Perspectives of Youth With LGBTQ+ Parents: Feelings of Openness and Acceptance Toward Others, Oneself, and Family

**Calisse R. Burand[1]* [iD], Krystal K. Cashen[2]*,
Kay A. Simon[3], and Rachel H. Farr[1]**

Abstract

Youth with LGBTQ+ parents may feel that their parents' LGBTQ+ identity impacted their lives because of unique experiences such as LGBTQ+ family socialization. Guided by family systems, queer, and social constructionism theories, we explored this question via in-depth interviews with 49 youth (8 with minoritized gender identities and 25 with minoritized sexual identities) between 12 and 25 years old (M_{age} = 19.51, SD = 3.48) in the United States, and who had at least one LGBTQ+ parent. Using inductive thematic analysis, four themes were identified: (1) *feelings of openness and acceptance toward the self*; (2) *feelings of openness and acceptance toward others*; (3) *feelings of openness and acceptance toward their family*; and (4) *perceptions of normalcy*. Many endorsed these themes and reported that they felt this way *specifically due* to their parents' LGBTQ+ identities. Youth were asked about their

[1]University of Kentucky, Lexington, USA
[2]Ohio Wesleyan University, Delaware, USA
[3]University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, USA

*These authors contributed equally to this work and are designated as co-first authors.

Corresponding Author:
Calisse R. Burand, Dr. Bing Zhang Department of Statistics, College of Arts & Sciences, University of Kentucky, 725 Rose Street, Multidisciplinary Science Building, Room 303 Lexington, KY 40536, USA.
Email: calisse.burand@uky.edu

thoughts related to future families. These themes were considered in relation to their family formation (e.g., adoption; donor insemination). This research indicates that youth with LGBTQ+ parents may experience unique socialization about openness and acceptance in the context of their families. This research is important in informing culturally competent practice for other youth, parents, and those who serve LGBTQ+ parent families.

Keywords

early/emerging adulthood, LGBT research, positive youth development, qualitative methods, adolescence

Families with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) parents have become increasingly visible as family-focused policies have opened more pathways to parenthood, particularly with the Supreme Court decision regarding marriage equality in the United States (U.S.) in 2015 (S. K. Goldberg & Conron, 2018). Despite these advances, there is little research that highlights the diverse and intersectional experiences of the children of LGBTQ+ parents (McKnight, 2016). Specifically, existing literature on LGBTQ+ parent families generally lacks representation as it pertains to people of color, single-parent families, and bisexual, transgender, and queer people (Fish & Russell, 2018; McKnight, 2016). In addition, this research has been based on predominantly white,[1] middle-class samples from limited geographic areas (e.g., coastal cities) within the U.S. (Fish & Russell, 2018). However, LGBTQ+ parent families in the U.S. are more likely to include people of color, to represent lower-income backgrounds, and to live in the South and Midwest as compared to those headed by cisgender, heterosexual parents (Badgett et al., 2019; Patterson et al., 2021). Because of this absence of research, practitioners who serve and care for LGBTQ+ families may be lacking the knowledge necessary to inform culturally competent parenting practices.

In this study, we aimed to fill three key gaps in the literature: sample diversity (e.g., family formation pathway, participants' own LGBTQ+ identity, racial/ethnic identity, and geographic region), youth perspectives, and feelings about family, including perceptions of future parenthood. Existing research has revealed that youth raised by LGBTQ+ parents show no or few differences in general health, psychological adjustment, coping behavior, and learning outcomes compared to their peers with cisgender heterosexual parents (Bos et al., 2016; Lick et al., 2013; Patterson et al., 2021). However,

youth with LGBTQ+ parents are likely to have unique experiences due to their parents' sexual or gender identities. For example, youth with LGBTQ+ parents may feel that their parents' identity impacted their lives in how they were parented, including specific benefits relating to their parents' identity (Lick et al., 2011). Youth may feel that they have a unique family identity, both as an individual and as a member of an LGB (and likely extending to an LGBTQ+) parent family (A. E. Goldberg, 2007b). As a result, these youth are likely to feel a closeness or similarity to others who hold other unshared marginalized identities, and they may also feel freed from rigidly adhering to certain cultural norms, like the "nuclear family" ideal of a mother, father, and two children (Clarke & Demetriou, 2016; Cody et al., 2017; Kuvalanka & Goldberg, 2009). Importantly, these feelings have not been empirically explored among a sample such as the one in the present study, and therefore, this is a unique contribution of our study. Previous studies have highlighted the perspectives of certain groups of youth underrepresented in the broader literature on LGBTQ+ families, like youth of color adopted (often transracially) to (primarily white) lesbian and gay parents (Cody et al., 2017), or LGBTQ+ children with LGBTQ+ parents (Kuvalanka & Goldberg, 2009; Kuvalanka & Munroe, 2020). This study builds upon that important research by encapsulating a broader set of experiences among youth with LGBTQ+ parents within one study—including consideration of family formation pathway, geographic region, racial/ethnic identity, and LGBTQ+ identity.

LGBTQ+ Family Socialization

One unique aspect of growing up in a LGBTQ+ parent family is exposure to LGBTQ+ family socialization. Building from racial socialization literature (e.g., Hughes et al., 2006), LGBTQ+ family socialization has been conceptualized as how parents socialize their children to understand what it means to be a part of a LGBTQ+ family. Specifically, LGBTQ+ family socialization practices include talking to children about how all people are equal regardless of their identities, exposing children to LGBTQ+ cultural events and history, and emphasizing to children how their family is "normal" (i.e., similar to other families; Oakley et al., 2017; Wyman Battalen et al., 2019). Such practices are likely to promote beliefs among people with LGBTQ+ parents that diverse identities and family structures are valid and worthy, as has been evidenced in previous qualitative work with adults with cisgender LGB[2] parents (A. E. Goldberg, 2007a; Kuvalanka & Goldberg, 2009; Lick et al., 2011). In A. E. Goldberg's (2007a, p. 555) study, participants noted that their parents' identities "opened [their] eyes to other ways of being" and "to the positive impact of differences in people." Additionally, Kuvalanka and

Goldberg (2009) found that some "second generation" LGBTQ+ adults with LGB parents felt more comfortable exploring their own sexual and gender identities because their parents had provided them with more fluid conceptualizations of possible identities. Our study builds upon previous work by examining perceptions of growing up in an LGBTQ+ parent family among a relatively younger sample who have LGBTQ+ parents and who represent a range of sexual and gender identities.

Youth with LGBTQ+ parents are also likely to have been exposed to a variety of pathways to parenthood, and this may relate to the way they think about family or becoming a parent in the future (Reczek, 2020). Families, in general, can be formed in diverse ways, including, but not limited to: sexual intercourse, adoption, foster care, stepparenting, re-partnering, donor insemination, and surrogacy. Although these pathways may be available to many members of the LGBTQ+ community, some pathways are more common, particularly as compared to cisgender heterosexual individuals (Reczek, 2020). For example, same-sex couples are seven times more likely to adopt children compared to different-sex couples (S. K. Goldberg & Conron, 2018). In addition, children living with same-sex couples are more likely to be racial minorities and adopted than those living with different-sex couples (United States Census Bureau, 2022). For LGBTQ+ individuals, the most common pathway to parenthood has been having a child or children (often via sexual intercourse) prior to coming out. However, this pathway is becoming less common in comparison to adoption, fostering, and use of assisted reproductive technologies (ART), which are growing in prevalence (Family Equality Council, 2019; Patterson et al., 2021). "Alternative" families (including their formation) may encourage an expanded mindset of what and who is considered "family." Learning how youth with LGBTQ+ parents conceptualize family and potential paths to future parenthood is important to understanding LGBTQ+ family dynamics and to informing how to support those who pursue having children through varied avenues. Further, past research on LGBTQ+ parent families often has been motivated by pressing social policy questions rather than application of theory (Farr et al., 2017; McKnight 2016). Thus, there is a need for research informed by theory that examines the experiences of youth with LGBTQ+ parents from youth's own perspectives.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was informed by family systems theory (Cox & Paley, 1997), queer theory (Allen & Mendez, 2018; Few-Demo et al., 2016; Oswald et al., 2005), and social constructionism (Harré,

2002; Schwandt, 2000). Together, these theories provide a basis for understanding the unique experiences of youth with LGBTQ+ parents as well as how those experiences may shape their perspectives toward others, themselves, and their families.

Family Systems Theory

Family systems theory posits that children's outcomes and healthy development depend more so upon family functioning than on the structure of the family (Cox & Paley, 1997). According to family systems theory, families consist of interconnecting subsystems such as relationships between romantic partners or the different parent-child relationships in the family. Because of this interconnectedness, parents' experiences related to their sexual and gender identities are likely to influence the experiences of their children. In other words, because youth with LGBTQ+ parents grow up in family systems whose family processes are informed by expanded notions of sexuality, gender, and family, their understandings of these constructs are likely to be shaped in ways that are distinct from cisgender heterosexual family systems. Focusing on family functioning provides a lens through which we can begin to understand the experiences of youth with LGBTQ+ parents.

Queer Theory

Queer theory, and queer family theory in particular (Allen & Mendez, 2018; Oswald et al., 2005), provides a foundation for understanding the specific processes that occur within LGBTQ+ parent families that shape the perspectives of youth with LGBTQ+ parents. Queer family theory posits that cultural standards, rules, and practices serve to reinforce binary understandings of gender, sexuality, and family that elevate cisgender, heterosexual, two-parent nuclear families as the standard. Although all people "do" gender, sexuality, and family through both processes and structure, LGTBQ+ parent families "do" gender, sexuality, and family in ways that may challenge and complicate these cis- and heteronormative binary understandings (Oswald et al., 2005), youth with LGBTQ+ parents may also have experiences that "queer" their perspectives (here, "doing" gender, sexuality, and family means performing the associated behaviors). Specifically, if youth with LGBTQ+ parents are raised in environments that differ from those of youth raised by cisgender heterosexual parents, these youth may feel particular comfort in environments that resist cis- and heteronormative understandings of family. In addition, some may advocate for changes in discriminatory policies that

negatively impact their LGBTQ+ parent families (Goldberg & Smith, 2013; Kuvalanka & Munroe, 2020; McKnight, 2016).

Social Constructionism

Social constructionism rejects the idea that there is one objective reality and instead focuses on the ways in which we construct our own understandings based on our experiences (Harré, 2002; Schwandt, 2000). In this way, our use of social constructionism as a guiding framework builds upon queer theory to allow for an understanding of how queer family experiences provide a context that shapes how youth conceptualize identity and family. A social constructionist approach allows us to center youth's own conceptualizations of how their family experiences have shaped their perspectives toward identities and family. While LGBTQ+ families may be understood as "inherently queer" or as distinct from cisgender heterosexual parent families, youth with LGBTQ+ parents may not perceive their families this way. Thus, a social constructionist approach aligns with inductive qualitative analyses that can inform our understanding of family and the nuances between being queer and having a queer perspective.

Current Study

Through these theoretical frameworks, we sought to understand youth's experiences in LGBTQ+ families. This study explored the perspectives of 49 racially, socioeconomically, and geographically diverse youth (age 12–25 years) in the U.S. with LGBTQ+ parents through interview data collected as part of the Stories and Experiences of LGBTQ+ Families from Youth (SELFY) project. Our research questions were: *In what ways does parental LGBTQ+ identity relate to youths' feelings toward others, themselves, and their families?* In turn, how do these feelings contribute to how youth plan their own potential pathways to parenthood and conceptualize their own ideas about families? Since our study sought to address gaps in representation of various identity groups within LGBTQ+ parent families, we also explored how these themes varied across groups based on participant characteristics (i.e., family formation pathway, own LGBTQ+ identity, racial/ethnic identity, social status, and geographic region).

We anticipated that our participants would likely conceptualize family in expansive ways, based on literature surrounding family systems theory, queer theory, and social constructionism (Allen & Mendez, 2018; Clarke & Demetriou, 2016), and because youth with LGBTQ+ parents belong to

families considered to be culturally "non-normative" (i.e., at least one parent identifies as LGBTQ+). Thoughts about youth's own future families may manifest in youth with LGBTQ+ parents as considerations of diverse pathways to their own parenthood, like adoption or ART.

Method

Procedure

Participants for this study were recruited using a variety of means. We had a target goal to recruit 50 participants who represented diversity in geographic region, socioeconomic background, racial/ethnic identity, and family structure. For participants to be eligible, one parent needed to identify as LGBTQ+ for at least 5 years (i.e., it was not a requirement that parents had done so for participants' entire lives). Youth were purposefully sampled via targeted recruitment efforts of racial/ethnic, economic, and geographic groups (e.g., primarily residing in the Southern and Midwestern U.S.) that have been historically excluded in LGBTQ+ family research (Fish & Russell, 2018) and snowball sampling. Email advertisements were sent to university LGBTQ+ resource centers, alumni groups, middle and high school LGBTQ+ groups (e.g., gay-straight alliances), and community organizations (e.g., Pride or LGBTQ+ community centers, LGBTQ+ friendly churches). Advertisements were aired on a radio station at the last author's institution and fliers were passed out at local and regional Pride events (or listed in Pride event pamphlets). Finally, study information was posted on social media by local and national organizations that work with LGBTQ+ individuals and their families (e.g., COLAGE). Some advertisements were passed along by the last author (e.g., members of local school boards). These recruitment methods targeted geographic regions of the South, Midwest, and Mountain West U.S., lower socioeconomic brackets, and those of racial/ethnic minority backgrounds by prioritizing organizations, events, and contacts that served these populations.

Those interested in participating completed a brief online survey on Qualtrics that included an informed consent (or if under 18, assent) form and basic demographic information. This survey was received by participants after communicating directly with the research team, or through a link included in an email from a relevant organization, if that is how the participant received the information initially. Any participant under age 18 years had a parent or legal guardian complete an additional online permission form alongside the assent form the participant filled out (but parents did not take part in the interviews themselves). Following survey completion, if the

participant was indeed eligible (i.e., between 12 and 25 years old, had at least one LGBTQ+ parent who had been out at least 5 years during a time the participant lived with them, including currently), a trained research team member followed up to schedule a 1- to 2-hour phone or Google hangout/chat interview (the latter was used with two participants). Note that virtually all eligible participants who completed the initial survey were invited to interview, yet there was a small number ($n < 5$) who did not follow up to schedule when prompted by research personnel. Phone interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by trained research personnel. After interviewing, participants received a $50 Amazon e-gift card as compensation and were debriefed via email. Data collection occurred from December 2018 through February 2020. The University of Kentucky's Institutional Review Board approved this study.

Measures

Demographic Information. Participants were asked to describe their racial/ethnic, sexual, and gender identities through open-ended interview questions. Participants were also asked to provide the name of the state in which they lived. This information was used in analyses to categorize participants based on racial/ethnic identity groups (Black, Latinx, Asian, White, and Multiracial), sexual and gender identity groups (cisgender heterosexual and LGBTQ+), and geographic region (South, Midwest, Northeast, and West). Participants also reported their subjective social status (SSS) using the MacArthur Ladder of Subjective Social Status (Adler et al., 2000) with higher scores indicating greater SSS. Information about LGBTQ+ parent family pathway represented by participants was also noted from interviews: first, participants were asked to describe how their family "came to be," and their responses were coded based on the form of their family when participants joined them (whether at birth or through adoption, etc.). This resulted in three possible pathways: (1) born via ART, (2) the participant experienced a parent coming out (i.e., born in the context of a different-sex relationship), or (3) the participant was adopted. If a participant experienced multiple family formation pathways, they were coded based on the form of their family at the time they joined it. Because family formation may impact the way participants perceive "family," frequencies of themes were examined by groups.

Semi-Structured Interview. Interviews with participants followed a semi-structured interview guide. The interview covered a wide range of topics including discrimination related to race and/or having an LGBTQ+ parent, family formation, coping strategies, peer relationships, disclosure about their family,

and perceptions of community and social support. The interview guide can be found here: https://osf.io/x3btc/?view_only=cf12307f4b474df493a2b50a563 6c43f. This study primarily considered responses to four questions from these interviews, but included information from the entire interview when applicable details were mentioned by participants. The four main interview prompts considered were as follows:

1. "Do you think your parents have raised you in a different way than your friends with (cisgender) heterosexual parents? In what ways?"
2. "Has having an LGBTQ+ parent changed how you think about what it means to have or be a family? Has it changed how you think about becoming or being a parent? How so?"
3. "Looking back over your life, what do you think has been the biggest challenge, as well as the most positive aspect, so far about having an LGBTQ+ parent? As you get older, do you imagine any additional challenges or positive aspects of having an LGBTQ+ parent?"
4. "What advice would you give to other youth who have an LGBTQ+ parent?"

Participants

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 49 youth, 12 to 25 ($M = 19.51$; $SD = 3.48$) years old, in the U.S., with at least one LGBTQ+ parent. Demographic information for youth is in Table 1 (and for their LGBTQ+ parents, Table 2). Family formation and structure varied greatly. Roughly half of youth experienced a parent coming out ($n = 24$). Other LGBTQ+ family pathways (i.e., how participants joined their families) included donor insemination ($n = 13$), adoption ($n = 5$; private/closed = 2, foster care = 2, and international = 1), surrogacy ($n = 1$), or multiple (2 or more) of these (e.g., donor insemination and divorce/remarriage; $n = 5$). Parents (111 were represented) were less diverse than youth in racial/ethnic (20% of parents were people of color vs. 37% of youth) and gender expansive[3] identities (6% of parents vs. 16% of youth).

Data Analysis Plan

Interview responses were coded according to inductive thematic analysis procedures (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012, 2021). First, another trained undergraduate research assistant and one of the first authors familiarized themselves with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006) by reading the interview transcripts several times. While reading, both coders took notes of what was

Table 1. Participant Demographics.

Characteristic	Sample (N=49)	Percentage of sample (%)
Gender		
Cisgender woman	28	57
Cisgender man	13	27
Transgender woman	0	0
Transgender man	2	4
Transmasculine	2	4
Nonbinary	3	6
Questioning	1	2
Race/ethnicity		
White	31	63
Black	4	8
Latinx	5	10
Asian	1	2
Multiracial	8	16
Sexual orientation		
Lesbian/gay	6	12
Bisexual	7	14
Queer	5	10
Confused/questioning	5	10
Pansexual	2	4
Heterosexual	24	49
Age		
Adolescent (<18)	13	27
Emerging adult (18+)	36	73
Geography		
South	22	45
Midwest	13	27
Northeast	8	16
West	6	12
SSS ranking (1–10); M (SD)		5.68 (1.26)

Note. Subjective Social Status (SSS) was assessed with the MacArthur Ladder of Subjective Social Status (Adler et al., 2000). Given the mean and standard deviation, participants generally perceived themselves to be middle class.

most striking, common among participants, and most relevant to the research question (e.g., initial codes; Braun & Clarke, 2006). For example, in answering the question, "In what ways do parents' LGBTQ+ identity relate to their child's feelings toward others?", coders noted that participants often

Table 2. Participants' Reports of their Parents' Demographic Characteristics.

Characteristic	Sample total	Percentage of sample (%)
Gender	$n = 111$	
Cisgender woman	75	67
Cisgender man	30	27
Transgender woman	4	4
Nonbinary	1	1
Gender fluid	1	1
Race/ethnicity	$n = 111$	
white	89	80
Black	10	9
Latinx	3	3
Asian	5	4
Multiracial	4	4
Sexual orientation	$n = 117$	
Lesbian/gay	70	60
Bisexual	13	11
Queer	3	3
Pansexual	2	2
Heterosexual	23	20
Multiple identities	6	5
Geography	$n = 49$	
South	22	45
Midwest	13	27
Northeast	8	16
West	6	12

Note. These characteristics were reported by the youth *about their parents;* these do not necessarily represent how these parents would describe themselves. In addition, data may be incomplete because youth may not have included a particular descriptor about that parent.

mentioned that they were raised to be "less judgmental" of others. The first author then consolidated initial codes into common themes (i.e., openness toward others' identities; Braun & Clarke, 2006) and described them in a coding manual (see https://osf.io/bgy6a/?view_only=e93930cf106d40ee91c4444351d537f6; e.g., *feelings of openness* and *acceptance toward others*; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Following the creation of the coding manual, each coder read the interview transcripts for the presence of each theme. Both coders met weekly to discuss disagreements or discrepancies between assigned codes, progressively working toward consensus about themes present in the data via complete coding (i.e., including all meaningful codes; Braun & Clarke,

2012). Coders took individual notes throughout individual coding sessions as well as notes during team meetings, using Word, Excel, and handwritten notes (i.e., memo-ing). When coders disagreed on a code the two coders reviewed their individual notes, the interview transcript, and consulted with lab personnel and/or other authors of this paper to reach a consensus. For example, sometimes the interviewer was asked for feedback on the tone or phrasing of the participant given that culturally specific responses can range from jokes to unique phrases, or responses perceived as especially serious.

In coding meetings, the pair of coders discussed reflexivity (Levitt et al., 2017, 2018), possible biases, and how the identities of each coder could influence analyses (i.e., positionality). These discussions took place before coding as well as throughout the process. For example, neither coder is a parent nor has LGBTQ+ parents, and thus they reflected on participants' experiences from outsider perspectives. In addition, despite having extensive research experience with LGBTQ+ individuals and their families, neither coder identified as a person of color or LGBTQ+. Therefore, throughout coding, coders were intentional about how their own identities impacted their interpretations of participant responses; other authors who share identities with participants reviewed the codebook and coding results. In addition, the other authors, who collectively represent identities relevant to these analyses (e.g., identifying as a LGBTQ+ childfree adult, a person of color, a child of LGBTQ+ parents, and an LGBTQ+ person with children) provided guidance and oversight throughout the process by offering insights from personal experiences and relevant literature as questions or coding disagreements arose. The interviewer (identified as a queer person of color) also provided insight about identities and contextualize participant responses. In coding meetings, the other authors would provide counsel on points of controversy or confusion, as well as provide feedback as the coders reviewed the reasoning behind all coding choices. While disagreements were not common, coders resolved these disagreements through discussion, and ensured another lab personnel who shared identities with the participant was present to corroborate participant experiences and provide a fuller explanation if necessary. Given the diverse identities held by participants (i.e., gender and sexual identity, racial/ethnic identity, family formation pathway, perceived social status, and geographic region), frequencies of theme endorsement across demographic groups are also reported.

Findings

Four themes characterized participant interviews: (1) *feelings of openness or acceptance toward others*, (2) *oneself*, (3) *their family*, as well as (4) *perceptions of normalcy*. These themes were derived from participants' responses.

Each overarching theme included several subthemes. Descriptions and exemplar quotes for each theme are included in Table 3. Patterns of subtheme endorsement across participant identities are presented in Tables 4 and 5.

Feelings of Openness or Acceptance Toward Others

This theme, *feelings of openness or acceptance toward others*, reflected participants' perceptions that their parents' sexual or gender identity led them to be accepting of or open to others. Isabelle[4] (18-year-old, white/Lebanese, cisgender, bisexual/queer female, with two gay fathers, in the Northeast) said, "*They've raised me to be a little bit more accepting, just by nature of who they are*." Molly (21-year-old, white, cisgender, heterosexual female, with a lesbian mother and stepmother, in the South) said, "*I do feel like my mom has raised me [to be] more passionate and kind to other humans*." Many agreed: 17 participants (34.7%) described that their parents raised them to be open to or accepting of others; 11 participants (22.4%) specifically noted that this differed from how their peers with cisgender heterosexual parents were raised. No one attributed this difference to something beyond their parent's identity; attributions to other factors were not made. Regardless of whether youth had experienced a parent coming out, were born via ART, or were adopted, the most common feeling was that they had been raised to be open to and accepting of others *and* that this was different from their peers. Many expressed this theme in verbatim, while others expressed that they were raised to be "non-judgmental," to "emphasize diversity and inclusion," or to look to people's character rather than their identities.

Feelings of Openness and Acceptance Toward Oneself

This theme, *feelings of openness and acceptance toward oneself*, was primarily found in participants' descriptions of their own growing up experience. The first subtheme, participants' home environment, involved descriptions of parents' sexual or gender identity linked with open, accepting, or supportive home environments. This was exemplified by Peyton (21-year-old, white, bisexual/queer, transgender man/gender nonconforming person, with a lesbian biologically related mother and a lesbian/bisexual adoptive mother, in the Northeast), who said,

> ". . .the positive aspect of having gay parents for me has been the more open environment that I was raised in and the almost like the upper hand that I felt like I had in my childhood of sort of understanding other family dynamics and kinds of families before most of my peers even knew anything about the LGBTQ community."

Table 3. Themes, Subthemes, and Example Quotes.[a].

Theme	Subtheme	Example quotes
Feelings of openness and/or acceptance toward others		"*They just put more of an emphasis on making sure I know that all families are different, all people are different and that I treat everyone with the respect they deserve.*" (Todd, 17, Chinese American, cisgender male, bisexual, 2 gay fathers, CA)
		"*Raised me to be a kind, open, you know, non-judgmental person.*" (Claudia, 20, white, cisgender woman, heterosexual, lesbian mother and bisexual mother, MI)
Feelings of openness and/or acceptance toward themselves	**Environment:** Parents' sexual identity created an accepting/ open/ supportive environment in the home.	"*Having like a sense of openness and acceptance that allowed me to really be my authentic self in all ways that I think was really cultivated because of having lesbian parents.*" (Tori, 23, white, cisgender woman, heterosexual/bisexual, 2 lesbian mothers, PA)
	Advice: Youth with LGBTQ+ parents should be proud, accepting, supportive, and/or open about their own identity.	"*. . .feeling free to kind of explore my gender.*" (Beth, 19, Latinx, cisgender woman, heterosexual, 2 lesbian mothers, KY)
Feelings of openness and/or acceptance toward their family	**Advice:** Youth with LGBTQ+ parents should be proud, accepting, supportive, and/or open about their family/their parents.	"*Love your family and not be ashamed of who you are and where you come from.*" (Natalie, 22, white, cisgender woman, heterosexual, 3 lesbian mothers, OH)
	"Love makes a family" discourse: Parents taught that families do not have to be biologically based, but can be chosen, based on love, and/or made up of diverse members.	"*The definition of a family is you know just a group of people who have a really deep strong love for each other.*" (Josh, 14, Latinx, cisgender male, confused, 2 lesbian mothers via surrogacy and adoption—custodial; lesbian surrogate mother and stepmother; biological father, KY)

(continued)

Table 3. (continued)

Theme	Subtheme	Example quotes
	Perceptions of parenthood: Other pathways to family other than through bio- and heteronormative ideals	"*There is more out there than like a nuclear family, but I feel like when it comes down to it, like for me, family is just like you know, the people you care about, the people you want to surround yourself with*." (Audrey, 21, white, cisgender woman, bisexual, pansexual father, queer mother, CT) "*Family is just how you want to shape it.*" (Riley, 15, Black, nonbinary, gay, bisexual mother, KY) ". . .*if you love each other a lot and you like, take care of each other, then I think that is what is most important in a family.*" (Dan, 13, white, pansexual, cisgender man, lesbian mother and stepmother, CA) "*(I'm) more open to fostering and adopting, because I've seen that so much*" (Claudia, 20, white, heterosexual, cisgender woman, born through donor insemination, lesbian mother and bisexual mother, MI) "*I picture adoption*" when asked about being a parent in the future (Hannah, 22, white, heterosexual, cisgender woman, experienced a parent coming out, lesbian mother and stepmother, heterosexual father, KY)

(continued)

Table 3. (continued)

Theme	Subtheme	Example quotes
Perceptions of normalcy	**Perceptions of normalcy:** They/their family were normal and not out of the ordinary; they wanted others to know that they/their family were normal/not out of the ordinary.	"*For me it's normal but for everyone it might not be, so I have grown up with them and it makes me feel normal to be around them.*" (Matt, 12, white, cisgender male, heterosexual, 2 lesbian mothers, KY) ". . .*understand, really, that it's just your parent just loving somebody.*" (Becca, 22, white, cisgender woman, heterosexual, lesbian mother and stepmother, heterosexual father, KY)

[a]All names are pseudonyms. All identity labels and family information were provided directly by participants.

Participants like Peyton described their childhood as having been improved because of the environment in which they were raised, *specifically* citing their parents' identities as a reason for their understanding about their own and other families. The perspectives of a slight majority of participants included this theme: 26 (53%) felt that they were raised in an open, accepting, or supportive environment, and 6 participants (12%) felt that this differed from how their peers with cisgender heterosexual parents were raised. More participants who identified as LGBTQ+ themselves (n=12; 46.2%) than those who were cisgender and heterosexual (n=6; 26.1%) endorsed that their parents' identities created accepting and open home environments.

Also of note is the subtheme about how participants advised other youth with LGBTQ+ parents—particularly to be proud, accepting, supportive, or open *about their own identity and about their home environment*. This theme was exemplified by Audrey (21-year-old, white, bisexual, cisgender woman, with a pansexual father and queer stepmother, in the Northeast): "*Accept, you know, yourself and your identity as a queerspawn.*[5]" A small number of participants n=3; 6.1%) emphasized the importance of accepting their own identities.

Feelings of Openness and Acceptance Toward Their Family

This theme, *feelings of openness and acceptance toward their family*, also involved two subthemes: participants' advice about their family (current and

Table 4. Endorsed Themes and Subthemes by Family Formation Pathway and Participant Sexual/Gender Identity.

	Total	Family formation pathway			Sexual/gender identity	
	N=49	Parent came out (N=26)	Adoption (N=5)	ART (N=18)	Cisgender heterosexual (N=23)	LGBTQ+ (N=26)
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
Acceptance toward others	6 (12.24)	3 (11.54)	1 (20.00)	2 (11.11)	4 (17.40)	2 (7.70)
AND this was different than their peers	11 (22.45)	4 (15.38)	2 (40.00)	5 (27.78)	3 (13.04)	8 (30.77)
Acceptance toward self						
Open and accepting environment at home	18 (36.73)	8 (30.77)	2 (40.00)	8 (44.44)	6 (26.08)	12 (46.15)
AND this was different than their peers	6 (12.24)	3 (11.54)	0	3 (16.67)	1 (4.35)	3 (11.54)
Proud	3 (6.12)	1 (3.85)	0	2 (11.11)	1 (4.35)	2 (7.70)
Accepting	2 (4.08)	2 (7.69)	0	0	1 (4.35)	1 (3.85)
Supportive	1 (2.04)	0	0	1 (5.56)	1 (4.35)	0
Acceptance toward family						
Proud	6 (12.24)	3 (11.54)	1 (20.00)	2 (11.11)	4 (17.39)	2 (7.70)
Accepting	9 (18.37)	6 (23.07)	2 (40.00)	1 (5.56)	5 (21.74)	4 (15.38)
Supportive	6 (12.24)	5 (19.23)	0	1 (5.56)	3 (13.04)	3 (11.54)
Open	3 (6.12)	1 (3.85)	0	2 (11.11)	2 (8.70)	1 (3.85)
Families can be chosen	23 (46.94)	12 (46.15)	2 (40.00)	9 (50.00)	12 (52.17)	11 (47.83)
Families can "look" different	11 (22.45)	10 (38.46)	0	1 (5.56)	6 (26.09)	5 (21.74)
Did not have expansive idea of family	7 (14.28)	4 (15.38)	2 (40.00)	1 (5.56)	6 (26.09)	1 (4.35)
Perceived normalcy						
Families are "normal"	5 (10.20)	2 (7.70)	1 (20.00)	2 (11.11)	2 (8.70)	3 (11.54)
Wanted others to know they are normal	6 (12.24)	5 (19.23)	0	1 (5.56)	6 (26.09)	0

Note. Percentages reflect percentages of subgroups that endorsed theme; ART=assisted reproductive technology; Participants could endorse multiple themes or no themes at all (i.e., some subtotals do not sum to the total for individual themes).

Table 5. Endorsed Themes and Subthemes by Participant Racial/Ethnic Identity, Geographic Region, and Perceived Social Status.

	Total	Racial/ethnic identity					Geographic region SSS				
	N=49	Black (n=4)	Latinx (n=5)	Asian (n=1)	white (n=31)	Multi-racial (n=8)	South (n=22)	Midwest (n=13)	Northeast (n=8)	West (n=6)	M (SD)
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	M (SD)
Acceptance toward others	6 (12.24)	1 (25.00)	0	0	3 (9.68)	2 (25.00)	3 (13.64)	2 (15.38)	1 (12.50)	0	5.58 (0.80)
AND this was different than their peers	11 (22.45)	1 (25.00)	2 (40.00)	0	7 (22.58)	1 (12.50)	5 (22.72)	1 (7.69)	1 (12.50)	4 (66.67)	6.55 (0.85)
Acceptance toward self											
Open and accepting environment at home	18 (36.73)	2 (50.00)	2 (40.00)	0	11 (35.48)	3 (37.50)	7 (31.82)	3 (23.08)	5 (62.50)	3 (50.00)	5.57 (1.23)
AND this was different than their peers	6 (12.24)	0	2 (40.00)	0	4 (12.90)	0	3 (13.64)	2 (15.38)	0	1 (16.67)	5.63 (1.53)
Proud	3 (6.12)	0	2 (40.00)	0	1 (3.23)	0	1 (4.55)	1 (7.69)	1 (12.50)	0	6.83 (0.76)
Accepting	2 (4.08)	0	0	0	2 (6.45)	0	1 (4.55)	0	1 (12.50)	0	4.25 (0.85)
Supportive	1 (2.04)	0	0	0	1 (3.23)	0	0	1 (7.69)	0	0	5.5 (0.00)
Acceptance toward family											
Proud	6 (12.24)	0	3 (60.00)	0	2 (6.45)	1 (12.50)	3 (13.64)	2 (15.38)	1 (12.50)	0	6.67 (0.75)
Accepting	9 (18.37)	0	1 (20.00)	0	5 (16.13)	3 (37.50)	4 (18.18)	3 (23.08)	1 (12.50)	1 (16.67)	5.14 (0.89)
Supportive	6 (12.24)	0	0	0	5 (16.13)	1 (12.50)	2 (9.09)	4 (30.77)	0	0	5.21 (0.95)
Open	3 (6.12)	0	1 (20.00)	0	2 (6.45)	0	2 (9.09)	0	1 (12.50)	0	4.67 (1.53)
Families can be chosen	23 (46.94)	2 (50.00)	2 (40.00)	0	13 (41.94)	1 (12.50)	8 (36.36)	7 (53.84)	4 (50.00)	4 (66.67)	5.98 (1.12)
Families can "look" different	11 (22.45)	1 (25.00)	0	0	6 (19.35)	1 (12.50)	7 (31.82)	2 (15.38)	2 (25.00)	0	4.95 (1.26)
Did not have expansive idea of family	7 (14.28)	1 (25.00)	1 (20.00)	0	1 (3.23)	1 (12.50)	2 (9.09)	4 (30.77)	0	1 (16.67)	5.43 (1.06)
Perceived normalcy											
Families are "normal"	5 (10.20)	0	1 (20.00)	0	3 (9.68)	1 (12.50)	4 (18.18)	0	1 (12.50)	0	6.60 (0.89)
Wanted others to know they are normal	6 (12.24)	0	1 (20.00)	0	5 (16.13)	0	5 (22.72)	1 (7.69)	0	0	5.58 (0.80)

Note. Percentages reflect percentages of subgroups that endorsed theme; SSS = Subjective Social Status, higher scores indicate greater SSS; Participants could endorse multiple themes or no themes at all (i.e., some subtotals do not sum to the total for individual themes).

future) and "love makes a family" discourse. The first subtheme included participants' advice about their family, where participants advised other youth with LGBTQ+ parents to be proud, accepting, supportive, or open *about their family or their parents*. As an example of advice given to other youth with LGBTQ+ parents about their families, Beth (19-year-old, white/ Hispanic, straight, cisgender woman, with two lesbian mothers, in the South), advised other youth to: "*(Be) very open about [their family] from a younger age*." Participants offered advice in relation to other LGBTQ+ parent families: 4 youth (8.2%) said other youth should feel *proud* of their families, 10 participants (20.4%) noted other youth should be *accepting* of their families, 7 participants (14.3%) said other youth should be *supportive* of their families, and 3 participants (6.1%) noted other youth should be *open* about their families/their family members' identities.

The second subtheme of *feelings of openness* and *acceptance toward their families* was about "love makes a family" discourse, where participants described how their parents taught them that families do not have to be biologically based, but that families can be chosen, based on love, and made up of diverse members. Audrey (21-year-old, white, bisexual, cisgender woman, with a pansexual father and queer stepmother, in the Northeast) talked about family in this way:

> "*it's [having LGBTQ+ parents] changed my definition of family. . .we talk about it a lot in the queer community, the idea of chosen family[6] and the importance of that as well, and so I feel like. . .the definition of a family. . .it's just people that love you*."

This theme was very common, with 34 participants (69.4%) describing an expanded idea of family. Nearly half of participants ($n = 23$; 46.9%) expressed that they thought family was not based on biological relatedness and 11 participants (22.5%) felt that *families could look different* than the "nuclear family" stereotype. Some participants ($n = 5$; 10.2%) expressed both these features. The subtheme, *families can be chosen*, was endorsed by participants who represented different family formation pathways (see Table 4, which shows participants' theme endorsement by family formation type and by sexual/gender identity). In contrast, 14.3% ($n = 7$) said their family *did not* give them an expanded idea of family. Tessa (19-year-old, biracial (white/Black), straight, cisgender woman, with a bisexual mother and heterosexual father, in the Midwest) said, "*no. . .(your parent) is still your parent*", in response to the question, "Has having an LGBTQ+ parent changed how you think about what it means to have or be a family?". Finally, some ($n = 7$; 14.3%) explicitly described considering "alternative" pathways to their own future parenthood

(see Table 3). Of these, all noted adoption ($n=7$; 14.3%). A few noted fostering ($n=2$; 4.1%) and stepparenting ($n=1$; 2.0%); two chose multiple pathways (e.g., stepparenting and adoption).

Perceptions of Normalcy

In this theme, *perceptions of normalcy*, participants reported that they and their families were "normal" and not out of the ordinary. This theme was distinct from others in that participants *wanted others to know* this too. Sarah (15-year-old, white, straight, cisgender female, with two lesbian/bisexual mothers, one straight father, in the South) said, "*I'd explain to them it's like not a bad thing and it's like more natural than like what most think when like we're first seeing like a same-sex couple.*" In sum, a small number of youth, 10% ($n=5$), reported that they and/or their families *were* normal, and 12% ($n=6$) specifically *wanted others to know* this. Of note, participants holding multiple marginalized identities were unlikely to endorse that they wanted others to know that their family was normal: no adopted or LGBTQ+ participants and only one participant who identified as multiracial ("mixed or Black," per the participant's description) endorsed this subtheme (see Tables 4 and 5, which describe participants' theme endorsement by racial/ethnic identity, their current geographic location or where they spent the most time living with their LGBTQ+ parent across their childhood or adolescence, and SSS).

Discussion

This inductive qualitative study was an investigation of the ways in which parents' LGBTQ+ identity related to their children's feelings toward others, themselves, and their families (including future ones), utilizing family systems theory, queer theory, and social constructionism. It was anticipated that youth would be likely to conceptualize family in broad ways and feel positively toward diverse identities in themselves, their peers, and their families. Youth in our study commonly mentioned themes of openness and acceptance when sharing their own thoughts on how growing up with LGBTQ+ parents shaped their perspectives. Here, a youth's "feelings of openness" are interpreted as those indicating that youth place few restrictions on how identities (e.g., gender or sexuality) are defined, as well as their feelings of accessibility in exploring these identities. This accessibility refers to perceptions of support and feeling able to explore their own identities. "Acceptance" is interpreted as willingness to welcome feelings, behaviors, or identities both similar to and different from their own. Importantly, our presentation of these

constructs was informed by participants' own description and understandings of their feelings of openness and acceptance. Because youth expressed these feelings, these youth may feel more comfortable being in environments that push back against normative institutions and understanding of family. In addition, many reported that they felt this way *specifically due* to their parents' LGBTQ+ identities rather than other factors that influenced their development.

Youth expressing that they feel open and accepting toward others, themselves, and about their families is consistent with existing literature; youth who hold a minority identity are likely to feel connected with others who also hold unshared minority statuses (Cody et al., 2017; A. E. Goldberg, 2007a; Hosking et al., 2015; Kuvalanka & Munroe, 2020; Lytle et al., 2012). For example, a woman from A. E. Goldberg's (2007a, p. 555) study said, "It has made me a lot more open-minded. . .". This finding also supports the idea that LGBTQ+ parents engage in LGBTQ+ family socialization (Oakley et al., 2017; Simon & Farr, 2022), which may facilitate feelings of openness and acceptance toward others. However, youth also generally did not perceive major differences between their own lives and those of their peers without LGBTQ+ parents- another indicator of youth's perceptions of themselves as "normal." For example, youth did not cite structural differences (i.e., parents' identities) as reasons their families were different, but instead focused on family processes such as the ways their parents talked about identity. This is consistent with existing research indicating few quantitative differences between families with and without LGBTQ+ parents (Bos et al., 2016; Farr, 2017; Lick et al., 2013; Patterson et al., 2021) and extends these findings to show alignment with qualitative reports of youth with LGBTQ+ parents. As such, youth consistently noted that if differences did exist they were based on the ways their parents taught them to view their world. Notably, this is most often when the words "open" and "accepting" would appear. Nevertheless, the lives of these youth are inherently shaped by their parents' identities, and our themes, informed by our theoretical frameworks, yield important information about how parents' identities impact the lenses with which youth view the world (Cox & Paley, 1997; Schwandt, 2000).

In addition, youth often expressed that their feelings of openness and acceptance were *distinct* from that of youth without LGBTQ+ parents. This finding indicates that LGBTQ+ parents, due to their own minority identities, may actively teach their children about being open and accepting of others who are different from themselves (Kuvalanka & Goldberg, 2009; Schwandt, 2000). This is consistent with social constructionism, as these LGBTQ+ parents actively shape the social constructs with which they raise their children (Schwandt, 2000). Furthermore, this finding suggests that LGBTQ+ family

socialization practices noted by other researchers (Oakley et al., 2017; Simon & Farr, 2022; Wyman Battalen et al., 2019) may translate into increased feelings of openness and acceptance among children with LGBTQ+ parents in adolescence and early emerging adulthood. The themes discussed by participants reflect experiences within their families that promote values in line with these practices. LGBTQ+ participants were particularly likely to note that their parents' identities were linked to home environments that fostered acceptance of their own identities. This finding supports those of previous work about second-generation children with LGBTQ+ parents, indicating that these socialization practices may support positive sexual and gender identity development (Kuvalanka & Goldberg, 2009; Kuvalanka & Munroe, 2020). Although studies of LGBTQ+ family socialization have often focused on LG parents and/or quantitative approaches (Oakley et al., 2017; Simon & Farr, 2022; Wyman Battalen et al., 2019), this qualitative study indicates that these practices may extend to a broader range of LGBTQ+ parents and children.

It is notable that instances of themes were identified in response to a question about advice to others with LGBTQ+ parents, which highlights the salience of these concepts to participants' experiences having LGBTQ+ parents. Other studies have examined advice given by those from diverse family systems (e.g., adoptive families) as a means of understanding their social constructions of experiences related those family systems (Cashen et al., 2019; Schwandt, 2000). Themes of acceptance and pride were common in participants' advice to others with LGBTQ+ parents. Specifically, this advice centered around both their own family structure and family structures in general, primarily endorsing themes that emphasized loyalty to their family beyond the identity of its members. By asking youth what advice they would give to other youth with LGBTQ+ parents this study was able to isolate what was *most* important to youth in terms of representing themselves and their families to the outside world.

Participants also reported expanded ideas about families and family formation and pathways to parenthood. Participants regularly espoused "love makes a family" discourse, providing further evidence for a concept often reported by other researchers (Hosking et al., 2015). Participants also talked about forming families in diverse ways, through adoption, surrogacy, foster families, or through being a stepparent, among others. These findings also reflect aspects of social constructionism and queer theory—participants have constructed their own definitions of family based on love and choice rather than heteronormative constructs (Few-Demo et al., 2016; Oswald et al., 2005; Schwandt, 2000).

This study, however, introduces a concept of "uniqueness" where participants both express feeling different *and* desiring to be perceived as normal, which brings into question from what direction these youth are "queering" the norm. Are youth contesting heteronormative constructs by enforcing the idea that queer families are part of the norm? Or are youth reconstructing the structure of families altogether by enforcing the idea that all families are different and there is no norm? In other words, are youth seeking to fully disrupt hegemonic understandings of family or simply shift the relative status of their families within current hegemonic structures (Allen & Mendez, 2018)? We also saw that youth with multiple stigmatized identities were less likely to endorse the theme that they wanted others to know that their families are normal. It is possible that participants with fewer marginalized identities may be more likely to see their families as being closer in proximity to hegemonic power structures (Allen & Mendez, 2018) and therefore more motivated to portray their families as normal to maintain this proximity. This finding may also be supported by findings from some studies that LGBTQ+ people of color show more favorable outcomes than white LGBTQ+ individuals (Cyrus, 2017; Lehavot et al., 2019). Building from minority stress theory, researchers in these studies have theorized that marginalization experiences across multiple identities may provide opportunities to develop resilience strategies. It may be the case that deprioritizing inclusion into the normative family type is one such strategy (Branscombe et al., 2012). This suggests that intersecting identities may influence the extent to which youth engage in the process of queering our understandings of families, and future research will help to further explore these dynamics. It is therefore important that future research continue to prioritize the perspective of youth with LGBTQ+ parents who hold multiple marginalized identities (Fish & Russell, 2018).

Strengths and Limitations

This study has several limitations. Although the youth in this study were more racially diverse than their parents, the parents represented in this study were largely white. Greater diversity would provide a broader understanding of the experiences of youth with LGBTQ+ parents. Furthermore, all but six parents identified as cisgender. Although there are many shared experiences, the experiences of transgender and gender nonconforming parent families can vary meaningfully from cisgender sexual minority parent families (e.g., Dickey et al., 2016). Therefore, more research is needed to understand how representative our findings are of the full diversity of LGBTQ+ family experiences. In addition, we only asked the youth in this study about their gender identity, and not their assigned sex at birth. In the future, asking more detailed

demographic information would provide more insight into the participants in our sample.

This study would also benefit from a longitudinal design and a greater number of adolescents. A longitudinal design would allow for an investigation about how participants' feelings may change over time, particularly as they approach the possibility of parenthood. As participants grow older, they may spend more time reflecting on their own experiences of family, and may express in more detail, passion, and conscientiousness what is important to them (Park et al., 2020). It is likely that participants' experiences exist as inherent challenges to heteronormativity (i.e., queer theory; Oswald et al., 2005) and may manifest in influencing their own children to carry forth elements of their own upbringing—as these youth near parenthood these elements, like being accepting of differences in others, may come forth in greater light. A greater number of younger participants would provide greater insight into current experiences living with LGBTQ+ parents, providing a more comprehensive understanding of experience. Future research should take care to include more adolescent participants through means such as targeted recruitment in collaboration with youth organizations and LGBTQ+ parent organizations that may include parents of adolescents.

Conversely, this study also had many strengths. The participants were diverse, specifically in terms of sexual and gender identity, family structure, and geographic location, addressing an existing gap in the literature (McKnight, 2016). Although the parents in this study were majority white, the youth were more diverse in terms of their racial/ethnic identity. Previous research has largely focused on families from metropolitan areas in the Western and Northeastern U.S., so including the experiences of families from the Southern and Midwestern U.S. helps to provide a more complete picture of the experiences of LGBTQ+ parent families (Park et al., 2020). Regional contexts can heavily impact the experiences of youth, especially youth in families with various minoritized statuses given the presence or lack of supportive policies (e.g., frequency of anti-LGBT legislation impacts gender affirming experiences for LGBTQ+ youth; Renley et al., 2022). Although no clear pattern of differences by geographic region emerged, this study addresses an increasingly important need to understand the experiences of youth in the Southern and Midwestern U.S. It is important to note, however, that the lack of clear differences between regions may be due to differences in experiences within regions (e.g., differences in policies between states, differences between rural and urban regions within states) that we were unable to explore with the sample in this study. Additionally, recent waves of anti-LGBTQ+ legislation in several states may exacerbate regional differences in the experiences of LGBTQ+ families (American Civil Liberties

Union, 2023). Further research attending to these variations within and across regions would provide greater insight.

Another relevant strength is that many of the youth in our sample were LGBTQ+ identified which may reflect our recruitment strategy of working with LGBTQ+ organizations. LGBTQ+ youth with LGBTQ+ parents report unique impacts of having LGBTQ+ parents on their identity development and community connections (Cashen, 2022; Kuvalanka & Goldberg, 2009). Therefore, having more second-generation LGBTQ+ youth in our sample allows us to represent the diverse experiences of youth with LGBTQ+ parents more fully. Additionally, the semi-structured interview format allowed participants to direct the conversation, and the age of our participants, "young adults" may have yielded articulate reflections about their experiences due to their developmental stage (A. E. Goldberg, 2007a). Thus, the information included in this study is what is most important and significant to these youth and is portrayed *as they themselves have shared them.*

Future Research Directions and Implications for Practice

Although our study constitutes an important step toward addressing a lack of diversity among LGBTQ+ families represented in the research, there is a need for continued attention to the nuances of experiences among LGBTQ+ families. As noted earlier, future work on the specific experiences of those with transgender and gender nonconforming parents is needed. Additionally, future work should explore the experiences of plurisexual parents (e.g., bisexual and pansexual) in greater detail. Compared to monosexual parents (e.g., lesbian and gay), plurisexual parents may be more likely to be partnered with someone of a different gender and therefore less likely to be "read" by others as an LGBTQ+ parent. The experiences of people with plurisexual parents may therefore be unique in meaningful ways (i.e., different experiences of stigmatization). On the other hand, previous research has noted that many plurisexual parents intend to engage in queer parenting practices (A. E. Goldberg et al., 2018). It is possible that these family processes may be just as, if not more, important for shaping youths' perspectives about their own and others' identities than interactions with individuals outside the family.

The findings of this study have several implications for practitioners who work with youth in LGBTQ+ families. Because youth with LGBTQ+ parents often have negative disclosure experiences, particularly from peers, it is notable that these youth report feelings of openness and acceptance. These negative experiences may point to unique strengths and coping mechanisms or resilience among youth, as well as to unique parent-child socialization tactics (like an emphasis on the cultural benefits of being a part of an

LGBTQ+ family, navigation of multiple minority identities, or facilitation of identity exploration) that warrants further research to understand more about the mechanisms at hand (A. E. Goldberg, 2007b; Oakley et al., 2017). For practitioners, educating both parents and youth of these coping mechanisms and socialization practices would be beneficial for encouraging and expediating a process of acceptance or integration, and for encouraging others whose parents may not hold an LGBTQ+ identity to build their own feelings of openness and acceptance (McKnight, 2016). Our finding that youth differed in their desire for their family to be perceived as normal also highlights the need for practitioners to be cognizant of the diversity of experiences among youth with LGBTQ+ parents. At the same, the relative lack of clear differences as a function of participant demographics (such as family formation pathway) suggests that practitioners should be careful not to overemphasize these differences when working with youth.

Our findings also point to several areas of future research that would continue to build our understanding of how LGBTQ+ family contexts shape youth perspectives. Of interest are the contexts from which parents teach their children these lessons of openness and acceptance toward others' identities and experiences, and whether these guidelines are unique to LGBTQ+ parent families, or more broadly apply to families with members who hold marginalized identities. In the future, connections between demographic characteristics, like age, sexual and gender identity, and qualitative experiences should be further investigated. In addition, emphasis on how LGBTQ+ parents discuss their children's own pathways to parenthood or family planning would be of great interest. For instance, because LGBTQ+ parents have navigated family planning and their own pathways to parenthood, they represent valuable informational resources for their own children. They may also provide valuable support systems that can encourage and assist their children in advocating for their own or their families' futures.

Conclusion

This research about the perspectives of youth with LGBTQ+ parents is important in informing the work of others who serve LGBTQ+ families. This research is also important because it fills three existing gaps in literature regarding diversity, future families, and youth perspectives, while also being informed by theory. Informed by family systems, queer, and social constructionism theories, we found that youth with LGBTQ+ parents were likely to endorse themes of openness and acceptance regarding others, families, and themselves. Participants regularly reported that their parents raised them to

be open and accepting of others, and that their parents created open, accepting, and supportive home environments. Importantly, many participants felt that this was different than how their peers with cisgender heterosexual parents were raised. Participants gave advice for other youth with LGBTQ+ parents to be open, proud, accepting, and supportive of themselves and their families. Youth endorsed the idea of chosen families (Weston, 1991), reflected on their own unique upbringings in considering their own future families, and, to a lesser extent, desired a perception of normalcy. Importantly, these perspectives were present among a unique sample of diverse youth who represent a wide variety of persons within the LGBTQ+ community. This research provides important information about youth's perspectives, particularly on their feelings about future families, which may inform longer-term areas for research and support.

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ORCID iD

Calisse R. Burand https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7140-3099

Notes

1. We capitalize minoritized racial/ethnic identities (e.g., Black) and lowercase white in deference to those who have been oppressed by whiteness as a social construct and power, and to acknowledge that minoritized racial/ethnic identities, such as Black, Latino/a/x/e, and Asian/Pacific Islander, constitute specific cultural groups whose members have distinct shared histories and experiences (Crenshaw, 1991).

2. When terminology other than "LGBTQ+" is noted, it is because we refer to language from the cited source.
3. Gender expansive represents an inclusive umbrella of identities and expressions beyond cisnormative notions, including transgender, nonbinary, genderfluid, and additional gender diverse identities (A. E. Goldberg & Allen, 2020).
4. All names are pseudonyms. All identity labels and information were given directly by participants.
5. "Queerspawn" is a term used by some people with LGBTQ+ parents to describe their experience. Some find the term empowering and some report discomfort with its usage (Garner, 2005; McKnight, 2016).
6. This term, chosen family, is originally attributed to Weston (1991) in her book, *Families We Choose*.

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Author Biographies

Calisse R. Burand is a graduate student in Statistics at the University of Kentucky. Her post-baccalaureate research focused on alcohol and hormone interactions in young adults.

Krystal K. Cashen, PhD is an Assistant Professor in Psychology at Ohio Wesleyan University. Her research focuses on how experiences related to growing up in LGBTQ+ and adoptive families shape development through the transition to adulthood.

Kay A. Simon, PhD is an Assistant Professor of Family Social Science at the University of Minnesota. Their research focuses on identity development among LGBTQ+ youth and childfree adults as well as LGBTQ+ parent families.

Rachel H. Farr, PhD is an Associate Professor in Psychology at the University of Kentucky. Her research focuses on LGBTQ+ people and their families, as well as on adoption.