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A Content Analysis of the First Decade of the *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of several specialized journals that examine the experiences of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) individuals, families, and communities, particularly the *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, has profoundly shaped GLBT research. Engaging in taking stock activities helps to identify trends on which future research should focus to further develop the field. For example, scholars suggest critical analysis of journal publications is necessary for field development, which was done here. Specifically, this content analysis examines the first decade of publications appearing in the *Journal of GLBT Family Studies* from 2005 to 2015 ($N = 233$) to identify trends in theoretical foundations, methodological plurality, and inclusivity. Results revealed foci on experiences of GLBT adults. Studies focused less on issues unique to GLBT populations (i.e., stigma). Qualitative designs and primarily White, middle-class samples were most frequently used. Strengths and future opportunities are discussed.

KEYWORDS

Content analysis; families; GLBT; GLBT families; methods; queer; theory

In recent decades, there has been increased visibility and support for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) individuals and their families (van Eeden-Moorefield & Alvarez, 2015). For example, public opinion is more accepting, many GLBT-headed families have been granted legal and civil liberty rights such as the right to marry and adopt, and several antidiscrimination policies now exist in many municipalities and states. However, we also recognize these advances are not uniform across segments of the GLBT population, especially for those who identify as transgender (Williams Institute, 2016), and that discrimination and minority stress persist (Mohr & Sarno, 2016). Further, victimization rates are higher for GLBT youth than for their heterosexual counterparts (Kann et al., 2016). For example, 42% of GLBT youth experienced bullying at school compared

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to 21% of heterosexual youth (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2004). In addition, students who are perceived to be gay are at a much higher risk of being bullied (Reise, 2016). Hate crimes against transgender people, particularly murders of transwomen of color, have increased by 13% since 2014 (Human Rights Campaign, 2015). It also remains legal to fire someone for being GLBT in about half of US states, with these rates higher for transgender individuals (Harley & Teaster, 2016; Movement Advancement Project, 2016). Accordingly, the lives of families with GLBT members over the past decades best can be described as in flux and even chaotic at times with a constant push and pull between social and legal advances and the daily realities of discrimination and minority stress.

Understandably, researchers have taken increasing interest in these families and how contextual changes influence their daily experience (Biblarz & Savci, 2010). With increased interest, GLBT-specific journals (e.g., *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, *Journal of Bisexuality*, *Journal of Homosexuality*) emerged to help build the field and disseminate findings. These journals are especially important given their tailored missions. The creation of the *Journal of GLBT Family Studies* was crucial to the field's development, as it is the only journal to focus specifically and entirely on GLBT-headed families, and their unique experiences (Galupo, 2016). The journal was founded by Dr. Jerry Bigner, Professor of Human Development and Family Studies at Colorado State University, in 2005, and is not connected to any organization or society (Galupo, 2016). The fact that only about 2% of general family journal articles focus on GLBT experiences (Zrenchik & Craft, 2015) means this journal fills a critical void in the field.

Many literature reviews have focused on the state of GLBT family literature (Biblarz & Savci, 2010); however, they lack objectivity (i.e., due to subjectivity in creating themes) compared to the use of systematic content analyses (Stemler, 2001). Previous analyses have taken stock of the literature on GLBT families across mainstream journals (Zrenchik & Craft, 2015); yet, few have investigated GLBT-specific journals (e.g., Elia & Eliason, 2012) and none have examined *The Journal of GLBT Family Studies* specifically. Although previous content analyses, of other journals, indicated the general status of queer family literature (e.g., Biblarz & Savci, 2010; Clark & Serovich, 1997; Elia & Eliason, 2012), study characteristics (such as focus, theory, study approach, study design, sample type, and sample composition) were infrequently coded, instead focusing more on prevalence rates. In a few studies that did code for topical foci, some found that identity and family issues (e.g., parenting and relationships; Johnston & Stewart, 2013; Sherrer & Woodford, 2013; Vaughn et al., 2014) were common. Understanding study characteristics, such as those stated previously, provide valuable indicators of a field's growth and enhances future development. Importantly, there are three specific areas that are useful to the development of the field of GLBT-headed family studies: theoretical foundations, methodological plurality, and inclusivity. Specifically, theoretical considerations that are unique to GLBT populations are a vital foundation to continuing GLBT-focused literature (Allen & Demo, 1995; Bowleg, 2013).

Further, the use of diverse methodologies allows for the development of a more nuanced understanding of family experiences, and knowledge more generally (Gilgun, 2012; Lavee & Dollahite, 1991; Russell & Muraco, 2013). Finally, scholars must ensure that they include the many intersecting identities and experiences across the broad GLBT community to avoid perpetuation of the monolithic assumption, or assumption that suggests no diversity exists within the GLBT community or their families (Biblarz & Savci, 2010; Bowleg, 2013).

Therefore, as the field develops, it is important to periodically take stock and identify various trends (e.g., focus, methods used) as a way to assess strengths, weaknesses, and future directions, thereby ensuring continued progress and development. Content analyses are useful for this purpose. Erford, Miller, Duncan, and Erford (2010) recommended that content analyses be conducted approximately every 10 years. By doing so, scholars are able to systematically review large volumes of data to identify common themes, and such analyses are particularly suited for examining journal content objectively (Stemler, 2001). Taken together, the purpose of this study was to understand the state of GLBT family research by describing its theoretical foundations, methodological plurality, and inclusiveness by undertaking a content analysis of all published volumes of the *Journal of GLBT Family Studies* through 2015.

Previous content analyses of GLBT research

Theoretical foundations

Certain theoretical foundations are more inclusive and are a better fit to understand GLBT-headed families, whereas other methodologies and theoretical foundations exude heteronormative bias (Clark & Serovich, 1997). For instance, previous content analyses, of other journals, have found that heterosexual families often are positioned in studies as the norm (i.e., heteronormative) or the normative bar to which GLBT-headed families are compared (Herz & Johansson, 2015). In this same vein, GLBT-headed families have been expected to replicate the behaviors of functioning heterosexual families to avoid being labeled as *deviant* or *unhealthy* (Malone & Cleary, 2002). Extant research suggests that heteronormative bias is often present when constructing research design and theoretical grounding on GLBT families (Clark & Serovich, 1997). Specific theories (i.e., minority stress theory) may be a more effective theoretical grounding when examining GLBT samples (DeBlaere, Brewster, Sarkees, & Moradi, 2010).

Importantly, previous content analyses, of other journals, found that theory was rarely used to ground studies focusing on GLBT lives (e.g., Elia & Eliason, 2012; Goodrich, Sands, & Catena, 2015; Graybill & Proctor, 2016; Van Sluytman & Torres, 2014; Zrenchik & Craft, 2015). Of studies that used theory, a resilience-based perspective was most common (e.g., Johnston & Stewart, 2013; Vaughn et al., 2014). Further, in a content analysis of clinical journals, Hartwell, Serovich, Grafsky, and Kerr (2012) reported that although only a third of the articles used

theory, those that did used feminist theory, social constructivist theory, systems theory (i.e., family systems, Bowen's family systems, ecological systems), or a counseling-based theory (e.g., cognitive behavioral theory). Understanding the theoretical underpinnings of research on GLBT families is important, as it allows readers to understand the ways in which studies are conceptualized and will ultimately lead to more pertinent research (Lavee & Dollahite, 1991). For instance, as GLBT families are exposed to discrimination, prejudice, and other cultural stressors, it is important to understand which studies are conceptualized in ways that take this into account (e.g., queer theory; Gedro, 2007). Further, theoretical grounding indicates to readers how findings are framed, including if heteronormative influences may be present within results (e.g., Vaughn et al., 2014).

Methodological plurality

Overall, GLBT research consists of both empirical and nonempirical work (Elia & Eliason, 2012; Huang et al., 2010; Sherrer & Woodford, 2013; Vaughn et al., 2014). For instance, previous content analyses, of other journals, found that nonempirical work surrounding GLBT topics included theoretical papers, literature reviews, programming, and organization information (e.g., Elia & Eliason, 2012; Huang et al., 2010; Sherrer & Woodford, 2013; Vaughn et al., 2014). Specific to empirical publications, other content analyses found that both quantitative and qualitative methodologies were used (Goodrich et al., 2015). Interestingly, although Goodrich et al. (2015) found an almost even split between qualitative and quantitative methods, other content analyses have found higher use of quantitative analyses (e.g., Goodrich et al., 2015; Hartwell et al., 2012; Vaughn et al., 2014), and still others found that the majority were qualitative methodologies (e.g., Elia & Eliason, 2012; Sherrer & Woodford, 2013; Van Sluytman & Torres, 2014). Additionally, although some authors identified mixed-methods studies, such as Van Sluytman and Torres' (2014) recognition of Averett, Yoon, and Jenkin's (2011) study of resilience among older lesbians, there was a general paucity of mixed-methods approaches. For instance, Goodrich et al. (2015) described a lack of mixed methodology in their analysis of *Journal of GLBT Issues in Counseling*. Despite the inclusion of methodological information in these analyses, others did not include reviewed studies' methodologies, making a comprehensive understanding of the nature of current research difficult (e.g., Johnston & Stewart, 2013; Lee & Crawford, 2007; Zrenchik & Craft, 2015).

Sampling

Further, many content analyses did not examine sampling methodology (Elia & Eliason, 2012; Graybill & Proctor, 2016; Hartwell et al., 2012; Johnston & Stewart, 2013). As queer populations are often difficult to sample (McCormack, 2014; Meyer & Wilson, 2009), content analyses that do examine sampling techniques are especially helpful. For instance, previous content analyses, of other journals, such

as Huang, Brewster, Moradi, Goodman, Wiseman, and Martin (2010) found some of the more common sampling methods included convenience, random, snowball, and nationally sampled groups. In fact, convenience sampling was, by far, the most common (81%). They also described where these studies had recruited participants from, which were places such as bars and clubs, through clinicians and health providers, and via LGBT organizations. Additionally, less than 10% of the 219 reviewed articles used a nationally based sample. Huang et al. (2010) further reported studies tended to recruit from major metropolitan areas in a small number of states (i.e., California, New York, Illinois, and Florida) in GLBT clubs and bars, which may not be conducive to representing diverse individuals and experiences. We also know that the Internet is becoming an increasingly popular choice for data collection among GLBT populations (van Eeden-Moorefield, Proulx, & Pasley, 2006), because it allows for the ability to reach more of a representative sample of this community.

Inclusivity

Scholarship on GLBT individuals and families has been critiqued for focusing mainly on those who are White, educated, and cis-gender (Logie & Rwigema, 2014). However, the GLBT community is a diverse population that spans all races, ethnicities, cultures, abilities, socioeconomic statuses, and positionalities (Biblarz & Savci 2010; Gates, 2014). For example, approximately 15% of the GLBT population identifies as African American non-Hispanic, 17% of the GLBT population identifies as Hispanic, 4% of the GLBT population identifies as Asian, and 5% of the GLBT population identifies as multiracial (Gates, 2014). Additionally, scholars find same-sex partners are more likely to be in an interracial relationship than those in different-sex relationships (Kastanis & Wilson, 2014). Further, a third of all people in same-sex couples with children are ethnic minorities (Gates, 2014). The most recent review of a decade's worth of literature on GLBT families suggests that, compared to White couples, ethnic minority couples, who live in all parts of the United States, are more likely to be raising children (Biblarz & Savci, 2010).

Additionally, individuals with a same-sex partner have higher rates of unemployment than those in different-sex relationships. Therefore, it is important to understand who is represented in the research and who is not to better develop a more comprehensive understanding of the unique experiences of GLBT families across and between populations. For example, transgender individuals are not often represented in general marriage and family therapy journals (Blumer, Green, Knowles, & Williams, 2012). In addition, bisexual and sexually fluid individuals are often underrepresented in GLBT literature (Lee & Crawford, 2007; Singh & Shelton, 2011; Tasker & Delvoye, 2015), with one notable exception being the *Journal of Bisexuality*, in which all articles focus specifically on bisexual populations. As such, Elias and Eliason (2012) conducted their own content analysis of this journal. They found that the

majority of research represented in the *Journal of Bisexuality* utilized both men and women in their samples; all-female samples followed by all-male samples were also represented. Similarly, in an effort to highlight the experiences of queer women in the literature, Lee and Crawford (2007) conducted a content analysis of the representation of lesbian and bisexual women in GLBT literature and found there to be less literature with lesbian samples than gay samples, with bisexual samples more underrepresented overall.

In their study on the *Journal of Bisexuality*, Elias and Eliason (2012) found the vast majority of the articles focused on western (i.e., United States) samples, with little international representation. Similarly, other content analyses (e.g., Huang et al., 2010; Singh & Shelton, 2011) have found the majority of research has had little representation of ethnic minority groups at all. For example, Goodrich et al.'s (2015) content analysis of the *Journal of GLBT Issues in Counseling* found that although some articles focused on African American and Asian samples, there was an overall lack of research with a specific focus on cultural issues, especially among Hispanic and Native American populations. Of the literature that does focus on ethnic minority groups (specifically youth), the majority focuses on sexual risk, substance use, and mental health problems, rather than family processes and development (Toomey, Huynh, Jones, Lee, & Revels-Macalinao, 2016).

Taken together, it appears that, although there are a wide variety of methodologies used in GLBT family scholarship, the use of sampling strategies beyond convenience is lacking. Further, there seems to be little heterogeneity in sample characteristics. The majority of research seems to focus on adult gay or lesbian (as opposed to sexually fluid, transgender, bisexual) populations who are primarily White. As the *Journal of GLBT Family Studies* has come upon its 10th anniversary, it is a relevant time to understand how the content of this journal adds to the broader body of literature (Erford et al., 2010). With this information, we are able to highlight both the major contributions of this journal as well as identify areas that should create a future research agenda for the next decade.

Methods

Article selection procedure

All volumes of the *Journal of GLBT Family Studies* from 2005 to 2015 were reviewed. Only pedagogical/teaching articles (0.42%), clinical articles (13.30%), nonclinical basic and applied research articles (61.37%), conceptual pieces (i.e., literature review, critical analysis, content pieces without methodology, theoretical pieces; 17.59%), meta-analyses (1.28%), or policy pieces (6.00%) were included in the content analysis. Purpose statements were used to determine the type of article. This resulted in a total of 233 reviewed articles. Book reviews, introductions to special issues, editorials, commentaries, and rejoinders were all excluded ($n = 35$),

similar to previous content analyses (e.g., Blumer et al., 2012; Buboltz, Miller, & Williams, 1999; Hartwell et al., 2012; Singh & Shelton, 2011).

Coding procedures

The focus of this content analysis was to describe study details (e.g., sample characteristics) and characteristics of conceptual and methodological rigor. To do so, members of the research team were trained in how to code each full article using procedures and categories that were developed specifically for this analysis and based off of procedures used in previous content analyses (Clark & Serovich, 1997; Zrenchik & Craft, 2015). To establish consensus, the first 10 articles were coded together by the first and third author (Evans, 2013). Once the primary set of articles were coded, the first author continued to code all additional articles and met biweekly with the third author to discuss any questions and uncertainties. Study authors consulted on uncertainties to ensure consistency. The third author also checked a random sample of 10% of the articles. Full consensus was achieved during these meetings.

Article content coding

Each article was deductively coded for focus, theory, study approach and design, sample type, and sample composition. Additional codes and subcategories were inductively developed within each code (e.g., for primary focus, subcategories included GLBT adult, GLBT couples, and GLBT children). All nonempirical articles (e.g., pedagogical, meta-analyses, policy pieces) were excluded from full-content coding because they lack empirical methodology. However, they were included in focus and theory.

Theoretical foundations

First, theoretical framework was coded based on whether theories were used explicitly, implicitly, or if the article was atheoretical. Specific theories explicitly used were recorded when applicable (e.g., feminist theory). When theory was used implicitly, members of the research team met and reached consensus on the likely theory used based on the information presented within the article. Additionally, subcodes were used to identify articles focused specifically on stigma, outness, and/or HIV given the theoretical importance of these unique phenomena in the lives of GLBT individuals, couples, and families (Sherrer & Woodford, 2013).

Methodological plurality

Second, several aspects of study approach and design were coded. To do so, the authors identified which studies undertook qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methodologies. The authors then determined whether the study was cross-sectional or longitudinal and the procedure for data collection (e.g., data collected in person, online, or via telephone). The authors also coded primary and secondary designs (e.g., naturalism, ethnomethodology, grounded theory, case study, survey).

Primary methods were also coded, including in-depth interview, focus group, content analysis, and survey, as examples.

Inclusivity

Each article was coded for its focus. Examples of primary focus codes included: GLBT adults, GLBT couples, GLBT children, heterosexual couples with GLBT children, and GLBT couples with children. For articles using a heterosexual comparative sample, the primary code was based on the GLBT subsample. The secondary focus identified if the article focused solely on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender individuals, or any inclusive combination (e.g., lesbian and gay sample only). Some articles (e.g., Reeves et al., 2010) focused on heterosexual groups and their views on GLBT families, therefore a code was developed for this category. Finally, the type of sample, (e.g., convenience, purposive, or snowball sample), as well as the sample size, was coded. Further, we identified if the article used a heterosexual subsample as a comparative sample. Participant demographic information, such as sample diversity and socioeconomic status were recorded.

Given the variance in the reporting of demographic information across studies, such as self-report measure verses annual household income reports, we deductively developed broad categories to be inclusive of all groups. Categories of diversity included: primarily White, primarily ethnic/racial, mixed, entirely minority, and entirely White samples. For a sample to be considered mixed, the percentage of most groups were required to match current US population trends. For example, 77.4% of the US population is White and 13.2% of the US population is Black or African American (US Census Bureau, 2016). Therefore, if a study utilized a sample with similar proportions, it was considered mixed. In studies where the sample was not mixed, the racial group with the highest representation was identified as the sample type. For example, if a sample was 51% African American/Black, it was coded as primarily racial/ethnic. If the sample was 51% Caucasian, it was coded as primarily White/Caucasian. Each article was also coded as international or not.

Sample socioeconomic status was coded as one of seven categories—mixed, primarily high, middle, or low, or entirely high, middle, or low—and were identified as such based on reports made by the study's author(s). When actual household income was reported, socio-economic status was coded based on current US demographics (e.g., less than \$25,000 a year would be coded as primarily low, under \$120,000 a year would be coded as primarily middle, and over \$120,000 a year would be coded as primarily high; US Census Bureau, 2016). Sample outness (i.e., the extent to which a participant's sexual orientation or gender identity is known by others) was coded as primarily out, mixed, primarily closeted, or not included. This was coded based on how study participants self-identified their outness. For example, if the majority of participants reported being out, it was coded as primarily out; if the majority of respondents reported that they were not out, it was coded as primarily closeted; if there was a mixture that was coded as mixed.

Table 1. Theoretical foundations.

	<i>f</i>	%
<i>Theory</i>		
Explicit	105	45.10%
Atheoretical	102	43.78%
Implicit	26	11.16%
<i>Theoretical framework</i>		
Identity framework	15	11.45%
Feminist framework	13	9.92%
Gender framework	10	7.63%
Minority stress framework	8	6.10%
Ecological framework	7	5.34%
Queer framework	7	5.34%
Life course framework	6	4.58%
Developmental framework	5	3.82%
Symbolic interactionism	4	3.05%
Miscellaneous	56	42.74%

Results

Theoretical foundations

In coding for theory, just under half (45.10%) of both the empirical and nonempirical reviewed articles used an explicit theory or conceptual framework, 44.77% were atheoretical, and only 11.16% implicitly used theory to guide their research (Table 1). Among the articles that explicitly used theory, the most commonly used theories were feminist (9.92%), identity (11.45%), and gender (7.63%). Due to low frequencies of other theories used, a combined group of miscellaneous theoretical frameworks was developed (42.74%). Examples of less commonly used theories coded as miscellaneous included attachment theory (0.43%), cognitive behavioral theory (0.43%), and Darwinism (0.43%; a full list can be obtained from the corresponding author). Regarding a focus on unique theoretical considerations, only 21.38% of articles focused on discrimination, 8.17% of articles focused on outness, and the overwhelming majority of articles did not focus on HIV/AIDS (99.37%).

Methodological plurality

Regarding the broad methodological research approach of only the empirical studies ($n = 160$), the majority (57.50%) of articles used a qualitative approach, whereas approximately one-third (35.62%) used a quantitative approach. Only 6.87% used a mixed-methods approach (see Table 2) and two articles used a true experimental design. The vast majority of research articles (85.63%) were cross sectional and only 14.38% were longitudinal. Data most often was collected in person (44.38%), mixed data collection strategies were used 22.50% of the time (e.g., data collected in person and through phone), online collection was used 18.75% of the time, mail was used 7.50% of the time, and phone was used 3.75% of the time. Only 3.13% of articles used secondary data (Table 2).

Table 2. Methodological plurality: Approach and design elements of articles.

	<i>f</i>	%
<i>Approach</i>		
Qualitative	92	57.50%
Quantitative	57	35.63%
Mixed	11	6.87%
<i>Design</i>		
Cross sectional	137	85.63%
Longitudinal	23	14.38%
<i>Data collection</i>		
In-person	71	44.38%
Online	30	18.75%
Mail	12	7.50%
Phone	6	3.75%
Secondary data	5	3.13%
Mixed design/other	36	22.50%
<i>Type of research</i>		
Nonclinical basic and applied research	143	61.37%
Conceptual pieces	41	17.59%
Clinical	31	13.30%
Policy	14	6.00%
Meta analysis	3	1.28%
Pedagogical/Teaching	1	0.42%

Of empirical articles, the most common sampling strategy was convenience (42.50%), followed by purposive (38.13%), and then snowball (14.38%). Sampling strategies used less frequently included cluster (0.63%) and multistage probability (0.63%; Table 3). Recruitment of participants was often through GLBT advocacy/support organizations. Of the qualitative articles ($N = 92$) common research designs were general designs (51.08%), grounded theory (13.04%), and open-ended surveys

Table 3. Methodological plurality: Sample methods.

	<i>f</i>	%
<i>Overall methods</i>		
Interview	56	35.00%
Survey	56	35.00%
Survey and interview	8	5.00%
Secondary data	8	5.00%
Content analysis	5	3.13%
Narrative	5	3.13%
GIS	1	0.63%
Other	21	13.13%
<i>Sampling strategy</i>		
Convenience	68	42.50%
Purposive	61	38.13%
Snowball	23	14.38%
Cluster	2	1.25%
Simple random	1	0.63%
Multistage probability	1	0.63%
Criterion-selective	1	0.63%
Illustrative evocative	1	0.63%
Not provided	1	0.63%
<i>Comparative sample</i>		
No	148	92.50%
Yes	12	7.50%

(13.04%). Commonly used methodology included in-depth interviews (39.13%) and semistructured interviews (10.86%). Less common qualitative methodology included diary entries (1.08%), unstructured interviews (1.08%) and conversation tasks with questionnaire (1.08%). Of the quantitative research designs ($N = 57$), surveys were the most commonly used research design (70.17%). Less commonly used research designs included nonexperimental designs (15.78%) and secondary data designs (14.03%). Surveys were the most commonly used methodology (73.68%). Less commonly used quantitative methodology included in-depth interviews (1.75%), semi-structured questionnaires (1.75%), and vignettes with surveys (1.75%).

Inclusivity

Focus

The majority of articles had a general focus on parenting (27.46%), followed by adults (22.32%), and couples (16.31%; see Table 4). Studies focused less often on larger family relationships (12.02%), child perspectives (a mixture of children who identified as GLBT and children of GLBT families; 9.87%), general public attitudes (8.15%), or services/ practitioner attitudes (3.86%).

Sample

Finally, we coded for the characteristics of the sample within each study. Within empirical articles, the specific focus (i.e., part of the GLBT population) was coded. Of the articles reviewed, 51.10% of the studies used a sampling approach that included all segments of the GLBT community. Others were limited to gay only (18.88%), lesbian only (13.30%), bisexual only (0.86%), transgender only (11.16%), and heterosexual samples (4.72%; Table 4). It is evident that bisexual samples are the most underrepresented group. The vast majority of articles (92.50%) focused solely on GLBT samples, and, approximately 8% of articles (7.50%) used a heterosexual comparison sample.

Table 4. Inclusivity: Article focus.

	f	%
General focus		
Parenting contexts and perspectives	64	27.47%
Adult perspective	52	22.32%
Couples perspective	38	16.31%
Family relationships	28	12.02%
Child perspective	23	9.87%
General public attitudes	19	8.15%
Services/Practitioner attitudes	9	3.86%
Specific focus		
Gay	44	18.88%
Lesbian	31	13.30%
Transgender	26	11.16%
Heterosexual	11	4.72%
Bisexual	2	0.86%
Inclusive mixture	119	51.10%

Table 5. Inclusivity: Sample demographics.

	<i>f</i>	%
<i>Sample diversity</i>		
Primarily White	80	50.00%
Incomplete/not provided	48	30.00%
Entirely White	12	7.50%
Entirely minority	9	5.63%
Not applicable	6	3.75%
Mixed	3	1.88%
Primarily ethnic/racial	2	1.25%
<i>SES diversity</i>		
Incomplete/not provided	111	69.38%
Primarily middle	15	9.38%
Primarily middle-high	10	6.25%
Mixed	7	4.38%
International SES	5	3.13%
Primarily high	5	3.13%
Primarily low	4	2.50%
Primarily middle-low	2	1.25%
Entirely middle	1	0.63%

Samples were comprised of primarily White participants (50.00%), and almost a third (30.00%) of empirical articles did not include the racial or ethnic characteristics of their samples. Additionally, only 1.88% of articles used a mixed sample, and 5.63% of articles used an entirely minority sample with the remainder falling into the other categories (Table 5). The majority of articles did not provide the socio-economic status of their sample (69.38%), and of those that did, almost 10% of samples were primarily middle class (see Table 5). Finally, we coded for the overall outness of the GLBT samples used in these articles. Almost one-third of respondents in empirical articles were primarily out (32.50%), 6.87% of articles used mixed outness samples (e.g., some closeted and some out respondents), and only two articles out of 233 used respondents who were primarily closeted. Many articles did not provide the outness of their respondents (31.88%) and respondent outness was not applicable in 27.50% of articles.

Discussion

For its inaugural 10 years, the *Journal of GLBT Families Studies* has been at the forefront of publishing studies that highlight the uniqueness of GLBT-headed families (Tornello, Kruczkowski, & Patterson, 2015), and is strongly positioned to disseminate relevant information to scholars and practitioners best able to support and strengthen all GLBT families (Allen & Demo, 1995). The results from this content analysis suggest several important findings that we believe demonstrate strengths of the field, as well as future directions to continue its growth and development. These are discussed in the following sections.

Theoretical foundations

Only 45% of the studies included in this review used explicit theory. Theories that were used are appropriate to understanding GLBT families (Allen & Demo, 1995),

which include feminist, gender, identity, minority stress, and queer frameworks, as well as others (see [Table 1](#)). These particular theories provide a framework to better examine and understand the intersectionality of sexual orientation, gender identity, race, socio-economic class, (dis)ability, religion, and other social categories. They help to provide a socio-political lens to study the experiences of marginalized groups within family research. Theory provides a conceptual guide for research (Demo & Allen, 1996); as such we caution researchers to avoid undertheorizing GLBT family research and encourage researchers to continue to utilize GLBT-specific and -inclusive theoretical foundations. By including more information on theoretical foundations, as GLBT scholars, we are able to engage in more theoretical discussions to strengthen a body of GLBT work (Knapp, 2009). However, we also acknowledge that our coding procedures of implicit theory were best guesses and therefore understand that this should be considered a limitation.

Further, there are understudied theoretical considerations unique to the GLBT community that deserve further study. Factors such as outness, experiences of stigma and discrimination, and HIV tend to be understudied in a family context. Moradi et al. (2010) examined the negative influences of discrimination on the lives of GLBT people, thus further examination of these variables within a families and relationships context will help us to develop relational supports and resources. For example, GLBT people and families have long been affected by HIV/AIDS, yet our findings reveal it is a topic published in less than 1% of the articles analyzed for this study, which is consistent with other GLBT family research content analysis (van Eeden-Moorefield, Few-Demo, Benson, Bible & Lummer, 2017). We speculate that as HIV has been considered a public health issue, research on HIV prevention has been published in public health journals. This shows a positive shift away from the biased belief that HIV was a gay disease; however, advances in HIV prevention, such as the development of pre-exposure prophylaxis, have important implications on the well-being of gay individuals, men who have sex with men, and gay couples (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016). For example, advances have changed the discourse regarding serodiscordant relationships, in which one partner is HIV negative and the other partner is HIV positive. Although public health research on serodiscordant couples has been growing (Chakravarty, Hoff, Neilands, & Darbes, 2012), we encourage increased research within the family realm by means of publication of research on relationship issues and quality. Further research may be conducted on relationship formation and disclosure when a partner is HIV positive.

Methodological plurality

The majority of the empirical studies used qualitative methodology, which allows scholars an in-depth look at the unique experiences of GLBT families; however, increased use of quantitative methods and mixed methods will allow for larger samples to examine GLBT issues. A balance of qualitative and quantitative research (i.e., methodological plurality) will allow for more breadth and depth in

developing a more holistic body of literature on the lives of GLBT individuals and families (Lavee & Dollahite, 1991).

There have been significant legal shifts that directly impact GLBT families in recent years allowing for protections and legal recognition of families (van Eeden-Moorefield & Alvarez, 2015). Therefore, although just over 85% of the empirical research was cross-sectional, as GLBT family structures gain recognition and public support, increased longitudinal research will allow for examination of GLBT family life transitions at various points in time. We call for increased longitudinal studies to examine life transitions that are understudied and unique to the GLBT community. For example, there have been recent calls from the transgender community for research on transgender aging (Siverskog, 2014); longitudinal data will provide researchers the opportunity to examine needs at various life points and provide better ongoing services. The Williams Institute has provided information on the aging gay and lesbian community, which may provide a model for subsequent research (Fredricksen-Goldsen, 2014).

Over half of the samples in the empirical articles included segments of the GLBT community, and were primarily recruited through GLBT advocacy and support organizations, which appear to be a popular recruitment strategy when sampling GLBT populations (Huang et al., 2010). However, it is important to note that GLBT advocacy and support organizations may not reach all individuals apart of the GLBT population due to limited access to these groups. The Internet may be a viable alternative to reaching these populations (van Eeden-Moorefield et al., 2006). For example, Tornello et al. (2015) recruited participants for their study through web sites, online listervs, and online newsletters. It is imperative that all members and parts of the GLBT community are visible in the scholarship, therefore, it is vital that future research considers more diverse recruitment methods. One starting place may be a more accurate understanding of the size of the GLBT population in the location being studied (The Williams Institute, 2016). At this time, the most common sampling strategies reflect the preponderance of qualitative research included in this review; therefore, an increase in quantitative GLBT research will likely shift recruitment to increased probability sampling strategies.

A need for inclusive focus

This content analysis revealed that most GLBT family research is approached from the perspectives of adults and does not include dyadic data, thus calling for more research from the perspective of children. Identifying the primary characteristics of GLBT-family research allows for improved service delivery (Hartwell et al., 2012), thus we were interested in the key foci of studies included in this analysis. The majority of articles published were empirical, and research on parenting was most common. As the body of literature has developed, and the way the field studies GLBT families, researchers can turn their focus to other variables that contribute to family well-being and the

needs of GLBT families. More specifically, broader GLBT family research is starting to look at unique factors such as discrimination (Sherrer & Woodford, 2013) or outness, and outside influences such as public attitudes and service/practitioner attitudes, allowing for better service delivery.

However, family practitioners' attitudes on GLBT issues is not present in this study, yet has implications for the types of services GLBT families receive. Inclusive and supportive human service providers and practitioners have the potential to play important roles in the livelihood and well-being of GLBT families (e.g., Blumer et al., 2012; Hartwell et al., 2012). Conversely, service providers and practitioners who hold homophobic and/or transphobic views have the ability to discriminate against families and create barriers to services. Research on this population will contribute to a developing landscape of GLBT family services, needs, and supports.

A need for inclusivity of more diverse samples

Over half of studies published were inclusive to all segments of the GLBT community. However, when examining specific segments of the community, bisexual samples are pointedly underrepresented. Bisexual and pansexual identities have long been invisible in the GLBT research (Singh & Shelton, 2011), which is indicated in less than 1% of the specific focus population in this content analysis. Fluid orientations and identities continue to be relatively absent in family research as a specific population of study. For example, a 2013 Pew Research Center found that 40% of a nationally representative sample of GLBT Americans identified as bisexual, and were more likely to have different-sex partners (Parker, 2015), yet GLBT-family research samples do not reflect the largest segment of the GLBT population. As such, this is a largely marginalized group, even within the GLBT community, which is marginalized itself. Often, people, both heterosexual and gay or lesbian, view a bisexual orientation as being transitory and, therefore, illegitimate. We encourage researchers to expand inclusion beyond an inclusive mixture of GLBT people and focus on the experiences and needs of bisexual, pansexual, and other sexually fluid groups.

We were surprised to realize that almost a third of the empirical articles did not indicate race or ethnicity, which is especially crucial to examining the intersectional experiences of racial and ethnic sexual minorities. Similar to Huang et al. (2010) and Singh and Shelton's (2011) content analyses, primarily White middle-class samples were most often utilized in research reviewed in this content analysis. Further, the majority of articles did not indicate socioeconomic status of their samples. Research that includes primarily or entirely White samples maintains a racially monolithic White standard of GLBT families, and fails to examine diversity within the GLBT community. For example, the high rates of family rejection, discrimination, and violent hate crimes against transgender women of color are of particular concern (Grant et al., 2011).

Researchers must approach racially diverse and inclusive projects with intention, and remain mindful of recruitment strategies that seek to include racial and ethnic sexual minorities. We do acknowledge that our coding of racial and ethnic diversity as well as socioeconomic status, was limited and, therefore, should be considered a limitation of this study. Future research must seek more racial and ethnic diversity to adequately account for members of the GLBT population that are not a part of the White middle class demographic.

Conclusion

The *Journal of GLBT Family Studies* has published a variety of research specific to GLBT families. Through the use of a content analysis, we were able to empirically understand the progress made over the past decade in this work. Based on our findings, we encourage future research to use theoretical foundations appropriate to GLBT families, use methodological plurality, and be more inclusive of other queer identities and GLBT people of color to continue the development of the field. In doing so, research in the next decade will account for the diverse experiences of more families.

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