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The Effects of Same-Sex Parental Relationships on Teenagers

Denise A. Daniels

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The Effects of Same-Sex Parental Relationships on Teenagers

by
Denise A. Daniels

An Applied Dissertation Submitted to the
Abraham S. Fischler College of Education
and School of Criminal Justice in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
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Approval Page

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Statement of Original Work

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April 25, 2021

Date

Abstract

The Effects of Same-Sex Parental Relationships on Teenagers: Denise A. Daniels, 2021: Applied Dissertation, Nova Southeastern University, Abraham S. Fischler College of Education and School of Criminal Justice. Keywords: relationship, stressors, teenagers, same-sex

Having same-sex parents is often linked with negative effects to the well-being of children into their adult years. The reported experiences from teenagers with same-sex parents and the stressors they experience are next to nonexistent. For this study, an interpretative phenomenological analysis was conducted to understand how teenagers age 13-16 make meaning of their same-sex parents' relationship and the stressors they experience.

The theoretical framework for this study was based on the collaborative language system (CLS) of Anderson and Goolishian. The researcher investigated the perceptions of four teenaged participants regarding their relationships with their same-sex parents and how they coped with the stressors they experience as a result of their parents' same-sex relationship. As teenagers living with same-sex parents, these teens shared how they define their parents' same-sex relationship to be and the stressors they experienced as a result of their parents' same-sex relationship. While these teens were able to navigate through their lived social experiences, through positive relationships, and self-acquired coping skills, implications for further research still exist with regard to fostering practices that create an environment for teens with same-sex parents to be able to use open expression and discuss effective ways of coping with their stressors.

Future research is recommended to conduct comparison studies that would include the similarities or dissimilarities between the lived experiences of teenagers living with different-sex and same-sex parents and how the different relationships are defined, and the stressors experienced as a result of their parent's relationship.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

There has been an increase in research regarding same-sex couples and their right to parent. For the purpose of this research study, *same-sex parents* were defined as two gay males or two lesbian females as parents. Despite the legal ability to marry, there is still social stigma attached to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender, queer (LGBTQ) parenting (Schoephoerster & Aamlid, 2016). Based on over 2 decades of reviewed peer research and a meta-analysis of contemporary research conducted by Mayo-Adam (2020) it was determined from their research that children were not harmed as a result of having gay or lesbian parents (Mayo-Adam, 2020). However, literature regarding same-sex parenting continues to largely focus on the cognitive development and wellbeing of children under the age of 13 with an even larger amount of literature that focuses on the behavior outcomes of adults age 20 and above. The effects of same-sex parenting on children stem mainly from results provided from cognitive tests and other measurable instruments (Bosisio & Ronfani, 2016). It appears that the gap in the literature regarding the negative effects of same-sex parents is coming to a slow close as the number of same-sex unions are being accepted around the world. However, with increased same-sex parental acceptance, there is limited research regarding the self-reported experiences of teenagers with same-sex parents aged 13-16 and the stressors that they may encounter. For this study, I conducted an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to investigate how this population living in Northeast Florida makes meaning of their experiences and the factors associated with their disclosure.

Statement of the Problem

The problem being studied is that teenagers who are in same-sex parented

relationships experience stress from negative social behaviors. These stressors may include peer isolation, public humiliation, and the fear of being bullied. The way these teens choose to cope with such stressful experiences often results in unfavorable outcomes: anxiety, depression, and social withdrawal (Perrin et al., 2019). There are limited resources available within Northeast Florida that provide support services specifically for teenagers of same-sex parents. Within Northeast Florida, there are many programs geared towards positive teen development. Also, separate services which are specific to the stressors experienced by teenagers with same-sex parents are next to nonexistent.

To compare the common reported lived experiences of teenagers with heterosexual parents to teenagers with same-sex parents, Dierckx et al. (2017) examined the everyday lived experiences reported by children and adolescents with transgender parents. From their study, the most common fear voiced by participants was *social stigmatization* (Dierckx et al., 2017). Zadeh et al. (2019) noted that teenagers who were living with a transgender parent also reported experiencing the fear of stares from strangers and inappropriate questions asked by their peers. Calzo et al. (2019) posited, because of their sexual orientation, LGBTQ families experience various levels of victimization, stress, and discrimination.

In a review of the services offered within Northeast Florida, there is one recommended program within the local community that provides services geared towards helping LGBTQ families. Although not an acronym, PRIDE is recognized as the headquarters serving the LGBTQ community throughout North Central Florida which provides support and services geared towards fostering community awareness through

community engagement. PRIDE also has a program geared specifically towards LGBTQ individuals instead of in becoming parents and offers a scholarship program that allows LGBTQ teens an opportunity to attend college. PRIDE also provides helpful legal information and parental support groups to their members. However, in working with PRIDE in a professional capacity by referring individuals and their families over the years, like a few other local LGBTQ organizations that I have referred individuals to for services, PRIDE also does not have a program that is specific to teenagers of same-sex parents living in the local community. As a result, many of these teens are faced with having to handle their stressors on their own. Thus, as a community provider, I often refer many of my LGBTQ consumers and their family members to local mental health organizations for assistance.

Deficiencies in the Evidence

Minimal research has been completed to date on the experiences as reported by teenagers regarding their same-sex parent relationship. Furthermore, the research completed on same-sex parenting for decades has focused on child development and child well-being. Some researchers argued that having same-sex parents will impact the development of children under age 13 (Crouch et al., 2017). However, Traylor et al. (2016) posited that the well-being of teenagers is affected with and without their knowledge. They also found that their social relationships and the experiences as reported by teenagers with same-sex parents may also prove beneficial in helping other teenagers to cope with their own experiences.

Background and Justification

Regarding teenagers with same-sex parents, most of the literature focused on the

well-being, negative social outcomes, and experiences of young children under the age of 12 and did not include reported experiences from teenagers of same-sex parents between the age of 13-16. However, within the literature, there are several research articles available for educational purposes on the experiences of children age 0 to 12 with same-sex parents, but few studies within the literature have been provided with a specific focus on the lived experiences of teenagers aged 13-16 with parents in same-sex relationships. The fact that there is next to no research available that pertains to same-sex parented relationships as reported by teenagers may be the reason for the large number of research articles that are derived from individual attitudes and opinions.

Traylor et al. (2016) argued that social relationships and experiences as reported by teenagers with same-sex parents may prove beneficial in helping other teenagers cope with their own experiences. However, having same-sex parents is said to impact the development of children under age 13 (Crouch et al., 2017). Research referring to the social interactions of teenagers focuses on the gay parental influence and the future sexual identity to be chosen by children raised in same-sex families (Farr et al., 2018). Further noted in the literature by Farr et al. (2018) was that during the early developmental years, children of same-sex parents would model and conform to the dominant parents' behavior and gender.

According to Shenkman (2016), the general belief and acceptance of the traditional family unit are accepted as the foundation and standard of what constitutes positive well-being and social outcome for children. Shenkman (2016) also noted that acceptance of the traditional family union when compared to the nontraditional family union, was based on religious beliefs. Also, Shenkman (2016) posited that same-sex

coupled families were considered equal to the traditional family unit.

Children with same-sex parents use caution when talking to others about their family unit (Bosisio & Ronfani, 2016). When children are questioned by their peers regarding their parent's same-sex relationship, they use "selective disclosure" (Bosisio & Ronfani, 2016, p. 2), meaning their disclosure about their same-sex family unit is limited to only those individuals they feel comfortable talking with. From this assertion, it is difficult to determine resources to meet their needs, understand their stressors, and understand how teenagers with same-sex parents view their family lived experiences to be.

Before collecting data for my study, I consulted with a long-term community service provider and friend, Mrs. Hill, the CEO of Hill LLC, who also has over 30 years of experience working as an advocate for the LGBTQ community of Northeast Florida. Mrs. Hill stated that she had had the opportunity to serve on the board of directors on the PFLAG and Jasmyn House board. Within her years of experience, she reports working as an HIV/AIDS consultant at River Region Human Services and having the opportunity to work with thousands of same-sex couples with teenagers and small children in her role as an HIV/AIDS consultant. Mrs. Hill is also an accomplished college basketball player and girls' basketball coach at a local private school in Northeast Florida. As a basketball coach., Mrs. Hill reports having to help over 10 or more teenage girls with same-sex parents deal with feelings of embarrassment, people finding out about their parent's same-sex relationship, being teased, shamed, and even bullied by their peers. (L. Hill, personal communication, September 23, 2019). For this reason, exploring the specific stressors as reported by teenagers with same-sex parents is paramount to create effective ways to help

existing and future teenagers with same-sex parents cope with their stressors.

Personal Interest in the Topic

As a licensed mental health counselor intern and EdD candidate, I became interested in the topic based on my own experiences with the LGBTQ individuals in my community. I worked 10 years as a project AIDS care coordinator for a local state agency. My caseload consisted of over 120 individuals that were diagnosed with AIDS. As a project aids care coordinator, my job entailed counseling individuals and their families about the importance of exercising proper medication management and making the necessary life choices geared towards helping them to sustain their lives. Within the counseling sessions, many of my clients would discuss the issues within their family environment and often spoke about feeling stressed out. From their conversations, I noticed that my gay and lesbian clients, either married or cohabitating, who had teenagers often shared their experiences about the difficult experiences they encountered with their teens. Oftentimes, these same-sex parents would bring their teens to the appointment and ask that I talk with their teens to share words of encouragement or give them advice. Based on several conversations with teens of same-sex parents over the years, I learned about the types of stressors that a large majority of the teenagers with same-sex parents experienced and that the stressors expressed by these teens differed somewhat from their parent's perception of what stressors affected their teen's the most.

Audience

Affected by this study will be teenagers living with same-sex parents, parents, caregivers, and teachers. Likewise, this dissertation may benefit educators, parents, and human service providers that share an interest in helping teenagers with same-sex parents

improve their social and coping skills. Also, this study may benefit same-sex parents who may want to understand how their teenagers feel about their parent's same-sex relationship. Lastly, this study may also benefit teenagers of same-sex parents to help other teenagers learn ways of coping with their stressors related to having same-sex parents.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to investigate the lived experiences of teenagers aged 13-16 who have same-sex parents as reported by these teenagers. The literature review outlines the nontraditional versus traditional family perspective, same-sex parenting attitudes, and opinions, cohabitation, stigmatization, stress, and bullying as possible factors influencing teenagers age 13-16 with same-sex parents. According to Tindall (2009), to capture the essence and meaning of the individual's understanding from their own experience and give meaning to the individual's account of their reported experience, the use of an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is recommended. Thus, for this study, an (IPA) was used to investigate how teenagers living in a large county in Northeast Florida make meaning of any experiences they may encounter as a result of having same-sex parents.

Definition of Terms

Bullying

The aggressive physical and verbal behavior of an individual to another individual who is unable physically or verbally defend themselves against the aggressor (Turner et al., 2017).

Collaboration Language System

The *collaborative language system* is the interaction of conversation. It is based under the umbrella of postmodernism, hermeneutics, social constructionism, and narrative theory which captures the belief that through language and knowledge meaning is generated from a conversation (Anderson, 2012).

Family

A family is a “group of two persons or more residing together and related by birth, marriage, or adoption” (Kreider & Gurrentz, 2019, p.1).

Lived Experiences

Lived experiences refer to participants who have experienced the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2007, p.128). For this study, *lived experiences* will be verbal reports provided of encounters experienced by teenagers with same-sex parents (Creswell, 2007).

Married Couple

A married couple, as defined for census purposes, is a husband and wife enumerated as members of the same household (Lofquist, 2015). The married couple may or may not have children living with them. The expression *husband-wife* or *married-couple* before the term *household, family, or subfamily* indicates that the household, family, or subfamily is maintained by a husband and wife (Lofquist, 2015). The number of married couples equals the count of married-couple families plus related and unrelated married-couple subfamilies (Kreider & Lofquist, 2015).

Nontraditional Family Unit

The nontraditional family unit consists of the father and mother having children

from multiple partners, grandparent as a caregiver and single-parent father or mother, and same-sex couple families (Cenegy et al., 2018, p. 199). It can also consist of gay and lesbian grandparents that parent their offspring's children and same-sex couple's use of surrogacy (Kazyak & Woodell, 2016).

Same-sex Parents

Two LGBTQ individuals in a partnership or marital union with one or more children (Rollè et al., 2020).

Traditional Family Unit

A married set of heterosexual parents, one man and one woman (Cenegy et al., 2018).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to investigate the *lived experiences* of teenagers age 13-16 who have same-sex parents. The following literature review presents information regarding same-sex parenting and the effects on teenagers age 13-16. Included in this study is an overview of the proposed social stressors presented in the literature as being experienced by teenagers age 13-16 living with same-sex parents. This research study also includes the theoretical framework and literature review based on research articles about factors that affect teenagers age 13-16 with same-sex parents. The factors identified from the research include the following: the nontraditional versus traditional family perspective, negative ideas about same-sex parents, same-sex parenting attitudes and opinions, changes in social attitudes towards same-sex parenting, cohabitation, stigmatization, LGBTQ experiences, stress strategies, and bullying.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this dissertation is based on the collaborative language systems (CLS). Anderson (2012) posited that CLS is a therapeutic approach used to develop a therapeutic relationship between clients and therapist through an exchange of meaningful and shared conversation based on the culture and social connections within the client's lived experience. CLS also includes language that is the basis of the collaborative language system approach and associated with knowledge and understanding through shared dialogue. Also, added under the umbrella of CLS, Anderson defines the *philosophical stance* as "a way of being" (Anderson, 2012, p.15). Certain relationships and dialogue simply happen on their own and thus, do not require

prompting from other individuals.

According to Anderson (2012),

Dialogue involves a process of trying to understand the other person from their perspective and not ours. Dialogical understanding is not a search for facts or details but an orientation. It is an (inter) active process not a passive one that requires participation through responding to connect and learn about the other, rather than to assume and understand them and their words from a theory. In relation to therapy, dialogue is invited through the process of the therapist's learning about the other, especially about their uniqueness and noticing the not yet noticed. Through the process of trying to understand, local understandings develop from within the conversation. The conversation is constant and never stops and has proven to be valuable within therapy (Anderson, 2012, p.15).

Nontraditional Versus the Traditional Family

Lawmakers and religious groups focus their efforts on the correlation between family dynamics and the effects of same-sex parenting on the future development of children raised in same-sex households (Gates, 2015). Limited research is available regarding the positive aspects of same-sex parenting whereas, there is a large amount of research concerning the negative aspects same-sex parenting and impact to child well-being.

Changes in past societal perceptions about same-sex family dynamics can be attributed to the pressure generated by LGBTQ groups and their constant fight requesting lawmakers and political parties to implement support for same-sex equality (Gates, 2015). However, Ogolsky et al. (2019) posited that federal recognition of same-sex

marriage was addressed in the 2015 United States Supreme Court Case on Obergefell v. Hodges. Even when one parent is the biological parent of the child and the other same-sex parent is not, they are still considered as two same-sex people raising a child (Shilo et al., 2016). Added was the idea that a nontraditional family was said to consist of a different makeup of acquaintances residing under one dwelling that includes cohabiting/non-married couples raising a child, a single mother or father as the sole provider in the home raising a child, homosexual couples raising a child, grandparent raising an offspring's child (Shilo et al., 2016). Further, "the consequences of instability" within the nontraditional home were said to affect the well-being of children (McLanahan & Sawhill, 2015, p. 3).

According to Takács (2015)

In countries having legal institutions allowing for non-heteronormative family practices, people are more likely to directly encounter manifestations of same-gender family and partnership forms as ordinary facts of everyday life and in addition to the normative message of the state [...] the introduction of these legal institutions can have longer-term socialization effects that can potentially contribute to increasing levels of acceptance toward non-heteronormative family forms (p.21-22).

Based on the information provided by Kreider and Gurrentz (2019) the U.S. Census Bureau's American's Family Living Arrangements table indicated that there were over 540,000 same-sex married coupled households in the United States and over 191,000 children in the United States are living with same-sex parents (Kreider & Gurrentz, 2019). However, in prior years, the LGBTQ population was considered a small

population represented on the Census Bureau's American's Living Arrangements table (Kreider & Lofquist, 2015). From the Census Bureau's American's Living Arrangements table review, specific gender relationship questions were derived. The results indicated that *mismarking* had occurred, which meant that the numbers identified for the number of same-sex couples that were generated over time had falsely presented higher reported numbers for heterosexual couples based on responses provided from the types of questions asked (Kreider & Gurrentz, 2019). As a result of the review and recognizing that *mismarking* had taken place, the year 2020 would be marked by the U.S. Census Bureau as the first year that accurate numbers would reflect same-sex couple estimate inclusion in the U.S. Census Bureau's American's Family Living Arrangements package (Kreider & Gurrentz, 2019).

Acquaintances living under one roof and the consequences of instability presupposes that the traditional family was the standard to live by over the nontraditional family type as was also emphasized in the literature (McLanahan & Sawhill, 2015). However, the assumption noted by McLanahan and Sawhill (2015), was that instability was a result experienced by individuals that cohabitate as a *nontraditional family type*; thus, the *traditional family type* is viewed as the standard perspective that has changed. In fact, *acquaintances living under one roof* or as commonly known as *cohabitation* and traditional partnership are now primarily linked and often indicated in research on union formation (Sassler & Lichter, 2020, p. 35.). Regarding *instabilities*, there is a limited amount of research that explores the *instabilities* experienced by same-sex married couples (Raley & Sweeney, 2020). Allen and Price (2020) posited that, same-sex couples with a child were more likely to break up in a relationship; thus, the gap instability is

greater than couples in a heterosexual relationship. Also contributing to the limited amount of research regarding *instabilities*, the limited data availability coupled with a limited number of same-sex couples willing to participate (Allen & Price, 2020). However, the *stability* levels between different-sex and same-sex couples living in the United States were noted by researchers as being the same (Bennett, 2017; Lau, 2012; Manning et al., 2016; Rosenfeld, 2014).

Same-sex parental roles and time spent with children according to same-sex gender type were also noted in the literature. In a study conducted by Titlestad and Robinson (2019), 13 female same-sex couple participants were interviewed to explore positive parenting experiences regarding the absence of social, the traditional heterosexual family-described roles. Participants in the study described their roles as in a co-parenting and negotiating type relationship over a heteronormative relationship, including support from the LGBTQ community with children or seeking to become parents. Results from the study indicated that children who had same-sex mothers that were in “a shared, equal, and collaborative co-parenting relationship may also be supported by social norms that better support women as parents than men” (Titlestad & Robinson, 2019, p.187).

Further, Prickett et al. (2015) suggested that compared to different-sex parents, same-sex female parents spent more time with their children by comparison to any gender partner pairing overall. Others have agreed to this view:

As in the case of non-parents, among parents, women in same-sex arrangements spend more time together than different-sex couples. The female same-sex couples with children are spending more than 1 hour more together (68 minutes)

in total when compared to different-sex parents. Similarly, female same-sex couples spend 36 minutes more exclusive time together than different-sex couples with children. The estimates for a family time also indicate that women in same-sex relationships spend more time together with their children and partner than do different-sex couples, though this difference is not statistically significant. Wald tests again show that mothers in same-sex arrangements are spending more time together than fathers in same-sex arrangements (Genadek et al., 2020, p. 20).

Negative Ideas about Same-sex Parents

Rosenfeld (2015) argued that children should only be raised by heterosexual parents and further posited that as a result of same-sex parenting, relationship instability, family transition, and the mental development of their children will be damaged by depression and other types of negative behaviors. Another negative idea about same-sex parents is that changes in the parental dynamic, such as changes in the biological parent's relationship is said to negatively impact teen behavior (Peter et al., 2016). The change in parental dynamics is also said to produce teen negative behaviors that include bullying, harassment, poor grades, and fighting.

Pimentel (2016) posited that the social outcomes of children due to same-sex couple's non-traditional union were based on religious beliefs. Unlike many heterosexual parents, the ability for most same-sex couples to become parents is not always easy and regardless of the relationship type, there are negative outcomes experienced by teenagers of same-sex parents that go unreported (Messina & Brodzinsky, 2019). Further, children who have same-sex parents will experience social and emotional problems and have the potential to become homosexual in the future, try to convert their peers into becoming

homosexual, and engage in future homosexual relationships (Joslin, 2011).

In other research, Gamble (2017) suggested that regarding same-sex parenting, the feelings experienced by teenagers concerning their parent's relationship usually goes unreported, is practically nonexistent, or reported solely from their parent's perspective.

To further explore reports regarding how teenagers feel about having same-sex parents, (Gamble, 2017) conducted a study and found that over 115 same-sex Australian parents, each parent reported that their teenagers had experienced negative behavior outcomes and negative social interactions to include segregation from their peers. In addition to negative social interactions, many teenagers with same-sex parents also experienced other problems that range from being teased to being bullied by their peers. Some have even attempted suicide as a result of being bullied (Gartrell & Bos, 2018). Most adolescents have concealed feelings of distress out of fear of harassment and physical altercations with peers (Tudrej et al., 2017). Also noted were the negative outcomes which included the negative attitudes shared by society towards "homophobia, transphobia, and heteronormativity" and not necessarily their parent's same-sex relationship (Peter et al., 2016, p. 4).

Same-Sex Parenting Attitudes and Opinions

Carone et al. (2019) conducted a study to evaluate the attitudes and opinions toward same-sex parenting in Italy. In their study, Carone et al. (2019) reviewed the responses of 4,187 heterosexual parent participants. Each participant completed an adaptation of a French questionnaire to investigate same-sex parenting attitudes towards, gender, religion, and political affiliation. The results from their study showed that negative attitudes about same-sex parenting for lesbian parents were associated with

traditional beliefs that only a man and woman should be married. While negative attitudes about same-sex parenting for gay men was believed to be based on negative attitudes about traditional beliefs, political affiliation, and religion “(Carone et al., 2019).

In a research study used to address the participant’s attitudes and opinions about same-sex parenting acceptance, Hollekim et al. (2012) compared same-sex couple parenting acceptance by Norwegians to Americans heterosexual specific adoption. In their study, they used a questionnaire to ask over 1,200 Norwegian participants to provide their opinions regarding their beliefs about same-sex parenting and relationships. From their study, it was determined that participants in the study were in support of same-sex marriage but were not in support of same-sex couple parenting (Hollekim et al., 2012),

Sloane and Robillard (2017) conducted a mediation analysis to explore same-sex marriage attitudes and opinions. They found that thoughts about same-sex attraction influenced attitudes and opinions toward same-sex marriage. Schoephoerster and Aamlid (2016) conducted a study with over 200 college students, age 18 who were asked to complete a 12-item questionnaire with 6 of the items about their attitudes in support of same-sex parenting and 6 items to include their thoughts. Over 60% of the respondents were female and less than 40% were male. They found that over 50% of the participants had a positive attitude toward same-sex marriage, while less than 49% were strictly in favor of different-sex marriage. From their study, it was determined that male participants were far less in favor of same-sex parenting than their female participants (Schoephoerster & Aamlid, 2016).

However, in an opposing argument Watkins (2018) compared heterosexual parenting, effects of same-sex parenting on child development, and school progress.

Watkins (2018) found that having same-sex parents did not affect child development as repeated throughout the literature. Using over 4,400 children of same-sex couples as participants to assess school progress, in comparing the effects of same-sex parents to heterosexual parents, the author. Watkins (2018) also found that school progress of children with same-sex parents when, compared to children of heterosexual parents as a result of their parent's same-sex relationship, had no impact on child development but instead, the dynamics of the family and not the family structure impacted child development in both family types.

Changes in Social Attitudes Towards Same-sex Parenting

Leaders in Congress and lawmakers have also been instrumental in the positive progression of equal rights for LGBTQ individuals (George, 2016). With regards to stopping same-sex couples' adoptive rights and the actions of "agency nullification" were noted as purposeful actions committed by Congress in their efforts to sustain from and intentionally fail to execute bans on the adoption of children by same-sex men and women (George, 2016, p. 368). Their actions helped to decrease the negative perceptions about same-sex parenting and increase awareness of additional rights for LGBTQ individuals to include identifying same-sex individuals as parents in the community. George (2016) also noted that as parenting by same-sex individuals increased, safeguarding the well-being of children fostered a positive push of awareness towards the inclusion of equal marital rights.

However, religion, race, and age over time have impacted the acceptance of same-sex marriage (Frame, 2019). Opinions of the clergy have changed over the years regarding same-sex marriage (Kirby et al., 2017). Acceptance of same-sex marriage and

partnership from the clergy of different religious denominations remains questionable (Gross et al., 2018). In addition, same-sex marriage acceptance is largely dependent on the commitment of “religious hierarchy and parish” (Kirby et al., 2017, p. 914).

Currently, within the United States, 80% of the individuals without a religious affiliation support same-sex marriage, while individuals with a religious affiliation only were in support of different-sex marriage (Masci et al., 2019). Sixty percent of the individuals under the age of 37 were in favor of same-sex marriage while individuals over the age of 37 still ranked below 60% in acceptance of same-sex marriage (Masci, et al., 2019). However, recent research established that it is uncertain whether time period and generation age were responsible for the support for same-sex marriage in the past (Twenge & Blake, 2020). The support for same-sex marriage was captured in American adult participants and yielded a nationally representative sample of (n = 13,483). (Twenge & Blake, 2020, p. 2). In addition, Twenge and Blake (2020) posited that “increased support for same-sex marriage was primarily due to period of time ranging from 11.1% to 66.7% over thirty years [and that] “time period increases in support for same-sex marriage appeared among across gender, race, education levels, regions, and levels of religious service attendance, though differences in support remain” (Twenge & Blake, 2020, p. 2). The results suggest Americans of all ages modified their beliefs about same-sex marriage over time (Twenge & Blake, 2020).

Cohabitation

When it comes to same-sex parenting and relationships, most of the research compares the parenting styles of heterosexual parents to the parenting styles of same-sex parents and fosters the belief that the relationship between children and parents are the

same within the two parenting styles (Fedewa et al., 2015). In the literature, raising a child in a same-sex parented home was not based on the missing biological parent but, on the overall “parent-child relationship” (Nejaime, 2016, p. 4). For many teenagers who live in same-sex parented households, there are increased numbers of reported factors that contribute to their family dynamics (Nejaime, 2016).

McLanahan and Sawhill (2015) argued that cohabitation has been considered the foundation of parenting for many LGBTQ individuals. In their study, it was determined that as a result of *unpredictability* within the cohabiting relationship, children will experience unforeseen circumstances due to uncertainties in finances (McLanahan & Sawhill, 2015). For example, unmarried couples who experience financial frustration may leave their current relationship for another. In addition to cohabiting relationships, “same-sex couples were likely to avoid traditional gendered division” (Carone et al., 2019, p. 2). When it came to raising children, same-sex parents generally selected the role that they were most comfortable in the relationship (Carone et al., 2019, pp. 2-3). When it comes to a child being raised by his or her biological parents who were in a heterosexual relationship versus being raised by same-sex parents two gay males or two lesbians. McLanahan and Sawhill (2015) posited that children raised by their biological parents have better interpersonal relationship experiences. However, the literature is limited in making the comparison with regards to co-parenting.

LGBTQ Experiences

Peter et al. (2016) conducted a study to explore the lived experiences as reported by teenagers who lived with their same-sex parents. In their study, Peter et al. (2016) concluded that there were proven changes in the relationship between same-sex parents

and their teenagers. They surveyed over 3,000 students to explore whether there was a correlation between having same-sex parents, skipping school, and not feeling safe. From the study, Peter et al. (2016) concluded that teenagers with same-sex parents had significantly higher reported incidents of skipping school for feeling unsafe compared to their peers with heterosexual parents. Also noted was a deficit in support, heightened levels of stress due to stigmatization, and a lack of feeling safe as a result of their same-sex parented relationship (Peter et al., 2016).

According to Peter et al. (2016) lesbian, gay, and transgender individuals that experience stigmatization and discrimination also affect the psychological well-being and health of their children while impeding upon their parental ability to effectively talk with and address their children's behaviors. The authors noted the child's behavior is overshadowed by the parents' feelings associated with the stigma and discrimination they experienced: thus, parents' conversations with their children do not take precedence (Peter et al., 2016). However, in the early child development stages, when the caregiver attachment is viewed by the child as safe and protecting, feelings of positive self-worth are experienced within the same-sex family union collectively (Peter et al., 2016).

Goldberg and Kivalanka (2012) conducted a research study to explore marriage inequality and the relationship experienced by adults who had same-sex parents when they were children. Adults in the study reported that their childhood experiences with their same-sex parents fostered an "open mind and acceptance" of gender differences (Goldberg & Kivalanka, 2012, p. 35). In similar research three approaches: *avoidance*, *caution*, and *engaged* were used to describe the way same-sex couples socialized within their families (Prendergast & MacPhee, 2018). For example, they either avoided the

conversation about gender differences, limited their conversation, or used direct and pointed discussions. Prendergast and MacPhee (2018) also suggested that the three approaches to socialization within the family should be researched further to examine positive and negative outcomes.

Stigmatization

Daskalakis et al. (2013) found that stigma was experienced more often for same-sex families compared to different-sex families and that for same-sex family children stigma often becomes uncontrollable to cope with. In the literature, the stigma for same-sex parents included the inability to raise a child. For example, children need to be raised by different-sex parents in order to experience mental optimal well-being. Also, children raised by their gay or lesbian parents are influenced by their parents' lifestyle. This means that children of same-sex parents will later become gay or lesbian adults.

Regarding coping with the experience of stigma, Goldberg et al. (2019) conducted a study using adopted children to determine if being adopted by same-sex parents had an impact on a child's ability to cope. From their study, it was determined that *age and timing* of adoption placement influenced the psychological adjustment of children. However, there was no difference in the psychological adjustment to an adopted child having different-sex parents when compared to having same-sex parents (Goldberg et al., 2019).

Researchers also suggested that lesbian and gay family stigmatization also affects the behavior outcome of their children (Prendergast & MacPhee, 2018). Same-sex parents in the past had limited conversations with their teenagers about same-sex stigmatization but more receptive to discussing sex practices, acceptance of different

racism and genders, and the avoidance of unwanted pregnancy (Bowling et al., 2017). In addition, same-sex parents found creative ways to help their children cope with discrimination and stigmatization by preparing their children for potential conflict associated with gender differences with the use of positive dialogue (Farr et al., 2018).

In a study about gay fathers who adopted children, it was determined that talking with their children often about difficult social situations and the stigma attached to raising a child as a gay man without the presence of a mother relieved the pressure of stigma (Vinjamuri, 2016). Most of the studies regarding same-sex parenting focused on child well-being and influences of sexuality on child behavior and even though current reviews regarding same-sex parenting have changed. Prendergast and MacPhee (2018) noted that further research should be conducted that moves past the family comparison and focuses more on individual uniqueness in the way the family unit affects the social and behavioral outcome of their children.

A study was conducted by James (2017) to explore whether same-sex parents continued to face problems raising children and how the problems they faced negatively influenced their quality of life. Although it was legally acceptable for same-sex couples to wed there continues to be problems experienced by parents in same-sex relationships that included obtaining legal paperwork, role identity, school acceptance, and different religious belief (James, 2017). However, as time goes on and acceptance of same-sex parenting increases, the problems experienced by same-sex parents will decrease (James, 2017).

Stress

Children raised by same-sex parents experience higher levels of stress and

emotional problems than children living with heterosexual parents (Reczek et al., 2017, p.1613). In their study, Camara et al. (2017) conducted a focus group consisting of (43 boys and 37 girls aged 15-16) to capture reported stressful experiences and the impact that supportive relationships had on increasing and decreasing adolescent stress levels. From their research, Camara et al. (2017) found that adolescents experience distress in their family and peer relationships. In addition, adolescents with trusting and supportive relationships cope with stress in situations of uncertainty more effectively than those who do not have supportive relationships which also increases their level of stress. Male participants in the Camara et al. (2017) study reported experiencing feelings of stress due to the uncertainty of their future in which they feared not knowing what the future held as a result of their academic performance. By comparison, female participants in the study reported that judgment and acceptance were particularly stressful, and being judged negatively by their peers about their appearance made them feel that others outside of their peer circle would also form negative opinions and judge about their appearance as well.

Camara et al. (2017) have also found that interpersonal relationships are valuable in helping teenagers cope with situations that are stressful and help as a social support source that protects teenagers from experiencing a psychological breakdown. Thus, teenagers who do not have positive peer interpersonal relations are unable to cope effectively. An interesting point noted was overall female participants reported being worried more about the way that they look physically while male participants worried less about physical appearance and opinions of others but, worried more about trust and relationships (Camara et al., 2017). Supportive relationships and mutual trust between

adolescent's interpersonal relationships have a significant role in the level of stress they experience and adolescent's relationships that are based on support and trust foster increased disclosure from the adolescent when they are faced with a stressful situation (Camara et al., 2017). This is to mean when an adolescent is faced with a relationship conflict or difficult situation, they are more likely to talk about their negative experiences with the people they trust.

According to Marshall et al. (2017), stress experienced by teenagers was due to the change in family dynamics. The transition from being a part of a different-sex parented household to a same-sex parented household is another stressful situation experienced by most teenagers (Marshall et al., 2017). The more changes experienced within the family, the more children, and adolescences experienced stress, the more their health and development were affected (Marshall et al., 2017). However, pinpointing the exact time when both health and development are affected is limited and the information provided is from parent disclosure and not the teenagers themselves (Marshall et al., 2017). Stress is not uncommon in the lives of children and the potential long-term impact from stress is said by researchers to cause negative psychological outcomes (Shapiro & Heath, 2014). However, prolonged periods of stress can result in negative psychosocial outcomes and suicide (Thippaiah et al., 2019). In line with Thippaiah et al. (2019), in a review of the World Health Organization's (WHO) Mortality Database report on teenage suicide and the factors that contribute to the increasing numbers in the teenager suicide rate, Glenn et al. (2019) found that based on the report a large number of teenage suicides were related to serious emotional problems experienced by teenagers which stem from "access to legal means and economic inequality" (Glenn et al., 2019, pp. 294-293).

Included in the *WHO* review are the developmental and mental factors associated with teenage suicide mortality rates.

In a qualitative study, using an open-ended statement questionnaire to understand anger and stress meaning as reported by teenagers, Björling and Singh (2017) used male and female teenager participants ages 14 to 18 to talk about their stress-related experiences. Björling and Singh (2017) found that teenagers used different terms to express their stress. As a result, conceptualizing the terms that teenagers used to express their stress-related experiences were difficult to define. In order to understand the true meaning of stress as defined in teen's stress-related experiences, *themes* were used to capture "the mind of stress, emotionally shutting out others, and growing out of it" (Björling & Singh, 2017, p. 2584). The use of themes showed a comparison of susceptibility to stressful situations between girls and boys. As a result, teenage girls experienced stress more than teenage boys and reported their anger to be in combination with their stress (Björling & Singh, 2017). However, in stress-related negative outcomes, girls rationalized their stress differently than boys and were more susceptible to stress-related depression (Hamilton et al., 2014, p. 702). From the literature, several strategies were identified to help teenagers learn how to effectively cope with their stressors. The strategies ranged from school-based programs that offer teenagers help during school hours to online video testimonies and self-help assessments.

Stress Strategies

Although there are many strategies used to help teenagers cope with their stress, two strategies from the literature were noted for helping teenagers effectively cope with their stress by making changes in the school setting and the other involving teenagers to

openly talk about the things that stress them while providing tips that helped them handle their stressors. Shapiro et al. (2016) examined the factors that influenced student stress by asking over 850 student participants to provide their opinion about the things that they felt caused them the most stress. From the list of stressors provided by the participants, most noted was not doing well with schoolwork. The second most common stressor noted was problems with members of the family, and the third on the list was experiencing problems with peers (Camara et al., 2017). Based on their findings, Shapiro et al. (2016) implemented a strategy to help teenagers cope with their stressful experiences. In addition, school-based mental health programs were geared toward lessening the shame associated with mental health, were geared towards increasing the relationships between peers and ran for several weeks within the school year. As a result, a less time-consuming program: “*The Stress OFF Strategies program*” included a 45-minute stress management session geared toward helping teens learn effective ways to deal with stress in a shorter time frame (Shapiro et al., 2016). The program was later used in over 1,500 schools and yielded positive results from both school officials and teenage participants.

A second noted strategy used to effectively help teenagers cope with their stress was a video entitled, *Recognizing and Managing Teen Stress* developed by the Hampden County District Attorney’s 2017-2018 Youth Advisory Board (Clynick, 2018). The purpose of the video is to help other students learn how to effectively deal with their stressors by hearing how other teenagers deal with their stressors on to their academics, sports, employment, extracurricular activities, and family. In the video teenagers in different grade levels share their stressors and how they cope with their stressful experiences. Eschenbeck et al. (2019) in their study used 15,000 children (Grades 6-13)

and 420 teenagers to explore the effectiveness of mental health and stress/ coping interventions in face-to-face versus online settings. As a first-of- its-kind *school-based non-inferiority trial* online and face-to-face intervention program Eschenbeck et al. (2019) proposed that the *StresSOS* online setting proved to be more effective over the face-to-face setting in helping children and teens acknowledge and understand their stressors with a set of interventions. As a result of having the online setting option, Children and teenagers felt less stress over having to experience the face-to-face setting option in school (Eschenbeck et al., 2019).

Bullying

Ball (2014) suggested that many teenagers living in same-sex parented households are said to have experienced being bullied. Further, the social and emotional problems experienced by these teenagers often range from being teased to being bullied by peers and in some cases have led to attempted suicide (Hutzell & Payne, 2018). Bullying is said to negatively affect teenagers (O'Donoghue & Guerin, 2017). In fact, Hicks et al. (2018) surveyed 463 students surveys to assess reports of bullying across the Southern United States and found that participants reported being bullied either face-to-face or on social media with less than 31% reporting bullying incidents to an authority figure. According to Yanez and Seldin (2019) in their report for the National Center for Education Statistics, teenage female victimization of rumors and being bullied within the school year outranked their male peers. Electronic Bullying: Online and by Text. National Center for Education Statistics. By comparison, teenage males reported incidences that outranked their female peers with regards to physical threats of bodily harm (Yanez & Seldin, 2019).

Summary

There continue to be deficiencies in the evidence regarding the topic of same-sex parenting and teenagers that report their experience of having same-sex parents. For the most part, the literature focuses mainly on the negative development of children and experiences of adults in same-sex couple relationships that include political and legal policies, attitudes, and opinions of others, and reports from agencies that work with same-sex couples. In addition, the right to adopt for many same-sex couples continues to be the subject of discussion (Scherman & Misca, 2018). Further, the United States Census Bureau report for 2017 indicated an increase in the number of same-sex married couples, a decrease in the number of heterosexual marriages, and an increase in single parents raising children (Kreider & Gurrentz, 2019). More important, Kreider and Gurrentz (2019) posited that the United States Census Bureau in 2018 reported over 56,000 same-sex married couples compared to the 57 million that was reported on the 2019 U.S. Census Bureau report. The literature provides information with regards to the legal rights and allowances of same-sex couples and the legal ramifications faced regarding their non-traditional union and the impact on their children. However, despite the stigma experienced by same-sex couples who want to become parents, same-sex parents are utilizing alternative methods to parent children. The methods used by same-sex couples included adoption, donor insemination, and surrogacy (Kazyak & Woodell, 2016).

From the research, it appears that stigmatization and discrimination continue to be experienced day-to-day by many same-sex parents and their children. Although there are different perspectives regarding the factors said to negatively influence the lives of children, these same factors could be said for teenagers with same-sex parents. The

positive factors that influenced teenager's perceptions of their same-sex parent relationship include the overall parent and child relationship (Prendergast & MacPhee, 2018). In addition, LGBTQ parents compared to heterosexual parents are said to be more involved with their child's academics and social relationships (Prendergast & MacPhee, 2018).

I selected the collaborative language system approach because I wanted to understand from the participants the meaning of their viewpoint derived from their lived experiences. My intention was to investigate the *lived experiences* of teenagers who have same-sex parents by examining their perceptions of the relationship they have with their same-sex parents. I also looked at the stressors experienced by these teenagers as a result of their parent's relationship.

Research Questions

1. What are the perceptions of teenaged participants regarding their relationships with their same-sex parents?
2. How do teenagers cope with their stressors experienced as a result of having same-sex parents?

Chapter 3: Methodology

For this study, the qualitative research approach was used to investigate the lived experiences of teenagers with same-sex parents, how teenagers make meaning of their parent's same-sex relationship, and the stressors experienced by these teenagers as a result of their parents' relationship. Thus, a phenomenological study was conducted as opposed to a case study because the purpose of this qualitative study is for the researcher to understand the lived experiences of teenagers with same-sex parents and the stressors experienced by these teenagers as a result of their parent's relationship. In fact, a case study as suggested by Stake (1995) was not considered because a case study is a bonded *system* which means that the attention of the researcher is given specifically towards the issues that are demonstrated in the case(s) and bounded by time and place. The specific strategy used in this research study starts with a collaborative qualitative research approach. Under the umbrella of qualitative research to include, phenomenological method, IPA, participants and sample size, recruitment, instruments, procedures, the role of the researcher, data analysis, and limitations.

Qualitative Research Approach

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), qualitative research is used to investigate and obtain the meaning of an individual's life experience. As suggested by (Creswell, 2007), the approach of the researcher towards participants' *lived experiences* be done with feelings of *newness*, and thus when researchers want to investigate a specific phenomenon i.e., object of a person's perception, the perceptions cannot be measured by numbers. For example, teenagers with same-sex parents have not disclosed their experiences because of fear of retaliation, social bias, or stigmatization.

Thus for this research study, quantitative research was not recommended because the essence, perception, and feelings of the experience could not be captured (Creswell, 2007). In addition, the qualitative method gave voice to otherwise silent individuals who share the same phenomenon.

Phenomenological Method

Included in this dissertation is the phenomenological method that was used to capture the experiences of teenagers living with their same-sex parents. Phenomenology seeks to obtain factual accounts of the participant's experience as witnessed by the participant. Utilizing that phenomenological method allows understanding of the phenomenon of teenagers who are living with their same-sex parents and the essence of their experience. In addition, the phenomenological method explores what is meant by the feelings and perceptions of the individual (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The aim of this phenomenological research study was to capture the *essence* and *meaning* of the individual's understanding from their experience and give meaning to the individual's account of their reported experience and not by the researcher or someone else's interpretation (Peat et al., 2019). Therefore, it was useful to understand the specifics of the experiences, as reported by the teenagers living with same-sex parents to provide insight and understanding into what it means to be a teenager living with same-sex parents and how they understand and define their experience to be.

For this study, the lived experiences were investigated of teenagers with same-sex parents by using IPA to understand the meaning given by teenagers to describe their same-sex parents' relationship and the stressors experienced by these teenagers as a result of their parent's relationship.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

For this study, the chosen qualitative method included IPA. The IPA process and methodology were created by English psychologist Jonathan Smith and used to obtain a deeper and more detailed account of the thoughts of participants who have experienced a particular phenomenon and how they make meaning of their experience which differs from a research process that simply characterizes and speaks for a select group of individuals (Peat et al., 2019). IPA also allows for a *homogenous sample*.

Homogenous Sample

In a *homogenous sample*, the researcher uses participants who have shared the same experience. For example, finding participants who are teenagers who live with same-sex parents. Further, IPA is known to be used empirically within the healthcare industry to gain an understanding of patient illness (Peat et al., 2019). IPA also consists of “reflexivity” and includes the composition of data collected and definition of the data within the analysis to form what is known as “double hermeneutic” (Shaw, 2010, p. 234). For example, when the participant and researcher engage in conversation exchange, the researcher plays an important role in trying to understand and make meaning of what the participant is trying to understand his or her experience to be.

Further, IPA provided the researcher with an in-depth and personal view of the participant’s lived experience and complimented the basis of phenomenological research in that questions were asked for the purpose of understanding the experience of the participant and provided the researcher with insight into the experience as understood by the participant in the occurrence. It is important to note that, for researchers to appreciate and fully understand the experiences as reported by participants, the IPA process is a

necessary component for researchers to use and apply “analytical skill,” for the purpose of obtaining the deep conceptual knowledge of the participant’s experience (Shaw, 2010, p. 234). Therefore, the use of IPA for this study made sense, because the purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of teenagers that have same-sex parents.

Participants

For this study, *purposeful sampling* was utilized in the selection of a specific number of participants (Creswell, 2007). As the researcher, Creswell (2007) suggested that when gathering detailed interview information from participants in a phenomenological study, the number of participants should include as many as 10 individuals who have shared the same phenomenon. However, the experienced phenomenon should be described by a small number of participants, ranging between 1-10 (Creswell, 2007). The actual sample size for this study was between 1-3 Reid et al. (2005) also suggested that with the use of IPA, the number of participants is small and ranges between 1-10. It is also recommended in IPA to use a purposeful sample to outline participants to which the question in the research study will apply (Peat et al., 2019). For example, participants who share the same experience. For this study, each participant in the study had to be committed to participation and have a personal experience of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007).

When using participants in the study to gather other interested participants to the study, Creswell, (2007) defined this process as *snowball sampling*. Included in purposely selecting participants for this study, each participant had to meet the following criteria: each participant had to have experience with the phenomenon, be willing to share their personal experience regarding the phenomenon, be a teenager

between the ages of 13 to 16, live with same-sex parents in Northeast Florida, and speak English. To contact specific participants who meet the criteria for this study, I utilized my professional network with the local organization PRIDE. Participants who did not meet the criteria were not included in this study.

After approval from the IRB, the researcher started the recruitment process with an email letter to the PRIDE treasurer (see Appendix A) explaining the purpose of my research. For the purpose of collecting information for a phenomenological study, Creswell, (2007, p. 141) recommended the use of *diverse forms*. To obtain participants that meet the inclusion criteria, as suggested by Creswell (2007), the researcher utilized a recruitment script (see Appendix B). Participants who do not meet the criteria were not included in this study.

A flyer to recruit participants was utilized by the researcher that consisted of the study title, the purpose of the study, amount of time used, participant compensation, expectations of the participant while participating in the study, and researcher's contact information (see Appendix C). The flyer was emailed to the PRIDE treasurer to review. After review of the flyer and approval, the flyer was forwarded via email provided to LGBTQ parent members of the organization. Participants' parents were also asked to complete the demographic form used by the researcher to gather information for the purpose of obtaining the participants' name, age, and to make certain that each participant met the criteria to further participate in the study (see Appendix D).

Instruments

Informal Telephone Interview

For the purpose of collecting information for this phenomenological study, the

PRIDE treasurer linked the researcher with access to the private PRIDE webpage to retrieve the number of participant parents who were interested in having their teenager participate in the study. Afterward, the researcher contacted each parent via the private PRIDE webpage asking each interested parent for their permission for the researcher to email all required research forms for signature via DocuSign, an easy-to-use app used for obtaining signatures on forms. To maintain confidentiality, each participant's DocuSign was encrypted and returned to the researcher via DocuSign with a provided document number. Included in the DocuSign were the demographic, confidentiality, consent form, and informal telephone interview date and time. During the informal telephone interview each participant was provided a scheduled formal telephone interview date and time via Calendry, an app used to set appointments. Participants were also informed by the researcher that their interviews would be recorded by the researchers' Samsung phone voice recorder and that all information provided by the participants would be kept confidential.

Semistructured Telephone Interview

Due to the social distancing order participants' appointments were scheduled by the researcher on Calendly, an online application that documents meetings in real-time, and sent notification reminders to the participant and the researcher. According to Creswell (2007, p. 141), for the purpose of collecting information for a phenomenological study, researchers utilize semistructured interviews. For this study, semistructured telephone interviews were conducted by the researcher using open-ended interview questions with each participant. During this phase in the interviewing process, all forms provided were discussed in detail and a copy of the confidentiality

and consent forms were sent to participants with a return receipt of email acceptance provided back to the researcher. Verification of the participant criteria in the study was completed. Ethical consideration was also utilized to protect participant anonymity by assigning each participant a different four-digit number instead of using their name. Parents of the participants were also provided an informed consent document that included their right to disclose private information and the right for their teenager to withdrawal from the study at any time; signatures were required by the participant and parent. As the researcher, if necessary and at the participant's request, I was prepared to carefully read and reread the consent forms. Each parent and participant was asked to initial and sign where indicated on the forms. In addition, a confidentiality form was provided to be reviewed and signed by the parent and participant that included potential risk to participant and participant rights. Parents and participants were also informed of my role as the researcher and not as a therapist. Further, participants were informed that the data provided would only be viewed by the researcher, the researcher's dissertation chair, and the IRB and later shredded.

Interview Protocol

The researcher utilized the "semistructured interview data collection approach" with open-ended interview questions to obtain data from the participants which also included my use of a personal journal to recap my feels, perceptions, experiences, and beliefs (Creswell, 2007, p.140). As a reliable resource to collect and analyze the data, with permission, the researcher utilized a Samsung cell phone voice recorder. Semistructured interviews as suggested by Bryman et al. (2004) when compared to other methods are more ethical in content and fosters a relationship involving the "exchange of

power” between the participant and researcher through conversation (Bryman et al., 2004, p.1020). From the power that was exchanged, the participant shared his or her experience as they defined their experience to be. Also noted in the literature, when conducting qualitative research, the semistructured interviewing method is the most prevailing and commonly used method for obtaining participant answers from questions asked by researchers (Cullen et al., 2012). In addition, the semistructured interview method, allows researchers to investigate with a perspective that is subjective while gathering rich information regarding their participants’ experience (Cullen et al., 2012).

For this study, I formulated my questions based on years of experience working within the LGBTQ community and the literature that was presented in Chapter 2.

Creswell (2007) suggested that researchers create questions from similar qualitative studies that meet the criteria of the approach being used. I modeled selected elements from questions on the strategies offered by Castillo-Montoya (2016; see Appendix E). According to Castillo-Montoya (2016),

The interview protocol refinement (IPR) framework is comprised of a four-phase process for systematically developing and refining an interview protocol. The four-phase process includes: (a) ensuring interview questions align with research questions, (b) constructing an inquiry-based conversation, (c) receiving feedback on interview protocols, and (d) piloting the interview protocol. The IPR method can support efforts to strengthen the reliability of interview protocols used for qualitative research and thereby contribute to improving the quality of data obtained from research interviews (p. 811).

Role of the Researcher

As an infectious disease counselor who has worked with LGBTQ individuals and their families in the Northeast Florida community for over 25 years, my experience with same-sex partnered families who have young children and teenagers is extensive. However, I was aware of the potential for bias that I may experience. Therefore, to limit the potential of my personal bias and cultivate trustworthiness, I implemented a member checking process. Included in the member checking process, was a follow-up interview asking participants to check the accuracy of their transcribed interview statements, themes interpreted and coded from the data analysis. During this time, participants will also have an opportunity to ask any question they may have about the process (Peat et al., 2019).

Role of the Researcher

To avoid the collection of faulty data, as the researcher, I put aside any personal bias when interviewing participants. Also noted by Creswell (2007), researchers should take measures to protect the study from their personal bias by using *bracketing*, putting all their personal feelings aside, and conduct each interview as a new interview. To further avoid inadequate data collection when interviewing participants, the researcher utilized an audio recording procedure. Before each participant interview, the researcher made certain of the proper functioning of the audio recorder for sound and volume of researcher and participant responses (Creswell, 2007). The consent forms were also provided to each participant prior to their participation in the study. Consent form included simple language and participant's rights and expected participation in the study (Creswell, 2007).

Participants were asked by the researcher to go into an area that was private and free of noise and distraction to be able to have their responses heard by the researcher and that would be comfortable for the participant. Overgaard (2015) suggested that *bracketing* to mean, putting aside one's personal feeling and thoughts to be used to honestly interpret the experiences of others. Overgaard (2015) also noted that the focus of the phenomenological researcher is to provide data based on the experience of the participant and that researchers exercise extreme measures of caution to avoid using personal bias (p.193). Based on the suggestion by Overgaard (2015), the researcher utilized developing a rapport with each participant by putting aside my personal beliefs, judgment, assumptions, and understandings derived from my personal experience with the subject matter and substantiate the participants' experience throughout the study. In addition, I utilized a reflective journal to note any moments of bias or emotional reactivity and employed advice and consult from my chair, professional peers, and committee members regarding ways to handle my bias.

Procedures

For the purpose of collecting information for a phenomenological study, (Creswell, 2007, p. 141) recommended the use of "diverse forms." Parents who had agreed to allow their teenagers to participate were also provided the demographic form (see Appendix D) for the purpose of obtaining the participants' name, age, and to make certain that each participant meets the criteria to further participate in the study. To meet the criteria for this study, (a) participants had to have same-sex parents, (b) speak English, (c) live in Northeast Florida, and (d) be between the ages of 13-16. Due to the age of the participants, the parents of the participants were provided an informed consent

document packet that included their right to disclose private information and the right for their teenager to withdrawal from the study at any time.

After receiving approval from the Nova Southeastern University's IRB and permission from PRIDE, I spoke with the same-sex parents of the teenagers attending the PRIDE organization who have teenagers who meet the inclusion criteria and asked if they would allow their teenager to participate in the study (Creswell, 2007). Everyone interested in participating in the study was provided a flyer that provides all relevant information about the study that included the study title, purpose of the study, and amount of time used for interview questioning (30-45 minutes).

The participants in this study were teenagers age 13 to 16. These participants are considered minors and required parental consent to participate in the research study. Before starting the interviewing process, each participant and parent was required to sign a consent. The research consent forms completed by the adolescents and their parents were in simple language so that both groups were able to clearly understand their rights and risk involved in the research study. Further, parents and participants were informed that the data provided would only be viewed by me, my dissertation chair, and the internal review board (IRB), and shredded after 5 years.

After receiving all required forms, and checking each form for completion, each parent and participant was linked with a time and date for the telephone interviews. Parents and participants were informed that interviews would take place over the telephone.

Before starting the telephone interviewing process with participants, I again wanted to make certain that I had the necessary working equipment. For example, my

Samsung cellphone voice recorder and transcriber were in good working condition, journal, and pencil and paper. While collecting data as suggested by Creswell (2007), the key is to make certain that everything pertaining to the interview is ready and in order before the interview. During the interview process, I carefully read, reread, and asked each participant if he or she had any questions regarding what they read on the presented forms.

Ethical consideration was also utilized to protect participant anonymity by the researcher assigning each participant with a different four-digit number instead of using the participants' name. Telephone interviews for each participant were conducted over the telephone and in my private residence located in Florida. In the semistructured interview process with the use of open-ended questions, the use of a five-page form consisting of five questions with space for the researcher to use to write down participant responses to questions should be used. During the semistructured interview questioning process with open-ended interview questions, I provided each participant with a depiction of my own experience *epoche* as a way of understanding that I could not totally disassociate myself from my own understanding of the situation (Creswell, 2007).

In addition, as the researcher, I was prepared to rewrite and repeat all questions when necessary and asked the questions in a relaxed and non-pressured manner to make the participant feel comfortable.

Interview Challenges

Researchers may encounter participants' refusal to participate in the interviewing process (Creswell, 2007). However, for this study, all who were invited participated. Another potential challenge in this study would have included participants' hesitation and

refusal to participate in the interviewing process due to the sensitive nature of the topic, feeling uncomfortable about disclosing in-depth personal information, fear of judgment by friends and family, awareness of the topic, decline participation by parents, and fear of disclosure of personal information (Creswell, 2007). Understanding these challenges, as the researcher, I was sympathetic towards each participants' reluctance to participate by reassuring them that their specific information will be kept confidential, before, during, and after their participation in the research study (Creswell, 2007). In addition, that if they chose not to answer any of the questions it would be without penalty. As the researcher, I tweaked and repeated questions when necessary and asked the questions in a relaxed and non-pressured manner to make the participant feel comfortable. Lastly, if the participants voiced that they were no longer interested in participating in the study, the researcher ended the interview. Those who completed their participation in the study received a \$50.00 Visa gift card (see Appendix C).

Prior to conducting the interview questions, participants were informed that this was not a therapy session and I am not a therapist. As the researcher, I approached each interview with originality meaning that I treated each interview with an openmind and without personal bias (Creswell, 2007). As the researcher, I managed my potential research bias by using the process of epoché (Overgaard, 2015). To engage in epoché, I utilized my journal to write down any personal thoughts, assumptions bias, or challenges faced during the interviewing process. Also, during the interviewing process, each participant was informed of their rights to confidentiality and reminded when the potential of the disclosure may take place during the process. As a result of the disclosure of sensitive information, participants may experience trauma. For example, when talking

about their lived experiences, participants may reflect on a prior experience that was hurtful or damaging. In an objective manner, as the researcher, I was prepared to direct participants to the PRIDE organization for further assistance. In a case such as this, with regard to ethical considerations and threats to the collection of data, as the researcher, I prepared myself to fulfill my obligation to first protect the participant in the study.

Data Analysis

The interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) process, as suggested by Shaw (2010), was used for the purpose of obtaining in-depth knowledge of the participant's experience. Included in the IPA process, a semistructured interview process with open-ended interview questions was also used for the purpose of gathering an understanding of the participants lived experiences that provide a picture of the participant's lived experience (see Appendix E).

Rather than utilizing the nomothetic approach which is said to be an approach used to collect results and generalize results to explain a population of people, I selected the idiographic approach which is the preferred approach in IPA. Peat et al. (2019) refer to IPA as a "meticulously idiographic and hermeneutic phenomenological approach" utilized to highlight the experiences as reported and lived by the participant (Peat et al., 2019, p. 9). After completing the participants' interviews, I completed the transcribing of the dialogue from my recorder. Utilizing the idiographic approach, I analyzed the data obtained from the participants' "significant statements" (Creswell, 2007, p. 159) and followed the step-by-step process for my data analysis offered by (Peat et al., 2019). To analyze the data:

1. Reading and rereading. The researcher was fully immersed in the data or

transcript of a single case. In addition, the researcher reads and re-reads the interviews to ensure the participants are the focus of the analysis.

2. Initial noting. Initial noting was used to obtain in-depth and content rich notes derived from the data. During this step, I put away my personal bias and review each interview with newness. In this step, the reading of the case is completed and the recorded observations are written on the left side of the margin of the transcript (Peat et al., 2019, p. 9). Table 1 is an illustration of the coding utilized by the researcher in the interview with participant # 1729.

Table 1*Participant Comments*

Original Comments	Researcher Comments
How would you define your parents' relationship?	
Before my mom met [no name] we was struggling. Boy oh boy! when my mom and [no name] got engaged, I was like we gonna have problems because where we live the people are so funny acting. There ain't no other gay families that I know in my neighborhood. I was like this is my mom and my mom is telling everybody she loves [no name] in front of the world!	Started by explaining prior family dynamics before explaining her experience.
Then I said to myself, I'm kind a proud of my mom though in a way because she doesn't fix the puzzle of what this world says. Yeah! it took a little time but, I accept our family difference now better than I did in before.	Is this acceptance of the relationship?
To be honest, I learned to get over it, it's hard to explain, I would say hard to understand the relationship at times because it's so different from my friends' parents,	Is it hard to express feelings regarding the relationship?
It was scary, because, we don't know what stupid shit people would say or do just because my parents are lesbians.	Describing the perception?
"Nobody cared how I felt. Yeah, I held my feelings in: I just keep them to myself. To avoid any further problems, I just went to my room and screamed into my pillow."	Is this coping by avoidance?
I talk about my feelings to my aunt: she's funny and so supportive. She's always making jokes about my parents' relationship to: it helps because I'm too sensitive about my parents.	Is this a person of support in the relationship?
I don't talk to my parents because my mother is so freaking over the top drama out, she gets so emotional about the smallest things.	What are the parental relationships?
I read my mystery books to keep my mind off the negative actions of people outside of our family. That's how you avoid trouble and family problems, I think."	Is there difficulty talking with family?

3. For this qualitative data analysis, I utilized the coding template recommended by Creswell (2007) for a phenomenological study. For the data analysis, I also utilized a coding template recommended by Creswell (2007) and used *hand-coding* by assigning and categorizing researcher

epoché and *bracketing*, participants “significant statements, meanings, units, and textual and structural descriptions which both might be written as memos” (Creswell, 2007, pp. 171-172). Hand-coding is the preferred method over computer coding to avoid participant thoughts of any perceived computer barriers between the researcher and genuine data (Creswell, 2007, p. 165).

4. Developing emergent themes. From each transcript, any statements or words related to the lived experiences of teen participants with same-sex parents in the study were identified (Creswell, 2007). Thus, developing emergent themes involves the researchers’ interpretation of the significant statements from participants. The researcher ‘chunks’ data relating to the observational ‘notes’ of the case (Peat et al., 2019).
5. Searching for connections across emergent themes. The researcher combines similar responses from participants and notes to consider commonality.
6. Moving to the next case. Prior case themes are ‘bracketed’ as the new case is considered with ‘open and fresh eyes’.... (Peat et al., 2019, p. 9). Steps 1–4 were taken with each new case and before moving to the subsequent analysis stage. (Peat et al., 2019)
7. Seeking patterns across cases. The researcher reviewed for recognizable themes and or qualities that were noticed across cases, Thus, highlighting and noting each recognizable theme with idiosyncratic differences.
8. Moving the interpretation to a deeper level: In this step, themes, and data

sets were reviewed using chronology and with the use of symbols or numbers as case identifiers. The researcher also tried to gain knowledge pertaining to the participants' experience and incorporates one's own definition and philosophy to continue investigating the data. Thus, findings from the IPA" are presented as a coherent analytical account including pertinent participant quotes and a detailed interpretative commentary" (Peat et al., 2019, p. 8).

Researchers may encounter participants that are unable to express their thoughts pertaining to their experience through conversation; for this, Creswell (2007) suggested the option of allowing participants to draw a picture of what they believe their experience to be and explain their drawing. Another option for the researcher would be to select only individuals who are willing to share their experiences (Creswell, 2007). The notes and journaling acquired in this research study were used to explain the *essence* of participants' experiences: the how and the what that happened within the experience, to obtain meaningful participant responses and combine responses obtained into meanings or themes (Creswell, 2007). Further, the notes and journaling were used to formulate a table or figures to provide a visual display of the *essence* of participants' recounting of their experiences (Creswell, 2007).

Observing as noted by Creswell (2007) involves the ability of the researcher to seek out individuals during the interviewing process with the potential to be deceptive. Another limited data collection as noted by Creswell (2007) is field issues consisting of time that researchers take to complete the interview in relation to the time needed for the collection of data. Also, to avoid the impediment of further data collection, researchers

should make every effort to get permission from the IRB and organization review committee to gain access to the organization to conduct the research study (Creswell, 2007). When conducting observations, researchers should keep from being overwhelmed while at the research location and take the observation overtime from a broad perspective to a narrower one (Creswell, 2007).

Verification and Validity

In order to show the accuracy of understanding the experiences as provided by the participants, Creswell (2007) recommends that the researcher utilize *confirming or triangulating* data obtained from a variety of sources (Creswell, 2007). For this research study, use of methodological rigor was used to obtain validity through *verification* (Creswell, 2007). Verification of the phenomenological method will be obtained from the literature. Also, for the purpose of verification, I journaled my research experience and used *bracketing* of my past experiences, selected the right number of participants, abided by the inclusion criteria for the study, while conducting participant interviews, I did until no other themes emerged until saturation (Creswell, 2007). A within-study validation completed by the researcher was conducted with the use of participant interviews, data analysis, and coding (Creswell, 2007). Also, according to Creswell (2007), the goal of the researcher is to obtain the validity of the research study. Thus, achieving validity consisted of utilizing topic-specific literature in combination with “trustworthiness” (Creswell, 2007, p. 271).

To establish credibility and to obtain an outer perspective of the research procedure, it is recommended that researchers incorporate “peer debriefing sessions” (Creswell, 2007, p. 208). According to Creswell, peer debriefing sessions are used with

peers as a way of obtaining someone else's unbiased opinion regarding the researchers' own study (Creswell, 2007 p. 208). For this study, the researcher also solicited feedback regarding the study through peer debriefing sessions by making telephone calls, informing my peers about my study, requesting their assistance, and scheduling *peer* debriefing sessions to include note-taking and exchange of notes. My peers consisted of professionals in the field of psychology that I have worked with for over 20 years. Further, noted as "the most critical technique for establishing credibility" is when researchers ask participants in their study to provide their perception of the trustworthiness of the results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Participants in this study were informed that they may be asked to participate in an additional interview for the purpose of obtaining clarity and validation of their responses to the interview questions.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to investigate the lived experiences of teenagers aged 13-16 who have parents in a same-sex relationship. The role of the researcher consisted of obtaining a deeper and more detailed account from the lived experience reported by each participant and how they make meaning and cope with their stressors. The researcher has worked with the LGBTQ community in Florida for over 20 years. The meaning that teenagers use to describe their same-sex parents' relationship and how they cope with their stressors is a critical and essential educational topic to help other students, parents, teachers, and social service providers. This chapter presents an analysis based on the lived experiences of each participant.

Overview of the Study

To answer the “what and how” questions that influenced the phenomenon and to gain in-depth insight into the experiences of teenagers who have parents in same-sex relationships, I utilized a qualitative collaborative inquiry research method (Creswell, 2017). The available research that seeks to understand the lived experiences of teenagers age 13- 16 with same-sex parents is minimal. Therefore, further exploring the gap and the limited accessibility of available research pertaining to the phenomenon would be beneficial. Thus, my expectation for this research is that continuous research will be conducted towards closing the gap in the literature regarding the lived experiences of teenagers age 13-16 with same-sex parents. My basis for conducting this research was to add additional research, provide awareness and fill the gap in the literature.

Two research questions guided this qualitative research study:

1. What are the perceptions of teenaged participants regarding their relationship with

their same-sex parents?

2. How do teenagers cope with their stressors experienced as a result of having same-sex parents?

The participants in this study were asked to share their lived experience of the phenomenon and answered semistructured interview questions that pertained to their experience of living with parents in a same-sex relationship. The researcher utilized the “semistructured interview data collection approach” with open-ended interview questions to obtain data from the participants to include in my use of a personal journal to recap my feels, perceptions, experiences, and beliefs (Creswell, 2007, p.140). In addition, the semistructured interview questions were utilized in this study also for the researcher to obtain clarity, to gain deeper insight, provide public awareness and mitigate the misconceptions of outsider individuals.

Various methods were utilized to recruit participants. After completing the recruitment stage, to protect participant anonymity each participant was provided a different four-digit number by the researcher instead of using their names. To establish a rapport with each participant, the interview protocol consisted of general interview questions and open-ended interview questions. The open-ended interview questions were used to collect data from the responses of each participant.

The interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was utilized to gain deeper insight into the meaning, coping, and stressors based on teenagers’ personal perceptions from their experiences living with parents in a same-sex relationship. In addition, the researcher collected the data for this study to establish common themes, similarities, differences, and patterns to establish an overall conclusion from the collected data.

Participant Demographics

For this study, the participants consisted of four teenagers. The demographics of the participants consisted of two teenage males: one African American and one Hispanic and two teenage females: both Caucasians. The participants were between ages 13-16. All participants had parents in a same-sex relationship, either gay or lesbian, and lived in Northeast Florida. At the time of the study, each participant attended public school via virtual learning due to the CoVid-19 pandemic requirements for social distancing. The participants in this study were also selected because of their age and their experience of having parents in a same-sex relationship. Parent and participant permission was provided to the researcher prior to participation in the research study.

Table 2 presents demographic data of participants deidentified with four-digit numbers.

Table 2

Demographic of the Participants

No	Age	Gender	Race / Ethnicity	Parent relationship type	Age of awareness	Total years with same-sex parents In Northeast Florida
1276	13	Female	Caucasian	Lesbian	10	3
1379	16	Male	African American	Gay	12	9
1729	14	Female	Caucasian	Lesbian	9	5
1847	13	Male	Hispanic	Gay	9	4

Results for Research Question 1

1. What are the perceptions of teenaged participants regarding their relationship with their same-sex parents?

From the interviews, two themes were generated from the significant statements related to the perceptions that participants used to define their signal-sex relationship experience. The themes include (a) initial difficulty with the relationship (b) relationship acceptance.

Theme 1: Initial Difficulty with the Relationship

Theme 1 was identified by the researcher based on the lived experiences as reported by participants on initial difficulty with the relationship. The researcher asked each participant to share their perceptions and feelings about their parent's same-sex relationship. This theme was identified from the transcripts of the participants from the research study. The participants were able to express their lived experiences about their initial difficulty with the relationship they experienced with their parents' same-sex relationship. The common thread noted by the researcher was that participants compared prior relationships to their current parental relationships to reference how their initial difficulty with their parents' same-sex relationship.

Participant # 1276 stated:

I don't know, I think my relationship prior to my parents' current relationship was pretty open and good because we just kicked-it like a family. On the real, I think you just go with the flow even when you have doubts: but things get better because you start to like the person after a while.

Whereas Participant # 1379 stated:

I was 2 years old when my mother died of an overdose, so I can't speak on her but, when I was around seven years old me, my dad and his best friend started hanging out allot. Around the time, yeah! close to me turning 12 [no name] and us started living together and we been together ever since. It was a little strange in the beginning because I knew so many other kids that had different-sex parents but [no name] was just pretty cool. So, it wasn't like I had a choice you know?

Participant # 1729 stated:

Before my mom met [no name] we was struggling. Boy oh boy! when my mom and [no name] got engaged, I was like we gonna have problems because where we live the people are so funny acting. There ain't no other gay families that I know in my neighborhood. I was like this is my mom and my mom is telling everybody she loves [no name] in front of the world! Then I said to myself, I'm kind a proud of my mom though in a way because she doesn't fix the puzzle of what this world says. Yeah! it took a little time but, I accept our family difference now better than I did in before.

Whereas Participant # 1847 stated:

Really [no name] I hated it. But you know what I realize I was just trying to be normal: you know like the other kids and they family. I didn't want my dad to really get another woman like that: I wanted him to be like trying to date a woman and not be with a man. It took me a longtime to accept that he was with [no name]. Man! that was some hard stuff. Yeah! I accepted him now, but I hated this whole thing with the two of them in the beginning.

Theme 2: Relationship Acceptance

This theme was identified from the transcripts of the participants from the research study. The participants were able to express their lived experiences of relationship acceptance concerning their parents' same-sex relationship. As the researcher, I discovered that the participants in this study shared a common thread in how they experienced relationship acceptance. In that, all of the participants noted that their acceptance of their parent's relationship was hard and/or difficult to understand and attached positive reasons to the acceptance of their parents' same-sex relationship.

Participant # 1276 stated:

It was kind of hard and difficult to understand and hard for me to handle at times in the beginning but, I think that the older I get it gets easier for me to accept though: it was just too much at once, you know? happening way to fast in the beginning: I would just say difficult. I saw my mom being happy and I wanted her happy to.

Participant # 1379 stated,

if I had to define it though, I would say it was kind of secretive but, doable and loveable at the same time. I felt like my pops was being secretive around other people cause he didn't know how people was going to treat us. I was okay with it because I had no choice and I just wanted my pops to be happy. Now I have nothing but love for my pops because I guess I just accepted it because I felt the love my parents was giving me.

Participant # 1729 stated

To be honest, I learned to get over it, it's hard to explain, I would say hard to understand the relationship at times because it's so different from my friends' parents, it's scary to, because you don't know some of the stupid [expletive] people say or will do to you just because your parents are lesbians.

Participant # 1847 stated:

This is so complicated, very hard, I just wanted my dad to be with a woman: not a man, it's tough at times to, but things are so much better than when it first started.

So, I would say hard: yes hard.

Results for Research Question 2

How do teenagers cope with their stressors experienced as a result of having same-sex parents? Results from the interviews generated three themes related to how teenagers cope with their stressors experienced as a result of having same-sex parents. These include (a) avoidance of expressed emotions (b) avoidance of peer relationships (c) avoidance of potential conflict.

Theme 1: Avoidance of Expressed Emotions

Theme 1 was identified by the researcher based on the lived experiences as reported by participants' avoidance of expressed emotions. The researcher asked participants to disclose their perceptions about how they used avoidance of expressed emotions. The participants were able to express their lived experience of avoidance of expressed emotions living with parents in a same-sex relationship. All of the participants noted that they avoided expressing their emotions stemming from their parent's same-sex relationship with their family members to avoid further problems in the family relationship.

Participant #1276 stated: "I just try to stay positive and keep the drama out of our lives by not talking about it."

Participant # 1379 stated: "When my pops introduced [no name] as his husband at the family reunion I just ran into my grandparents' bathroom and cried so no one could hear me to avoid any embarrassment."

Participant # 1729 stated: "Nobody cared how I felt. Yeah, I held my feelings in: I just keep them to myself. To avoid any further problems, I just went to my room and screamed into my pillow."

Whereas Participant #1847 stated: “I don’t know, I think about it sometimes, but no, I try not to think too much about the negative stuff. I rather keep my feelings to myself.”

Theme 2: Avoidance of Peer Relationships

Theme 2 was identified by the researcher based on the lived experiences as reported by participants’ avoidance of peer relationships. The researcher asked participants to disclose their perceptions of their avoidance of peer relationships. The participants were able to express their lived experiences of avoidance of peer relationships as a result of living with parents in a same-sex relationship. I discovered a common thread of avoidance which was manifested in such forms as, participants coping with their avoidance by suppressing their feelings, alternating their environment to avoid peer interactions, and avoiding relationships with peers that were not before their parents’ relationship.

Participant # 1379 stated:

For me, I just kept my friend circle small. I remember praying that none of the people at school would find out. I run on [no name] track team and I’m not trying to mess up my rep because of my parents. At my school, the kids are cruel, and I see how they mess with kids. I just keep talking with my old friends.

Participant # 1276 stated:

I used to be teased by some girls at my school about my parents, but I never told my parents because I handled it myself. They kept on for a while and I learned to just ignore them heifers. I changed my times I would go to the locker room to avoid them.

Whereas Participant # 1729 stated:

I just ignored them and go to my locker after second period. I just wanted it to go away and it did. I try to stay away from the trouble and just stick to my family and studies. I talk about my feelings to my aunt: she's funny and so supportive. She's always making jokes about my parents' relationship to: it helps because I'm too sensitive about my parents. I don't talk to my parents because my mother is so freaking over the top drama out, she gets so emotional about the smallest things. When my aunt ain't around I'll read or run to deal with things: problems with strangers who have problems with us or anything negative.

Participant # 1847 stated: "I don't really think much about them kids at my school. I see how they treat kids that they know have gay parents: I stay to myself." I talk with friends from [no name]. When we go there it's different: not like here.

Theme 3: Avoidance of Potential Conflict

Theme 3 was identified by the researcher based on the lived experiences as reported by participants' avoidance of potential conflict. The researcher asked participants to disclose their perceptions of their avoidance of potential conflict. This theme was determined from the transcripts of the participants from this research study. From their reported experiences, all of the participants noted their ways of coping with conflict and their avoidance of potential conflict in the protection of their family members.

Participant # 1276 stated: "I've learned to avoid certain people. Being in my family situation with my parents has made me more protective over my family

more so because of how people act out there.”

Participant # 1379 stated: “I was acting hard [meaning tuff] and kept to myself to avoid trouble. No, I never fought anybody but I ‘m ready to go to blows [meaning fight] for my pops.”

Participant # 1729 stated:

“I read my mystery books to keep my mind off the negative actions of people outside of our family. That’s how you avoid trouble and family problems, I think.”

Participant # 1847 stated:

My mother calls and I avoid talking about my Dads’ relationship with her: I get quite with her and she don’t want to talk about it no more: it only causes problems, so I talk about something else to avoid trouble. I remember going to my aunt’s birthday party and overhearing her talk about my dad and saying some fowl mess about him and how we was living. She didn’t know what was really happening in our household. That made me not trust her or any family from that point on. I wanted to tell my dad about it but, I just kept it to myself; I couldn’t hurt him like that it was lame anyway.

Summary of Results

From this qualitative study, several themes emerged which investigated the effects of same-sex parental relations on teenagers. From the data analysis process, five critical themes were generated from the research questions. Research Question 1 generated the following themes: (a) initial difficulty with the relationship and (b) relationship acceptance.

Research Question 2 generated the following three themes: (a) avoidance of

expressed emotions (b) avoidance of peer relationships (c) avoidance of potential conflict. Each of the thematic categories identified by the researcher was reviewed and double-checked and compared with the lived experiences as reported by each participant in their responses during the interview and found to be consistent. From the thematic categories, themes emerged to investigate the thoughts and views of teenagers age 13-16 with parents in same-sex relationships. The current literature offers insight into the developmental outcome, well-being and comparison data between heterosexual and same-sex parenting. However, scholarly literature that is specific to the lived experiences of teenagers with same-sex parents and the effects of their parent's relationship on these teens is limited. Thus, there is a significant gap in the research that pertains to the experiences of teenagers age 13-16 and the effects of their parents' same-sex relationship as reported by them. There is also a limited amount of literature to address how these teens define and cope with the stressors they experience as a result of their parents' relationship. Further research geared towards gaining insight offered to assist teenagers to cope will serve to add to the current body of scholarly literature. Chapter 5 will provide a general discussion regarding to the results obtained in this study, the conclusions based on the results, implications of the study, and recommendations for further research.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The gap in the research was the effects of same-sex parental relationships on teenagers age 13-16. Researchers noted that, unlike many heterosexual parents, the ability for most same-sex couples to become parents is not always easy and regardless of the relationship type, there are negative outcomes experienced by teenagers of same-sex parents that go unreported (Messina & Brodzinsky, 2019). Also noted were the negative outcomes which included the negative attitudes shared by society towards “homophobia, transphobia, and heteronormativity” and not necessarily their parent’s same-sex relationship (Peter et al., 2016, p. 4). However, with increased same-sex parental acceptance, there is limited research regarding the self-reported experiences of teenagers with same-sex parents aged 13-16 and the stressors that they may encounter.

Elaboration and Interpretation of Results

As indicated on the 2019 U.S. Census Bureau’s American Family Living Arrangements table, there are over 540,000 same-sex married coupled households in the United States, and over 191,000 children in the United States are living with same-sex parents (Lofquist, 2015). In the year 2010, the LGBTQ population was considered a small population represented on the Census Bureau’s American Living Arrangements table (Kreider & Gurrentz, 2019). As a result of a nine-year review and recognizing that mismarking had taken place, the year 2020 marked the first year that estimated numbers accurately reflected same-sex couple inclusion in the U.S. Census Bureau’s American’s Family Living Arrangements package (Lofquist, 2015). In addition, 60% of the individuals under the age of 37 were in favor of same-sex marriage while individuals over the age of 37 still ranked below 60% in acceptance of same-sex marriage (Kreider &

Gurrentz, 2019). The research established that a rather uncertain time period and generation age were responsible for the support for same-sex marriage in the past (Twenge & Blake, 2020).

In the targeted area located in a small county in Northeast Florida, same-sex parental relationships are next to non-existent. The data collection for this qualitative research was collected from participants LGBTQ members with teenagers between the ages 13-16 and members of the PRIDE organization located in Northeast Florida. The area in which the organization is located is best known for its many churches and traditional thoughts regarding the LGBTQ community. The experience of the research has been that the same-sex lesbian and gay parents in the community located in Florida appear to be a secret society and not as visible in comparison to the lesbian and gay same-sex parents in other states such as California or New York.

The participants in this study included four teenagers. All participants live with parents who are in a same-sex relationship. The demographics of the teenagers in this study comprised of two males and two females. The male participants included one African American male age, 16 that had lived with his gay parents for 9 years, and one Hispanic male, age 13 that had lived with his gay parents for 4 years. The female participants included one Caucasian female age 13 that had lived with her lesbian parents for 3 years and another Caucasian female age 14 that had lived with her lesbian parents for 5 years. The participants for this study were selected because of their experiences as teenagers with same-sex parents in a relationship.

The researcher conducted interviews with each participant. According to Creswell (2017), in qualitative research, it is important to make a detailed description of the data

collection with the use of the phenomenological research approach. Hence, for this study, the researcher utilized a detailed accounting of data collected to establish common patterns and themes generated from the data to look for similarities and differences among the themes to make some general conclusions from the data being collected. To answer the why and how questions of the reported experiences that were specific to the experiences of the participants, the researchers' findings for data interpretation included putting patterns into an analytic framework. To determine the significance of the problem and the purpose of the study, coded themes were collected.

Relationship of Findings to the Literature

In the following section, I will compare the results I found to those in the literature. The following is an interpretation of the research findings:

Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of teenaged participants regarding their relationships with their same-sex parents?

Theme 1: Initial difficulty with the relationship. Theme 1 was identified by the researcher based on the lived experiences as reported by participants on initial difficulty with the relationship. Some researchers noted that adolescence is also the phase of life for teenagers whereas emotional and cognitive changes take place that affect the parent-adolescent relationship (Perrin et al., 2019). Also, within the adolescent-parent relationship, researchers reported that teenagers become more interdependent, more independent, and there is give and take within the relationship (Laursen et al., 1998). Thus, the adolescent-parent relationship is ever-evolving and largely dependent on the family dynamics (Laursen et al., 1998). This includes changes in parental relationships

changes due to divorce and difference in partner selection (Perrin et al., 2019).

Theme 2: Relationship acceptance. Theme 2 was identified by the researcher based on the lived experiences as reported by participants' relationship acceptance. The findings are in accordance with the research with regard to participants' lived experiences of relationship acceptance to their same-sex parents' relationship. In that, children with same-sex parents will experience the dissolution of their parents' heterosexual marriage prior to the same-sex parent relationship (Farr & Goldberg, 2018). Researchers also noted that in LGBTQ post- heterosexual relationship dissolution PHRD, there is a significant impact on teenagers' acceptance of the new parental partnerships and stepfamily experience. In line with Farr and Goldberg (2018), Twenge and Blake (2020) posited that in terms of acceptance, the new family dynamic can be somewhat difficult for teenagers to accept.

As the number of same-sex marriages has tripled over the years with an estimated 537,000 married couples since June 2017 and as the number continues to increase as acceptance of same-sex marriages and same-sex relationships are accepted (Farr & Goldberg, 2018), limited in the research is how the children learn to accept their parents' same-sex relationship. Tabor (2019) conducted a research study including 30 adult children of transgender parents to identify role-related ambiguity as it related to the challenges faced by children and their ability to accept the changes within their family structure. From the research, Tabor (2019) concluded that relationship acceptance between child and parent, included the child's understanding of the changes within the role of the parent and changes in the family dynamic. For many teenagers with same-sex parents, accepting their parent's same-sex relationship requires understanding the role of

the parents, being comfortable with their family differences, and being able to work through the changes within the family together as a family before relationship acceptance can take place (Tabor, 2019). Over time and with the proper resources the challenges experienced by these children can be resolved (Tabor, 2019).

Research Question 2: How do teenagers cope with their stressors experienced as a result of having same-sex parents?

Theme 1: Avoidance of expressed emotions. This study agrees with other studies on avoidance of expressed emotions of teenagers with parents in same-sex relationships. Adolescents' avoidance of emotions can be understood from the biopsychosocial approach. As noted by (Burns et al., 2019), the biopsychosocial phase in the adolescent stage is critical. Using the biopsychosocial model to understand this critical stage in a teenagers' life and why certain teens avoid expressing their emotions can be traced back to (Engel, 1977). The biopsychosocial model was described as an interdisciplinary model that interconnected an individuals' genes, thoughts, behaviors, and environment to the individuals' health and human development (George & Engel, 1980). In addition, adolescent avoidance of expressed emotions and behaviors includes their feelings of fear, avoidance beliefs, current coping methods, and attribution social include the financial status, environment cultural aspects such as work, family circumstances, and benefits/economics (Schell, 2020). Some researchers noted that adolescents are apprehensive in expressing their emotions if they believe that they can handle their emotions on their own, hold negative attitudes about getting help, and have experienced negative outcomes from seeking help with their emotions in the past (Morris et al., 2017).

For many teenagers, being able to express the way they feel can be somewhat difficult when trying to cope with the changes within the family. As a way of avoiding family conflict, many teenagers with same-sex parents can only store their emotions about their parents' relationship within themselves. In this study, the participants shared their experiences related to their reluctance to express how they felt inside to their families. As noted by researchers, avoidance of expressing emotions is a way of coping with feelings that include apprehension in expressing emotions because of one's belief that one is able to cope with their emotions and negative attitudes about getting help on their own (Morris et al., 2017).

Theme 2: Avoidance of peer relationships. The findings regarding avoidance of peer relationships were helpful for the researcher to understand the lived experiences of how feelings, beliefs, and environment attribute to avoidance of peer relationships of teens with parents in a same-sex relationship. Avoidance behaviors were noted by the researchers to include, avoidance of relationships stemming from feelings of anxiety. Researchers posited that anxiety is experienced in most teenagers when there are changes in their home environment and through their social interactions which cause avoidance in forming relationships (Lansford, 2018). In addition, Lansford (2018) noted that avoiding peer relationships in teenagers with parents who are in a same-sex relationship included avoiding relationships due to feelings of discomfort, prior negative interaction with peers relating to their family dynamic, and/or when experiencing other negative peer interactions between their peers that centered around having parents in a same-sex relationship.

In line with the research of Lansford (2018) study, In the researchers' study,

avoidance of peer relationships due to feelings of discomfort and prior negative interactions, Avoidance was indicated with Participant # 1379 who coped with avoidance of peer relationships by keeping to himself. Participant #1379 stated: I just keep to myself. I don't talk to them unless I have to, I just focus on my studies, if they don't bother me: I don't bother them" Avoidance of peer relationships in the environment as noted by Lansford (2018), was indicated by Participants #1729 as she recalled how she coped with avoiding peer relationships by altering her time and the way in which she traveled to and from her classes at school in an effort to avoid her peers. Participant 1729 stated: "I ignored them; I go to my locker way before them or after they leave. I just stayed away from kids at school: I just don't want to be around them."

In their study, Lansford (2018), also noted discomfort experienced by teens as a result of the parents' same-sex relationship. Participant # 1847 expressed his discomfort in prior encounters involving his family members when overhearing the manner in which his family members viewed his fathers' same-sex relationship which manifested his avoidance of peer relationships. Participant # 1847 stated:

"It made me not trust people like that. Its' hard when your own family talk about you: you know? My dad don't hear those things. He don't care seem like how the family treat him. In school, I see it and hear it to, so I just avoid being around too many people. I just stay to myself: I stay away from the haters. To profoundly move forward from the experience of avoidance peer relationships, teenagers must ultimately do so on their own (Prajapati et al., 2017).

Theme 3 Avoidance of potential conflict. The findings regarding avoidance of potential conflict noted that conflict causes anxiety in adolescents. In their study, Lucas-

Thompson et al. (2020) noted that parent marriage-related conflict increases adolescent anxiety. Also, in their study, Lucas-Thompson et al. (2020), used 60 adolescent participants between ages (10-19) to measure interpersonal actions and symptoms of adolescent anxiety symptoms and interpersonal conflict. The results from their study indicated that parent negative marital conflict impacted adolescent anxiety.

In the researchers' study parent negative marriage related conflict was indicated with Participant #1847 who coped with avoiding potential conflict between his parents by keeping a conversation between his biological mother's comments regarding his fathers' gay relationship to himself and not disclosing the conversation further with his gay father to avoid potential conflict. Branje (2018) noted that in early adolescence, parent-child conflict increases as adolescents seek independence from their parental home environment. Branje (2018) also noted that positive peer relationships play a significant role in the well-being of adolescents ability to cope with changes to peer relationships as they transition into adulthood. The avoidance of potential conflict among teenagers regarding peers was noted in the researchers' study as Participant #1729 expressed how she coped with avoiding potential conflict by keeping her views and feelings inside herself as a part of her lived experience with avoidance of potential conflict of peers. Participant # 1729 stated: "I ran upstairs to my room and screamed in my pillow to avoid telling my mom because she gets so drama out."

Limitations of the Study

For this phenomenological study, a few limitations were considered. One limitation included the availability to meet face to face to select participants for the study. A proclamation documenting the 2019-CoV infection or Coronavirus -19

(CoVID-19) as a pandemic was signed by President Donald J. Trump on March 13, 2020, resulting from the request made by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary on January 31, 2020, to declare CoVID-19 a public health emergency (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2020). According to Zhang and Liu (2020) Co-VID-19 originally known as SARS or CoV-2 originated in Wuhan, Hubei Province, People's Republic of China, and is currently known as CoVID-19.

In its global presence, CoVID-19 was recognized for threatening the world's economy, the health of individuals, claiming the lives of thousands of people while simultaneously changing the way many individuals socialize (Zhang & Liu, 2020). To combat the further spread of CoVID-19, President Trump along with state and local leaders around the world has implemented a *social distancing* order (Trump, 2020). The order for *social distancing* includes all individuals to limit their social contact with others to a distance of 6 feet, wear a protective mask if you feel sick or have a compromised immune system, wash your hands regularly, limit unnecessary travel and face-to-face interactions and stay at home (Trump, 2020). As a result, all schools, non-essential employees and service agencies, businesses, state, and local government agencies are ordered to utilize *social distancing* (Trump, 2020). In addition, local schools, social service agencies, and social activity venues have closed until further notice. Thus, the original number of 10 participants expected to participate in the study and at the intended PRIDE facility location for the researcher to conduct face-to-face contact with participants did not take place due to the *social distancing* order.

As a result of the *social distancing* order, PRIDE, and its other sister LGBTQ

agency elected in March to also implement social distancing by limiting all face-to-face contact to include only essential staff and postpone their service needs and group events to participants until further notice; the facility has limited public access and only essential employees were allowed to enter the property (personal communication, August 21, 2020). However, contact was made with the researcher via a telephone call from PRIDE's treasurer, and all future contact would be between me and the PRIDE organizational headquarters located in Gainesville, Florida. In our conversation, the researcher provided the PRIDE treasurer with a brief description of my research.

As an alternative to the researchers' original plan to conduct face-to-face interviews with participants at the PRIDE location, PRIDE's treasurer stated she will act as the researcher's liaison by contacting all members under the umbrella of the PRIDE organization who are LGBTQ couples with teenagers age 13-16 and provide members with the researcher's study and contact information (personal communication, Sept 20, 2020). PRIDE's treasurer also agreed to link interested participants with all necessary consent forms when needed and return all form back to the researcher via email address. PRIDE's treasurer also stated that due to the possibility of fear experienced during the pandemic PRIDE members regarding the Co-VID 19 it might be difficult to obtain more than 3 LGBTQ couples with teenagers between the ages 13-16. "We just have to see" (personal communication, September 20, 2020).

Another limitation was the limited number of available participants willing to participate in the research study in lieu of a pandemic. Utilizing access to the PRIDE webpage, the researcher was able to obtain participants that met the criteria for the researchers' study. The researcher was able to employ a homogenous sample of teenage

participants who had shared the experience of having parents in a same-sex relationship. Purposeful sampling was utilized by the researcher in the selection of a specific number of participants. The actual sample size used for this study was between 1-4. As suggested by Reid et al. (2005) when using the qualitative method of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), the number of participants is small and ranges between 1-10. It is also recommended in IPA to use a purposeful sample to outline participants to which the question in the research study will apply (Peat et al., 2019).

The current study remains relevant to closing the gap in the current literature that has not been established in regard to the effects of same-sex parental relationships on teenagers. This study offers some insight into what little is known about the lived experiences of teenagers with same-sex parents as offered in the rich description they use to describe their lived experience with their same-sex parents.

Recommendations for Further Research

There is a need for further research with a focus on teenagers with same-sex parents, especially research that includes the lived experiences of teenagers with same-sex parents as reported by teenagers. Therefore, there is a need for resources for parents and providers that identify the stressors and negative coping experiences of teenagers with parents in a same-sex relationship.

The findings of this current study indicated that initial difficulty with the parent sex-sex relationship and relationship acceptance is common among teenagers living with parents who are in a same-sex relationship. In the study, most of the participants experienced difficulty with their parents' same-sex relationship because of the manner in which they were made aware of the relationship. According to Laursen et al. (1998), the

teen-parent relationship is ever-changing and dependent upon the dynamics of the family. Changes that affect the relationship between the teenager and their parent include divorce and different partner selection (Perrin et al., 2019). Relationship acceptance is also indicated in the study. Most of the teenagers experienced difficulty accepting their parents' same-sex relationship due to negative social experiences to include the dissolution of their parents' heterosexual marriage. According to Farr and Goldberg (2018) LGBTQ post- heterosexual relationship dissolution PHRD, new parental partnerships, and the stepfamily experience are difficult for teenagers to accept.

The finding in this current study also indicated that relationship avoidance of expressed emotions, avoidance of peer relationships, and avoidance of conflict are also common among teenagers with parents in a same-sex relationship. Most of the teenagers avoided expressing their emotions by keeping their emotions hidden within as a way of coping. According to Schell (2020), included in the avoidance of expressed emotions are feelings of fear. Some researchers noted that teenagers are reluctant in sharing how they feel and perceive that they can handle their emotions on their own if they have experienced problems when seeking help for their emotions in the past (Morris et al., 2017).

Avoidance of peer relationships was also indicated in the study as a way of coping for teenagers with same-sex parents in a relationship. The teenagers in the study disclosed their ways of coping with their peers. They avoided making new peer relationships to avoid peer reprisal regarding their parents' same-sex relationship. According to Lansford (2018) teens with same-sex parents avoid their peer relationships because of prior negative interactions and negative peer reactions to their family dynamic.

Recommendations for Local Practice

The findings of the current study have practical recommendations for local practices. One recommendation includes the embracing of resources that specifically help teenagers with same-sex parents to cope with the social and emotional problems they experience. Such resources should include techniques that focus on teenagers with parents in same-sex relationship's use of an open expression of emotion without fear of reprisal with an emphasis on fostering healthy and stress-free LGBTQ family relationships. Another recommendation, in line with these resources are two resources from the literature: the Hampden District Attorney's 2017-2018 Youth Advisory Board: Recognizing and managing teen stress video (Clynick, 2018, 19:44) and the Pilot evaluation of the feasibility and acceptability of *Stressoff* strategies: A single-session school-based stress management program for adolescents (Shapiro et al., 2016).

Conclusion

The problem studied in this phenomenological research study was teenagers in same-sex parented relationships experience stress from negative social behaviors. The stressors included peer isolation, public humiliation, and the fear of being bullied. The existing literature offers insight into empirical findings that identify the challenges faced by teenagers with same-sex parents: how they elect to cope with their stressful experiences that often result in unfavorable behavioral outcomes. Their inability to effectively handle their stressors results in: anxiety, depression, and social withdrawal (Perrin et al., 2019). Within Northeast Florida, there are a limited number of available resources that provide support and services specifically for teenagers of same-sex parents. Separate services which are specific to the stressors experienced by teenagers with same-

sex parents are next to nonexistent.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to investigate the lived experiences of teenagers aged 13-16 who have same-sex parents in a parental relationship. Through the current study, I want to support teenagers who have parents in a same-sex relationships that experience stressors and the inability to express their emotions. By understanding the teenagers' lived experiences in this study, I hope that lawmakers, providers, educators, and parents will find value in its practicality and use the evidence to support improving resources specifically towards helping teenagers with parents in a same-sex relationship. The meanings that teenagers give to describe their same-sex parents' relationships and how teenagers cope with their stressors experienced as a result of having same-sex parents is extremely important at both the family level and society levels. The ability to understand from participants' lived experiences as reported by them provided the researcher insight and essence related to how this population defines and copes with their lived experience as teenagers living with same-sex parents.

In addition, LGBTQ support organizations providing services to families with teenagers aged (13-16) who have problems with their parents' same-sex relationship would greatly benefit from the current study by utilizing it as a tool to best practices when working with this population.

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Appendix A

Email Letter

Denise A. Daniels

1125 Kingsley Avenue

Orange Park, Florida 32065

Date:

Dear Community Partners,

My name is Denise Daniels I am an EdD student at Nova Southeastern University located in Davie Florida. I am currently conducting a research study on teenagers with same-sex parents and how their same-sex parents' relationship influences their disclosure. Dr. David Weintraub, Ph.D., professor at Nova Southeastern University, is supervising my research. Please see approval letter attached.

I am emailing to request your agency to link all LGBTQ couples with teenager age 13-16 with the attached recruitment flyer pertaining to my research project. The research will be a confidential telephone interview with teenagers aged 13-16 with same-sex parents regarding how their parents' same-sex relationship influences the teenagers' disclosure. The interview will focus on the participants' experience as they report their experiences to be and how their parents' same-sex relationships influence their disclosure.

The interview will last approximately 30-45 minutes and the participants will receive a \$50.00-dollar VISA gift card as incentive for participating mailed to PFLAG. Participants will also receive a referral list of local community mental health providers and hotline number in case they have a desire to speak with someone later. Participants will also receive the telephone number to my Chair, Dr. David Weintraub, Ph.D. I will also have a licensed mental health counselor available in case of an emergency. If you should have any further questions, please contact me, for additional information at (904) 252-5246 or email at dqcsi@comcast.net

Sincerely,

Denise A. Daniels

E.D. Student

Appendix B
Recruitment Script

Thank you, for taking the time to participate in this research project. It is my intention to conduct an interpretative phenomenological analysis to understand the lived experiences for teenagers in Jacksonville Florida aged 13-16 with same-sex parents and how parents' sex-sex relationship influences their disclosure. Participation in this study requires that you be a teenager aged 13-16, living with same-sex parents in the City of Jacksonville Florida and obtain parent approval for your participation.

The information that you will provide about your personal experience is valuable to the research study. Because you will be asked to share your personal experiences about the research topic it is important that you have not received professional counseling related to the research topic: counseling is not provided. Therefore, if you are receiving counseling for issues pertaining to your experience with the research topic, you will not be permitted to participate in this study.

Confidentiality

The information that you provide for this research study will remain confidential except if you disclose that you want to harm yourself or harm another. In addition, if you disclose the act of abuse to a child, the elderly, and persons with disabilities.

Interviews will take place in a location that offers both comfort and privacy, the interview will take place over the telephone. During the interview, I will review the consent forms with you and provided you with a copy. If you consent to participant, you will check yes on the form and sign the form. The interviewing process is a voluntary process and at any time during the interviewing process you can withdraw. In order to capture the essence of your experience, the interview will be recorded. You are not required to disclose any identifiable information.

Appendix C
Recruitment Flyer

RESEARCH



PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

Are you a teenager between ages 13-16?

- Are currently being raised at home with same-sex parents?
- Do you live in Jacksonville Florida?
- Are you currently receiving counseling related to family issues?

To learn more about participating in this study, please call me at (904) 252-5246 or email at DQCSI@Comcast.net

Would you be willing to participate in a dissertation study on the lived experiences of a teenager living with same-sex parents and the meaning and influences attached to disclosure?

I am recruiting teenagers who live with same-sex parents

Your participation is voluntary and confidential, and you can withdraw at any time.

Your thoughts and time spent are valuable and may benefit others with similar experiences.

You will be compensated with a \$50.00 VISA gift card as a way to say thank you for your time and participation.

Appendix D
Demographics Form

Participant number _____ **Date:** _____

Age: _____ **Ethic/ Race/ Cultural Background:** _____

Place of birth: _____

How long have you lived in Jacksonville Florida? _____

Do you live with parents who are same-sex? Yes No

Appendix E
Interview Protocol

Thank you for being willing to participate in the interview process of my research study. As I have mentioned to you before, my research study seeks to understand the lived experiences of teenagers age 13-16 who live with same-sex parents. The aim of this research is for me to understand their experiences by their report. Our interview today will last approximately 60 minutes during which I will be asking you about your parents' relationship and the experiences and feelings you have had being a teenager with same-sex parents.

Prior to today, you completed a consent form providing me your permission (or not) to audio record our conversation. Are you still ok with me recording (or not) our conversation today? ___ Yes ___ No

If yes, I want to thank you for your time and participation. At any point during this interview please let me know when you do not want to be recorded and I will turn off the recorder or keep something you said off the record. If no: Thank you for letting me know. I will only take notes of our conversation.

Before we begin the interview, do you have any questions? [Discuss questions] If during the interview, you have questions please feel free to ask and I will be more than happy to answer your questions.

General Questions:

1. Tell me a little about yourself
2. How many siblings do you have?
3. Total, how many people live in your home?
4. How long have you been living in Northeast Florida?

Research Question 1: What meanings do teenagers give to describe their same-sex parents' relationship?

Interview Questions that Address Research Question 1:

1. How would you define your parents' relationship?
2. What feelings did you experience towards your parents?
3. What negative thoughts have you experienced about your parents' relationship?
4. What positive thoughts have you experienced about your parents' relationship?

5. What was your relationship with your parents like prior to finding out about their relationship?

How do you think growing up in a same-sex parented home has influenced the person that you are today?

Research Question 2: How do teenagers cope with their stressors experienced as a result of having same-sex parents?

Interview Questions that Address Research Question 2:

1. Have you experienced any problems from your peers about your parents' relationship?
 - How did you deal with it?
2. What has been your experience with any negative behaviors from strangers as a result of your parents' relationship?
 - How did you deal with it?
3. What, if any are some of the ways you have had to deal with family members about your parents' relationship?
4. What are some of the positive things that you do to help you deal with people who don't like your parents' relationship?
5. What has made you feel uncomfortable about your parents' same-sex relationship?
 - Why did you feel the experience was uncomfortable?
 - What have you done to avoid the experiences from happening again?

Thank you for your participation in the research study. All responses will be kept confidential. At a later date you may be asked to do a follow up telephone interview to your responses.