

**28. Lesbian and Bisexual Women:
Comparing Demographics and Coming-Out for Mothers and Non-mothers**

Morris, J. F., Balsam, K. F., & Rothblum, E. D. (2002). Lesbian and bisexual mothers and nonmothers: Demographics and the coming-out process. *Journal of Family Psychology, 16*, 144-156.

This study explored the demographics and the coming-out milestones for three groups of lesbian and bisexual (LB) women across the country: 1,919 non-mothers, 313 mothers who had children before coming out (BCO) and 187 mothers who had children after coming out (ACO). All groups similarly progressed through the coming-out process (but with substantial individual variation). However, women who had children ACO reached milestones 7-12 years earlier than those who had children BCO, and 1-4 years earlier than non-mothers. Thus, mothers who had children BCO were older when they first questioned being LB, had sexual relations with another woman, identified as LB, and told someone they were LB.

Another significant difference was that non-mothers reported being out to more friends than mothers. There was a greater percentage of mothers than non-mothers among African-American women. The reverse was true for Caucasian women. Mothers who had children ACO were 5 years younger than those who had children BCO, but 5 years older than non-mothers. Many mothers had been married to a man (90% who had children BCO, 50% who had children ACO). This was true for only 12.6% of non-mothers. Mothers who had children BCO were more likely to have received mental health counseling, but were less likely to have been verbally or physically abused for being LGB.

The groups did not differ with regard to education attained, occupation, same-sex relationship status, being out to family and co-workers, or the size of the town or city lived in. Most mothers (70%) did not fear custody loss for being LGB.