



University of
BRISTOL

'It's just fundamental to my existence': exploring the narratives of young
adults with lesbian parents

Student Number: 2394518

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Introduction

As the daughter of lesbian parents conceived via anonymous sperm donor, my family has been a source of pride, embarrassment, curiosity and confusion, often all at the same time. Despite knowing other families like mine, it wasn't until I met a friend at university who also had lesbian parents that we both realised we had never properly discussed our experiences with someone who shared our family structure. I began to wonder how other young adults with lesbian parents narrated and perceived their experiences of being raised in a planned lesbian family.

Finding a statistic on the amount of planned lesbian families in the UK was challenging, with McDonald and Morgan (2019: 486) estimating 20,000 dependent children live in same-sex couple families in the UK. However, this includes all variations of same-sex families, including those with children from previous heterosexual relationships, suggesting the number of children born into lesbian families to be far lower. This sets the context for the hidden nature of those with lesbian parents in both academia and wider society.

This dissertation is situated within broader sociological queer theory and family studies. It draws on queer theory to disrupt heteronormative understandings of the family and challenge dominant assumptions about the family's relationship to queerness. Understanding LGBTQ+ families contributes to queer theory more generally, as the position of children with LGBTQ+ parents problematises the binary between

heterosexual and queer. Examining previous research on LGBTQ+ peoples' experiences of stigma, community and identity, it will evaluate where young adults with lesbian parents fit in relation to these narratives. As discussed in the literature review, there is a paucity of research which centres those with LGBTQ+ parents in their own right, and when they do, all LGBTQ+ families are grouped together. There has also been a resistance to research the experience of the second-generation; LGBTQ+ people with LGBTQ+ parents. This dissertation aims to contribute to the existing body of literature by amplifying the voices of young adults with lesbian parents, a demographic that occupies an interesting and underexplored position within the LGBTQ+ community.

Based on the literature, my research is guided by the following questions:

How do young adults with lesbian parents characterise and narrate their experiences within their family?

How do participants relate and engage with the LGBTQ+ community?

What is the perceived importance of participants' family structure to their own identity?

Firstly, I will examine the existing literature on the topics of family, stigma, community and identity, before identifying the scholarship's gaps and thus contextualising this research's aims. The findings will then discuss the key themes; stigma, the characterisation of their family, community, and identity. Finally, the conclusion will discuss the implications of the findings about how young adults with lesbian parents

narrate their experiences, and highlight areas for this research to be developed in the future.

Literature Review

Family

First it is necessary to situate this research within the broader context of queer theory and the family. 'Family life' is seen as synonymous to heterosexuality (Pratesi 2012: 95), based on a heteronormative ideology where heterosexuality is legitimised and privileged as fundamental and 'natural' (Cohen 2005: 24). This results in the expectation of the nuclear family as the standard and best way to raise children.

Using the term 'queerspawn', Sachs advocates for the use of 'queer relationality' to push back against the entrenched hegemony of heteronormative understandings of relationships (2022: 112). In the language used by Judith Butler (1990) to talk about gender, family practices can be seen as 'performative', with families constructed through their enactment (Weeks et al 2001: 38). This treats families as interactional, and as a source of identity (Biblarz and Savci 2010: 491), emphasising self-activity and agency: family is what we do (Weeks et al 2001: 38). This reveals the discursive nature of 'family' as a social construction, and serves as a site for further theorising queer worldmaking (2022: 112). LGBTQ+ families demonstrate this by challenging heterosexuality's reproductive monopoly and traditional ways of understanding kinship (Folgerø 2008: 142). It is from this perspective that the position of children with LGBTQ+ parents become significant, by undermining heteronormative conceptions of familial identities as fixed, and creating new possibilities for forms of belonging (2022: 130). When the 'family of origin' is understood as queer, then traditional narratives of both

queerness and family are disrupted. This suggests a need to re-examine the meaning and significance of family, centring on the way members of LGBTQ+ families understand their own experiences.

Earlier literature on LGBTQ+ families was largely from a psychological comparative framework, where LGBTQ+ families were studied in comparison to heterosexual families with a focus on adjustment outcomes of children instead of individual experiences (Welsh 2011: 69). They took a defensive stance to demonstrate LGBTQ+ families are 'just as good' as heterosexual families (Goldberg et al 2024: 220). When using heterosexual families as a control group, the normative status of heterosexuality remains unquestioned (Clarke and Demetriou 2016: 132). This assumes that finding no difference between LGBTQ+ and heterosexual families is desirable (ibid), and therefore reinforces that difference from the norm is indicative of deficiency (Clarke 2002: 212).

This highlights a theoretical gap in the literature and demonstrates the need for research to investigate LGBTQ+ families in their own right. This avoids ascribing heteronormative categories onto LGBTQ+ families, and instead focuses on the experiences and meanings of those with lived experience. Stories of children with LGBTQ+ parents are often curated using a stereotypical narrative: 'a moment of shame about [their] families, the overcoming of this moment, and movement to a place of triumph and pride' (Epstein-Fine and Zook 2018: 17). Their lives are edited to prove straight audiences wrong and to provide possibility and role models for queer audiences

(2018: 13). Consequently, LGBTQ+ families accounts are flattened of nuance, lacking the 'luxury' to be as openly complicated, confusing, or dysfunctional as heterosexual families (Garner 2004: 6). Much of the literature I will discuss was produced around 2000-2018, a period when laws on LGBTQ+ families e.g. marriage and adoption rights were being contested. This may have resulted in a desire to portray LGBTQ+ families as idealised, from both researchers and participants (Gahan 2018: 256). This demonstrates the need for up-to-date research in the current social context. My research aims to understand the experiences of young adults with lesbian parents from a non-comparative and non-judgemental lens. It will not try to 'prove' anything about the nature of LGBTQ+ families, including trying to affirm the suitability of them. Instead, it will centre voices of the children of these families themselves, aided by my own identity in a lesbian parented family.

Stigma

A recurrent theme in the literature is LGBTQ+ people's experience of stigma. Society establishes the means of categorising people and the complement of attributes thought to be ordinary and natural for members (Goffman 1963: 10). 'Stigma' refers to an attribute that is 'deeply discrediting' (1963: 11). Stigma placed on LGBTQ+ people may result in living 'in the closet', referring to a 'state of gay oppression produced by a condition of heterosexual domination' (Seidman 2013: 8). In the closet, individuals suffer systematic forms of disadvantage and disrespect (ibid) and are marked as outsiders and moral, social, and political aliens (2013: 173). Accordingly, the closet is not simply a

product of individual ignorance and acts of prejudice, but is created by the actions of institutions (2013: 8). Today, Seidman argues many LGBTQ+ people live outside the framework of the closet (2013: 9). The choice is no longer between denial or living a double life (2013: 63), but rather a struggle with defining the meaning and place of being LGBTQ+ in lives that allow for personal choice, while navigating a public world that continues to pose risks (2013: 64).

The concept of stigma can be applied to the children of LGBTQ+ parents through 'courtesy stigma'. One type of stigma Goffman identifies are blemishes of individual character, for example, imprisonment, addiction, or homosexuality (1963: 12). This contrasts with tribal stigma of race, nation, and religion, as stigma that is transmitted through lineages and contaminates all family members (ibid). The stigma conferred by having LGBTQ+ parents could disrupt this binary by combining both forms of stigma as a blemish to individual character that is transmitted through lineages. 'Courtesy stigma' refers to an individual who is related through the social structure to a stigmatised individual, leading the wider society to treat both individuals in some respects as one (1963: 38). In this way, they share some of the discredit of the stigmatised person to whom they are related (ibid). Goffman provides the example of the spouse of a mental patient, but this could be extended to a child whose parents occupy the stigmatised position of being LGBTQ+. Although individuals with courtesy stigma may suffer many of the standard deprivations of their courtesy group, they may not be able to enjoy the self-elevation which is a common defence against such treatment as they may not be

accepted by their courtesy group (1963: 39). This is because they carry a burden that is not 'really' theirs (1963: 39).

Children with LGBTQ+ parents

Although limited, there have been studies which examine stigma faced by children with LGBTQ+ parents, though usually from the parents' perspective. Research has focused on strategies LGBTQ+ parents use to prepare their children for discrimination (Breshears 2011: 279), as well as ways LGBTQ+ parents have interacted with their children's schools to mitigate discrimination (McDonald and Morgan 2019).

DiBennardo and Saguy (2018) specifically apply Goffman's concept of 'courtesy stigma' to children with LGBTQ+ parents. Like LGBTQ+ people themselves, children with LGBTQ+ parents also face homophobia and discrimination. Everyday situations that those in heterosexual families take for granted have the potential to cause children with LGBTQ+ parents distress or anxiety. For example, a child from a heterosexual family can see their family type on the television without hearing them described as 'controversial', or can complete forms that have spaces for mother and father to accurately reflect their family structure (Garner 2004: 125). In this way, the children of LGBTQ+ parents constantly experience awkward, nerve-racking, or potentially unsafe situations. Because of this, homophobia may be experienced as inherently personal (Goldberg et al 2012: 72). To combat this, children with LGBTQ+ parents sometimes

used strategies such as posing and passing to protect themselves and family from social disapproval (Welsh 2011: 59), mirroring the way that LGBTQ+ people may be closeted.

Despite similarities with LGBTQ+ people themselves, children with LGBTQ+ parents have additional experiences which make 'passing' impossible. For example, children may not get a choice to conceal their family, as their parents may be seen by teachers and peers during school pick-up. What no longer feels like a big deal to LGBTQ+ adults can feel insurmountable to children who have not yet developed the skills or understanding to deflect ridicule or advocate for themselves (Garner 2004: 99). Another significant difference is while LGBTQ+ people may conceal their identity *from* their parents, children with LGBTQ+ parents may feel the need to conceal the identity *of* their parents. Although children with LGBTQ+ parents share similar experiences to LGBTQ+ people, there are also key differences, suggesting a need for further research into the experiences of these children.

Community

Those who occupy stigmatised positions often find community in those who share experiences and social positions. In these circles, the individual can find moral support, the comfort of feeling at home, and be accepted as a person who is like 'any other normal person' (Goffman 1963: 28). The LGBTQ+ community can be such a space, understood not as a unified subculture, but as a category implicated in the ways LGBTQ+ people have developed collective identities, organised space and

conceptualised their relationships (Weston 1997: 124). The perceived benefit of the LGBTQ+ community is an assumed mutual understanding and the potential for support (Formby 2019: 66), as well as a place of safety and political activism (2019: 61). This understanding of the LGBTQ+ community is influenced by Anderson's 'imagined communities' as many LGBTQ+ people do not live in 'gay spaces', and instead only belong to an imagined community of other LGBTQ+ people (2019: 6). In this context, the LGBTQ+ community suggests a 'bond', 'connection' or sense of solidarity, based on the assumption of shared experiences of stigma, prejudice or discrimination (ibid). This belonging can be defined as 'the process of creating a sense of identification with, or connection to, cultures, people, places and material objects' (May 2013: 3), which can be important for those who feel excluded from dominant society.

Some research has been done on LGBTQ+ families experiences of community. LGBTQ+ parents are often sympathetic to the fact that their children have not 'chosen' their family situation, requiring them to address the way they negotiate self and family presentation in the 'outside' world (Weeks et al 2001: 175). One response may be to choose locations to settle that have established LGBTQ+ communities so their children can connect with other non-heterosexual families. Alternatively, parents may distance their family from the LGBTQ+ community, demonstrated by a decrease of sexual identity as parental identity ascends (Ghaziani 2014: 62). Despite this, the LGBTQ+ community can be seen as offering support and safety to LGBTQ+ families. In Miller's memoir on same-sex parenting she recalls the LGBTQ+ community providing 'an extra circle of protection and friendship' (2011: 208-209) which was 'exhilarating and wholly

affirming' (2011: 210-211), due to previous experiences of being excluded from family spaces.

Children with LGBTQ+ parents

Literature about the role of the LGBTQ+ community for children with LGBTQ+ parents is further restricted, especially once they reach adulthood. Returning to 'courtesy stigma', some individuals embrace stigma and live within the world of one's stigmatised connection (Goffman 1963: 38). Whether they too identify as LGBTQ+ or not, those with LGBTQ+ parents may feel a sense of belonging and identification with the LGBTQ+ community, resulting in a desire to participate and protect the community. As children, this may be welcomed due to their parents' membership and identification (Goldberg et al 2012: 71), but may be viewed as outsiders once they establish their own identity.

In this sense, the LGBTQ+ community is also a sight of exclusion. Goldberg et al suggests that straight children with LGBTQ+ parents straddle two communities (2012: 74), in which they occupy both insider and outsider status (DiBennardo and Saguy 2018: 299). They may feel highly visible in straight communities and invisible in queer ones (Epstein-Fine and Zook 2018: 15). Especially once they become adults, they may be viewed as a 'suspicious outsider', or a 'tourist at home' (Garner 2004: 197). This indicates although children with LGBTQ+ parents may feel a special connection to the LGBTQ+ community, they may not fit in as they used to (2004: 202) as their validity of membership may be undermined by other members of the community who see them as

outsiders. Although some maintain a strong sense of connection and an entitlement about their right to belong, the literature documented that often 'queer credibility' was invalidated (Goldberg et al 2012: 78). Although within a heteronormative society there is privilege in being heterosexual, for those who grew up in LGBTQ+ spaces, invisibility and erasure from LGBTQ+ communities can feel like rejection from the culture they've known and understand (2018: 19). Contrarily, sometimes having LGBTQ+ parents warranted extra respect in queer circles (2004: 119), where they were perceived as having unique experiences making them privy to the secret life of the stigmatised individual (Goffman 1963: 36).

This connection between children with LGBTQ+ parents and the LGBTQ+ community has been underexplored, resulting in an empirical gap. Most of the existing literature was written over 10 years ago, and authors question where children with LGBTQ+ parents will fit into the queer community as their numbers grow (Garner 2004: 223). This suggests the need for research to further explore the current generation of young adults with LGBTQ+ parents. Specifically, focusing on planned lesbian families adds to the research context as they may have different experiences of community than the literature suggests, as this research only examines those who have lived in lesbian families from birth.

Identity

The question of where children with LGBTQ+ parents fit into the LGBTQ+ community relates to their own identity. Identity is the human capacity to know 'who's who' (Jenkins 2014: 6). It denotes the way individuals and collectivities are distinguished in their relations with other individuals and collectivities (2014: 19). Kin-group membership epitomises the collectivity of identity, locating individuals within a field that is independent of and beyond individually embodied points of view (2014: 88). Kinship identity establishes relations of similarity with fellow kin in terms of descent, differentiating the individual from non-kin and, in classificatory terms, other members of the descent group (ibid). This is made complex by children with LGBTQ+ parents as unlike other characteristics which make up family identity, sexuality is not an inherited status. For example, most people who identify as lesbian were not born to lesbian parents. However, we are born, develop, and grow within the context of a family embedded within a larger sociopolitical culture that shapes and determines the evolution of an individual life cycle (Welsh 2011: 50), meaning that parents' identity may inform children's identity.

Children with LGBTQ+ parents

As we are shaped by the cultural context in which we are raised (Garner 2004: 195), children with LGBTQ+ parents may be 'queered' by their upbringing. Mendez describes queer socialisation as the ways parents transmit heteronormativity and/or queerness to their children (2020: 515). This involves socialisation into queer culture; the patterns of

thinking, believing and behaving, produced mainly by and for LGBTQ+ individuals (ibid). This may be through active socialisation, such as participating in the queer community and exposing their children to LGBTQ+ families (2020: 516), or indirect queer socialisation through time spent interacting with parents (2020: 526). The term 'culturally queer' has been suggested to describe those who have been queered by their upbringing. In this way, queerness is less about sexual orientation and more about 'the invisible glue that binds...our lives together' (Epstein-Fine and Zook 2018: 19), drawing again on the imagined community. For example, Garner identifies as 'culturally queer, erotically straight' (2004: 198), as simply saying she is heterosexual 'dismisses the pride' she has in her heritage (ibid). In this sense, the identity of children with LGBTQ+ parents may be shaped by their family experience and their connection to the LGBTQ+ community may be significant, regardless of their own sexuality. This connection between family and identity has been overlooked in the second-generation, who complicate processes of queer socialisation, suggesting another nuance that has been missed in research.

Just like LGBTQ+ people themselves, children with LGBTQ+ parents do not have a static identity. Identities can be altered, added or subtracted, and we make choices about which identities are a core part of our self-definition and which are secondary (Seidman 2013: 9). In different points of their life, the fact they have LGBTQ+ parents may hold different importance and cannot be assumed to stay the same. It has been 22 years since Garner stated, 'the question of where heterosexual adult children fit into the landscape of LGBT communities will become even more pressing as their numbers

grow' (2004: 223), but there remains limited academic engagement with questions such as this. As more adult children talk openly about their cultural identities, they provide opportunities for LGBTQ+ communities to define queerness as beyond 'what you do in bed', therefore pushing the boundaries of 'community' and testing the definition of queer (2004: 223, 224). This study is focused specifically on 'planned lesbian families', meaning a family with same-sex female parents who intentionally decided to have children together, with one parent being biologically related to their child (Bos 2004: 7). This contrasts with children who were born originally into a heterosexual relationship, or children who were adopted by lesbian parents (ibid). This research aims to contribute to the body of literature on children with LGBTQ+ parents, and therefore queer theory more generally by qualitatively exploring how young adults with lesbian parents narrate their experiences of family and personal identity.

Methodology

Building on the gaps I identified in the literature review, I selected to use semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis to research how young adults with lesbian parents narrate their experiences.

Welsh identified that in studies on children with LGBTQ+ parents, there is a 'very small proportion of studies using interviewing techniques' (2011: 53). This methodological-empirical gap informed the decision to conduct interviews as it was the best way to make a useful contribution to the literature engaged with above. When research involves obtaining a sense of how individuals view their situation and what their experiences have been, in-depth interviewing is considered an appropriate method (Morris 2015: 8). Using semi-structured interviews allows for open-ended questions and free-flowing inquiries (Knight 2002: 52), giving the researcher access to interviewees' thoughts, experiences, memories, understandings and perceptions of the topic (2015: 5-10). They also give space to seek clarity, facilitating a richer and more accurate understanding.

However, a challenge of lightly structured interviewing is that rapport can lead the interviewer astray on a tide of goodwilled disclosure (Knight 2002: 62). To mitigate this, I conducted my interviews in a formal tone and paid attention to my research guide to ensure that discussion remained relevant to answer the research questions. It was also

important to remind participants that their responses would be anonymised and data kept fully confidential.

I conducted a pilot interview which helped me understand the most effective way to phrase questions. I then wrote 12 pre-planned questions, with extra sub-questions if prompts were needed. Previous research on children with LGBTQ+ parents found that participants tended to share the public story they have practiced throughout their lives (Sass 2018: 33), which I took into account while designing my questions to facilitate discussions beyond their standard script. Some of my prompts included sharing brief descriptions of my own experiences. Although there are times when self-disclosure is appropriate and constructive (Morris 2015: 91), I took care to only share what was necessary and relevant and was cautious to remain focused on their experiences.

Sample

The recruitment for these interviews was targeted at young adults (age 18-25) with lesbian parents. Although participants' parents may not specifically identify as lesbian, they were all born into a same-sex female relationship, often through a sperm donor, which for ease and clarity are referred to as 'lesbian parents'. This sample was chosen as researching LGBTQ+ families more generally, encompasses a range of experiences which could not be dutifully covered here. My own background as a child of lesbian parents contributed to my interest and accessibility of this sample. Young adults were

chosen because of the practicality of recruiting and interviewing those over 18, therefore limiting ethical issues regarding informed consent.

Young adults with lesbian parents are a 'hidden' and geographically dispersed population (Clarke and Demetriou 2016: 135), meaning that snowball sampling was the most appropriate recruitment method. This is a form of opportunity sampling in which an informant is asked to name others who the researcher could approach (Knight 2002: 122). Initially participants were recruited from my established social networks, including friends I knew due to our shared family type. I was then able to contact further participants from there. This recruitment method gave me access to those who may not have answered advertisements, especially as there are limited channels I would have been able to recruit participants from, as they are identified by their parents' identity rather than their own. Consequently, the sample reflects my social networks, meaning the range of people included was inevitably limited (Browne 2005: 51). For example, all participants attend university, and all but one grew up in London. However, this may reflect the demographic characteristics of young adults with lesbian parents themselves, as opposed to just the method of sampling.

My final sample was eight young adults, between the ages of 19-21. See appendix for a table of participants' characteristics. The interviews were conducted in December-January 2025-26 and lasted 45-60 minutes. One interview took place in-person in a private room in a university building, while the others all took place on Microsoft Teams.

These were automatically recorded and transcribed by Teams, and then manually corrected for accuracy.

Positionality

A strength of this sample is that researchers who share the status of participants may be more attuned to responses than researchers who are outsiders to the group (Padovano-Janik et al 2015: 471). My shared position as a young adult with lesbian parents may have been a strength as many participants expressed enjoyment at being able to speak to someone with a similar family structure. It also may have aided the conversation by facilitating trust, as participants knew that I may have shared some of their experiences. This is particularly relevant regarding this specific demographic as most participants shared they had a lack of contact with other young adults with lesbian parents. I was also able to use personal experience to help construct my research guide to ask relevant questions, while being careful not to assume shared understanding.

My existing relationships with participants had differing impacts. Out of the participants, there were three who I personally knew very well, two who I consider acquaintances, and three who I did not know at all. For some of the participants I personally knew, our established trust and rapport may have meant they felt more comfortable and therefore were more open and honest. However, there were a few participants who appeared more guarded and restrained in their answers, maybe due to our colloquial relationship. In this way I was given different accounts of their opinions and experiences than a

stranger may have obtained (Browne 2005: 56). I mitigated this by reminding participants their accounts were confidential and would not be discussed outside of the interview, and within the dissertation, data would be anonymised and they would be given pseudonyms.

Analysis

Thematic analysis was selected as an appropriate method to capture the complexities of meaning within a textual data set (Guest et al 2012: 11). Thematic analyses move beyond counting explicit words or phrases to focus on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data (2012: 10). The interviews were re-read thoroughly to familiarise myself with the data before the coding process began. The transcripts were then coded inductively, and similar codes were grouped into themes. As expected, there was a close match between my interview guide and the themes (Morris 2015: 129). This method allowed for a comprehensive analysis of the experience of young adults with lesbian parents. The themes which arose from the analysis were the experience of stigma, characterisation of family, community, and identity.

Ethics

This research was conducted in line with the BSA (2017) and University ethical guidelines. Participants were provided with an information sheet prior to interviews

outlining what participation would involve, the aims of the research, and details regarding confidentiality and the right to withdraw. Written consent was obtained agreeing to take part, and the data was stored in line with the Data Protection Act. To ensure anonymity, participants have been given pseudonyms and identifying information was changed or redacted.

Discussion

As examined, the literature reveals a lack of up-to-date research exclusively on young adults with lesbian parents. This chapter begins by discussing experiences of stigma, before suggesting that unlike previous literature, this was not the defining feature of young adults with lesbian parents' narratives. It will then discuss the themes which participants centred in their accounts: characterisation of family, community, and identity. These sections reveal the diverse and complex lives of participants by investigating the themes which were important to them when describing their experiences and perceptions. My overarching finding is that young adults with lesbian parents occupy an interesting and often overlooked position in relation to the LGBTQ+ community, and further research must consider their full lives beyond experiences of stigma.

Stigma

Heteronormative assumptions meant that in many situations, participants had to explicitly disclose they had lesbian parents, or else it led to misunderstandings. This was especially prominent in childhood when other children had limited knowledge of LGBTQ+ families, and participants themselves were unsure how to explain them. As a child, Grace's neighbour told her that everyone must have a mum and a dad. She found it difficult to understand and counter this assumption because her family was all she knew. As a young adult, Grace could better navigate this situation, whereas during

childhood it felt confusing and embarrassing. A similar experience was shared by Amber who remembered being approached about having lesbian parents. At that time, Amber did not know what lesbian meant and so a lack of knowledge or vocabulary created uncertainty which had the potential to result in embarrassment or shame for participants.

For most participants, secondary school was the most challenging time regarding their parents' identity, and was the only time they actively tried to disassociate from their family structure. Halle concealed her parents' identity by pretending her mum was her aunt, eventually sitting her friends down to disclose she had lesbian parents.

'I felt like I was coming out. I was doing this like big reveal' (Halle)

Although her friends did not have negative reactions, she still found disclosure stressful and emotional, comparing it to the coming out experience of LGBTQ+ people themselves.

Notably, participants commented specifically on Religious Studies (RS) as an environment where they had often felt stigmatised and embarrassed. They felt singled out by classmates, often facilitated by teachers' discussions on homosexuality;

‘a teacher would mention different family types and I just could feel all the blood rushing to my face’ (Grace)

‘I hated RS...like talking about family...I wanted to like sink into the floor and just have the teacher shut up...so people stopped thinking about me’ (Halle)

Participants described feeling highly visible when topics regarding different family types or gay marriage were mentioned as they were the only ones in their class with LGBTQ+ parents. Even when comments were not explicitly directed at participants, lessons involving such discussions made them deeply uncomfortable. This suggests an affiliation between participants' parents' identity and their own identity, as classmates would associate them with LGBTQ+ topics. They were often stared at or whispered about when these topics arose as they were their classmates' point of reference for queerness. This was particularly prominent before peers had explored their own sexuality and it still felt taboo;

‘No one was queer at that point. No one had figured themselves out. So if we were talking about queer things, I was the only one with any perspective....it was up to me to stand up for everyone’ (Esther)

This indicates that participants closely identified with their family identity and often felt like discussions on homosexuality were an attack on their family, especially in

classroom environments. Esther suggested that teachers should be aware that children with LGBTQ+ parents carry 'the weight of the community on their back' and are often left to defend their community by themselves.

Despite this, all participants stated they were open about their family structure, and it was not something they tried to conceal. What was striking was that despite some accounts of stigma, it generally did not feature as a dominant theme in the stories participants told about their experience having lesbian parents. Generally, when I questioned if participants had experienced discrimination, they found it difficult to recall examples and described hearing 'casual homophobia', but nothing directly;

'No one has ever mocked me for my family structure' (Felix)

'I can't think of anything specifically...my parents were pretty protective in that way that I didn't experience that' (Grace)

'I don't think there's ever been like, a direct stigma that I've been really aware of' (Darcy)

'I've never been in a situation where I've seen like, direct, visceral homophobia' (Calum)

When there was recollection of stigma, it was presented as 'awkward' (Amber) rather than deeply affective, and something they rarely face now as young adults. The stories that participants presented suggest a different experience to previous research which foregrounds the experience of stigma (for example, DiBennardo and Saguy 2018, Prendergast and MacPhee 2017). This is not to say that participants didn't face stigma,

but rather this stigma does not totally characterise their experience. This could be explained by the different context between this study and the literature, as a lot of the literature was written in a US context around the time of the Obergefell v. Hodges ruling (Justia Law 2015), which may have been a more contentious time for LGBTQ+ rights, resulting in greater stigma for those with LGBTQ+ parents. Additionally, participants were keen to depart from topics of stigma, and instead steered the interview to other experiences which they had rarely discussed. This suggests that participants were familiar with assumptions of stigma or difference and instead wanted to highlight other aspects of their experiences.

The subsequent sections highlight the themes which stood out as significant for understanding the experiences of young adults with lesbian parents beyond narratives of stigma; the characterisation of family, community and identity. In relation to community and identity there will also be an explicit focus on second-generation participants to address the knowledge gap of this group. These themes are interesting and insightful in gaining a more comprehensive and holistic understanding of the experiences of young adults with lesbian parents.

Characterisation of family

This section discusses the way that participants characterised their family structure as both normal and rare. These discourses occurred simultaneously and were implicitly

weaved through all the other themes. They demonstrate the intricacies of participants' characterisations of their families, reflecting the sometimes contradictory positions they occupy. It highlights the need for attention to be paid to different family structures in their own right and not assume shared experience, as previous research does when grouping different types of LGBTQ+ families together.

Normal

Throughout the interviews, most participants highlighted the normalcy of their family. For some participants, this involved minimising the centrality of having lesbian parents in their family, and instead describing it as 'an afterthought' (Ben).

'They haven't raised me in a gay way. They've raised me in a way which all parents should...being empathetic, talking about things, communication...all I'm trying to highlight is that it's the exact same. It's just a slightly different model' (Felix)

This account emphasises the ordinary nature of Felix's family and foregrounds positive characteristics of his parents ('empathetic') to demonstrate the way all families should work, regardless of structure. This echoes normalising discourses which present LGBTQ+ families as no different to heterosexual families by suggesting that it is 'love that makes a family' (Clarke and Demetriou 2016: 139). In this way, Felix's parents' individual characteristics and therefore similarities to all parents are highlighted as more important than perceived differences. This may suggest an attempt to downplay the

significance of their parents' sexuality and minimise the 'taint' of difference associated with their family (2016: 136). However, differing from the literature, participants did not appear to use these discourses to normalise their family to outsiders, but instead conveyed the fact that their families were normal to them. While the literature included participants born into heterosexual families before having a parent come-out (Garner 2004, Clarke and Demetriou 2016, Welsh 2011, Goldberg et al 2012, Padovano-Janik et al 2015), participants in this study were born to lesbian parents. This may mean as participants' families had never conformed to the heterosexual family, those with lesbian parents may not be bound by heteronormative conceptions of family as heterosexual (Pratesi 2012: 95). In this way, describing their family as normal didn't appear as an intentional distancing from their parents' identity due to shame or embarrassment, but rather a reflection of the fact that having lesbian parents is all they have ever known and therefore not something particularly notable.

Rare

Despite conveying the normality of their family, this did not mean that participants understood their family to be exactly the same as heterosexual families. Participants' were aware that to outsiders, their families were sometimes viewed as strange or unusual. This was reflected in their consideration of the potential for their families to be politicised. Amber, whose parents are divorced, can be guarded about this information as she worries about 'betraying the LGBTQ community' by 'proving that...lesbian parents can't work'. Even amongst LGBTQ+ people it can be 'awkward' as she feels a

pressure to represent 'what their lives could be'. This demonstrates that participants view their family as normal, while understanding this is not the dominant view.

Additionally, many participants were eager to take part in this study and appeared excited at the opportunity to talk about their family, especially to someone else with lesbian parents. Several participants had never, or rarely, talked to another person with lesbian parents, and found it 'refreshing' (Grace) to have the opportunity. Some participants were interested in my own experiences, as the researcher; 'has anything I've said resonated with you?' (Calum), 'are there other boys that you're interviewing?' (Felix). This suggests that even while describing their family as normal, participants also appeared acutely aware that their family was uncommon, and they didn't often meet people with similar experiences. This echoes Gahan's study of separated same-sex parents in which participants responded with excitement, both at knowing that their experiences weren't entirely unique and that the study may lead to greater visibility of their family practices (2018: 253). The characterisation of their family as 'normal' is therefore complicated both directly through their admissions of not knowing other LGBTQ+ families, and indirectly through the themes next discussed.

Community

This section discusses participants' relationship to the LGBTQ+ community. It examines participants' perceptions of where children with lesbian parents should fit in the community, and then the specificities of the experience of second-generation participants. This makes a valuable contribution to the literature, as while the LGBTQ+ community is viewed as a source of support for LGBTQ+ people, there is limited information about how young adults with lesbian parents perceive and relate to the LGBTQ+ community (Goldberg et al 2012: 80).

Engagement with community

A few participants engaged with the LGBTQ+ community as children through attending a group for lesbian parented families. Darcy and Grace commented that it was helpful for normalising their family, but 'it was for the parents' (Darcy) more than the children. Now, participants' main engagement with the LGBTQ+ community was through friendships, as they 'naturally gravitated' (Halle) to LGBTQ+ people rather than formal community groups or activities. Felix described himself as 'biased' towards wanting to be friends with LGBTQ+ people but doesn't have any other involvement with the community.

Perceptions of community

Participants expressed mixed feelings about where those with lesbian parents belong in the LGBTQ+ community. Although participants generally thought it would have been helpful to have known other similar families, they weren't sure whether this meant that all children of LGBTQ+ parents could be part of the community themselves. Felix made sure to clarify there doesn't need to be a 'whole new avenue' for children with LGBTQ+ parents, because if they are straight, they won't experience oppression based on their sexuality, regardless of their parents. Darcy also appeared cautious at the idea of making space for straight children with LGBTQ+ parents, as it may cause discomfort for others in the community. In this way, participants seemed uncertain about the space children of LGBTQ+ parents should occupy without overstepping on the experiences of other LGBTQ+ people. This highlights the question of where children with LGBTQ+ parents fit, especially if they have strong affinities to queer culture. However, unlike the previous research (Goldberg et al 2012, Garner 2004), participants did not seem to feel a tension of where they themselves fit, just an uncertainty about whether children of LGBTQ+ parents generally should be included within the community. The issue of where children with LGBTQ+ parents fit into the community implies an assumption they are heterosexual and therefore will not belong to the community of their own accord. Many participants in this study were second-generation, resulting in different experiences than the literature suggests.

The second-generation

Where children of LGBTQ+ parents are heterosexual, research presents them as stuck between the LGBTQ+ community and the mainstream heterosexual community (Goldberg et al 2012: 71), suggesting that the second-generation won't face such tensions. However, in this research, second-generation participants' narratives of community were mediated by their family structure and existing experiences of the LGBTQ+ community. Despite their own LGBTQ+ identity, some participants felt more accepted in the community based on their parents' identity. Calum (bisexual) commented that he uses his parents' sexuality to 'reinforce' his right to be a part of the LGBTQ+ community, suggesting his family structure strengthened his community position and acceptance.

The standard trajectory of LGBTQ+ people follow a narrative of relocating, coming out, and coming into new communities (Weeks et al 2001: 86). However, Esther found that she could not relate to traditional LGBTQ+ experiences because queerness had already been something 'primary' in her life that she had 'been able to exist with' prior to her own self-discovery;

'Because I'd always had a perspective of it...because it was so normal for me, it wasn't something...I needed to think of for myself. It was just something that was there.'

(Esther)

Because of this, Esther felt like she ‘missed out’ on trying to insert herself into the community and ‘all of the tribulations that might have come with that’. The value of the LGBTQ+ community is often understood as validating identities when those identities might not be validated elsewhere (Formby 2019: 183), but as participants’ identities were validated in the family and already had this as a source of support, some felt less of a need to find their own community. The LGBTQ+ community was viewed as an ‘escape’ from the ‘outside world’ (2019: 122), which participants did not seek out as they were already embedded in the community. This suggests a need to further understand the experiences of community for the second-generation as they do not neatly follow the path of other LGBTQ+ people who did not have lesbian parents.

Identity

This theme captures participants’ connection to their family identity, and therefore LGBTQ+ history and culture. Generally participants demonstrated a strong identification with their family structure through feminism, queer heritage and pride, often with a stronger connection to the LGBTQ+ community of their parents’ generation than their own. This theme suggests that young adults with lesbian parents have strong affiliations to LGBTQ+ culture through ‘queer socialisation’ which is significant in understanding how participants’ own identities were informed by their family structure. This further reveals experiences beyond frameworks of stigma to demonstrate a fuller picture of the lives of young adults with lesbian parents.

Feminism

All participants commented on the way that their own political beliefs were informed by their parents' strong associations with feminism. They perceived their family to be distinctly feminist in a way that could only be possible with lesbian parents. Amber contended that even with a liberal father, heterosexual families would be unable to create the same kind of feminist environment that she grew up with. This was based on the belief that LGBTQ+ relationships open opportunities for more equal relationships (Weeks et al 2001: 47), allowing their family to be freer from patriarchal norms. Darcy made a point of stating that, for her, the most significant element of having lesbian parents was its contribution to her identity as a feminist. Her parents' identity facilitated her own development of feminism as she had a formative education of 'the spectrum of feminism', resulting in her being 'more educated and empathetic to different ideas'.

Participants' first-hand knowledge of challenges their parents had experienced also contributed to the development of their political beliefs. They gained insight into previous generations of LGBTQ+ people which gave them an increased connection to the fight for equality. Grace valued being able to learn LGBTQ+ history from her parents which improved her understanding of the context of contemporary queer culture, and she often approached conversations with friends from a different perspective because of this. For Amber, the fact that her parents 'came out at a time when it was really hard' meant that she had a perspective of LGBTQ+ life from before she was born that other

people her age may not possess. In this way, young adults with lesbian parents may have 'insider information' (Halle) about queer culture as part of their heritage, resulting in a greater connection to the LGBTQ+ community.

For Halle, it was 'very natural' to have strong opinions about politics; 'I feel like it's kind of impossible for me to not be political...I mean, I'm already black and a woman and I grew up in a queer household'. This highlights that although all participants saw the importance of their family structure as influencing their political values, particularly in relation to feminism, within this group their experiences are not a monolith. Participants' identity of having lesbian parents also intersects with the other identities they inhabit, in Halle's case related to ethnicity.

Queer heritage

As sexual orientation is not a trait typically shared within families, the transmission of LGBTQ+ culture to children with lesbian parents has rarely been examined. Some participants recounted an active 'queer socialisation' (Mendez 2020: 515) from their parents in the form of queer culture. Calum credited his parents with passing down 'cultural queerness' as they showed him 'films and media with queer messaging and queer undertones'. Likewise, Halle's parents made a 'conscious effort' to take her to see 'as many...queer things as possible'. For example, she recalled seeing 'Moonlight' when she was 11, which remains her favourite film. In this way, Halle didn't see queer media as something she sought out and instead is just what she 'grew up on'. This

suggests that by choice and by habit, culturally queer adults feel a special connection with LGBTQ+ people, and are drawn to places that reflect their heritage (Garner 2004: 202).

However, some participants engaged in queer culture through their own volition instead of through their family. Most of Esther's knowledge of queerness was learnt from friends who 'were more experimental' as her parents 'don't talk about their own queerness very much'. As an adult she tried to extend her knowledge of queer culture through watching films that are 'important and significant to queer people'. Similarly, Ben didn't particularly engage with queer culture in his family setting, but as his girlfriend is queer, he began reading books about the LGBTQ+ community and was able to apply what he found to his parents.

Pride

Many participants took great pride in their family structure and saw it as a salient aspect of their own identity. This was reflected in their willingness to talk about their family and the admiration they described their parents with. This was particularly important where they viewed their parents as 'trailblazers' for the LGBTQ+ community and representing something bigger than themselves.

‘My parents are really, really cool people, and they did a really good job raising me and I see what they are as being awesome’ (Calum)

‘They are fortunately in a relationship that I really look up to and admire...I got super lucky’ (Esther)

Although identification with their parents' queerness was important, it was also perceived as akin to any other familial characteristics. Felix and Calum expressed a connection to their parents' identity, but in a way that was not specific to sexuality. Calum suggested that children of the miners' strike, and children whose families were affected by the 2008 recession would identify with those issues similarly to the way he identifies with the LGBTQ+ community. This suggests that although participants entered adulthood with connections to queer cultural heritage (Garner 2004: 195), it was seen as a standard familial characteristic which inevitably impacted their own identity.

Out of all participants, Darcy appeared the most neutral in relation to her parents' identity, and doesn't 'associate it with a sense of pride for [herself]', possibly explained by her parents separating when she was 12, meaning she is 'vaguely disassociated with a sense of having lesbian parents'. This again highlights the diversity of experiences of young adults with lesbian parents, as this identity cannot be separated from their other life experiences and characteristics.

Life stage

Participants' identity, and therefore connection to the LGBTQ+ community may change through their life course. As participants developed their own identity outside of their family, some became less interested in the LGBTQ+ community (Goldberg et al 2012: 78) and the connection to their parents' identity decreased. Calum and Felix both highlighted that as they have grown outside of the family context, other things became more central to their identity. Felix described diverging from his parents as 'just the nature of growing up', and Calum and Amber believed as they gained more of their own personality, they relied less on their parents' identity.

However, for other participants, maturing and gaining some perspective enabled a deeper understanding of their background. Esther recalled that as a child she didn't 'register that it was something quite important' about her, but now as an adult she had a strong identification based on her family;

'The more that I engage with queerness as I get older, I can see it as such a beautiful thing...It's just always been very special and very beautiful to me' (Esther)

Distance from family allowed participants to reflect on the wider significance of having lesbian parents. Meeting a wider range of people enabled Grace to fully recognise how proud she is to be named after two women as even having a 'double-barrelled name is

such a political thing'. In this way, growing up was not a linear narrative of acceptance, but a process of understanding and development.

The second-generation

Second-generation participants reflected on the way their parents' identity impacted their own experience of sexuality. Some participants noted that queerness had played an integral part of their upbringing and consequently was something they never had to question. Rather than assuming to be heterosexual, Darcy assumed from a young age she was a lesbian as it felt 'familiar'. Esther (lesbian) remembered that being queer 'just made sense' as she understood 'what this looks like and what this feels like'. Although rejecting that LGBTQ+ parents inevitably raise LGBTQ+ children, there was an acknowledgement that their family structure and experience of queerness did inform their own sexuality in the way that it was seen as a natural progression.

The existence of queerness within the family facilitated an easier and earlier discovery of their own identity. Darcy (bisexual) found she was aware of what sexuality was far sooner than other people, as in her family there was an 'openness of thinking...you could be any sexuality'. Similarly, Halle (queer) was 'much more free to explore bisexuality'. This suggests that participants were provided with broader and fluid conceptions of identities than they may have otherwise been exposed to in heterosexual families (Kualanka and Goldberg 2008: 910).

Participants also expressed the privilege they had in knowing they would be accepted by their parents. For Calum (bisexual), ‘there was no closet at all’ and telling his parents was ‘really exciting’. They viewed coming out to one’s family as usually the most difficult part of being LGBTQ+, which they were grateful to not have to worry about due to their ‘built-in support structure’ (Calum). This highlights how lesbian parented families may queer the family by shifting the ‘family of origin’ from a family that rejects the queer, to a queer family itself (Sachs 2022: 129-130). This disrupts the traditional narratives of queerness and coming out by highlighting alternative narratives of queerness within the family.

Despite appreciating the value that having lesbian parents had in self-discovery, this could be a double-edged sword. Some participants felt wary about how outsiders may view them as second-generation LGBTQ+ people. Esther joked that she is ‘the poster child for...the right-wing theory...gay parents...raise gay kids’. In this way, Esther worried how her identity would reflect on her family, and therefore the potential implications for her parents (Garner 2004: 171). Grace and Darcy (bisexual) both discussed the lack of media representation of the second-generation, leading Grace to worry she could not be LGBTQ+ as there would be ‘too much gay’ in her family. Some participants experienced difficulty in claiming their own identity as they worried their family identity undermined their own. Amber sometimes felt that she had to prove that she’s not a ‘fake bisexual’, and Halle worried that she would be perceived as copying her parents. In this sense participants’ ability to affirm their own identity could be

constrained, rather than facilitated by their parents' sexual orientation (DiBennardo and Saguy 2018: 297). This suggests that for the second-generation, experiences of identity were not always straightforward, resulting in specific experiences which previously have been overlooked.

This theme of identity has highlighted the way in which participants' own identity was shaped and informed by their upbringing with lesbian parents. In the literature, Garner contends that children with LGBTQ+ parents are 'queered' by their upbringing, placing them in a 'cultural limbo' (2004: 199). Although some participants in this study had strong engagements with queer culture, none of them felt a specific tension between queer culture and the dominant culture of wider society. As queer media has become more mainstream and widely available from when much of the literature was written (e.g. Garner 2004), perhaps participants did not feel this tension as there is less of a difference between the supposed heterosexual mainstream and the queer subculture.

Instead, some participants felt a generational tension. Existing family connections to queerness could produce a stronger attachment to the LGBTQ+ community of their parents' generation rather than their own. Darcy felt 'quite alienated' by the current LGBTQ+ community as she felt like 'things have moved on' from what she knows. Although she is bisexual, she tended to not relate to LGBTQ+ people her own age and felt a stronger connection to the older queer community she grew up with. Halle also didn't feel connected to 'the younger queer community' and identifies more with her

parents' queerness than her own. She attends events with the 'older black queer community in London' where most people know her. Although she is friends with lots of LGBTQ+ people her own age, she takes part in community events less frequently and doesn't feel the same connection. This suggests a need for greater attention to be given to the way a culture of queerness can be inherited within families, rather than being seen as something experienced outside the family.

Overall, having lesbian parents was both 'a big deal' and 'not a big deal' for participants (Clarke and Demetriou 2016: 144). This highlights the complex layers and contextual relationships between young adults with lesbian parents, and the way they narrate their experiences. Beyond the framework of stigma, participants relayed stories of unique opportunities which came from having lesbian parents, tending to highlight the ways their family structure had shaped who they are as people. Even though participants emphasised this to different extents, or downplayed the centrality of their parents' identity, it was still clear through their narratives that their upbringing with lesbian parents had a profound impact on their identity as young adults. Particularly they understood their values and connection to queer heritage and culture to be informed by the family structure in which they were raised. In this way, having lesbian parents was 'fundamental to [their] existence' (Calum). This suggests the need for greater attention to be paid to young adults with lesbian parents to uncover the meanings they assign to their families.

Conclusion

This study set out to produce up-to-date research on the narratives that young adults with lesbian parents tell about their experiences of family and personal identity. Situated within the broader context of queer theory and research on LGBTQ+ families, this research was personally compelling and strengthened my own personal identification with my family. I was humbled by the warm and passionate responses from participants, which established the need for more avenues for young adults with lesbian parents to be able to discuss their experiences. This research demonstrates that young adults with lesbian parents' stories cannot be reduced to a singular narrative or trope. While not negating the role of stigma as a factor in the participants' lives, this was not the headline of the narratives they wanted to tell. Participants were eager to discuss many of the opportunities they saw from having lesbian parents, such as developing feminist values and connection to queer culture. They saw their identity as being greatly impacted by their parents but also highlighted that this was just the nature of family relations. In many ways, the narratives they told were those of love, admiration and gratitude to their parents, which could not be separated from, or entirely attributed to their parents' lesbian identity. This highlights the need to honour the lives of participants with nuanced research, which this project accomplished.

Focusing on planned lesbian families enabled a development of the literature as participants lived in a different context to others with LGBTQ+ parents who had been born into heterosexual families. This was reflected in their characterisation of their

family as normal, as it was all they had known. There were mixed experiences regarding identity and community as many participants felt a connection to the LGBTQ+ community based on their parents but were unsure what this meant for children with LGBTQ+ parents more generally. As young adults, some participants' identification with their family identity decreased, while others saw a strengthening of connection. Participants seemed to have a particular connection to the older queer community due to the knowledge and insight they gained from their parents. Second-generation participants had distinct experiences as their family identity made it easier to understand their sexuality and find community, but also complicated their experiences, which have not been sufficiently accounted for in previous research.

In many ways, the questions in this research did not really have an answer, but instead inspired stories which are the antidote 'to the simple and succinct and superficial' (Sass 2018: 34). This research aimed to consider the rich worlds that participants inhabit and try to understand the meanings of their experiences. The wide range of opinions and narratives presented reflect the nature of family and identity. Family is often complex, and this is no different for those with lesbian parents. Although young adults with lesbian parents share some experiences with LGBTQ+ adults, they face their own opportunities and tensions. My research highlights the importance of moving beyond simplistic narratives of LGBTQ+ families which flatten their experiences into stories composed entirely of stigma and difference, or idealised narratives which avoid mention of the distinct experiences members of these families may face.

Future research would benefit from a greater attention to intersecting identities that impact the experiences of young adults with lesbian parents. The interviews revealed interesting discussions of ethnicity and gender, but the scope of this project did not facilitate an in-depth analysis of these characteristics. Extending the sample to children may be useful to gain an understanding of participants' perceptions before they have been mediated by wider political and social understandings. Going forward, research should strive to address the gaps in the knowledge about the children of LGBTQ+ parents by centring the voices of this group themselves and paying attention to the narratives which they give importance to.

This research has highlighted some ways to understand the experiences of young adults with lesbian parents beyond a single narrative of stigma. Participants portrayed a complex but insightful picture of their experiences and perceptions which can not be reduced to a singular trope. It is important to celebrate these 'muddy waters' because they counter 'the two-dimensional broad brushstrokes used to explain the lives of kids in queer families' (Sass 2018: 35). As Amber observed, 'everyone I know who's got two mums has a different story and I think that's quite nice to see how varied it is'.

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Appendix 1: Table of participants

Name (pseudonym)	Gender	Sexuality	Ethnicity
Amber	Female	Bisexual	British Indian
Ben	Male	Straight	White British
Calum	Male	Bisexual	White British
Darcy	Female	Bisexual	White British
Esther	Female	Lesbian	White British
Felix	Male	Straight	Mixed White and Black British
Grace	Female	Bisexual	White British
Halle	Female	Queer	Black British

Appendix 2: Sample interview transcript with Halle

What's your engagement with the queer community now?

A lot of my, all of my friends are queer, which is, yeah. That's kind of it, like, literally all of them. So I feel like I naturally gravitated towards them. But I think I have, I think I have more of a connection to like the older black queer community in London, which is not that big, but that's just all my parents' friends. So like, I definitely feel...I don't really feel that connected to the queer, the younger queer community, I feel. I don't really go to a lot of events or things, but I'm always going to events with my parents, with their communities. I feel a lot more connected to them. Like I would go, there would be some like black lesbian and gay event in London and like, they would all know me, like, for example. But I don't feel that same connection with...if I ever went to a like a queer event for people my age, which is kind of interesting. But yeah, all of my friends are

queer in some way, barring one, I think. So clearly I have like a, I'm gravitating towards them because there's a lot more straight people than there are queer people. So clearly, like clearly I'm gravitating towards them, but yeah, a bigger connection to the older queer community, specifically black queer in London.

Yeah. Do you think that's just to do with the culture you grew up in, or do you feel like you belong more in those spaces or I guess?

I do feel like I belong in those spaces because I just feel like I'm an extension of my parents. But I feel...Wait, what was the question again?

Why do you think that?

I think it's just because of who I grew up around, I guess. And...I don't know, I think maybe it leads back to me not really telling anyone that I'm queer unless it comes out in conversations. So I feel like people who come out and it's this profound thing and they sit down and like they tell their parents, it's a lot more significant to them. So they naturally like find and go to events and for them, because that's something that is a big deal to them. Not saying it's a bad thing, but like to me, I'm not saying I'm like nonchalant about it, but like it low-key isn't that big of a deal to me. So I guess I don't feel the need to find my community because I've sort of already got that at home and it was normal to me. I mean, straight people don't really find their community. Like, I don't really know, like it's sort of already there. Like the one way I can think about it is like with

my grandma in [redacted] she would never find, like her black community because like everyone there is already black. So it's like there's no need to find those people. And I feel like it's the same for me. I don't feel the need to find that in younger people because it's not a profound thing that I discovered and everyone around me growing up was already queer, barring my sister. So maybe that's why I haven't been too involved in going to events and stuff like that.

Do you kind of feel like you kind of have 'insider information' in the sense of like, do you feel like you have a maybe more of an understanding or a different understanding to someone your age who was queer, but with straight parents?

Yeah, I always feel like I'm like, I don't know, maybe this sounds weird, but I always feel like I know more than, like, I don't know! Like more knowledgeable, I guess. Yeah, insider information, that's a good way to put it. Like, I always feel... 'oh, this is like something new for you, but like I already knew this'. Like this is like, yeah, yeah, you can like go on your discovery journey. But me, like I've already got this locked in so I don't really need to go on this journey, which is kind of funny. But maybe that, I maybe I shouldn't say that, but yeah, I feel like I...I, yeah, I feel like I am much more knowledgeable. Maybe I'm not, but I feel like that. And yeah.

Yeah, no, I understand that. So other than like going to events, do you engage within kind of queer culture, like queer media, maybe songs, films, that kind of thing?

Yes, a lot. I mean...but I feel like every good piece of media is already created by queer people. So I feel like I, again, like the same with my friends, I'm never sort of seeking out. It just happens that four of my, that in my letterbox, like three of my top favourite are all queer. So like, it's never, again, it's never something that I seek out, but I think I'm naturally, I naturally gravitate towards it. Sometimes I do seek it out and, but yeah, I, I think...I think queer media personally is just better. So I do engage with it, but not consciously. I just do, I guess. And also because the music that my parents were listening to and the films that they watched. Like as a whole family, we went to go see Moonlight in 2016, I was like 11. So that's just like now one of my favourite movies, but that's just something that I just, like, I didn't make a decision to watch that, I just did. So it was like, like when Pose came out about the ballroom culture, I think it was like 2020 like lockdown or just before, like we watched it as a whole family on the TV. So that's just like one of my favourite TV series now. But I guess it's just because I was brought up just going to see that because obviously as my parents growing up in the late 80s, 90s, queer media wasn't really represented and now I feel like there's a lot more of it out. So when I was growing up, they made a conscious effort to take me and my sister to see as many gay and queer things as possible, listen to as much as possible. So I guess I gravitate towards it now because that's just what I grew up on.