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## FAMILIES OF NON-HETEROSEXUAL PEOPLE WITH CHILDREN: AMONG OLD ANSWERS AND NEW QUESTIONS

The aim of this paper is to present and analyse the available data concerning the situation of children of non-heterosexual people and to discuss selected areas of LGB parenting. The article enables an identification of issues related to the welfare and specificity of functioning of children brought up by gays, lesbians and bisexual people, which over almost forty years of research have finally been empirically verified. At the same time, it points to the need to caution against generalizing particular conclusions from the conducted research, especially those concerning the level of discrimination and peer violence against non-heterosexual people and their children, on families living in Poland and other countries characterised by a low level of acceptance of LGB parenting. The paper also identifies areas that should be of interest to researchers, including the perspective of social parents and their relations with children, experiences of children raised by non-heterosexual men and bisexual parents, as well as experiences of children brought up in family systems alternative to the traditional model (a pair of parents with children). The data collected so far allow us to speak about safe context of development of children raised in family systems created by non-heterosexual parents, and, at the same time, they point to a space for educational programs and research projects that will enable further understanding of experiences of non-heterosexual parents and their children.

Keywords: non-heterosexual parents, children of same-sex couples, Rainbow Families, psychosexual orientation, LGB

### INTRODUCTION

Over nearly forty years of research, initially conducted mainly in the United States, numerous reports have been published expanding the scope of knowledge about families with children created by non-heterosexual women and men. The first studies were carried out predominantly according to the model of proving a lack of differences between children brought up by hetero- and non-heterosexual parents. Their emergence and adopted shape were associated with a demand for factual argumentation in the context of ongoing discussions and court cases, in which parental competence and the right of one of the parents<sup>1</sup> to childcare

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<sup>1</sup> I am speaking here primarily about non-heterosexual women, because when parents get a divorce, in a vast majority of cases it is considered that the child should stay with the mother. The argument associated with the mother's non-heterosexual orientation was frequently used by fathers, but also by other family members, to deprive the divorcing (or already divorced) women of the right to raise their children, either alone or with a new female partner with whom they created a new relationship (Tasker 2013: 3).

were questioned because of the parent's psychosexual orientation. Therefore, a large part of the scientific knowledge concerning the impact of a parent's psychosexual orientation on a child's development derives from research conducted on children brought up by non-heterosexual women and their new female partners, with whom they entered into a relationship after separating from the child's biological father (Tasker 2013: 3). The spectrum of scientific reports was subsequently expanded by studies on families in which children were conceived through modern reproduction techniques, or were incorporated into families created by same-sex couples through adoption or foster care. There was an increase in the number of studies conducted on large samples, of a longitudinal character and high methodological standards, especially in countries characterised by more affirmative attitudes towards non-traditional family patterns and non-heterosexual people. Nevertheless, as Kuhar and Takács write, parenthood of non-heterosexual people continues to meet with more or less explicit manifestations of lack of social recognition, which has an influence on the way people refer to the results of the already conducted studies and on the formulation of new research projects on LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) people's families (Kuhar and Takács 2011b: 15). Researchers who take a negative attitude towards gays and lesbians and people who refer to the results of their research, often overemphasise differences between children of hetero- and non-heterosexual parents. There are also frequent attempts to reach unjustified conclusions, unsupported by research, about the existence of a relationship between problems experienced by a child (usually about the occurrence of mental disorders or experiences of sexual abuse) and the parents' psychosexual orientation, or being brought up in a non-traditional family. In this context, one reaction of researchers, fearing that information included in their publications can be used for political purposes, can be a minimisation of the importance of differences observed in their studies. While these differences do not have to be synonymous with the existence of deficits in the studied children, the researchers are often afraid that conclusions from their studies, published in good faith, will be quoted as arguments against non-heterosexual parents. Such a phenomenon can be observed, for example, in the case of studies that report that children of non-heterosexual parents feel more free to reveal their own homoerotic desires. Instead of resulting in a greater level of acceptance and support from parents, it is interpreted by the opponents of LGB parenting as "socialising towards homosexuality" (Kuhar and Takács 2011a: 139). As a matter of fact, it should be emphasised that although we do not still have sufficient data on what the sexuality of children of non-heterosexual parents will be in adulthood, there is already a body of studies that enables us to speak about safe development of children in family environments created by such parents (Kuhar and Takács 2011a: 139).

## CHILDREN OF NON-HETEROSEXUAL PARENTS – OVERVIEW OF THE EXISTING SCIENTIFIC REPORTS

The American Psychological Association, in a statement supporting non-heterosexual parenthood, has cited the results of studies conducted since the 1980s in the United States and Europe. The empirical basis of the statement issued by the APA, however, has been

questioned by opponents of non-heterosexual parenthood, who criticised, among others, the use of small, homogenous samples and the lack of control groups in research plans, the selection criteria applied to the control groups, and the focus on the short-term perspective in studying the consequences of same-sex couples bringing up a child (Marks 2012: 735). So far, four meta-analyses have been published which included studies on the development of non-heterosexual parents' children, and one that was specifically dedicated to children of gay fathers (Fedewa, Black and Ahn 2015: 4; Miller, Kors and Macfie 2016). The ones conducted by Crawl, Fedewa and their teams present a broader repertoire of characteristics that define the developmental well-being of the studied children, including their gender identity and sexual orientation, behaviour associated with gender roles, cognitive functioning, broadly understood psychological adaptation, and the quality of relations between the child and the parents. Additionally, these two meta-analyses (Crawl, Ahn and Baker 2008; Fedewa, Black and Ahn 2015) exclusively incorporated studies in which control groups were applied, making it possible to compare the results of children brought up by hetero- and non-heterosexual parents. Moreover, Fedewa and her colleagues looked into the developmental consequences for the children of non-heterosexual parents by means of presenting the results separately for the families of the non-heterosexual women and the non-heterosexual men (Fedewa, Black and Ahn 2015). Thanks to referring to the results of meta-analyses, which jointly present the results of a large number of studies pertaining to the specific sphere of functioning of the child and the family, it is possible to fend off claims about formulating opinions exclusively on the basis of research conducted on small samples (Crawl, Ahn and Baker 2008: 3). Performing a critical analysis of the inclusion criteria described in the collected publications, it is possible to state that in order to make generalisations about the gathered results and apply them to a broader population of families created by non-heterosexual individuals, it would be necessary to check the influence of potential differences associated with the participants' ethnic origins, cultural backgrounds, religious preferences and the socioeconomic status of the families (Crawl, Ahn and Baker 2008: 15). In addition, there were also studies with control groups in which children of same-sex couples were compared to children of heterosexual parents who raised their children alone. Such a methodological procedure enables looking into the effect of the absence of the other-sex parent on the functioning of children brought up by hetero- and non-heterosexual parents. On the other hand, it brings about the problem of comparability of the developmental conditions of children raised by two parents and only by one parent. Analysing the above summaries of the results pertaining to the different areas of functioning of children, it is worth taking into consideration the doubts signalled here. In spite of the described limitations, they constitute a rich source of information on the development of children brought up by non-heterosexual parents and, above all, by two mothers.

#### THE CHILD'S SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT – GENDER IDENTITY, PSYCHOSEXUAL ORIENTATION AND BEHAVIOUR ASSOCIATED WITH GENDER ROLES

Studies in which researchers investigated whether children of hetero- and non-heterosexual parents differ in experiencing difficulties in terms of gender identity have shown no greater tendency to express dissatisfaction or uncertainty about gender identity in children from the

latter group (Tomalski 2007: 67–70). Neither did the children of non-heterosexual parents differ in a statistically significant manner from their peers raised by heterosexual parents when it comes to their declared psychosexual orientation (Fedewa, Black and Ahn 2015: 24–25). The only difference observed in this respect was the above-mentioned greater openness of the children to explore their desires in romantic and sexual relations with people of the same sex, and their having a greater sense of support from their parents, who manifest acceptance for their child's choices in the sphere of romantic relationships (Fedewa, Black and Ahn 2015: 23). There were studies that showed that children of hetero- and non-heterosexual parents can differ significantly in terms of behaviours that, according to the theory of gender roles, are considered to be typically male or female. Tasker and Golombok reported in their study that daughters of non-heterosexual parents were, in comparison to children raised by couples of heterosexual parents, more open to experiments in the sphere of different gender roles (Tasker and Golombok 1997). In the studies conducted by Fulcher and her colleagues (2008), lesbian mothers turned out to be characterised by a more liberal attitude towards behaviours of their children connected with social gender roles. In the same study, the authors also observed a greater balance in the division of household duties among the family members, which correlated positively with less gender-stereotyped activities preferred by the children (Fulcher, Sutfin and Patterson 2008: 334–338). At the same time, it is worth noting that a prevailing percentage of the conducted studies did not confirm the existence of a relationship between the children's choice of toys and activities and the psychosexual orientation of their parents (Tomalski 2007: 69). A critical commentary about the available body of studies on sexuality in families formed by non-heterosexual people has been made by Hicks (2011). The author notes that while in the previous studies, especially the earlier ones, researchers would predominantly focus on providing information on whether non-heterosexual parents are able to provide their children with balanced gender models, the very act of referring to the theory of gender roles would often turn out to be problematic. This phenomenon resulted from the fact that this theory somehow promotes a concept that men and women perform separate, albeit complementary tasks, supporting, among others, the idea that childcare is a part of a woman's role and her responsibility. Heteronormativity present in the gender roles theory strengthens an image of a male and female parent who are complementary to each other, forcing the non-heterosexual parents to define their family model against the background of a division that is artificial for them. Therefore, while there still is a need for research on the issue of sexuality in the families of non-heterosexual people, it would be desirable to adopt new directions in studies on ways non-heterosexual parents and their children construct and realize gender (Hicks 2011: 151–154).

#### THE CHILD'S MENTAL DEVELOPMENT

Numerous studies have analysed various aspects of mental development of children of non-heterosexual parents. Researchers investigated, among others, their emotional functioning, including susceptibility to depression disorders and anxiety, their personality traits, and cognitive development. When compared to children raised by heterosexual parents, the children of non-heterosexual parents did not manifest greater difficulties in terms of a stable, coherent course

of development. Moreover, the results of the meta-analysis carried out by Miller, Kors and Macfie indicated that in terms of psychological adjustment, children of gay fathers had even better outcomes than children from the control groups (Miller, Kors and Macfie 2016: 4). These difficulties were rather typical of children brought up in families in which a high level of anxiety, stress and conflicts could be observed, regardless of the parents' psychosexual orientation (Abramowicz 2012: 233). Experiences of discrimination will be discussed in a more detailed manner in the section devoted to functioning in social relations. At this point, however, it can be noted that such experiences only proved to have an influence on the level of functioning expressed in the categories of vulnerability to depression, self-esteem or experienced psychosomatic complaints, when the child's relationship with the parents was, at the same time, characterised by a high level of uncertainty (Becker-Stoll and Beckh 2009: 233).

#### THE FORMATION AND QUALITY OF RELATIONS BETWEEN CHILDREN AND PARENTS

In their meta-analysis Fedewa and her team also collected studies in which researchers compared the quality of relations between each of the parents – the hetero- and the non-heterosexual parent, and the children raised by them. These studies did not show any direct relations between the psychosexual orientation of the parent and the quality of the relationship with the child (Fedewa, Black and Ahn 2015: 21–23). In Bennett's study, which explored the processes under which children adopted by same-sex couples differentiated between primary and additional caregivers, 12 out of 15 children adopted by couples of women showed a preference towards one of the mothers. This phenomenon could be observed even though the division of responsibilities associated with running the household and taking care of the child was described by the mothers as equal. The observed preferences were not connected to the specificity of the division of responsibilities, time spent by each of the women with the child, or their legal status as mothers (Bennett 2003: 166). It is worth mentioning at this point that in the study *Families of choice in Poland*, conducted by a team of researchers led by Mizielińska (2014), two-thirds of the same-sex couples participating in the study also declared the existence of a division of responsibilities based upon the principle of equality and cooperation between the biological (or adoptive) parent and the social parent (Mizielińska, Abramowicz and Stasińska 2014: 98–99). Nevertheless, research results published so far still say very little about the specifics of shaping the child-parent relationship in families created by non-heterosexual people from the Polish population.

In a large part of the cited studies, the vast majority of research participants were couples of non-heterosexual mothers, yet a pattern concerning the more frequent application of a more egalitarian division of responsibilities observed in their case could not always be confirmed in studies on families created by non-heterosexual men and their children. In studies that looked into the functioning of families led by two men, far more often than in the case of families of non-heterosexual women, we could observe the decision being made to temporarily suspend the professional career of one of the fathers to stay at home with the child (Kuhar and Takács 2011a: 137). There is a need, however, for more studies involving families of non-heterosexual fathers, to determine the frequency and origin of the observed differences.

## FUNCTIONING IN INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND PEER STIGMATISATION

The studies conducted so far have not shown any greater tendency for children raised by non-heterosexual parents to experience more serious problems in building interpersonal relationships, to be less popular at school, or to be less accepted by their peers. It has been demonstrated in the studies on this matter that children of non-heterosexual parents meet with a comparable level of discrimination and violence from their peers as do children raised by heterosexual parents. While the children from the first group would experience attacks and insults associated with their parents' psychosexual orientation and their own sexuality, a similar level of stigmatisation could be observed in the case of the children with heterosexual parents. In the latter group, however, the acts of stigmatisation were triggered by different factors, such as specific characteristics of one's appearance, the way they dress, or their intelligence (Abramowicz 2012: 233). Although the level of discrimination and aggression on the part of the peers can be, in fact, very high, children raised by non-heterosexual parents described in the studies cited by Danna proved to function emotionally at a similar level as their peers. In the case of the children of non-heterosexual couples we could observe a specific immunity to problems with mental health, usually observed in the context of experiences of abuse and discrimination (Danna 2011: 110). A possible explanation of this phenomenon can be the fact that such acts of discrimination do not pertain directly to the child, but to his/her parents, which in the end can be less harmful to the child. According to an explanation set more in the family system theory, non-heterosexual women and men, anticipating the possibility of their children experiencing acts of discrimination at school, effectively prepare them to cope with such experiences (McNair 2004: 63).

Despite many optimistic reports about the frequency of discrimination acts and how children of non-heterosexual parents cope with stigmatisation, we should be cautious about making generalisations of the conclusions formulated in the studies conducted in such countries as Great Britain, Belgium or the Netherlands on the Polish population. Although it was shown in the research report *Family – its contemporary meaning and understanding*, published in 2013, that the number of people who consider a couple of same-sex individuals who raise a child together to be a family has almost tripled (an increase from 9 to 23% over seven years), three-quarters of Polish society still do not recognise this model of family (Fundacja Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej 2013: 6). This can translate into a much higher level of discrimination and peer stigmatisation directed at children of non-heterosexual parents, which points to a need to implement educational programs to prevent it, and to prepare the school environment to cope with these problems.

## TERRA INCOGNITA ON THE MAP OF RESEARCH ON CHILDREN OF NON-HETEROSEXUAL PARENTS AND ON PARENTHOOD OF LGB PEOPLE

The studies published so far have explored numerous dimensions of functioning of children of non-heterosexual parents, including the above-described issues associated with their sexual, cognitive, emotional and social development; the functioning of the whole family systems;

and mutual relations between individual members of the family. We need to bear in mind, however, that a great deal of what we know at this point about the functioning of rainbow families comes from studies on children brought up by couples of women, who identify themselves as lesbians, who are Caucasian, and typically with higher education (Kuhar and Takács 2011a: 137). Even though scientific circles involved in this area have adopted the umbrella term “LGB parenting”, we need to remember that although parents who belong to this group and their children share many common experiences, there still are many important issues that require further research and more precise definitions.

#### GAY AND BISEXUAL MEN AS PARENTS, AND THEIR CHILDREN

One of the more obvious areas that requires further investigation is the experiences of children of non-heterosexual men. Non-heterosexual women can potentially more easily create a family for various reasons associated with, among others, a higher probability that the child will stay with the mother after she separates from the child’s biological father, and greater access of female couples to technologies aiding reproduction. Thus, it is much easier to gather a research sample composed of such individuals. From the socio-cultural perspective, Hicks notes that due to the socially created division of the gender roles, gay fathers always seem to deviate more from the standards set for their gender than lesbian mothers, because the category of a parent-caregiver is socially considered to be more feminine. Of course, there are many lesbian mothers who “disturb” the normative image of femininity and who question the standard ideas about motherhood. Gay fathers are, however, far more likely to face situations in which they have to confirm their masculinity, and they often come across messages stating that childcare is the responsibility of a woman, which, in consequence, negates their suitability for the role of a parent (Riggs 2010). Furthermore, being non-heterosexual men in a community of heterosexual parents as well as fathers in a gay community can be experienced as struggling with a multi-minority status (Armesto 2002: 70). As well, Tasker comments on the problem of the small number of studies providing data on children of non-heterosexual men. The author claims that it is easier for lesbian couples to create a structure closer to the heteronormative model of the family (Tasker 2013: 8), partly attributing this to the observations mentioned above. Berkowitz, conducting a review of the available studies, pointed out that up until 2013 there were only two empirical studies devoted to the issue of fatherhood of gay men who become parents with the help of surrogates. In one of these studies researchers investigated 40 gay male couples who raised children together, while in the other one, 15 men who were in the process of trying for a baby using surrogacy were examined (Bergman, Rubio, Green and Padrón 2010; Greenfeld and Seli 2011, for: Berkowitz 2013: 73). The studies conducted so far yield insight into various experiences of gay couples, such as changes in individuals’ sense of identity and self-esteem after becoming parents, relations with families of origin or into strategies of balancing work and family (e.g., Bergman, Rubio, Green and Padrón 2010; Richardson, Moyer and Goldberg 2012). However, the existing criteria for creating research groups can significantly limit the possibility of finding families in which non-heterosexual men perform the parental function. A greater openness to other family models, for example,

such in which a non-heterosexual father participates in raising a child who, however, does not live with him, but is aware of his psychosexual orientation, might significantly expand the scope of knowledge on experiences associated with being raised by non-heterosexual fathers and on parenthood in a wider group of such individuals (Berkowitz 2013: 83). In addition to increasing the number of studies involving families created by non-heterosexual men, it would be also valuable to compare such families from the perspective of how they were created (therefore, families established by non-heterosexual men who benefited from surrogacy, families in which men are foster parents or adoptive parents), in order to identify the potential influence of other variables, such as biological ties, on the family dynamics.

#### CHILDREN OF LGB PARENTS IN ALTERNATIVE FAMILY STRUCTURES

Presenting the results of studies conducted in Germany under the *Rainbow family* project, apart from referring to data collected during interviews with same-sex couples, Jensen also referred to data on the functioning of what he calls *queer families*. The author used this term to describe families in which a gay man and a lesbian (or a lesbian couple) decides to have a baby together. In comparison to families created by lesbians who use a sperm donor, in queer families the non-heterosexual man does not only function as a donor, but also acts as a parent, participating in the family life after the child is born.<sup>2</sup> In the context of mainstream research on families created by non-heterosexual parents, collecting more information about the functioning of children in queer families would yield valuable insight into this field of study and help better explore the effect of parents' psychosexual orientation on the development of their children, partially separating it from the issue of the parent's own gender. An additional challenge for researchers would be the need to move away from the model of the parental dyad towards a model allowing for the presence of more than two parental figures (Jansen 2011: 49).

#### LOST AMONG SAME-SEX AND OTHER-SEX COUPLES: BISEXUAL PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN

Ross and Dobinson (2013: 81) pointed out the problem of an absence of research on parenthood of bisexual people and their children, stating that it is a phenomenon consistent with a general lack of studies dedicated specifically to this group of people (at least such in which bisexual people are placed in one group with lesbians and gays). The observed trends can be seen as invalidating experiences of bisexual parents by assuming that their experiences are consistent with those of heterosexual parents or gays and lesbians, depending on the gender of the partner with whom the bisexual person creates a family (Urlich 2011: 22). The available reports point to specific prejudice that the bisexual parents must face. Due to a social preference for monosexuality, bisexual people are believed not to be able to maintain long-term relationships with a partner of one sex, which makes them seem unsuitable to

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<sup>2</sup> Data collected over 10 years of the *Rainbow family* project in Germany show that in queer families children most often live with their mother (or mothers). Sometimes, a gay and a lesbian couple live in neighbouring apartments or houses. It is rare for a child to live in a household run mostly by his gay father (Jansen 2011: 44).

perform the function of a parent. This problem often affects bisexual parents to an even greater extent than gay men and lesbians, who everyday must also struggle with the image of LGB people as highly promiscuous. In public opinion, there a structure of bisexuality functions, according to which bisexual individuals manifest excessive over-sexualisation, which causes the bisexual parents to be characterized at a level of sexualisation that does not fit the concept of the family and its values. Apart from the stereotypes functioning in the social space, researchers of LGB families can also deepen the phenomenon of invalidating experiences of this group of parents and their children. We can speak about this in the context of focusing in research plans on the mere parent constellation (*same-sex couple*), without analysing the aspect of psychosexual orientation with which each of the parents identifies (Ross and Dobinson 2013: 91).

#### BEING THE “THIRD PARENT” TO THE CHILD: THE PERSPECTIVE OF SOCIAL PARENTS

Regardless of the issue of psychosexual orientation of the parent, an important direction of research seems to be the exploration of experiences characteristic of social parenthood, thus accompanying a situation in which a non-heterosexual man or woman becomes a parent for his/her partner’s child. Danna has addressed an issue connected with differences in experiences of social parents in planned and reconstructed families. Both for the relationship between the child and the social parent, as well as for perceiving and fulfilling oneself as the child’s caregiver, an important factor can be seeing oneself as the child’s “third parent” (Danna 2011: 103). Although the researcher wrote about this issue in the context of difficulties experienced by social parents in reconstructed families, this can also apply to social parents in planned families, where both biological parents are involved in raising the child. Comparing biological and social parents in terms of how they incorporate their parental function into their identity, is also an important direction of studies, because it enables adopting a qualitatively different research perspective. Within this perspective, a shift of focus takes place: from investigating the normativity of the development of children raised by non-heterosexual parents towards deepening the knowledge about experiences associated with parenthood in each of the non-heterosexual partners. Moreover, although the postulate of a need for better exploration and understanding of the specific situation of social parents and their relationships with children is discussed in relation to research on families of non-heterosexual people, this issue also appears to be valuable in the context of adoptive families created by other-sex couples.

#### DIFFERENT RAINBOW FAMILIES – COMMON CHALLENGES

The diversity of family models demonstrated in the previous point quite clearly shows that referring to experiences of “non-heterosexual people’s families with children” as one category can be problematic because of the heterogeneity of the phenomenon to which the term is applied. At the same time, discussing the functioning of children growing up in rainbow families and their parents without a comprehensive knowledge of various possible

family constellations limits the possibility of generalising the collected research results only to a certain part of the analysed population of families. Keeping in mind how diverse the group of families with non-heterosexual parents can be, it is possible to distinguish a pool of common challenges that such individuals have to face in their everyday functioning. A simplistic vision of what constitutes parenthood of women and men is one issue related to the understanding and social definition of the category of a parent. While certain behaviours and characteristics are more often manifested either by mothers or by fathers, it seems wrong to assume the two exclusive parental categories of “female” and “male”. There are many properties of parenting that cannot be reduced to the categories of femininity and masculinity, and that seem to be conditioned more by the parent’s education level, origin or religious beliefs. Such simplification, according to which there exists a division into a male and a female parent who are complementary to one another, to a greater or a lesser extent supports a vision that every child needs such a “parental set” (Kuhar and Takács 2011a: 142). This issue seems to be an element of an even more serious challenge: the need to rebuild or even to create from scratch for own purposes, a model of functioning of a family in which individual roles are not defined by the traditional division of gender roles. And so, for example, in a family where gender is not a significant factor deciding who should stop working temporarily and take care of the child, it is necessary to make basic arrangements that will structure the functioning of the whole family system (Galán 2011: 29). An element of the experience of a large part of non-heterosexual parents is needed to deal with legal regulations that do not provide the same protection and privileges to hetero- and non-heterosexual people, who either already perform or plan to perform the role of a parent. It might seem that the unequal legal treatment results from favouring the position of a biological parent over the position of a social parent. Jansen, however, describing the situation in Finland, observes that the woman’s husband is automatically considered the child’s legal guardian, even when the mother was fertilised with the use of sperm from a donor. Analogically, the mother’s same-sex partner, who lives with her in a registered civil partnership, must adopt her child to become the child’s legal guardian (Jansen 2011: 72). Apart from difficulties that result from the frequent invisibility of non-heterosexual social parents in the eyes of the law, such parents often have to struggle with manifestations of a lack of social recognition of their position and role. Another difficulty reported by non-heterosexual parents, originally described by Danna, may also be surprising. While the parents she surveyed declared that they experienced greater support from the heterosexual environment, they would, at the same time, often feel excluded and to a lesser degree supported in their parental roles by other people belonging to the LGB environment (Danna 2011: 112).

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper was to make a critical assessment of the available research reports on the issue of experiences of family members, especially of children, in families of non-heterosexual people. The author intended to display the strengths and size of data resources present in the already conducted studies, as well as to point to areas that require further

exploration. Notwithstanding the relatively wide spectrum of studies on various developmental aspects of functioning of children brought up by same-sex couples, above all by two mothers, including the children's psychosexual, emotional, cognitive and social functioning, there still are many aspects of individual experiences of particular family members that call for deeper exploration and further analysis. The diversity of family models created by non-heterosexual people presented here, of experiences of such individuals as parents and their potential influence on the functioning of their children, requires that the next generations of researchers and authors of educational programs take into account a wider picture of this population.

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#### RODZINY OSÓB NIEHETEROSEKSUALNYCH Z DZIEĆMI: POŚRÓD STARYCH ODPOWIEDZI I NOWYCH PYTAŃ

Celem niniejszej pracy jest prezentacja i analiza dostępnych danych dotyczących dzieci wychowywanych przez nieheteroseksualnych rodziców oraz wybranych obszarów rodzicielstwa osób LGB. Artykuł pozwala na wyodrębnienie zagadnień związanych z dobrostanem i specyfiką funkcjonowania dzieci gejów, lesbijek i osób biseksualnych, które na przestrzeni blisko czterdziestu lat badań doczekały się weryfikacji empirycznej. Wskazuje jednocześnie na konieczność ostrożności w generalizowaniu wybranych wniosków z badań, związanych między innymi z poziomem dyskryminacji i przemocy rówieśniczej na osoby nieheteroseksualne i ich dzieci żyjące w Polsce oraz innych krajach, charakteryzujących się niskim poziomem akceptacji wobec rodzicielstwa osób LGB. Praca wskazuje także na wymagające zainteresowania badaczy obszary, obejmujące między innymi perspektywę rodziców społecznych i ich relacji z dziećmi, doświadczeń dzieci nieheteroseksualnych mężczyzn oraz rodziców biseksualnych, a także w alternatywnych do tradycyjnego (dwoje rodziców z dziećmi) układach rodzinnych. Zebrane do tej pory dane pozwalają mówić o bezpiecznym kontekście rozwoju w systemie rodzinnym zapewnianym dzieciom przez rodziców nieheteroseksualnych, wskazując jednocześnie przestrzeń dla programów edukacyjnych oraz obszarów badawczych, pozwalających jeszcze lepiej poznać doświadczenia nieheteroseksualnych rodziców i ich dzieci.

Słowa kluczowe: nieheteroseksualni rodzice, dzieci par jednopłciowych, tęczowe rodziny, orientacja psychoseksualna, LGB