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EMPIRICAL ARTICLE

Microaggression and discrimination experiences among diverse youth with LGBTQ+ parents in the United States

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Abstract

Family-based microaggressions and discrimination experienced by youth with LGBTQ+ parents are important to understand from their perspectives. Using mixed methods, we examined such experiences among 12- to 25-year-old youth ($N = 51$) with at least one LGBTQ+ parent in the United States. Youth were diverse in race/ethnicity, family structure, gender and sexual identities, socioeconomic status, and geographic region. Using interviews, we explored LGBTQ+ family-based microaggressions (reported through scale items with feedback) and discrimination (assessed via thematic analysis). Microaggressions and discrimination based on having LGBTQ+ parents were common, yet there were distinctions in direct and indirect stigma across the quantitative items and qualitative themes. These results underscore the value of mixed methods research with youth and implications for future research, practice, and policy.

KEYWORDS
discrimination, emerging adulthood, LGBTQ+ parent families, microaggressions, mixed methods, youth

Up to six million individuals in the United States have LGBTQ+ parents (Gates, 2015a), yet empirical research has not often included the direct perspectives of adolescents and young adults (i.e., youth) with LGBTQ+ parents, especially about victimization experiences (Fish & Russell, 2018; for examples, see Bos et al., 2021; Kuvalanka et al., 2006). Children, adolescents, and young adults with LGBTQ+ parents face discrimination, microaggressions, and courtesy or affiliate stigma (i.e., stigma experienced by people with close ties to those in stigmatized groups; Goffman, 1963, as cited by DiBennardo & Saguy, 2018) due to having LGBTQ+ parents (Crouch et al., 2015; Goldberg & Garcia, 2020; Haines et al., 2018; Robinson & Brewster, 2016). Stigma, discrimination, and microaggression experiences are negatively associated with mental and physical health among LGBTQ+ people (Nadal, 2013; Sue & Spanierman, 2020), and their children (Goldberg & Garcia, 2020; Koh et al., 2019). Research has yet to *qualitatively* explore LGBTQ+ family microaggressions and discrimination among *adolescents* of LGBTQ+ parents (e.g., Kuvalanka et al., 2014; Kuvalanka & Munroe, 2020). LGBTQ+ family research also has generally focused on predominantly white, middle-upper class samples in urban, coastal U.S. regions (Fish & Russell, 2018). Using a convergent mixed methods design (Creswell & Clark, 2018),

we sought to understand the perspectives of racially, economically, and geographically diverse youth with LGBTQ+ parents in the United States about LGBTQ+ family-specific microaggressions and discrimination experiences.

Moreover, research to date has often focused on exalting sameness through using a deficit-comparison approach in assuming LGBTQ+ parents to be inferior to cisgender- heterosexual (cis-het) parents, the latter billed as the implied "gold standard" or ideal normative family (e.g., Farr et al., 2022; Fish & Russell, 2018; Prendergast & MacPhee, 2018). LGBTQ+ parent families (compared to cis-het parent families) are also proportionately more likely to include individuals who hold minoritized racial/ethnic identities, are lower-income, and from the U.S. South, Midwest, and Mountain West (Badgett et al., 2019; Conron et al., 2018; Gates, 2015b). Thus, research that incorporates intersectional lenses (Battle & Ashley, 2008; Bowleg, 2008; Crenshaw, 1989) is needed to represent LGBTQ+ parent family diversity. There have been calls for researchers to attend, conceptually and methodologically, to intersections of multiple social identities as related to individual, including children's, outcomes (e.g., Bowleg, 2008; Ghavami et al., 2016). It is timely to consider the direct perspectives of racially, economically, and geographically diverse youth with LGBTQ+

parents using strengths-based and intersectional perspectives (and not damage-centered, comparative ones; Fish & Russell, 2018; Prendergast & MacPhee, 2018; Tuck, 2009).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Minority stress theory (MST)

Minority stress theory (Brooks, 1981; Meyer, 2003, 2015; Rich et al., 2020) is based on the premise that individuals with minoritized sexual identities (and members of other marginalized groups) experience often chronic levels of psychosocial stress resulting from stigma, prejudice, and discrimination. Unique minority stressors for LGBTQ+ people include facing stigma, discrimination, or rejection (Meyer, 2015). An underlying assumption of MST is that stress is often experienced at chronic levels due to the pervasive and embedded nature of stigma in broader social and cultural milieus. Stigma may result from interpersonal and institutional discrimination (Meyer, 2003, 2015), and it can apply to not only LGBTQ+ people, but also to their children (Siegel et al., 2022). MST also underscores intersectionality as important to understanding consequences of multiple minority statuses, discrimination, and stigma (Meyer, 2010). Thus, it is imperative to attend to how youth with LGBTQ+ parents who are also diverse in race, class, and geography may interface with discrimination related to their families. From MST, we expect that marginalized groups such as LGBTQ+ parents, and their children, may experience negative psychological effects from stigma and discrimination (Meyer, 2015; Rivas-Koehl et al., 2023; Siegel et al., 2022). This has been empirically supported by related research about overt discrimination and microaggressions (Bos et al., 2021; Goldberg & Garcia, 2020; Nadal, 2013; Siegel et al., 2022). Rivas-Koehl et al. (2023), in introducing the temporal intersectional minority stress model, emphasize (among other things) how minority stress operates intersectionally in the context of families—paramount in the current study.

Microaggressions

Harassment often takes the form of microaggressions, which are everyday interpersonal, sometimes unintentional, acts of discrimination against members of certain groups (e.g., race, gender, sexuality, etc.) and reflect individual bias (Sue et al., 2007). Originally defined in terms of racial discrimination (Pierce et al., 1977; Sue et al., 2007), microaggression research has evolved to include other minoritized groups (Nadal, 2019). Among LGBTQ+ people, common microaggressions include experiencing assumptions that one is cis-het or overhearing phrases like "that's so gay" (Haines et al., 2018; Nadal, 2013, 2019; Woodford et al., 2012). Scales have been developed to assess microaggression experiences of members of many social groups, including LGBTQ+ individuals (Fisher et al., 2019).

Even so, microaggressions as a construct have been conceptually and methodologically critiqued (claiming microaggressions research relies on "faulty premises"), particularly as related to issues with self-reports (Lilienfeld, 2017). Scholars such as Williams (2020), however, have responded to earlier critiques, claiming that Lilienfeld applied a "cultural-deficit model" in approaching microaggressions research. In contrast, Williams provided empirical evidence to rebut and deconstruct each of Lilienfeld's "faulty premises" (e.g., see arguments in Williams, 2020, Table 1, p. 4). For example, microaggressions can be meaningfully assessed via subjective self-report and microaggressions are consistently associated with negative mental health outcomes. Interestingly, there are no existing measures (to our knowledge) specifically developed for children from LGBTQ+ parent families. Rather, the few existing studies about microaggression experiences of people with LGBTQ+ parents have been qualitative (Carone et al., 2022; Farr et al., 2016; Haines et al., 2018). Thus, assessing microaggressions experienced by children with LGBTQ+ parents via mixed methods remains worthy and important to explore.

Discrimination

It is not uncommon for youth with LGBTQ+ parents to report teasing, bullying, victimization, and other overt discrimination based on having LGBTQ+ parents (Bos et al., 2021; Cody et al., 2017; Green et al., 2019; Koh et al., 2019; Perrin et al., 2019). In this study, we understand discrimination to include microaggressions as one form of interpersonal, sometimes unintentional (or covert) discrimination, and also that discrimination broadly can be interpersonal and institutional (or structural or systemic; "macroaggressions"), as well as covert and overt (Sue et al., 2007; Williams, 2020). In general, existing literature indicates that children with LGBTQ+ parents do not experience more bullying overall than peers with cis-het parents, but the type of victimization they experience is unique and focused on having LGBTQ+ parents (Carone et al., 2022). These studies have reflected samples of adolescents and young adults joined their LGBTQ+ parent families through various pathways (e.g., foster care, donor insemination, etc.). The parents of youth represented in these studies often hold marginalized monosexual identities (i.e., lesbian mothers, gay fathers). Fewer studies have examined these topics among youth with parents who hold queer, pansexual, transgender, and nonbinary identities, among other marginalized sexual and gender diverse identities. Our study sought in part to address this gap in sample diversity and representation.

CURRENT STUDY

Our convergent mixed method study design (Creswell & Clark, 2018) involved 51 interviews with racially, economically, and geographically diverse youth 12–25 years old, all of whom self-identified as having at least one LGBTQ+ parent

TABLE 1 Descriptive information for microaggression items among diverse youth with LGBTQ+ parents.

Item	M	SD	Range
1. You heard someone say "that's so gay"	2.11	1.00	1–5
2. You were told that being gay [LGBTQ+] is just a phase	1.65	0.96	1–5
3. A heterosexual person didn't believe that LGBTQ+ people face discrimination	1.88	0.99	1–5
4. Someone said LGBTQ+ people are trying to get "special rights" that they don't deserve	1.82	0.97	1–5
5. You heard about people trying to deny rights for same-sex couples or LGBTQ+ people	2.66	1.24	1–5
6. Someone implied that only heterosexuality & families with a mother and father are normal	2.08	0.89	1–4
7. Someone said, "you know how gay [LGBTQ+] people are"	1.84	1.07	1–4
8. Someone expressed a stereotype (e.g., "gay men are so good at fashion")	2.78	1.12	1–5
9. You heard someone talk about "the gay lifestyle"	1.82	0.97	1–4
10. You saw a group either in person, or in the media, show negative signs (e.g., A religious group with a sign that said "God hates fags")	2.66	1.17	1–5
11. Someone said, "I don't mind gay [LGBTQ+] people, they just shouldn't be so public"	1.88	1.09	1–5
12. Someone said a hateful slur about LGBTQ+ people (e.g., "fag" or "dyke")	2.16	1.10	1–5
13. Someone said "homosexuality" is a sin or immoral	2.00	0.98	1–4
14. A heterosexual person denied they have any heterosexism (e.g., "I'm offended you would imply I could be homophobic")	1.71	0.90	1–5
15. You were told you were overreacting when you talked about a negative experience you or your family had because of your parents' sexual orientation or gender identity	1.57	0.81	1–4
16. A heterosexual person said you are being "paranoid" when you suspect someone treated you or your family in a homophobic way	1.50	0.79	1–4
17. A friend or family member expressed disappointment about you having LGBTQ+ parents	1.53	0.92	1–4
18. Someone assumed your parent(s) has HIV because of their sexual orientation or gender identity	1.14	0.63	1–5
19. You heard that people of certain ethnicities are not LGBTQ+	1.36	0.70	1–4
20. Someone assumed your parent(s) must be depressed because of their sexual orientation or gender identity	1.16	0.55	1–4
21. A heterosexual person seemed uncomfortable because they thought your parent(s) were attracted to them	1.22	0.58	1–4
22. Someone assumed that you might be LGBTQ+ because your parent is/parents are	1.89	1.03	1–5
23. You were made to feel that your family was inferior because your parent(s) are LGBTQ+	1.45	0.70	1–3
24. You were told not to disclose or discuss that your parent(s) are LGBTQ+	1.22	0.50	1–3
25. You were told you must have missed out on having a same-gender or appropriate gender role model as a parent	1.63	0.77	1–4
26. Someone said, "your parents are not like those gay [LGBTQ+] people"	1.35	0.72	1–4
27. Someone asked, "where's your mom/dad?", assuming you have parents of these genders rather than same-sex parents	2.34	1.23	1–5

and who live primarily in the South and Midwest. Informed by MST, we had three research questions: (1) Do diverse youth with LGBTQ+ parents endorse microaggression items based on having LGBTQ+ parents, and if so, at what frequency? (2) How (and at what frequency) do youth describe experiencing discrimination based on having LGBTQ+ parents? (3) How are youths' responses to open-ended questions about discrimination experiences consistent with, or different from, microaggression item responses? This study was exploratory; we had few explicit hypotheses or expectations. We did, however, expect that these youth would experience microaggressions and overt discrimination regarding LGBTQ+ families, aligning with previous research (Farr et al., 2016; Haines et al., 2018). We also explored variations in experience by age and other demographic characteristics.

Importantly, we understand that using MST without attending to positive qualities, experiences, and strengths can inadvertently cast youth and their LGBTQ+ parents as depleted, powerless, and hopeless (Levitt et al., 2023). Thus, we

seek to move beyond a damage-centered focus (Tuck, 2009) while we also acknowledge potential harm from family-based discrimination and microaggressions experienced by youth with LGBTQ+ parents. We did this by incorporating the perspectives of youth directly (rather than other informants, such as parents or teachers, to speak on youth's experiences) and via multiple methods (e.g., using Likert scale items, cognitive interview techniques, and open-ended interview questions). To achieve our research aims, we interviewed youth to learn about their discrimination experiences broadly and also to deliver microaggression items we adapted from a scale created for LGBTQ+ youth (Swann et al., 2016). We used a cognitive interview format where we solicited item feedback (e.g., Willis, 1999). We did not assume that previous experiences, established measures, or questions developed for other groups "work" or apply to this sample of diverse youth with LGBTQ+ parents. We see our study as a step toward strengthening the microaggressions literature to address the everyday prejudice experienced by

racially, economically, and geographically diverse youth with LGBTQ+ parents.

METHOD

Participants

Participants included 51 individuals between the ages of 12 and 25 years old who are part of an LGBTQ+ parent family. At least one parent needed to be reported by participants as identifying as LGBTQ+, but the parent did not have to identify as such when the child was born or joined the family. Our study depended on participants who understood their parent to hold a minoritized sexual or gender identity, and we acknowledge that youth may not always have such understanding of their parents' identities. Underrepresented groups in terms of racial/ethnic identity, socioeconomic status, and geographic region of the United States were purposively oversampled. Most participants lived in suburban areas, although from different states, including KY ($n = 17$), OH ($n = 11$), PA ($n = 3$), CA ($n = 4$), MA ($n = 2$), TX ($n = 2$), and one participant from each of these states: CT, IN, MD, MI, MN, NC, NJ, NM, NY, OK, SC, and UT. There were also varied pathways to how participants joined their families, including through reproductive sex (i.e., among parents who identified as LGBTQ+ at the time and those who later came out; $n = 27$), donor insemination ($n = 13$), surrogacy ($n = 1$), private/closed domestic adoption ($n = 2$), foster care adoption ($n = 2$), international adoption ($n = 1$), or two or more of these pathways ($n = 5$).

After targeted recruitment, participants represented a range of ages from 12 to 25 years old and diverse social identities. They averaged 19.63 years, with 13 under 18, and 38 between 18 and 25. They were heterosexual/straight ($n = 25$), bisexual ($n = 7$), lesbian or gay ($n = 6$), confused/questioning ($n = 5$), queer ($n = 5$), pansexual ($n = 2$) and asexual ($n = 1$). They were cisgender women ($n = 28$) and men ($n = 14$), nonbinary ($n = 4$), trans men ($n = 2$), transmasculine ($n = 2$), and questioning ($n = 1$). They were white ($n = 31$), multiracial ($n = 9$), Black ($n = 5$), Latino/a ($n = 5$), and Asian ($n = 1$). Participants typically described themselves as middle-class ($M = 5.71$, $SD = 1.26$ on a 1–10 scale, range: 2.5–8); subjective social status described under measures.

Parents of participants (numbers exceed 51 since many participants had more than one parent) represented by this sample were reported by their children to be diverse in sexual orientation (20 identified as gay, 51 as lesbian, 14 as bisexual, 2 as queer, 2 as pansexual and 24 as heterosexual; data on sexual identity were missing for one participant whose parent is a transgender woman). Parents of participants represented different gender identities: 77 cisgender women, 31 cisgender men, 4 transwomen, 1 nonbinary parent, and 1 genderfluid parent. Finally, parents represented by participants were described to hold these racial/ethnic identities: 90 were white, 12 were Black, 3 were Latino/a, 5 were Asian, and 4 were multiracial.

Procedure

In this project (Stories & Experiences of LGBTQ+ Families from Youth, SELFY; Burand et al., 2023), participants were systematically and intentionally recruited in several ways (as in similar studies of LGBTQ+ people, for example, the Generations project, which involved a modified targeted sampling strategy and ethnographic approach for qualitative data collection; Barsigian et al., 2020). Study information was the same, regardless of advertisement type. Recruitment efforts were locally and regionally targeted to the geographic regions of the U.S. South, Midwest, and Mountain West and to individuals from lower socioeconomic and minoritized racial/ethnic backgrounds. The first and last authors intentionally led recruitment efforts (in-person, email communications) to represent LGBTQ+ parent and LGBTQ+ BIPOC identities, respectively. Recruitment involved email advertisements from university LGBTQ+ resource centers, alumni groups, school (e.g., gay–straight alliances), and other community organizations (e.g., LGBTQ+-affirming churches, Pride or LGBTQ+ community centers and organizations, such as Bluegrass Black Pride and Kentucky Black Pride), as well as advertisements via local radio stations, fliers passed out in-person at local and regional Pride events (or listed in Pride event pamphlets), including in a large historically Black city in the Southern United States to encourage socioeconomic and racial diversity, and social media (e.g., Facebook) posts through local community and national (e.g., COLAGE) organizations that work with LGBTQ+ individuals and their children.

If interested in participating, participants either were asked to complete or responded directly to a brief Qualtrics survey online that included an informed consent (or assent, if under 18) form and basic demographic and family information questions. If participants were under 18, a parent or legal guardian completed a permission form. Minors completed an additional online assent form. If eligible (i.e., between 12 and 25 years old, had at least one LGBTQ+ parent who had been out at least 5 years and during a time that the participant had lived, or was currently living, with them), a trained research personnel followed up with the participant to schedule a one- to two-hour phone or Google hangout/chat interview. Specifically, before the interview (and to assess eligibility), prospective participants were asked to first toggle "child" (or parent) in response to the following: "Are you an LGBTQ+ parent or are you the child of an LGBTQ+ parent?", "How old are you?" (with options to select 12–25 years), and "If you know it, how long has your parent been openly LGBTQ+?" (open-ended text box). The interview questions covered themes of discrimination (including microaggressions) related to identities such as race and having an LGBTQ+ parent, family communication, coping strategies, peer relationships, disclosure about family, and perceptions of support in their communities.

To generate constructive and robust feedback in a stream-lined way about the proposed microaggression survey, we made use of cognitive interview strategies (Willis, 1999; Willis & Artino, 2013) to assess a list of possible items (for more details, see Materials section below). These items about microaggressions that young people with LGBTQ+ parents face were modified from a 26-item measure developed for LGBTQ+ youth (Swann et al., 2016). The items were adapted for more general application among youth from LGBTQ+ families (who may, but need not, also identify as LGBTQ+). Following the audio-recorded interviews, full transcriptions were generated by trained research personnel. Data were collected from December 2018 to February 2020. Participants received a $50 e-gift card as compensation for their time. This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Kentucky.

Materials

Demographic questions

Participants responded to demographic questions in the survey (i.e., consent/assent forms) and during the interview. They completed survey questions about their age, racial/ethnic identity, and approximate household income. They reported their parents' racial/ethnic identities, their relationship to them (e.g., adoption, birth, etc.), and how long their parents had openly identified as LGBTQ+. For instance, participants responded to: "Please write out the racial/ethnic identities of your parent(s) below and describe your relationship to them (e.g., stepdad, African American; adoptive mom, multiracial)" and "please describe a little bit about how your family was formed (e.g., adoption)." During the interview, participants were asked to verbally confirm and elaborate on these responses. This was especially relevant to questions that prompted more in-depth explanations, such as whether the family formation option selected on the survey reflected their current family structure (e.g., whether parents divorced and remarried, whether a sperm donor became known later in the child's life, etc.). Interviewers asked follow-up questions about discrepant survey and interview responses; these were generally clarifying. We used interview responses in the case of such minor discrepancies. Perceptions of participants' social status were assessed in interviews with the MacArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status, which prompts comparison to others in the United States on a 1–10 scale; higher scores represent higher perceived status (e.g., jobs, money, education; Adler et al., 2000).

Microaggression questions

At the end of interviews, microaggressions were assessed with survey items adapted from Swann et al.'s (2016) microaggression inventory for LGBTQ+ youth. Our modified survey consisted of 27 items describing discriminatory or microaggressive situations such as, "Someone asked, 'where's your mom/dad?', assuming you have parents of these genders rather than same-sex parents" and "You heard someone say 'that's so gay'" (items and interview guide: https://osf.io/x3btc/?view_only=cf12307f4b474df493a2b50a5636c43f). As the statements were read, participants were asked to consider the frequency at which they had experienced each item within the past 6 months by responding using a 1 to 5 scale, with 1 = not at all, 2 = a few times, 3 = about every month, 4 = about every week, and 5 = about every day. Aligned with cognitive interview techniques (Willis, 1999; Willis & Artino, 2013), participants were asked for feedback and overall reflections about what they might change, add, or drop.

Experiences of discrimination

In the semi-structured interview, participants were asked about their experiences with discrimination. For example: "Earlier, you told me about your "core identities". Have you experienced discrimination or been treated differently based on any of these identities?" and "Could you tell me about a time that you felt like you were treated differently because you had an LGBTQ+ parent?". Participants most often described experiences of discrimination in response to these questions, yet they also shared such experiences at other parts of the interview, especially in response to questions about relationships with friends and extended family and experiences of community support. Therefore, coders analyzed entire transcripts for potential discrimination experiences, which were identified using a thematic analysis codebook approach (Braun & Clarke, 2021), described below.

Data analysis plan

Microaggression results

Descriptive results (i.e., mean, standard deviations, range, and frequency) are reported for each of the microaggression items. We report an overall average for the frequency of microaggression experiences (see Table 1). Finally, we include participant reflections on the microaggression items overall from the broader interviews.

Discrimination coding

Coding of experiences of discrimination occurred in two phases. In the first phase, a team consisting of the second author and three trained undergraduate research assistants used thematic analysis procedures outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) to generate a codebook of types of discrimination experienced by participants. The four coders represented a range of LGBTQ+ identities, including being a child from an LGBTQ+ parent family, and aspects of positionality in the context of these data were

discussed reflexively throughout the process of coding. Positionality—especially in terms of minoritized sexual and gender identities, racial/ethnic identities, age, geographic context, and family experiences—was regularly discussed among the research team, including all four authors, about how our identities impacted the research process, including interviewing, coding, analyzing, interpreting, and presenting data. We began by familiarizing ourselves with the data by closely reading through a randomly selected subset of transcripts. We then generated initial codes by identifying quotes where participants described experiences of stigma and discrimination and noting their features. During weekly meetings, we discussed our individual codes and generated a consensus list of initial codes. In this initial coding phase, 26 (51.0%) transcripts were included that were representative of the entire sample (e.g., participants' sexual, gender, and racial/ethnic identities, parents' sexual and gender identities, parenthood pathway, and geographic region). Once we reached data saturation (i.e., no new initial codes identified; Guest et al., 2006), we moved to identifying themes. This involved an iterative process of naming themes, defining themes, and revising names and definitions until coders agreed that the final themes accurately reflected the data. For example, we grouped initial codes that represented experiences with institutions as "Experienced Systemic Exclusion." This later became *Institutional Discrimination*. The final codebook is here: https://osf.io/grvth/?view_only=083b3a504f464f59b625f56e71e0e8bf.

In the second phase of coding, a second group of three trained undergraduate assistants read through all 51 transcripts, identified instances of discrimination, and coded each for type of discrimination using the themes identified in the first coding phase. Each transcript was independently coded by all coders and final codes were agreed upon in weekly coding meetings.

Integrating microaggression and discrimination results

Using a side-by-side joint display (McCrudden et al., 2021), we compared and contrasted findings from the close-ended microaggression questions (i.e., quantitative data) in the interview with the more open-ended ones about discrimination (i.e., qualitative), particularly in terms of frequency and salience. Members of the coding and authorship teams, as well as one additional research assistant who served as an auditor (three people in total), collaborated in analyzing each microaggression item and their "best fit" match to one qualitative theme. We did this to streamline and systematize the data using a convergent design and to facilitate the comparison and presentation of the mixed method findings (APA, 2018; Creswell & Clark, 2018). Finally, with microaggression and discrimination results, we explored variations by age and other demographic characteristics. To address intersectional experiences, we specifically examined discrimination experiences based on being an LGBTQ+ family and another identity (e.g., race).

RESULTS

Microaggression experiences

First, descriptive results (i.e., mean, standard deviation, frequency range) are reported for each microaggression item, as well as the overall average (Tables 1 and 3). The average frequency of experience across all 27 statements was low, occurring a few times in the past 6 months (M = 1.79; Median = 1; SD = 1.02; range = 1–5; Table 1). The most frequently endorsed statements were "You heard about people trying to deny rights for same-sex couples or LGBTQ+ people", "Someone expressed a stereotype (e.g., 'gay men are so good at fashion')", and "You saw a group either in person, or in the media, show negative signs (e.g., A religious group with a sign that said 'God hates fags')". The least frequently endorsed statements were "Someone assumed your parent(s) has HIV because of their sexual orientation or gender identity" and "Someone assumed your parent(s) must be depressed because of their sexual orientation or gender identity".

Participants were asked to reflect on the microaggression items broadly; 16 of 51 provided additional comments (11 of those 16 were ages 18–25). Multiple participants said that people assume one of their parents is not actually their parent or that they have a single parent. As such, others may act confused when two (or more) LGBTQ+ parents are part of the same family. Relatedly, when some suggested that they do not have "a mom," the assumption is that she passed away (and the participant receives an "I'm so sorry!" response) rather than being met with the understanding that some people do not have mothers (e.g., they have gay fathers, etc.).

Riley (15, Black, nonbinary, gay, suburban, cisgender bisexual mother, KY) described how extended family members can be sources of LGBTQ+ family microaggressions:

> "that [grandparents] actually affects the whole family… before my momma came out to us she came out to my grandma and my grandma you know she's old she's religious so her views on the LGBTQ community weren't very good…she always told me…your mom's trying to turn you gay…y'all should talk about…if they [grandparents] had something to say about your parent being LGBTQ."

One highlighted that peers are often perpetrators of such microaggressions, and another noted that teachers and school staff are common offenders too. A few indicated that the HIV item was not relevant and surprised them. For example, Abby (16, Black, cisgender woman, questioning, single gay father,

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CA) noted this question shocked her. Several participants indicated that the items should consider the past year rather than the last 6 months.

Experiences of discrimination

Full theme descriptions and frequencies of discrimination related to having LGBTQ+ parents are in Table 2; exemplar quotes are in Table 3. All names are pseudonyms; identities are self-described. The 11 themes reflect discrimination common across marginalized groups (e.g., *Interpersonal Experiences of Being Excluded*, *Aggression*) and unique to having LGBTQ+ parents (e.g., *Heteronormativity/Cisnormativity*, *Being Outed*). Themes represent interactions with individuals like family members, peers, and teachers (e.g., *Invalidation*, *Implicit Discomfort from Others*, *Asked Invasive Questions*), with institutions (e.g., *Institutional Discrimination*), and with broader sociocultural ideas about LGBTQ+ families (e.g., *Pressure to be a "Poster Child"*, *Internalized Stigmatization*). Participants' stories (including individual quotations) could include multiple codes that overlapped across themes (or subthemes); they were not mutually exclusive.

On average, each participant reported 7.62 (SD = 5.99) discrimination instances, with 382 in total. The 3 most frequent themes were *Assumptions Made by Others* (n = 152 instances), *Aggression* (n = 73), and *Interpersonal Experiences of Being Excluded* (n = 30). The high *Assumptions Made by Others* appeared driven by subtheme, *Heteronormativity/Cisnormativity* (n = 113). These instances conveyed that LGBTQ+ families are not the norm (see Chelsea's story, Table 3). Participants reported experiencing assumptions that they identified as LGBTQ+ due to having LGBTQ+ parents (n = 22). If participants were LGBTQ+, others assumed this resulted from LGBTQ+ parents. *Aggression* included teasing and derogatory remarks to participants directly (*Verbal Aggression*; n = 53) or about LGBTQ+ families (*Witnessing Aggression*; n = 20). No one reported physical aggression due to having LGBTQ+ parents (yet they did so due to other identities, like race). *Interpersonal Experiences of Being Excluded* captured when participants were excluded from a meaningful relationship because of their LGBTQ+ family. As Amber's example (Table 3) highlights, exclusion often happened with peers.

Several themes, despite fewer instances, reflect discrimination unique to LGBTQ+ families. *Invalidation of Family* (n = 15) and *Invalidation of Parents' Identity* (n = 3), both subthemes of *Experiences of Invalidation* (n = 25), highlight when others communicate that LGBTQ+ family relationships or identities are not as valid or "real" as their cisgender heterosexual counterparts (see Stephanie's example, Table 3). Examples of *Invalidation of Parent's Identity* included intentional misgendering of the participant's parent by close others. Participants also reported *Institutional Discrimination* (n = 28) in which participants were negatively impacted by *Discriminatory Laws and Policies* (n = 11), or *Exclusion by*

Institutions (e.g., libraries, churches, schools; n = 16). Several recalled the family impact of lack of access to legal protections prior to marriage equality, like Chelsea: "I was getting healthcare and my mom was getting healthcare but because my other mom and brother were not legally connected to that mom, they were not getting health insurance." *Pressure to be a "Poster Child"* (n = 23) showed impacts of broader stigmatization of LGBTQ+ families (see Tori's example, Table 3).

Mixed method results and demographic comparisons

Table 3 provides a side-by-side comparison of the quantitative microaggression and qualitative discrimination results. The 27 items were matched to 5 themes; overlap was common in experiences of invalidation, assumptions, institutional discrimination, aggression, and discomfort. Not all discrimination themes (6) were captured by microaggression items. Exclusion, invasive questions, spokesperson, poster child, being outed, and internalized stigma did not align with any items. Of these themes, exclusion and poster child were the most frequent (named by 18 and 14 participants, respectively, of the 51 total). Similarly, some items were endorsed by more participants than were identified as a theme, like institutional discrimination (41 participants reported this microaggression, while only 19 described it as discrimination).

We explored variations by demographic characteristics across our microaggression and discrimination results. Due to small cell sizes, we grouped racial identities as BIPOC or white, sexual identities as minoritized or heterosexual, and gender identities as expansive or cisgender. Family structure was grouped as lesbian mothers, gay fathers, or families with other minoritized sexual and gender identities. Parenthood pathways were adoption, ART, or reproductive sex. Even so, we were statistically underpowered for most tests to detect medium or large effects. With our sample size and groups, power for large effects was .97 for correlations, .80 for *t*-tests, and .70 for ANOVA with 3 groups (and 0.62 with 4). Independent samples *t* tests showed no differences by participant racial/ethnic, sexual, or gender identity. One-way ANOVA revealed no differences in geography and family structure. Pearson bivariate correlations indicated no differences by perceived social status. With discrimination specifically, differences were related to age and parenthood pathway. (There were none in this regard for microaggression items.) Emerging adults reported more instances (M = 8.82, SD = 6.22) than adolescents (M = 3.83, SD = 3.07), $t(48) = -2.66$, $p = .005$. Participants conceived via ART (M = 10.89, SD = 7.37) versus reproductive sex (M = 5.59, SD = 4.31) reported more discrimination, $F(2, 48) = 5.22$, $p = .009$ (there were no statistically significant differences in this regard with adoption).

Of the 382 total discrimination instances, 52 involved multiple identities (LGBTQ+ family *and* another). Of the 52, 38 were about own sexual identity, 12 about gender, and 3

TABLE 2 Experiences of discrimination identified in thematic analysis.

Theme (instances)	Description & Subthemes (instances across participants)
Interpersonal experiences of being excluded ($n=30$)	Experiences of discrimination where a meaningful person (e.g., family member, peer, teacher) in the participant's life excluded or rejected them from specific experiences or specific relationships because of their identity. This includes situations where participants lost friendships after peers learned about their parents' LGBTQ+ identities as well as instances where participants were excluded from family gatherings and events.
Experiences of invalidation ($n=25$)	This theme includes experiences where participants were made to feel as though their identity was invalidated by others or that others questioned the authenticity of their identity. Examples of this include invalidation of one's family identity as a person with LGBTQ+ parents by other people in the LGBTQ+ community. This theme also includes experiences where others invalidated the possibility that the participant could experience discrimination based on their identity.
	Invalidation of family ($n=15$): Within experiences of invalidation, these experiences specifically include times when family relationships with LGBTQ+ parents were invalidated. Examples of this include one parent not being invited to family gatherings by the other parent's extended family on the basis of their LGBTQ+ family relationships not being considered legitimate. These experiences differ from Interpersonal Experiences of Being Excluded because they involve a negation of the family relationship above and beyond not being included in a specific event.
	Invalidation of parents' identity ($n=3$): This theme refers to experiences where the participant witnessed an invalidation of their parents' sexual or gender identity (e.g., intentional misgendering of parent).
Institutional discrimination ($n=28$)	Experiences within this theme represent discrimination experienced by participants when interfacing with institutions.
	Experiences of Institutional Exclusion ($n=16$): Experiences in this theme reflect those instances in which institutions (e.g., schools, workplaces, churches, community libraries, hospitals) communicated that participants didn't belong because of their identity. This could include both instances where participants were explicitly excluded (e.g., library not accepting family donation of LGBTQ+ related books, losing job because of identity) and experiences where participants were made to feel like they didn't belong because of a lack of explicit inclusion (e.g., forms assuming parents had a mom and dad, gendered parent–child activities).
	Discriminatory laws and policies ($n=11$): This theme is used to note instances where participants identified specific laws and policies that explicitly targeted or denied rights to members of a group they identified with. While instances coded under Experiences of Institutional Exclusion include instances where individuals (e.g., doctors, librarians, employers) acted on behalf of an institution; this theme represents instances where a law or policy was enacted by an institution (e.g., government, workplace, school) itself.
Assumptions made by others reflecting bias/ignorance ($n=152$)	Experiences within this theme reflect interactions participants had with other individuals that communicated assumptions about participants' identities. These assumptions include both negative stereotypes about specific groups and those that reflect beliefs about who is included in normative groups (e.g., heteronormative assumptions about family). Although these experiences were not necessarily interpreted by participants as intentional, they communicated to the participants that perpetrators did not value group(s) that participants belong to in the same way as more privileged groups.
	Experiences of heteronormativity/cisnormativity ($n=113$): These experiences involve interactions had by participants that reflect heteronormative and/or cisnormative assumptions. Such assumptions include assumptions about gender roles, assumptions that participant has parents of different genders or that parents are cisgender. Experiences within this theme also include those where others communicated a lack of knowledge/ignorance about LGBTQ+ identities resulting from an expectation that heterosexual, monosexual, and binary cisgender identities are the normative identity.
	Assumption that participant also identifies as LGBTQ+ ($n=22$): Experiences within this theme reflect instances where other individuals assumed that participant identified as LGBTQ+ because of the stereotype that having LGBTQ+ parents will make the participant more likely to identify as LGBTQ+. This would also include instances where LGBTQ+ identifying participant was assumed to only identify as LGBTQ+ because they have LGBTQ+ parent(s).
Aggression ($n=73$)	These experiences reflection experiences of discrimination in which participants perceived an intention to cause harm (emotional, mental, physical) beyond harm caused by exclusion.
	Direct verbal aggression ($n=53$): These experiences include comments that were directly made to the participant that communicated negative affect toward the participant because of their/their parents' identity. This includes experiences described by participants as teasing or bullying and experiences where participants were told that having LGBTQ+ parents was "weird" or "gross" or that being LGBTQ+ is a sin. Direct verbal aggression includes instances where the perpetrator made a statement directly to the participant or the perpetrator made a comment about the participant/the participant's family where the perpetrator knew that the participant would overhear the comment.
	Witnessing aggression ($n=20$): This theme reflects instances where participants witnessed experiences similar to those described in Direct Verbal and Physical Aggression. However, the aggression was not directly targeted to the participant. Instead, participants reported overhearing people in their immediate environment make comments about identity groups that the participant belongs to. For example, participants reported overhearing peers make homophobic jokes or using LGBTQ+ slurs or witnessing anti-LGBTQ+ protests. Instances where participants were told about discrimination experienced by others that they did not witness firsthand are not included under this theme.

T A B L E   2   (Continued)

Theme (instances)	Description & Subthemes (instances across participants)
Implicit discomfort from others (*n* = 19)	This theme reflects ambiguous experiences where participants perceived that they were being treated differently from others because of their identity. In many cases, this was described by participants as others being uncomfortable around them because of their identity. Perpetrators' actions were ambiguous but were perceived by the participants as communicating a discomfort with/negative feelings about their identity.
Asked invasive questions (*n* = 9)	This theme reflects experiences where participants were asked questions that were considered to be too personal or that they would have not been asked if they held other identities.
Asked to be a spokesperson (*n* = 9)	This theme includes instances where participants felt pressured to act as a "spokesperson" for their identity group or to educate others about the experiences of the whole group. Compared to instances described by "Asked Invasive Questions" which were considered to be too personal, instances in this theme were interpreted by participants as reflecting a curiosity about the experiences of the target identity group.
Pressure to be a poster child (*n* = 23)	Participants who spoke to this theme identified feeling pressure to present themselves as "perfect" or to "turn out great" in order to disprove negative stereotypes about LGBTQ+ parents. This pressure could refer to broader developmental outcomes as well as more specific pressure to identify as cisgender and heterosexual.
Being outed (*n* = 1)	Instances in this theme reflect experiences where another person disclosed a participant's identity without the consent of the participant. While this wasn't always intended to cause harm to the participant, being outed in this way by someone else made the participant feel uneasy or unsafe.
Internalized stigmatization (*n* = 16)	Instances in this theme include those where participants endorse negative societal ideas about their own identity group and apply those beliefs toward themselves or their family. This theme would include instances where a cisgender, heterosexual participant held homophobic or transphobic beliefs when their parent(s) hold those identities.

Note: Frequencies for overarching themes include sum of frequencies of subthemes and instances that were coded as the overarching theme but did not fit under any subtheme.

about race. For instance, Abby (16, Black, cisgender woman, questioning, single gay father, CA) said: "some of the Black community is very homophobic and I have to like say please be quiet because you guys are pissing me off a little."

DISCUSSION

Our general expectation that diverse youth with LGBTQ+ parents would experience microaggressions and discrimination was indeed supported in this convergent mixed method design study, aligned with MST (Brooks, 1981; Meyer, 2003; Rich et al., 2020; Rivas-Koehl et al., 2023). The findings reflect that youth with LGBTQ+ parents do commonly experience microaggressions and discrimination based on their parents' LGBTQ+ identities, particularly reflecting heterosexism and consistent with existing studies (e.g., Farr et al., 2016; Haines et al., 2018; Nadal, 2019). All microaggression items were endorsed across the sample, albeit infrequently. Discrimination was commonly reported across participants too, regardless of own intersections of diverse identities and circumstances (Battle & Ashley, 2008; Bowleg, 2008; Fish & Russell, 2018). These results indicate that these are fairly universal experiences for youth with LGBTQ+ parents (Lick et al., 2013).

The most frequently endorsed microaggression items tended to reflect negative group attitudes (i.e., broad LGBTQ+ stereotypes) rather than directed toward a specific individual. The latter were the least frequently endorsed items, including assumptions about the mental and sexual health of LGBTQ+ parents. This aligns with the phenomenon of courtesy or affiliate stigma (DiBennardo & Saguy, 2018; Robinson & Brewster, 2016), given that these

are children of LGBTQ+ parents who may not hold their own LGBTQ+ identity (i.e., the notion of an LGBTQ+ family identity versus an individual LGBTQ+ identity). We argue these experiences can be both "stigma by association" and *direct* forms of stigma that individuals experience based on their LGBTQ+ family identity (Cashen, 2022), which the item and open-ended responses of our participants suggest. The most endorsed microaggressions also frequently aligned with the most common themes of discrimination, such as *Assumptions Made by Others* (e.g., assumptions or stereotypes that youth with LGBTQ+ parents will be LGBTQ+ too) or *Witnessing Aggression* (e.g., seeing one's LGBTQ+ parent harassed or discriminated against). Such heterosexism is documented in the LGBTQ+ parent family literature (e.g., Farr et al., 2022), but rarely from youth with LGBTQ+ parents directly and not via mixed methods. Combined with qualitative coding that revealed no physical harassment, these results align with literature indicating that less traumatic microaggressions (microinsults, heterosexism) occur more often than assumptions of abnormality and threats (Carone et al., 2022; Haines et al., 2018; Nadal, 2019).

We did not find differences based on demographic characteristics with microaggression experiences, and only a few differences in this way regarding discrimination. Specifically, youth born to their parents via ART versus reproductive sex reported greater discrimination. This difference may reflect that children born to LGBTQ+ parents (rather than experiencing a parent coming out later, common among those born via reproductive sex) have lived in LGBTQ+ parent families for longer and have had more time to experience discrimination. The other difference was that older youth reported more instances of discrimination than did younger

TABLE 3 Joint display of qualitative and quantitative results in mixed methods, side-by-side panel.

Qualitative (Sub)theme	Microaggression item	Item frequency[a]	Examples of qualitative quotes[b]	Theme frequency
Interpersonal experiences of being excluded	N/A	N/A	"In like middle school, I had a good friend that was very religious and when she asked me about my parents and I told her because I trusted her, all of a sudden she really didn't want to hang out with me anymore" (*Amber, 22, white, bisexual/questioning cisgender woman, cisgender lesbian mothers, TX*)	n = 18 (30 instances)
Experiences of invalidation	2. You were told that being gay [LGBTQ+] is just a phase	n = 20	"When she [grandmother] goes out, she doesn't… like when she talks to you, like just, anybody in general that's not within the family she goes, like, oh, my mom's friend [referring to stepmother]." (*Stephanie, 23, Asian, heterosexual cisgender woman, cisgender lesbian mothers, TX*)	n = 15 (25 instances)
	3. A heterosexual person didn't believe that LGBTQ+ people face discrimination	n = 28		
	15. You were told you were overreacting when you talked about a negative experience you or your family had because of your parents' sexual orientation or gender identity	n = 20	"When [parent] first came out, when they would use her dead name to refer to her or call her, like a boy, but I understand if that's a mistake, because sometimes they would do it on purpose." (*Anna, 15, white, questioning cisgender woman, cisgender lesbian mother and transgender mother, KY*)	
	16. A heterosexual person said you are being "paranoid" when you suspect someone treated you/your family in a homophobic way	n = 17		
	17. A friend or family member expressed disappointment about you having LGBTQ+ parents	n = 15		
	23. You were made to feel that your family was inferior because your parent(s) are LGBTQ+	n = 17		
Institutional discrimination	5. You heard about people trying to deny rights for same-sex couples or LGBTQ+ people	n = 41	"I remember whenever I came out as trans, right around the time the, uh, the military ban went through, and I was in ROTC at [university] and, uh, I wasn't able to be contracted to that because of that" (*John, 22, white, pansexual transgender man, genderfluid pansexual parent, KY*)	n = 19 (28 instances)

TABLE 3 (Continued)

Qualitative (Sub)theme	Microaggression item	Item frequency[a]	Examples of qualitative quotes[b]	Theme frequency
Assumptions made by others reflecting bias/ignorance	4. Someone said LGBTQ+ people are trying to get "special rights" that they don't deserve	n = 27	"it [having a gay father] is important to me because people judge you and they want to judge your family and that just because your father's gay you'll end up gay and you know you're not as strong because your dad's not... you know, it's all not real" (Preston, 20, Black, cisgender man, gay father and heterosexual mother, OH)	n = 45 (152 instances)
	6. Someone implied that only heterosexuality & families with a mother and father are normal	n = 36		
	7. Someone said, "you know how gay [LGBTQ+] people are"	n = 24	"A lot of queerspawn experience this, your waiter comes, and you ask for the check and the waiter says do you want one check or two because they assume it's two different families." (Chelsea, 24, white, queer cisgender woman, cisgender lesbian and bisexual mothers, NC)	
	8. Someone expressed a stereotype ("gay men are so good at fashion")	n = 43		
	9. You heard someone talk about "the gay lifestyle"	n = 25		
	11. Someone said, "I don't mind gay [LGBTQ+] people, they just shouldn't be so public"	n = 26		
	14. A heterosexual person denied they have any heterosexism ("I'm offended that you would imply I could be homophobic")	n = 25	"A lot of people tend to think I'm gay because my dads are gay but that's not true." (Nathan, 20, white, cisgender man, cisgender heterosexual mother and cisgender gay fathers, UT)	
	18. Someone assumed your parent(s) has HIV because of their sexual orientation or gender identity	n = 3		
	19. You heard that people of certain ethnicities are not LGBTQ+	n = 14	"If I'm doing some type of paperwork out and there's something on the form that says like mother's name and father's name, that sort of has an effect on me." (Peyton, 21, white, trans man/gender nonconforming, cisgender lesbian and bisexual mothers, PA)	
	20. Someone assumed your parent(s) must be depressed because of their sexual orientation or gender identity	n = 6		
	22. Someone assumed that you might be LGBTQ+ because your parent is/parents are	n = 27	"When we all found out, my oldest brother sat us all down and was like, you cannot tell anybody... he kind of scared us all into not really being open about it." (Becca, 22, white, heterosexual cisgender woman, cisgender lesbian mother and stepmother, KY)	
	24. You were told not to disclose or discuss that your parent(s) are LGBTQ+	n = 9		
	25. You were told you must have missed out on having a same-gender or appropriate gender role model as a parent	n = 24		
	26. Someone said, "your parents are not like those [LGBTQ+] people"	n = 12		
	27. Someone asked, "where's your mom/dad?", assuming you have parents of both genders rather than same-sex parents	n = 36		

TABLE 3 (Continued)

Qualitative (Sub)theme	Microaggression item	Item frequency[a]	Examples of qualitative quotes[b]	Theme frequency
Aggression	1. You heard someone say "that's so gay"	$n = 37$	"I went to like, public middle school that had an arts magnet program, and…a lot of the kids in the arts magnet program were the more like, progressive, liberal people from my town and then a lot of the other people were not in the magnet program and I remember a lot of, like, "that's so gay," or like, "you guys are all homos in that program," and that being sort of magnified by the fact that I had gay parents" (*Taylor, 21, white, cisgender woman, lesbian mothers, CA*)	$n = 33$ (73 instances)
	10. You saw a group either in person, or in the media, show negative signs (A religious group with a sign, e.g., "God hates fags")	$n = 41$	"I remember one where this point would taunt me every day making fun of me because my mom was in a same-sex relationship" (*Charlotte, 19, white, cisgender heterosexual woman, cisgender lesbian mothers, OH*)	
	12. Someone said a hateful slur about LGBTQ+ people ("fag")	$n = 34$	"I would say some of it's been a struggle because I've seen people throw bottles at my mom. I've seen people call her names." (*Tessa, 19, biracial, cisgender heterosexual woman, cisgender bisexual mother and cisgender heterosexual father, OH*)	
	13. Someone said "homosexuality" is a sin or immoral	$n = 23$	"In high school there was um there was a day that I was um like verbally and physically harassed um in my gym class" (*Peyton, 21, white, trans man/gender nonconforming, lesbian (birth & step) and bisexual (adoptive) mothers, PA*)	
Implicit discomfort from others	21. A heterosexual person seemed uncomfortable because they thought your parent(s) were attracted to them	$n = 8$	"I think people's parents would treat me differently after I told them, like they couldn't talk about that community around me as much because maybe they had different opinions or they were worried about offending me, and I would say that kind of set me off away from some people" (*Jessica, 20, white, cisgender woman, bisexual father and heterosexual mother – both re-partnered, KY*)	$n = 14$ (19 instances)
			"I mean sometimes we were out in public and people hear me call both moms, you may get stares" (*Charlotte, 19, white, cisgender heterosexual woman, cisgender lesbian mothers, OH*)	

TABLE 3 (Continued)

Qualitative (Sub)theme	Microaggression item	Item frequency[a]	Examples of qualitative quotes[b]	Theme frequency
Asked invasive questions	N/A	N/A	"I will have practical strangers ask me, 'How were you born then, like, you know how?', and I don't feel the need to tell them that I was born using a sperm donor. They're not entitled to that information, or they ask questions about my parents' sexual activities that I think are totally off limits for anyone to ask." (*Claudia, 20, white, cisgender heterosexual woman, cisgender lesbian mother and bisexual mother, MI*)	n = 7 (9 instances)
Asked to be a spokesperson	N/A	N/A	"People want to know, what does your family think about this? Are you worried about XYZ thing? And so I, you know, answer a lot of questions and I can only speak for my family. You know, I don't know how the whole community feels." (*Claudia, 20, white, cisgender heterosexual woman, cisgender lesbian mother and bisexual mother, MI*)	n = 4 (9 instances)
Pressure to be a poster child	N/A	N/A	"People have these like stereotypes maybe about LGBTQ parents or just like thinking that they're like subpar. And I guess maybe part of me wanted to like, rise above that. I guess I was a really good student in school, I was like a huge overachiever, so I think part of that in addition to being my personality, and just like having great parents is that kind of wanting to go above and beyond." (*Tori, 23, white, cisgender questioning woman, cisgender lesbian mothers, PA*)	n = 14 (23 instances)
Being outed	N/A	N/A	"I had a suitemate was also queer and she kind of outed me to people. And we never really had a conversation about what I was comfortable with, so it was a little surprising." (*Morgan, 21, Biracial, asexual nonbinary woman, cisgender bisexual mother and cisgender heterosexual father, NY*)	n = 1 (1 instance)
Internalized stigmatization	N/A	N/A	"Well, I would say the hardest part was getting over the fact that I have a gay parent, you know? Not having a mom and a dad– having both sexes in the same household." (*Sam, 20, Mixed, straight cisgender male, single gay father, KY*)	n = 9 (16 instances)

[a] *n* reflects overall frequency of how many participants (of 51 total) who endorsed this item *ever* happened (rating 2–5).

[b] All names are pseudonyms and all identities were self-described by participants.

youth. This result could be driven by developmental changes in ability to reflect on experiences or reflection prompted by some of those community connection shifts that come with emerging adulthood (Cashen, 2022). Finally, we noted that about 14% of discrimination instances involved multiple identities (LGBTQ+ family and another marginalized identity). Clearly, the role of intersectional social identities and experiences are imperative to consider, and align well with recent MST theoretical advances (Rivas-Koehl et al., 2023), in understanding the lives of youth with LGBTQ+ parents (e.g., Battle & Ashley, 2008; Crenshaw, 1989; Ghavami et al., 2016).

Our findings underscore the importance of utilizing mixed methods approaches when exploring understudied phenomena among an understudied population. Firstly, in inquiring about microaggression items via cognitive interview techniques (Willis, 1999), rich and nuanced feedback was generated about the unique experiences of youth with LGBTQ+ parents that may be distinct from LGBTQ+ people and could reflect generational or identity differences. Youth highlighted grandparents' roles, pervasive heterosexist assumptions about LGBTQ+ family structures, and the time span considered, which could inform future scale development research.

Secondly, qualitative coding revealed themes of discrimination that youth with LGBTQ+ parents uniquely and directly experience that were not covered in the microaggression items, such as exclusion, outing, invasive questions, internalized stigma, and pressure to be a spokesperson or a poster child. There are parallels to and overlap with the experiences of LGBTQ+ people, but there appear to be specific versions experienced by children with LGBTQ+ parents (i.e., this is not exclusively "affiliate" stigma). Specifically, the 27 microaggression items were identified to align with fewer than half of the qualitative themes (5 of 11). Additionally, the fact that more participants endorsed a microaggression item about institutional discrimination as compared to discussing institutional discrimination more open-endedly in the interview could also suggest that quantitative survey questions capture less impactful or direct experiences than do the qualitative prompts (i.e., many participants were familiar with institutional discrimination but did not necessarily feel directly impacted by it). Thus, our mixed methods findings indicate that modifying an existing measure designed for LGBTQ+ youth is not sufficient to comprehensively capture the experiences of diverse youth with LGBTQ+ parents. Consideration of qualitative themes and feedback generated from more open-ended prompts appears essential for future microaggression scale item development.

Institutional discrimination and the role of equality (such as marriage equality) were salient for youth with LGBTQ+ parents in terms of the ramifications on family life. This mirrors research with LGBTQ+ adults and parents about the significance of legal safeguards, including marriage rights (e.g., Farr et al., 2022). Importantly, many described instances of discrimination throughout the interview, rather than exclusively in response to relevant prompts. This underscores the limitations of only employing specific questions or quantitative items. The utility of (convergent) mixed methods designs to yield similar and distinct results across quantitative and qualitative analyses has been supported in LGBTQ+ youth research (Hammack et al., 2022). We have extended this in our study, one of the first to do so among youth with LGBTQ+ parents.

Strengths, limitations, and future research directions

Many previous studies of LGBTQ+ parent families have been limited in terms of racial/ethnic identity, socioeconomic status, and geographic location (Fish & Russell, 2018). This sample may more accurately represent LGBTQ+ families in the United States across intersections of identities and demographic characteristics. Additionally, previous studies have been limited in including the perspective of the parents, but not children, in the family. This study is unique in its approach of gaining insight directly from adolescent and emerging adult children of LGBTQ+ parents and doing so via a convergent mixed methods design. This allowed us to draw on the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative approaches, to validate and corroborate the results produced via different methods, and to gain a more comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences (Creswell & Clark, 2018).

This study also has limitations. The sample size of 51 was underpowered for quantitative analyses but was appropriate for addressing our descriptive and exploratory research questions using a convergent mixed methods approach. As a qualitative project, the goal was not generalizability, but rather representation. We also did not have direct information about participants' perceptions about their family's visibility as an LGBTQ+ parent family, which could have implications for their experiences. Future research should strive to represent the population's entirety. We acknowledge alternative approaches that might yield additional or different results with mixed methods designs, including sequential ones or differential ways to pool and compare quantitative and qualitative data in a joint display (Creswell & Clark, 2018).

Future studies could further develop the microaggression items explored here into a full-scale measure that could be implemented with larger samples of youth with LGBTQ+ parents. A new quantitative assessment could be a tool to advance understanding about unique experiences of adolescents and young adults with LGBTQ+ parents and how to support positive adjustment amidst intersectional minority stress in the context of families (Brooks, 1981; Meyer, 2010; Rich et al., 2020; Rivas-Koehl et al., 2023). Research—perhaps with further development of a quantitative tool—could explore associations with wellbeing, adjustment, resilience, and coping amidst discrimination. This would involve going beyond a damage-centered approach (Tuck, 2009), solely focused on minority stress, toward a more strengths-based one (Levitt et al., 2023).

Implications for policy and practice

The findings are relevant to law, policy, and practice in understanding experiences and impact of discrimination and microaggressions in interpersonal and institutional settings. At the time of this writing, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) is tracking over 500 anti-LGBTQ+ bills in the United States (see: https://www.aclu.org/legislative-attacks-on-lgbtq-rights). Thus, the relevance of microaggressions and discrimination, and their potential harm, are salient and important to practitioners who work with LGBTQ+ parents and their children, including medical and mental health professionals, educators, and child welfare personnel. In contrast, and moving forward, laws and policies that support the wellbeing and resilience of LGBTQ+ parent families could minimize the negative effects of stigma and discrimination (Farr et al., 2022).

Conclusion

In summary, in this mixed methods study with a convergent design, diverse youth with LGBTQ+ parents described microaggressions and discrimination based on their families as common experiences that occur in a variety of ways, including as unique stigma that occurs *directly* from, *and* by association with being part of an LGBTQ+ family. Our findings extend the literature on LGBTQ+ parent families in exploring the experiences of an underrepresented sample of adolescents and emerging adults from their direct perspectives with a noncomparative approach. Our results support the importance of assessing diverse youth's microaggression and discrimination experiences via multiple methods. Overall, findings may inform researchers and professionals in effectively addressing the needs of diverse youth with LGBTQ+ parents, as well as laws and policies that are affirming and supportive of LGBTQ+ parent families.

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