaning system as an absolute truth that is used to form identities. Since the larger society accepts the gender binary as an absolute truth, many parents feel accountable to uphold these beliefs and transcend them onto their children, despite children's potential preferences towards gender nonconformity (Rahilly, 2015).

This process of gender socialization has been broadly defined in the literature as the process by which children and youth are taught core expectations of male and female gender roles. Various influential figures and groups within a child's environment contribute to this process of gender socialization, which can include: parents, peers, siblings, religious institutions, and the media. Due to their earliest influential role as teachers, much of the literature on gender socialization has focused on the contributions made by parents. Parents have been shown to play a vital role in guiding children's gender socialization through modeling gendered interactions within the family and passing on direct, verbal messages about gendered expectations to their children (Kane, 2006).

A majority of the prior research on gender socialization has shown that most parents have a tendency to contribute to the gendered treatment of children, which usually begins at birth. Through this process, socially accepted feminine behaviors for girls is reinforced by parents, and the same occurs for that of masculinity for boys (Kane, 2006). Early literature has indicated gendered selections made by parents, which has included: gendered toys, gendered clothing choices, and gendered decorations for children's rooms (Cahill, 1989; Etaugh & Liss, 1992; Kane, 2006; Pomerleau et al., 1990). Goldberg, Kashy, and Smith, (2012) suggest lesbian and

gay parents may create different home environments for their children as a result of their own tendency to hold less gender-stereotyped beliefs and behaviors as compared to heterosexual parents (Goldberg, 2007; Goldberg, Kashy, & Smith, 2012; Tasker & Golombok, 1997). If lesbian and gay parents value gender conformity in their children less than heterosexual parents, they may be less likely to participate in differential gender-typed reinforcement (Goldberg, Kashy, & Smith, 2012). Despite this, few studies have investigated the impact of parents' sexual orientation identity on these gendered dimensions of child rearing.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The Role of Parents in Children's Gender Socialization

Epstein and Ward (2011) investigated the direct communication of gendered values through the family. This study measured the frequency and content of recalled parental gender socialization messages and the potential impacts on children's current gender beliefs. The findings indicated that receiving messages in childhood that promoted traditional gender roles was associated with more traditional gender beliefs, thus suggesting that these beliefs are perpetuated through family systems. This effect was similar for sons and daughters, thus indicating no gender differences between males and females for this association (Epstein & Ward, 2011).

Gender policing refers to the ways in which parents attempt to monitor and control their children's gender expressions. In a study of 43 parents with gender-variant children, 60% of the parents attempted to police their children's gender choices and encouraged stereotypical gender choices. This policing was done sometimes as an immediate reaction to prevent these "unnatural" choices, but other times it was the result of suggestions made by family members and mental health professionals (Hill & Menvielle, 2009). The overarching patterns that have emerged from this body of research on gender policing suggest that fathers tend to engage in more gendered, differential treatment of sons and daughters, and enforce more gender boundaries for their children as compared to mothers. This is believed to be due to fathers' motivation to endorse their own masculinity, as controlling and monitoring sons' gendered expressions is a way in which fathers can reinforce their own sense of masculine identity. Among both mothers and fathers, gendered boundaries are more enforced for sons than daughters. Parents consistently indicated an awareness that their sons would be highly scrutinized and judged within the larger

society for their gender expressions and behaviors, which was not evident in parents' responses about their daughters. Many suggested they felt accountable to raise their sons to be men, and were fearful that their sons would be bullied by others if they did not meet these masculine ideals (Kane, 2006).

Kane (2006) conducted qualitative interviews with parents on their perceptions of gender nonconformity expressed by their preschool children. An analysis of the interviews suggested that parents were more accepting of gender nonconformity among their young daughters, but were more critical and resistant to gender nonconformity in their sons. Throughout the interviews, Kane noted that the parents referred to gender as something that they needed to actively shape and construct, as if it were an accomplishment they were working towards completing. From this, Kane suggests that this recognition from parents that they are consciously constructing their children's gender indicates a significant opportunity that parents can be encouraged to shift their conscious control into a more gender-neutral direction (Kane, 2006).

Gender-Neutral/Feminist Child Rearing Practices

Many researchers became interested in this area of research on children's gender socialization following the second-wave feminist movement. During this time, researchers began investigating parenting practices that resist stereotyping male and female children based on societal conceptions of masculinity and femininity. This parenting practice is often referred to as "gender-neutral" or "feminist" parenting (Rahilly, 2015). Through consciousness-raising groups during the second-wave feminist movement, feminists began to critique traditional parenting practices of how girls were raised, as they wished to expand roles for girls at home, school, the workplace, and in the media (Martin, 2005).

The second-wave feminist movement eventually inspired the development of contemporary gender-neutral parenting, which draws from social and developmental psychology and social learning theories to understand the socially constructed nature of gender and its impact on how children are raised. As this philosophy gained attraction, people began to rethink the gendered aspects of their children's environments, clothing, books, television and media, and the gender roles modeled by parents (Martin, 2005). Empirical studies on gender-neutral parenting have shown that families that are characterized as "fair," "feminist," "post-gender," or "egalitarian" report higher positive associations between men's progressive attitudes and their involvement with their children (Blaisure & Allen, 1995; Gerson, 1997; Mack-Canty & Wright, 2004; Risman, 1998; & White, 2006). This increase in father involvement is believed to be associated with the development of nurturing behaviors, as more feminist notions of fatherhood fight against the negative stigma associated with men who readily express their emotions (White, 2006).

White (2006) examined the ways in which African American fathers have reconstructed fatherhood to counter traditional patriarchal beliefs and practices. One of the themes that arose during interviews included fathers' attempts to foster diverse conversations about gender with their children. This mainly consisted of attempts to raise children in a gender-neutral context without enforcing strict guidelines and expectations about gender (White, 2006). Gender-neutral child rearing practices not only allow children the autonomy to choose how they wish to express themselves, but also provide the engagement of conversations about gender literacy, human diversity, and individuality in ways that can provide life-long lessons about respecting all people, regardless of their personal differences. Gender-neutral practices go beyond allowing boy

children to wear pink, and more significantly advocate for the freedom of expression to provide children the space to flourish into their full potential.

Gender-Neutral Attitudes Among Lesbian and Gay Parents

Due to their tendency to hold less gender-stereotyped beliefs and behaviors as compared to heterosexual parents, lesbian and gay parents represent a unique population by which gender socialization occurs for children (Goldberg, 2007; Tasker & Golombok, 1997). Research has shown that lesbians describe themselves as more masculine and less feminine than heterosexual women, and gay men describe themselves as more feminine and less masculine than heterosexual men. Lesbians and gay men also tend to have less stereotypical gendered interests and hobbies (Lippa 2005; 2008). From this, it appears lesbian and gay individuals tend to challenge traditional norms of gendered attitudes and behaviors, thus it is important to understand how this relates to the gender socialization of their children.

As compared to heterosexual parents, lesbian and gay parents tend to have a more open view about gender identity, and thus may be more likely to adopt gender-neutral child rearing practices (Goldberg, Kashy, & Smith, 2012). This trend of gender-neutral attitudes has been shown in the literature, as men and women with lesbian and gay parents have described themselves as having less gender-stereotyped attitudes, which they attribute to their parent's child rearing style (Goldberg, 2007; Tasker & Golombok, 1997). Similarly, children of lesbian and gay parents have been found to show a greater acceptance of gender nonconformity in their peers and display more gender-variant behaviors themselves (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010).

Much of the research on the role of parental sexual orientation and children's gendered attitudes and behavior has involved comparisons of children raised by lesbian mothers and heterosexual parents (Goldberg, Kashy, & Smith, 2012). Sutfin et al. (2008) compared preschool

aged children in lesbian families and heterosexual families and found that both male and female children of lesbian families maintained less traditional attitudes about gender than children in heterosexual parent families. Similarly, Bos and Sandfort (2010) compared 8 to 12-year-old children in lesbian families and heterosexual families and found that both male and female children in lesbian families felt less pressure to conform to gender stereotypes and were less likely to view their own gender as superior. Few studies have investigated the impact of lesbian and gay parents' internalization of negative dimensions of their sexual orientation identity on their attitudes towards more gender-neutral means of child rearing. It is possible that gay and lesbian parents with a more negative sexual orientation identity may struggle to develop a gender-neutral acceptance in their own children, thus leading them to adopt more traditional gender stereotypes in their child rearing.

Farr, Bruun, Doss, and Patterson (2018) examined how gender-typed toy play and gendered characteristics in early childhood were associated with children's gender-typed behaviors in middle childhood, and whether child gender and parental sexual orientation were associated with gender-typed behaviors during both developmental periods. This study included families headed by lesbian, gay, and heterosexual adoptive parents. The results indicated girls played with toys stereotyped for girls and gender-neutral toys for approximately equal amounts of time, yet boys spent more time with toys stereotyped for boys than gender-neutral toys. This finding did not differ based on family structure, as it was evident among all families. From this, the authors suggest that the sex of the child may play a larger role in children's gendered behavior than parents' sexual orientation (Farr, Bruun, Doss, & Patterson, 2018). In contrast, a similar study examined parent-reported gender-typed play behavior in adopted boys and girls in lesbian, gay, and heterosexual families and found that boys with lesbian mothers showed the

least gender-typed play (Goldberg & Garcia, 2016). These represent the most recent research available on children's gender socialization among lesbian and gay parents, yet found conflicting results. Neither study measured parents' parenting behaviors or gender-related beliefs.

Goldberg, Kashy, and Smith (2012) argue that the children of lesbian and gay parents possess certain strengths that may aid them later in life, as expanding children's experiences beyond gender constraints can foster various types of skill-building. Bos et al. (2006) found that boys who scored higher on conventionally feminine traits also had better psychological adjustment scores, as compared to boys with low femininity scores. This evidence indicates potential benefits to gender-neutral approaches to child rearing, as less gender stereotyped play behavior may be associated with positive outcomes in children (Goldberg, Kashy, & Smith, 2012). Despite this speculation, little research has investigated the impact of gender-neutral attitudes among lesbian and gay parents on child outcomes.

Theoretical Framework

Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory provides significant insight into how and why parents play a vital role into the gender socialization process of their children during early childhood. Beginning at birth, parents have been shown to be pivotal figures in guiding children's gender socialization process. This can occur via multiple avenues, yet typically unfolds through the modeling of gendered interactions within the family and the passing on of both direct and indirect messages about gender. Through this process, parents construct and model children's perceptions of socially accepted feminine characteristics for girls and masculine characteristics for boys (Kane, 2006).

At the center of Bandura's social learning theory is the idea that we observe and model the attitudes and behaviors of the people within our environment. This process is referred to as

observational learning, which explains human behavior as a complex interaction between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental influences. Observational learning is divided into four sub-processes, which include: attentional processes, retention processes, motor reproduction processes, and reinforcement and motivational processes. Bandura suggests that individuals will be more likely to enact a modeled behavior if the outcome reflects something the individual values, or if the behavior serves a functional purpose (Bandura, 1977; Culatta, 2018). These reinforcement and motivational processes dictate the imitated performance of the action, and the direct and vicarious reinforcements that govern the rewards that could make us more likely to imitate the behavior again. Thus, young children are more likely to model gender-typed behavior if they are socialized and reinforced into gender stereotyped roles by their parents. Bandura's concept of observational learning has provided significant implications for childrearing that emphasize the role parents play in molding children's behavior throughout the lifespan (Crain, 2010).

While forming his theory on social learning, Bandura investigated the ways children are taught to appropriately behave in either feminine or masculine ways based on their gender. Through his studies, Bandura concluded that children view the behavior of both genders, yet through observations of their peers, parents, and other social influences, they imitate the behavior that is deemed acceptable within their environment. Social learning theory provides a framework to understand how lesbian and gay parents may approach their child rearing styles towards more gender-neutral territory. Due to prior research that indicates lesbian and gay parents value gender conformity in their children less than heterosexual parents, they may be less likely to participate in differential reinforcement based on the gender of their children. This suggests that lesbian and gay parents provide a unique socialization process for their children, which may include the

modeling of more gender-neutral attitudes and behaviors that are learned and later imitated by children (Goldberg, Kashy, & Smith, 2012; Sutfin et al., 2008).

The original intentions of the study were to examine both gay and lesbian parents' gender-neutral parenting attitudes. Although both groups were targeted in recruitment efforts, responses were limited to only lesbian participants. Going forward in the study, all research questions will be examined in relation to lesbian mothers. Studies on sexual minority families tend to get more participation from lesbian mothers as compared to gay fathers, and studies on parental attitudes and behaviors regarding gender rarely include gay fathers (Farr, Bruun, Doss, & Patterson, 2018). The primary purpose of this study is to investigate the correlations between lesbian mothers' gender-neutral parenting attitudes, negative dimensions of their sexual orientation identity, and child outcomes. These research questions will guide the study:

1) For lesbian mothers, what are the associations between and within measures of gender-neutral parenting attitudes, negative dimensions of sexual orientation identity, and child outcomes?

2) What demographic variables (e.g. race, gender, age of the parent, age of the child, income level, education level) can differentiate between lesbian mothers' gender-neutral parenting attitudes?

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

The constructs of interest in this study are gender-neutral parenting attitudes, negative dimensions of sexual orientation identity, and child outcomes. To measure these constructs, participants were assessed using three instruments: (a) the Child Gender Socialization Scale (Blakemore & Hill, 2008), the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Identity Scale (LGBIS; Mohr & Fassinger, 2000), and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, 1997). Participants additionally completed an 8-item demographic survey and four open-ended response questions.

Participants

The participants included lesbian mothers ($N = 40$) with at least one child between the ages of 3 and 8 years. Among the mothers, 37.5% completed the questionnaire from the perspective of their male-identified child ($n = 15$), while 62.5% completed the questionnaire from the perspective of their female-identified child ($n = 25$). A purposive sampling technique was used to recruit participants through flyers that included a summary of the purpose for the research study and a link to an online Qualtrics survey. The flyers were posted on popular LGBTQ Facebook groups and pages and through personal contacts that distributed flyers to on and off campus locations (e.g. the LGBTQ center located at the main student center). An example of this flyer is included in Appendix F. To increase recruitment efforts, one entry into a random drawing of $10 Target gift cards was offered as a voluntary option to all that participated. At the end of the data collection, twelve gift cards were distributed to the winners.

Participants identified their gender as: 95.0% female ($n = 38$), 2.5% genderqueer ($n = 1$), and 2.5% non-binary ($n = 3$). Participants identified themselves as the following ethnic/cultural backgrounds: 72.5% White/Caucasian ($n = 29$), 12.5% Hispanic/Latino ($n = 5$), 7.5%

Black/African American ($n = 3$), and 7.5% other racial and ethnic identities ($n = 3$). The highest

level of education received by the participants was reported as: 12.5% high school degree or

equivalent ($n = 5$), 32.5% some college ($n = 13$), 17.5% Associate's degree ($n = 7$), 15.0%

Bachelor's degree ($n = 6$), 12.5% Master's degree ($n = 5$), and 10.0% professional degree

($n = 4$). The amount of income received by the participants was reported as: 5.0% less than

$20,000 ($n = 2$), 20.0% $20,000 to $34,999 ($n = 8$), 15.0% $35,000 to $49,999 ($n = 6$), 25.0%

$50,000 to $74,999 ($n = 10$), 12.5% $75,000 to $99,999 ($n = 5$), and 22.5% over $100,000

($n = 9$).

Measures

   Demographic Survey. An 8-item demographic questionnaire was included to assess for

basic demographic information, including: race, gender, sexual orientation, age of the parent, age

of the child, income level, and education level. This survey is included in Appendix B.

   Child Gender Socialization Scale. The Child Gender Socialization Scale assesses for

parents' attitudes about gendered behaviors in their children. There are two forms of this

measure, each with gender-appropriate nouns and pronouns, but with identical content. Mothers

were asked to select the sex of their child, and were then presented with the corresponding

survey with the sex pronouns of their child. Mothers with more than one child were asked to

answer the survey from the perspective of one of their children. This is a five-dimensional

measure that contains 28 items total. On these items, mothers indicated their degree of evaluation

on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Very Negative) to 7 (Very Positive). The five

dimensions of parents' attitudes include: Disapproval of Other-Gender Characteristics (two

items, e.g., "I discouraged my daughter from acting like a boy"); Toys and Activities Stereotyped

for Boys (eight items, e.g., "Playing with toy trucks"); Toys and Activities Stereotyped for Girls

(seven items, e.g., "Playing with baby dolls"); Helping at Home (seven items, e.g., "Sweeping the floor"); and Education for Marriage and Family (four items, e.g., "I want my daughter's education to prepare her for child rearing"). High scores indicate high levels of each socialization type (Blakemore & Hill, 2008). An analysis of reliability using Cronbach's alpha indicated the Disapproval of Other-Gender Characteristics scale had a negative average covariance among the items, with an alpha value of -0.05 and standard deviation of 0.22. Due to the similarity within the participant's responses for this subscale, it was not included in the correlational analyses.

The concept of gender-neutral child rearing was created during the second-wave feminist movement, thus the terms "gender-neutral" and "feminist" parenting are often used interchangeably within the literature to represent parenting practices that resist stereotyping male and female children (Martin, 2005; Rahilly, 2015). For the purpose of this study, the term "gender-neutral" will be utilized to encompass the constructs measured by this instrument. The scale demonstrated good internal consistency and reasonable test–retest reliability with reliability coefficients ranging from .65 to.76 (Blakemore & Hill, 2008). This measure is included in Appendix C.

LGBIS. The LGBIS contains 27 items with diverse identity-related statements regarding an individual's internalization of various aspects related to their sexual orientation identity. The original questionnaire includes the following subscales: (1) Concealment Motivation, (2) Identity Uncertainty, (3) Internalized Homonegativity, (4) Difficult Process, (5) Acceptance Concerns, (6) Identity Superiority, (7) Identity Centrality, (8) Identity Affirmation. For the purpose of this study, only the Concealment Motivation, Internalized Homonegativity, Acceptance Concerns, and Difficult Process subscales will be utilized to average a composite score to represent a depiction of Overall Negative Identity. On these items, mothers indicated their degree of

agreeableness on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly

Agree). Sample items include "I can't feel comfortable knowing that others judge me negatively

for my sexual orientation." and "I keep careful control over who knows about my same-sex

romantic relationships". The higher the score, the more an individual experiences that dimension

of identity as measured by each subscale. For example, higher scores on the Need for

Acceptance subscale indicates that an individual has a stronger need for acceptance within their

sexual orientation identity (Mohr & Kendra, 2011). This measure is included in Appendix D.

   SDQ. The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire assesses the presence of child

psychological problems, including both externalizing and internalizing problems. It measures

five distinct subscales: (1) conduct problems, (2) emotional symptoms, (3) hyperactivity, (4) peer

problems, and (5) prosocial behavior. This scale has 25 items which contain statements that

measure children's behavioral and emotional difficulties. On these items, mothers will indicate

the presence of certain behaviors in their children on a 3-point Likert scale (0 = Not True, 1 =

Somewhat True, and 2 = Certainly True). Sample items include "Considerate of other people's

feelings." and "Often unhappy, down-hearted or tearful." (Goodman, 1997). This measure is

included in Appendix E.

   Open-Ended Questions. In order to gain a more holistic sense of mothers' gender-neutral

attitudes, they will be given four open-ended response questions at the end of the survey. This

will give participants the opportunity to express their attitudes and experiences in their own

words. These questions are included in Appendix F.

Data Collection Procedure

   Qualtrics was used to create an online, self-administered survey that incorporated each

measurement of interest for this study. Once IRB approved the study, the recruitment process

began. After navigating to the survey link, participants were presented with a consent form that explained the purpose of the study, the approximate amount of time it would take to complete, the procedures they could expect, and the potential risks and benefits of participating in the study. After consenting to participate, the participants were directed to complete each section of the survey at their own pace via the Qualtrics platform. Data collection from the Qualtrics survey consisted of five sections: (1) an 8-item demographic survey, (2) the Child Gender Socialization Scale (Blakemore & Hill, 2008), (3) the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Identity Scale (LGBIS; Mohr & Fassinger, 2000), (4) the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, 1997), and (5) four open-ended response questions.

Data Analysis Procedure

This exploratory study primarily utilized quantitative data analysis techniques with an inclusion of qualitative open-ended response questions. This approach allowed for a more comprehensive collection of the data, such that the results could be supported by both, statistical analyses and personal participant anecdotes (Creswell, 2007). The quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS. Frequencies and descriptive statistics (e.g. mean, median, mode) were utilized to analyze data on demographics. While, parametric statistics such as correlations and ANOVAs were employed to analyze other research questions. The qualitative data from the open-ended responses was integrated as direct quotations that reflected the quantitative results. This captured the perspective of the participants without the constraints of questionnaire categories, as the direct quotations provide further and more personal insight into the interpretation of the quantitative results (Patton, 2002).

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

RQ$_1$: For lesbian mothers, what are the associations between and within measures of gender-neutral parenting attitudes, negative dimensions of sexual orientation identity, and child outcomes?

Relationship Between Sexual Orientation Identity (LGBIS) and Gender Neutral Parenting Attitudes (Gender Socialization Scale)

Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, and Cronbach's alpha) for all measures are shown in Table 1. The relationships between the variables of interest were investigated using a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. The first research question aimed to explore the correlations between and within dimensions of lesbian mothers' gender-neutral parenting attitudes, negative dimensions of their sexual orientation identity, and child outcomes. Due to the fact that there were two forms of the gender-neutral parenting attitudes scale, each with gender-appropriate nouns and pronouns of the child, the correlations between and across the variables were split and analyzed based on the sex of the child.

Correlation analysis between the LGBIS and gender socialization scale for mothers answering about their daughters (see Table 2) revealed helping at home was negative correlated with difficult process, acceptance concerns, concealment motivation, and overall negative identity. This suggests that the more lesbian mothers encourage their daughters to help with household chores, the less they find it difficult to identify as a lesbian to themselves and others, are concerned about being accepted, conceal their lesbian identity, and the less negative they feel overall about their lesbian identity. Within the LGBIS scale, acceptance concerns was positively associated with difficult process, and concealment motivation was positively associated with both difficult process and acceptance concerns. Thus, for mothers answering about their

daughters, the more they struggled with their acceptance of their identity, the more difficult was the process of identifying as a lesbian to themselves and others. Similarly, the more concealed they were about their lesbian identity, the more difficult was the process, and more concerning was their acceptance of their identity. Within the gender socialization scale, the encouragement of toys/activities stereotyped for girls was positively associated with toys/activities stereotyped for boys. This suggests that lesbian mothers tend to encourage their daughters to engage with toys/activities stereotyped for both boys and girls. Helping at home was positively correlated with the encouragement of toys/activities stereotyped for boys. Thus, the more mothers encourage their daughters to help at home, the more they also encourage their daughters to engage with toys/activities stereotyped for boys.

For mothers answering about their sons, correlation analysis between the LGBIS and gender socialization scales for mothers answering about their sons (see Table 3) indicated no significant associations. Within the LGBIS scale, internalized homonegativity was positively associated with difficult process and concealment motivation. Concealment motivation and difficult process were positively correlated. Thus, for mothers answering about their sons, the more they reject and stigmatize themselves for being lesbian, the more difficult was the process, and more concerning was their acceptance of their identity. Similarly, the more concealed they are about their identity, the more difficult was the process of identifying as a lesbian to themselves and others. There were no correlations within the gender socialization scale found for mothers answering about their sons.

Relationship Between Sexual Orientation Identity (LGBIS) and Child Outcomes (SDQ)

Correlation analysis between the LGBIS and gender socialization scales for mothers answering about their daughters (see Table 4) showed internalized homonegativity was

positively correlated with peer problems, emotional symptoms, and total difficulties. This suggests that among mothers answering about their daughters, the more they reject and stigmatize themselves for being lesbian, the more their daughter struggles interacting with peers, expresses symptoms related to negative emotions and anxieties, and has overall difficulty with externalizing and internalizing problems. Within the SDQ scale, emotional symptoms was positively correlated with hyperactivity/inattention and peer problems. There was also a positive correlation between hyperactivity/inattention and conduct problems. Thus, the more daughters are hyperactive and inattentive, the more they struggle interacting with peers, and the more they express aggression and disregard for others. Correlation analysis between the LGBIS and gender socialization scales for mothers answering about their sons (see Table 5) revealed no correlations between the LGBIS and SDQ scales. Within the SDQ scale, there was a positive correlation between emotional symptoms and peer problems. Therefore, the more sons express symptoms related to negative emotions and anxieties, the more they struggle interacting with peers.

Relationship Between Gender Neutral Parenting Attitudes (Gender Socialization Scale) and Child Outcomes (SDQ)

Correlation analysis between the gender socialization and SDQ scales for mothers answering about their daughters (see Table 6) revealed a positive correlation between education for family and marriage and peer problems. Therefore, the more mothers want their daughter's education to prepare them for family and marriage, the more their daughters tend to struggle interacting with peers. Correlation analysis between the SDQ and gender socialization scales for mothers answering about their sons (see Table 7) indicated a negative correlation between hyperactivity/inattention and helping at home. This suggests the more sons are hyperactive and inattentive, the less mothers tend to encourage them to help with household chores at home.

19

There was also a negative correlation between the encouragement of toys/activities for boys and peer problems. Thus, the more mothers encourage their sons to engage with toys/activities stereotyped for boys, the less their sons tend to struggle interacting with peers.

RQ$_2$: What demographic variables (e.g. race, gender, age of the parent, age of the child, income level, and education level) can differentiate between lesbian mothers' gender-neutral parenting attitudes?

Demographic Differences

The second research question aimed to explore what demographic variables could differentiate between lesbian mothers' gender-neutral parenting attitudes. Differences in race, gender, age of the parent, age of the child, income level, and education level were all observed using ANOVA. Level of education was split into a dichotomous variable, represented by two categories: lower levels of education (less than a high school diploma, high school degree or equivalent, some college, and associate degree) and higher levels of education (Bachelor's degree, Master's degree, professional degree, and doctorate). Of the variables measured, level of education was the only demographic variable that had a significant effect on mothers' gender-neutral parenting attitudes.

Level of education had a significant effect on the encouragement of activities/toys stereotyped for boys [$F(1, 38) = 8.88$, $p = 0.005$]. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for participants with lower levels of education ($M = 37.00$, SD $= 7.70$) was significantly different than those with higher levels of education ($M = 28.80$, SD $= 9.54$). Level of education also had a significant effect on the encouragement of activities/toys stereotyped for girls [$F(1, 36) = 6.63$, $p = 0.014$]. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for participants with lower levels of education ($M = 50.96$, SD

= 7.28) was significantly different than those with higher levels of education (M = 44.13, SD = 8.98). Thus, lesbian mothers with lower levels of education encouraged toys/activities stereotyped for girls and boys more than mothers with higher levels of education.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics

	α	M	SD
1. Internalized Homonegativity	.83	4.75	3.45
2. Difficult Process	.84	7.93	4.68
3. Acceptance Concerns	.56	7.43	3.62
4. Concealment Motivation	.77	5.78	3.45
5. Overall Negative Identity	.66	25.88	10.77
6. Gender Socialization – Stereotyped Boys' Toys	.82	33.93	9.24
7. Gender Socialization – Stereotyped Girls' Toys	.90	48.26	8.57
8. Gender Socialization – Helping at Home	.93	41.95	8.62
9. Gender Socialization – Education for Family and Marriage	.74	7.88	4.21
10. Gender Socialization – Disapproval of Other-Gender Characteristics	-.05	2.05	0.22
11. Emotional Symptoms	.72	7.03	2.21
12. Conduct Problems	.67	6.72	1.78
13. Hyperactivity/Inattention	.84	9.71	3.10
14. Peer Problems	.75	7.50	2.58
15. Total Difficulties	.69	30.85	7.03

Table 2

Correlations for LGBIS and Gender Socialization for Mothers Answering About their Daughters

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Internalized Homonegativity	—								

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
2. Difficult Process	.07	—							
3. Acceptance Concerns	.08	.62**	—						
4. Concealment Motivation	.05	.42*	.49*	—					
5. Overall Negative Identity	.44*	.80**	.78**	.70**	—				
6. Gender Socialization – Stereotyped Boys' Toys	-.14	.03	-.05	-.09	-.09	—			
7. Gender Socialization – Stereotyped Girls' Toys	-.29	.16	-.10	.14	-.03	.62**	—		
8. Gender Socialization – Helping at Home	-.11	-.48*	-.57**	-.62**	-.65**	.42*	.25	—	
9. Gender Socialization – Education for Family and Marriage	.22	.07	-.05	-.16	.04	-.33	-.10	.06	—

$^*p < .05.$ $^{**}p < .01.$

Table 3

Correlations for LGBIS and Gender Socialization for Mothers Answering About their Sons

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Internalized Homonegativity	—								
2. Difficult Process	.59*	—							
3. Acceptance Concerns	.31	.50	—						
4. Concealment Motivation	.66**	.54*	.08	—					
5. Overall Negative Identity	.78**	.91**	.66**	.69**	—				
6. Gender Socialization – Stereotyped Boys' Toys	.12	.26	.30	.28	.32	—			
7. Gender Socialization – Stereotyped Girls' Toys	.21	.10	.16	-.15	.11	-.01	—		
8. Gender Socialization – Helping at Home	.07	.004	.31	.05	.13	.04	.35	—	
9. Gender Socialization – Education for Family and Marriage	-.40	-.14	.26	-.50	-.20	.16	-.13	.06	—

$^*p < .05.$ $^{**}p < .01.$

Table 4

Correlations for LGBIS and SDQ for Mothers Answering About their Daughters

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Internalized Homonegativity	—									
2. Difficult Process	.07	—								
3. Acceptance Concerns	.08	.62**	—							
4. Concealment Motivation	.05	.42*	.49*	—						
5. Overall Negative Identity	.44*	.80**	.78**	.70**	—					
6. Emotional Symptoms	.43*	-.09	.07	.06	.17	—				
7. Conduct Problems	.13	-.03	-.12	.14	.05	.26	—			
8. Hyperactivity/Inattention	.27	.05	-.20	-.07	.03	.47*	.63**	—		
9. Peer Problems	.48*	.04	.03	-.16	.15	.73**	.12	.31	—	
10. Total Difficulties	.44*	.05	-.06	-.05	.15	.82**	.62**	.82**	.74**	—

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Table 5

Correlations for LGBIS and SDQ for Mothers Answering About their Sons

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Internalized Homonegativity	—									
2. Difficult Process	.59*	—								
3. Acceptance Concerns	.31	.50	—							
4. Concealment Motivation	.66**	.54*	.08	—						
5. Overall Negative Identity	.78**	.91**	66**	69**	—					
6. Emotional Symptoms	.08	-.03	-.14	.26	.02	—				
7. Conduct Problems	-.40	.09	-.10	.04	-.08	.36	—			
8. Hyperactivity/Inattention	-.09	-.04	.07	-.12	-.05	.34	.31	—		
9. Peer Problems	.35	.38	.08	.11	.34	.62*	-.14	.16	—	
10. Total Difficulties	.07	.16	.000	.10	.13	.83**	.39	.72**	72**	—

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Table 6

Correlations for Gender Socialization and SDQ for Mothers Answering About their Daughters

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Gender Socialization – Stereotyped Boys' Toys	—								
2. Gender Socialization – Stereotyped Girls' Toys	.62**	—							
3. Gender Socialization – Helping at Home	.42*	.25	—						
4. Gender Socialization – Education for Family and Marriage	-.33	-.10	.04	—					
5. Emotional Symptoms	-.41	-.31	.02	.18	.74**	—			
6. Conduct Problems	-.27	-.29	-.26	-.16	.04	.26	—		
7. Hyperactivity/Inattention	-.27	-.20	.05	.02	.29	.47*	.63**	—	
8. Peer Problems	-.33	-.27	.08	.56**	.72**	.73**	.12	.31	—
9. Total Difficulties	-.40	-.34	01	.23	.61**	.82**	.62**	.82**	.74**

*p < .05. **p < .01.

Table 7

Correlations for Gender Socialization and SDQ for Mothers Answering About their Sons

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Gender Socialization – Stereotyped Boys' Toys	—								
2. Gender Socialization – Stereotyped Girls' Toys	-.01	—							
3. Gender Socialization – Helping at Home	.04	.35	—						
4. Gender Socialization – Education for Family and Marriage	.16	-.13	.06	—					
5. Emotional Symptoms	-.41	-.34	-.11	-.31	.45	—			
6. Conduct Problems	-.09	-.01	.16	-.05	-.27	.36	—		

7. Hyperactivity/Inattention	.12	-.40	-.60*	.08	-.05	.34	.31	—	
8. Peer Problems	-.54*	-.33	-.16	-.23	.41	.62*	-.14	.16.	—
9. Total Difficulties	-.27	-.50	-.42	-.15	.25	.83**	.39	.72**	.72** —

$^*p < .05.$ $^{**}p < .01.$

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to explore the correlations between and within lesbian mothers' gender-neutral parenting attitudes, negative dimensions of sexual orientation identity, and child outcomes, and to identify demographic differences that distinguish mothers' gender-neutral parenting attitudes. For this purpose, three quantitative measures and four open-ended response questions were utilized to develop a mixed-methods survey. This study builds upon the literature by affirming results from previous studies and discovering novel associations relating to lesbian mothers' gender-neutral parenting attitudes.

Internalized Homonegativity

For mothers answering about their daughters, internalized homonegativity was associated with peer problems, emotional symptoms, and total difficulties. Mothers who did not struggle with internalized homonegativity did not report these internalizing and externalizing problems in their daughters. Internalized homonegativity has been linked to depression, self-esteem issues, and general psychological distress (Cox et al., 2008; 2011; DiPlacido, 1998; Lewis, et al., 2001; Meyer, 1995; Shidlo, 1994; Vanden Berghe, Dewaele, Cox, & Vincke, 2010). Due to the fact that they struggle with wishing they were not lesbian, these mothers may face these aspects of psychological distress that may affect their interactions with their daughters, resulting in certain negative outcomes.

High levels of internalized homonegativity have also been identified as a contributing factor in decreased interpersonal relationship quality and dissatisfaction with social support and social well-being (Frost & Meyer, 2009; Skerven & Aubin, 2015). This negative impact on interpersonal relationships as a result of internalized homonegativity may explain why daughters of lesbian mothers may present with more peer problems and emotional symptoms, as children

model the behavior of the relationships they observe in their environment (Crain, 2010). Little research is available on lesbian mothers and the impact of internalized homonegativity on their child's outcomes. Within the SDQ scale for mothers answering about their daughters, emotional symptoms was positively correlated with hyperactivity/inattention and peer problems. There was also a positive correlation between hyperactivity/inattention and conduct problems. For mothers answering about their sons, internalized homonegativity was positively associated with difficult process and concealment motivation, but not associated with any subscales on the gender-neutral parenting attitudes measure.

Concealment Motivation, Difficult Process, and Acceptance Concerns

Among all mothers, regardless of the identified sex of their child, concealment motivation was positively associated with difficult process. This correlation has been found in prior research on lesbian and gay individuals, and suggests those with more difficulties accepting their sexuality appear to have more motivational efforts to conceal their sexual orientation identity (Pepping, Cronin, Halford, & Lyons, 2019). For mothers answering about their daughters, the correlations within the LGBIS subscales indicated acceptance concerns was positively associated with difficult process, and concealment motivation was positively associated with acceptance concerns. The correlation between acceptance concerns and difficult process have been identified in prior studies (Mohr & Fassinger, 2003), and similarly with concealment motivation and acceptance concerns (Mohr & Kendra, 2011).

Sex of the Child

The results from this study suggest the sex of the child plays an influential role in lesbian mothers' gender-neutral attitudes. For daughters of lesbian mothers, the encouragement of stereotyped toys/activities for girls was positively associated with stereotyped toys/activities for

27

boys. This suggests that lesbian mothers tend to encourage their daughters to engage with stereotyped toys/activities for both boys and girls, indicating lesbian mothers' adoption of a gender-neutral approach regarding their daughters' behavior and activities. As one mother described this with their own daughter, "She enjoys dance class and cooking with us and also cleaning up after herself which, I guess play into heteronormative gender roles. She also enjoys building things with Legos, reading, crafts, and playing with her toy cars. She enjoys being outside in the summer and likes to play soccer with her mom. Some of these things could be considered outside of gender norms."

Similarly, helping at home was positively correlated with the encouragement of toys/activities stereotyped for boys, thus mothers who encourage their daughters to help with household chores are likely to also encourage their daughters to engage with toys/activities stereotyped for boys. This indicates mothers' support of traditional feminine and masculine stereotyped activities for their daughters, and their adoption of a more gender-neutral child rearing practice (Goldberg, Kashy, & Smith, 2012). Since these associations were not present for mothers answering about their sons, it appears that the adoption of this gender-neutral approach is influenced by the sex of the child. Farr, Bruun, Doss, and Patterson (2018) found that children's gender was associated with significant differences in observations of play during early childhood, as girls played with toys stereotyped for girls and gender-neutral toys for approximately equal amounts of time, yet boys spent more time with toys stereotyped for boys than gender-neutral toys. This finding did not differ based on family structure, as it was evident for lesbian, gay, and heterosexual families (Farr, Bruun, Doss, & Patterson, 2018).

Significant correlations between internalized homonegativity with peer problems, emotional symptoms, and total difficulties were found specifically for lesbian mothers answering

based on their daughters' behaviors. For lesbian mothers, sharing a gender identity with their daughter may create an additional layer of contention when they have significant feelings of internal homonegativity. The societal pressures of femininity may further explain why the added stress of internalized homonegativity may transmit as peer problems, emotional symptoms, and total difficulties for daughters. Despite this speculation, few studies have investigated the unique relationship between lesbian mothers and their daughters (Lerner & Sinacore, 2012). This supports the broader literature on lesbian mothers which suggests that their children do not experience worse outcomes compared with other children (Anderssen, Amlie, & Ytterøy, 2002; Baiocco, Carone, Ioverno, & Lingiardi, 2018). Instead, the child's outcomes tend to be more determined by their parent's experience of stigma, heterosexism, and poor social support (Perrin et al., 2013; Goldberg, 2010).

For mothers answering about their sons, there was a negative correlation between the encouragement of toys/activities stereotyped for boys and peer problems. Thus, boys who were more encouraged to engage with toys/activities stereotyped for boys were less likely to experience difficulty interacting with peers. For boys, conforming to behaviors and activities that are deemed masculine helps them to fit within their peer group, thus leading them to experience less peer problems. There was a positive correlation between emotional symptoms and peer problems, therefore, the boys that struggle interacting with peers also tend to express more symptoms related to negative emotions and anxieties. Prior research has shown masculine ideals are a moderator of this relationship, as boys tend to conform to masculine behaviors deemed acceptable within their peer groups, which leads to the repression of emotions and a desire to mask their true feelings (Randell, Jerdén, Öhman, Starrin, & Flacking, 2016). This area of research on boys' gender conformity within peer groups is fairly limited, and has mostly focused

on boys during adolescence (Way et al., 2014). As one mother explained, "He loves pink, unicorns, and sequin shirts. I think it's great that he's not confined by gender norms, but I do worry that he will be bullied. I usually try to push him away from "girly" clothing so he won't be bullied."

The encouragement of toys/activities stereotyped for boys may act as a social buffer for boys, as conforming to masculine ideals and characteristics may aid them in fitting into social groups. This coincides with research indicating conforming to traditionally masculine activities stereotyped for boys is associated with a higher social status than girls conforming to traditionally feminine activities (Ruble, Martin, & Berenbaum, 2006), and children that challenge gender stereotypes are subject to increased social isolation (Horn & Sinno, 2014; Mulvey & Killen, 2015). This differential treatment of boys versus girls has been implicated in previous studies (Kane, 2006), and has been found among lesbian, gay, and heterosexual family structures (Farr, Bruun, Doss, & Patterson, 2018). Thus, this influence of the sex of the child is not limited only to lesbian mothers.

Challenging Gender Stereotypes

For mothers answering about their daughters, helping at home was negatively correlated with difficult process, acceptance concerns, concealment motivation, and overall negative identity. Thus, mothers who struggle more with these negative dimensions of their sexual orientation identity are less likely to encourage their daughters to help with household chores. Mothers that did not struggle with these dimensions of their identity encouraged their daughters to help with household chores. This trend was not evident for sons, as the only association found with helping at home was a negative correlation with hyperactivity/inattention. This correlation between helping at home and negative dimensions of sexual orientation identity specifically for

mothers answering about their daughters provides more evidence for the recurring trend suggesting that the sex of the child plays an influential role in the ways these variables interact. These correlations suggest that lesbian mothers that struggle with certain dimensions of their sexual orientation identity may feel inclined to challenge some of the traditional domestic qualities surrounding feminine gender roles.

In-depth interviews with 18 LGBTQ parents indicated that while some parents seek to offer their children a variety of gendered options for clothing, toys, and activities and interests (adopting amore gender-neutral approach), others are more critical of their children engaging in characteristics of masculinity and femininity they deem harmful or dangerous (Averett, 2016). The existence of these two approaches to gendered behavior in children should be further investigated to determine additional facets of identity that may contribute to LGBTQ parents' adoption of either approach. The results from this study suggest lesbian mothers with an overall negative lesbian identity may be more inclined to adopt this critical approach as a means to challenge dominant gender stereotypes. As explained by one mother, "I have friends that are strongly against letting their children be girly. Constantly criticizing girly toys and activities. And I can't help sometimes but feel like the whole gender neutral thing is an attack on being feminine…If my son wants to wear pink or my daughter (who is extremely competitive) wants to play sports, it doesn't matter. As long as they know they are supported in every choice they make, and loved for who they are."

The negative reliability of the disapproval of other-gender characteristics scale suggests that the participants gave similar responses on the questionnaire items for this scale. The two questions that comprised this scale included 27. *I would discourage my son (daughter) from playing with girls' (boys') toys or games* and 28. *I would discourage my son (daughter) from*

acting like a girl (boy). Frequency statistics of this question revealed that for both questions, 39 of the participants selected "Strongly Disagree" and 1 participant selected "Somewhat Disagree". This suggests that lesbian mothers do not actively discourage their children from expressing other-gender characteristics. This coincides with prior research that lesbian mothers show a greater acceptance of gender nonconformity (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010).

Impact of Education

Race, gender, age of the parent, age of the child, income level, and education level were all examined to determine if any of these variables could differentiate lesbian mothers' gender-neutral parenting attitudes. Results indicated education level contained the only significant difference, with lower levels of education associated with the encouragement of toys/activities stereotyped for both girls and boys. Thus, lesbian mothers with lower education levels tend to be more highly stereotyped within their attitudes regarding their children's activities and behavior as compared to lesbian mothers with higher education levels. The impact of education on mothers' parenting practices towards gender was frequently mentioned in mothers' responses to the third open-ended question. When asked to describe other factors related to their identity that have impacted their parenting practices towards gender, mothers included responses such as, "Education level plays a role for sure", "Education in awareness makes a huge difference", and "I believe my opinion is more due to my upbringing and education."

The influence of education on gender stereotyping has been evident within the literature, as parents with lower education levels have expressed more traditional gender role attitudes and gender-typing of toys for their children as compared to parents with higher educational levels (Kollmayer, Schultes, Schober, Hodosi, & Spiel, 2018). Similarly, lower maternal educational level has been shown to be related to stronger explicit attitudes about gender (Endendijk et al.,

32

2013). In a systematic review of quantitative studies, more highly educated parents generally expressed more equitable gender attitudes than parents of lower education levels (Kågesten et al., 2016). The current study builds upon this literature by validating its presence within a non-heterosexual sample. Few, if any, studies have indicated this link between education levels and gender-neutral attitudes among lesbian participants.

Implications

This exploratory study contributes to the growing body of literature on gender-neutral parenting practices among lesbian mothers by providing an explanation into how their experience with negative dimensions of their sexual orientation identity has influenced their attitudes about children's gendered behavior and activities, and how this resultantly affects their child's outcomes. After becoming a parent, lesbian mothers become involved in a complex journey of negotiating ideologies of gender, sexuality, and parenting unique to their identity (Berkowitz & Ryan, 2011). Prior research has shown than lesbian parents hold less gender-stereotyped beliefs and behaviors as compared to heterosexual parents, thus lesbian parents represent a unique population by which gender socialization occurs for children (Goldberg, 2007; Tasker & Golombok, 1997). The results from this study provide new insight into lesbian mothers' attitudes towards children's gender-related behavior and activities, and how it can differ based on their internalization of negative dimensions of their sexual orientation identity, the sex of their child, and their education level.

Several studies have indicated that children raised by lesbian women do not experience adverse outcomes compared with other children (Anderssen, Amlie, & Ytterøy, 2002; Baiocco, Carone, Ioverno, & Lingiardi, 2018). Rather, the societal presence of stigma, heterosexism, and social support have been identified as more important influences on children's developmental

outcomes than only the sexual orientation of their parents (Perrin et al., 2013; Goldberg, 2010). This was reflected in the results of the current study, as negative child outcomes were only found to be in association with negative dimensions of a parent's sexual orientation identity. These results have significant implications for therapists and clinicians, as they provide insight into how certain negative internalizations can harbor within lesbian mothers.

Furthermore, these results indicate professionals have the opportunity to foster growth and self-acceptance within sexual minority individuals. They can play an influential role in helping to dismantle some of the harmful and stigmatizing effects experienced as a result of larger societal expectations surrounding roles and expectations for gender and sexuality. This suggests a larger need for support among lesbian mothers, particularly an awareness surrounding heteronormative and heterosexist assumptions and the social stigma faced by sexual minority parents. Through this, lesbian mothers can be given the space to celebrate the value of their own diversity, allowing both themselves and their children to feel valued and important (Rawsthorne, 2009).

Limitations and Future Directions

One limitation to this study is the small sample size and lack of racial diversity. Parents align with several intersecting identities, which plays a significant role in their attitudes and beliefs regarding their allowance of children's gender expression. Future research should aim to include diverse LGBTQ family structures in order to understand the variation that exists within in the experiences of LGBTQ parents (Averett, 2016). The findings within this study suggest a unique relationship between lesbian mothers and their daughters that may create different approaches and beliefs about girls' gendered behavior. Similar studies are relatively unknown, as research on lesbian mothers and their daughters is sparse within the literature (Lerner &

Sinacore, 2012). Due to the small sample size, the present significant results lack the statistical power of larger studies. The low reliabilities for the acceptance concerns and disapproval of other gender characteristics subscales are notable weaknesses of the study. Future research within this area should be conducted to further explore these preliminary correlations and include multivariate examinations of these constructs, such as hierarchical linear regression and other multivariate analyses.

An additional limitation to the study includes the reliance on reporting from parents only. Although it was beyond the scope of the study, including reports from outside observers such as teachers or other caregivers would have reduced the risk of parent self-report bias. However, previous literature has indicated high agreement between parent reports and teacher reports on the SDQ for primary school-aged children, which lessens concerns about parent self-report bias for this measure (Stone et al., 2010, 2015). The study utilized direct quotations as a basic source of qualitative data. While this method is informative, it is limited by the writing skills of the participants, inability to ask probing or elaborative questions, and a potential lack of effort to write a response (Patton, 2002). Future studies should conduct in-depth interviews related to the variables of interest to gain a deeper comprehension of the results from the current study.

This research was initially aimed to include both lesbian and gay parents, and recruitment efforts targeted both groups. However, all participants in this study identified as lesbian mothers. Few studies investigate the narratives of both lesbian and gay parents as they relate to their children's gender (Berkowitz & Ryan, 2011). This may be largely attributed to the fact that few studies on sexual minority parent families represent gay father families as compared with lesbian mother families, and there is little inclusion of gay fathers in research specifically on parental attitudes and behaviors regarding gender (Farr, Bruun, Doss, & Patterson, 2018). Much of the

35

research on the role of parental sexual orientation and children's gendered attitudes and behavior has involved comparisons of children raised by lesbian mothers and heterosexual parents (Goldberg, Kashy, & Smith, 2012).

Conclusion

The gendered ways that parents interact with their children can have significant effects on their child's development and sense of self (Dumas, 2014). To gain a deeper and more diverse understanding of children's gender socialization, it is important to examine how young children's behavior and activities occur throughout the lifespan, in various settings. As family structures become increasingly diverse, research must evolve in order to include the experiences of LGBTQ families and how they approach gender within their parenting practices (Goldberg, Kashy, & Smith, 2012). The results from this study suggest that the associations between a parent's sexual orientation and gender-neutral parenting attitudes may be more complex than previously thought, as factors such as the sex of the child, education level, and internalized homonegativity can play a significant role on gender-neutral parenting attitudes and child outcomes among lesbian mothers.

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APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board
4N-64 Brody Medical Sciences Building· Mail Stop 682
600 Moye Boulevard · Greenville, NC 27834
Office **252-744-2914** · Fax **252-744-2284** ·
rede.ecu.edu/umcirb/

Notification of Exempt Certification

From: Social/Behavioral IRB
To: Brittany Alligood
CC: Archana Hegde
Date: 11/25/2019
Re: UMCIRB 19-002953
         THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN IDENTITY, CHILD OUTCOMES, AND GENDER-NEUTRAL PARENTING
         ATTITUDES OF LESBIAN AND GAY PARENTS

I am pleased to inform you that your research submission has been certified as exempt on 11/24/2019. This study is eligible for Exempt Certification under category # 2ab.

It is your responsibility to ensure that this research is conducted in the manner reported in your application and/or protocol, as well as being consistent with the ethical principles of the Belmont Report and your profession.

This research study does not require any additional interaction with the UMCIRB unless there are proposed changes to this study. Any change, prior to implementing that change, must be submitted to the UMCIRB for review and approval. The UMCIRB will determine if the change impacts the eligibility of the research for exempt status. If more substantive review is required, you will be notified within five business days.

Document	Description
Consent Paragraph.doc(0.01)	Consent Forms
thesis flyer.jpg(0.01)	Recruitment Documents/Scripts
Thesis Proposal with Edits.docx(0.01)	Study Protocol or Grant Application
Thesis Survey.docx(0.01)	Surveys and Questionnaires

For research studies where a waiver of HIPAA Authorization has been approved, each of the waiver criteria in 45 CFR 164.512(i)(2)(ii) has been met. Additionally, the elements of PHI to be collected as described in items 1 and 2 of the Application for Waiver of Authorization have been determined to be the minimal necessary for the specified research.

The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

IRB00000705 East Carolina U IRB #1 (Biomedical) IORG0000418
IRB00003781 East Carolina U IRB #2 (Behavioral/SS) IORG0000418

APPENDIX B: DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

1. What is your age? _____

2. What age is your child? _____

3. How do you identify your gender? _____

4. How do you identify your sexual orientation? _____

5. How do you describe your race or ethnicity? _____

6. What is your occupation? _____

7. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? (If you're currently enrolled in school, please indicate the highest degree you have received.)
   o Less than a high school diploma
   o High school degree or equivalent (e.g. GED)
   o Some college
   o Associate degree (e.g. AA, AS)
   o Bachelor's degree (e.g. BA, BS)
   o Master's degree (e.g. MA, MS, MEd)
   o Professional degree (e.g. MD, DDS, DVM)
   o Doctorate (e.g. PhD, EdD)

8. What is your current household income?
   o Less than $20,000
   o $20,000 to $34,999
   o $35,000 to $49,999
   o $50,000 to $74,999
   o $75,000 to $99,999
   o Over $100,000

APPENDIX C: CHILD GENDER SOCIALIZATION SCALE

Below are several activities in which your child might engage now or in the future. Indicate your evaluation of your child doing these things on this scale. There are no right or wrong answers, only opinions.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Negative	Somewhat Negative	Slightly Negative	Neutral	Slightly Positive	Somewhat Positive	Very Positive

1. Taking ballet lessons.
2. Cleaning his (her) room.
3. Helping with the laundry.
4. Taking out the garbage.
5. Playing football.
6. Playing with military toys.
7. Playing with a toy kitchen set.
8. Playing with toy guns.
9. Playing with toy jewelry.
10. Playing with a toy dish set.
11. Playing with a toy tool kit.
12. Sweeping the floor.
13. Cutting the grass.
14. Setting the table.
15. Playing with a toy nurse kit.
16. Playing hopscotch.
17. Playing with G.I. Joes.
18. Playing with toy trucks
19. Playing with Barbie Dolls.
20. Washing the dishes.
21. Playing with baby dolls.
22. Playing with toy cars.

Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. There are no right or wrong answers, only opinions.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree

23. I would encourage my son (daughter) to go to college.
24. I would want my son's (daughter's) education to prepare him (her) for marriage.
25. I would want my son's (daughter's) education to prepare him (her) for earning a living.
26. I would want my son's (daughter's) education to prepare him (her) for child rearing.
27. I would discourage my son (daughter) from playing with girls' (boys') toys or games.
28. I would discourage my son (daughter) from acting like a girl (boy).

APPENDIX D: LESBIAN, GAY, AND BISEXUAL IDENTITY SCALE

For each of the following questions, please mark the response that best indicates your current experience as an LGB person. Please be as honest as possible: Indicate how you really feel now, not how you think you should feel. There is no need to think too much about any one question. Answer each question according to your initial reaction and then move on to the next.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I prefer to keep my same-sex romantic relationships rather private.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. If it were possible, I would choose to be straight.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. I'm not totally sure what my sexual orientation is.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. I keep careful control over who knows about my same-sex romantic relationships.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. I often wonder whether others judge me for my sexual orientation.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. I am glad to be an LGB person	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. I look down on heterosexuals.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. I keep changing my mind about my sexual orientation.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. I can't feel comfortable knowing that others judge me negatively for my sexual orientation.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. I feel that LGB people are superior to heterosexuals.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. My sexual orientation is an insignificant part of who I am.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. Admitting to myself that I'm an LGB person has been a very painful process.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. I'm proud to be part of the LGB community.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. I can't decide whether I am bisexual or homosexual.	1	2	3	4	5	6

15. My sexual orientation is a central part of my identity.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. I think a lot about how my sexual orientation affects the way people see me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. Admitting to myself that I'm an LGB person has been a very slow process.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. Straight people have boring lives compared with LGB people.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. My sexual orientation is a very personal and private matter.	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. I wish I were heterosexual.	1	2	3	4	5	6
21. To understand who I am as a person, you have to know that I'm LGB.	1	2	3	4	5	6
22. I get very confused when I try to figure out my sexual orientation.	1	2	3	4	5	6
23. I have felt comfortable with my sexual identity just about from the start.	1	2	3	4	5	6
24. Being an LGB person is a very important aspect of my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6
25. I believe being LGB is an important part of me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
26. I am proud to be LGB.	1	2	3	4	5	6
27. I believe it is unfair that I am attracted to people of the same sex.	1	2	3	4	5	6

APPENDIX E: STRENGTHS AND DIFFICULTIES QUESTIONNAIRE

For each item, please mark the box for Not True, Somewhat True or Certainly True. It would help us if you answered all items as best you can even if you are not absolutely certain or the item seems daft! Please give your answers on the basis of the child's behavior over the last six months or this school year.

	Not True	Somewhat True	Certainly True
1. Considerate of other people's feelings	□	□	□
2. Restless, overactive, cannot stay still for long	□	□	□
3. Often complains of headaches, stomach-aches or sickness	□	□	□
4. Shares readily with other children (treats, toys, pencils etc)	□	□	□
5. Often has temper tantrums or hot tempers	□	□	□
6. Rather solitary, tends to play alone	□	□	□
7. Generally obedient, usually does what adults request	□	□	□
8. Many worries, often seems worried	□	□	□
9. Helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill	□	□	□
10. Constantly fidgeting or squirming	□	□	□
11. Has at least one good friend	□	□	□
12. Often fights with other children or bullies them	□	□	□
13. Often unhappy, down-hearted or tearful	□	□	□
14. Generally liked by other children	□	□	□
15. Easily distracted, concentration wanders	□	□	□
16. Nervous or clingy in new situations, easily loses confidence	□	□	□
17. Kind to younger children	□	□	□
18. Often lies or cheats	□	□	□
19. Picked on or bullied by other children	□	□	□
20. Often volunteers to help others (parents, teachers, other children)	□	□	□
21. Thinks things out before acting	□	□	□
22. Steals from home, school or elsewhere	□	□	□

23. Gets on better with adults than with other children   □   □   □

24. Many fears, easily scared   □   □   □

25. Sees tasks through to the end. good attention span   □   □   □

APPENDIX F: OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe your attitudes about children's gender-related behavior?

   _____

2. How do you believe your sexual orientation has impacted your parenting practices

   towards gender?

   _____

3. Do you believe there are other factors (i.g. age, race, education level, occupation, income

   level) related to your identity that have impacted your parenting practices towards

   gender?

   _____

4. Are there any additional comments you would like to add?

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED!

We are conducting a research study of gender-neutral parenting attitudes among lesbian and gay parents, and need your participation! The study will consist of an online Qualtrics survey that will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. All participants will have the opportunity to be entered to win a random drawing for a $10 Target gift card.

In order to participate, you must:
-Have at least one child between the ages of 3 and 8
- Identify as lesbian or gay

If you meet the requirements and wish to participate, go to the link below:

bit.ly/2r04qyF

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