

LGBT Families

My grandpa majored in biology in college, but he wasn't allowed to teach at a high school because he was black. Not long ago, I spoke on a panel at a high school with my mom. This guy in the audience told my mom that he wouldn't want her to teach his kids because she is a lesbian. It reminded me so much of what happened to my grandpa. I think homophobia is like any other "ism." . . . Like racism, you learn it from the people you grow up with, from your parents, from television, and from society.

—Rayna White, eleventh grader, daughter of a lesbian mother (PrideSource, 2013, para. 9)

What we collectively define and accept as family has far-reaching implications. The boundaries that we—and others—make between family and nonfamily play both subtle and not-so-subtle roles in our daily lives.

—Powell et al., 2010, pp. 1–2

Because of cultural, political, and religious debates over the past several decades about how families must be structured and function in order to perform a productive role in society, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) families have captured the interest of politicians, academics, and the general public. Fierce debates persist concerning who should be able to form families through marriage, adoption, and the use of reproductive technologies. Policies and laws concerning families in general are developing out of those debates, thus reacting to a changing family landscape and in turn

shaping a new family landscape. Amid the debates and changing laws, members of LGBT communities are negotiating the political, cultural, and social terrain that regulate their material and ideological access to the title of “family.” Therefore, if we want to understand how families are changing today, and how those families fit into, are shaped by, and also shape larger society, then we must understand one of the most important growing segments of current families: LGBT families.

In 2010, there were approximately 594,000 same-sex partner households in the United States making up about 1% of all American households (Krivickas & Lofquist, 2011) spread over 99% of all counties in the United States (Gates & Ost, 2004). Of the total 594,000 households, 115,000 (19.3%) reported having children living with them, 84% of whom were children of the householder. In 2008, 13.9% of male-male unmarried households, and 26.5% of female-female unmarried households reported having children (Krivickas & Lofquist, 2011). The numbers of lesbian and gay households with children have increased since 2000 when estimates suggested that only 5% of partnered gay men and 22% of partnered lesbians had children in their households (Black, Gates, Sanders, & Taylor, 2000). While these numbers do not take into account single lesbians and gay men, bisexual women and men, and transgender people who are not living in same-sex households, the data offer some evidence that there is an increasing and substantial number of families in the United States that are headed at minimum by lesbian and gay parents. In addition, in 2010, approximately 78% of LGB people in the United States said they would like the right to marry (Herek, Norton, Allen, & Sims, 2010). In practice, by 2010 government offices within seven states and Washington, D.C. had issued at minimum 41,700 marriage licenses to same-sex couples (Chamie & Mirkin, 2011). The number of states allowing lesbians and gay men to marry has increased from one state (Massachusetts) in 2003 to 19 states plus the District of Columbia by the middle of 2014. Coupled with the U.S. Supreme Court’s 2013 verdict that the federal government must honor all legal state marriages regardless of the sexual identity of those married, we can expect to see the number of married lesbians and gay men increase, as well as an increase in visibility of LGBT families within public arenas, because of changing marriage laws.

Social science research strongly suggests that families are socially, not biologically, constructed. This means that the ways in which families are formed—the roles and functions families perform, their structure in terms of who occupies them, and the experiences of their members—are born out of the social, economic, cultural, political, and historical context in which those families exist. There is nothing natural, or normal, or biologically inherent

or mandated about any particular family type. We can see how families are socially constructed by studying how families have changed throughout history and how they are structured and function in different geographic locations. Therefore, as a sociologist who understands families to be socially constructed, I wonder about three particular questions: (a) How and why do different family forms develop in particular social and historical contexts, (b) why are new family forms so threatening to certain groups of people in society, and (c) how are new family forms beneficial to the society in which they exist?

Based on the current trends in LGBT families and on my three questions above, the purpose of the book *LGBT Families* is to provide an understanding of what LGBT families are, why they have developed at this historical moment, how they are socially constructed, why conservative thinkers perceive LGBT families to be a threat to society, and how LGBT families are in fact an important and positive addition to the U.S. family landscape. The book draws on cutting-edge scholarship and data concerning LGBT families, focusing specifically on social constructionist and intersectional (i.e., race-class-gender-sexuality) perspectives. In doing so, *LGBT Families* highlights the diversity of such families in the United States, as well as globally. This book not only organizes and presents current research on LGBT families, but it also uses that research to better understand how LGBT families strengthen the institution of family. In addition, although the book focuses primarily on the experiences of people within LGBT families, a major theme of how external forces shape these families runs throughout the book in order to place LGBT families in a sociological context.

To start the conversation of what LGBT families are and how they have formed historically, this initial chapter first deconstructs and defines key terms. Then, to illustrate how LGBT families have been socially constructed out of the culmination of several historical factors, the chapter provides a brief history of the development of LGBT families. The chapter then focuses on current barriers that LGBT families face, and finishes with a discussion of the plan of the remaining book.

Deconstructing and Defining Terms

The connection between an active and effective LGBT rights movement, an equally active and effective conservative movement against LGBT families, and policies and laws concerning issues such as marriage and immigration have led to a public discourse on what constitutes family and where LGBT families fit into the current U.S. family landscape. As the quote by Powell and

his colleagues at the beginning of this chapter states, how we define family and who we accept as having legitimate claims to being recognized as a family has both serious implications for the United States and beyond, as well as for the individuals within those families.

Although the term *LGBT families* seems simple enough, the deconstruction of this term illustrates the complexities within LGBT families themselves. While teaching family sociology courses over the past 15 years or so, and through the reading of a variety of sources, I have developed and use the following definition of family: Family is a social institution found in all societies comprising two or more people related by birth, law, or intimate affectionate relationships, who may or may not reside together. I use the above definition because it includes as many configurations of families about which I have read or heard. The more we learn about the diversity of families, the more we can test and stretch our definitions of “family.” For example, some of my students argue that the definition should include animal companions (aka “pets”) as well. In fact, in their study of who Americans count as family, Powell, Bolzendahl, Geist, and Steelman (2010) found that 51% of those surveyed believe that pets count as family. While that fact is interesting, what is more interesting is that only 30% of Americans count gay and lesbian couples without children to be family. So, as these authors pointedly remark, more Americans believe that pets count as family than do gay and lesbian couples (p. 45).

To be clear, my definition of family is not one accepted by a court of law or upon which politicians base family policy. Legal definitions of family generally include people who are connected only by bloodlines or legal ties (e.g., marriage, adoption, legal guardianship, and foster care), although some judges are beginning to use social definitions of family particularly in determining court cases involving LGBT families (Richman, 2009).

I use an inclusive definition for this book because while “family” is a legal term, it is also an ideological and socially constructed term that means many different things to many different people. Family is an *idea* about how human relationships *should* be organized. How as a society we define family, who we think should be included or not included in our families, the functions of families, and the structure of families, change over time and over geographic location or space. So there is nothing fixed or innate or “natural” about families. In other words, what families look like and how we think about them depends on the social and historical context and moment in which we are thinking about them. The definition of family above works well for this book not only because LGBT families fit into that definition but also because the definition allows us to compare other definitions used throughout judicial and political systems.

Thinking about the definition of family in general also leads to a question that Judith Stacey asked in her 1996 book, *In the Name of the Family*: What is an LGBT family? In trying to answer this question, Stacey asked additional questions:

Should we count only families in which every single member is gay? Clearly there are not very many, if even any, of these. Or does the presence of just one gay member color a family gay? Just as clearly, there are many of these, including those of Ronald Reagan, Colin Powell, Phyllis Schlafly and Newt Gingrich. (1996, p. 107)

Stacey's question of what we mean by LGBT families is important. In 1991, Kath Weston published a book called *Families We Choose*, in which she argued that gays and lesbians have been "exiles from kinship" (Weston, 1991). She wrote that "for years, and in an amazing variety of contexts, claiming a lesbian or gay identity has been portrayed as a rejection of 'the family' and a departure from kinship" (p. 22). In other words, until very recently, media and other public portrayals of LGBT people assumed that "LGBT" and "family" could not possibly go together. This portrayal was based on two assumptions: (a) that gays and lesbians cannot or do not have children, and (b) anyone who is LGBT must have been rejected by, and therefore alienated from, their families of origin (e.g., their parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc.).

Current data and research provide strong evidence that these two assumptions are no longer (if they ever were) true. So what is an LGBT family? Not only Stacey, but other social scientists have also grappled with this question. As Baca Zinn, Eitzen, and Wells (2011) stated, defining LGBT families is difficult "because individuals—not families—have sexual orientation" (p. 429). These authors point out that typically members of families often have sexual identities that differ from one another. Furthermore, sexual identities can change over a life course such that a family member may embrace a particular sexual or gender identity at one point but then later in life embrace another sexual or gender identity. Therefore, defining an LGBT family can be difficult.

Some scholars define LGBT families by the presence of one or more LGBT adults in the family (Allen & Demo, 1995). Others have included "couples, parents, children, and youth, as well as intentional communities" within the definition of LGBT families (Doherty, 2006, p. xxii). For the purpose of this book, I drew on previous definitions, as well as my own general definition of family, to define LGBT families as two or more people related by birth, law, or intimate affectionate relationships, who may or may not

reside together, and where the LGBT identity of at least one family member impacts other family members in some meaningful way. This definition is intentionally broad to be as inclusive as possible.

Built into my definition of LGBT families are a variety of sexual and gender identities. Trying to define sexual and gender categories is not always easy, particularly if we understand such categories to be socially constructed, that is, gaining their purpose and meaning from the social, cultural, political, economic, and historical context in which they are created. In fact, queer theory challenges traditional sexual categories and shows how these categories are “products of particular constellations of power and knowledge” (Epstein, 1994, p. 192). Queer theorists, such as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1993) and Judith Butler (1993), have problematized sexual categories. For example, Sedgwick argues that sexualities have traditionally been couched in false dichotomies. The notions of out versus in, gay versus straight, male versus female all lead to a false view that masks the fluid and mutable nature of human sexuality. Butler also argues that gender and sexual categories are unstable and contestable because they rely on the social and historical moment in which they exist (Butler, 1993). By revealing how unstable categories really are, there is no end to the ways in which queer theorists can deconstruct gender and sexual categories. Sociologists tend to depart from queer theory at the point of endless deconstruction because sociologists are interested in understanding how underlying and unifying factors create similar experiences for different groups of people based on social structural factors, such as sexuality, as well as race, social class, and gender (Epstein, 1994). That is, sociologists want to examine how the categorization of people is “materially experienced across the world” by specific groups of people (Stein & Plummer, 1994, p. 184).

In defining sexual categories, we tend to use terms that identify the gender toward whom our emotional, romantic, or sexual attractions are directed (Stryker, 2008); for example, “‘heterosexual’ (toward a member of another gender), ‘homosexual’ (toward a member of the same gender), ‘bisexual’ (toward a member of any gender)” (Stryker 2008, p. 16). To complicate matters even more, historian Susan Stryker (2008) pointed out that the sexual terms mentioned above “depend on our understanding of our own gender”; that is, the terms homo- and hetero- “make sense only in relation to a gender they are the ‘same as’ or ‘different from’” (p. 16). If people do not have a fixed or clear gender identity (as discussed below) then definitions of sexual categories begin to lose meaning.

Perhaps to avoid confusion about how sexuality and gender relate to one another, the American Psychological Association (APA, 2013) defined sexual categories by referring to attractions based on someone’s “sex” rather than

“gender.” The distinction between the two is that we think of “sex” as being the biological makeup that determines if someone is physically male or female, which is often easier to identify than gender (i.e., “the socially learned behaviors and expectations associated with being men and women”) (Andersen & Witham, 2011, p. 418). Yet in her work on people who are intersexual (i.e., who have ambiguous genitalia), biologist Anne Fausto-Sterling (1993, 2000) suggested that there are at least five different varieties of “sex” found in the biological world. Thus, even our desire to construct and maintain the myth of only two biological sexes (female and male) is in fact socially constructed. All this is to say that the definitions of heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual (referring to the possibility of only desiring two—“bi”—sexes, rather than two *or more* sexes) are based on limited, if not false understandings of the biological, psychological, and sociological world.

Sociologists argue that although we as a society must understand that categories based on sexual and gender identities are problematic and that the lines between and among these categories are in reality blurry and unclear, we must also understand that many of our laws, policies, practices, and beliefs are based on distinct categories. Furthermore, in order to understand how people in sexual and gender categories create and experience family life, we also need to have some understanding of how we as a society define sexual and gender categories. We also need to understand how people and systems use those categories to dole out rewards and resources in unequal ways such that we have developed discrimination based on seemingly real, yet socially constructed, gender and sexual categories. Such discrimination includes homophobia (the fear of gays and lesbians), biphobia (the fear of bisexual people), transphobia (the fear of transgender people), heterosexism (the assumption that being heterosexual is best, and the systematic privileging of heterosexuals over people who are not heterosexual), as well as more commonly understood sexism, racism, classism, ageism, and so on.

So how do we define sexual and gender categories? “Gay” generally refers to men who have emotional, romantic, and sexual attractions to other men, although some women also refer to themselves as gay. “Lesbian” refers almost exclusively to women who have emotional, romantic, and sexual attractions to other women (APA, 2008), although there are some men who refer to themselves as “male lesbians.” These are men who either wish that they “had been born a woman, but who (even if he had been a woman) could only make love to another woman and never to a man” (Gilmartin, 1987, p. 125) or who embody the “ideological, ethical, or political posture” of lesbians (Zita, 1992, p. 110). Bisexual refers to people who have emotional, romantic, and sexual attractions to multiple genders (Burlison, 2005; Seidman, 2009). The category of bisexual is complicated because there are

many compound bisexual identities as well, such as “lesbian-identified bisexual,” “bisexual lesbian,” “gay bisexual,” and “heterosexual-identified bisexual” (Rust, 2000, p. 39). In addition, attraction does not necessarily imply action. Therefore, although bisexual people may be attracted to more than one gender, they may not act on that attraction (Burleson, 2005) and thus may appear to outsiders as heterosexual or as lesbian or gay if they remain in committed, monogamous relationships.

In addition to sexual categories, definitions of gender categories can be complicated as well. In general, people refer to two main gender categories, based on two main biological sexes: male and female. Male refers to those born with XY chromosomes and female to those born with XX chromosomes. When these sex categories gain social and cultural meaning, they become gender categories, such that people develop masculine and feminine identities. Masculinity is the collection of cultural ideas, beliefs, values, and norms that shape what dominant society considers appropriate social action for those assigned the status of boys and men. Femininity is the same except for girls and women. Not all masculinities and femininities are equally valued and rewarded, however. Gender scholar R. W. Connell (1987) explained that there is a hegemonic masculinity against which all other masculinities are measured. Hegemony refers to dominance; thus, hegemonic masculinity is the most dominant and socially accepted form of masculinity that maintains patriarchy and dominance over women and other men (Connell, 1987). Hegemonic masculinity not only works to keep women subordinate to men but also to humiliate men who stray from dominant definitions of accepted masculinity in any given society, including gay men. Connell also referred to the dominant femininity that we value and reward as “emphasized femininity,” and defined such femininity as being “oriented to accommodating the interests and desires of men” (p. 183). Therefore, emphasized femininity also works to keep patriarchal power in place by having women conform to an ideal of womanhood that benefits men.

In relation to the two main gender categories, there are also multiple gender categories or identities important to this book that fall under the umbrella term *transgender*. Transgender indicates “anyone who does not feel comfortable in the gender role they were attributed with at birth, or who has a gender identity at odds with the labels ‘man’ or ‘woman’ credited to them by formal authorities” (Whittle, 2006, p. xi).

Many identities fall within the category of transgender. One such identity is transsexual, which refers to people “who feel a strong desire to change their sexual morphology in order to live entirely as permanent, full-time members of the gender other than the one they were assigned to at birth” (Stryker, 2008, p. 18). According to clinical sexologist, Mildred Brown, transsexuals

often feel “trapped—destined to live out their lives ‘imprisoned in the wrong body’ unless they correct the situation with hormones or sex reassignment surgery” (Brown & Rounsley, 1996, p. 6). The terms “transmen,” “female-to-male” (FTM), “transgender men,” and “transsexual men” all refer to “people who were born with female bodies but consider themselves to be men and live socially as men” (Stryker, 2008, p. 20). Similarly, “transwomen,” “male-to-female” (MTF), “transgender women,” and “transsexual women” are categories that “refer to people who were born with male bodies but consider themselves to be women and live socially as women” (p. 20).

The category of transgender also includes people who cross-dress, who are drag queens, drag kings, and genderqueers. The term *cross-dresser* is intended to be “a non-judgmental replacement for ‘transvestite’” (Stryker, 2008, p. 17) and includes those who like to “wear clothing that is traditionally or stereotypically worn by another gender in their culture” but who are “usually comfortable with their assigned sex and do not wish to change it” (APA, 2011, p. 1). Drag queens and drag kings generally refer to gay men and lesbians, respectively, who dress as another gender “for the purpose of entertaining others at bars, clubs, or other events” (APA, 2013, p. 2). Genderqueers are “people who identify their gender as falling outside the binary constructs of ‘male’ and ‘female.’ They may define their gender as falling somewhere on a continuum between male and female, or they may define it as wholly different from these terms” (APA, 2011, p. 2). Genderqueers often use gender-neutral pronouns, that is, pronouns that do not indicate whether a person is either masculine or feminine, such as “ze” (pronounced “zee”) or “sie” (pronounced “see”), instead of “he” or “she,” or “hir” (pronounced “here”) instead of “his” or “her” (Feinberg, 1998; Stryker, 2008). Some genderqueers also use “they” for “him” or “her” to degender language. Important to note is that because sexual and gender categories are different from one another, there are transgender people who are lesbian, gay, and bisexual (Burleson, 2005; Rodriguez Rust, 2000a; Weinberg, Williams, & Pryor, 1995). Understanding categories of people based on gender and sexual identities is significant to understanding LGBT families because we need to understand who is creating and occupying those families.

A Brief History of the Development of LGBT Families

The definitions discussed above have developed out of a historical context. Indeed, prior to the 1980s, the term *LGBT families* was an oxymoron. This section discusses the history of the development of LGBT families to provide evidence of how LGBT families have developed out of a coalescing

of particular social, economic, political, and cultural factors over time. Providing this history contributes to our understanding of how LGBT families are socially constructed.

Elsewhere, I have documented a longer history of the development of lesbian and gay families (Mezey, 2008a). Here, I offer a shortened version that incorporates bisexual and transgender history to help explain the historical context out of which LGBT families have developed. LGBT families have emerged out of four key factors: (a) the gay liberation movement, (b) the women's rights movement, (c) the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and (d) the development of reproductive and conceptive technologies. These were not the only factors, but they were perhaps the most influential in helping LGBT people develop their families today.

The gay liberation movement was instrumental in helping people outside of dominant gender and sexual categories develop a positive self-image and group identity. Starting as the homophile movement during the first half of the 20th century, White, middle-class homosexuals began to meet through organizations such as the Mattachine Society (for homosexual men) and the Daughters of Bilitis (for homosexual women). These groups served to connect homosexuals and fight against sexual discrimination (D'Emilio, 1998). Outside of these largely White groups, groups of homosexual racial-ethnic minorities also started to socialize in separate groups, particularly in bars (Kennedy & Davis, 1993).

Concurrently, bisexual and transgender people began to organize as well. The concept of "bisexual" was not identified until the early 20th century. Previously, people held the "common belief that bisexuality didn't exist or was either self-deception or a transition phase" (Dworkin, 2000, p. 118). Because of these perceptions, both heterosexuals and homosexuals ostracized bisexual people. However, coming out of a desire for sexual freedom as well as heterosexual "swinger" communities (Highleyman, 2001), bisexual people began to understand their own sexual desires as real. Alfred Kinsey's 1948 and 1953 publications of his "Kinsey Scale" in which he identified a continuum of sexual desires ranging from "exclusively heterosexual" to "exclusively homosexual" also helped bisexual people make sense of their own sexual desires (Dworkin, 2000; Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948; Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin, & Gebhard, 1953). Through a burgeoning awareness, bisexual people began to gain self-identity through groups such as the Sexual Freedom League, a group that experimented sexually with both heterosexual and same-sex partners, and the National Sex Forum, a group that educated pastors and therapists about homosexuality, lesbianism, and bisexuality (Dworkin, 2000).

Transgender people also started organizing in the wake of Kinsey's work, as well as through the work of psychiatrists like Karl Bowman who were

researching diverse gendered behaviors. Through the work of early transgender activists, such as Louise Lawrence and Virginia Prince in the 1940s and 1950s, social networking and organizing of transgender people around the country began to increase, and organizations such as the Foundation for Personality Expression (FPE) and the Labyrinth were started (Stryker, 2008). Similar to homosexuals, race divisions existed among transgender people as well. As Stryker (2008) wrote, “While white suburban transgender people were sneaking out to clandestine meetings, many transgender people of color were highly visible parts of urban culture” through drag balls held in major urban areas (p. 56).

During the time that LGBT people began to form their own groups, the civil rights movement was developing in ways that provided examples of how to organize politically. Drawing on the strategies of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., as well as more radical groups, such as the Black Panthers, the Nation of Islam, and the Congress of Racial Equality, LGBT people began to organize their own protests and find new ways of community organizing (D’Emilio, 1983, 2007; Stryker, 2008). The new sense of pride that LGBT people developed out of the early homophile movement developed into the gay liberation movement after a group of LGBT bar-goers revolted against police riots at the Stonewall Bar in New York City on June 28, 1969 (D’Emilio, 1983; Faderman, 1991; Stryker, 2008).

At the same time that the gay liberation movement was picking up momentum, early second-wave feminists were also working toward securing women’s rights. Despite homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia among early activists (Rust, 1995; Stryker, 2008), feminism and the women’s rights movement were nevertheless instrumental in the development of LGBT families. Through the women’s rights movement and the development of a feminist consciousness, women began to interact more specifically with other women, creating spaces in which they could explore lesbian relationships. Because feminists encouraged women to take control of their own bodies and to more freely experiment in sexual ways, bisexual women and men began to explore their sexualities in ways that cultural norms had previously prohibited (Dworkin, 2000).

At this time, White radical feminists began to critique the nuclear family, arguing that housework, motherhood, and catering to husbands oppressed women and limited women’s access to higher education and paid labor (Allen, 1983; D’Emilio, 2007; Firestone, 1970; Gimenez, 1983). As feminist theories developed, women of color began examining the relationship between race and gender oppression, drawing on connections they made between the civil rights and the women’s liberation movements (Collins, 1990; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1984). As women in general developed a new

feminist way of conceiving gender relations and as men and women increasingly began to have sexual relations with the purpose of pleasure rather than procreation, the differences between heterosexual relationships and same-sex relationships began to diminish (Faderman, 1991).

During this time, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s, bisexual and transgender people found both the gay liberation and women's liberation movements to be hostile spaces. Feminists such as those in the Daughters of Bilitis did not consider transwomen to be "real" women and therefore prevented transwomen from entering women-only spaces and events, a division line that still exists in some feminist circles (Stryker, 2008). Similarly, some gay and lesbian organizations, such as those that organized San Francisco's gay pride events, "opposed drag and expressly forbid transgender people from participating" (Stryker, 2008, p. 102). In addition, gay and lesbian groups often prevented bisexual people from joining. As a result, bisexuals started their own organizations, such as the San Francisco Sexual Information (SFSI), the Bi Center, and BiPOL (a bisexual political action group) in San Francisco (Dworkin, 2000) and the National Bisexual Liberation Group in New York, as well as later groups developing in major cities throughout the United States (Highleyman, 2001). The effect of being excluded from both the women's and gay liberation movements was that bisexual and transgender people began to form their own communities and senses of identity (Dworkin, 2000; Stryker, 2008).

As LGBT people began to develop a stronger identity—albeit often separated by race, social class, sexual, and gender divisions—in the 1980s, gay men, bisexual men, and transgender people in particular were faced with a new challenge in the form of the HIV/AIDS epidemic (Stryker 2008). Regarding the development of LGBT families, the HIV/AIDS epidemic had three important effects. First, the epidemic brought separate sexual and gender communities together. Because people initially associated the AIDS epidemic with gay male sex and because heterosexual people feared that bisexual men would infect heterosexual women, homophobia and biphobia were heightened during this time (Dworkin, 2000; Highleyman, 2001). Therefore, as Stryker (2008) wrote, "To adequately respond to the AIDS epidemic demanded a new kind of alliance politics, in which specific communities came together across the dividing lines of race and gender, social class and nationality, citizenship and sexual orientation" (p. 134).

Under the reclaimed umbrella of "queer," organizations such as Aids Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT-UP) and Queer Nation worked to unify forces and create a "new kind of unabashedly progay, nonseparatist, anti-assimilationist alliance politics to combat AIDS" (Stryker, 2008, p. 134).

By the mid-1990s, many organizations that had formally focused only on gay-lesbian issues, or gay-lesbian-bisexual issues, now included transgender in their causes and efforts (Stryker, 2008).

The second important effect the HIV/AIDS epidemic had on the development of LGBT families is that the epidemic openly displayed the deep disregard society had for LGBT relationships. The illness and death that struck gay and bisexual men forced the dying men, their partners, and their friends to acknowledge how poorly recognized their families were by physicians and courts. Issues relating to “next of kin,” such as “hospital visitation rights; decision making about medical care; choices about funeral arrangements and burials; and the access of survivors to homes, possessions, and inheritance” all brought the lack of recognition of their intimate partner relationships into clear focus for LGBT people (D’Emilio, 2007, p. 49).

Third, evidence suggests that one reason lesbians and gay men began to have and adopt children in the 1980s was to counteract the deaths that the LGBT community was experiencing related to HIV/AIDS (Lewin, 1993; Mallon, 2011; Moraga, 1997; Weston, 1991), as well as to care for children who lived with HIV/AIDS (Mallon, 2011). The loss of community members was particularly salient for men of color as they constituted over 41% of the total HIV/AIDS cases at the time (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 1988, as cited in Morales, 1990). Not surprisingly, therefore, Latino and African American LGBT community groups led many of the local battles against the epidemic (D’Emilio, 2007). The irony is that while lesbians began having more children during this time perhaps partially to counterbalance the epidemic, they were also less willing to use the sperm from gay and bisexual men because they feared contracting the disease themselves or passing it on to their offspring (Bernstein & Stephenson, 1995; Stacey, 1996; Sullivan, 2004; Weston, 1991). The result was that more lesbians began using tested sperm from sperm banks, thus, reducing the number of gay and bisexual men as parents (Weston, 1991).

During the 1980s and 1990s, lesbians were able to access tested sperm because of the increased use and access to reproductive and conceptive technologies (Stacey, 1998), the fourth main historical factor in the development of LGBT families today. Reproductive technologies, also known as assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs), refer to “the use of non-coital technologies to conceive a child and initiate pregnancy. Most widely used is artificial insemination, but in vitro fertilization (IVF), egg donation, surrogacy, and genetic screening techniques are also available” (Robertson, 2005, p. 324). ARTs have revolutionized most types of families, not just LGBT families, because they allow people who historically could not have children (e.g., infertile men, older women) to have children through a variety of

means that potentially separate genetic, gestational, and social parenting from one another (Gimenez, 1991). Although the use of ARTs are often expensive and not always covered by insurance, they allow LGBT people who can afford the services to have genetically connected children without getting involved in heterosexual sexual relations.

The culmination of the gay liberation movement, the women's rights movement, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and the development of reproductive and conceptive technologies have combined forces to create the current existence of LGBT families. These four factors supported in positive ways the formation of LGBT identities, communities, and ultimately families. However, as the following section illustrates, forces working against the formation of LGBT families continue to persist.

Remaining Barriers for LGBT Families

Despite the historical landscape in which LGBT people are now forming families, there remain barriers preventing LGBT family formation as well. As suggested through the opening comment of the chapter spoken by an eleventh grader whose mother is a lesbian, these barriers come out of an ideological battle between those who believe that LGBT people are immoral and hurting the fabric of American culture, and those who believe that LGBT people should have the same rights as heterosexual Americans. The debate surrounding LGBT families, and truly families in general, involves asking one main question: Is there one best type of family that creates the best quality of life for those within the family and for larger society? Related to this one main question are two subquestions: (a) Who should be able to get married?, and (b) Who should be able to raise children? These questions are asked by politicians, academics, and the general public in response to the single fact that almost everyone can agree upon: Families in the United States are changing.

In trying to make sense of why families are changing and the consequences of those changes, people have participated in a long-standing discussion about cause and effect called the family values debate. The two main sides of the debate include "conservatives"—or "the decline of the family" lamenters (Powell et al., 2010, p. 8)—and "progressives"—or "diversity defenders" (Cherlin, 2003, as cited in Powell et al., 2010, p. 10). People who identify with conservatives through the family values debate largely consist of certain religious leaders, politicians, and social scientists who argue that families are changing because Americans no longer value the "traditional" nuclear family (i.e., dad at work, mom at home, with direct offspring living in their own home with a white picket fence, suggesting economic security

and independence). Such conservatives argue that the move away from the traditional nuclear family is causing a decline in material and economic conditions nationwide (Blankenhorn, 1991; Dill, Baca Zinn, & Patton, 1998; Stacey, 1996; Wilson, 1993).

Family values conservatives also claim “that the traditional nuclear family is the basis of social organization and cohesion in the United States” (Dill et al., 1998, p. 6). According to these conservatives, the breakdown of the nuclear-family structure causes societal ills such as poverty, teen pregnancy, divorce, drug use, crime, and poor education (Dill et al., 1998). Conservatives in the family values debate further argue that biological differences between men and women justify the nuclear-family form because women are biologically disposed caregivers and men are biologically disposed breadwinners (Andersen & Witham, 2011). In addition, in order for a family to function “properly,” husbands or fathers must be present (Blankenhorn, 1991; Popenoe, 1999).

For such conservatives, the traditional heterosexual family is not only the glue that keeps society together, but also marriage (between one man and one woman) is the glue that keeps the traditional family together. According to family values conservatives, marriage is necessary for families to maintain social cohesion and strong child welfare. Marriage is so prominent a point that it has taken on the form of the “marriage movement” to promote the benefits of heterosexual marriage to couples and society (Heath, 2012). Conservatives draw on research suggesting that marital arrangements promote longer lives, greater household financial stability, greater physical and mental health for women and men, and more sexual satisfaction than non-marital arrangements (see for example, research conducted by Waite & Gallagher, 2001). Following this logic, a reduction in marriage and the increase in divorce are main causes of family decline and a majority of social problems (Cahill & Tobias, 2007; National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference [NHCLC], 2013; Popenoe, 1993; Whitehead, 1993).

Although supporters of the marriage movement agree that marriage benefits individuals and society, there is some disagreement as to whether or not marriage should be extended to lesbians and gays (Waite & Gallagher, 2001, pp. 200–201). Most conservatives within the family values debate feel strongly that both marriage and family remain heterosexual institutions (Stacey, 1996). To ensure the heterosexual nature of marriage and family, Republicans introduced a bill in 1996 called the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), which Democratic President Bill Clinton signed into law. DOMA states that marriage is “a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife” (Dunlap, as cited in Stacey, 1996, p. 120). As Representative Bob Barr (R-GA), the architect of DOMA, stated, “The flames of hedonism,

the flames of narcissism, the flames of self-centered morality are licking at the very foundations of our society: the family unit” (DOMA Debate, as cited in Cahill & Tobias, 2007, p. 3). Therefore, to protect the traditional family and the social, economic, cultural, political, and moral fabric of the nation, DOMA specifically and intentionally left LGBT people out of the legal definition of marriage and family. That is, family values conservatives believe that LGBT families stand in direct opposition to the “traditional” family and therefore will cause major social problems to occur if allowed to develop. This sentiment is exemplified through a statement posted on the website of the conservative National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference (NHCLC; 2013), in partnership with the Alliance For Marriage, that called

to define marriage in order to strengthen families and reinforce the threads that enable families to thrive and prosper. This is not about being anti-gay or discriminating against anyone. This is about strengthening the family to make sure that the successful historical model which embodies the fundamental fiber of society continues to be strengthened and not undermined by activist judges. The primary deterrent in the Latino community to drug abuse, gang violence, teenage pregnancy, and other social ills is faith in God and a family with both a mother and a father. (NHCLC, 2013, para. 1)

This view expressed by the NHCLC is not isolated to Hispanics or religious groups (see, for example, the Family Research Council and the Heritage Foundation) but rather is a popular sentiment among family values conservatives nationwide and has far-reaching policy implications.

The opinions of conservative lawmakers and judges often shape the outcomes of trials concerning LGBT families and the family laws that policy makers implement in a variety of states. Sociologist and legal studies professor Kimberly Richman (2009) wrote that judges made explicit references to morality and religion in their judicial decisions in 34% of custody and adoption cases between 1952 and 2004 involving an LGBT parent. Similarly, as of May 2014, 28 states had constitutional amendments and 3 states had instituted a state-level DOMA that bans same-sex marriage (Human Rights Campaign [HRC], 2014b). Many of these laws were instituted around the time or in direct effect of the 2004 presidential election of George W. Bush, who pushed a conservative agenda and used the promise of banning marriage for same-sex couples as part of his campaign platform (Olson, Harrison, & College, 2006). Thus, the family values debate “and the public debates surrounding morality it has spurred, have been part and parcel of evolving judicial and public attitudes toward LGBT parents and families” (Richman, 2009, p. 26).

On the other hand, progressives, who consist largely of specific historians and social scientists, have pushed back against the arguments made by conservative scholars, religious leaders, and politicians (Coontz, 1993; Dill et al., 1998; Stacey, 1996). Progressive scholars argue that as society changes, families change. Therefore, in trying to understand why and how families have been changing throughout time, progressives look to factors external to families. These factors are both economic (e.g., shifts in work and the economy) and cultural (e.g., large social movements fueled by structural shifts). Progressives also look to data suggesting that families in the United States have always been changing (Coontz, 1993).

As opposed to conservatives, progressive scholars argue that diverse family structures are not a natural given but rather result from social, cultural, economic, and political changes (Dill et al., 1998). According to progressive scholars, diverse family forms are not the cause of social ills. Rather, diverse family forms have developed historically as survival strategies in response to adverse social, economic, and cultural challenges.

Progressives refute conservative assumptions by drawing on a variety of social science and historical research. First, they argue that the nuclear family form has not been the dominant historical form; nor has the family changed over time simply because of cultural values. Rather, the traditional family is really a modern, White middle-class phenomenon that grew out of structural changes, such as the industrial revolution, the Great Depression, World War II, automated machinery, increased reliance on the computer chip, and globalization. These are the same factors that have also increased social problems in the United States, such as unemployment, decrease of the middle class, and increased poverty (Coontz, 2007; Eitzen, Baca Zinn, & Smith, 2013; Stacey, 1996). According to progressive research, families change in order to survive such structural changes, thus, diverging from the traditional model, not because they are lazy or because they have faulty cultural values but because unstable financial situations deny them access to the resources necessary to maintain (if they want) a traditional family. In other words, changes in family structures serve as survival strategies and positive adjustments to negative social forces, such as economic hardships and social discrimination.

Progressives also challenge conservative assertions that biological ties are necessary in families by pointing to research showing that both motherhood and fatherhood are socially constructed and that fathers can develop nurturing skills when they become primary caregivers to their children (Coltrane, 1989; Glenn, 1994). Furthermore, progressives show how maintaining rigid and traditional family divisions of labor based on gender is not feasible for or beneficial to many working- and lower class families, particularly during

economic recessions or for families that have recently emigrated from another country (Coltrane, 2007; Hill, 2012; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994).

Progressives also refute marriage as the only legitimate defining characteristic of a family. They point to research showing how female-headed households and children who grow up with divorced parents or in step-families are no worse than children who grow up in two-biological-parent families. Progressives argue that it is not the structure of the family but rather the quality of the relationships between adults and children that determine the welfare of the children (Demo, 1992). They look to research on LGBT families showing that children with LGBT parents are at least as psychologically and socially healthy as children with heterosexual parents (Stacey & Biblarz, 2001).

Progressives argue that the reliance on an ahistorical approach, on cultural and biological determinism, and on marriage, lead conservatives to a reversed sense of cause-and-effect in the relationship between family and society. That is, by ignoring historical and structural factors that prevent individuals from forming “traditional” families, conservatives are able to treat “the family as the cause of social conditions, rather than as a reflection of them” (Dill et al., 1998, p. 11). Thus, rather than discussing how family forms are changing in positive ways to counter negative economic, social, and political forces, conservatives state that economic, social, and political situations are changing because the traditional family is disintegrating.

The dueling sides of the family values debate mean that although there are conservative laws and policies being instituted that undermine LGBT families, there are simultaneously progressive laws and policies being instituted that support LGBT families. Thus, at the same time that states are banning marriage equality, they are also recognizing legal parenthood of LGBT adults by increasing access to ARTs and decreasing barriers to adoption for potential and existing gay and lesbian parents (Richman, 2009). In other words, one result of the family values debate is that the political and social ground upon which LGBT families are forming is constantly shifting. In addition, where LGBT people live within the United States may determine how difficult or easy it is for them to form and maintain their families, as laws differ from state to state, as detailed in Chapter 2.

Plan of the Book

How do we make sense of these opposing viewpoints and their consequences for LGBT people and their potential and existing families? In this book, I take a progressive stance and present data suggesting that LGBT families have not

only risen out of social structural factors but are also reacting against discrimination and economic hardship to create a model that strengthens the institution of family and adds positively to the fundamental fiber of our society. I delve deeply and widely into the literature and research and use data to draw conclusions about how such factors shape our current families. I also examine what the consequences for LGBT families and society in general are, and try to help readers understand how the fear of LGBT families conjured up by family values conservatives is indeed unfounded.

Each of the following chapters is designed to present information concerning a different aspect of LGBT families and explain how LGBT families—while certainly not perfect—at times mirror heterosexual families and at times present alternatives from which heterosexuals might learn to strengthen their own families. Although the book focuses primarily on LGBT families in the United States, Chapters 1 through 5 each contain a Global Box authored by Morganne Firmstone with information examining specific issues facing LGBT members within global communities. Those chapters also conclude with suggested films and Internet resources addressing issues raised in that chapter.

Chapter 2 addresses the question of marriage, the legal and socially dominant recognition of what makes a family and a major focus of LGBT activists as well as the general public. This chapter discusses why marriage equality is paramount to many LGBT families philosophically, socially, and economically. The chapter also examines the historical and current struggle for marriage equality, as well as the backlash against marriage equality. In the chapter, I discuss current state and federal legislation regarding marriage equality, and compare marriage, civil unions, and domestic partnerships. The chapter examines how LGBT people who do not have access to marriage, civil unions, or domestic partnerships organize their families; and why some LGBT people believe that marriage is not worth fighting for.

Chapter 3 addresses parenting. Since the late 1970s and early 1980s, lesbians and gay men have been birthing and adopting children in record numbers, starting what many people are calling the “gayby” boom. The gayby boom started with women and men who became parents within heterosexual identities and then later identified as lesbian or gay. More recently, lesbians and gay men within these identities have been choosing parenthood by adopting and birthing children. Because of the fierce cultural debates surrounding LGBT parenthood and what happens to children raised by LGBT parents, the third chapter covers a variety of issues regarding children and parenting, starting with how LGBT people decide to become parents and how LGBT people actually become parents (e.g., through heterosexual relationships, donor insemination, adoption, and surrogacy). The chapter examines co-parents, stepparents,

multiple parents, and second-parent adoption; household division of labor and work-family balance; transracial LGBT families; strategies for raising children in homophobic and heterosexist contexts; and divorce and separation. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of LGBT grandparents.

Chapter 4 examines the lives and experiences of LGBT children and youth in families. The chapter focuses on how and when children come out; family reactions to their coming out; negotiations between families and other social institutions, such as schools and medical professionals; and mental health issues that children face when they come out or transition. The chapter pays particular attention to how LGBT children fare within the context of hegemonic masculinity, emphasized femininity, homo/bi/transphobia, and heterosexism.

Chapter 5 takes an in-depth look at intimate partner violence (IPV) within LGBT relationships. Originally labeled wife battering, then referred to as domestic violence, and now recognized as IPV, the field of understanding how adults commit violence and other forms of abuse against their intimate partners has developed dramatically since the 1980s. Included in the significant body of empirical and theoretical work in the field of IPV is a growing understanding of violence and abuse within LGBT relationships and families. Because of homophobia and heterosexism, violence in LGBT families has been largely hidden; and working to end violence has been poorly supported by community organizations and law enforcement agencies. This chapter examines the following issues: the prevalence and nature of IPV within LGBT families; explanations for why violence and abuse exist within LGBT families; options for, and responses by, LGBT people in abusive relationships; the response of law enforcement to LGBT abusers and victims; and community and other support for LGBT victims and abusers, including shelter options and rehabilitative programs.

Chapter 6 concludes the book by focusing on what we can learn by studying LGBT families and how LGBT families benefit society. LGBT families have developed out of the coalescing and intersections of specific social, political, economic, and cultural factors and are, therefore, a product of their time. Despite the fact—or perhaps because of the fact—that LGBT families are becoming more prevalent and visible in society, they live under political and cultural scrutiny and face serious challenges in forming and maintaining themselves. And yet, because we are living in difficult economic and political times, many of the issues that challenge LGBT families also challenge heterosexual families. The chapter concludes by making recommendations for how policy makers, private and public agencies, communities, and people in general can support LGBT families to ensure that they are as healthy as possible.

GLOBAL BOX

by Morganne Firmstone

The global landscape of LGBT families is a complicated intersection of cultural beliefs and practices, policies, and environment. Violence, discrimination, restricted access, and loss of identity within societal norms are just a few of the vast number of daily challenges facing LGBT families. Not only do LGBT families face a variety of trials in their everyday lives, but they have also the added difficulty of navigating through the winding path of global politics surrounding what it means to be a partner, family, parent, son, daughter, and sibling.

One of the most basic means of forming families is through the institution of marriage. Through marriage, people solidify and document their union with one another in order to receive particular benefits—whether they are legal, social, emotional, political, or financial. In essence, marriage provides access to social legitimacy and material benefits. Not everyone is legally entitled to this access, however. Many countries have strict policies and definitions about who may enter into the institution of marriage and, consequently, who may not. The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2012) noted that 76 countries worldwide have discriminatory policies that ban “private, consensual same-sex relationships” (p. 7). LGBT individuals in these countries are at a higher risk of arrest, prosecution, and imprisonment simply for not being heterosexual (UN High Commissioner for Human Rights [UN High Commissioner], 2012). Based mainly on dominant cultural definitions, values, and norms regarding the meanings of the words “gender” and “sexuality,” countries enact policies that affect the ability to marry, or even have a relationship.

While LGBT couples around the world face diminished access to marriage, some couples are not even granted the acknowledgment of existence. For example, most African countries prohibit marriage between same-sex couples. According to Mujuzi (2009), the governing legal documents of most African countries recognize only heterosexual unions. Furthermore, sexual relationships among same-sex partners are banned and, in some cases, punishable. National policies that deny the existence of LGBT relationships have profound consequences when discussing LGBT families because such relationships cannot even exist under law. Not only do LGBT families barely exist in Africa, but even homosexual acts, and as an extension, homosexual identities, are also banned from many African nations.

In fact, in 2009, Ugandan parliamentarian David Bahati introduced the Uganda Anti-Homosexuality Bill. According to the U.S. Department of State (2011), this legislation would “impose punishments ranging from imprisonment

(Continued)

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to the death penalty on individuals twice convicted of 'homosexuality' or 'related offenses'" (p. 47). In addition, several administrative-level members of the Ugandan government have openly expressed support for some form of the anti-homosexuality bill. Indeed, in February 2014, the Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni signed the bill into law. The law "toughens penalties against gay people and defines some homosexual acts as crimes punishable by life in prison" (CNN, 2014).

Despite the backlash against LGBT people in Uganda, several African nations have made progress in instituting some form of marriage equality to protect the rights of LGBT people. Shockingly enough, despite being part of one of the most conservative continents, the African nation of South Africa instituted a same-sex marriage policy in 2006. The new law reaches only so far, however, because under the law, religious and civil officials can refuse to perform marriage ceremonies to same-sex couples (Heaton, 2010). Moreover, South Africa is not immune to incidence of violence. According to a UN Human Rights Council report (UN High Commissioner, 2011), lesbians in South Africa have been singled out as victims of hate crimes. In one case, two lesbians were "beaten, stoned, and one stabbed to death" (p. 9). Beliefs surrounding heterosexism and marriage are extremely deep-rooted and inherent within culture; policy advancements alone cannot readily resolve these tensions.

In addition to South Africa, several Asian countries have tried to advance the rights of LGBT people. For example, India has worked toward LGBT policy advancements over the past 5 years, but not without setbacks. In 2009, the Delhi High Court overturned provisions of the Indian Penal Code which prohibited same-sex sexual activity (U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, 2013). Despite this decision, the U.S. State Department (2013) reported that "the abolished clause continued to be used sporadically to target, harass, and punish lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons" (p. 54). Although LGBT groups were active throughout India, including involvement in parades, speeches, rallies, and marches, they faced "discrimination and violence throughout society, particularly in rural areas" (U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, 2013, p. 54).

LGBT people in India still experience difficulty in obtaining medical treatment, as well as job discrimination, physical attacks, rape, and police brutality and coercion (U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, 2013). In the case of Diya Rai, a transgender person, the level of abuse and discrimination in India was apparent. According to the U.S. State Department (2013), Diya Rai submitted a complaint to the Bengal Human Rights Commission regarding an illegal detainment. Diya Rai was held at a police station in Baguiati for 9 hours while law enforcement officials taunted her about her sexuality. According to the report, Diya Rai was "later released without being charged and [she] alleged that police made her sign a 'personal bond' to never return to the

area" (p. 55). Such stories provide evidence that LGBT people face not only exclusion but also active and directed discouragement, and at times even more severe harassment, violence, and in some cases, death.

Despite discouragement, LGBT advocates and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) around the world have not given up the fight for equality. The issues and concerns of LGBT people and families have reached a global stage on several occasions. The Declaration of Montreal and the Yogyakarta Principles were two of the forefront documents signed in a global context. The Declaration of Montreal was introduced by the participants of the International Conference on LGBT Human Rights held in Canada in 2006. The document is an attempt to summarize the demands of the international LGBT movement in the broadest sense, and it could serve as a basis for political discussion by contextualizing the needs and demands of the LGBT community based on a human rights platform (Outgames Montréal, 2006).

According to O'Flaherty and Fisher (2008), the Yogyakarta Principles on the Application of Human Rights Law in Relation to Sexual Orientation were launched in 2007 by a group of human rights experts who intended to create a document that identified the "obligation of the States to respect, protect, and fulfill the human rights of all persons regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity" (p. 207). O'Flaherty and Fisher (2008) believe that the principles will play a crucial role in advocacy efforts and in "jurisprudential development" (p. 207).

Perhaps one of the most historic international reports, *Discriminatory Laws and Practices and Acts of Violence Against Individuals Based on Their Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity* was issued in 2011 by the United Nations (UN High Commissioner, 2011). This was the first-ever UN report on human rights, sexual orientation, and gender identity. The report documents global discrimination and violence faced by LGBT people and encourages states to use the human rights legal framework to help end violence and human rights violations committed against LGBT people (UN High Commissioner, 2011). The report makes several recommendations to nations worldwide, including repealing laws that prohibit same-sex relations between consensual adults, thoroughly investigating any crimes or killings committed against those for reasons of real or perceived gender identity or sexual orientation, enacting antidiscrimination legislation, providing sensitivity training to police and other law enforcement personnel, and supporting public information campaigns to reduce homophobia and promote acceptance (UN High Commissioner, 2011).

Framing the experiences of LGBT people as a human rights issue is the first step toward recognizing that if individual LGBT acts and identities are not sanctified by the policies of a nation, there is little hope for LGBT families to form. In other words, nations need to first protect the rights of LGBT people before those individuals can safely and legally form families. Although several policy initiatives have gained momentum in recent years, many nations have a long, rigorous road of legal battles ahead.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Compiled by Morganne Firmstone

Websites

- Center for American Progress
 - <http://www.americanprogress.org>
- Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders
 - <http://www.glad.org>
- The Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation
 - <http://www.glaad.org/about>
- Human Rights Campaign
 - <http://hrc.org>
- Human Rights Watch
 - <http://www.hrw.org>
- International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission
 - <http://www.iglhrc.org>
- National Center for Lesbian Rights
 - <http://www.nclrights.org>
- National Gay and Lesbian Task Force
 - <http://www.nglftf.org>

Films

- *Born This Way (2013 Documentary)*
 - A portrait of the underground gay and lesbian community in Cameroon. It follows Cedric and Gertrude, two young Cameroonians, as they move between a secret, supportive LGBT community and an outside culture that, though intensely homophobic, is in transition toward greater acceptance.
- *Call Me Kuchu (2012 Documentary)*
 - Explores the struggles of the LGBT community in Uganda, focusing in part on the 2011 murder of LGBT activist David Kato.
- *Fish Out of Water (2009 Documentary)*
 - Showcases the seven Bible verses that are most often used to condemn homosexuality and marriage between same-sex couples.
- *For the Bible Tells Me So (2007 Documentary)*
 - An exploration of the intersection between religion and homosexuality in the United States and how the “religious right” has used its interpretation of the Bible to stigmatize the gay community.

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- *A Jihad for Love (2007 Documentary)*
 - A documentary on gay, lesbian, and transgender Muslims across the Muslim and Western worlds.
- *Paragraph 175 (2000 Documentary)*
 - Film chronicling the lives of the handful of known survivors of Germany's Paragraph 175, the sodomy provision of the penal code that led to over 100,000 men being arrested and imprisoned or sent to concentration camps between 1933 and 1945.
- *Rape for Who I Am (2006 Documentary)*
 - Insights into the lives of South Africa's Black lesbians.
- *The World's Worst Place to Be Gay (2013 BBC Documentary)*
 - Scott Mills travels to Uganda where the death penalty could soon be introduced for being gay. The gay Radio 1 DJ finds out what it is like to live in a society that persecutes people like him and meets those who are leading the hate campaign.