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Queering Methodologies to Understand Queer Families

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Abstract

Queering questions that which is normative. In this article, we discuss how, for the study of queer families, queering methodologies could reclaim traditional research methods that reflect historically dominant or privileged paradigms. We suggest that queer perspectives may be used to adapt mainstream (i.e., dominant, positivist, empirical) methods, creating possibilities for new, diverse understandings of queer families. We start with comments on the development and current standing of queer family research. We then reflect on several key conceptual and methodological tensions as they apply to queer family studies: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer individuals ↔ queer families, between-group ↔ within-group, and quantitative ↔ qualitative. In conclusion, we discuss how these methodological considerations provide researchers opportunities to conduct research not only about but *for* queer families. Such research may reflect the diversity of queer families and challenge the normativities and systems of privilege that constrain them.

Keywords

Families; LGBT; methodology; research methods; queer; sexual and gender minorities

Queering Methodologies to Understand Queer Families

In what ways might methodologies offer new understanding and richness for the study of queer families? Mainstream methodologies often constrain approaches to the study of families (Allen, Lloyd, & Few, 2009); the concept of queering challenges scholars to interrogate that which is normative (M. Warner, 1999), including their research methods (Russell, 2016). In this article, we reconsider and reimagine methods and methodologies—the "theory and analysis of how research does or should proceed" (Harding, 1987, p. 3)—in ways that might illuminate the full scope of possibilities for queer individuals, families, and the structural conditions in which they live. We conclude by revisiting methods to address current challenges and opportunities in the study of queer families. Ultimately, we aim to challenge dominant narratives in the study of families and provide practical tools and approaches for a more critical investigation of queer families and the diverse, and often un(der)represented, experiences that define them.

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Queer Families, Normativities, and Intersectionality

We begin by recognizing the academic roots of queer theory (Butler, 1990; M. Warner, 1999) and note that our use of *queer* and *queer families* does not presume personal identities (as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) or queer; Oswald, Blume, & Marks, 2005; Oswald, Kuvalanka, Blume, & Berkowitz, 2009). As both an academic perspective and personal identity, we acknowledge that the degree to which *queer* is understood and adopted varies by social status characteristics, including age, cohort, race, culture, religion, gender, and social class. That is, we acknowledge that the people and families we discuss in our writing may very well reject the notion of queer and queer identities—and even more broadly accepted identities, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. We use this language, however, to describe a broad set of identities that represent the "doing" of sexuality, gender, and family outside of heteronormative binaries (see Oswald et al., 2005). Although individuals and families may not adopt a queer identity or may not be deliberately nonnormative, the existence and experiences of many families challenge (or queer) traditional notions of gender, sexuality, and family, particularly within family scholarship.

The study of families as a field of social science research historically has been situated in and characterized by norms across multiple axes that are fundamental to and embedded in family, including age, social class, gender, and sexuality. Heteronormativity in the study of families is consistent with (and has contributed to) the same heteronormative forces in policy and legal realms, most recently in same-sex marriage legal proceedings that were largely influenced by the question about the suitability of same-sex couples to be parents (*Obergefell v. Hodges*, 2015). Oswald and colleagues (2005) introduced heteronormativity —the socially reified ideology of gender conformity, heterosexuality, and traditional family form(ation) as the norm (see also Butler, 1990)—into the canon of family science. They conceptualized heteronormativity as the "convergence of at least three binary opposites . . . into a singular theoretical complex" (p. 144): *real* males and females versus gender *deviants*, *natural* versus *unnatural* sexuality, and *genuine* versus *pseudo* families. Queer theory asserts that these tensions emerge when families complicate these assumptions by "doing" sexuality, gender, and family outside of the binary.

Traces of (hetero)normativity are evident in many study designs that compare marginalized to dominant groups, and such designs often limit the identification and understanding of unique characteristics, processes, and strengths of queer families not captured within many comparative perspectives (Allen & Demo, 1995; Few-Demo, Humble, Curran, & Lloyd, 2016). Notably, the progress made through these studies largely has been focused on understandings of majority (White, cisgender, middle-class; i.e., homonormative) families (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Tasker & Patterson, 2007; van Eeden-Moorefiled & Benson, 2016). A fundamental challenge is that interrogating (only) heteronormativity reflects a single-axis view of oppression (i.e., from the vantage point of a single identity; see Crenshaw, 1989). Centering marginal identities as the focal axis of analysis (i.e., focusing on lesbians, gay men, bisexual, or transgender identities) is a major advance for the field of family science (Allen, 2015) but also may obscure intersectional diversity and prevent a deeper understanding of (queer) families (Cole, 2009; Crenshaw, 1989; Lewis & Grzanka, 2016). Alternatively, studies of queer families could be conceptualized and approached with

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judicious attention to intersecting systems and structures that contribute to the social inequalities that queer families face.

Thus, to capture the experience of queer families, sexual and gender identities cannot be isolated from other socially positioned identities such as race, ethnicity, class, geographic location, nativity, religion, and ability. The roots of thinking and theorizing about intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) often are traced to the Combahee River Collective (1995) and their 1977 *Black Feminist Statement*. That work provided a foundational declaration for understanding the ways that marginalized identities or social locations are interlocking and mutually constructed and, therefore, cannot be meaningfully understood or represented along single axes of oppression. Notably, the Combahee River Collective were "Black feminists and *lesbians*" (emphasis added), a fact that is often not represented in the discussion of the intellectual roots of intersectionality (e.g., Cole, 2009).

Scholars have begun to study complexities among queer families and the ways that they are *doing* gender, sexuality, and family (Oswald et al., 2009). Notable examples include studies of gay fathers (Goldberg, 2012), second-generation queers (Kuvalanka, 2013; Kuvalanka & Goldberg, 2009), parents of transgender or gender-creative children (Johnson & Benson, 2014; Kuvalanka, Weiner, & Mahan, 2014), and the recent introduction of transfamily theory (McGuire, Kuvalanka, Catalpa, & Toomey, 2016). Queering traditional approaches to research allows prevailing notions of "the family" to be deconstructed and illuminates diversity among queer and all families (Allen & Demo, 1995). What follows is not meant to be an exhaustive review; instead, we provide examples from LGBT and queer literatures to discuss the potential for queering family scholarship in ways that expose and challenge (hetero)normativities and highlight intersectional experiences.

Queering Methods

A broad set of pragmatic issues are relevant to methods and methodologies in scholarship on queer families (see Russell & Muraco, 2013; Umberson, Thomeer, Kroeger, Lodge, & Xu, 2015). We describe a few issues in what follows and acknowledge there are others not included here because they exceed the scope of this article. For example, there are a host of issues regarding measurement, including what to measure and how (Durso & Gates, 2015; The GenIUSS Group, 2014; Williams Institute, 2009), as well as the need for sexual and gender minority measures in national and representative data relevant to families (Cahill & Makadon, 2017; Durso & Gates, 2015). Also, a growing number of large, publically available datasets offer new opportunities to unveil unique and important within-group differences among queer families (see lgbtdata.com; Russell & Muraco, 2013). Similarly, advances in complicated and rigorous quantitative methods provide avenues for analyzing data in novel ways that capture intersecting identities and diversities in experiences (i.e., latent class and latent profile analysis; Collins & Lanza, 2011; Grzanka, 2016; Masyn, 2013) or familial processes that may (or may not) differ for or among queer families (i.e., multiple-group actor–partner interdependence models [APIMs]; Kenny, Cashy, & Cook, 2006).

Using examples from within and outside family scholarship, we highlight strategies to reclaim traditional methods in ways that reflect research practices and epistemologies that

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might attend to and challenge normativity and privilege. We recognize historic criticisms of positivist science from feminist and queer perspectives and thus acknowledge our belief in the value of feminist and queer empirical approaches to understanding the lives of queer people and families (Bowleg, 2008; Thompson, 1992). Ultimately, we contend that queer perspectives may be used to adapt or appropriate mainstream (dominant, positivist, empirical) methods in ways that contribute to possibilities for new understandings of queer families. We identify what we believe are three important epistemological and methodological tensions in the following subsections.

LGBT People ↔ Queer Families

The first tension we acknowledge is between a focus on individual LGBT or queer people versus a focus on queer families, as well as the complexity and distinctions between meanings and definitions of *LGBT* and *queer*. Unlike other cultural groups, queer people are defined by individual identities, and the study of queer people historically has been based in the medical and developmental sciences (Richardson & Seidman, 2002). We observe that family relationships are understood intergenerationally, yet the identity of queer families is often traced to individuals or couples whose personal identities become the basis for a family's queerness (e.g., families may be queer because children come out as LGBTQ; families may be queer because adult relationships that define them comprise those who are LGBTQ). Thus, our focus has remained on LGBT-identified people as children or parents raising children, foci that, in the context of the study of families, is itself heteronormative. Queer families and identities, however, are complex, dynamic, personally meaningful, developmentally situated, historically located, socially ascribed, and diverse in ways that have not been captured in family science scholarship (cf. family of choice networks; Dewaele, Cox, Van den Berghe, & Vincke, 2011). Considerations of intersectionality often have focused on personal identities and experiences, and such complexities are amplified in families: Intersectionality points to the complexities of identities for individuals (Bowleg, 2008; Crenshaw, 1989) and thus conceptualizing family intersectionality multiplies the potential ways individuals share and negotiate identities as families and in family systems as well as across the life course.

Scholarship on LGBT people and families has origins in understandings of individual identities for whom meaning is traced to the gay (and later, lesbian; and even later, bisexual; and much later, transgender) rights movement(s) (Marcus, 1992). From the beginning, these movements faced critiques from within of sexism, racism, and classism; subsequently, social movements institutionalized to increase visibility, rights, and protections for LGBT people through strategies that normalize LGBT people and lives (Puar, 2007). The effect of those normalizing strategies is that they produce *homonormativity*, or normativity and privilege among sexual and gender minorities (gay men and lesbians in particular) rooted in the race, class, and gender systems inherent to heteronormativity. Queer, however, draws from feminist and gay and lesbian critiques of cultural understandings of gender and sexuality, focusing on the ways that gender, sexuality, and identity are defined and regulated in terms of normativity (M. Warner, 1999). Thus, understanding queer families involves critical analysis of the normative forces of gender and sexuality as well as race and social class (and other axes of oppression) that shape the experiences and possibilities of families.

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Historically, family scholars have concerned themselves most often with LGBT people and with families constituted by LGBT people. Less often has there been direct consideration of the intersections of race, ethnicity, and class (among others) and the way normativities related to these identities constrain queer (and all) families (Bowleg, 2008; Moore, 2011).

Between-Group ↔ Within-Group

A second tension has to do with methodological and epistemological differences in between- and within-group designs in family science. Early studies of ethnic minority families (e.g., African American, Latino) led to the development of within-group conceptual models and analytic approaches that center a culturally situated understanding of minority families, with a particular focus on strengths and challenges that families navigate in a society characterized by racism (Garcia Coll et al., 1996; Umaña-Taylor, Alfaro, Bámaca, & Guimond, 2009; Wills et al., 2007). The study of queer families has been slow to move beyond a comparative lens: That is, nonqueer families are the baseline to which queer families are often compared, interpreted, and understood (Allen & Demo, 1995). Thus, studies of queer families historically have taken a between-groups approach, often comparing LGBT or queer people and families to (ostensibly) non-LGBT or nonqueer people or families (see Biblarz & Stacey, 2010). The point is not that within-group studies are better but rather that each approach offers possibilities to contribute to understanding queer families.

Comparative or between-group studies have been essential for identifying and documenting LGBT disparities in health and well-being, which fundamentally transformed scientific and public understanding of LGBT lives (Institute of Medicine, 2011). Such studies have highlighted, for example, the structural conditions that disadvantage LGBT people (such as state bans on marriage for same-sex couples; see Hatzenbuehler, McLaughlin, Keyes, & Hasin, 2010) or the distinct gender dynamics in same-sex compared with different-sex couples (e.g., health behavior work is gendered in different-sex couples, whereas patterns of cooperative work are more commonly found in same-sex couples; Reczek & Umberson, 2012). Comparative approaches also have played a role in securing basic rights for queer families (e.g., marital and parental rights; American Psychological Association et al., 2015; *Obergefell v. Hodges*, 2015). Yet many studies designed to compare LGBT or queer people, couples, or families to heterosexuals inadvertently (or in some cases intentionally) reinforce homonormativities in sampling and design. That is, studies have been based on samples that reflect race and social-class privilege (van Eeden-Moorefield, Few-Demo, Benson, Bible, & Lummer, 2018) or are based on heteronormative assumptions that monogamous coupling and parenthood are normal relationship characteristics (Moore & Stambolis-Ruhstorfer, 2013).

One example of how between-group studies have masked understanding of queer families is the gap between typical samples in studies of queer families and results from population-based data. A recent content analysis of LGBT research in top family journals (van Eeden-Moorefield et al., 2018) demonstrated that two thirds had primarily or entirely White samples (with 13.5% not reporting any racial or ethnic details of the sample). In fact, the predominant view of queer families in family science (and at large; see Gay and Lesbian

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Alliance Against Defamation, 2015) is that they consist of White, cisgender, middle-class, educated, gay- or lesbian-identified people, living in urban and coastal areas who transition to parenthood together through adoption or assisted-reproductive technologies (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Gates, 2011; Tasker & Patterson, 2007). However, national data indicate that queer families are most likely to be led by women of color, economically disadvantaged, living in rural areas in (mostly) Southern, Midwestern, or Mountain regions, who are raising children who are often from previous different-sex relationships (Gates, 2013, 2014, 2015; Goldberg, Gartrell, & Gates, 2014). Because between-group designs focus primarily on differences based on sexual (and to a lesser extent gender) identities, other identities that are salient to the experience of queer individuals and families become invisible. However, shifting research questions from "How do queer families differ from heterosexual families regarding *x*?" to "How do queer families differ from one another regarding *x*?" provides a dramatically different point of reference for understanding diversity among queer families.

Being mindful of between-group differences when conducting research using a within-group design could provide unique insights into the experiences of particular groups (Cole, 2009). In the context of research on queer individuals and families, considering diversity in queer life experiences and histories may lead to deeper understanding and create the potential to identify more appropriate strategies that promote queer and family well-being. For example, by delineating the sexual and gender diversity among Black men who have sex with men (BMSM), Wilson and Miyashita (2016) identified experiences of racism and poverty that may be shared among BMSM, as well as the factors related to LGBT identity and community that may distinguish subgroups of experience among BMSM with respect to HIV risks, thus illuminating multiple and diverse strategies for intervention. In a study examining social support networks of LGB men and women, Frost, Meyer, and Schwartz (2016) found that lesbian and bisexual women are less likely to rely on family-of-choice networks than are gay and bisexual men but are more likely to seek support from their family of origin, particularly for instrumental needs. Still, racial and ethnic minority LGBs reported lower levels of both emotional and instrumental support than White LGBs and demonstrated a high degree of homophily (in both sexual and racial or ethnic identities) in support-seeking behavior. These findings demonstrate distinct strategies among LGB people of color in their support-seeking behavior. Moore's (2008, 2011) findings regarding the division of household labor among Black lesbian stepfamilies, in which biological mothers trade responsibility of household chores for greater household authority, similarly challenge models of queer family dynamics drawn from studies of White lesbian families (Biblarz & Savci, 2010) and speak to the importance of within-group studies.

Conversely, applying within-group strategies in the context of comparative designs might yield findings that illuminate otherwise unseen qualities or characteristics not only of the subgroup but potentially also of the comparison (often majority) group (Cole, 2009). For example, research on sexual identity development historically has focused exclusively on sexual minorities. However, Morgan and colleagues found that, like most sexual minorities, the majority of exclusively heterosexual men (Morgan, Steiner, & Thompson, 2009) and women (Morgan & Thompson, 2011) report sexual identity questioning. The youth victimization literature also provides examples: Sexual-orientation– and gender-identity–based bullying and victimization are detrimental to sexual- and gender-minority youth but

also to youth who identify as heterosexual (Poteat, Mereish, DiGiovanni, & Koenig, 2011; Russell, Sinclair, Poteat, & Koenig, 2012). Moreover, findings from a novel study demonstrated that sexual-orientation and gender-identity discrimination are not only harmful to sexual and gender minority health, but also to the people who perpetrate antigay prejudice (Hatzenbuehler, Bellatorre, & Muennig, 2014). Design decisions ultimately may reflect dominant presumptions about families—as well as presumptions regarding how to study them—in ways that thwart understanding of queer families; on the other hand, creative, intentional application of within- or between-group designs offers potential to illuminate new understandings of queer lives and families.

Quantitative ↔ Qualitative

Regarding the third tension, uses and values related to qualitative and quantitative research methodology vary across disciplines that study families and are passionately discussed in feminist, intersectional, and queer writings (Harding, 1987; McCall, 2005; Thompson, 1992; D. M. Warner, 2004). We recognize and respect the tensions among positivistic, interpretive, and critical perspectives in family scholarship (Allen, 2000; Sharp & Weaver, 2015). Researchers, however, often overemphasize the differences between these approaches "by portraying quantitative work on general patterns as scientific but sterile and oppressive and qualitative research on small *N*s as rich and emancipatory but soft and subjective" (Ragin, 2000, p. 22).

Not unlike the broader field of family science, empirical queer family scholarship is more likely to use (and emphasize; see Goldberg, 2010) quantitative rather than qualitative approaches (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Hartwell, Serovich, Grafsky, & Kerr, 2012; van Eeden-Moorefield et al., 2018), and although mixed-methods offer unique perspectives to enrich and contextualize experiences, content analyses of top family journals demonstrate that mixed methods are rarely used in queer family scholarship (less than 4% of LGBT empirical studies; Hartwell et al., 2012; van Eeden-Moorefield et al., 2018). Similar to our description of between- and within-group designs, we do not aim to engage in a dialogue on whether and when quantitative or qualitative (or mixed-methods) approaches offer benefit to the understanding of queer families. Instead, we ask whether it is possible to queer historically singular methods (i.e., only quantitative or qualitative)? That is, in what ways might methods be queered or contribute to queer meanings (Russell, 2016; see also Oswald et al., 2009)?

Generally, qualitative approaches lend themselves more readily to understanding and deconstructing the intersectional systems of power and privilege that situate the experience and processes of queer families (Oswald et al., 2005, 2009). The benefits of qualitative approaches to the study of diverse, queer lives is well demonstrated in the work of Bowleg (2008; Bowleg, Huang, Brooks, Black, & Burkholder, 2003), where participants asserted an experience that is not independently Black, female, or lesbian but that is unique to the contemporaneous relationality of, and social inequalities related to, all three identities (see also Crenshaw, 1989). This level of specificity is not captured in quantitative approaches that are largely restricted to testing these experiences as additive or interactional—the former of which is criticized as an independent investigation of identity and the latter of which is

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susceptible to power and interpretability limitations (Bowleg, 2008; Lewis & Grzanka, 2016; McCall, 2005).

Qualitative studies have been instrumental in elucidating queer family experiences and processes. For example, qualitative investigations have found that (traditionally) gender-based partner and parenting behaviors manifest in alternative ways for same-sex couples. Reczek and Umberson (2012, 2016) found that the ways couples "do" gender and family vary as a function of both an individuals' gender but also the gender with whom they are partnered. In the context of heterosexual relationships, for instance, intergenerational caregiving is a gendered activity: caregiving roles are most often performed by women for both their own and their spouse's parent(s). Thus, heterosexual women in caregiving roles reported less support from their spouses than did heterosexual men in caregiving roles, relative to same-gender spouses in caregiving roles who reported a high degree of instrumental and emotional support from partners and demonstrated a more integrated and coordinated action of care for ailing parents. Similar dynamics can be found in the parenting literature, where same-sex parents "mother" and "father" their children irrespective of gender (Reczek, 2016; Schacher, Auerbach, & Silverstein, 2005). Notably, Umberson and colleagues (2015) also hypothesized that these gendered partner behaviors could vary as a function of other intersecting identities (e.g., race, ethnicity, and class).

Qualitative approaches also have uncovered differences in the experience and motivations for behaviors that, on the surface, appear similar across queer and nonqueer families. In a qualitative study of parents, for example, Kane (2006) noted that both heterosexual and same-sex parents expressed concerns regarding their child's gender nonconforming behavior. However, same-sex parents discussed the fear of societal judgments as a motivating factor for the suppression of their child's gender creative expression, whereas heterosexual mothers primarily cite negative reactions from their male partners. These insights speak directly to the pressure of normativities regarding gender, sexuality, and family but also the distinct experiences of queer and heterosexual parents in the context of discrimination.

Unique insights notwithstanding, existing qualitative studies of queer families (like quantitative studies) are based predominantly on White, cisgender, and middle-class samples. Although qualitative studies can accommodate queer family experiences in light of normativities and stigma, researchers must purposively seek out and sample those who traditionally have been at the margins of queer family research. Studies of queer families must also be designed to capture the multiple and intersecting systems of oppression these individuals and families experience (see Bowleg, 2008, 2013; Moore, 2008, 2011). When reflecting on her work on the intersections of gender, race, and sexual identity, Bowleg (2008) offered two recommendations for other researchers examining intersectionality: "Focus on meaningful constructs such as stress, prejudice, discrimination rather than relying on the demographic questions alone . . . [and] tap the interdependence and mutuality of identities rather than implying . . . that identities are independent, separate, and able to be ranked" (p. 316). Consistent with Bowleg's point, methods that focus on the social contexts where stigma is enacted are critical for understanding queer people and families. Although not solutions to the dearth of methodological approaches for studying intersectionality

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(Bowleg, 2012; McCall, 2005), these considerations (i.e., a focus on context and interdependent experiences) offer a promising start to capturing and illuminating the lived experience of diverse (queer) families.

There are opportunities to queer even historically dominant and objectivist methods (e.g., large-scale survey research). The emerging scholarship on structural stigma (see Hatzenbuehler, 2014) has taken advantage of large, preexisting population-based data for examinations of the experiences of queer people in a dynamic political landscape. For instance, the National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions serendipitously captured pre- and postevent measures of LGB adults' mental health and substance use in states that did and did not institute a ban on same-sex marriage in 2004–2005. In this quasi-experimental design, LGB adults living in states that instituted anti-LGB legislation experienced a statistical increase in mood, anxiety, and alcohol use disorders compared with LGB adults living in states that did not pass these bills (or heterosexuals living in either condition; Hatzenbuehler et al., 2010). Similarly, researchers have started to link data sources that were designed and collected independently to triangulate social, interpersonal, and intrapersonal experiences related to discrimination and prejudice (for examples, see Hatzenbuehler et al., 2014; Hatzenbuehler & McLaughlin, 2014). In one study, Duncan and Hatzenbuehler (2014) linked school-based surveys with local police department records and found that sexual minority youth were at greater risk for suicidal ideation and attempts when they lived in neighborhoods with higher rates of LGBT assault hate crimes compared with sexual minority youth who resided in neighborhoods with lower reports of these incidences. The role of context has always been a key variable in the understanding of youth and families (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Elder, 1998), and these approaches offer promising strategies to elucidate the ways that sociopolitical structures—including the institutionalization and reification of normativities, power, and privilege—influence (queer) familial experiences.

Untapped Methods

Finally, numerous methodological approaches have rarely been employed in studies of queer families. Although the use of mixed methods is not new to family science and offers rich possibilities for capitalizing on the inherent strengths of both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Plano Clark, Huddleston-Casas, Churchill, O'Neil Green, & Garrett, 2008), we know of few examples applied to queer families. In one such study of family members of LGB people after the November 2006 U.S. election, Horne, Rostosky, and Riggle (2011) documented quantitatively higher exposure to negative messages in the media and greater negative affect among relatives of LGB people in states that had passed amendments to restrict marriage. Qualitative data illuminated a source of negative affect: Family members of LGBs in states that passed restrictive amendments reported more concern for the safety of their family members.

Community-based participatory action research techniques offer methods to engage communities in the process of research; to deconstruct hierarchies inherent in the research process and involve populations of study in identifying research questions, informing study design, and (in some instances) providing their interpretation of findings to better represent

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their lived experiences. Such approaches may be especially relevant for studies of historically marginalized groups such as LGB and queer people of color (DeBlaere, Brewster, Sarkees, & Moradi, 2010). Various forms of participatory action research techniques have been applied, for example, to studies of LGBTQ youth (Wagaman, 2015), LGB college students (Stover, 2015), and LGBT military personnel (Ramirez et al., 2013), yet such approaches have not been widely applied to queer families.

In addition to the dearth of mixed and participatory methods, it is a challenge to acquire large, diverse samples when studying underrepresented and marginalized groups. That said, the inclusion of sexual and gender minority measures in large, publically available datasets provide a growing number of opportunities to diversify approaches for studying (queer) families (Russell & Fish, 2016; Russell & Muraco, 2013). Advances in statistical methods also offer new ways to assess nuanced processes in smaller samples that improve rigor. In primary data collection, for example, small sample sizes are less detrimental in studies that conduct multiple assessments over short periods of time. Examples of these approaches include (dyadic) daily dairy data (Laurenceau & Bolger, 2005) and ecological momentary assessments (Shiffman, Stone, & Hufford, 2008), both of which include the collection of multiple points of data and thereby increase statistical power for analyzing across-, between-, and within-person processes. These data collection procedures can incorporate multiple perspectives, combatting shared method variance (Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000), and allow for the implementation of time-lagged effects that improve inferences of temporality and directionality of associations within and across persons and families (Totenhagen, Randall, Cooper, Tao, & Walsh, 2017).

Although multilevel modeling (MLM) is fairly commonplace in the family science literature, application of MLM to the study of queer families has lagged in comparison (Smith, Sayer, & Goldberg, 2013). MLM (see Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002) offers a flexible and powerful platform for assessing multiple respondent processes as well as between- and within-family associations or intraindividual change over time (see Smith, Sayer, & Goldberg, 2013, for a more in-depth discussion of MLM and queer family science). Extensions of MLM allow researchers to test exchangeable (or indistinguishable) dyad models (i.e., dyads or couples that are not defined by two distinct genders) for the analysis of data outside the confines of the gender binary. MLM methods also can model more than two interdependent data points, accommodating triadic (or higher order) interactions (e.g., child–parent triads, polyamory triads; Lyons & Sayer, 2005). The application of MLM to understanding queer family experiences also offers opportunities to model variability in context (i.e., people nested within families and families nested within neighborhoods, communities, or states) and captures the variability of experiences within these contexts. Other approaches to dyadic data analysis, such as APIMs (Kenny et al., 2006), allow researchers to model dyadic processes across groups or conditions via multiple-group APIMs (see Monk & Nelson Goff, 2014). Largely untapped in the study of queer families, these methods represent rigorous quantitative approaches to examine the sociocultural and interpersonal factors that contextualize the ways in which queer individuals, couples, and families operate.

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Finally, although not a solution to the quantitative conundrums of intersectional research, mixture modeling techniques such as latent class and latent profile analysis (Collins & Lanza, 2011; Masyn, 2013) offer one vantage point to measuring intersectionality by modeling profiles that characterize multidimensional, interdependent, and mutually constructed identities and experiences in context.

Considerations Moving Forward

In this article our goal was to identify conceptual and methodological tensions related to scholarship on queer families. Put another way, we hoped that using a queer lens to understand these tensions might be constructive for advancing methods in the study of queer and all families. Much like intersectional interpretive and analytical perspectives (Bowleg, 2008, 2012; Cole, 2009; Lewis & Grzanka, 2016), queering methods requires explicit attention to the ways that queering and queered scholarship might illuminate interlocking systems of power and privilege that shape the life experiences of those whose identities and experiences do not reflect normative expectations of gender, sexuality, and family (Oswald et al., 2009). Ultimately, a queer approach to methods embeds responsibility for critical analysis in the design and conduct of family scholarship. Too often science is used in ways that stabilize social norms and theoretical frameworks for understanding families; a queer method compels not only analytic critique but also critique of the ways that science may confront family normativities. For family scholars, the questions becomes this: How can we use science in ways that best represent and strengthen (queer) families? How can we conduct research for queer families in ways that do not reinforce the subjugation of queer identities and families who are noticeably absent in queer family scholarship? In other words, how might we move from doing research *on* queer families to doing research *for* (and with) queer families (Thompson, 1992)?

Research on queer families seeks to inform and address the relative erasure of queer families in the broader family literature. This is compensatory work that highlights inequalities inherent in the lived experience of queer families (for parallels in queer pedagogy, see also Few-Demo et al., 2016). Comparatively, research for queer families is concerned with empowerment (Thompson, 1992): situating queer family experiences in broader social context; attending to diversities among queer families according to race, ethnicity, and class, among others; and challenging conventional assumptions and conceptualizations of queer families. Queering methods for queer families also implores responsibility from scholars to “effectively disseminate our research findings to policymakers and other persons in positions of power” (Goldberg, 2013, pp. 33). Such scholarship engages queer communities both within the research process (via [community-based] participatory action research; Wagaman, 2015) and in the broad circulation and application of findings.

We have offered a glimpse of what it might mean to queer approaches to the study of families, and how shifting methodological paradigms and epistemological standpoints of traditional positivistic approaches could better reflect, uncover, and illuminate diverse, queer lives and the social conditions that shape them. These considerations in the study of queer families, however, must reflect an understanding of and responsibility for correcting the systems of oppression that situate the queer families and the individuals who constitute

them. Only then will family scientists be able to assert their commitment to the understanding and strengthening of all, including queer, families.

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