

# Social Support and LGBTQ+ Individuals and Communities

Áine M. Humble

**Version** Pre-print/submitted manuscript

**Citation (published version)** Humble, A. M. (2021). Social support and LGBTQ+ individuals and communities. In I. N. West (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of queer studies and communication*. Oxford University Press.

**Publisher's Statement** This is a draft of a chapter that has been accepted for publication by Oxford University Press in the forthcoming book *The [Oxford] Encyclopedia of Queer Studies and Communication* edited by Isaac N. West due for publication in 2021.

## How to cite e-Commons items

**Always cite the published version**, so the author(s) will receive recognition through services that track citation counts. If you need to cite the page number of the **author manuscript from the e-Commons** because you cannot access the published version, then cite the e-Commons version **in addition to** the published version using the permanent URI (handle) found on the record page.

**This chapter was made openly accessible by Mount Saint Vincent University Faculty.**



**Humble, A. M.** (forthcoming- 2021). Social support and LGBTQ+ individuals and communities. In I. N. West (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of queer studies and communication*. Oxford University Press. (Peer reviewed) doi:10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.1228

This is an author-generated pre-print of the article  
Please refer to published version for page numbers

## **Social Support and LGBTQ+ Individuals and Communities**

By Áine M. Humble

## Summary

Social support is an important resource that can help reduce stressful situations or buffer the impact of stressful situations for LGBTQ+ individuals. Many different definitions of social support exist, but researchers often focus on emotional, informational, or practical support provided to a person. Social support is communicated by people close to a person as well through institutional practices and policies and in communities. General trends around the world show increasing support for sexual-minority individuals—and to a lesser extent gender-minority individuals—but there are many countries still hostile to LGBTQ+ individuals. A number of individual-level and country-level variables are related to positive attitudes toward LGBTQ+ individuals.

Social support is operationalized in many ways in quantitative research on LGBTQ+ individuals, usually used as a predictor of health outcomes. Some quantitative measures look at general social support, whereas others study social support within particular settings, or very specific ways in which support is communicated. Measures of social support specific to LGBTQ+ populations have been developed, such as *The Gay and Lesbian Acceptance and Support Index*. Research also looks at support at the community level—the broader community (often referred to as community climate) as well as LGBTQ+ community. Qualitative research is valuable for exploring what social support means to various groups and for understanding how different social identities interact with each other.

Many factors influence expectations and experiences of social support; thus, research should be contextualized. Rather than studying LGBTQ+ as a group, subgroups can be studied, along with intersectional research. When this is carried out, unique findings can appear. For example, lesbians in adulthood can include ex-partners and ex-lovers in their social support

networks, and Black lesbian parents describe complex ways in which they interact with their families and religious communities. Different life course changes such as same-sex marriage and LGBTQ+ parenting provide opportunities to explore if and how social support is communicated to LGBTQ+ individuals. Who support is received from is also a key area of interest—families of origin, chosen families, friends, work colleagues, LGBTQ+ communities and broader communities, and so on. Later-life circumstances of LGBTQ+ individuals also need focus, as these individuals often have smaller social support networks due to lifetime discrimination and cumulative life course experiences. Political situations involving elevated anti-gay rhetoric are also relevant contexts in which to study how social support can ameliorate minority stress. Research is starting to look at social support in formal organizations, many of which have developed guidelines for developing inclusive environments for sexual- and gender-minority groups.

**Key words:** community climate, family acceptance, formal support, informal support, intersectionality, LGBTQ+, LGBTQ+ communities, life course, minority stress, social support

## Social Support and LGBTQ+ Individuals and Communities

### Introduction

Exposure to stress differs based on factors such as gender, race, ethnicity, and income, which can create health-related inequalities at the societal level (Thoits, 2010). Discrimination can further harm the health of those who are members of minority groups (Thoits, 2010), such as individuals who identify as LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, plus). LGBTQ+ individuals experience discrimination and prejudice related to homophobia, heterosexism, transphobia, and biphobia, and this additional burden is called *minority stress* (Meyer, 1995, 2003). Important assumptions of minority stress are that it is experienced in addition to “regular” stresses and therefore requires additional adaptation, it is chronic, and it is based in social interactions (Meyer, 2003).

Minority stress processes related to LGBTQ+ individuals are threefold, consisting of: (a) objectively experienced events (*distal* sources), (b) subjective appraisals (*proximal* sources) and associated vigilance of anticipated or feared events, and (c) internalized homophobia (Meyer, 2003). Objectively experienced stressors can range from microaggressions, which are “behaviors and statements, often unconscious or unintentional, that communicate hostile or derogatory messages” (Nadal, Whitman, Davis, Erazo, & Davidoff, 2016, p. 488), such as a person saying “that’s so gay” to hostile and violent reactions from others. Stress can result from subjective appraisals such as worrying about whether co-workers will be friendly to a partner at a work-related function (LeBlanc, Frost, & Wight, 2015). Internalized homophobia can result in negative self-perceptions and diminished psychological adjustment (Meyer, 2003). A list of sexuality-related stressors related to “family reactions, disclosure or visibility concerns, violence,

harassment, societal misunderstanding, discrimination, HIV/AIDS, and sexual orientation conflict” (Doty, Willoughby, Lindahl, & Malik, 2010, p. 1137) is found in the 52-item *Measure of Gay-Related Stress (MOGS)* (Lewis, Derlega, Griffin, & Krowinski, 2003). These chronically experienced social situations can negatively affect both the mental and physical health of sexual- and gender-minority individuals (Meyer, 1995, 2003).

A key way in which stress can be reduced is through the communication of social support to those who identify as LGBTQ+ (Frost, Meyer, & Schwartz, 2016). Family, friends, communities, and beyond (e.g., institutions and government) all influence the well-being of LGBTQ+ individuals. Moreover, support comes not only from “outside” of the LGBTQ+ community<sup>1</sup> but also from within it (Meyer, 2003). Being able to reach out to other sexuality minority youth for advice or to see them as role models, for example, can help youth who are in the process of coming out to others (Frost et al., 2016).

Social support may reduce the number of stressful events a person is experiencing or it may help them to change their perceptions of how challenging a particular circumstance is (Brownell & Shumaker, 1984). For sexual- and gender-minority individuals, social support can reduce stress “by reducing isolation and offering resources, a sense of security, and a sense of identity” (Vyncke & Julien, 2007, p. 402). This entry focuses solely on the positive effects of social support for LGBTQ+ individuals, while recognizing that social support can also be used in a controlling way (Nurullah, 2012; Vyncke & Julien, 2007).

Social support is first defined and distinguished from the concept of tolerance. Examples of changing attitudes around the world follow this section. Factors associated with acceptance are then briefly presented. The fourth section presents various examples of how social support has been operationalized in LGBTQ+ research. The final section notes the importance of a

contextual approach to studying this topic: (a) different groups under the LGBTQ+ umbrella rather than as a group, including intersectional identities; (b) experiences across the lifespan; and (c) social support in formal environments.

### **Defining Social Support**

Various definitions exist for social support (Dowers, White, Cook, & Kingsley, 2020; Masini & Barrett, 2008; Williams, Barclay, & Schmied, 2004), which was first studied as a “distinct construct” in the mid-1970s (Nurullah, 2012, p. 173). Cobb provided one of the earliest definitions in a 1976 Presidential Address to the American Psychosomatic Society: information leading a person to believe that they are “cared for and loved,” “esteemed and valued,” and “belongs to a network of communication and mutual obligation” (p. 300). Williams et al.’s 2004 review of social support in social science research found 30 different definitions, with Cobb’s definition used the most frequently. Cobb’s definition is still used (e.g., Ingham, Eccles, & Armitage, 2017). Peggy Thoits’ definition from research (e.g., 2010, 2011) about the link between social support and health is also cited by many researchers (e.g., Hawthorne, Camic, & Rimes, 2020). Thoits (2010) defines social support as “emotional, informational, or practical assistance from significant others, such as family members, friends, or coworkers; support actually may be received from others or simply perceived to be available when needed” (p. S47). Definitions of each of these three types of assistance are also provided.

Emotional support refers to demonstrations of love and caring, esteem and value, encouragement, and sympathy. Informational assistance is the provision of facts or advice that may help a person solve problems; this category of help can also include appraisal support—feedback about the person’s interpretation of a situation and guidance regarding possible courses of action (Cohen and McKay 1984; Weiss 1974). Instrumental

support consists of offering or supplying behavioral or material assistance with practical tasks or problems. (Thoits, 2011, p. 146)

Applying Thoits's three types of assistance to LGBTQ+ individuals, one could look at what kind of responses others have when an LGBTQ+ person discloses harassment, whether they know of resources to refer an LGBTQ+ person to, and if they provide tangible assistance during times of need (e.g., finances to help with the purchase of a home or assist with a gender-affirming operation). Actions such as a heterosexual person marching in or attending a Gay Pride Parade or posting signs of support on their social media site (Matsick, Kim, & Kruk, 2020) also communicate messages that LGBTQ+ individuals are accepted and valued.

Major life events, such as the death of a partner or moving to a new country, represent opportunities for others to show their support. However, many daily, regular events also occur in which individuals hope to receive support from others (Thoits, 2011); this kind of support is less visible than support occurring in response to major events. Examples of daily support are (a) feeling heard after relaying a challenging work experience to a family member later in the day (completing a heterosexist-worded form, for example); (b) chatting with neighbors about aggravating street construction; and (c) helping a same-sex couple prepare for a party.

Routine or everyday emotional, informational, and instrumental acts are helpful in themselves and also may sustain self-esteem, a sense of mattering to others, and perceived control over minor or impending obstacles and thus indirectly maintain psychological well-being and (through positive affect) physical well-being as well. (Thoits, 2011, p. 150)

The previous examples are of informal social support, which comes from *primary groups* of people who are close to a person, such as family and friends (Thoits, 2010). Communities and



religious organizations are also examples of informal social support (Glass & Few-Demo, 2013). Many researchers only focus their study of social support in this manner (e.g., Dowers et al., 2020) or emphasize that it is “informal” social support they are examining (e.g., Hawthorne et al., 2020; Ingham et al., 2017).

Social support is also demonstrated more broadly by *secondary groups* (Thoits, 2011), environments characterized by more formal and less personal interactions, compared to primary groups. Examples of secondary groups are workplaces, schools, healthcare settings, and organized athletics. Some researchers have examined the role that such support can play in the well-being of LGBTQ+ individuals, examining support in state, employment, educational, and sports contexts (Atteberry-Ash, Woodford, & Spectrum Center, 2018; Oswald, Cuthbertson, Lazarevic, & Goldberg, 2010; Pitcher, Camacho, Renn, & Woodford, 2018; Woodford, Pacey, Kulick, & Hong, 2015).

Social support is distinct from other concepts. For example, it is not the same as social integration, social capital, or a social network (Nurullah, 2012). A person may have social capital or a social network, but neither is a guarantee of receiving social support when it is needed. Additionally, social support is not the same as *tolerance*, which is defined in different ways in literature about LGBTQ+ individuals. Holman, Fish, Oswald, and Goldberg (2019) suggest that tolerance consists of “a general source of support” at an institutional level, but with “very clear limitations to that support” (p. 554), whereas Twenge, Carter, and Campbell (2015) define it as “agreeing that controversial outgroups should be allowed public expression” (p. 389). In general, tolerating differences is not the same as supporting them: “to support difference is to believe that individuals, families, and communities are better off when people are valued for their differences, rather than despise them” (Oswald, Routon, McGuire, & Holman, 2018, p. 42).

## **Global Trends in Acceptance of LGBTQ+ Individuals**

Research on trends related to acceptance of homosexuality and gay rights is limited (Smith, Son, & Kim, 2014). However, cross-sectional, cross-cultural research does show increased tolerance toward LGBTQ+ individuals over the past twenty years (Pew Research Center, 2020; Smith et al., 2014). The lives of sexual minorities—and to a lesser extent gender minorities—has improved in many countries since the first International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia (IDAHO) held on May 16, 2004 (Meyer, 2016). Positive attitudes are more likely found in individualistic countries (Twenge, Carter, & Campbell, 2015) such as in the Americas and Western European countries (Pew Research Center, 2020). Improvements have also occurred in South America (Meyer, 2016). Increasing acceptance is seen in other countries. For example, 14% of Kenyans said that homosexuality was acceptable in 2019, compared with 1% in 2002, and India increased in acceptance from 16% to 37% from 2014 to 2019 (Pew Research Center, 2020).

Support is also increasingly seen for same-sex marriage. From 2000 to 2020, 30 countries and territories legalized same-sex marriage, starting with the Netherlands in 2000 and more recently Costa Rica in 2020 (Pew Research Center, 2019)

Nevertheless, in some countries, such as Russia and Uganda, LGBTQ+ individuals continue to face hostile and dangerous circumstances (Meyer, 2016). It is illegal to be gay in 32 African countries, and gay sex is criminalized in 67 countries (Greenhalgh, 2019). Moreover, even in countries in which support is more generally found, anti-gay political and institutional discourse and actions are found (see, for example, Shear & Savage, 2017; Unger, 2020). Support, tolerance, and rejection can be communicated in the same country, and threats to LGBTQ+ protection cause concern and fear for both LGBTQ+ individuals and their allies (Brown &

Keller, 2018; Gonzalez, Pulice-Farrow, & Galupo, 2018).

Positive or negative attitudes toward LGBTQ+ individuals can also take many different forms. Negative attitudes about LGBTQ+ parenting exist (Weiner & Zinner, 2015), despite research showing that children raised in such families are as similarly well-adjusted as children raised by heterosexual parents (Patterson, 2017). Thus, a person might show support for homosexuality and same-sex intimate relationships, but not support parenting by LGBTQ+ individuals. Ambivalent attitudes (Costa & Salinas-Quiroz, 2019) about certain contexts can also exist.

### **Factors Associated with Acceptance**

A number of factors are related to acceptance of homosexuality, such as having interactions with LGBTQ+ individuals, age, education, religiosity, political ideology, and a country's wealth (Burgess & Baunach, 2014; Pew Research Center, 2020; Smith et al., 2014). These factors may also interact with other conditions. For instance, higher levels of education are less related to LGBTQ+ acceptance in countries in which sexual- and gender-minorities are still viewed very negatively (Smith et al., 2014).

Other research has examined factors related to acceptance of same-sex marriage and same-sex parenting (e.g., Costa & Salinas-Quiroz, 2019), finding similar results. In the US, for example, interactions with LGBTQ+ individuals, higher educational levels, lower levels of religious intensity, younger ages, liberal ideology, and partisanship are positively related to acceptance of same-sex marriage (Daniels, 2019; Lee & Mutz, 2019). Women are also more supportive than men of same-sex marriage and parenting (Costa, Carneiro, Esposito, D'Amore, & Green, 2018; Sloane & Robillard, 2018). Attitudes about same-sex parenting may depend on what parenting configurations are being assessed. Older Italians are more negative about gay

parenting than they are about lesbian or heterosexual parenting (Baiocco, Nardelli, Pezzuti, & Lingiardi, 2013). A study of attitudes about adoption by same-sex couples in 28 European countries found that both individual-level and country-level variables influence attitudes (Takács, Szalma, & Bartus, 2016).

### **Measuring Social Support for LGBTQ+ Individuals**

Most research is quantitative in design and uses social support as a predictor of health outcomes. Qualitative approaches to understanding social support for LGBTQ+ individuals also exist. This section provides some examples of the ways in which social support is operationalized and examined.

In quantitative research, social support is typically measured as an individual's *perception* of social support, rather than the actual receipt of social support (Frost et al., 2016; Nurullah, 2012). Perceived social support is consistently shown to be related to better physical and mental well-being, but less is known about the actual receipt of support (Nurullah, 2012).

Measures vary in their focus. They can focus on (a) general social support, (b) support within particular settings, or (c) very specific ways in which support is communicated. Previously existing measures (i.e., not developed specifically for LGBTQ+ populations) are used, as are scales created specifically for LGBTQ+ populations. Community-based measures distinguish between LGBTQ+ communities and general, broader communities. Some measures examine in more detail *who* provides social support.

Doty et al. (2010) note the importance of distinguishing between social support for general problems versus those that are specifically related to one's sexuality, such as issues with disclosure, visibility, and family reactions. These researchers used subscales from a previously existing general measure: Vaux, Riedel, and Stewart's (1987) *The Social Support Behaviors*

*Scale.* The *Emotional Support* and *Advice/Guidance* subscales were used twice: the first time to measure perceived support for general problems and the second time for problems related specifically to one's sexuality. Sample statements are "Listened when I needed to talk about my feelings," "Gave me a hug, or otherwise showed me I was cared about," and "Told me who to talk to for help" (pp. 214–215). Results showed that sexual minority friends provided higher levels of sexuality support than family members or heterosexual friends, and the researchers noted the importance of connecting LGB (lesbian, gay, bisexual) youth with others. As can be seen, however, the scale items are generally stated and make no reference to issues related to sexual orientation or gender identity.

In a review of research on trans, gender-diverse, and non-binary (TGDNB) adults' experiences of social support, Dowers and colleagues (2020) raise concern about the application of cisnormative measures of social support to TGDNB individuals, for whom different forms of social support might exist outside typical family, friends, and/or partner configurations (Dowers et al., 2020). The most commonly used measure of social support was the *Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)* (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, & Farley, 1988). This measure includes a "significant other" subscale, which assumes a person has a monogamous relationship. Additionally, research on online forms of community support is needed.

Around 2010, studies with measures specifically designed to examine social support for LGBTQ+ individuals started appearing (e.g., Ryan, Russell, Huebner, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2010; Shulman, Gotta, & Green, 2012; Vyncke & Julien, 2007). These measures focus mainly on support communicated by family members (e.g., Ryan et al., 2010; Vyncke & Julien, 2007), and sometimes include other members of a person's network (e.g., Shulman et al., 2012).

Ryan et al.'s (2010) *Measure of Family Acceptance* focused specifically on family and

caregiver acceptance, and it was developed with a diverse sample of Latino and non-Latino White LGBT adolescents and their families. Participants indicate how often they experienced a positive reaction to 55 items, such as “How often did any of your parents/caregivers appreciate your clothing or hairstyle, even though it might not have been typical for your gender?” and “How often were your openly LGBT friends invited to join family activities?” (p. 207). Overall scores are categorized into low, moderate, and high levels of family acceptance. This measure has been used numerous times by researchers, such as Snapp et al. (2015) who found that family acceptance had a strong influence on health outcomes for teenagers, even when accounting for friends and community support.

Vyncke and Julien (2007) also focused on family support, but studied support for same-sex couples as opposed to individuals. Their *Social Support to the Couple* measure consists of six items: five items measure support (e.g., “How often are you invited for a family dinner or reunion with your partner?”), and one item measures interference (e.g., “How often do members of your family criticize your partner?”) (p. 409).. Two items also examine support from heterosexual friends (e.g., “How often do you receive invitations from your heterosexual/GLB friends who assume that you will very probably come with your partner?”) (p. 409). Vyncke and Julien found that social support helped to both strengthen the relationship as well as reduce stress.

In a study of social support and relationship satisfaction, Shulman and colleagues (2012) stated that no specific measures for social support related to LGBTQ+ identities existed. They created a measure called *The Gay and Lesbian Acceptance and Support Index (GLASSI)*. This 22-item scale measures perceived support for being a sexuality minority (e.g., “How supportive is your mother of your gay/lesbian/bisexual identity?”) (p. 165) and for one’s couple

relationship. Three subscales measure support from different sources: (a) one's family of origin, (b) the larger heterosexual community, and (c) one's religious community. These researchers found that perceptions of support from one's family and the community were positively associated with relationship satisfaction.

In addition to what kind of support is perceived, research has also examined *who* is perceived as providing support. Frost et al. (2016), for instance, used Martin and Dean's (1987) *Social Support Network* measure. Martin and Dean had modified the language from an earlier 1977 measure so that it could be used with gay and bisexual men. This measure asks LGB individuals who they turned to for everyday support (e.g., being able to count on a person for small favors) and major support (e.g., borrowing money for a major purchase). After individuals are identified, additional questions are asked about them, such as their age, sexual orientation, and relationship to the LGB person. A summary is then generated regarding how many individuals provided daily or major support to an LGB person. In Frost et al.'s study, the results were also compared to heterosexual respondents. Results indicated that LGB individuals relied more on their friends than families for major assistance, compared to heterosexual individuals.

Community connectedness and support measures started emerging around the same time as measures focusing on social support from significant others. Frost and Meyer (2012) noted that previously developed measures of community connectedness had limitations, such as not being originally being developed for LGBTQ+ participants, lacking psychometric data, being too long, or only being tested with White participants. They therefore modified an earlier measure developed by Barrett and Pollack (2005) and tested it with a racially diverse population in the New York City area. Prior to completing the 8-item *The Measure of Connectedness to the LGBT Community*, individuals were instructed to think of community as “[not any] particular

neighborhood or social group, but in general, groups of gay men, bisexual men and women, lesbians, and transgender individuals” (p. 40). Examples of items are “You feel a bond with the LGBT community” and “You really feel that any problems faced by NYC’s LGBT community are also your own problems.” This measure has been used in research looking at social support and the well-being of young bisexual people of color (Flanders, Shuler, Desnoyers, & VanKim, 2019), who found that connections to the LGBTQ+ community resulted higher levels of binegativity for these individuals, despite broader levels of social support being related to lower levels of binegativity. These findings point to the ongoing issue of acceptance of bisexuality within the LGBTQ+ community.

A different line of research has looked more broadly at support in local and regional communities (Holman & Oswald, 2016; Oswald et al., 2010; Oswald et al., 2018; Woodford et al., 2015), using the language of *community climate*. Community climate is “the level of community support for homosexuality, indicated by objectively measurable phenomenon such as religious and political affiliations, legal rights, workplace opportunities and policies, and the presence of GLBT [gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender] community members and services” (Oswald et al., 2010, p. 215). Community climate influences the well-being of LGBTQ+ individuals by demonstrating support or rejection for them (Oswald et al., 2010). The research in this area has been both qualitative and mixed methods in design. Holman and Oswald (2016) qualitatively analyzed individuals’ responses to open-ended questions about what were the best and worst aspects of living in their communities. Oswald and colleagues (2010) presented a list of specific municipal- and county-level tools to measure support for LGBTQ+ individuals, such as counting the number of businesses listed in local LGBTQ+ resources and examining county voting patterns. In contrast, Woodford and colleagues (2015) created two measures to focus



specifically on *lack of* support in the form of microaggressions (Nadal et al., 2016) in distal and proximal environments. The first scale measures exposure to negative messages about LGBTQ+ people by media and politicians, (e.g., “I’ve heard politicians oppose equal rights and protections for LGBQ [lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer] people”) and the second scale measures microaggressions happening more locally in one’s community (e.g., “I saw people holding signs with religiously based anti-LGBQ messages [e.g., ‘Faggots are going to hell’]”) (pp. 124–125). Exposure to these kind of situations was related to higher levels of anxiety and perceived stress for LGBTQ+ individuals.

Some research has narrowed in on support within specific contexts (Holman et al., 2019) or very specific forms of support (Matsick et al., 2020). This is not surprising, as the developers of early definitions of social support recognized that the meaning of social support relates to the context in which it is being studied (Williams et al., 2004). As an example of specific context, *The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Climate Inventory (LGBTCI)* (Liddle, Luzzo, Hauenstein, & Schuck, 2004) measures informal aspects of workplace environments that communicate supportiveness to LGBTQ+ employees. This measure consists of 20 items, such as “LGBT employees feel free to display pictures of same-sex partners” and “Employees are expected to not act ‘too gay’” (p. 551). This measure is typically as a predictor of outcomes such as workplace satisfaction (Holman et al., 2019). In 2019, Holman and colleagues performed additional analyses on this scale, arguing that it measures two constructs rather than one. One subscale measures workplace support; the other measures workplace hostility. Operationalizing workplace climate in this manner allows for the fact that support and hostility can exist concurrently. They identified four types of workplaces climates: supportive, ambiguous, tolerant, and hostile. Tolerant work communities, for example, are those in which institutional support is

provided, but not all employees agree with the institutional support (Holman et al., 2019).

Matsick et al.'s (2020) research is an example of a very specific type of social support: the use of rainbow filters in women's Facebook profile photos. Rainbow filters are a type of "low-effort" pro-LGBTQ+ activism called *pictivism* (Oeldorf-Hirsch & McGloin, 2017, cited in Matsick et al., 2020, p. 343). Although activist in nature, filters can be viewed as "empty gestures" of support (p. 357) because they require little effort. Nevertheless, the authors argue that more research is needed in this area, given that approximately half of all Americans use social media to communicate political opinions (Pew Research Center, 2018). Using an experimental design, these researchers examined how rainbow filters influenced viewers' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. Results indicated that the use of rainbow filters increased LGBTQ+ individuals' perceptions of acceptance within online communities, although this sense of acceptance was higher if the filter user was presented as queer rather than heterosexual. Moreover, heterosexual individuals were more impacted by pictivism if it was demonstrated by a queer user rather than another heterosexual user.

As the research field of social support for LGBTQ+ individuals develops, its study will need to become more focused on specific contexts, and researchers have argued that qualitative approaches are more amenable to understanding what social support means to people (Dowers et al., 2020; Williams et al., 2004). For example, Dowers et al. (2020) state that "use of qualitative research methods, specifically phenomenology and grounded theory, would make it possible to develop a context-specific definition of what is social support from the perspectives of TGDNB adults" (p. 252). Additionally, qualitative methods are more appropriate for intersectional analysis (Shields, 2008), which examines how various social identities interact with each other. The following are a few examples of qualitative research on social support for LGBTQ+

individuals.

Price and Prosek (2020) used a phenomenological approach to examine the ways in which parents support their LGBTQ+ children in early adulthood. Rather than completing a battery of measures, participants were asked to discuss topics such as their experiences of disclosing their sexual orientation to their parents and their perceptions of their parents' support. Gay and lesbian participants perceived their parents to affirm their sexual identity during disclosure and after it in four ways: (a) asking intentional questions about [LGBTQ+] community, (b) [having a] welcoming attitude toward child's potential partners, (c) providing encouragement during experiences of fear or discrimination, and (d) performing acts of service to promote child's expression of identity" (p. 89). The young adults described how such support helped them to feel more confident and authentic.

Two examples of intersectional approaches to studying social support are Glass and Few-Demo (2013) and Abelson (2016). In a study of Black lesbian couples, Glass and Few-Demo asked open-ended questions such as "(a) 'Tell me about your experiences with your extended families,' (b) 'When you have a challenge, as a couple, where do you turn?' and (c) 'Outside of your extended families, where do you get the most support? (What does that support look like?)" (Glass & Few-Demo, 2013, p. 716). Their richly detailed qualitative analysis revealed complex negotiations for the couples. Extended families supported them as parents (i.e., supported their children) but did not support them as a same-sex couple. Friends, churches, and lesbian and gay friends also supported them as sexual minority individuals, but not as couples. This analysis raises interesting questions, such as "is it commonplace for Black lesbians to prioritize familial affinity and belonging over the need to be a part of LGBTQ communities?" (p. 724). Another example of intersectional qualitative research is a study of trans men living in

rural communities (Abelson, 2016), which used a “modified life history approach” (p. 1539) to explore the men’s experiences. In this study, trans men who carried out peaceful lives in rural areas made “claims to sameness” (p. 1539) in race and working-class masculinities in order to feel like they belonged. Abelson states:

An intersectional lens takes us beyond a binary understanding of acceptance and ‘othering’ to a more finely shaded understanding or [*sic*] how race, gender, sexuality, and class work together to offer different possibilities for limited acceptance or exclusion in rural life for rural trans people.

In summary, various measures have been used to study social support for and within LGBTQ+ communities. Research tends to be quantitative in design, but qualitative research is also emerging. Scholars have commented on the importance of attending to context, studying different people represented in the LGBTQ+ community, such as gender-diverse and non-binary individuals, and acknowledging intersectionality in how social support is experienced. The final section explores some of the diverse ways in which support for LGBTQ+ individuals is studied.

### **Contextualizing Support**

Early research on this topic has been criticized for limitations such as focusing on LGBTQ+ individuals who are White (Dowers et al., 2020), middle class, and living in urban areas (Forstie, 2020). Additionally, some researchers have argued that more research needs to focus beyond family support in the adolescent years (Snapp, Watson, Russell, Diaz, & Ryan, 2015) and beyond family responses to initial self-disclosure (Reeves et al., 2010). There are so many different contexts in which social support can be explored. LGBTQ+ individuals’ needs for social support, and their perceptions and experiences of it differ depending on the context (Williams et al., 2004). Meyer (2016, p. 6) notes the importance of intersectional research:

Researchers have to be aware not only of generational and regional differences in the experiences of sexual- and gender-minorities, but also of differences related to race/ethnicity, gender and gender expression, socioeconomic status, and religiosity among people in any time and place. We can no longer portray LGBT people as one community, but need to recognize the multiple communities that LGBT people inhabit, and the multiple experiences they have in these varied environments.

This final section provides some examples of the study of social support (a) within different groups represented in the LGBTQ+ umbrella, (b) across the lifespan, and (c) during times of elevated anti-gay rhetoric. It concludes with some examples of social support in formal environments.

### ***Moving Beyond Studying LGBTQ+ Individuals as a Group***

Unique social support experiences exist for individuals represented in the LGBTQ+ community, and research needs to focus on this. The following are a few examples of findings representing this diversity.

- Gay and bisexual men appear to rely more heavily on LGBTQ+ friends than family or heterosexual friends for major support (e.g., borrowing large amounts of money), compared to lesbian and heterosexual women (Frost et al., 2016). Racial/ethnic minority LGB individuals also report fewer ways in which everyday support is communicated to them than White LGBs.
- In lesbians' social support networks, ex-partners and lovers often play an important role in providing social support (Degges-White, 2012; Hawthorne et al., 2020; Ingham et al., 2017).
- Social support is particularly important for bisexual individuals because they can experience discrimination from both the heterosexual community and the LGBTQ+ community

(Flanders et al., 2019; Pollitt, Muraco, Grossman, & Russell, 2017). Close connections to each community can have conflicting results. Closer connections to the LGBTQ+ community result in higher levels of binegativity for bisexual individuals, but support from other people such as family members is related to more positive experiences with bisexuality (Flanders et al., 2019).

- Social support may be found in different sources for TGDNB adults beyond the normally considered “tripartite relations of family/friend/significant other” (Dowers et al., 2020, p. 243), such as online communities.
- LGBTQ+ individuals who belong to ethnic and racial minority groups experience additional barriers when coming out, and research on this topic typically focuses on these intersectional challenges. Ideologies of collectivism and *familism*, for instance, complicate dynamics with families of origin, and LGBTQ+ individuals may be less likely to come out to their families (Price & Prosek, 2020). Yet, not all families are unsupportive. An innovative special issue framed by intersectionality in the *Journal of GLBT Family Studies* challenges the notion that People of Color and Indigenous People (POCI) always invalidate their LGBTQ+ members (Abreu & Gonzalez, 2020). A range of reactions occur, and support and rejection can co-exist in Latinx families (Przeworski & Piedra, 2020). Moreover, older family members can be significant role models of resiliency for LGBTQ+ individuals through their overcoming of adversities such as racism and poverty (Stone, Nimmons, Salcido, & Schnarrs, 2020).
- LGBTQ+ individuals who immigrate from countries where their sexual or gender identities were not supported may be both surprised and disappointed to experience a lack of support in White-dominated LGBTQ+ communities in their new countries (Logie, Lacombe-Duncan, Lee-Foon, Ryan, & Ramsay, 2016; Sadika, Wiebe, Morrison, & Morrison, 2020).

Perceptions of support can differ based on what kind of support is being sought, however (Gray, Mendelsohn, & Omoto, 2015).

- Undocumented immigrant trans Latinas are able to create “robust” social networks through a collection of informal and formal means (Hwahng et al., 2019).
- Subgroups of the LGBTQ+ community may define community support in different ways. For example, youth may identify more specific forms of support, such as opportunities for gatherings at dance clubs, bars, and educational events (Snapp, Watson, Russell, Diaz, & Ryan, 2015).

### *Life Course Approaches*

Various experiences across the life course present opportunities to explore social support. Family experiences and transitions are particularly key because family life habitually emphasizes *heteronormativity*, an ideology that “promotes gender conventionality, heterosexuality, and family traditionalism as the correct way for people to be” (Ingraham, 1996, cited in Oswald, Blume, & Marks, 2005, p. 143). Family traditions and roles can raise taken-for-granted ideologies to the surface and challenge the exchange of social support between individuals. Family transitions also create new role demands, which results in new needs or expectations for social support. Much diversity exists in sexual- and gender-minority families,<sup>2</sup> and research is lacking on marginalized families such as those with individuals who are transgender, asexual, and polyamorous (Reczek, 2020). Individuals also experience sociohistorical events at different times in their lives that create or elevate minority stress.

### Intimate Relationships

Support can be demonstrated in many ways for individuals in intimate relationships, who experience not only individual-level minority stress but also couple-level minority stress

(LeBlanc et al., 2015). Weddings provide many ways for individuals, businesses, and organizations to show support for LGBTQ+ individuals (Humble, 2013, 2016; Ocobock, 2013), and in some cases are the first time a family member might actually show support for an LGBTQ+ relative (Ocobock, 2013). Yet, American research shows that some LGBTQ+ individuals in committed relationships who chose not to marry report experiencing less support from others (Kennedy & Dalla, 2020; Lannutti, 2018; LeBlanc et al., 2015) because their cohabiting relationships are now viewed as inferior to married ones. Moreover, research examining broader societal contexts remains important. Unequal recognition at the state level has a negative impact on same-sex couples, regardless of whether they are married (LeBlanc, Frost, & Bowen, 2018).

### Parenting

Research has started looking at the role that social support plays in a variety of LGBTQ+-parent families contexts (Patterson, 2017; Reczek, 2020), such as couples who plan parenthood through adoption or surrogacy. For instance, support from families, friends, and workplaces decreases depression and anxiety in the transition to adoptive parenting for lesbian and gay parents (Goldberg & Smith, 2011). Overall, the research to date indicates that social support is lacking for sexual- and gender-minority parents and their families (Reczek, 2020). Additionally, more research is needed on TGDNB-parenting (Abreu, Rosenkrantz, Ryser-Oatman, Rostosky, & Riggle, 2019) and LGBTQ+-parent families outside of Western and European countries (Costa & Salinas-Quiroz, 2019).

### Older Adults

A life course approach is often used when studying LGBTQ+ older adults, which takes into account lifetime experiences of discrimination, historical timing, and linked lives



(Fredriksen Goldsen, Jen, & Muraco, 2019). Older individuals may have lost important sources of social support when they came out at younger ages (i.e., rejection from their families), which results in vulnerability in terms of social support later in life. They may rely more on friends than families and many report limited amounts of support (Hawthorne et al., 2020). For example, older men's reliance on other gay men for support is reduced due to AIDS mortality, which then results in increased reliance on formal supports (Jones, Simpson, & Stansbury, 2018). However, reaching out to formal support can be difficult for LGBTQ+ individuals who have experienced stigma throughout their lives—particularly in the healthcare system. Moreover, contemporary discrimination still exists.

Perceptions of support in later life differ based on age, gender, gender identity, and parental status; thus, an intersectional research approach is need (Fredriksen Goldsen et al., 2019). Moreover, LGBTQ+ older adults are resilient and demonstrate agency in the ways they have developed social supports throughout their lives, such as the creation of *chosen families*. Many gaps are found in the literature on social support for older individuals, such as research about caregiving (Fredriksen Goldsen et al., 2019). Research participants also tend to be recruited through LGBTQ+ organizations and snowballing techniques. Individuals recruited in these ways often report good levels of social support, which raises issue around generalizability of results (Hawthorne et al., 2020).

### Times of Elevated Anti-Gay Rhetoric

LGBTQ+ issues come to the forefront during times such as elections or when political initiatives are being considered. Such situations can result in elevated public displays of anti-gay rhetoric, which constitutes a minority stress factor for LGBTQ+ individuals (Verrelli, White, Harvey, & Pulciani, 2019) and can negatively impact their well-being (Frost & Fingerhut, 2016;

Rostosky, Riggle, Horne, Nicholas Denton, & Huellemeier, 2010). Family members and friends play an important role in providing support during these times (Lannutti, 2011), and a limited amount of research has looked at this.

Verrelli et al. (2019) studied social support in Australia for LGB individuals during the Federal Government's postal survey about the legalization of same-sex marriage. The Marriage Act was amended after the survey to include same-sex couples, but not without considerable public debate. Exposure to anti-gay messages in various forms such as online content, radio reports, and bumper stickers increased LGB individuals' psychological distress. However, perceived emotional support from one's social network (immediate and extended family, LGB and heterosexual friends, work colleagues, school peers, and neighbors) helped buffer this stress (Verrelli et al., 2019).

Several studies report on experiences of social support in a special issue of the *Journal of GLBT Family Studies* (Lannutti & Galupo, 2018) about the 2016 U.S. election and LGBTQ+ communities. LGBTQ+ individuals with family members who chose to support political groups that were unsupportive of LGBTQ+ rights or threatening to take them away (i.e., the Republican party) reported negative emotions and conflict with their family members (Brown & Keller, 2018; Gonzalez et al., 2018). In response, they sought out like-minded individuals for emotional support and also engaged in advocacy (Brown & Keller, 2018). In contrast, families who became closer after the 2016 U.S. election had non-LGBTQ+ family members who communicated support through becoming more educated about sexual- and gender-minority issues and shared their fears and concerns with the LGBTQ+ person (Gonzalez et al., 2018). Anti-gay administrations can actually result in stronger family relationships and greater awareness of marginalized individuals' experiences (Gonzalez et al., 2018).

***Formal Support***

Secondary groups need to use multifaceted approaches to not only effectively communicate support to LGBTQ+ individuals but also rectify longstanding systemic and structural histories of stigma and oppression. For example, in addition to creating more inclusive employment and patient settings, medical students need to be educated about LGBT healthcare *before* they enter their profession in order to help reduce homophobia and heterosexism perpetuated by physicians (Eliason, Dibble, & Robertson, 2011). Sports coaches need guidelines on how to respond to microaggressions such as anti-gay LGBTQ+ language (NCAA, 2012) often used in locker rooms. The longstanding binary-gendered structure of sport also creates specific challenges for trans athletes and needs rectifying (Atteberry-Ash et al., 2018). Inclusive services in agencies providing care to older LGBTQ+ adults include knowing correct terminology, examining intake forms for inclusive language, developing print and online materials that include same-sex couples and other diverse populations, and creating LGBT-specific support groups (The National Resource Center on LGBT Aging, 2020). Aging service providers need to think carefully about misconceptions that they might hold, such as the assumption that their institution does not have any LGBTQ+ clients because nobody has openly identified as such. And in post-secondary campus athletics, the implementation of inclusive policies is not sufficient; educational campaigns to encourage support for such policies are also important, particularly ones geared toward male students (Atteberry-Ash et al., 2018). Secondary groups also consider intersectionality: guidelines for psychologists (American Psychological Association, 2012, 2015) and sports coaches (NCAA, 2012) note the importance of understanding how sexual orientation and gender identity interact with other cultural identities.

Many organizations have developed guidelines for developing more welcoming and

inclusive environments. Table 1 lists examples of resources from American and Canadian organizations. Guidelines and policies are important in showing individuals how to communicate support to LGBTQ+ individuals. Research is needed to examine if and how guidelines are implemented, and how effective they are.

Table 1  
*Examples of Organizational Resources*

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Web Address</b>	<b>Resource Example</b>
American Psychological Association	<a href="http://www.apa.org/topics/lgbt/">www.apa.org/topics/lgbt/</a> <a href="http://www.apa.org/topics/lgbt/transgender">www.apa.org/topics/lgbt/transgender</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guidelines for psychological practice with lesbian, gay, and bisexual clients (2012)</li> <li>• Guidelines for psychological practice with transgender and gender nonconforming people (2015)</li> </ul>
Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport	<a href="https://cces.ca/">https://cces.ca/</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating inclusive environments for trans participants in Canadian sport – Policy and practice template for sport organizations (2018)</li> </ul>
Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals	<a href="http://www.lgbtcampus.org">www.lgbtcampus.org</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommendations for supporting trans and queer students of color (2016)</li> </ul>
GLSEN (formerly the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network)	<a href="http://www.glsen.org">www.glsen.org</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The 2017 National School Climate Survey (2018)</li> <li>• Pronoun guide (2020)</li> <li>• GLSEN Safe Space Kit (for middle and high schools)</li> </ul>
Human Rights Campaign	<a href="http://www.hrc.org">www.hrc.org</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coming out: Living authentically as Black LGBTQ people (2020)</li> </ul>
The Joint Commission	<a href="http://www.jointcommission.org">www.jointcommission.org</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advancing effective communication, cultural competence, and patient- and family-centered care for the</li> </ul>

		lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community: A field guide (2011)
Lambda Legal	<a href="http://www.lambdalegal.org">www.lambdalegal.org</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intersex-affirming hospital policy guide: Providing ethical and compassionate health care to intersex patients (2018)</li> </ul>
National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)	<a href="http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/inclusion/lgbtq-resources">www.ncaa.org/about/resources/inclusion/lgbtq-resources</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Champions of respect: Inclusion of LGBTQ student-athletes and staff in NCAA® programs (2012)</li> </ul>
National Resource Center on LGBT Aging	<a href="http://www.lgbtagingcenter.org">www.lgbtagingcenter.org</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusive services for LGBT older adults: A practical guide to creating welcoming agencies (2020)</li> </ul>
Pride at Work Canada	<a href="http://prideatwork.ca">prideatwork.ca</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beyond diversity: An LGBT best practices guide for employers (2017)</li> <li>• LGBTQ2+ Workplace Inclusion Index</li> </ul>
SAGE (Services and advocacy for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender adults)	<a href="http://www.sageusa.org">www.sageusa.org</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing LGBT cultural competence (2018)<sup>a</sup></li> </ul>

---

<sup>a</sup>Housing-focused, for property management companies, etc.

## Conclusion

Social support is an important resource that helps prevent or ameliorate minority stress and other types of stress in LGBTQ+ individuals, couples, families, and communities. It is studied in many ways and contexts, and various operationalizations of social support for LGBTQ+ individuals emerged around the 2010s. Qualitative research also provides insight into complex dynamics and perceptions of social support. As the field grows, methodological reviews will be helpful to make sense of this burgeoning area of research. Researchers have also noted the need for contextualization and for intersectional research in this area. This type of research

will likely increase in the future, with more research on specific life and family contexts.

Research from underrepresented regions such as Africa will complement the current work being carried out in Western and European countries.

### **Further Reading**

Abreu, R. L., & Gonzalez, K. A. (Eds.). (2020). Redefining collectivism: Family and community among sexual and gender diverse people of color and indigenous people [Special Issue].

*Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, 16(2).

Abreu, R. L., Rosenkrantz, D. E., Ryser-Oatman, J. T., Rostosky, S. S., & Riggle, E. D. B.

(2019). Parental reactions to transgender and gender diverse children: A literature review.

*Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, 15, 461–485.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1550428X.2019.1656132>

American Psychological Association. (2012). Guidelines for psychological practice with lesbian, gay, and bisexual clients. *American Psychologist*, 67, 10–42.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/a0024659>

American Psychological Association. (2015). Guidelines for psychological practice with transgender and gender nonconforming people. *American Psychologist*, 70, 832–864.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/a0039906>

Dowers, E., White, C., Cook, K., & Kingsley, J. (2020). Trans, gender diverse and non-binary adult experiences of social support: A systematic quantitative literature review.

*International Journal of Transgender Health*, 21, 242–257.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/26895269.2020.1771805>

The Family Acceptance Project®. (n.d.). *Publications*. Retrieved August 5, 2020, from

<https://familyproject.sfsu.edu/publications>

- Forstie, C. (2020). Theory making from the middle: Researching LGBTQ communities in small cities. *City & Community, 19*, 153–168. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cico.12446>
- Fredriksen-Goldsen, K. I., Hoy-Ellis, C. P., Goldsen, J., Emler, C. A., & Hooyman, N. R. (2014). Creating a vision for the future: Key competencies and strategies for culturally competent practice with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) older adults in the health and human services. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work, 57*, 80–107. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01634372.2014.890690>
- Frost, D. M., & Meyer, I. H. (2012). Measuring community connectedness among diverse sexual minority populations. *Journal of Sex Research, 49*, 36–49. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2011.565427>
- Goldberg, A. E., & Allen, K. R. (Eds.). (2020). *LGBTQ-parent families* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Cham, Switzerland: Springer.
- Hawthorne, O., Camic, P. M., & Rimes, K. A. (2020). Understanding the structure, experiences and challenges of social support for older lesbian, gay and bisexual people: A systematic review. *Ageing & Society, 40*, 282–305. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0144686X18000910>
- Meyer, I. H. (2003). Prejudice, social stress, and mental health in lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations: Conceptual issues and research evidence. *Psychological Bulletin, 129*, 674–697. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.129.5.674>
- Oswald, R. F., Cuthbertson, C., Lazarevic, V., & Goldberg, A. E. (2010). New developments in the field: Measuring community climate. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies, 6*, 214–228. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15504281003709230>
- Reczek, C. (2020). Sexual- and gender-minority families: A 2010 to 2020 decade in review. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 82*, 300–325. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12607>

- Sadika, B., Wiebe, E., Morrison, M. A., & Morrison, T. G. (2020). Intersectional microaggressions and social support for LGBTQ persons of color: A systematic review of the Canadian-based empirical literature. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies, 16*, 111–147.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1550428X.2020.1724125>
- Thoits, P. A. (2011). Mechanisms linking social ties and support to physical and mental health. *Journal of Health & Social Behavior, 52*, 145–161.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0022146510395592>



## References

- Abelson, M. J. (2016). 'You aren't from around here': Race, masculinity, and rural transgender men. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 23, 1535–1546.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2016.1219324>
- Abreu, R. L., & Gonzalez, K. A. (2020). Redefining collectivism: Family and community among sexual and gender diverse people of color and indigenous people: Introduction to the special issue. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, 16, 107–110.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1550428X.2020.1736038>
- Abreu, R. L., Rosenkrantz, D. E., Ryser-Oatman, J. T., Rostosky, S. S., & Riggle, E. D. B. (2019). Parental reactions to transgender and gender diverse children: A literature review. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, 15, 461–485.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1550428X.2019.1656132>
- American Psychological Association. (2012). Guidelines for psychological practice with lesbian, gay, and bisexual clients. *American Psychologist*, 67, 10–42.  
<https://doi.org/10.1037/a0024659>
- American Psychological Association. (2015). Guidelines for psychological practice with transgender and gender nonconforming people. *American Psychologist*, 70, 832–864.  
<https://doi.org/10.1037/a0039906>
- Atteberry-Ash, B., Woodford, M. R., & Spectrum Center. (2018). Support for policy protecting LGBT student athletes among heterosexual students participating in club and intercollegiate sports. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 15, 151–162.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-017-0283-z>
- Baiocco, R., Nardelli, N., Pezzuti, L., & Lingiardi, V. (2013). Attitudes of Italian heterosexual

- older adults towards lesbian and gay parenting. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, *10*, 285–292. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-013-0129-2>
- Barrett, D. C., & Pollack, L. M. (2005). Whose gay community? Social class, sexual self-expression, and gay community involvement. *Sociological Quarterly*, *46*, 437–446. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1533-8525.2005.00021.x>
- Brown, C., & Keller, C. J. (2018). The 2016 presidential election outcome: Fears, tension, and resiliency of GLBTQ communities. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, *14*, 101–129. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1550428X.2017.1420847>
- Brownell, A., & Shumaker, S. A. (1984). Social support: An introduction to a complex phenomenon. *Journal of Social Issues*, *40*, 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.1984.tb01104.x>
- Burgess, E. O., & Baunach, D. M. (2014). Heterosexual allies? Understanding heterosexuals' alliance with the gay community. *Sexuality & Culture*, *18*, 936–958. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-014-9230-9>
- Cobb, S. (1976). Social support as a moderator of life stress. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, *38*, 300–314. <https://doi.org/10.1097/00006842-197609000-00003>
- Costa, P. A., Carneiro, F. A., Esposito, F., D'Amore, S., & Green, R.-J. (2018). Sexual prejudice in Portugal: Results from the first wave European study on heterosexuals' attitudes toward same-gender marriage and parenting. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, *15*, 99–110. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-017-0292-y>
- Costa, P. A., & Salinas-Quiroz, F. (2019). A comparative study of attitudes toward same-gender parenting and gay and lesbian rights in Portugal and in Mexico. *Journal of Homosexuality*, *66*, 1909–1926. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2018.1519303>

- Daniels, R. S. (2019). The evolution of attitudes on same-sex marriage in the United States, 1988–2014. *Social Science Quarterly, 100*, 1651–1663.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.12673>
- Degges-White, S. (2012). Lesbian friendships: An exploration of lesbian social support networks. *Adulthood Journal, 11*, 16–26. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-0029.2012.00002.x>
- Doty, N. D., Willoughby, B. L. B., Lindahl, K. M., & Malik, N. M. (2010). Sexuality related social support among lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 39*, 1134–1147. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-010-9566-x>
- Dowers, E., White, C., Cook, K., & Kingsley, J. (2020). Trans, gender diverse and non-binary adult experiences of social support: A systematic quantitative literature review. *International Journal of Transgender Health, 21*, 242–257.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/26895269.2020.1771805>
- Eliason, M. J., Dibble, S. L., & Robertson, P. A. (2011). Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) physicians' experiences in the workplace. *Journal of Homosexuality, 58*, 1355–1371. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2011.614902>
- Flanders, C. E., Shuler, S. A., Desnoyers, S. A., & VanKim, N. A. (2019). Relationships between social support, identity, anxiety, and depression among young bisexual people of color. *Journal of Bisexuality, 19*, 253–275. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2019.1617543>
- Forstie, C. (2020). Theory making from the middle: Researching LGBTQ communities in small cities. *City & Community, 19*, 153–168. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cico.12446>
- Fredriksen Goldsen, K. I., Jen, S., & Muraco, A. (2019). Iridescent life course: LGBTQ aging research and blueprint for the future – A systematic review. *Gerontology, 65*, 253–274.

<https://doi.org/10.1159/000493559>

- Frost, D. M., & Fingerhut, A. W. (2016). Daily exposure to negative campaign messages decreases same-sex couples' psychological and relational well-being. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations, 19*, 477–492. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430216642028>
- Frost, D. M., & Meyer, I. H. (2012). Measuring community connectedness among diverse sexual minority populations. *Journal of Sex Research, 49*, 36–49. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2011.565427>
- Frost, D. M., Meyer, I. H., & Schwartz, S. (2016). Social support networks among diverse sexual minority populations. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 86*, 91–102. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ort0000117>
- Glass, V. Q., & Few-Demo, A. L. (2013). Complexities of informal social support arrangements for Black lesbian couples. *Family Relations, 62*, 714–726. <https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12036>
- Goldberg, A. E., & Smith, J. Z. (2011). Stigma, social context, and mental health: Lesbian and gay couples across the transition to adoptive parenthood. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 58*, 139–150. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0021684>
- Gonzalez, K. A., Pulice-Farrow, L., & Galupo, M. P. (2018). “My aunt unfriended me:” Narratives of GLBTQ family relationships post 2016 presidential election. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies, 14*, 61–84. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1550428X.2017.1420845>
- Gray, N. N., Mendelsohn, D. M., & Omoto, A. M. (2015). Community connectedness, challenges, and resilience among gay Latino immigrants. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 55*, 202–214. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-014-9697-4>
- Greenhalgh, H. (2019, June 28). *Stonewall 50. Where next for LGBTQ+ lives?* Retrieved October

1, 2020, from World Economic Forum website:

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/06/stonewall-50-where-next-for-lgbt-lives-by-thomson-reuters-foundation/>

Hawthorne, O., Camic, P. M., & Rimes, K. A. (2020). Understanding the structure, experiences and challenges of social support for older lesbian, gay and bisexual people: A systematic review. *Ageing & Society, 40*, 282–305. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0144686X18000910>

Holman, E. G., Fish, J. N., Oswald, R. F., & Goldberg, A. (2019). Reconsidering the LGBT Climate Inventory: Understanding support and hostility for LGBTQ employees in the workplace. *Journal of Career Assessment, 27*, 544–559.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1069072718788324>

Holman, E. G., & Oswald, R. F. (2016). A decade of changes: Within-group analysis of LGBTQ individuals' perceptions of their community context and the relevance for social service providers. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services, 28*, 214–230.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10538720.2016.1191406>

Humble, A. M. (2013). Moving from ambivalence to certainty: Older same-sex couples marry in Canada. *Canadian Journal on Aging, 32*, 131–144.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0714980813000196>

Humble, A. M. (2016). “She didn’t bat an eye”: Canadian same-sex wedding planning and support from the wedding industry. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies, 12*, 277–299.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1550428X.2015.1065780>

Hwahng, S. J., Allen, B., Zadoretzky, C., Barber, H., McKnight, C., & Des Jarlais, D. (2019). Alternative kinship structures, resilience and social support among immigrant trans Latinas in the USA. *Culture, Health & Sexuality, 21*, 1–15.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13691058.2018.1440323>

- Ingham, C. F. A., Eccles, F. J. R., & Armitage, J. R. (2017). Non-heterosexual women's experiences of informal social support: A qualitative metasynthesis. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services, 29*, 109–143. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10538720.2017.1295413>
- Jones, R. M., Simpson, G. M., & Stansbury, K. (2018). Informal support experiences of older African-American gay men living with HIV/AIDS. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services, 30*, 209–219. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10538720.2018.1463886>
- Kennedy, H. R., & Dalla, R. L. (2020). “It may be legal, but it is not treated equally”: Marriage equality and well-being implications for same-sex couples. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services, 32*, 67–98. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10538720.2019.1681340>
- Kuvalanka, K. A., & Munroe, K. (2020). The “second generation”: LGBTQ youth with LGBTQ parents. In A. E. Goldberg & K. R. Allen (Eds.), *LGBTQ-parent families* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. 241-256). Cham, Switzerland: Springer.
- Lannutti, P. J. (2011). Examining communication about marriage amendments: Same-sex couples and their extended social networks. *Journal of Social Issues, 67*, 264–281. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.2011.01697.x>
- Lannutti, P. J. (2018). Committed, unmarried same-sex couples and their social networks in the United States: Relationships and discursive strategies. *Journal of Homosexuality, 65*, 1232–1248. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2017.1411690>
- Lannutti, P., & Galupo, M. P. (2018). 2016 U.S. Presidential election and the LGBTQ community: Introduction to the special issue. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies, 14*, 1. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1550428X.2017.1420857>
- LeBlanc, A. J., Frost, D. M., & Bowen, K. (2018). Legal marriage, unequal recognition, and

- mental health among same-sex couples. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 80, 397–408.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12460>
- LeBlanc, A. J., Frost, D. M., & Wight, R. G. (2015). Minority stress and stress proliferation among same-sex and other marginalized couples. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 77, 40–59. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12160>
- Lee, H.-Y., & Mutz, D. C. (2019). Changing attitudes toward same-sex marriage: A three-wave panel study. *Political Behavior*, 41, 701–722. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-018-9463-7>
- Lewis, R. J., Derlega, V. J., Griffin, J. L., & Krowinski, A. C. (2003). Stressors for gay men and lesbians: Life stress, gay-related stress, stigma consciousness, and depressive symptoms. *Journal of Social & Clinical Psychology*, 22, 716–729.  
<https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.22.6.716.22932>
- Liddle, B. J., Luzzo, D. A., Hauenstein, A. L., & Schuck, K. (2004). Construction and validation of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered climate inventory. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 12, 33–50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1069072703257722>
- Logie, C. H., Lacombe-Duncan, A., Lee-Foon, N., Ryan, S., & Ramsay, H. (2016). “It’s for us – newcomers, LGBTQ persons, and HIV-positive persons. You feel free to be”: A qualitative study exploring social support group participation among African and Caribbean lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender newcomers and refugees in Toronto, Canada. *BMC International Health and Human Rights*, 16, Art 18.  
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12914-016-0092-0>
- Martin, J. L., & Dean, L. L. (1987). *Ego-dystonic homosexuality scale*. Unpublished manuscript, Columbia University, New York, NY.
- Masini, B. E., & Barrett, H. A. (2008). Social support as a predictor of psychological and

physical well-being and lifestyle in lesbian, gay, and bisexual adults aged 50 and over.

*Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services*, 20, 91–110.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10538720802179013>

Matsick, J. L., Kim, L. M., & Kruk, M. (2020). Facebook LGBTQ pictivism: The effects of women's rainbow profile filters on sexual prejudice and online belonging. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 44, 342–361. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0361684320930566>

Meyer, I. H. (1995). Minority stress and mental health in gay men. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 36, 38–56. JSTOR. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2137286>

Meyer, I. H. (2003). Prejudice, social stress, and mental health in lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations: Conceptual issues and research evidence. *Psychological Bulletin*, 129, 674–697. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.129.5.674>

Meyer, I. H. (2016). Does an improved social environment for sexual and gender minorities have implications for a new minority stress research agenda? *Psychology of Sexualities Review*, 7, 81–90.

Nadal, K. L., Whitman, C. N., Davis, L. S., Erazo, T., & Davidoff, K. C. (2016). Microaggressions toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and genderqueer people: A review of the literature. *Journal of Sex Research*, 53, 488–508.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2016.1142495>

NCAA. (2012). *Champions of respect: Inclusion of LGBTQ student-athletes in NCAA® programs*. Retrieved August 28, 2020, from NCAA website: [www.ncaapublications.com/p-4305-champions-of-respect-inclusion-of-lgbtq-student-athletes-and-staff-in-ncaa-programs.aspx](http://www.ncaapublications.com/p-4305-champions-of-respect-inclusion-of-lgbtq-student-athletes-and-staff-in-ncaa-programs.aspx)

Nurullah, A. S. (2012). Received and provided social support: A review of current evidence and



- future directions. *American Journal of Health Studies*, 27, 173–188.
- Ocobock, A. (2013). The power and limits of marriage: Married gay men's family relationships. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 75, 191–205. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2012.01032.x>
- Oswald, R. F., Blume, L. B., & Marks, S. R. (2005). Decentering heteronormativity: A model for family studies. In V. L. Bengtson, A. C. Acock, K. R. Allen, P. Dilworth-Anderson, & D. M. Klein (Eds.), *Sourcebook of family theory and research* (pp. 143-165). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Oswald, R. F., Cuthbertson, C., Lazarevic, V., & Goldberg, A. E. (2010). New developments in the field: Measuring community climate. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, 6, 214–228. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15504281003709230>
- Oswald, R. F., Routon, J. M., McGuire, J. K., & Holman, E. G. (2018). Tolerance versus support: Perceptions of residential community climate among LGB parents. *Family Relations*, 67, 41–54. <https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12292>
- Patterson, C. J. (2017). Parents' sexual orientation and children's development. *Child Development Perspectives*, 11, 45–49. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdep.12207>
- Pew Research Center. (2018, July 11). *Activism in the social media age*. Retrieved October 1, 2020, from Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech website: <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2018/07/11/public-attitudes-toward-political-engagement-on-social-media/>
- Pew Research Center. (2019, October 28). *Gay marriage around the world*. Retrieved August 18, 2020, from Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project website: <https://www.pewforum.org/fact-sheet/gay-marriage-around-the-world/>

- Pew Research Center. (2020, June 25). *The global divide on homosexuality persists*. Retrieved August 18, 2020, from Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project website: <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/06/25/global-divide-on-homosexuality-persists/>
- Pitcher, E. N., Camacho, T. P., Renn, K. A., & Woodford, M. R. (2018). Affirming policies, programs, and supportive services: Using an organizational perspective to understand LGBTQ+ college student success. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 11*, 117–132. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000048>
- Pollitt, A. M., Muraco, J. A., Grossman, A. H., & Russell, S. T. (2017). Disclosure stress, social support, and depressive symptoms among cisgender bisexual youth. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 79*, 1278–1294. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12418>
- Price, E. W., & Prosek, E. A. (2020). The lived experiences of GLB college students who feel supported by their parents. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies, 16*, 83–102. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1550428X.2019.1593278>
- Przeworski, A., & Piedra, A. (2020). The role of the family for sexual minority Latinx individuals: A systematic review and recommendations for clinical practice. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies, 16*, 211–240. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1550428X.2020.1724109>
- Reczek, C. (2020). Sexual- and gender-minority families: A 2010 to 2020 decade in review. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 82*, 300–325. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12607>
- Reeves, T., Horne, S. G., Rostosky, S. S., Riggle, E. D. B., Baggett, L. R., & Aycok, R. A. (2010). Family members' support for GLBT issues: The role of family adaptability and cohesion. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies, 6*, 80–97. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15504280903472857>

- Rostosky, S. S., Riggle, E. D. B., Horne, S. G., Denton, F. N., & Huellemeier, J. D. (2010). Lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals' psychological reactions to amendments denying access to civil marriage. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, *80*, 302–310.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1939-0025.2010.01033.x>
- Ryan, C., Russell, S. T., Huebner, D., Diaz, R., & Sanchez, J. (2010). Family acceptance in adolescence and the health of LGBT young adults. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing*, *23*, 205–213. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6171.2010.00246.x>
- Sadika, B., Wiebe, E., Morrison, M. A., & Morrison, T. G. (2020). Intersectional microaggressions and social support for LGBTQ persons of color: A systematic review of the Canadian-based empirical literature. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, *16*, 111–147.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1550428X.2020.1724125>
- Shear, M. D., & Savage, C. (2017, July 27). In one day, Trump administration lands 3 punches against gay rights. *The New York Times*. Retrieved August 28, 2020, from New York Times website: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/27/us/politics/white-house-lgbt-rights-military-civil-rights-act.html>
- Shields, S. (2008). Gender: An intersectionality perspective. *Sex Roles*, *59*, 301–311.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-008-9501-8>
- Shulman, J. L., Gotta, G., & Green, R.-J. (2012). Will marriage matter? Effects of marriage anticipated by same-sex couples. *Journal of Family Issues*, *33*, 158–181.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X11406228>
- Sloane, J. L., & Robillard, L. M. (2018). Factors affecting heterosexual attitudes to same-sex marriage in Australia. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, *15*, 290–301.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-017-0276-y>

- Smith, T. W., Son, J., & Kim, J. (2014). *Public attitudes toward homosexuality and gay rights across time and countries*. Retrieved July 15, 2020, from The Williams Institute website: <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4p93w90c>
- Snapp, S. D., Watson, R. J., Russell, S. T., Diaz, R. M., & Ryan, C. (2015). Social support networks for LGBT young adults: Low cost strategies for positive adjustment. *Family Relations, 64*, 420–430. <https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12124>
- Stone, A. L., Nimmons, E. A., Salcido, R., & Schnarrs, P. (2020). “My Meemaw is a cool ass person”: Family members as role models of resilience for sexual and gender diverse people of color. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies, 16*, 241–257. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1550428X.2020.1724148>
- Takács, J., Szalma, I., & Bartus, T. (2016). Social attitudes toward adoption by same-sex couples in Europe. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 45*, 1787–1798. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-016-0691-9>
- The National Resource Center on LGBT Aging. (2020). *Inclusive services for LGBT older adults: A practical guide to creating welcoming agencies*. Retrieved September 6, 2020, from <https://www.lgbtagingcenter.org/>
- Thoits, P. A. (2010). Stress and health: Major findings and policy implications. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 51*, S41–S53. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022146510383499>
- Thoits, P. A. (2011). Mechanisms linking social ties and support to physical and mental health. *Journal of Health & Social Behavior, 52*, 145–161. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022146510395592>
- Twenge, J. M., Carter, N. T., & Campbell, W. K. (2015). Time period, generational, and age differences in tolerance for controversial beliefs and lifestyles in the United States, 1972–

2012. *Social Forces*, 94, 379–399. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/sov050>
- Unger, D. (2020, June 24). “Just appalling”: Pride Winnipeg cuts ties with human rights museum over LGBTQ2+ censorship. Retrieved August 28, 2020, from CTV News website: <https://winnipeg.ctvnews.ca/just-appalling-pride-winnipeg-cuts-ties-with-human-rights-museum-over-lgbtq2-censorship-1.4998605>
- Vaux, A., Riedel, S., & Stewart, D. (1987). Modes of social support: The Social Support Behaviors (SS-B) Scale. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 15, 209–237. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00919279>
- Verrelli, S., White, F. A., Harvey, L. J., & Pulciani, M. R. (2019). Minority stress, social support, and the mental health of lesbian, gay, and bisexual Australians during the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey. *Australian Psychologist*, 54, 336–346. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ap.12380>
- Vyncke, J. D., & Julien, D. (2007). Social support, coming out, and adjustment of lesbian mothers in Canada and France: An exploratory study. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, 3, 397–424. [https://doi.org/10.1300/J461v03n04\\_03](https://doi.org/10.1300/J461v03n04_03)
- Weiner, B. A., & Zinner, L. (2015). Attitudes toward straight, gay male, and transsexual parenting. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 62, 327–339. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2014.972800>
- Williams, P., Barclay, L., & Schmied, V. (2004). Defining social support in context: A necessary step in improving research, intervention, and practice. *Qualitative Health Research*, 14, 942–960. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732304266997>
- Woodford, M. R., Paceley, M. S., Kulick, A., & Hong, J. S. (2015). The LGBTQ social climate matters: Policies, protests, and placards and psychological well-being among LGBTQ

emerging adults. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services*, 27, 116–141.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10538720.2015.990334>

Zimet, G. D., Dahlem, N. W., Zimet, S. G., & Farley, G. K. (1988). The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 52, 30–41 .

[https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327752jpa5201\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327752jpa5201_2)

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>The term “community” is used at times in this entry, with the caveat that it is a simplistic term that does not reflect the full diversity of LGBTQ+ individuals’ experiences (Meyer, 2016). Some LGBTQ+ individuals do not feel connected to or represented by a broader queer community (Burgess & Baunach, 2014; Forstie, 2020; Frost & Meyer, 2012). Individuals may also differ in terms of how they define community or communities (Frost & Meyer, 2012).

<sup>2</sup>Research on sexual- and gender-minority families tend to focus on families in which children are LGBTQ+ or adults (e.g., partners or parents) are LGBTQ+. Less research is known about families in which multi-generations identify as sexual- or gender-minority individuals (see Kunalanka & Munroe, 2020).