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Two Mothers, One Grandmother: Intergenerational Ambivalence in Heterosexual Mother-LBQ Daughter Relationships

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Abstract

Using the theoretical framing of structural ambivalence, which points to how competing cultural norms can cause conflict in family relationships, this paper asks: how does the transition to parenthood affect the intergenerational family relationship between LBQ adult women and their heterosexual mothers? Analyzing qualitative data from interviews with three adult child-parent dyads, we discuss how two cultural norms manifest in these relationships: pronatalism, or the privileging of procreation and heteronormativity, or the privileging of heterosexuality. In some ways, the intergenerational family relationship is strengthened as both LGB daughters and their heterosexual mothers express that the grandchild resulted in their becoming closer and developing a better understanding of one another. Yet the intergenerational family relationship is also strained as both members express that new conflicts arose within their relationship over issues such as how to refer to the donor or how to explain the LBQ-parent family to other family members. Mothers often

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felt put in an intermediary role between family members who did not approve of the LBQ parent's sexuality and families. We discuss the implications of these findings in relation to sexuality and family scholarship and changing LGBTQ family dynamics.

Keywords: Familial relationships, Qualitative research, Lesbian mothering, Same-sex parenting

Introduction

When Ashley reflected on her experience coming out to her mom, she said this about her mom's initial reaction: "She wasn't...P-Flag Mom of the Year. [She didn't say] 'oh, it's great!' No. She was upset. She was sad. She was worried." Among the factors that she thought contributed to these reactions was her mother's sentiment that "I'm not going to be a grandma." Ashley's experience resonates with research that illustrates heterosexual parents can struggle to understand and accept their LGBQ child's sexuality, and also that parents can experience a process of grief if they perceive that their child coming out as LGBQ means a loss of their having grandchildren (Beeler & Di-Prova, 1999; Ben-Ari, 1995; Gafsky, 2014; Martin et al., 2010; LaSala, 2000; Saltzburg, 2004; Savin-Williams, 2005; Savin-Williams & Dube, 1998; Strommen, 1989). Yet, these reactions might be shifting as LGBQ people have increased opportunities to become parents if they desire (Goldberg & Allen, 2013; Mamo, 2007). Likewise, if an LGBQ person has a child, that experience may impact their relationship with their own parents (Gall et al., 2019). In Ashley's case, she explained that her mother was "excited" when she heard the news that Ashley was pregnant. When we interviewed Ashley's mother, Betsy, she told the story of hearing the news of Ashley's pregnancy in this way: "I was at work. I had to go outside, I was crying...it was fabulous." About being a grandma, she said "It's brought a lot of joy... I love every minute of it." Importantly, Betsy also thinks that becoming a grandma has brought her closer to her daughter.

In this manuscript, we analyze data from three mother-daughter dyads and focus on changes in the relationship between cisgender heterosexual mothers and cisgender LBQ adult daughters as a result of the LBQ daughter having a child, and how this dynamic plays out in the wider, extended family context. We draw on the family studies theoretical framing of structural ambivalence to address how competing

cultural norms can manifest in these family relationships (Connidis & McMullen, 2002). Moreover, we examine both the relationship between mothers and daughters and also analyze that relationship as embedded in a larger family system (Cox & Paley, 1997).

Literature Review

Theoretical Frameworks: Structured Ambivalence and Family Systems

We draw on family scholars who foreground the concept of ambivalence to understand how family relationships can have both positive and negative dimensions (Luscher & Pillemer, 1998). Work focused on mother-daughter relationships, for instance, indicates that family members in this relationship report high levels of both support and conflict (Pillemer & Suito, 2002; Shrier et al., 2004; Willson et al., 2003), with daughters often experiencing an effortful, agentic process in the maintenance of these relationships (Alford, 2021). Research also demonstrates that parents are more likely to experience ambivalence towards their adult children whom they perceive do not share similar values (Gilligan et al., 2015; Pillemer et al., 2012). In a related vein, when adult children achieve normative adult statuses, parents experience decreased levels of ambivalence. For instance, parents express less ambivalence towards married children, children who do not divorce, and children who are employed (Pillemer et al., 2007, 2012). Such findings would thus suggest that parents would also express less ambivalence towards adult children who achieve the normative adult status of parenthood (Schenk & Dykstra, 2012). The bulk of this research conceptualizes ambivalence at the psychological or individual level, however, and thus may thus fail to adequately address how family transitions, including the birth of a child, may actually *increase* levels of ambivalence if it introduces competing cultural norms into the family system.

To that end, we draw on the concept of structured ambivalence—a concept that which refers to the contradictions that arise in family relationships because of competing cultural norms; scholars argue that these competing cultural norms manifest in how family members respond to and interact with one another and precipitate experiences of

conflict and support among family members (Connidis & McMullen, 2002; Lorenz-Meyer, 2004). According to the concept of structured ambivalence, in order to fully understand intergenerational family relationships, researchers must address culture or the systems of meanings that family members draw on when interacting with one another (Hays, 2000; Scherrer et al., 2015).

Specifically, in our focus on changes in LBQ daughter-heterosexual mother relationships after the LBQ daughter has a child, we are particularly interested in two cultural norms that can create ambivalence in these relationships: pronatalism, or the cultural privileging of procreation (Parry, 2005) and heteronormativity, or cultural privileging of heterosexuality (Martin & Kazyak, 2009). The degree to which women are expected to have children and are pressured from family members, especially mothers, to do so (Barber, 2000) suggests that the arrival of a child would introduce more support into the relationship between LBQ daughters and heterosexual mothers. Yet the privileging of heterosexuality results in LBQ people facing stigma related to their sexuality and social and legal discrimination related to parenting because “mother” and “heterosexual” are conflated in cultural imagination (Hopkins et al., 2013; Kazyak, 2015; Moore & Stambolis-Ruhstorfer, 2013; Powell et al., 2010; Seidman, 2002; Smith, 1993). Thus, the birth of a child could introduce more conflict into the relationship insofar as mothers might have competing interpretations about their LBQ daughters becoming parents. Families also may find themselves navigating more discussions and increased visibility about the daughter’s LBQ sexuality after she becomes a parent which could lead to conflict (Bernstein, 2015).

We also draw on scholars who conceptualize the family as a system of interdependent members who continuously influence one another (Cox & Paley, 1997). Much attention has been paid to the interdependent and reciprocal nature of the parent–child relationship (Amato & Sobolewski, 2001; Umberson, 1992). Research indicates, for instance, that the relationship between adult children and their parents can affect adult children’s marriage quality (Reczek et al., 2010) and the stress of new parenthood (Bouchard & Doucet, 2011). Adult children’s life transitions can also influence their parents. For instance, adult children becoming parents has a positive effect on their parent’s well-being (Carr, 2004; Kalmijn & De Graaf, 2012). Family

systems theory also draws attention to how a change in the family impacts family members' relationships with one another: for instance, how the birth of a child affects the intergenerational relationship between the new parent and the new grandparent. Indeed, research indicates that adult children's contact with and support from their parents often increases during this time, as grandparents provide resources such as money and time (Belsky & Rovine, 1984; Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1986; LaRossa & LaRossa, 1981). However, a new child can also introduce conflict into the relationship between new parents and new grandparents, as the generations may disagree on parenting approaches or other issues (Aquilino, 1997; Halpert & Carr, 2008; Rossi & Rossi, 1991). Moreover, a family systems approach also posits the importance of thinking about how the mother-daughter relationship itself is also embedded in a larger family network and mothers and daughters both negotiate multiple family relationships beyond the dyad (Scherrer, 2010).

LGBQ Family Relationships

Our analysis is also grounded in and extends research on the family relationships of LGBQ people. Research overall shows that LGBQ people perceive less support from their family compared to heterosexual peers (Rothblum et al., 2005). Research focused on LGBQ people coming out to families of origin demonstrates that heterosexual family members struggle to understand and accept their LGBQ family member's sexuality (Ben-Ari, 1995; LaSala, 2000; Saltzburg, 2004; Savin-Williams, 2005; Savin-Williams & Dube, 1998; Strommen, 1989). Coming out introduces conflict to the family system as the disclosure of a LGBQ identity disrupts parents' expectations and desires that their children be heterosexual (Scherrer et al., 2015), with some going so far as to say that "the picture they had envisioned of their child's life was shattered" (Grafsky, 2014: 47). Parents may also grapple with whether or how to tell other family members and people outside of the family. They may not disclose their child's sexual orientation for fear of facing stigma (Allen, 1999; Grafsky, 2014; Laird, 1993; Juros, 2020), especially in larger cultures that are particularly homonegative (Allen & Golojuch, 2019; Juros, 2020), or may act as facilitators in telling other family members (Scherrer, 2010, 2014). LGBQ people

also may not fully disclose their sexuality or same-sex partnership in an attempt to maintain good relationships with their parents (Acosta, 2013; Drumm et al., 2021; Glass, 2014; Reczek, 2016).

During the coming out process, family members draw on existing cultural understandings of those identities to interpret and respond to that disclosure (Broad et al., 2004; Fields, 2001; Martin et al., 2010; Scherrer, 2014; Seidman, 2002), and to “become” the parent of an LGBTQ son or daughter (Grafsky, 2014, p. 47). Particularly relevant to the proposed research is the finding that parents often experience a process of grieving over the lack of a heterosexual identity and life after their child comes out: most notably, the loss of having grandchildren (Beeler & Di-Prova, 1999; Grafsky, 2014; Martin et al., 2010; LaSala, 2000).

Given the degree to which the loss of being a grandparent is so salient for many parents, relationships with family of origin and parents may change if the LGBTQ person becomes a parent (Goldberg & Allen, 2013; Mamo, 2007). As Connidis (2003, p. 85) argues: “providing a grandchild...may prove to be a great facilitator to negotiating ambivalence, especially if the child is biologically related” (Connidis, 2003, p. 85). LGBTQ people are increasingly pursuing parenthood (Patterson & Riskind, 2010) and relationships with family members of origin can be salient in this process. Emerging research in this area shows that some LGBTQ people think about becoming parents as a way to signal to their family that they are an adult and/or gain respect from family of origin (Lewin, 1993, 2009; Reed et al., 2011), as well as to signal that their identity and long-term relationships are permanent (Drumm et al., 2021). Existing literature about whether LGBTQ people becoming a parent changes their relationship with heterosexual parents shows a range of possible changes: some report these relationships becoming closer and more positive after they became parents (Bergman et al., 2010; Goldberg, 2006; Mallon, 2004), others either that their relationship did not change and remained strained (Oswald, 2002) or that it became more negative (Hequembourg, 2004; Hequembourg & Farrell, 1999). Likewise, some report regular contact between grandparents and grandkids in lesbian-headed families, although contact is more likely with biological grandparents compared to non-biological grandparents (Patterson et al., 1998; Stacey, 2011). Our work adds to this burgeoning literature by addressing how cultural norms matter

to family processes and by analyzing the mother-daughter relationship within the broader family system.

Methods

Data

We analyze data from in-depth interviews with three mother-daughter pairs after receiving informed consent from all individual participants. The project received approval from the Institutional Review Board at the authors' home institution (#17,793). Participants were recruited through national and regional LGBTQ organizations and LGBTQ parenting groups; calls also were circulated on social media. To be eligible, both the mother and daughter had to be willing to be interviewed. Mothers had to identify as heterosexual and daughters had to identify as non-heterosexual. Daughters also had to have disclosed their sexuality to their mother prior to having a child, had a child after coming out and/or in the context of a same-sex relationship, and had a child through donor insemination. Although certainly not reflective of all types of LGBTQ-parent families or intergenerational relationships, we used these very narrow eligibility requirements based on methodological advice from sexuality and family scholars about not "muddling the research focus" (Roy et al., 2015).

The first author conducted all of the interviews. Mothers and daughters were interviewed separately but were asked the same questions on similar topics, following best practices for collecting data from multiple family members (Reczek, 2014; Scherrer, 2014). This strategy allowed for both mother and daughter to offer their own perspectives and experiences of, for instance, when the daughter initially came out, and for the authors to assess whether and how their stories converged. The interview included questions about four main topics: (1) the coming out or disclosure experience (2) the birth or adoption of a child (3) the current level of disclosure about the LBQ-parent family both to other family members and people outside of the family (4) the current level of acceptance within the broader family of origin for the LBQ-parent family.

Once interviews were complete, each was transcribed and coded by the research team. Coding began by “open coding” where the first author read through the transcripts and took notes on interesting themes (Emerson et al., 1995). Following, each author coded the transcripts for evidence of the themes that are the focus in this manuscript: heteronormativity and pronatalism. Given our interest in conceptualizing the relationships through the family systems theoretical lens, special attention was paid to how these themes influenced dynamics in the larger, extended family unit. Likewise, we also looked for instances when mothers and daughters had different interpretations of the same event and when mother and daughters articulated both positive and negative understandings of a particular experience. The research team wrote memos that linked themes, which were developed into the findings section below. Some quotes were minimally edited for readability while keeping the meaning of the messages given by mothers and daughters.

As with all research designs, ours has strengths and limitations. That we have data from in-depth interviews with two family members offers some strengths. First, our study design has alignment between what Roy et al. (2015, p. 244) refer to as the “unit of observation” and the “unit of analysis.” In other words, conducting interviews with both the mother and the daughter in a family (unit of observation) allows us to better capture family interactions (unit of analysis) than had we only done individual interviews. Second, having data from two family members also allows us to more fully examine nuances, ambivalences, and contradictions within families (Carr & Springer, 2010; Roy et al., 2015; Scherrer, 2014). Specifically, doing the interviews separately (rather than together) aligns with our interest in how, as Reczek (2014, p. 323) notes “family members experience the same events differently.” In the context of our study, what mothers perceive as support for their daughters’ LGBQ identity might differ from what the daughter experiences. The separate interviews are also appropriate for giving family members a chance to more freely discuss what they may perceive as sensitive or potentially difficult topics (Reczek, 2014). Finally, drawing from Roy et al., (2015, p. 247) scholarship, our “small homogenous sample” aligns with our research interest in examining the “intricate dynamics of reality construction in certain family groups.” The drawback of such a sample is that it limits our ability

to “understand broad variation within a specific phenomenon” (Roy et al., 2015, p. 247). Future researchers could expand on our study by drawing on a larger and more diverse sample and studying how these family dynamics might vary by identities known to influence LGBTQ people’s experiences with families of origin, including race and ethnicity (see Acosta, 2013; Brainer, 2019; Moore, 2011), religion (Wilcox, 2003), or gender and gender identity (see Brumbaugh-Johnson & Hull, 2019; Kade, 2021).

The participants in our study are cisgender, white, living in the Midwest, and described a range of family experiences in terms of the closeness they felt, the day-to-day contact they currently had, and the ways their relationships had changed over time. All of the daughters had children via donor insemination within the context of a same-sex relationship and were the parent who was pregnant and gave birth to their children. The first mother-daughter dyad are mother, Edith and daughter, Fiona. Fiona and Edith were close throughout her adolescence and early adulthood, but the relationship suffered after Fiona came out. Although Edith felt her response was supportive, Fiona did not feel the same. In particular, Fiona resented that her mother told her not to come out to her father. When Fiona came out to her father 8 years later, she found his response more supportive than her mother’s and lamented waiting so long to come out to him. The relationship between Fiona and Edith began to get “back to normal” after the birth of Fiona’s first child. Since becoming a grandma, Edith is out to her friends about Fiona’s sexuality. Still, Fiona did not feel as if Edith fully accepted her wife as a second mother until after her wife completed a second-parent adoption. A main source of tension within the larger family stems from Fiona’s brothers and sisters-in-laws; her brothers’ wives are openly homophobic. Edith is sad her family is “not the family that [they] were,” and blames her sons and daughters-in-law for driving a “wedge” in the family, especially because she feels she raised her sons better. The second dyad is Betsy and her daughter Ashley. Ashley and Betsy have a very close and open relationship. When Ashley was young, this relationship was strained and continued to be strained in some ways while Ashley was coming out. Over time, and through many conversations, Betsy became more supportive of her daughter’s identity. There continues to be strain in their relationship, particularly in relation to Ashley’s spouse, but overall both

agree that their relationship has improved over the years. Betsy now spends some of her providing childcare for her grandchild. Finally, the third dyad are mother, Carol and daughter, Diane. The relationship between Carol and her daughter Diane was tumultuous in the past, especially after Diane's coming out, but at the time of the interview was getting better and both acknowledged the love they have for each other. For a long time, their relationship was surface-level rather than personal, which Carol admits upset her, especially not being invited to Diane's wedding or finding out after they were married. Currently, Carol praises Diane and her wife for their parenting skills and meeting all the needs of their children—physically but also mentally and emotionally. Below we present more in-depth narratives from these three mother-daughter dyads.

Findings

Mother–Daughter Relationships: Ambivalent and Changing

In this section, we focus on the changing and ambivalent nature of the relationship between heterosexual mothers and LBQ daughters. We trace their narratives about how their relationships have changed since the initial coming out, with a focus specifically on how the LBQ daughter becoming a mother mattered. Their narratives highlight that mother-daughter relationships were marked by ambivalence, as relationships were experienced as both supportive and strained given larger cultural norms of heterosexism and pronatalism, and also that they changed over time.

In reflecting on the coming out experience, all interviewees spoke to the fact that it was a difficult process. Fiona said she wanted to come out to her mom in order to have a closer relationship with her: “I wanted my mom to know who I was and what was going on.” Fiona was also worried about what her mom's reaction would be and reflected: “I can't even remember how many hours of sleep I lost...how sick to my stomach [I was].” Ultimately Fiona described being “disappointed” by her mom's reaction to her coming out. Rather than say “that's great” or “I don't care,” two sentiments Fiona thought would be ideal to hear, her mom responded by saying “well I suspected that.”

Fiona also noted that she asked her mom if she had any questions and her mom simply said “no.” In contrast to Fiona’s experiences of the coming out process, Ashley and Betsy both explained that it was in fact Betsy who initiated the conversation and who, as Betsy put it, was the one who “kind of pulled her [Ashley] out the closet.” Also, unlike Fiona and Edith, they had many discussions following the initial disclosure of Ashley’s sexuality. Ashley said that her mom ended the initial conversation by saying: “‘I love you and we’ll talk.’ And we did. We talked a lot and like every day after that.” In a similar vein to Fiona, Diane was very worried about coming out to her mom. She reflected: “I remember it as crying...thinking that my family was going to abandon me.” Carol, Diane’s mother, reflected on the coming out process in the following way: “She said, ‘Mom, I’m gay’ through just a torrent of tears and anguish. And I realized then that...she cared more about what I was going to think and feel than...really she should have. She was crying for me. Not for herself...And that I was causing her that kind of pain.” Carol said that realization prompted her to respond to her daughter saying “‘mom, I know you’re disappointed’” by saying: “‘I love you, I don’t care what you’ve done, who you are, or anything.’” Diane’s experience described her mom’s reaction as better than she thought it would be because “it [being abandoned] didn’t happen.” These narratives illustrate how heteronormativity manifests in the coming out process.

Alongside whatever initial reactions they had or sentiments they expressed to their daughters, mothers also reflected on their conflicting emotions. For instance, although Carol was affirming to Diane, Carol admitted the difficulty she had in hearing her daughter come out: “I was sad, but on a couple of levels...I knew that being gay was a hard lifestyle, and honestly, even now I think it’s a sin. It’s not an unforgivable sin, but I think that God said it was wrong...and, you know, but I sin every day and that’s what I’ve told her.” In these reflections, we see the ambivalent feelings Carol experiences in relation to her daughter’s sexuality. Carol’s feelings reflect the cultural privileging of heterosexuality and degree to which lesbian identity is stigmatized (“hard lifestyle” and “sin”). Both Carol and Diane described how their relationship was strained after coming out. For instance, Carol explained that she was not at her daughter’s wedding and that she “didn’t know they had gotten married... till after the fact... and I still have a sad place in my heart that I would have liked to have been there.”

Ashley also talked about her mom having mixed reaction to her coming out: Ashley said her mom's reaction was "maybe more positive than I expected, because she didn't completely like freak out and push me away kind of thing...It was like freaking out, but like 'I'm still here,' you know?" Ashley further described that even though her mom did not "push her away" she also "wasn't accepting right away. She wasn't happy about it. She didn't know how to make sense of it." Both Ashley and Betsy talked about the fears that Betsy had for her daughter: Betsy said: "The concerns was the negativity from the public... and her coming out to the rest of the family. I didn't know how they were...would react." Again, Betsy's comments underscore how heteronormativity manifests in family relationships insofar her daughter's coming out prompted her to feel "concern" and worry. Ashley's comments echoed that: "She...and just tons of concerns for my safety and that kind of stuff." Ashley also thought her mom interpreted her coming out as meaning that she would not have children.

All interviewees spoke to whether and how their relationship changed after the birth of their (grand)child. Participants' narratives highlight how the cultural privileging of procreating, particularly for cisgender women, manifests in these family dynamics. For instance, Diane says her mom was supportive of her having kids with her spouse: "It was definitely a positive—awesome [reaction]...she's always been like 'oh, I think you'll be a great mom'...[so she was] really glad...very positive." Carol's reflections echoed those of her daughter. Carol said she did not think Diane would have kids and was thus thrilled when she did: "what's so odd, is I never thought [Diane] would have kids. I was thrilled beyond belief that they would consider doing that." When I asked Carol why she thought Diane wouldn't have kids, Carol said: "in high school she never dated...Then when she got...in a gay relationship, I thought, no, no grandkids...And that's just ignorance on my part. I should have known that they [could]...you know. But it wasn't as likely as if she had married a male." Carol also said that the fact that Diane told her about being pregnant was meaningful and marked a change in the relationship: "I knew they were trying to get pregnant...and she told me early on that she was pregnant, before she told the rest of the family...and that meant a lot to me. It was kind of like she was saying 'I want you to be a part of this.'" Carol also spoke at length about how much she thought her relationship

with Diane changed after Diane had a child. Carol reflected: “She for the first time, understood...how much I loved her”; Carol said that Diane having a child was “the best thing that ever happened in our relationship, and it’s the best thing that ever happened to [Diane].” Reflecting on her relationship with Diane after Diane had a child, Carol said: “I think during that time, I proved to her that when your child’s sick, you can call me and I’ll come. When you have a special happening in your life, I want to be a part of it...now I don’t think she questions whether I accept it or not or...I do.”

Fiona thinks that her having a baby changed how her mom (Edith) viewed her sexuality. She explained: “it’s been a process for her coming around...and seeing that...my life is normal and it’s really no different than my brothers and especially once the kids came into the picture then I think things finally kinda got to be really ok.” Here Fiona credits having a baby as part of what helped her mom’s process of “coming around” to being more accepting about her sexuality as normal. Fiona further thinks that her having a baby changed her relationship with her mom for the better: “I think that that [having a baby] brought us closer together...because...her daughter had a baby and...that was part of her vision I guess.” Again, here we see evidence of the cultural norm of pronatalism for cisgender women at work insofar as Fiona thought she realized her mom’s “vision” of becoming a mom herself. Edith discussed that when she learned Fiona was pregnant, she was “glad that she was able to have one of her own,” further underscoring the pronatalism norm at work. Interestingly, Fiona describes that part of what happened when she had kids was that it also helped her see her mom in a new way: “when my mom’s around my kids I see how she was with me before...I came out.” Overall she says the experience has “brings out a little more joy...for both of us.” Fiona also spoke to the fact that she thinks her mom becoming a grandma facilitated her mom telling her friends about Fiona’s sexuality. Fiona said that she doesn’t think her mom told her friends about her being a lesbian prior to her having a baby; but since the baby her mom “takes the baby to lunch with friends,” “shows them pictures,” “and talks about us.” Here the grandchild (and norm of pronatalism and desire to share with friends) facilitates Fiona’s mother being explicit with her friends about her daughter’s relationship and sexuality.

Yet we also see narratives that complicate this story from both Fiona and her mother Edith and underscore ambivalence. For instance, Fiona notes that her mom's first reaction to learning that Fiona was trying to have a baby was not entirely supportive. Rather, Fiona said her mom "got kind of defensive" and asked "who's gonna watch the kid?" Here we see perhaps evidence of heteronormativity in the reaction of wondering how a family headed by two moms might work—"who's gonna watch the kid" (with the implicit comparison to a family headed by heterosexual couple where the mom is assumed to be the one who will watch the kids). Fiona also talked about the broader political landscape and the degree to which her and her mom's political differences and supporting different political parties cause conflict in their relationship. She said: "it [who my mom voted for and that she's defending his actions] bothers me more than I thought it would...it's discouraging and sad for me because the politics are going to have an effect on my family and me...and I can't fathom how it is she doesn't see that." Here, the broader cultural and political context—in which LGBTQ rights are restricted or opposed and heterosexuality is privileged—shapes how Fiona relates to her mother at the interpersonal level.

For Edith, evidence of ambivalence came up as she discussed wishing she could have had more information about the donor: "they looked specifically for a donor who did not want to be a part of the child's life...because they did not want to be tangled up in a mess later. Which I understood, and that's fine. I personally would like to know a little bit about him. But they've given me just a few—a little bit of information, but not a lot... And that's the way they wanted it. And this is their deal... this is their family, and any consequences, they will have to deal with." Here we see competing or ambivalent sentiments. On the one hand, Edith says she respects and supports their decision about the donor, and also at the same time, shares the sentiment that suggests she thinks there might be negative consequences to their decision. Although Edith was excited about her daughter becoming a mother, a reflection of pronatalism, she nonetheless expressed some hesitancy about the family structure within which her daughter mothers, a reflection of heteronormativity.

Betsy also expressed that she had some concerns about her daughter having a child because of societal stigma against LGBQ families (similar to how she reacted to her daughter coming out). Reflecting

on her grandchild having two moms, Betsy said: “There’s always concerns there. But I think the world’s changing to a positive and more understanding of gay couples with children. And I think [my grandchild] will be big enough and bold enough to stand on her feet.” Both Betsy’s and Edith’s comments underscore how the cultural norms of pronatalism and heterosexism can manifest in the relationship between adult LGB daughters and heterosexual mothers insofar as they describe both support and concern about their LGB daughter becoming a mother. Moreover, the mother-daughter relationship is embedded in a larger family system which both mothers and daughters must navigate; we turn to these navigations in the following section, focusing especially on how heterosexual mothers played a role in managing their daughter’s sexuality within the larger family.

Mothers’ Management in Larger Family Network

Across all these dyads, we find that mothers played important roles in managing their daughters’ sexualities within the larger family, from the initial coming out to pregnancy, childbirth, and beyond. Their management reflects how mothers tried to navigate the manifestation of heteronormativity within the family on behalf of their daughters. Mothers’ management sometimes began when their daughter first came out. For instance, Edith discouraged her daughter (Fiona) from coming out to Fiona’s father. Fiona remembers her mother saying, “I’m not telling your father [because] I have no idea how he’s going to react” and also suggesting that Fiona likewise should not tell her father. Fiona heeded her mother’s advice, reflective of heteronormativity, and waited to come out to her father until her and her spouse were planning to have children, which was 8 years after she came out to her mother. Ironically, her father’s reaction was more supportive than her mother’s. Fiona reflected: “I was floored and I just sat there and cried and was like ‘why did I wait this long?... I would’ve had somebody that was supportive.’” Likewise, Betsy, also stressed to her daughter (Ashley) that it was not Betsy’s place to come out to other family members for her daughter, in this instance, her mother (Ashley’s grandmother). When Ashley asked her mom to “tell grandma,” Betsy recalled that she said “no” and said “that’s something you need to do [but] I’ll be there with you if you want me to be.”

Mothers also played a role in helping their daughters navigate being out within the larger family. Sometimes this took the form of encouraging daughters to be more visible and explicit about their sexuality and/or their same-sex relationships with other family members. In these cases, mothers actions reflect an attempt to challenge heteronormativity within the larger family. For example, Carol described how on large family vacations, her daughter (Diane) would often not show affection or sleep in the same bedroom with her spouse out of concern for how other family members would respond, especially younger nieces and nephews. Carol explained that she talked with Diane about this and said: “I told her, ‘Diane, they’re big people...you are who you are. I don’t want you to feel like you can’t be who you are around the family. It’s okay.’” Here Carol plays a role in advocating for her daughter and encouraging her to be more visible and out to all family members. A similar narrative emerged when Carol was talking about when Diane was pregnant and Carol’s siblings wanted to give Diane a baby shower; “my family gave her a shower. And she [Diane] was like, ‘Are you sure they want to?’ And I said, ‘they’re asking me and do this date for her’...And everybody came but one sister...And they gave her a really nice shower and some beautiful stuff.” Carol thinks the shower helped Diane to stop being concerned about other family members’ reactions: “I think it was beginning, the wheel was turning a little bit...I used to tell her, I said, “[Diane], who you sleep with, who you live your life with, what you do with your life is your business...You’re a big person now. It...you know, they may have their opinions [but]...they don’t voice it in front of me.” Here, we see Carol trying to navigate and manage the relationship that Diane has with her aunts, uncles, and other family members. There is ambivalence in family members stemming from the competing cultural norms of heteronormativity and pronatalism. Diane reflects on her family members being unaccepting of LGB sexuality (i.e. holding heteronormative views: “they may have opinions about it”) while also taking a “your life is your business” approach and celebrating her pregnancy (i.e. holding pronatalist views). Diane also discussed this tension and ambivalence in her family relationships with regard to what acceptance of LBQ sexuality looks like. In relation to her siblings, she said: “my sister and her husband think I’m OK but would think nothing of degrading gay men.” Diane used

the phrase “people hold different truths” to reflect on her experience with family members being simultaneously acceptance and unaccepting of LGB sexuality.

Other times, mothers tried to navigate larger family dynamics, and specifically tried to manage conflict between siblings that arose because of family members’ heteronormative views. The conflict was particularly salient in the stories from Fiona and Edith. Both mother and daughter spoke about how Fiona’s siblings did not approve of Fiona’s sexuality and had limited contact with Fiona’s family as a result. This conflict had the power to reshape some of their long-standing family traditions. For instance, their entire family used to vacation together at the same place every year; now Fiona’s brothers and their families no longer join these vacations. Edith explained ways that she has tried to intervene in the conflict. In one attempt to heal, Edith suggested that her daughter (Fiona) ask one of her brothers to be the godfather to her first child; Fiona did, but the brother refused. Although Edith believed she “didn’t raise [her children] to discriminate,” and laments the fact that they are “not the family that [they] were,” she also does not know how much to further intervene because as she put it “they are grown children...with families of their own and there’s just so much you can do as a parent when that happens.”

Edith expressed particular frustration with one of her son’s wife, whom she felt was particularly disapproving of LGBTQ identities and families and was negatively influencing her son. Edith explained: “[My son’s wife] is of the opinion that [Fiona] is going to influence [Fiona’s] kids in a negative way and her kids in a negative way and she’s afraid that it’s going to bring up questions [from her kids] that she doesn’t feel comfortable answering.” Here we see Edith try to negotiate multiple family member’s responses to her daughter’s sexuality and family and mitigate conflict between family members—although she is ultimately unsuccessful in these endeavors. Also, although both Fiona and Edith discussed this family dynamic in the interviews, it appears they do not necessarily talk about it with each other. Fiona explained: “we’re not a family that looks for conflict and we try and avoid it or any discussions that could be too heated discussions. I mean, my siblings are a prime example of that...we don’t discuss the fact that they’re not accepting and they’re not supportive...that’s not talked about.”

Another way that mothers managed their daughter's sexuality within the larger family is by fielding questions about LBQ relationships from other family members. In some cases, we again see evidence that mothers' actions reflect an attempt to challenge heteronormativity within the larger family. For example, Betsy recounted numerous conversations she had with her own mother about her daughter Ashley's sexuality and family. Betsy's mother (Ashley's grandmother) did not understand how Ashley could become pregnant without being in a heterosexual relationship and also expressed concern about Ashley raising a child with a same-sex partner. In these conversations, Betsy expressed support for Ashley and advocated for her mother to likewise support Ashley. As Betsy put it: "Mom had a lot of questions. I mean, she's older. She didn't understand...Yeah, she had a lot of questions...and she did ask me [them]...and I said, 'Mom, I'm fine with it'... I don't care who [Ashley] loves.'"

Edith also fielded questions from her other grandchildren about if Fiona's child had a father. She told her grandson his cousin did have a father, but that the father didn't live with them; her grandson replied "oh, I understand" and did not ask further questions. In the interview with Fiona, she explained that she talked with mom after this exchange because Fiona wanted to use the terminology of "donor" not "dad." She said: "we sat down and had this whole big discussion about a dad and a father and a donor and the differences between the two." Here the interactions Edith had with other family members impacted the dialogue between her and her daughter— and likewise the dialogue between Fiona and Edith has the potential to shape future discussions that Edith has with other family members about LGBTQ families.

Mothers and Daughters-in-Law

Along with mothers managing their daughter's LGBTQ sexuality within the larger family of origin network, we also find that the relationship between mothers and their daughter's spouses—in other words between mother and daughter-in-law—is another important family relationship to navigate and one that can also be characterized by ambivalence. In general, given heterosexism and heteronormativity, the daughter's LGBTQ relationship may not always be fully embraced in the same way as a heterosexual relationship. Fiona pointed to her mom

not including her spouse in family pictures when their relationship first began: “when we would take family pictures, [mom] wouldn’t include [my spouse]. I would have to pull her in and like make a point to include her. But now she’s a part of the family [and] she’s in every picture and all of that.” Similar to how understandings of their daughters’ sexuality can change over time, mothers’ treatment of their daughters’ LGB relationship and same-sex spouse can also shift.

Additionally, some mothers may see positives to their daughters being in LGB relationships and parenting with another woman, as was true for Carol. Reflecting on how she thinks her daughter’s relationship and parenting are different from those of heterosexual couples (including her own), Carol said: “I have seen what good parents they are...and how attentive they are to each other in ways that I don’t think a female-male are...like they trade off really well...like they switch nights and they communicate more...And there’s not that nagging ‘it’s your turn to take out the garbage’... kind of thing. It’s like they’ve got a schedule...and they both abide by [it]. And they’re fair to each other. It’s more of a partnership, half and half, equal partnership than it is with a man and a woman...than I’ve ever experienced.” Carol said that she has “respect” for how her daughter and daughter-in-law “handle everyday life.” Although Carol highlighted positives she saw in her daughter’s same-sex relationship, for others, the mother and daughter-in-law relationship and how the mother responded to her daughter’s LGB family was more fraught.

Indeed, some interviewees discussed the difficulty that mothers had in accepting and appropriately acknowledging their daughter’s family—and specifically the fact that there were two moms. Often, the mothers struggled to accept their daughter-in-law’s place as a mother. These dynamics reflect how mothers’ pronatalist excitement over their daughter becoming a mother was constrained by heteronormativity. For example, Betsy and Ashley both discussed some extremely strained and conflictual interactions between Betsy and Ashley’s spouse. Their stories highlight ambivalence and how competing cultural norms manifest in mother and daughter-in-law relationships. Ashley discussed the fact that her wife was angry with how involved Ashley’s mother (Betsy) was during the pregnancy. Ashley said: “she was like excited at the idea of being a grandma, like super excited...and then she got a little like too excited...and was getting like over-involved. And it was

pissing my wife off.” Ashley pointed to the fact that because her wife’s role as a mother was neither socially nor legally fully recognized, her wife was especially sensitive to her mother in-laws over involvement. Ashley said: “She doesn’t want to be pushed out. She wants to be recognized...and I know that she feels in a kind of insecure place because nobody’s going to question that I’m the mom to this child...but she feels like she’s always going to be questioned...or not the real mom.” Along with negotiating the lack of social recognition because of heteronormativity, Ashley also noted how she and her wife negotiated legal ambiguity and inequity insofar as they could not both be listed as mothers on the birth certificate in all states and how this influenced their decision to give birth in a different state than they were living so that her wife would not be “robbed of being recognized as a parent.” She thinks both of these factors contributed to the dynamic between her mother and her wife because as she put it: “when my mom felt like she was just doing her role as like, you know, the mom of the pregnant one or whatever...my wife felt like my mom was doing what the spouse should be doing and took offense. Like, you wouldn’t do that if I was a husband... you wouldn’t do that if I were the father.” Betsy, on the other hand, felt that she was being pushed out by her daughter-in-law: “It was a struggle at first because of my daughter-in-law. I felt like she was trying to push me out. She didn’t want me there at the birth, but I was. That’s my daughter, that’s my grandchild.”

When Ashley was in labor, there was a fight that resulted in security guards being called and Ashley’s spouse “taking off her wedding ring and throwing it at me,” as Ashley explained. According to Ashley, her spouse felt that her role was being usurped by Ashley’s mom. Ashley described her spouse’s sentiments in this way: “Your mom wants to be your main support person and I’m getting pushed out... Your mom is trying to play the role that I should be playing as your spouse.” This strained dynamic continued after labor as well. When Betsy reflected on her relationship with Ashley’s spouse, she expressed feeling that her daughter-in-law usurped Ashley’s motherhood role. She said: “I did at first have a problem with [my granddaughter] calling her [daughter-in-law] Mommy. Because my daughter is her Mommy. My daughter carried her.” Here we see how Betsy experienced ambivalence in the relationships with her daughter and daughter-in-law, an ambivalence that arose because of competing cultural

norms. Given pronatalism, Betsy wanted to be involved in her daughter's pregnancy and birth and was excited about the grandchild. Given heteronormativity, Betsy had difficulty recognizing both of her grandchild's parents and did not want to refer to her daughter in-law as the child's "mommy."

A similar dynamic emerged with Edith, Fiona, and Fiona's spouse. Fiona discussed the fact that she thought her mother Edith did not fully acknowledge her spouse's role as a mom given larger cultural norm of heteronormativity that devalues families by same-sex parents. Rather than respect parenting decisions made by both moms, Fiona noted that Edith would often discredit decisions made by Fiona's spouse and looked to Fiona as the one with final decision-making authority. Fiona believed her mother only fully recognized her spouse as an equal parent after her spouse was legally able to pursue a second-parent adoption (which legally recognized her role as a mother)—and after they had a second child together. She explained: "It wasn't until we invited her to [the] adoption that...[my mom] saw... that [my spouse] was... legitimately...recognized as [a] parent...and you know [after]...we sat down with her... [with]...all our legal documents...I think that kind of started the ball rolling with her thought process. But it probably really wasn't until [our second child] was born that that she really, really, really saw [my spouse] as a parent." Here, the institution of law in part serves to legitimate the daughter-in-law's role as a full and equal parent in the eyes of the mother.

Discussion and Conclusion

Our analyses of the changes in the relationship between cisgender heterosexual mothers and cisgender LBQ adult daughters as a result of the LBQ daughter having a child, how this dynamic plays out in the wider family context, and how cultural norms influence these processes offer important insights for family scholars interested in LG-BTQ families. First, the relationships that LBQ daughters have with their heterosexual mothers were characterized by ambivalence. Mothers and daughters relationships were neither wholly positive or negative. Rather, their relationship moved between being positive and negative, and was often experienced as having both positive and

negative aspects simultaneously. In some ways, the daughter becoming a mother led to both of them feeling like their relationship grew stronger. Both daughters and mothers described feeling a new level of closeness, contact, and support in many ways. Their narratives reflect the gendered pronatalist cultural expectation for cisgender women to have children (and grandchildren). However, although the birth of a grandchild brought joy to mothers and could repair previously strained relationships, it also introduced new dynamics into their dyadic relationship that were experienced as conflictual. Likewise, the meaning of acceptance (of the daughter's LBQ sexuality and two-mom family) was also one that could change over time and was not always experienced in the same way by mother and daughter. Future work could pay particular attention to how sentiments that mothers expressed and believed to be benign or even supportive (e.g. fear for safety, lesbian sexuality is sin) were experienced differently by daughters. Future research could also explore these dynamics using a turning points methodology, in which participants describe specific incidents and discuss how they changed their relationship (see for example, Braithwaite et al., 2018; Dun, 2010).

Importantly, the birth of a grandchild also introduced new dynamics into the larger family system in terms of how mothers managed the ways in which the daughter's sexuality was acknowledged, expressed, or supported within the larger family. In addition, it also resulted in new dynamics regarding the relationship between heterosexual new grandmothers and their daughters' spouses, or their daughters-in-law. Thinking about structured ambivalence within a family system and the cultural norms of pronatalism and heteronormativity allows us to better understand these dynamics.

Mothers in some ways facilitated their daughters being more out and visible within the family of origin. Because of the privileging of reproduction, mothers were often excited to share the news that they would become grandmothers and to continue sharing stories about their grandchildren. In other words, becoming a grandmother meant talking about their grandchildren and daughter's family, and potentially answering questions from other family members. In this way, mothers were in a position that could allow them to facilitate family members gaining more awareness about LBQ sexuality and becoming more accepting. We also see that mothers' management could change

over time as they learned more about their daughter's approach to parenting as a LBQ mother (e.g. using "donor" rather than "father").

Yet mothers' ability to facilitate acceptance within the larger family system was constrained by heteronormativity. In some cases, siblings' heteronormativity and homophobia drove wedges in the family and forced mothers to play peacemaker between their daughter and her other adult children and their families. The conflict worsened when children were introduced because the other adult children did not want their children interacting with cousins who were parented by LGBQ mothers.

Likewise, heteronormativity also impacted the relationships between mothers and their daughter's spouses. Mothers were excited and to some extent relieved when their daughters decided to have children; mothers feared their daughters' sexuality would prevent them from becoming grandmothers. After this initial excitement, however, mothers were confronted with a new challenge: navigating a family where their daughter was not the only mother. Heteronormativity assumes distinctive roles for spouses (i.e., wife and husband) and parents (i.e., mother and father) based on gender and sexuality. Despite substantive and sustained challenges to traditional gender roles, cultural schemas continue to associate motherhood with childcare and fatherhood with financial support, and mothers in this study draw on these heteronormative schemas. Although one mother ultimately saw the advantages of a two-mother family for both her daughter and grandchildren, the other mothers in this study felt far more conflict. For some, an additional mother diminished the specialness of their daughter's motherhood. Others simply did not always know how to interact with a second mother. The degree to which the broader social and legal context also did not recognize two mom families only exacerbated this challenge. With changing laws and social attitudes towards LGBQ families, future research can continue to address how these changes manifest in family relationship. Funding This research was supported by two internal grants: the Social & Behavioral Science Research Consortium Seed Grant and the Research Council Faculty Seed Grant.

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