

Eden B. King, Ann H. Huffman, and Chad I. Peddie

The workplace is a critical context in which to understand the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) parents. A growing body of research emerging from the disciplines of organizational and counseling psychology provides important evidence regarding LGBT workers. In her comprehensive review of the literature on LGBT people in the workplace, management scholar Belle Ragins (2004) described three dominant challenges faced by LGBT people. First, Ragins reflected on the issues that arise as a function of the fact that the invisibility of an LGBT identity often leads to assumptions of heterosexuality. LGBT workers who have not disclosed their sexual or gender identity may be subject to indirect discrimination as their coworkers disparage gay or lesbian people or make “gay” jokes. In contrast, LGBT workers who have disclosed their identity face different issues, such as

backlash and discrimination as a result of their disclosure (King, Reilly, & Hebl, 2008). These outcomes illustrate a disclosure dilemma wherein many LGBT workers encounter negative outcomes regardless of the disclosure decision they make. This dilemma can result in psychologically demanding and constant efforts to manage an LGBT identity at work (Button, 2001) to avoid discrimination.

Indeed, the second challenge Ragins (2004) described is negative coworker reactions. Ragins argued that LGBT workers likely face negative coworker reactions due to the perceived controllability of sexual orientation and to the threats that some coworkers experience in response to LGBT people. These threats include a tangible threat (fear of health and safety), a symbolic threat (defensiveness of moral or political views), and personal threats (questions regarding one’s own sexual identity). This framework is consistent with experimental evidence that heterosexual job applicants are rated (Horvath & Ryan, 2003) and treated (Hebl, Foster, Mannix, & Dovidio, 2002) more positively than gay and lesbian applicants. In addition, Ragins’ ideas about negative reactions are also consistent with survey data which demonstrate that as much as 66% of LGBT people report experiencing discrimination (Croteau, 1996) and more than a third of gay and lesbian professionals indicate encountering sexuality-related physical or verbal harassment at work (Ragins & Cornwell, 2001).

The third and final challenge Ragins (2004) highlighted is the lack of social support that

E.B. King, Ph.D. (✉)
Department of Psychology, George Mason University,
4400 University Drive, MSN 3f5, Fairfax,
VA 22030, USA
e-mail: eking6@gmu.edu

A.H. Huffman, Ph.D.
Department of Psychology and W. A. Franke College
of Business, Northern Arizona University, Box 15106,
Flagstaff, AZ 86011, USA
e-mail: ann.huffman@nau.edu

C.I. Peddie, M.A.
Human Resources Research Organization, 66 Canal
Center Plaza, Suite 700, Alexandria, VA 22314, USA
e-mail: ianscorp@aol.com

LGBT people likely find inside and outside of the workplace. Because of their minority status and the concealability of their identity, LGBT workers may find it difficult to identify other LGBT people at work. This lack of connection may make it difficult for LGBT employees to access both tangible and psychosocial resources (King et al., 2008). For example, LGBT people might not know who it is safe to ask about accessing same-sex partner benefits, or who to talk to about experiences of heterosexism. At an institutional level, some of the structures (families, schools, churches) that support members of other stigmatized groups (such as women and ethnic minorities) are not always as welcoming of or helpful to LGBT people (Ragins, 2004). This lack of support, both internal and external to their workplaces, can lead to feelings of isolation. In sum, research has demonstrated that LGBT people encounter numerous challenges in the workplace.

However, very little empirical evidence has considered the unique challenges that may emerge when LGBT people balance the demands of work with the responsibilities of family (i.e., work–family conflict). Although a substantial body of psychological research on the work–family interface has explored antecedents and consequences associated with work–family conflict among heterosexual workers (see Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinley, 2005), little is known about the ways in which the work–family interface is experienced by LGBT people. Thus, the goal of this chapter is to integrate the growing body of research on LGBT workplace issues with primarily heterocentric research on the work–family interface. We will begin by briefly discussing the major conclusions of work–family interface research. Next, we will synthesize research on LGBT workplace and family issues to highlight the concerns of LGBT parents and the ways in which these experiences might be improved. We will conclude by offering potential next steps for research and practice with the hope of building understanding related to potential barriers and opportunities for LGBT parents at work.

The Work–Family Interface

Research on the intersection of the work and family domains has burgeoned in the past two decades, dismantling the expectation that the balance of these two domains could be achieved through the enactment of traditional gender roles. These traditional gender roles frame men as “breadwinners,” whose sole responsibility is in the workplace, and women as “homemakers,” whose sole responsibility is child and household labor (Eagly, 1987). Surges of women entering the workforce beginning with the second wave of the feminist movement of the 1960s created family settings where traditional gender roles were no longer functional (Bond, Thompson, Galinsky, & Prottas, 2002). Today, most parents, regardless of family structure, are balancing multiple roles that blend work and family responsibilities.

Importantly, as implied by the heterocentric description of the evolution of the work–family interface above, very little of this rapidly growing area of research has focused on the ways in which LGBT people balance work and family. A recent methodological review of work–family research in organizational psychology and management identified no studies on LGBT families (Casper, Eby, Bordeaux, Lockwood, & Lambert, 2007). Instead, existing organizational/management research (including that of this chapter’s authors) tends to take a heterocentric approach wherein parents are implicitly defined as opposite-gender, married, cohabiting couples (see Dunne, 2000). This presumption is particularly problematic in light of the fact that research on LGBT families in other disciplines (such as family psychology and sociology) generally does not directly address the *work* experiences of LGBT people. Here we will briefly review organizational scholarship on the work–family interface as a basis for building understanding of the ways in which simultaneous involvement in family and work is experienced by employees. Next, we describe the ways that parents, scholars, and employers might be informed by fully integrating LGBT parents in conceptualizations of the work–family interface.

Theoretical Models of the Work–Family Interface

The term “work–family interface” refers to the experiences that occur at the intersection between work and family domains. Common perspectives that address this interface include work–family conflict (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964) and work–family enrichment (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). A common theme underlying each of these perspectives is their reliance on *role theory* (Katz & Kahn, 1978), which posits that people are involved in multiple roles that can affect one another. A “work” role is defined as the engagement in activities that result in the provision of monetary goods and services which sustain living (Piotrkowski, Rapoport, & Rapoport, 1987). “Family” roles entail involvement, obligation, or responsibility to collections of individuals related by marriage, biology, or adoption (Piotrkowski et al., 1987). Activities related to the family domain involve contributions to the sustaining of family well-being such as child care or food preparation.

Whereas many researchers initially conceptualized the work–family interface as a unidirectional phenomenon whereby experiences at work were observed to impact those of the family, researchers now realize that this interface is actually bidirectional (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992). The most common term used to capture the negative aspects of the work–family interface is work–family conflict. The concept of work–family conflict hinges on the scarcity hypothesis, which posits that the treatment of roles in the work and family domains are incompatible to a certain extent (Kahn et al., 1964). *Role conflict* emerges when the demands of one role make it difficult to fulfill the demands of another role. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) defined three distinct forms of work–family interrole conflict: time-based conflict, strain-based conflict, and behavior-based conflict. Time-based conflict captures situations where participation in either work or family events is prevented by simultaneously occurring responsibilities in the other domain. As an example, a parent might miss a parent–teacher conference due to a meeting at work. Strain-

based conflict involves the affective experiences—such as anxiety, stress, and tension—that arise due to demands in both domains. Finally, behavior-based conflict stems from a discrepancy between styles of behavior in both roles. For example, a partner may be expected to be loving and supportive at home, while assertive and authoritative as a supervisor at work.

Although much of the research devoted to the work and family interface focuses on the negative effects of one domain on the other, it is important to realize that under certain conditions the interaction of work and family can have positive effects (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Researchers investigating positive work–family interactions suggest that participating in multiple roles may be beneficial, such that one’s participation in one role can enhance performance in another role (e.g., work–family enrichment; Barnett & Hyde, 2001).

Consequences of the Work–Family Interface

A growing body of research (limited to heterosexual workers, most of whom have children) has established that work–family conflict is linked with important outcomes in work settings as well as in other areas of life (e.g., Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). For example, with regard to work, meta-analytic work has uncovered a strong negative relationship between work–family conflict and job satisfaction (Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000). Additionally, Allen et al. (2000) identified unfavorable relationships between work–family conflict and affective organizational commitment, turnover, and job performance. Similarly unfavorable relationships emerge between work–family conflict and other aspects of life. Again, meta-analyses found a strong negative relationship between work–family conflict and life satisfaction (Allen et al., 2000). Allen et al. (2000) also identified negative relationships between work–family conflict and both marital and family satisfaction. These findings were found to hold among professionals working in a wide variety of occupational settings.

A relatively small set of studies has considered the positive outcomes of work–family enrichment. Positive work–family interactions have been found to hold favorable relationships with work outcomes including job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Van Steenbergen, Ellemers, & Mooijaart, 2007). Similarly, work–family enrichment is positively associated with individual outcomes such as well-being and satisfaction (Van Steenbergen et al., 2007).

Factors that Influence the Work–Family Interface

In addition to investigating important outcomes of work–family conflict and enrichment, researchers have also explored the factors that might facilitate a positive work–family interface (almost exclusively among opposite-sex couples with children). Eby et al. (2005) reviewed predictors of the work–family interface including family characteristics, job attributes, organizational characteristics, spouse variables, and individual differences. This review demonstrated strong relationships between elements of the work domain and work–family conflict such as work demands (e.g., work hours; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000), involvement in work (Carlson & Perrewé, 1999), and an unsupportive organizational culture or supervisor (Nielson, Carlson, & Lankau, 2001). Similarly, empirical research has demonstrated that family characteristics such as concerns about child care (Buffardi & Erdwins, 1997) and the degree to which individuals identify psychologically with their family role (Carlson & Perrewé, 1999) can increase work–family conflict. There have been fewer studies on predictors of work–family enrichment. Research has shown that characteristics such as self-esteem, family support, job characteristics, and supervisor support and family-related characteristics such as family member support are all positively related to work–family enrichment (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000).

One individual difference variable that has been shown to influence the work–family interface of heterosexual employees is gender. Gender plays an important role in the work–family

interface in part because of the ideology of gender roles described at the outset of this section. In the work domain, men are perceived to be fulfilling the ideals of masculinity by focusing on their careers, whereas women are seen as eschewing the feminine gender role by engaging in the same behavior (Eagly, 1987). Equally problematic is the parallel process in the home domain: women who focus on their families are seen as embodying femininity, whereas men sometimes receive social penalties for heavy involvement in their families (such as working part-time; Eagly & Steffen, 1984). Ultimately, in line with Eagly (1987), social expectations about the roles of men and women are perpetuated through gendered behaviors.

Indeed, women in heterosexual relationships tend to be responsible for the majority of household and child-care labor irrespective of their employment status (see Coltrane, 2000). Importantly, however, evidence regarding gender differences in work–family conflict is mixed, with some studies suggesting women experience more conflict than men (Behson, 2002) and others suggesting comparable levels of conflict (Duxbury & Higgins, 1991). More nuanced analyses of gender differences in the factors that give rise to work–family conflict point to the variable impact of specific conditions; for example, in their study of 131 men and 109 women, Duxbury and Higgins (1991) found that being oriented toward work was a stronger predictor of conflict for women than men, whereas being oriented toward family was a stronger predictor of conflict for men than women. One generally consistent finding is that becoming a parent tends to have more detrimental effects on the careers of women than men. In one survey study of nearly 100 supervisor–subordinate dyads (King, 2008), heterosexual men and women with children reported equivalent levels of commitment to work and desire for development and advancement, but their supervisors perceived the fathers to be more committed to work and interested in development and advancement than mothers. Moreover, these inaccurate perceptions accounted for gender discrepancies in pay and promotions, whereby men were paid more than women and were more likely to be promoted. Such findings are consistent with

the notion that women's workplace advancement is often blocked by a "motherhood penalty" or a "maternal wall" (Williams, 2004).

In summary, there is a large and growing body of evidence on predictors and outcomes of the work–family interface for opposite-sex, cohabitating, married couples (Casper et al., 2007). But what of families of LGBT people?

The Work–Family Interface of LGBT Parents

Empirical data regarding the work–family interface for people in same-sex relationships are scarce. In fact, it has only been since 1990 that the U.S. Census has collected data regarding unmarried partners. Researchers have begun to explore the experiences of LGBT parents in part by inferring an LGBT identity for individuals who indicate that they have an "unmarried partner" of the same sex (Prokos & Keene, 2010). Evidence from the Census suggests that these couples tend to be more highly educated and more inclined to hold two incomes than heterosexual families (Black, Sanders, & Taylor, 2007). Additionally, the Census estimates that 22% of male same-sex couples and 33% of female same-sex couples have children, whereas approximately 45% of heterosexual couples have children (Simmons & O'Connell, 2003).

It is not yet clear whether empirical findings on the work–family interface of heterosexual parents can be generalized to LGBT parents. On the one hand, O'Ryan and McFarland's (2010) interview-based study of five lesbian and four gay couples found that LGBT parents use strategies that are not unlike those of heterosexual parents to balance work and family (e.g., carefully weighing work decisions and creating positive social networks). In addition, Mercier's (2006) interview-based study of 21 lesbian parents suggested that workplace flexibility was considered a benefit for family in much the same way as it is for heterosexual parents. Tuten and August (2006) studied 58 lesbian mothers and found that work characteristics such as job role autonomy, fewer hours worked, and supportive work–family

culture and policies reduced work–family conflict in a manner consistent with the research on heterosexual couples. On the other hand, however, it should be noted that the extent to which these women were "out" at work predicted work–family conflict over and beyond these typical variables (Tuten & August, 2006). These findings suggest that there are unique characteristics of the workplace (such as the extent to which coworkers and supervisors are supportive of LGBT workers) that might need to be taken into account for LGBT employees.

Some research points to other potential work–family differences between heterosexual and LGBT employees. For example, in a longitudinal study of 29 lesbian couples (58 women) who were becoming parents, it was predicted that work characteristics typically affecting heterosexual couples' relationships, such as hours worked and organizational support, would similarly affect lesbian parents. However, contrary to hypotheses, these variables were not related to the partners' relationship conflict (Goldberg & Sayer, 2006). One of the explanations for differences in the experience of work–family conflict between LGBT and non-LGBT individuals may relate to gender dynamics; LGBT-parent families experiences of work–life conflict and balance may inevitably differ from those of heterosexual-parent families because the partners are of the same gender. Indeed, in support of this notion, studies of families involving lesbian parents have often found that work, household, and child-care labor are often shared more equally in lesbian couples than in heterosexual couples (e.g., Patterson, Sutfin, & Fulcher, 2004). Given the mixed nature of these findings, it is important to consider the theoretical perspectives that might help to explain the experiences of LGBT parents at the intersection of work and family domains.

Applying and Extending Existing Theories to LGBT Parents

The limited body of research directly focusing on how LGBT parents experience and manage work–family conflict points to the need to develop

a deeper understanding of the work–family interface of LGBT parents. To achieve this deeper understanding, a critical next step is to examine the ways in which existing theories of the work–family interface and of LGBT workplace experiences can be useful in understanding the work–family interface of LGBT people.

Role Theory

As the dominant model used to understand the work–family interface in heterosexual parents, role theory (Katz & Kahn, 1978) has the capacity to provide insights about LGBT parents. Specifically, in recognizing that people sustain multiple roles—each of which is accompanied by pressure, expectations, forces, and behaviors—that can be mutually conflicting, role theory highlights the importance of considering *all* of the roles individuals occupy. Like their heterosexual counterparts, working LGBT parents are engaged in the roles of work and family. However, unlike their counterparts, LGBT parents may experience expectations, forces, and pressures from their social identity group. That is, being LGBT may constitute an additional role for some people that can potentially enhance or conflict with their other roles.

On the conflict side, being LGBT may sometimes make it difficult to fulfill the demands of work and parent roles. For example, LGBT people who work in jobs in which their identity is particularly stigmatized may face feelings of inauthenticity (if they do not disclose their identity) or discrimination (if they do disclose) that could interfere with their work-role behaviors. As another example, because many Americans endorse a traditional view of family as consisting of opposite-sex parents and children (Collins, 1998), LGBT parents may also occasionally experience conflict between their LGBT and parent identities. For example, LGBT parents likely want to express their sexual identity openly in their communities while also wanting to protect their children from the negative consequences of bigotry. Indeed, one semi-structured interview-based study with six daughters of lesbian parents found that lesbian mothers had carefully prepared

their children for heterosexism by openly defining and discussing sexual orientation and warning them about the possibility of future incidents (Litovich & Langhout, 2004). On the enhancement side, being a parent might help LGBT people in ways that are similar to heterosexual people. According to an expansionist perspective (Barnett & Hyde, 2001), people can gain positive views of the self, additional avenues of social support, and even stress relief through involvement in parenting. It is possible that becoming a parent could help LGBT people connect with their coworkers and supervisors through shared experiences. In addition, parenthood may act as unique information that distances LGBT people from negative stereotypes (see Singletary & Hebl, 2009).

Stigma Theory

Grounded in Erving Goffman's (1963) influential book, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, stigma theory suggests that particular characteristics are imbued with social meaning. A *stigma*, which originally referred to a mark burned into the skin of thieves in ancient Greece, is a characteristic that is devalued in a particular context. Holders of stigmas are typically subject to economic disadvantage, stereotyping, and discrimination (Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998). Stigmas vary along several dimensions, two of the most meaningful of which are *concealability* and perceived *controllability* (Crocker et al., 1998). According to Goffman, individuals with stigmas that are concealable, like LGBT people, must uniquely decide whether, how, when, and to whom to disclose their identity. Individuals with stigmas that are perceived to be controllable, like LGBT people, are likely to be blamed for their identity or condition and thus might face particularly negative reactions (Goffman, 1963).

Research on LGBT people from the perspective of stigma theory has demonstrated that people with nonheterosexual sexual identities are targets of stereotyping and discrimination that is emblematic of stigma. For example, one experimental field study demonstrated that job applicants were treated more negatively when they wore a hat

that said “gay and proud” than when they wore a hat that said “Texan and proud” (Hebl et al., 2002). The stigma perspective has also yielded insights about the dilemmas that LGBT people face in their decisions regarding disclosure of their sexual identity to their coworkers, supervisors, and clients. As an example, using an experience sampling methodology with 50 LGBT workers, King, Mohr, Peddie, Jones, and Kendra (2010) found that LGBT people felt like they had to make a decision about whether or not to reveal their sexual identity while at work an average of nine times over a 3-week period. In addition, stigma theory has been used to help explain persistent negative beliefs about and attitudes toward LGBT people; the extent to which people believe homosexuality to be a choice (and therefore a “controllable condition”) is associated with more negative stereotypes and prejudice about LGBT people (Haider-Markel & Joslyn, 2008).

In stigma theory, the emphasis on the concealable nature of an LGBT identity has important implications for LGBT parents in two primary areas: (a) disclosure disconnects, and (b) access to resources. In her discussion of concealable stigmas, Ragins (2008) described the processes involved with disclosing a stigmatized identity across work and nonwork domains. Her theoretical paper highlighted the interface between work and nonwork disclosures, and argued that the level of disclosure across these domains could be indicative of identity denial (“out” in neither domain), identity disconnects (“out” in one domain but not the other), or identity integration (“out” in both domains). Because LGBT parents must balance their own personal concerns about disclosure as well as their concerns about their children, they may be vulnerable to identity disconnects, which, Ragins argued, creates psychological incongruence, stress, and anxiety.

Moreover, LGBT parents’ disclosure dilemmas may make it difficult to access helpful resources in both work and nonwork domains. In the work domain, the availability of particular work–life policies may not result in positive gains for some employee groups including LGBT people (Ryan & Kossek, 2008). One of the reasons for this variability in utility of work–life benefits is that supervisors often serve as gatekeepers

with regard to work–family benefits such as family leave, flexible work schedules, and telecommuting. Thus, the interpersonal relationships between LGBT parents and their supervisors could pose challenges to managing the intersection of the work and family domains. In fact, evidence suggests that in all employees, the relationship between the supervisor and subordinate may be responsible for employees’ reluctance to partake in such benefits due to fear of retribution (Bowen & Orthner, 1991). LGBT parents therefore likely face multiple barriers to accessing resources. First, they must disclose their parental status, which may also make them vulnerable to discussions of their sexual identity. In other words, LGBT people may have to “out” themselves at work when they become parents. Second, not all benefits available to heterosexual employees may be universally available to same-sex parents (Ryan & Kossek, 2008). Third, LGBT parents often must rely on their supervisor’s equanimity to allow them to utilize benefits.

Similar barriers may be encountered by LGBT parents who have not disclosed their sexual identity widely outside of work. Many heterosexual parents manage care for their children by relying heavily on immediate family members such as grandmothers (Fuller-Thomson, Minkler, & Driver, 1996). When LGBT parents have not disclosed their sexual identity to their families, or when their families have not fully embraced their LGBT identity, LGBT parents may not have access to the potentially useful support of involved families. Fears about losing control over sexual identity disclosure may also make it harder for LGBT parents to gain the benefits of involvement in social organizations (e.g., “mommy’s day out” groups or church organizations) that provide support. The disclosure dilemmas that are central to stigma theory imply several distinct issues that LGBT parents could face at the intersection of work and family.

Minority Stress

The second major theoretical lens that has been brought to bear on the experiences of LGBT workers is minority stress. Drawing from general

views of stress as physical, mental, or emotional strain or pressure that can be due to conditions in the social environment, Meyer (2003) suggested that members of stigmatized groups experience a unique form of *minority stress*. LGBT people tend to live their lives, residing and working, in close proximity with heterosexuals and few other LGBT people (Waldo, 1999). According to Meyer (2003), LGBT people experience not only general stressors that are common to nonminority groups but also distal stressors (e.g., discrimination and violence) and proximal stressors (e.g., expectations of rejection, identity management efforts, and internalized homophobia). Consistent with general models of stress, the accumulation of stressors can ultimately affect mental health outcomes. In addition to its numerous applications in counseling psychology (see Meyer, 2003), the minority stress perspective has been used to help explain some of the workplace experiences of LGBT people. For example, fear of disclosing a nonheterosexual identity is a unique minority stressor that has been correlated with job attitudes and career outcomes (Ragins, Singh, & Cornwell, 2007).

A direct extension of this theory to LGBT parents might suggest that an LGBT identity may exacerbate the stress of the work–family interface. The implication is not only that LGBT people would generally experience more stressors than non-LGBT people but also that LGBT parents would experience more stressors than LGBT people who are not parents. In other words, because less than a third of same-sex couples have children (Simmons & O’Connell, 2003), LGBT parents may comprise a minority or subgroup within LGBT communities. Framed in this way, being an LGBT parent could be seen as a predictor of work–family conflict. It is also possible that the stressors experienced by LGBT people could exacerbate the consequences of work–family conflict. Take as an example a common experience of work–family conflict: a breakdown in child care. The stress of this breakdown might be worse for LGBT parents than for heterosexual parents because the latter group may have easier access to work- and nonwork resources (such as emergency care services

through work or familial care). Finally, an LGBT identity could in some cases buffer the consequences of work–family conflict; it is possible that LGBT parents have developed resilience and coping strategies that help them deal with such stressors (Meyer, 2010). More research is needed to address each of these important questions.

An Intersectionality Perspective

To this point, we have discussed the potential experiences of LGBT parents in general without describing the wide variability that exists within this population or the nuances that emerge at the intersection of sexual orientation, gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. A theoretical paradigm that is applicable to both minority stress and stigma theories while attending to these important identities is the perspective of *intersectionality*. From the lens of critical race and feminist theories (Crenshaw, 1988), intersectionality underscores the notion that people who are members of multiple stigmatized social identity categories have unique experiences (Cole, 2009). For example, Crenshaw (1988) examined the intersection of gender and race in her exploration of African-American women. She found that discrimination associated with membership in one stigmatized identity group can be compounded when another stigmatized identity is also possessed. Consistent with this, survey research (Berdahl & Moore, 2006) indicated that ethnic minority women faced a “double jeopardy”: not only did women report more sexual harassment than men but also minorities reported more ethnic harassment than did Whites; minority women experienced the greatest amount of harassment overall. Similarly, it has been argued that LGBT people of color may face more discrimination than LGBT people who are White (Moradi et al., 2010). In response to this, Meyer (2010) contended that although there may be an internal conflict between racial and sexual identities such that perceptions of oneself as a particular sexuality interfere with values associated with one’s race, LGBT people of color can have positive racial and sexual identities.

An intersectionality perspective might be particularly useful in considering the workplace experiences of LGBT parents, who may be stigmatized as a function of their sexual identity as well as their parental status (in addition to gender, race, and other characteristics). Research on heterosexual parents suggests that women (but not men) face stigmatization in the workplace when they become parents (e.g., Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2004). Heterosexual women with children are perceived as less committed to work and less interested in advancement than are women without children or men (King, 2008). It is possible that (consistent with a “double jeopardy” perspective) these negative effects of maternal status are exacerbated among lesbian women, who possess the devalued characteristics of being women, mothers, and gay. However, there is some evidence that lesbians with children actually have higher income (Baumle, 2009) and perceived work commitment (Peplau & Fingerhut, 2004) than their gay male and heterosexual counterparts. More research is needed to reconcile these contradictory findings.

An intersectionality perspective might also help to frame efforts toward understanding how LGBT parents from different socioeconomic groups experience the work–family interface. The notion of work–family balance, a theoretical equilibrium among the time, affect, and behavior experienced across multiple domains, may be a luxury for many families whose jobs do not easily support the costs of food, shelter, and health care. The work–family interface for such people may be characterized by extremely long hours or a “patchwork” of multiple jobs, desperation and anxious moods, and a lack of access to high quality child care (Ford, 2011). LGBT parents in low-paying jobs may experience high levels of continuance commitment; in other words, they may prioritize keeping their jobs above all else (Meyer & Allen, 1993). As such, LGBT parents without substantial economic resources may feel particularly high levels of fear about disclosure and discrimination, or may feel stuck in environments that are unfriendly to gay people and families. Overall, existing theories on the experiences of LGBT people suggest that people who occupy

the intersection of a minority sexual identity and parenthood likely experience challenges in balancing their involvement in multiple roles, particularly with regard to disclosure disconnects, access to resources, and the frequency of stressors.

In her critique of feminist work on gender and the family, Ferree (2010) discussed differences between locational and relational intersectionalities. The former approach focuses on social identity categories and the perspectives of individuals who possess multiple marginalized identities (e.g., poor African-American women; Ferree, 2010). This is contrasted with a focus on processes (such as racializing particular ethnic groups) that arise from complex and unequal relations (Ferree, 2010). Thus, it is the latter approach that may be particularly helpful for understanding ongoing, interpersonal dynamics such as the work–family interface. In line with this, Shields (2008) stated that focusing on differences between categories of people is a “seductive oversimplification” (p. 303) that should be supplanted with a focus on explanation of processes. In the case of LGBT parents and the workplace, then, these arguments imply that attention should be devoted to the processes underlying systems of workplace inequality. Structures and processes that subordinate LGBT parents, such as the absence of domestic partnership benefits, workplace policies that are unfriendly to families (e.g., lack of flex time), and a lack of federal protection for employment discrimination for people with LGBT identities, perpetuate challenges faced by LGBT parents.

Future Directions

Our review of extant theory and research has revealed sizeable gaps in scholarly understanding of the workplace experiences of LGBT parents. It is clear that much more work is needed to fully describe, explain, and predict the conditions under and ways in which LGBT parents can create and sustain positive interfaces between their work, family, and LGBT roles and identities. In the consideration of future research we have

identified critical areas that must be addressed, including comparisons between LGBT and heterosexual families, accessibility of family-oriented benefits, and the implementation of LGBT friendly benefits.

One important direction for future research is developing more fine-tuned comparisons between LGBT and heterosexual parents and between specific groups within LGBT parents (such as lesbians and gay men, bisexual parents, single gay parents, transgendered parents across transition stages, and LGBT parents across socioeconomic statuses) in relation to the work–family interface. Preliminary comparative research (e.g., Tuten & August, 2006) has suggested that there may indeed be important differences between these groups. Experiences might also vary as a function of the manner in which children came to be; LBT parents who physically carry a child throughout pregnancy likely have different needs than LGBT people who adopt children. It would be useful to understand the unique needs and stressors, as well as exacerbating and buffering factors, for each of these groups. A nuanced understanding of when and why such differences emerge may help identify strategies for LGBT individuals, counselors, human resource practitioners, and consultants to take toward improving the work–family interface of LGBT parents.

A fundamental issue in speculating upon differences in the management of the work–family interface between LGBT and heterosexual people is consideration of the availability and utilization of family-friendly organizational benefits. When requesting to access benefits related to work–family balance (e.g., domestic partner benefits, parental leave) it may become necessary for LGBT employees to “out” themselves. The requirement to disclose sexual identity in this manner may deter some LGBT parents from seeking such benefits even when they are available (see Ryan & Kossek, 2008). Indeed, the current discussion of disclosure dilemmas and double jeopardy points to the importance of identifying and assessing strategies for helping LGBT workers access resources. Existing research suggests that basic structures such as clear procedures regarding same-sex partner benefits, antidiscrimination policies that include LGBT

people, and LGBT employee resource groups, diversity councils, and mentorship programs may improve the experiences of LGBT workers (for a review, see King & Cortina, 2010).

To fully support LGBT parents it may be necessary for organizations to implement procedures that allow employees to make use of family-friendly policies without providing detailed information about their family structures that may require disclosure of an LGBT identity. Importantly, however, research has also suggested that formal policies protecting LGBT workers may only be useful to the extent that they are enacted within informal organizational environments that are supportive of LGBT people (Huffman, Watrous, & King, 2008). It is possible that supportive supervisors, mentors, or social networks could help LGBT parents navigate disclosure decisions that facilitate better access to resources. More evidence is needed to clarify not only which policies are most helpful to LGBT parents but also how to implement procedures that allow for their utilization.

Conclusion

In summary, bodies of evidence on the work–family interface and on the workplace experiences of LGBT people are rich and growing. Unfortunately, however, these streams of research have developed in disconnected silos—very few studies have explored the work–family experiences of LGBT people. The limited existing research suggests that there are likely meaningful similarities and differences between the experiences of LGBT and heterosexual parents in balancing work and family. Thus, we argue that scholars have both an opportunity and an obligation to consider the integration of role conflict, stigma, minority stress, and intersectionality theories and research as they apply to LGBT parents.

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