

Peer Relations Among Adolescents With Female Same-Sex Parents

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This study examined associations among family type (same-sex vs. opposite-sex parents), adolescent gender, family and relationship variables, and the peer relations of adolescents. Participants included 44 adolescents parented by same-sex female couples and 44 adolescents parented by opposite-sex couples, matched on demographic characteristics and drawn from a national sample. On both self-reported and peer-reported measures of relations with peers, adolescents were functioning well, and the quality of their peer relations was not associated with family type. Regardless of family type, adolescents whose parents described closer relationships with them reported higher quality peer relations and more friends in school and were rated as more central in their friendship networks.

Keywords: sexual orientation, gay, lesbian, adolescents

There has been considerable debate in both academic and non-academic worlds (e.g., Bellafante, 2004; Stacey & Biblarz, 2001) about the impact of parental sexual orientation on children's and adolescents' development. The outcome of this debate may have a profound impact on children's lives through legal decisions in custody cases as well as those concerning adoption and foster care (Golombok, 2002; Patterson, Fulcher, & Wainright, 2002; Perrin & Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health, 2002). This issue also has implications for well-established theories of child and adolescent development (Golombok & Tasker, 1994). As a result, researchers have increasingly investigated the role of parental sexual orientation on child and adolescent development. This study represents an effort to contribute to this literature by examining the quality of youth peer relations using information gathered from both adolescents themselves and their peers.

Many different theoretical predictions about the development of children with lesbian mothers can be drawn from the psychological literature (Golombok et al., 2003). Some authors (e.g., Baumrind, 1995) have suggested that parental sexual orientation might be expected to have an important influence on development, particularly during adolescence. Others, however, have argued that parental sexual orientation is less likely than are the qualities of relationships and interactions found within the family to be an important influence (e.g., Chan, Raboy, & Patterson, 1998). Research has sought to evaluate these expectations by exploring possible linkages between parental sexual orientation on the one hand and children's development on the other.

Peer relations are an especially important domain of social functioning for children and for adolescents. Longitudinal studies (e.g., Coie, Lochman, Terry, & Hyman, 1992; Ollendick, Weist, Borden, & Greene, 1992) have found that peer rejection or a lack

of peer acceptance in childhood is associated with later academic difficulties, truancy, and dropping out (Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 1998). Poor peer relations in childhood have also been found to be associated with difficulties in psychological adjustment (Rubin et al., 1998). Longitudinal research has reported associations between childhood peer rejection and adolescent delinquency (e.g., Kupersmidt & Coie, 1990) and depressive symptoms (e.g., Prinstein & Aikins, 2004). Research that has shown considerable consistency in the quality of peer relations over time (e.g., Frederickson & Furnham, 2001) illustrates the importance of optimizing peer relations for children and adolescents in order to avoid the harmful effects of peer rejection.

Studies reported to date have identified few associations between parental sexual orientation and young children's well-being (Patterson, 2000, 2006) but have suggested that processes within the family may be associated with child outcomes (Chan, Raboy, and Patterson, 1998; Golombok et al., 2003). Research has focused on children who were born to lesbian mothers (e.g., Brewaeys, Ponjaert, Van Hall, & Golombok, 1997; Chan, Brooks, Raboy, & Patterson, 1998; Chan, Raboy, and Patterson, 1998; Flaks, Ficher, Masterpasqua, & Joseph, 1995; Gartrell, Deck, Rodas, Peyser, & Banks, 2005; Golombok, Tasker, & Murray, 1997) and on those who were born in the context of a heterosexual relationship (e.g., Golombok, Spencer, & Rutter, 1983; Green, 1978; Green, Mandel, Hotvedt, Gray, & Smith, 1986; Kirkpatrick, Smith, & Roy, 1981). Results of these studies have suggested that children's development is similar in many ways whether children are reared by lesbian or by heterosexual parents.

There are, however, fewer studies of adolescent offspring of lesbian or gay parents. Indeed, some have advised caution when generalizing the results of research conducted with young children to adolescents (e.g., Perrin & Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health, 2002). Because issues such as personal identity, peers, and dating emerge as especially important during adolescence, and because of concerns about the possible effects of same-sex parenting during this period (e.g., Baumrind, 1995), it is a particularly important time at which to examine the development of youth with nonheterosexual parents.

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The small body of research that has focused on adolescent offspring of families headed by same-sex couples includes Huggins's (1989) study of 36 adolescents (13–19 years old, 18 with divorced heterosexual mothers and 18 with divorced lesbian mothers), which reported no differences in adolescent self-esteem as a function of mothers' sexual orientation. In another early study, O'Connell (1993) studied 11 young men and women, 16–23 years old, who were the offspring of divorced or separated lesbian mothers. Participants expressed strong love, loyalty, and protectiveness toward their mothers and a desire for others to understand the benefits of having a lesbian mother. Participants, however, also described concerns about losing friends, and some described attempts to control information about their mothers' sexual orientation.

Gershon, Tschann, and Jemerin (1999) studied self-esteem, perception of stigma, and coping skills among adolescents, 11–18 years old, who had either been born to women who identified as lesbians (25 adolescents) or been born in the context of their mother's earlier heterosexual marriage (51 adolescents). Adolescents who perceived more stigma related to having a lesbian mother had lower self-esteem in five of seven areas, including social acceptance, self-worth, behavioral conduct, physical appearance, and close friendship (Gershon et al., 1999).

Tasker and Golombok (1995) conducted a longitudinal study of young adult offspring of lesbian mothers. Forty-six young adults, 17–35 years old, were interviewed in this follow-up to Golombok and colleagues' (1983) study of children reared in divorced lesbian mother or divorced heterosexual mother families. Tasker and Golombok (1995) reported that young men and women who were reared by lesbian mothers were no more likely than those reared by heterosexual mothers to experience depression or anxiety or to have sought professional help for psychiatric problems. They reported having close friendships during adolescence and were no more likely to remember peer teasing than were those from other families. Offspring of lesbian mothers were also no more likely to report same-sex sexual attraction or a gay/lesbian/bisexual identity than were those from heterosexual families. They were, however, more likely to have considered a gay or lesbian relationship as a possibility for themselves and to have been involved in a same-sex relationship.

Recently, Wainright, Russell, and Patterson (2004) reported a study of family and relationship variables on the one hand, and adolescent personal and social adjustment on the other. Using data from a large national database, they studied adjustment in a sample of 44 teenagers (12–18 years old) with same-sex parents and a matched sample of 44 teenagers with opposite-sex parents. On a range of psychosocial outcomes including depressive symptoms, anxiety, and school adjustment, Wainright and her colleagues found no significant differences as a function of family type (i.e., same-sex vs. opposite-sex parents). Particularly notable among their findings was that there were no significant effects for family type on adolescent reports of sexual behavior or romantic relationships. Wainright and her colleagues did, however, find significant associations between parental perception of parent–adolescent relationship quality and adolescent school adjustment (Wainright et al., 2004). Similar findings were reported for delinquency, substance use, and victimization by Wainright and Patterson (2006).

Overall, the research on adolescent and young adult offspring of lesbian mothers has suggested that they are developing in positive

ways. However, existing research is still limited and is mostly based on small samples, the representativeness of which is difficult to assess (Stacey & Biblarz, 2001). One recent study has assessed adjustment of 7-year-old children with lesbian and heterosexual mothers using data from a large geographic population study (Golombok et al., 2003). We have recently used data from a national sample—the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Bearman, Jones, & Udry, 1997)—to study adolescent adjustment among offspring of same-sex parents (Wainright & Patterson, 2006; Wainright et al., 2004). This study is, however, the first to assess peer reports of peer relations of adolescents living with same-sex parents in which data are drawn from a large national sample.

In their review of the literature on parent-child relationships and peer relations, Ladd and Le Sieur (1995) suggested that there are links between parenting styles (Baumrind, 1967; Maccoby & Martin, 1983) and children's competence with peers, with an authoritative (highly demanding and highly responsive) parenting style providing the best foundation for children's peer relations. Numerous studies (e.g., Harrist, Petit, Dodge, & Bates, 1994; Putallaz, 1987) have found that parents who engage in authoritative parenting behaviors are more likely to have children who have positive experiences with peers. This association has been found in longitudinal as well as cross-sectional studies (e.g., Isley, O'Neil, & Parke, 1996). Similarly, research has found that warm and supportive parenting and positive parent–adolescent relationships are associated with positive peer relations for adolescents (e.g., Dekovic & Meeus, 1997; Matza, Kupersmidt, & Glenn, 2001). We expected similar findings in this study.

In summary, we assessed peer relations among adolescent offspring of same-sex parents and explored factors associated with individual differences in peer relations within this group. We assessed structural variables such as family type (i.e., whether parent has a same-sex or opposite-sex partner) as well as family and relationship variables such as adolescents' perceptions of care from adults and peers, autonomy, and integration into the neighborhood, and parents' perceptions of the quality of their relationship with their child. We studied both adolescents' own reports and those of their peers. On the basis of previous findings with children (e.g., Chan, Raboy, and Patterson, 1998; Flaks et al., 1995; Golombok et al., 2003), we expected to find few differences in peer experiences between youth living with parents who had same-sex versus opposite-sex partners. Consistent with the literature on sources of individual differences among adolescents (e.g., Steinberg & Silk, 2002), however, we did expect to find associations between family and relationship variables and adolescent peer relations.

Method

Participants

Participating families were drawn from a large national sample of adolescents in the United States collected by Quality Education Data for the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Bearman et al., 1997). This study, known as Add Health, is a school-based study of the health-related behaviors of adolescents in Grades 7–12. The Add Health study examined numerous factors that influence adolescents' behavior, including personal character-

istics, families, friendships, romantic relationships, peer groups, schools, neighborhoods, and communities (Bearman et al., 1997).

In order to obtain a school-based representative sample of American adolescents, Add Health used a clustered sampling design. Systematic sampling methods and implicit stratification were used to ensure that this sample was representative of U.S. schools with respect to region of country, urbanicity, school type, ethnicity, and school size. The final sample, which included more than 90,000 students in Grades 7–12, consisted of a pair of schools in each of 80 communities, with the exception of some high schools that spanned Grades 7–12 and therefore functioned as their own feeder schools.

This sample completed Add Health's In-School Questionnaire, which is a self-administered instrument that was administered in a 45- to 60-min class period between September 1994 and April 1995. This questionnaire included topics such as demographic characteristics, education and occupation of parents, household structure, risk behaviors, expectations for the future, self-esteem, health status, friendships, and school-year extracurricular activities. Each school provided a student roster that was used by project staff to assign an identification number to each student. Schools provided these rosters to their students so that they could identify their friends when they completed the questionnaire. Parents were informed in advance and could direct that their children not participate in the study (Bearman et al., 1997).

All students who completed an In-School Questionnaire, plus any others who were listed on a school roster, were eligible for selection into the core in-home sample. This sample is representative of American adolescents in Grades 7–12 in the 1994–1995 school year. A total core sample of 12,105 adolescents was interviewed. Interviews were conducted in the participants' homes (Bearman et al., 1997).

A parent, preferably the resident mother, of each adolescent respondent was asked to complete a questionnaire covering topics that included parents' marriages and marriage-like relationships; neighborhood characteristics; involvement in volunteer, civic, or school activities; health-affecting behaviors; education and employment; household income and economic assistance; and parent-adolescent communication and interaction (Bearman et al., 1997).

Offspring of same-sex couples were identified through a two-step process. We first identified families in which parents reported being in a marriage or marriage-like relationship with a person of the same sex. Because no data had been collected on parents' sexual identities per se, families headed by gay, bisexual, or lesbian parents who did not report that they were in a marriage or marriage-like relationship at the time of data collection could not be identified. In the second step, the consistency of parental reports about gender and family relationships was examined, and only those cases with consistent data were retained for further analysis (see Wainright et al., 2004 for details). The number of families headed by male same-sex couples was very small ($n = 6$), so they were excluded from the final sample.

The focal group of families identified through this process consisted of 44 adolescents, 23 girls and 21 boys. Approximately 68% of the adolescents identified themselves as European American or White, and 31.8% identified themselves as non-White or biracial. On average, the adolescents were 15.1 years old ($SD = 1.5$ years), with a range of 12 to 18 years. Average household

income for families in the focal group was approximately \$45,500 per year (see Table 1).

The resources of the Add Health database allowed the construction of a well-matched comparison group of adolescents reared by opposite-sex parents. This matching was accomplished by generating a list of adolescents from the Add Health database who matched each target adolescent on the following characteristics: sex, age, ethnic background, adoption status (identified via parent reports), learning disability status, family income, and parent's educational attainment. The first matching adolescent on each list was chosen as the comparison adolescent for that target adolescent. The final sample included 88 families, including 44 families headed by mothers with female partners and 44 comparison families headed by opposite-sex couples.

To assess the degree to which our focal group of 44 families with same-sex parents was representative of the overall population from which it was drawn, we compared the demographic characteristics of the focal group with those for the entire Add Health core sample ($n = 12,105$). Using one-sample t tests and chi-square tests, as appropriate, we compared adolescent age, parent age, household income, adolescent gender, racial identification, adoption status, and parental education in the two groups. None of these comparisons was statistically significant, leading to the conclusion that the focal group of 44 families was demographically similar to the population from which it was drawn.

Measures

Adolescent Self-Report Outcome Variables

Quality of relationships with peers and classmates. Adolescents' reports of the quality of their peer relationships were measured with a scale of nine items, including questions about how much the adolescent feels friends care about him or her, feels close to people at school, and feels like a part of his or her school, as well as frequency of trouble getting along with other students, feeling that people were unfriendly, getting into any physical fights or serious physical fights, and being jumped. Negative items were reverse-coded. These items were standardized ($M = 0$, $SD = 1$)

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of Sample

Variable	Family type		Opposite-sex vs. same-sex
	Same-sex parents	Opposite-sex parents	
No. of families	44	44	
Child's age (years)	15.1 (1.5)	15.0 (1.4)	$t < 1$, <i>ns</i>
Parent's age (years)	41.1 (6.6)	41.9 (5.1)	$t < 1$, <i>ns</i>
Annual household income ^a	45.5 (20.7)	43.0 (20.5)	$t < 1$, <i>ns</i>
Female (%)	52.3	52.3	$\chi^2 < 1$, <i>ns</i>
Non-White (%)	31.8	31.8	$\chi^2 < 1$, <i>ns</i>
Adopted (%)	4.5	4.5	$\chi^2 < 1$, <i>ns</i>
With college-educated parents (%)	47.7	47.7	$\chi^2 < 1$, <i>ns</i>

Note. Standard deviations are given in parentheses.

^a Income given in thousands of dollars.

and the sum was taken, with higher scores indicating more positive relationships. Cronbach's alpha was .68 for this sample.

Support from and time spent with five best male and five best female friends. The adolescent's perceived support from and amount of time spent with his or her five best male friends and five best female friends were measured with 10 yes/no items (3 items each about time with male friends and time with female friends; 2 items each about support from male friends and support from female friends). The support items asked whether the adolescent had talked to the friend about a problem or talked to the friend on the telephone during the past 7 days. The time items asked whether the adolescent had gone to the friend's house, hung out with the friend during the past 7 days, or spent time with the friend during the past weekend. The 3 support items were summed for all five friends of each gender, and possible scores ranged from 0 to 15. The 2 time items were summed for all five friends of each gender, and possible scores ranged from 0 to 10. Higher scores indicated more support from or time spent with friends. Cronbach's alphas were .88 for time with female friends, .83 for time with male friends, .82 for support from female friends, and .70 for support from male friends.

Adolescents' self-report data on their friendship networks were available for a subset ($n = 56$) of adolescents in our sample. Analyses revealed that this subset of adolescents did not differ on family income or parental education from those adolescents for whom these data were not available. Analyses of these network variables are limited to this smaller sample.

Number of friends in school. The number of friends the adolescent reported having in his or her school was measured as the number of friendship nominations (up to 10) the adolescent made for students in his or her school.

Presence of best female and/or male friend. The presence of a best female friend was assessed with a yes/no item indicating whether the adolescent nominated a female friend in the school as his or her best friend. Similarly, the presence of a best male friend was assessed with a yes/no item indicating whether the adolescent nominated a male friend in his or her school as a best friend.

Peer-Report Outcome Variables

Peer-report network data were available to augment the information provided by adolescents regarding their friendship networks. As with the adolescent self-report network data, analyses of these data were limited to the subset of adolescents ($n = 56$) for whom network data were available. Variables constructed by Add Health staff (Carolina Population Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1997) from peer-report data include adolescent popularity, Bonacich centrality, network density, network heterogeneity, and several network traits.

Popularity. Adolescents' popularity was calculated as the number of times an adolescent was nominated as a friend by other students in his or her school. Higher scores indicate greater popularity in the adolescent's school.

Bonacich centrality. Adolescents' centrality within their friendship network (Bonacich, 1987; Carolina Population Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1997) assesses whether adolescents are located in prominent positions within their friendship network and connected to many peers in their peer group (Haynie, 2000). Higher numbers indicate greater centrality.

Network density. The density of adolescents' friendship networks, including students who were nominated by the adolescent as a friend and students who nominated the adolescent as a friend, assesses how many interconnections exist among students in the peer group, which is related to how likely adolescents are to know others in their school (Haynie, 2000). Higher numbers indicate greater network density.

Network heterogeneity. In order to assess the degree of diversity in adolescents' friendship networks, which included students who were nominated as friends by the adolescent and students who nominated the adolescent as a friend, we used heterogeneity measures of grade, age, and race computed by the Add Health staff. Higher numbers indicate greater diversity in a trait, and a score of zero indicates that all members of the adolescent's friendship network who had valid data on that attribute shared the same trait.

Network traits. We assessed two characteristics of adolescents' friendship networks with the mean value on that characteristic or behavior for students in the adolescent's peer network (both those who were nominated by the adolescent as a friend and those who nominated the adolescent as a friend). These characteristics included grades and number of extracurricular activities. Higher scores indicate higher grades or more activities (Carolina Population Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1997).

Adolescent Self-Report Family and Relationship Variables

Care from others. Adolescents' perceived care from adults and friends was measured with three items regarding how much the adolescent believed that adults, teachers, and friends care about them. The mean of the three items was taken as the adolescent's score, and possible scores ranged from 1 to 5, with higher scores indicating perceptions of more caring. Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .58 for this sample.

Parental warmth. Perceived parental warmth toward the adolescent was assessed using the mean of five items from adolescent reports. Self-report items included adolescents' perceptions of parents' warmth and caring toward the adolescent, perceived level of family's understanding and attention, and adolescents' feelings of closeness to parents. For questions in which adolescents were asked about each of their parents, the response for the parent who was described as more warm and loving was used. Scores ranged from 1 to 5, with higher scores indicating greater warmth. Cronbach's alpha for the parental warmth scale was .70 for this sample.

Activities with mother. Adolescents answered eight yes/no items describing activities adolescents sometimes engage in with their mothers. Adolescents reported whether or not they had engaged in each of the activities with their resident mother in the past 4 weeks. These items included going shopping, playing a sport, talking about someone the adolescent is dating, going to the movies, discussing a personal problem, talking about grades, talking about a school project, and talking about other things going on in school. The eight items were summed, with possible scores ranging from 0 to 8. Cronbach's alpha for this variable was .67 for this sample.

Parent-Report Family and Relationship Variables

Quality of relationship with parents. Parents' perceptions of the quality of their relationship with their adolescent were assessed

using a scale made up of six items from the Parent's In-Home Interview. Items included questions about the parents' assessment of trust, understanding, communication, and general quality of their relationship with their adolescent, and were measured on a scale of 1 to 5. The scores were averaged and the mean ranged from 1 to 5, with higher scores indicating closer relationships. Cronbach's alpha was .71 for this scale.

Results

Analyses were conducted in two major steps. The first set of analyses evaluated the degree to which adolescents living with same-sex couples differed in their family relationships and peer relations from the comparison group, and they employed two-way (family type: Same- vs. Opposite-Sex Parents \times Gender of Adolescent) analyses of variance (ANOVAs) and multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVAs). The second set of analyses explored associations of adolescent peer relations with assessments of family and relationship processes. Simultaneous multiple regression analyses were used to determine whether these processes were significant predictors of adolescent adjustment while controlling for family type, adolescent gender, and socioeconomic status (SES). We expected that family type would be less important than family relationships and processes in accounting for variation in the quality of adolescent peer relations. We also expected that processes related to positive outcomes for adolescents would be similar, regardless of family type. Thus, no interactions between family type and relationship processes were predicted.

Structural Comparisons

Adolescent Reports of Peer Relations

Overall, this sample of adolescents ($n = 88$) reported positive peer relations, with adolescents reporting an average of about five friends in their school ($M = 4.67$, $SD = 3.26$). Adolescents also reported that they spent time with between one and two male friends and between one and two female friends, on average, in the past week engaging in activities such as going to the friend's home, hanging out, and talking on the phone.

As expected, MANOVA revealed no difference in the number of friends that adolescents nominated in their school nor in the quality of their peer relations as a function of family type, $F(2, 63) = 0.65$, *ns* (see Table 2). There was a nonsignificant ($.05 < p < .10$) trend for adolescent gender, with girls rating the quality of their peer relations more positively than did boys. Among adolescents who had valid data (25 adolescents who have same-sex parents and their 25 matched adolescents who have opposite-sex parents), there was no significant difference between groups in the percentage of adolescents who reported having a best male friend (64% of adolescents with same-sex parents and 68% of those with opposite-sex parents, *ns*). There was also no significant difference in the percentage of adolescents who reported having a best female friend (68% of adolescents with same-sex parents and 40% of adolescents with opposite-sex parents, *ns*). There was a nonsignificant trend for family type such that adolescents with same-sex parents were somewhat more likely than those with opposite-sex parents to report having a best female friend ($.05 < p < .10$).

MANOVA of adolescents' reports of time spent with and support received from male and female friends also revealed no

significant differences as a function of family type, $F(4, 47) = 0.29$, *ns*. There was a significant effect for adolescent gender, $F(4, 47) = 4.24$, $p < .01$; girls reported more support from female friends than did boys.

All MANOVAs were run again as MANCOVAs with family income and parents' education as covariates. As the results did not differ between the two analyses and as the influence of demographic characteristics was not a focus of this research, MANOVA results are presented here. Overall, adolescent reports of peer relations did not differ as a function of family type.

Peer Reports of Peer Relations

With regard to peer reports of peer relations, adolescents in this sample were nominated as a friend by an average of almost five schoolmates ($M = 4.71$, $SD = 3.94$). As expected, MANOVA of peer reports of the adolescent's peer relations, including popularity, network centrality, and network density, revealed no significant differences as a function of family type, $F(3, 44) = 1.81$, *ns*. There was, however, a significant effect for adolescent gender, $F(3, 44) = 5.05$, $p < .01$, with girls having higher popularity ratings than did boys.

Peer report data also were used to calculate the heterogeneity of the adolescent's friendship network with respect to age, race, and grade-point average (GPA). On average, this sample of adolescents had networks that were moderately diverse. MANOVA of these measures of heterogeneity revealed no significant differences as a function of family type, $F(3, 44) = 1.28$, *ns*, or adolescent gender, $F(3, 44) = 1.32$, *ns*. Similarly, MANOVA of network characteristics (average GPA and average number of extracurricular activities of those in the adolescent's friendship network) revealed no differences as a function of family type, $F(2, 44) = 1.72$, *ns*; or adolescent gender, $F(2, 44) = .85$, *ns*. In summary, adolescents living with same-sex parents had friendship networks that were very similar in heterogeneity and member characteristics to those of adolescents living with opposite-sex parents.

Family and Relationship Process Variables

Overall, adolescents reported positive family relationships. Adolescents' reports of parental warmth were high. On a scale of 1 to 5, the mean for the entire sample was 4.36 ($SD = 0.45$), with a range of 2.80 to 5.00. With regard to time spent with their parents, adolescents reported an average of more than three activities with their mother in the past 4 weeks ($M = 3.34$, $SD = 1.99$). Similar to their ratings of relationships with parents, adolescents' perceptions of others' care for them were high ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 0.65$). Parents' perceptions of the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship were also high, with a mean of 4.20 ($SD = 0.53$) on a scale of 1 to 5.

Consistent with results for adolescents' peer relations, MANOVA revealed that there were no differences in adolescent reports of family and relationship processes, including parental warmth, activities with mother, or care from others as a function of family type, $F(3, 81) = 0.24$, *ns*. There was, however, a significant multivariate difference in family and relationship processes that was attributable to adolescent gender, $F(3, 81) = 5.84$, $p < .01$,

Table 2
Family and Peer Variables as a Function of Family Type and Adolescent Gender

Variable	Opposite-sex parents		Same-sex parents		Family type	F Gender	Gender × Family Type
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls			
Adolescent relationships with peers ^a	<i>n</i> = 18	<i>n</i> = 22	<i>n</i> = 14	<i>n</i> = 14	<1, <i>ns</i>	2.74 [†]	<1, <i>ns</i>
Number of friends nominated ^{b,n}	4.22 (3.66)	4.27 (2.71)	5.36 (3.65)	5.00 (3.37)	1.30, <i>ns</i>	<1, <i>ns</i>	<1, <i>ns</i>
Quality of relationships with peers ^{b,o}	-1.52 (4.66)	1.16 (3.10)	-0.94 (5.62)	1.30 (4.10)	<1, <i>ns</i>	5.28 ^m , <i>ns</i>	<1, <i>ns</i>
Time and support from male and female friends ^c	<i>n</i> = 14	<i>n</i> = 13	<i>n</i> = 14	<i>n</i> = 13	<1, <i>ns</i>	4.24 ^{**}	1.30, <i>ns</i>
Support from male friends ^{d,p}	3.07 (3.12)	4.46 (3.33)	3.43 (2.68)	2.77 (2.49)	<1, <i>ns</i>	<1, <i>ns</i>	1.65, <i>ns</i>
Support from female friends ^{d,q}	2.21 (3.02)	5.15 (3.32)	3.00 (2.77)	3.62 (3.01)	<1, <i>ns</i>	4.64 [*]	1.98, <i>ns</i>
Time with male friends ^{d,r}	4.29 (3.89)	4.46 (3.76)	5.36 (4.36)	1.85 (3.02)	<1, <i>ns</i>	2.59, <i>ns</i>	3.17, <i>ns</i>
Time with female friends ^{d,s}	2.36 (3.91)	6.23 (4.23)	3.79 (3.81)	3.08 (2.18)	<1, <i>ns</i>	2.56, <i>ns</i>	5.37 ^m , <i>ns</i>
Network variables ^e	<i>n</i> = 12	<i>n</i> = 11	<i>n</i> = 14	<i>n</i> = 13	1.81, <i>ns</i>	5.05 ^{**}	<1, <i>ns</i>
Popularity ^{f,t}	4.42 (2.31)	6.64 (6.25)	3.21 (2.42)	6.46 (4.05)	<1, <i>ns</i>	5.89 [*]	<1, <i>ns</i>
Network centrality ^{f,u}	0.76 (0.76)	0.99 (0.67)	1.01 (0.72)	0.99 (0.66)	<1, <i>ns</i>	<1, <i>ns</i>	<1, <i>ns</i>
Network density ^{f,v}	0.29 (0.09)	0.36 (0.17)	0.27 (0.09)	0.28 (0.13)	2.09, <i>ns</i>	<1, <i>ns</i>	<1, <i>ns</i>
Heterogeneity variables ^g	<i>n</i> = 12	<i>n</i> = 11	<i>n</i> = 14	<i>n</i> = 13	1.28, <i>ns</i>	1.32, <i>ns</i>	1.64, <i>ns</i>
GPA heterogeneity ^{h,w}	0.31 (0.26)	0.15 (0.19)	0.31 (0.26)	0.34 (0.25)	1.71, <i>ns</i>	<1, <i>ns</i>	1.97, <i>ns</i>
Race heterogeneity ^{h,x}	0.21 (.21)	0.22 (.20)	0.21 (.21)	0.40 (.22)	2.33, <i>ns</i>	2.87 ^m , <i>ns</i>	2.31, <i>ns</i>
Age heterogeneity ^{h,y}	0.49 (0.18)	0.39 (0.24)	0.45 (0.20)	0.54 (0.13)	1.11, <i>ns</i>	<1, <i>ns</i>	2.67, <i>ns</i>
Network characteristics ⁱ	<i>n</i> = 12	<i>n</i> = 11	<i>n</i> = 13	<i>n</i> = 13	1.72, <i>ns</i>	<1, <i>ns</i>	<1, <i>ns</i>
Network average GPA ^{j,z}	2.85 (0.63)	2.69 (0.49)	3.01 (0.51)	2.78 (0.43)	<1, <i>ns</i>	1.74, <i>ns</i>	<1, <i>ns</i>
Network average number of extra-curricular activities ^{l,1}	2.68 (1.43)	2.66 (1.32)	2.42 (1.05)	2.11 (0.90)	1.42, <i>ns</i>	<1, <i>ns</i>	<1, <i>ns</i>
Family and relationship variables ^k	<i>n</i> = 21	<i>n</i> = 22	<i>n</i> = 21	<i>n</i> = 23	<1, <i>ns</i>	5.84 ^{**}	<1, <i>ns</i>
Parental warmth ^{L,2}	4.30 (0.36)	4.48 (0.31)	4.32 (0.50)	4.34 (0.59)	<1, <i>ns</i>	<1, <i>ns</i>	<1, <i>ns</i>
Care from adults and peers ^{L,3}	3.94 (0.70)	4.23 (0.52)	3.78 (0.67)	4.29 (0.61)	<1, <i>ns</i>	8.91 ^{**}	<1, <i>ns</i>
Activities with mother ^{L,4}	2.62 (1.77)	3.86 (1.88)	2.81 (1.75)	4.00 (2.24)	<1, <i>ns</i>	8.65 ^{**}	<1, <i>ns</i>

Note. Standard deviations are given in parentheses.

^a $F(2, 63)$. ^b $F(3, 67)$. ^c $F(4, 47)$. ^d $F(3, 53)$. ^e $F(3, 44)$. ^f $F(3, 49)$. ^g $F(3, 44)$. ^h $F(3, 49)$. ⁱ $F(2, 44)$. ^j $F(3, 48)$. ^k $F(3, 81)$. ^L $F(3, 86)$. ^m MANOVA was not significant at $p < .05$. ⁿ Number of schoolmates nominated by adolescent as friends. ^o Adolescent report of quality of relationships with peers on a standardized scale. Higher numbers indicate better quality relations with peers. ^p Higher scores indicate greater perceived support from 5 closest male friends, and possible scores ranged from 0 to 10. ^q Higher scores indicate greater perceived support from 5 closest female friends, and possible scores ranged from 0 to 10. ^r Higher scores indicate more time spent with 5 closest male friends, and possible scores ranged from 0 to 15. ^s Higher scores indicate more time spent with 5 closest female friends, and possible scores ranged from 0 to 15. ^t Number of schoolmates who nominated adolescent as a friend. ^u Higher numbers indicate greater centrality in adolescent's network, and possible scores range from 0 to 4. ^v Higher numbers indicate greater network density, and possible scores range from 0 to 1. ^w Higher numbers indicate greater diversity in grade point average in network, and possible scores range from 0 to 1. ^x Higher numbers indicate greater diversity in ethnic background in network, and possible scores range from 0 to 1. ^y Higher numbers indicate greater diversity in age of members of network, and possible scores range from 0 to 1. ^z Average grade point average of members of adolescent's peer network. 4 = A, 3 = B, 2 = C, 1 = D or lower.

¹ Average number of extracurricular activities participated in by members of adolescent's peer network. ² Higher scores indicate closer parent-adolescent relationships (adolescent report), and possible scores ranged from 1 to 5. ³ Higher numbers indicate greater levels of perceived care from adults and peers, and possible scores range from 1 to 5. ⁴ Higher numbers indicate more activities with mother in past 4 weeks.

[†] $p < .10$. ^{*} $p < .05$. ^{**} $p < .01$.

with girls reporting higher levels of care from adults and peers and more activities with their mothers than did boys.

Comparisons With the Add Health Core Sample

In order to assess the degree to which outcomes for adolescents in our focal and comparison samples differed from those for the population from which the samples were drawn, we obtained mean scores from the Add Health Core Sample for each of the dependent variables. Using one-sample *t* tests and chi-square tests, we compared means for our focal sample with those for the entire Add Health core sample. None of these comparisons was statistically significant. Thus, peer relations for adolescents with same-sex parents in our focal sample did not differ significantly from those of a nationally representative group of American adolescents.

Associations Among Family Relationships and Outcome Variables

After finding no significant links between family type and adolescents' peer relations, we explored possible associations between processes in the adolescent's environment and adolescent peer relations. Simultaneous multiple regression analyses were used to determine whether these family and relationship variables were significant predictors of adolescent peer relations while controlling for family type, adolescent gender, and socioeconomic status. Regression analyses were conducted separately for adolescents' reports of the quality of their peer relations and the number of friends nominated by the adolescent as friends, as well as for peer reports of popularity, network centrality, and network density. Family type, adolescent's gender, parental education, and family

income were also included as predictors, with family type and adolescent gender remaining in all models for comparison. Demographic variables and family and relationship variables that were not statistically significant predictors were removed from the models.

Predictions of adolescent peer relations based on process variables, family type, adolescent gender, and SES (parental education and family income) are shown in Table 3. Adolescents' perceptions of parental warmth showed similar associations with adolescent outcomes, but the parent report of the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship was used in these regression analyses to avoid reporter bias.

Results showed that, as expected, family and relationship variables were significantly associated with many measures of adolescent peer relations. Adolescents' reports of the quality of their peer relations were significantly associated with parents' reports of the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship and with the adolescents' reports of caring from adults and peers, with more positive parent-adolescent relationships and more perceived care from adults and peers associated with more positive peer relations. Similarly, the number of school friends reported by adolescents was associated with the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship and the number of activities done with mother, with more positive parent-adolescent relationships and more activities with mother associated with having more friends at school. There was also a nonsignificant trend for an association between number of school friends and parental education, with higher levels of parental education associated with having more friends at school ($.05 < p < .10$).

Peer reports of adolescent peer relations were also significantly associated with family and relationship variables. Peer reports of

adolescents' popularity were significantly associated with the number of activities with mother, with more activities with mother associated with greater popularity. Adolescents' centrality in their peer networks was associated with the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship; more positive relationships were associated with greater network centrality. There was a nonsignificant trend for the association between network centrality and the number of activities with mother; more activities with mother were associated with greater network centrality ($.05 < p < .10$). There was also a significant association between network centrality and parental education, with higher levels of parental education associated with greater network centrality. There were no significant associations among the density of adolescents' peer networks and family and relationship variables.

In summary, adolescent peer relations were associated, as predicted, with several family and relationship variables. Adolescent reports of care from adults and peers and number of activities with mother, as well as parental reports of the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship, were significantly associated with numerous measures of adolescent peer relations. Also as predicted, family type was not significantly associated with any measure of adolescent peer relations, but several associations were found among these measures and adolescent gender. Overall, these results suggest that family and relationship process variables are more important predictors of adolescent peer relations than is family type.

Discussion

The results of this study, which is the first to draw participants from a large, national sample to examine the peer relations of

Table 3
Simultaneous Multiple Regression of Adolescent Peer Relations Onto Family Type, Gender, and Family and Relationship Variables

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE (B)</i>	β	<i>F</i>	<i>R</i> ²
Self-report of peer relations					
Quality of peer relations ^{a,c}				12.26 ^{***}	.39
Family type	-0.28	0.85	-.03		
Adolescent gender	1.44	0.89	.15		
Care from adults and peers ^c	3.35	0.69	.45 ^{***}		
Quality of parent-adolescent relationship ^f	2.79	0.81	.31 ^{***}		
Number friends in school ^{b,c}				3.88 ^{**}	.24
Family type	0.86	0.75	.13		
Adolescent gender	-1.15	0.79	-.18		
Quality of parent-adolescent relationship ^f	1.37	0.67	.23 [*]		
Activities with mother ^c	0.58	0.22	.32 [*]		
Parent's education ^f	0.31	0.15	.23 [†]		
Peer report of peer relations					
Popularity ^{c,g}				4.65 ^{**}	.19
Family type	0.31	0.97	.04		
Adolescent gender	1.33	1.01	.17		
Activities with mother ^c	0.77	0.28	.35 ^{**}		
Network centrality ^{d,g}				3.76 ^{**}	.24
Family type	0.17	0.15	.12		
Adolescent gender	-0.23	0.16	-.18		
Quality of parent-adolescent relationship ^f	0.29	0.14	.24 [*]		
Activities with mother ^c	0.09	0.05	.24 [†]		
Parent's education ^f	0.08	0.03	.29 [*]		
Network density ^g				<i>ns</i>	

^a $F(4, 82)$. ^b $F(5, 65)$. ^c $F(3, 61)$. ^d $F(5, 65)$. ^e Adolescent report. ^f Parent report. ^g Peer report.
[†] $p < .10$. ^{*} $p < .05$. ^{**} $p < .01$. ^{***} $p < .001$.

adolescents living with same-sex couples, have revealed no significant differences in adolescent peer relations as a function of family type. Regardless of family type, however, family and relationship variables such as the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship were significantly associated with several aspects of adolescent peer relations. These results, which support the findings of past research on children living with lesbian mothers, suggest that relationships and processes that take place within the family are more important in predicting adolescent peer relations than is family type (Chan, Raboy, and Patterson, 1998; Patterson, 1995, 2006).

Our research included assessments of multiple facets of adolescent peer relations, including the adolescents' perceptions of the quality of their own peer relations, the number of friends they have in school, and the amount of support they receive from both male and female friends. It also included peers' reports of the adolescents' popularity within the school; centrality within peer networks; network density; network heterogeneity with respect to race, age, and grades; and network characteristics in terms of average grades and extracurricular activities of network members. The consistency of the results, which failed to reveal significant differences among adolescents living with same-sex parents versus those living with opposite-sex parents in a geographically, racially, and economically diverse sample, lends credence to the findings of past research, which suggest that adolescents living with same-sex parents are developing well and that family type is not an important factor in adolescents' outcomes (e.g., Wainright & Patterson, 2006; Wainright et al., 2004).

We did not find significant associations between adolescents' peer relations and family type, but we did uncover associations between several aspects of adolescent peer relations on the one hand, and family and relationship variables on the other. Parents' reports of the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship were significantly associated with adolescents' self-reports of the quality of their peer relations, number of friends in school, and peer network centrality. Also supporting the view that adolescent peer relations are strongly associated with qualities of other relationships, results revealed that adolescents' reports of care from others were significantly associated with their reports of the quality of their peer relations. Similarly, adolescents' reports of the number of activities with their mothers were significantly associated with their reports of the number of friends they have in school as well as with peer reports of their popularity. Overall, these results support past findings that suggest that relationships and processes within the family are more important predictors of adolescent peer relations than are structural variables such as family type (e.g., Allen, Moore, Kuperminc, & Bell, 1998).

Major theories of human development have often been interpreted as predicting that offspring of same-sex parents would encounter important difficulties in their adjustment, including their peer relations (Golombok & Tasker, 1994) and that this would be especially true during adolescence (Baumrind, 1995). Results from this large sample of American adolescents have failed to confirm these predictions, suggesting that the theories may need reevaluation, especially in their application to outcomes for offspring of same-sex parents (Patterson, 2000). Results of numerous recent studies on children and adolescents who do not live with heterosexual parents (e.g., Patterson, 2000; Perrin & Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health, 2002; Stevens,

Perry, Burston, Golombok, & Golding, 2003), as well as those of the current research, suggest that theorists may need to reconsider the importance of opposite-sex parents for human personal and social development.

The current findings also have implications for public policies that involve children of lesbian mothers (Patterson et al., 2002). Inasmuch as these findings suggest that adolescents living with same-sex parents experience relationships with peers in much the same way as do adolescents living with opposite-sex parents, they provide no justification for discrimination against lesbian mothers in matters such as adoption and child custody proceedings as a result of their sexual orientation. These results suggest that relationships and processes that occur within the family are important factors in the development of adolescents' peer relations and support legal decisions about adolescents' lives that are based on the qualities of relationships between parents and their adolescent offspring.

Our confidence in the present findings is bolstered by the strengths of the Add Health study (Bearman et al., 1997) from which the data have been drawn. The Add Health study was designed and conducted by experienced researchers who did not collect data for the purpose of studying adolescents living with same-sex parents. This fact addresses one of the concerns about some earlier studies, namely that samples may have been biased toward lesbian mothers who have higher incomes and greater educational attainment, as well as toward those families whose children are developing well. Regardless of whether earlier samples were or were not biased in any way, the present sample cannot have been subject to any such biases.

The use of the Add Health database has allowed us to identify an ethnically, economically, and geographically diverse sample of adolescents living with same-sex couples. This is one of the most diverse samples employed in research with this population to date. The continuing but understandable reluctance of some same-sex parents to identify themselves as such, however, results in our inability to assess the exact degree to which the current sample is representative of all lesbian-headed families. In addition, the Add Health database does not make it possible to determine how long adolescents have lived in their current family situations, so we cannot make claims on that topic. Despite these issues, the Add Health database provided an outstanding resource for our research.

One of the notable strengths of this research is that it is the first to involve information collected from parents and peers as well as from adolescent self-reports in the study of adolescent peer relations among youths reared by same-sex couples. This feature of the study allowed us to evaluate the possibility that self-reports might provide overly optimistic estimates of youth development. To the contrary, we found that both adolescents themselves and their peers at school described the peer relations of youngsters reared by same-sex couples as satisfactory.

Despite the issues in past research that were addressed by the design of our study, the current research has several limitations. Most evident among these is the fact that parents were not asked directly about their sexual identities. As a result, this research was forced to rely on indirect assessments of sexual identity such as parent-report items that asked parents whether they were in a "marriage or marriage-like relationship" and then inquired as to the gender of that partner. The design of this study allowed the identification and study of adolescents living with mothers who

have female romantic partners but not adolescents with lesbian mothers who lived in other types of households (e.g., single lesbian mothers or mothers who did not consider their relationship with a female romantic partner to be a marriage or marriage-like relationship). The current research would have been strengthened if parents had been asked to describe their sexual identities in terms of their sexual attractions, fantasies, behaviors, and identities. As in all studies with gay and lesbian populations, it is very likely that some parents chose not to disclose their same-sex relationships and therefore could not be identified for study in this research.

In summary, the present study has assessed several aspects of peer relations among adolescents living with same-sex versus opposite-sex couples. Although family type had no significant linkages with any aspect of adolescent peer relations, the quality of adolescents' relationships with parents was associated with several aspects of their relations with peers. Regardless of whether they lived with same-sex or opposite-sex couples, adolescents whose parents reported having close and satisfying relationships with them were likely to have better quality peer relations, more friends in school, and greater centrality within their friendship networks than did other adolescents. These results do not support the view that adolescent peer relations are shaped by parental sexual orientation, but they are consistent with theories that emphasize the importance of adolescent relationships with parents in the development of their relations with peers. Overall, the results suggest that important decisions about adolescent lives (such as custody determinations) should be made not on the basis of parental sexual orientation, but by focusing instead on the qualities of adolescents' relationships with parents.

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