University of Southampton

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Geography and Environmental Science

Narrating Kinship and Connection:

The Life Stories of Adult-Children Raised by LBTQ Parents

By

Eliza Garwood

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Abstract

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Despite the increasing literature on LGBTQ families, there continues to be limited research on the children within these families. The social, legal and political context for LGBTQ people has transformed drastically over the twentieth and twenty-first century. However, we know little about how these changes will have shaped the life courses of people raised by LGBTQ parents.

The data within this thesis comes from 20 biographical interviews with adult-children raised by lesbian, bisexual, trans and queer (LBTQ) parents in England and Scotland. This thesis explores how people with LBTQ parents narrate their life stories, particularly addressing the intersections of family, identity, social norms and historical context. I use a combination of life course and queer theory to discuss the complex and messy everyday spatialities and relationalities found in participant life stories. The study examines the interplay between notions of normative families, genders and sexualities, and alternative everyday practices in families with LBTQ parents. This analysis is combined with a geographical and temporal lens, discussing how family practices, emotions and relationships can shift through time and space.

I firstly discuss this in relation to genetic normativity, noting that although people with LBTQ parents often live in families that seem to resist dominant notions of biological relatedness, genetic discourses remain significant to those raised by LBTQ parents. This suggests that children raised in LBTQ households must navigate between the non-traditional aspects of their families and ongoing normative genetic discourses. Secondly, I examine queer origin stories, highlighting the ways that adult-children with LBTQ parents emphasise the importance of knowing their queer family histories, rather than only their genetic relations. This demonstrates the ways that adult-children can re-create, re-shape and re-tell their queer origin stories in adulthood. Third, I look into how participants narrated their experiences within the various spaces they moved between. I focus on the idea of 'coming out' or disclosure, to discuss how the power within specific contexts prompt different practices, displays, and feelings from people with LBTQ parents. Finally, I explore how participants related to ideas of normality and normativity more broadly, noting adult-children's pursuit of intelligibility and legitimacy; how adult-children engage in quiet forms of everyday activism; and complicate traditional notions of the idealised life course.

These findings contribute to the geographies of family and intimacy and sociological understandings of LGBTQ and queer kinship, adding to the limited body of work on children raised by non-heterosexual or gender confirming parents.

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Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

Print name: **Eliza Garwood**

Title of thesis: **Narrating Kinship and Connection: The Life Stories of Adult-Children Raised by LBTQ Parents**

I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. Parts of this work have been published as:-

Garwood, E. and Lewis, N. (2019) 'Where are the Adult Children of LGBTQ Parents? A Critical Review.' *Journal of Family Theory and Review*, 11(4): 592-610.

Signature: ..... Date: .....

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Chapter 1 Introduction

So often, the children of LGBTQ parents are discussed in media, politics and legislation through discourses of 'risk' and 'wellbeing' (Hosking et al., 2015: 328). Fears about the outcomes of children raised by LGBTQ parents have overwhelmed LGBTQ parenting debates for decades. While these narratives of risk and fear have become somewhat less dominant in the UK, these arguments still continue today, with critiques against LGBTQ parenting citing the "best interests" of children as their main priority. For example, in February 2018 the *Daily Mail*[1] ran an article with the headline 'please don't pretend two dads is the new normal' which claimed that 'children benefit most from being brought up by a man and a woman' (Littlejohn, 2018). This type of argument has been analysed by Nash and Browne (2019: 1), who have noted that equalities legislation and support for LGBTQ education has led to the rise of what they term 'heteroactivism', founded on the assertion of the 'superiority of monogamous, binary cis-gendered, coupled marriages as best for children and for society'. Furthermore, in a recent court ruling, it was decided that a trans man who carried and gave birth cannot be registered as the child's father (Booth, 2019). This ruling, by the most senior judge in England and Wales, claimed that those who are pregnant and give birth are considered 'mothers', irrespective of their gender. An article about the story in the *Daily Mail,* although mostly positive and claiming that the child will be 'surrounded by love', continues to maintain that it will be a 'complicated thing to have to explain to a child' (Johnston, 2019).

This discourse of the "at risk" child, who will be "confused" by their LGBTQ-headed family, has consistently been at the core of political debates and academic research regarding LGBTQ parenting. However, what is missing within these debates are the voices of the children brought up by these parents and in these families (Clarke, 2007: 26). Paechter (2000: 406) has claimed that the limited research on the children of lesbian and gay men mean that they 'remain absent from the minds of all those involved in education, from policymakers and academics to teachers in classrooms'. While this statement was made two decades ago, the landscape of academic literature in relation to the children of LGBTQ parents in the UK looks strikingly similar, with the voices of children raised in LGBTQ-families still largely absent from these discussions. This thesis seeks to make an important intervention into existing studies of LGBTQ intimacies, and uses

[1] The *Daily Mail* is a right-wing UK tabloid newspaper.

biographical interviews to gather the life stories of adults raised by lesbian, bisexual, trans and queer parents.

The silences and invisibility of children who grow up with LGBTQ-parents has been something I have been keenly aware of throughout my life, as a child of lesbian parents, who grew up in a household where LGBTQ identities and relationships were part of my everyday reality. Throughout my childhood I was surrounded by stories and narratives of LGBTQ life. However, I knew few others (other than my siblings) who had been raised by LGBTQ parents or in 'queerer' households. Thus, my own experiences of what it was like to be raised in such a family could not be shared and were not reflected back to me in wider society. Likewise, I could not draw on common narratives to explain my experiences of living in an LGBTQ household. Whilst these were not negative experiences, the lack of understanding by those around me, such as friends, peers and teachers, and the need to continually explain my family set up, often highlighted my difference from the norm, producing moments of exclusion from heteronormative society. Within my interviews with participants for this study, this story was regularly repeated back to me, albeit in different ways, highlighting the lack of stories about the everyday lives of those raised by LGBTQ parents.

Furthermore, the (media) stories that are told about LGBTQ families often present these as new, novel or innovative families, including TV shows such as *The Kids are Alright, The New Normal or Modern Family.* Likewise, the recent flurry of work into LGBTQ parenting in light of advances in reproductive technologies and new equalities legislation, although extremely valuable, can risk overlooking the long history of LGBTQ-headed families (Dempsey, 2010; Hicks, 2011; Nordqvist, 2010, 2012). LGBTQ-headed families are becoming more visible and common, however it is important to recognise that people have been raised by LGBTQ parents decades before reproductive technologies became available or equalities laws were in place. The social and legislative changes laid out in detail later in this chapter, will have shaped the life narratives of people with LGBTQ parents, yet LGBTQ families have a much longer history.

The stories of 20 adult-children born to and/or raised by lesbian, bisexual, trans and queer (LBTQ)[2] parents are at the centre of this thesis. Informed by biographical narrative interviews, this thesis examines the ways that people with LBTQ parents interact with the ideas of family, kinship, and gender and sexual normativities throughout their lives, in different geographical and

[2] While I use the term "LGBTQ" to discuss the literature and policy regarding LGBTQ individuals and families more broadly, as I was unable to interview anyone with gay fathers, I have decided to condense this to "LBTQ" when discussing my own study and participants.

temporal contexts. LGBTQ families have come into existence in a wide variety of ways, with many different formations, in part, due to the legislative context in which they were formed. Participants involved in the study have a variety of family structures, these included: people born to single, coupled or separated LBTQ identifying parents, people whose parents disclosed their LBTQ identity during their childhood/adolescence, a combination of heterosexual and LBTQ parents through either divorce/separation or prearranged co-parenting arrangements, people with known donors, and those with LBTQ parents who are not legally and/or biologically related but are considered parents. These are not simple stories and do not narrate neat family configurations. Thus, in this thesis I aim to capture some of the complexity and messiness of these life narratives, noting the multiple, ambivalent and often contradictory ways in which participants described their everyday family lives.

1.1 Aims, objectives and research questions

There is currently a limited amount of literature on adults and children of LGBTQ parents, and this existing research largely does not address the spatialities and onward lives of this population. Within this research, and other LGBTQ family literature, there have been speculations about how these children will develop throughout their lives. These have included questions about whether children will be “harmed” or “damaged” by LGBTQ parenting, which have frequently been refuted by psychological research claiming the ”sameness” of children with LGBTQ parents (Golombok et al., 1983). Others have suggested that LGBTQ parenting may lead to children becoming more progressive, open-minded or accepting. For example, Epstein (2005: 11) states that:

> there may be some possibilities created for children who grow up in queer households, households that may challenge profoundly historically entrenched gender dynamics, and where there may be an openness to sexual, and other kinds of, diversity.

Nevertheless, there has been very limited temporal and spatial analysis of this population. Thus, these questions and speculations have remained just that. Through analysing life narratives of adults raised by LBTQ parents, I aim to ask questions about past and ongoing lived experience, kinship ties and imagined futures. I focus on how people’s identities and everyday performances have been shaped through their childhood, adolescence and adult lives. I interrogate how the (hetero)normativity embedded within everyday spaces, such as the home, classroom, playground, workplace, church and nation may enable and/or constrain adult-children who have LBTQ

parents. Contributing to debates on the spatial dynamics of kinship, family and intimacy, I will explore the narratives of this population in relation to family, gender and sexual normativities, highlighting how their experiences may offer new understandings of kinship and family.

The overarching research questions for this thesis are:

- How do people raised by LBTQ parents conceptualise kinship and relatedness? And how do these imaginings and practices of kinship develop through time?
- How do adult-children narrate their origins as part of an LBTQ family and community?
- How do place and space shape the everyday lives of people with LBTQ parents?
- How do people with LBTQ parents react to and utilise the ideas of their families as ordinary and normal, or different and radical?

1.2 LGBTQ rights and new equalities landscapes

The social, legal and political context surrounding LGBTQ people and their families has transformed drastically over the twentieth and twenty-first century in the United Kingdom. Since 2000 the UK has seen important legal changes, so much so that the UK was ranked the third most progressive country in Europe for LGBTQ equality by the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA, 2016). For LGBTQ families and people with LGBTQ parents, some of the most important legislative shifts have been those relating to adoption, conception, parental rights, education and marriage. In this section I will briefly trace some of the most significant legislative changes that have occurred in the UK in recent decades, noting a number of progressive shifts for the rights of LGBTQ people. However, I will also draw out some of the limits and oppositions to these new found rights gains.

Family and personal relationships are key ways in which we interact with the state and public institutions, including schools, parenting services and healthcare. The state and public bodies once framed families and intimacies as ideally heteronormative (Browne and Nash, 2017). However, a shifting equalities landscape in the UK (and beyond) has reshaped the inclusion/exclusion boundary, including *some* LGBTQ people as idealised national citizens. While some have taken an optimistic view point of these legal gains, others have argued that this legislation does not broaden inclusion for the imagined ideal sexual citizen, but continues to endorse a certain family form and way of living. Various scholars, including Richardson (2005), Bell

and Binnie (2000), Taylor (2011) and Wilkinson (2013) contend that the focus on equal rights, centred on the sameness of LGBTQ people, fails to confront ingrained heteronormativity and is in fact an 'attempt to tame…diversity' (Ammaturo, 2015: 1154).

Some of the most fervent debates, both within and outside of academia, have focused on same-sex marriage. Same-sex marriage was legalised in England and Wales in 2013 (Marriage [Same Sex Couples] Act 2013), in Scotland in 2014 (The Marriage and Civil Partnership [Scotland] Act 2014) and in Northern Ireland in 2019 (Northern Ireland [Executie Formation etc] Act 2019), after civil partnerships had been in place since 2004 (Civil Partnership Act, 2004). Within the UK, pro-same-sex marriage debates were founded on the notion that these relationships were 'equally loving, and equally as beneficial to the wider community and the nation' (Wilkinson, 2013: 208). However, scholars such as Bell and Binnie (2000) argued that same-sex marriage may in fact reiterate the importance of marriage for the nation, repositioning marriage as the ultimate relationship form in a time when co-habitation and divorce was on the rise. Furthermore, Wilkinson (2013) claims that the extension of marriage rights upholds the dominance of the 'logic of the child-bearing couple' and positioning the family as central for the strength of the nation. Rather than prioritising heterosexuality in nation building, Wilkinson (2013: 209) contests that the state now promotes 'compulsory coupledom' which includes LGBTQ couples, as 'strong families and couples create a strong nation'.

Other legislative changes that were vital for the experiences of LGBTQ-headed families were the *UK Adoption and Children* Act (2002), allowing children to be adopted and fostered jointly by unmarried couples, including lesbians and gay men (Logan and Sellick, 207), and *Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008.* The passage of the *Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008* enabled non-biological mothers in civil partnerships to be recorded and recognised as legal parents from their child's birth, whether conceived at home or in a fertility clinic. This in part also applies to female same-sex couples who are not civil partnered, however these couples must conceive through a licensed fertility clinic (Section 43). This act permits people in marriages, civil partnerships or longstanding relationships to be recorded as a child's parent after birth to a gestational surrogate (Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008; section 42 and 54). Although the *Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008* seems to offer more progressive solutions for same-sex couples, it can be claimed that it continues to be restrictive for those who do not fit the idealised two-parent couple, giving married couples the highest level of freedom and legal parental status. Arguably, this discourages other forms of more complex parental relationships with more than two people. Furthermore, while single people can access some fertility treatment, legislation prevents them from accessing surrogacy, indicating the continued concern around single parents.

Furthermore, despite the fact that the rise in new reproductive technologies provides choice to those striving to construct families outside the heterosexual two-parent nuclear family, within a neoliberal market, this is mediated by class, wealth and economic status, impacting the choices that these families are able to make. In the UK, on the whole, LGBTQ people wanting to conceive have to pay for expensive fertility treatment. Thus, although LGBTQ families are often spoken of in terms of 'choice' and 'agency', as unconstrained and self-regulating actors, this view overlooks the intersection between class and sexuality, and the limitations that are placed on the choices available (Hicks, 2011: 37; Taylor, 2011). Consequently, both same-sex marriage and new reproductive laws demonstrate how legislation can be altered to include those who identify as LGBTQ without unsettling the logic of the stable, responsible, productive, loving couple.

Another important legislative change for people with LGBTQ parents was the repeal of section 2a of the *Local Government Act 1988* in 2003. This included the clause known as Section 28, initially passed by the Conservative government led by Margaret Thatcher. Section 28 banned local authorities from "intentionally promot[ing] homosexuality or publish[ing] material with the intention of promoting homosexuality" and from "the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship" (Local Government Act 1988: section 28). While there were no successful prosecutions under Section 28, there is wide agreement that its power was symbolic rather than legal, encouraging a level of suppression and restricting teachers in their discussions of sex, family and LGBTQ issues (Burridge, 2004: 329). Arguments for its implementation and against the repeal also incited fear in parents surrounding homosexuality and children. The eventual repeal of this clause legally allowed LGBTQ families and relationships to be openly discussed in schools for the first time in 15 years (Local Government Act 2003; section 122), however some have claimed that there has been a hangover with many schools continuing to be cautious of discussions of LGBTQ relationships and sex, with silence surrounding these issues continuing (Nixon and Givens, 2007; Edwards et al., 2016). That said, recent government regulations for Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) in England mean that by September 2020 RSE will be compulsory in all secondary schools, and Relationship Education (RE) will be required in all primary schools. However, schools will be "free to determine how they do this" and are expected to ensure that material taught is 'age appropriate' (DfE, 2019: 15).

Nash and Browne (2019: 2) have argued that while LGBTQ equalities have increased in the UK, 'contestations regarding gender and sexual rights have not dissipated', rather oppositions are begging to be reformulated. They use the term 'heteroactivism' to 'describe and analyse these forms of activisms that reify monogamous, cis-gendered, coupled marriages as best for children and for society at large' (ibid). Instead of relying on tactics that branded LGBTQ life as threatening, paedophilic or deficient, opponents utilise arguments around 'freedom of speech and religion',

'parental rights' and 'state indoctrination' (Nash and Browne, 2019: 5). This is particularly argued in relation to schooling, claiming that (heterosexual) children will be confused by being exposed to LGBTQ sexualities/genders/relationships too early. These arguments have been used to oppose new RSE in the UK (Formby and Donovan, 2019) and the acceptance of trans students in primary schools (Nash and Browne, 2019).

This shift in the equalities legislation, passed within a 13-year period, indicates the rapid social and political changes for LGBTQ people in the UK. This is not to underplay the continuing heteronormativity entrenched within much of this legislation, or to overlook the way that oppositions have been reformulated, nor is it to assume that LGBTQ people now have full legal equality. However, it is vital to demonstrate the level of legal change that may have occurred within the lifetime of many born to and/or raised by LBTQ parents within this study, as well as the shifting debates that have accompanied these changes. These changes present the legal and political backdrop for the life courses and life narratives of those raised by LBTQ parents.

1.3 Situating (LGBTQ) families in geography

Family has become a contested and debated term within academic writing. Some, such as Roseneil and Budgeon (2004: 104) have critiqued the focus on "the family" arguing that there is a need to 'decenter the 'family' and the heterosexual couple in our intellectual imaginaries'. Similarly, other have argued that we should instead focus on 'personal life' (Smart, 2007) or 'intimacy' (Wilkinson, 2019) when examining the multitude of relationships that exist in daily life. In contrast, Edwards and Gillies (2012) have argued for retaining the concept of 'family' within social science research. Here, they argue that although these other concepts have value, it would be risky to move beyond ideas of family, when families are becoming the focus of 'policy and political normative judgements' (Edwards and Gillies, 2012: 68). Likewise, Tarrant and Hall (2019: 2) in their recent paper on 'geographies of family' argue that even if we agree that the term family is limiting, archaic and invokes normative benchmarks of what family *should* be, we cannot refute the 'impenetrability of family as concept, ideology and practice across human cultures'. Thus, I do not argue that we should dismiss the importance of concepts such as intimacy or personal life and the way they can offer a broader conceptual frame. Nevertheless, most people are considered, or consider themselves, part of a 'family'. Consequently, we must acknowledge the ways that everyday narratives and experiences are shaped by real and imagined families.

There has recently been a burgeoning body of work on the geographies of family. In 2008 Valentine suggested that geography could benefit from linking the sub-disciplines of sexualities and children's/youth geographies, through their connections to 'family' and intimacies. She argued that previous work had focused on the 'organisation of care', as opposed to interrogating the 'emotional ties, the meaning and quality of relationships' and the performance of intimate connections within families (Valentine, 2008: 2101). Since then there has been notable examples of geographic work focusing on family and relationality. This includes research into the spatialities of grandparenthood (Tarrant, 2013), family life and drinking culture (Valentine et al., 2012), working parenthood (Harden et al., 2013) and the intersection of school, families and parenting (Marandet and Wainwright, 2015). Furthermore, there is an upcoming Special Issue of *Gender, Place and Culture* dedicated to family geographies.

While this does show a move towards re-placing family within geographical analysis, much of this work tends to be heteronormative in its focus. Valentine (2008: 2099) argued that geography has failed to combine the studies of sexuality, intimacy and family, in stark contrast to other disciplines such as sociology which have attended to both heterosexual and LGBTQ relationships, parenting and families (Dunne, 2000; Weeks et al., 2001; Gabb, 2005a; Ryan-Flood, 2009). Likewise, Luzia (2010: 363) argued that the attention to non-heterosexual families in geography is especially sparse. Luzia (2008; 2010; 2011; 2013) is one of few geographers who has attended to the socio-spatialities of LGBTQ parenting. Her work emphasises the way that everyday localities of family are not just confined to the home or the domestic sphere, but are 'multi-scalar, straddling the intimate, domestic, civic, state and national spheres, sometimes simultaneously' (Luzia, 2013: 205). Throughout her work, Luzia has pointed to spaces such as the home (2010), fertility clinic (2013), LGBTQ parenting group (2013), lesbian and gay scene space (2010) and the day care centre (2008). This work has provided a view of the LGBTQ family as something that exists 'in and through everyday spaces' and has begun to demonstrate how being in an LGBTQ family overlaps with other identities, modes of being and ways of doing (Luzia, 2013: 218).

Currently, there is no geographical literature on adults or children with LGBTQ parents. Existing literature on children of LGBTQ parents from other disciplines, such as psychology, does not explicitly analyse the geographies of family life and kinships. Nevertheless, there are examples of specific sites within present research on LGBTQ families, such as experiences of children at school and within the home. That said, most research overlooks how these specific spaces, such as homes and schools, are understood or constructed for people with LGBTQ parents and how they interact and intersect across time (Goldberg, 2007a: 111). As research from human geography (Gorman-Murray 2006, 2007a, 2008b, 2012) and sociology (Gabb 2005a; 2005b) has

suggested, acceptance and discussion of non-normative sexualities within the home can be fragmented or even contentious. Depending on the timing and location of their schooling, children growing up in LGBTQ-parent homes may attend school with an increased knowledge about topics such as LGBTQ identities or processes of conception. On the other hand, children could also enter school with an incomplete picture of their parents' identities, a lack of skills to explain their situation to others, or limited support from their teachers and school administrators. Moreover, few studies focus on the everyday spaces that the children of LGBTQ parents encounter as adults. Although the children of LGBTQ parents may have a heightened sensitivity to homophobia and heterosexism (Goldberg 2007a), there is no mention of how these phenomena manifest in spaces encountered past childhood.

While geographers have usefully begun to explore the spaces and spacings that co-constitute family subjectivities (Harker, 2010), the lens of the everyday also asserts the temporal and dynamic character of family, family identities and family life. Thus, this study will ask questions about how adults who were raised in LBTQ-headed families narrate their life experiences, considering not only the spaces that constitute family life, but also the 'temporal and dynamic character of family, family identity and family life' (Tarrant and Hall, 2019: 6). This will include looking at the intersections of spaces across time (such as home, school, work), the non-linear life courses and imagined futures of adult-children raised by LBTQ parents.

1.4 Chapter outlines

The following chapter will introduce the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings of this study. There will be a discussion of life course theory, queer theory, queer temporality and the way that these perspectives can be brought together to better understand the experiences, practices and everyday localities of people who have LGBTQ parents.

Chapter Three details the existing literature relating to this thesis. This chapter is organised into three main sections. Firstly, I map out the history of the empirical work on children of LGBTQ parents, documenting the comparative psychological studies that highlight the similarities between children raised by lesbian and gay parents and those raised by heterosexual parents. Secondly, I discuss how LGBTQ families and parenting have been conceptualised in queer and feminist empirical studies. Lastly, I discuss the different, but intersecting, spatial scales that have been highlighted as important within both geographical work on LGBTQ people/families and the empirical studies from other disciplines on people with LGBTQ parents.

In Chapter Four I outline and justify the methodological framework of this study. I explain the value of biographical-narrative methods as the key method of inquiry. I acknowledge my position within the research project and highlight the importance of reflexivity. I also provide an overview of the main ethical concerns, and how they were managed, the data collection process, the demographics of my research group and the process of analysis.

Chapters Five to Eight present and analyse the findings of my study and address my research questions. These chapters draw on interview data to examine how participants experienced being raised by LBTQ parents in everyday life, including narratives about childhood and their ongoing adult lives.

Chapter Five examines how people raised by LBTQ parents negotiate practices and conceptualisations of relatedness. While LBTQ parents may begin their reproductive journeys with a set of kinship intentions and agreements, these are not fixed but instead are continually negotiated as children grow up and construct their own familial relationships. Despite living in families which seem to resist dominant notions of biological relatedness, genetic discourses remain significant to those raised by LBTQ parents. This chapter highlights the interplay between 'genetic thinking' across generations in LBTQ families. This suggests that children raised in LBTQ households must navigate between the creative, non-traditional aspects of their families and ongoing normative genetic discourses.

In Chapter Six, I consider the way adults raised in LBTQ households were often interested in tracing their queer family histories, rather than solely their biological relations. This chapter examines how participants' origin stories relate to parents' identities and journeys to, and through, LBTQ parenthood. Knowledge of queer origins was pivotal in the process of self-making and enabled participants to produce and express connections between themselves and their LBTQ parents. Furthermore, queer social histories allowed them to articulate their affinity to LGBTQ communities and culture more widely, particularly noting the how their knowledge and experience of past socio-legal discrimination against LGBTQ people had influenced their outlooks and relationship with LGBTQ people/communities. Thus, origin narratives of people raised by LBTQ parents highlight that the desire to 'know ones' origins' is not rooted exclusively in biogenetics. In this case, origin stories disrupted the established biogenetic narrative, stressing the importance LGBTQ culture and history for constructing a connection between collective and individual identity.

Chapter Seven examines how the power embedded in specific spaces and geographical contexts motivate different practices, displays, and feelings among (adult-)children of LBTQ parents. Geographical work relating to 'coming out' emphasises the importance of space and the

need for continual disclosures across different landscapes. The active negotiation of varying (hetero)normative landscapes was a recurring theme within the narratives of people with LBTQ parents. This discussion identifies the various everyday sites where disclosure becomes most relevant for people with LBTQ parents across their lives. First, I look at experiences of disclosure and discussions within the home, particularly examining how some participants narrated home as a space of silence and others as an LBTQ or queer space. Next, I discuss the school as a site of institutional heteronormativity in which teachers and peers regulate the disclosure decisions/discussions of people with LBTQ parents. Finally, I turn to the workplace to examine how various 'adult' spaces and institutions may resemble, counter or reinforce earlier disclosure experiences at home or in school.

In Chapter Eight, I explore how people with LBTQ parents relate to notions of normality, normativity, radicalism and resistance. In this chapter, I engage with queer theoretical literature to consider what it means when your kinship structure is simultaneously considered as both 'normal' and radical, assimilationist and resistant. How then do notions of 'the radical' and 'the normal' relate to the everyday lives of people raised by LBTQ parents. I ask how adult-children from LBTQ-headed families locate themselves in relation to discourses of normality, difference and radicalism. I trace the various ways participants employ narratives of 'normal' family lives to legitimise and communicate their upbringings. However, I also complicate these traditional discourses, highlighting the mundane, quiet, everyday moments of non-normativity that were expressed and practiced by participants. I argue that by looking at the ways we live our everyday lives, we can understand that LBTQ kinship does not always represent queer defiance, yet can still disrupt norms surrounding intimacy, kinship and the life course. I conclude by suggesting that the insistence that LBTQ kinship is essentially 'unqueer' or fails to generate adequately 'queer' life courses, denies the multiplicity of intimacies that exist in LBTQ kinship networks.

In the final chapter, I give an overview of the thesis. I cover some of the overarching findings from the preceding empirical chapters, emphasising the value of analysing the interplay of narratives of everyday family life and broader social discourses. I highlight the contribution of the study, which includes adding to work on the geographies of families and intimacy, and sociological work on LGBTQ kinship. I also address the limitations of the study and suggest future research directions that would further investigate the specificity of lived experience for people with LGBTQ parents.

Chapter 2 Queering the life course

This chapter sets out the theoretical framework that underpins my research. In particular, I seek to bring theories on the life course into dialogue with theoretical work in queer theory around temporality. Currently, few studies of those raised by LGBTQ parents examine life experiences beyond childhood/adolescence, or consider ongoing patterns of disclosure, identity formation and personal relationships. Life course analysis seeks to move beyond a snapshot of life events to investigate how a combination of personal experience, historical and political context, and kinship formation and relationships inform one another in a reciprocal manner. Although life course theory moves past the linear life cycle models which assume people transition through life in similar ways, most literature in this field has continued to focus on normative events such as marriage, coupledom, work and childrearing, thus assuming 'healthy' and 'normal' life course trajectories.

Consequently, in this chapter, I argue for the need to 'queer' life course theory, incorporating an analysis of how heteronormativity shapes dominant conceptualisations of the life course. In doing so, I hope to be able to provide a better understanding of the complex and often messy life narratives of people raised by LBTQ parents. I contend that a queer lens, which requires a critique of normativities and orthodoxies, can be useful for re-imagining the life course. In particular, work on queer temporality helpfully challenges the idea of a "normal" and "healthy" life course, and opens space for understanding how heteronormativity informs everyday life. As I shall go on to outline in this chapter, literature on queer temporality has highlighted how visions of the 'successful life' have been constructed through notions of heteronormative success, particularly in terms of achieving what is considered 'the good' life. Some of this literature critiques reproduction and family life, specifically lesbian and gay families for assimilating into the linear logics of heteronormativity.

However, some of the current empirical scholarship on LGBTQ lives (and LGBTQ kinship in particular), has challenged certain strands of queer theory for disavowing normativity. Work on everyday kinship has helped stress the messiness of LGBTQ lives, and helps challenge a neat theoretical boundary between normativity/anti-normativity. Such work argues that there are no exclusively queer actions, practices or subjects. Rather, we should examine life narratives in *relation* to heteronormative discourses, structures and institutions. Through questioning this anti-normative stance utilised by some in queer theory, we are able to see the way that the spatial

specificities of everyday kinship practices can be overlooked through overarching critiques of normativity.

The integration of life course and queer theory provokes some key questions which shape the theoretical framework of this thesis and the analysis of the empirical data. Does a life course perspective provide an adequate way of understanding the changing dynamics of LBTQ-headed families and their children over time? How can this be broadened to recognise the construction of social roles, transitions, turning points and the life course itself? Can the incorporation of theories around queer temporality resolve some of the limitations of life course theory? And what are the dilemmas and limitations that come with using this queer temporal lens? The chapter begins by outlining existing work on the life course, before moving on to think about what it might mean to 'queer' the life course.

2.1 Life course perspective

Taking a geographical approach enables a view of individuals and families through the different spatial scales that they encounter and pass through on a daily basis. A life course perspective not only offers opportunities to explore each of these scales, but also how they interact within individual lives across time and how they shape a person's individual subjectivity or process of becoming. The phrases "life phase" or the "life cycle" have been used extensively within theoretical and empirical research to discuss the development and unfolding of events and processes over time, however they are often not clearly defined or consistently used (Bengtson and Allen, 1993: 470). Life cycle models and models of family change have been grounded in psychology and psychiatry, focusing on individual development and portraying the "cycle" as an ordered and preexistent set of stages which are to be progressed through at specific points in the life course (Bengtson and Allen, 1993: 478). This sees individuals as 'living organisms with observable biological patterns' who will go through predictable biological processes through infanthood, childhood, adulthood and old age (Hunt, 2005: 10). This then relates life changes to the so called 'biological clock' and understands these changes through a physiological and psychological framework (ibid).

However, the developmental or biological approach to studying life courses overlooks the social context within which individuals live: from intimate relationships to the wider socio-economic context and political/historical period (Bengtson and Allen, 1993: 478). Moreover, these

developmental accounts regard the life cycle as having a fundamentally linear nature for all, assuming life events occur for all at similar times and in similar ways. Thus, developmental models are inadequate for examining the lives of those raised by LGBTQ parents whose familial model may not abide by expected spatial and temporal processes. For example, a major theme in research on children of LGBTQ parents is disclosure, both by parents and children. The literature, however, consistently demonstrates a) there is no clear pattern for the timing of this disclosure, and b) this is not a singular event, but something that will continue throughout the life course (Garner, 2004; Goldberg, 2007a; Fairlough, 2008).

An alternative life course perspective has developed which has sought to take into account the social context of an individual life and wider social and political dynamics (Elder, 1975, Featherman and Sorensen, 1983; Hagestad and Neugarten, 1985; Hareven, 1982, 1987). Scholars have enhanced the analysis of the life course through highlighting how individual subjectivities are intertwined with specific 'place-embedded networks of relationships and institutions to shape the timing and nature of life events' particularly education, work, reproduction and marriage (Lewis, 2014: 225). A life course approach thus examines the relationship between individual identities, personal relationships, and institutional and socio-historical contexts (ibid). Life course work often focuses on the concept of *transitions* regarding social roles and changes. An individual life course is constructed from the social roles taken on across time. The roles individuals take informs how they experience the 'social world' and how they relate to others, as experiences can be shared by those in comparable or corresponding roles (Holstein and Gubrium, 2007: 339). The life course of an individual is also said to be 'multidimensional' as the roles or identities taken on by any one person are simultaneous and numerous, reflecting the intersectionality of their various identities, for example someone may be a daughter, a lesbian, a student and a parent concurrently (Elder, 1977: 282). Particular transitions can also be seen as turning points in the life course, these are certain events that produce a distinctive transformation in a life trajectory (Carpenter, 2010: 158). Turning points are significant to the life course and expose the practices of agency in acting on or generating new prospects (Bynner, 2005: 379). As such, life courses are anticipated to shift depending on 'space, time and population' and actions are not made in isolation but are continually influenced by the context within which one lives (George, 1993: 358). The questioning of childhood and static age categories put forward by children's geographies (Bosco, 2010; Horton and Kraftl, 2006; Kesby, 2007) corresponds with constructivist life course theory, critiquing the stable, linear life course put forward by life cycle models from psychology and psychiatry.

The life course approach has been employed within family studies, offering the 'links of lineage and generational time to analyses of family behaviour' (Bengtson and Allen, 1993: 479).

Elder (1977: 287) contends that family research tends to examine the connection between the family and the socio-economic context at a single juncture rather than viewing it as a 'sequence of interchanges and reciprocal adaptations' throughout the life course. Arguably this singular view is typical of research into LGBTQ families and can be seen in much of the work on children raised by LGBTQ parents. The little work that has been produced on this subject has mainly only analysed the opinions and experiences of children at a certain point in time, rather than looking at adults and their experiences across their lives and through the socio-legal shifts regarding LGBTQ people and families (except Goldberg, 2007a). Using a life course approach then enables a:

> contextual, processual, and dynamic approach to the study of change in the lives of individual family members over time, and of families as social units as they change over historical periods (Bengtson and Allen, 1993: 479).

This allows for the integration of social context and connection. The concept of 'linked lives' highlights the fact that choices and experiences are interdependent, impacted by social networks, and interpersonal / intergenerational relationships throughout the life course (Huinink and Feldhaus, 2009: 318). This has been particularly noted in research on couples and partners. Bailey et al. (2004: 1619) demonstrate the ways that choices surrounding migration and household geography are impacted by partners and the 'linked lives of the household' in dual-earner couples. The concept of 'linked lives' can thus be adapted to fit the analysis of family relationships, including parent-child connections and others considered intimate relations, as individual lives often hinge on the life courses of others (Huinink and Feldhaus, 2009: 318). Although these linkages can offer support, they may also create tension or conflict. People raised by an LGBTQ parent or parents negotiate their life trajectories with "linked" others (e.g., parents, relatives, friends) who may have varying views on family, inclusion, discrimination, identity formation, and belonging (Hammack and Cohler, 2009; Lewis, 2014). Furthermore, as children age, they may become more aware of the importance of their parents' identities to the organisation of their own personal lives. Consequently, they may seek out LGBTQ friends beyond their own parents to help raise their own children and develop a social support system that is conscious of LGBTQ history and inclusion. I will now lay out the ways life course theory has been used in sexuality research, highlighting its limitations and suggesting the value of 'queering' life course theory.

2.2 Queering the life course approach

Sexuality has been examined less often through a life course perspective, however examples can be seen when looking at studies of migration (Lewis, 2014; Wimark, 2016), implications of political exclusion (Hammack and Cohler, 2011) and LGBTQ parenthood (Tornello and Patterson, 2015). Literature in this sub-field has argued that the LGBTQ population represent a 'cohort' who may have diverging experiences in comparison to their heterosexual counterparts (Wimark, 2016: 661). Coming out as lesbian, gay or bisexual and in some instances as trans (however this has been conceptualised differently[3] (see Clare, 2017)) is frequently referenced as a point of divergence for this population (Floyd and Bakeman, 2006). Coming out can be seen as multiple, nonlinear, repetitive, complex and constantly shifting across space and time (Floyd and Bakeman, 2006; Gray, 2013). For some, this divergence is linked to historical time, as the the political environment for LGBTQ people and their families has changed substantially in most Anglo-American countries. Growing social acceptance and new legal equalities are allowing more children to be raised by "out" LGBTQ parents. A life course perspective enables the analysis of historical context in the experiences of LGBTQ people and their families, demonstrating the ways that historical socio-legal changes have resulted in different life course trajectories (Hammack and Cohler, 2009).

Although a life course perspective can be viewed as a valuable tool for analysing sexuality and the family, there are still significant limitations that may accompany this perspective. In this thesis, I aim to 'queer' life course theory, taking account of the ways in which it may unintentionally bolster essentialist views around gender, sexuality and family. Queer theory emerged in the 1990s and is influenced by Foucauldian thought and post-structuralism. It is a critical perspective that aims to challenge the 'normalising mechanisms of state power to name its sexual subjects: male or female, married or single, heterosexual or homosexual, natural or perverse' (Eng et al., 2005: 1). Dedicated to interrogating the social processes that create, maintain and acknowledge identity categories, not only sexual but gendered, racial, classed and religious, queer theory contends that these identity categories are performative rather than essential, intrinsic or natural (Butler, 1990; Oswin, 2013: 106). While 'queer' is often understood as synonymous with LGBTQ, this definition overlooks the ways in which some heterosexuals can also be excluded from heterosexual privilege. Thus, heteronormativity is not merely the

3 Clare (2017) argues that trans people are not necessarily expected to always come out in the same way lesbians and gay men are. Likewise, Zimman (2009) claims that for trans people, coming out narratives are often characterised by a 'gender history' rather than a revelation of their 'gender identity'.

legitimisation of heterosexuality above homosexuality but is a 'set of norms that makes… a particular expression of heterosexuality seem right' (Oswin, 2010: 259). This may include an assumption that adults will become involved in monogamous, heterosexual partnerships and aspire to have children with their chosen partner. These heteronormative assumptions about the way we *should* live have informed social policy across time, with the heterosexual couple positioned at the center of national and local decision making involving 'legal, tax and medical systems' (Carlile and Paechter, 2018: 15). Another important aspect of queer theory and Butler's (1990: 151) argument is the assumption of 'a stable sex expressed through a stable gender (masculine expresses male, feminine expresses female)'. Butler (1990) argues that 'the heterosexual matrix' means that the sex/gender binary is considered stable, with only two opposing genders, which are constant across the life course. These assumptions will particularly have an impact on 'families with parents who are not cisgender, or, indeed, committed to binary gender identities or performances' (Carlile and Paechter, 2018: 15).

In this thesis I contend that life course theory has often failed to consider the ways that heteronormativity shapes everyday life, family practices and personal relationships. Life course theory continues to be laden with assumptions about what constitutes a significant phase of life and what does not. The subjects and transitionary stages of marriage (Williams and Umberson, 2014), education (Lynch, 2003), parenthood (Baxter et al., 2008), work (Cunningham, 2008; Uggen, 2000; Wright and Cullen, 2004) and retirement (Bures, 1997) continue to dominate the field (Bailey, 2009: 3). There is a growing recognition that traditional life transitions are 'no longer linear in terms of sequencing or timing' (Valentine and Skelton, 2007: 105). Valentine and Skelton (2007: 116) argue that assumptions of 'normal' transitions through life 'implicitly throws up the possibility of failed or broken transitions'. They argue that notions of individualisation and individual choice mean that 'blame' is frequently connected to life courses that are deemed 'unsuccessful' (ibid). This does not account for the privilege accorded to some to achieve a "successful" life and the limits imposed on others. Likewise, this does not consider that some will measure their progress through life against different criteria, abandoning some ideas of normative life stages, such as coupledom, marriage or having (biological) children. Thus, the focus of study is often restricted by normative notions of what counts as a transition, turning point, or valuable stage in life, when in actuality, for many it is events beyond those mentioned and beyond the limits of expectation that 'function as rites of passage, circulate norms and social meanings, and play roles in constituting groups' (Bailey, 2009: 3). This is not to argue that traditionally referenced life course trajectories are not worthy of attention, however the assumption that these trajectories are the most important can have the effect of overlooking and erasing those who may live in ways that fall outside of the 'institutionalised life course' through the

foregrounding of expected and approved events (Brown, 2009: 71). Moreover, with the focus within life course theory on transitions through roles, this overlooks the question such as: How are these roles constructed? What is expected of those who fill them? Does this type of theorising reinforce essentialist notions of familial roles and relationships e.g. mother, father, sister, brother, grandparents, and deny those who exceed the limits of language and intelligibility? Some studies have begun to reflect on these questions, including Schwiter's (2011) use of discourse analysis to understand life course trajectories and transitions. Schwiter argues that life course work should not only focus on 'institutions and agency' but also include analysis of 'norms and conventions' to illuminate the constructed character of transitions and what we understand as 'shared knowledge in a particular place at a particular historical moment' (Schwiter, 2011: 402). In sum, I argue that life course theory needs "queering" and could be broadened by acknowledging the ways that heteronormativity shapes the life course. Likewise, there is a need to recognise the way that the life course itself, including time, age and transitions, are socially constructed.

2.3 Queer temporality

The ideas of normative linear scheduling of life events has been critiqued within recent queer theoretical debates. This can be seen in the rise of work on queer temporality by authors including Halberstam (2005), Freeman (2010), Edelman (2004) and Stockton (2009). For instance, Freeman (2005) argues that the expected and encouraged social life course is shaped by 'Western modernity' and the nation state. Here she outlines the discursive steps taken by nation states to foreground productive ways of living, including, reproduction and marriage (Freeman, 2005). Questioning the assumed succession of familial identity roles, Freeman (2007: 310) argues that 'a child will move from a nephew to uncle, from daughter to mother, but rarely the other way'. However, through a queer lens, deconstructing gender, sexuality and temporal frameworks, it is possible for a 'nephew to [become an] aunt' or a 'daughter to [become a] father' (ibid). This view enables an understanding that LGBTQ families may not always adhere to normative temporal frameworks. This may most obviously apply to people with trans parents, however it is also valuable for analysing the ways that all families change over time, often in unexpected ways.

In her discussion on queer theory and kinship, Freeman (2007) also highlights the influential work of Foucault. She suggests that Foucault sees the 'modern family' residing 'at the *intersection* between kinship and sexuality', claiming that normative ideas about family continue to shape 'expectations' about gender and sexuality (Freeman, 2007: 296, emphasis found in original).

Foucault's ideas around the classification of normal / abnormal can be applied to the critique of the life course. Notions of the 'good life' have produced a dichotomy between those leading lives constructed as "normal" and healthy, and those living "abnormal" or failed lives. Life courses are constructed in line with seemingly common sense, well-known ideas about what it means to live a successful life. Furthermore, the Foucauldian concept of governmentality has been used to underline the ways in which discourses of subjectivity and individuality encourage particular 'achievements' and 'identities' at certain points within the life course (Hörschelmann, 2011: 380). Governmentality is a concept used to explain the "conduct of conduct" or the practices that aim to guide and motivate actions in conjunction with a certain set of normative standards (Klesse, 2007: 573). Here government is understood in a broader sense, shifting away from the traditional notion of the executive authority of the state, to instead discuss a method of governmentality which creates populations who are able to shape their own conduct through internalised discourses (Rose-Redwood, 2006: 474).

For instance, issues of reproduction have been constructed as a matter of national concern, including lesbian and gay parenting, single motherhood and teenage pregnancy. Likewise, romantic relationships often get positioned in relation to 'schematised representations of normal', which often involves monogamy, co-habitation, financial commitment, marriage and children (Klesse, 2007: 577). Edwards and Gillies (2012: 432) argued that it is vital to examine the lived realities of families as "the family" has been 'moved to the centre of the political agenda'. Likewise, Tarrant and Hall (2019: 3) claim that the everyday lives of families 'have become increasingly defined as matters of public policy and concern'. Furthermore, Legg, (2005: 142) suggests that geographical scales, including the home, street, community and nation, are vital in the regulation of population. This is exemplified in Schwiter's (2011) study on 'transitions to parenthood', noting how success in a career, financial stability and relationship commitment must all coincide for people to legitimately decide to have a child. Despite the persistent discourse of 'free choice', in this case many spatial scales interweave to determine who is 'allowed to have children and who is not' (Schwiter, 2011: 402). However, when these scalar connections are left unexposed and unchallenged, 'strategies of government' seem 'natural' (ibid). Thus, people learn to self-regulate and follow norms in ways that involve "healthy" 'individual choices' to create 'stable, domesticated families' benefiting the nation state (Legg, 2005: 142).

Although useful for understanding the complexity and non-linearity of life events, queer temporality work has also argued for a rejection of relationality and the centrality of 'the child' in the ordering of personal lives. Much of the literature on queer temporality is founded upon a theoretical premise that positions queerness as 'anti-relational' (Berlant, 1997; Bersani, 1989, 1995; Edelman, 2004; Halberstam, 2005). Accordingly, such work often positions queer life as

inherently anti-familial. For example, Bersani's (1995: 5) work on the 'anti-social' thesis has been particularly influential, arguing that efforts to 'resignify the family' so it becomes an inclusive institution for LGBTQ people will in fact have 'assimilative rather than subversive consequences'. Instead, Bersani (1995: 52) suggests that we challenge the very concept 'of relationality itself'. This argument has also been used by Edelman (2004) in his widely cited book *No Future.* Edelman (2004) introduces the concept of 'reproductive futurism' to highlight the ways in which so many current political projects are done in the name of 'the child' (both current children, and future generations). For Edelman (2004: 17) it is imperative that 'queerness *should* and *must* redefine such notions as "civil order" through a rupturing of our foundational faith in the reproduction of futurity'. Edelman (2004) invites 'queers' to reject the idea of the future through reproduction. However, through doing this he positions 'queerness' as inherent only in particular locations, bodies or actions. Accordingly, LGBTQ people who choose to reproduce are positioned as assimilating into reproductive heteronormativity.

Others, including Warner (1999) and Halberstam (2005), have made similar arguments about the assimilatory character of LGBTQ families. For instance, Warner (1999) contends that partaking in the normative institution of marriage and the family damages and reaffirms the oppression of queer people and deviant subjects. Likewise, Halberstam's work in *A Queer Time and Place* (2005: 1) states that 'queer uses of time and space develop, at least in part, in opposition to the institution of the family, heterosexuality, and reproduction'. They go on to argue that although not all will be able to abide by 'reproductive time', it continues to be viewed as the most 'desirable' way to live one's life (Halberstam, 2005: 5). By 'reproductive time' or 'family time' Halberstam describes the way that daily activities are impacted by the practice of childrearing and are organised around the needs of a child (e.g. 'early to bed, early to rise') (ibid). Here they give examples of the way that reproductive time is governed by a 'biological clock' and 'respectable scheduling' that encourages not only involvement in the institutions of marriage and childrearing, but that these be accomplished in a certain order, and at a certain age, within the life course (Halberstam, 2005: 5). Halberstam explicitly points to the 'middle-class gays and lesbians [who] are choosing to raise children in conventional family settings' as examples of those LGBTQ people still living in linear (hetero)normative time (2005:152-153). In Halberstam's view, these people are failing to disrupt the norm, challenge expected life narratives or realise their queer potential.

These debates surrounding queer temporality link to the concept of 'homonormativity', a term coined by Duggan (2002), who claimed that notions of gay rights and the discourse of equality has led to a privileging of normative gay men and lesbians. This describes those who enact socially acceptable forms of gay living that do not disrupt the heterosexual standard, 'while

promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption' (Duggan, 2002: 179). The ideas expressed by Duggan have been taken on by many queer theorists to critique neoliberal policies, practices and privatisation, as well as the actions of privileged lesbian and gay citizens (Brown, 2009). Many have utilised the concept of 'homonormativity' to describe the shifting ideas of the 'good' life and family, within which LGBTQ people can be included. This argues those gay and lesbian couples, who are monogamous, cisgender and able-bodied can be 'included as citizens of the nation state in ways that were once unimaginable' (Browne and Nash, 2014: 323). However, others who fall outside this acceptable boundary, including those who live more non-normative or unconventional lives, continue to be excluded. These are important arguments and should not be disregarded. However, I argue that it is vital not to conflate institutional homonormativity, which is embedded in neoliberal or neoconservative policies, with the lives, choices or everyday experiences of LGBTQ people. While LGBTQ people may engage in homonormative institutions, such as marriage, or utilise homonormative discourses of love and monogamy, this does not mean that these individuals are essentially (or always) homonormative themselves. Therefore, those studying LGBTQ kinship have stressed the need to account for the complex and 'messy realities of everyday life' (Hicks, 2011: 22; Ryan-Flood, 2009).

Despite the value and influence of this collection of scholarship, I would argue that some of the scholarship produced under the name of 'anti-relational' queer theory has limited ideas about queer value and what it means to live a queer life. Although I share some of the concerns expressed by queer theorists about issues such as the privileges afforded to certain gay men and lesbians and the further marginalising of others, like Brown (2009: 1497) I worry about the ways in which the 'homonormative' critique has been applied to 'all mainstream expressions of lesbian and gay culture', family and reproduction. Furthermore, Wiegman and Wilson (2015), in their critique of the entrenched anti-normativity of queer theory, argue that queer theory, particularly work on the anti-social thesis, diminishes the complex workings of norms to specific rules and regulations that we should all oppose. This anti-normative stance, in fact, increases the stability of norms through the 'sponsoring of a politics of oppositionality' (Wiegman and Wilson, 2015: 14). Anti-normativity celebrates and values those life courses which are viewed to disrupt the 'normal' and reject reproductive temporality. Through prioritising the rebellious, out of time and out of place, Halberstam (2005) and others create a stable sense of who is 'queer' and who is not. There is an assumption that extending adolescence and/or refusing to have children equate to a significant queer existence and that following a normative reproductive path excludes one from a queerer way of life. In effect, this creates a queer hierarchy in which those who challenge the status quo are viewed as superior to those who are stuck in a (hetero)normative linearity.

This line of anti-relational queer work lacks space and understanding of individual circumstance, and thus is unable to account for unstable, contradictory and complex subject positions. The overarching critique of assimilationist or normative practices can in fact neglect the diversity of experience and cast out some LGBTQ people as insufficiently queer or as political failures. Categorising a person or their actions as fundamentally normative is troubling as it assumes a level of stability, does not fully recognise that no one is immune to the power of social norms and that all subjects will conform to some norms in varying and fluctuating amounts. Browne's (2006: 890) argument is useful here when she questions whether we can ever perform and live in queer ways in our everyday lives. She points to the messiness of labeling others or labeling ourselves as 'queer', particularly when queerness is considered as 'fleeting, defying control and boundaries' (ibid). Debatably, the liveability of a totally non-normative life would be difficult and thus we should not be labelling those who may seem to conform or assimilate as failing to perform their queer subjectivity.

As Fanthome (cited in Hicks, 2011: 20) argues, the divisions between what (or who) is queer and what (or who) is not, is 'performative rather than ontological' and thus there are no exclusively queer actions or subjects. These ideas are not new and can be traced back to the work of Martin (1994), who claimed that:

> radical anti-normativity throws a lot of babies out with the bathwater, family along with its normalizing and constraining functions and forms; concerns about children, along with the disidentification of sexuality from reproduction (Martin, 1994: 123).

She goes on to state that there is a 'fear of ordinariness or normalcy' which skims over the complexity of everyday life and fails to take account of 'the dilemmas of the average people that we also are' (ibid). In this way, it may be more useful to conceptualise LGBTQ families, including people with LGBTQ parents, as experiencing and narrating 'moments of queerness' rather than having a static, fixed sense of being included or excluded (Power and Bartlett, 2018). Like Love (2007: 132) I wonder how requiring a level of rejection of the family, rebellion from the (hetero)norm and refusal to conform will enable us to comprehend the intricacies of everyday lived experiences of LGBTQ people.

Similarly, geographers, including Brown (2009, 2012) and Browne (2006, 2007) have challenged this type of anti-normative theorising. They have remarked that if the critique of (homo)normativity or focus on anti-normativity continues to be applied unvaryingly and homogenously to all aspects of mainstream LGBTQ families, reproduction and culture, we may end up losing sight of spatial specificities. It has been asserted countless times that queerness is not something we can necessarily pin down, define or identify in simple terms. As Browne (2006)

claims, certain practices, objects or people defined as queer in our current temporal and geographical context will not necessarily remain queer with shifting ideas of normality and normativity. Furthermore, given the overarching concern geographers have with the materiality and transformation of space, the intersection between queer theory and geographical research diverges from more literary forms of queer theory, which rely 'heavily on more discursive analyses and metaphorical understandings', towards the localised experiences of everyday spaces, places and lives (Browne, 2006; Browne et al., 2007: 10). This thesis then seeks to use queer theory to understand the complexity and non-linearity of the life course, while accounting for the everyday in relation to societal norms and political structures.

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined how a queer temporal lens can be useful for exploring the ways that the life course may not follow 'an official timeline' and enables a move away from assuming certain events as inherent to a "successful" life (Freeman, 2005: 57). However, as I have noted, queer temporality literature often bolsters the binary of 'queer intimacies versus heteronormative parenthood', discounting the complex lived realities of LGBTQ families (Ryan-Flood, 2011: 247). Thus, I question whether the participation in normative life events, such as marriage or childrearing, should mean individuals are immediately discounted from living a 'queerer' life. Although I acknowledge the value of queer temporality literature for analysing the life courses of those raised in less traditional, idealised or normative families, it needs to be used cautiously so as not to further exclude those who may not fully embody this idealised vision of the radical 'queer subject'.

Rather than evaluate the ways that LGBTQ families and their adult-children have transgressed heteronormativity or how they have conformed to mainstream familial models, my research seeks to combine work on the life course with work from a more queer perspective. Such a framework will allow me to examine the complex and messy everyday spatialities and relationalities in the life stories of adult-children raised by LBTQ parents. The combination of queer and life course approaches thus enables a wider view of family life over the life course that is not tied to normative assumptions of phases of life, age, relationships, gender or sexuality, but allows for an acknowledgement of the complexity of kinship, including navigating through existing structures of heteronormativity. My project aims to explore how the life stories of people with LBTQ parents entwine with wider notions of intimacy and kinship, exploring how meaning is

constructed through individual biographic narratives. As Ryan-Flood (2009) notes, 'debates about potential assimilation or subversion…often overlook the importance of context' to understanding LGBTQ families. Thus, although adult-children of LBTQ parents may have experienced and performed in both heteronormative and transgressive ways, this will not be the focus of this project. Rather I will explore the narratives of this population in *relation* to heteronormativity and the ways that their experience may offer new understandings of kinship and family across time and space.

Chapter 3 Literature Review

Research on LGBTQ families has seen an upsurge since the mid 2000s, but it is a disparate and sometimes contentious field of study. Although there is a vast amount of qualitative research on LGBTQ families, the majority of studies on children of LGBTQ parents have been conducted within the disciplines of psychology and child development. These assess the outcomes of children raised by lesbian and gay parents, with limited studies on families with parents who are bisexual or trans. However, queer and feminist work has critiqued this approach arguing that it fails to challenge heteronormativity, as it centres the legitimacy of LGBTQ parenting on the ability to raise "normal" (read: heterosexual and gender conforming) children who will maintain the status quo (Chevrette, 2013; Hicks, 2005; Stacey and Biblarz, 2001). Instead, queer critiques make a case for *non-comparative* research focusing on the specificity of families' experiences and narratives, without privileging a heteronormative model.

There has consequently been an expansion of non-comparative studies detailing the experiences of, and relationships within, LGBTQ kinship circles (Dempsey, 2010; Gabb, 2004a; 2004b; 2017; Nordqvist, 2012; Stacey, 1996). However, as Hosking et al. (2015: 330) contest, these often continue to overlook the voices of the children who were raised in these households. Moreover, Goldberg's (2007a) call for research into how being raised by LGBTQ parents might influence adulthood, is still mostly left unanswered.

This chapter sets out some of the wider literature and debates in which my research is situated. I begin by outlining and critiquing psychological comparative studies and then move on to discuss alternative feminist and queer research on families, particularly 'families of choice' and issues of gender and/or sexual identity. Although, for the most part, work on children/adults of LGBTQ families is not geographically focused, the second section of this chapter traces the spatiality of this literature, highlighting the different scales through which people move. These scales include the home, school, workplace, community and the nation-state.

3.1 Comparative family research

Research into same-sex parenting has frequently taken a comparative approach; comparing the outcomes of children raised by lesbian and gay parents to those of children raised by heterosexual parents (for example see, Bozett, 1987; Chan et al., 1998; Golombok et al., 1983; Kirkpatrick et al., 1981; Wainright et al., 2004). In the 1980s and 1990s most of the research on this population was conducted by psychologists and childhood development specialists who focused on physical health, psychological adjustments, and emotional wellbeing of children raised by same-sex parents. This body of research consistently demonstrates that same-sex parenting bares no negative impacts on children, with levels of 'emotional adjustment, sexual preference, stigmatisation, gender role behaviour, behavioural adjustment, gender identity, and cognitive functioning' differing little from other children (Anderssen et al., 2002: 349). Many of these studies were conducted during a time of fervent debate about same-sex parenting. Until relatively recently, the lesbian and gay population were regarded, by law makers, courts and broader heteronormative discourses, as unfit parents and damaging to children. A 'good' parent was constructed as 'exclusively heterosexual based on the ability to naturally procreate' (Hosking and Ripper, 2012: 178). Custody cases frequently focused on the widespread assumptions that lesbian and gay parents would produce children who were confused about their sexual orientation and gender identity or that they would be seriously harmed by the stigma of having lesbian or gay parents (Wright, 2001). Thus, these comparative studies offered support for same-sex parenting within these custody battles, parliamentary debates and the wider societal context, repeatedly demonstrating the "sameness" or normality of children from same-sex and heterosexual parents (Golombok et al., 1983). In this sense, these appeals to sameness were at the time a political act which enabled many lesbian mothers to keep custody of their children.

However, there is now a growing body of work, using queer and social constructivist approaches, that argue there is a need to move away the idea that lesbian and gay parenting is 'the same as' heterosexual parenting. The socio-legal contexts that once guided attitudes toward gay and lesbian parenting have changed considerably and the children who were once the subjects of these research studies have now aged into adulthood. Nevertheless, we can see that these studies continue to be published with little acknowledgement of the important critiques that have been made. For example, Far's (2016: 8-9) study found that 'children adopted by same-sex and other-sex parents appear to be equally well-adjusted'. This study adopted normative indicators of function to assess the lesbian and gay families, measuring child behavioural adjustment, parenting stress, couple relationship adjustment, which included assessing how often

parents kiss (Far, 2016: 4-5). This demonstrates the endurance of (hetero)normative standards for LGBTQ-headed families and a need to prove that they continue to raise children within the boundaries which have been set thus far (Far, 2016).

Stacey and Biblarz (2001: 160) contend that the 'ideological pressure' to give support to same-sex parenting has 'constrain[ed] intellectual development in this field'. As past public sentiment and socially conservative scholars attempted to prove that same-sex parenting caused harm, many researchers aimed to counter this by emphasising its 'absence' (ibid). Despite the positive intentions of much of this literature, queer and feminist perspectives have provided some vital critiques. Firstly, and perhaps most commonly noted, comparative research continues to sustain normative assumptions about gender, sexuality and the family. Through this lens, heterosexual parents and their children remain framed as the ideal family type which LGBTQ families must live up to, indicating that 'differences equal deficits' (Goldberg, 2007a: 550). Likewise, many studies (for example see Brewaeys et al., 1997; Golombok et al., 1983; Green, 1978; Hoeffer, 1981; Javaid, 1983) determine that a child's development is satisfactory by measuring their compliance to inflexible gender norms. Studies present same-sex parenting as undamaging because 'the sons of lesbian mothers preferred masculine toys or activities and the daughters chose feminine ones', displaying the "correct" gender role development (Tasker, 2005: 233). Similarly, the heterosexuality of children of LGBTQ parents has been repeatedly called into question, with studies primarily reassuring that children 'did not differ on… measures of sexual orientation' (Anderssen et al., 2002: 344; Tasker and Golombok, 1995). This indicates the way that this research privileges heterosexuality, as LGBTQ and other non-normative sexualities/genders are consistently portrayed as less favourable. Consequently, as psychological studies sustain the heterosexual family archetype, LGBTQ families become constructed as 'acceptable' only because they conform to the 'heterosexual norm' (Chevrette, 2013: 176).

This echoes the critiques feminist and queer scholars have made regarding the 'neoliberal politics of normalisation' that can be seen in the "fight" for 'equal rights' which have dominated the discourse of lesbian and gay movements in the West (Richardson, 2005: 516). Richardson argues (2005: 532) that the:

> struggle for equality [now in fact] help[s] to reaffirm the regulatory power of the state by reinforcing the authority of institutions appealed to which confer rights and responsibilities (in this case military, marriage, family), and through which sexualities are regulated.

Consequently, there is a sense that same-sex couples/families are being brought into an idea of "normal" rather than challenging existing standards. The difficulty here is that a certain type of

lesbian or gay parent, and heterosexual parent for that matter, is privileged when arguing for sameness and equality, further excluding those who may not qualify and overlooking those who may seem normative but actually live more unconventional lives (Richardson, 2005: 520).

Moreover, this "no difference" model restricts the research field, limiting what and who can be examined, and what questions can be asked for fear of the social and political repercussions (Clarke, 2002). Stacey and Biblarz (2001: 160) state that instead of stabilising the hierarchy of sexual and family type through demonstrating sameness, scholars should acknowledge and examine the 'meaningful differences' that may exist between the parenting of same-sex and opposite sex couples, as well as the difference of the lived experiences of children raised within non-normative[4] households. Others go further, declaring that research into LGBTQ families should reject the comparative method completely. Hicks (2005: 163) problematises Stacey and Biblarz's (2001) view, arguing, that by acknowledging difference they construct 'the idea of lesbians and gay men as other' to heteronormativity, reinforcing the very notion which they aimed to deconstruct. Thus, this may overlook the way we may see queerer moments within seemingly straight lives. Arguably, a more productive method would move away from this similarity/difference framework completely. Hicks (2005: 165) advocates for more 'in-depth studies…[and] personal accounts' of families, enabling the complexity of experience and relationships, interwoven with the current political and societal discourses of sexuality, to be more fully understood.

Furthermore, although childhood outcomes have been at the heart of these studies, much of this research was 'carried out *on*, rather than *with*, participants' (Hosking et al., 2015: 330). Within the discourses both for and against LGBTQ parenting "the child" becomes positioned as a symbol of the 'nation's future' (Hosking et al., 2015: 328). There have been many instances where the discursive figure of "the child" has been used to further a political or cultural agenda, with same-sex marriage presenting a clear example of this. Hosking et al. (2015: 328) discuss how the traditional family rhetoric has stressed 'child protection', claiming that same-sex marriage would lead to the normalisation of LGBTQ people and this would mean more 'children would grow up without a mother and a father'. Likewise, Browne et al. (2018: 532) examined the same-sex marriage debate in Ireland, noting the way that the 'figure of an innocent Irish child', in need of protection, was used to oppose same-sex marriage. In a similar vein, proponents of same-sex marriage assert that marriage *is* the ideal context to raise children, however they claim that it

[4] Here non-normative alludes to, but is not limited to, families that do not conform to heteronormative standards of the two-parent, cisgender, monogamous, married couple.

does not matter whether the married parents are heterosexual or same-sex (Polikoff, 2005: 573). This “child” is not, however, representative of “real” children, their experiences, struggles, or views, rather is a permanent and ‘absolute category’ often invoked to secure a particular political opinion (Baird, 2008: 293).

This critique echoes research on children’s geographies, which argues that children are ‘competent social actors’ (Valentine, 2003a: 481). From the early 1970s a range of literature has developed to highlight the lived experience of children, particularly concerning the way they use and are confined to certain spaces, such as schools (Valentine, 2003b: 37). Some have expanded children’s geography, deconstructing the very notion of childhood itself. Valentine (2003b: 38) draws on post-structural ideas of performativity (Butler, 1993) to stress the ways that separate age categories are enacted rather than essential. Childhood is often considered a time of innocence, irresponsibility and immaturity, however children frequently demonstrate great maturity, while some adults live in ways that are considered ‘irrational and irresponsible’ (Valentine, 2003b: 38). Through this lens, children can ‘grow in terms of how others regard them’ by doing certain actions associated with adulthood in particular spaces; this can also take place in reverse order (ibid). Consequently, Valentine (2003b: 38) argues that the shift from childhood to adulthood is not a linear process but ‘can be complex and fluid’. In line with this argument, Hosking et al. (2015: 328) asserts ‘children’s own voices’ were, and are, notably absent from political debates, specifically around same-sex marriage and LGBTQ parenting. With this in mind, the notion of the universal “child” needs to be transformed, as what we now require are studies that investigate the diverse and complex experiences of those raised within LGBTQ families.

3.2 Second-generation LGBTQ and ‘culturally queer’

Much of the comparative research on children with lesbian and gay parents claims that children grow up with “normal” gendered identities and are no more likely to be LGBTQ themselves. However, some, including Stacey and Biblarz (2001: 176), have argued that children brought up by lesbian, gay and bisexual parents seem to have a less severe affiliation with gender norms and are more likely to be open to same-sex relationships or experiences (also see, Green et al., 1986; Goldberg, 2007a: 557). This has been partly attributed to children’s exposure to different ways of living, with children aware of their parents’ sexualities and same-sex relationships, as well as children frequently being raised around other LGBTQ people. This indicates that children raised in different types of families may be increasingly open to living in ways that depart from the norm.

That said, there is still little research on second generation LGBTQ people (a term used for those identifying as LGBTQ who also have LGBTQ parents). Kuvalanka and Goldberg (2009: 905) argue that this may be because researchers are 'wary of highlighting the experiences of queer youth with queer parents for fear that critics of queer families will utilise the research as evidence for the argument against LGBTQ parenting'. Furthermore, Hicks' (2011: 9) argument that some did in fact read Stacey and Biblarz's work as 'evidence that gay parents create gay kids' seems to imply a hesitance to discuss second generation LGBTQ people for fear of proving this anti-LGBTQ sentiment. While this anti-LGBTQ argument is less common now, Nash and Browne (2019: 7) have argued that, in its place, ''parental rights' (as opposed to parenting per se) is an emergent framing …. through which oppositions are articulated'. Rather than positioning LGBTQ parents themselves as the "problem", Nash and Browne (2019: 11) claim there has been a shift towards condemning the state and equalities legislation. They argue in the UK 'heteroactivist' resistances are moving away from being overtly anti-LGBTQ and instead resting on the 'question of parental rights [to protect their children], state bullying and the intrusion into the private realm of the home'. Despite this shift, there is still a persistent narrative that argues that exposing children to LGBTQ people, whether this is through parenting (past) or schooling (current), will lead to "confusion" and is therefore dangerous for "innocent" children.

It is hence important to acknowledge that research on or including second generation LGBTQ people could encourage or enhance critics arguments *against* LGBTQ-headed families. However, I argue that anxiety about supporting critics arguments should not limit research on such populations. While some researchers have 'deflected analytic attention' away from the non-(hetero)normative genders/sexualities of children of LGBTQ parents, it is essential to recognise that some children of LGBTQ parents *do* identify as LGBTQ themselves (Kuvalanka and Goldberg, 2009).

Kuvalanka and Goldberg's (2009) study into the second-generation LGBTQ people is one of the only studies that directly addresses this population. They aimed to investigate how LGBTQ youth with bisexual or lesbian mothers 'construct their own sexual and gender identities', specifically questioning whether the social context within which they were raised led them to "queer" their own understandings of gender and sexuality (Kuvalanka and Goldberg, 2009: 907). Their analysis emphasises the variety and complexity of the answers to these questions. They argue that, for their participants, having lesbian or bisexual mothers destabilised conventional understandings of gender and sexuality from a young age and did increase the ease of their initial coming out (Kuvalanka and Goldberg, 2009: 912). Nevertheless, the persistent power of 'societal scrutiny' on both young people and their parents was also considered. The young people within the study discussed 'pressures to be heterosexual' and 'fears of heterosexism', while parents

feared for their children's wellbeing and worried about proving critics right that 'queer parents [*do*] raise queer children' (Kuvalanka and Goldberg, 2009: 911). Hence, it should not be assumed that just because LGBTQ families challenge heteronormative gender configurations that they will constantly support gender/sexuality nonconformity.

While most children of LGBTQ parents identify as heterosexual (Golombok et al., 1983; Green, 1978), there has been some discussion of these adults and children positioning themselves as 'culturally queer' and 'part of queer communities' (Gustavson and Schmitt, 2011: 161; also see Epstein, 2009; Garner, 2004). Goldberg (2007a) argues that some of those raised by LGBTQ parents state their concept of family has been 'queered'. Thus, these participants stressed the way that their upbringing shaped their choices as adults and imagined futures, challenging conventional ideas surrounding kinship, intimacy and family. This begs the question, are "queerer" parents raising a whole new generation with a more fluid conception of gender/sex, domestic diversity and what constitutes a "real" family? Various academics have suggested that opportunities may have been created for children raised in LGBTQ and non-heterosexual households, for example Halberstam (2013: xxi) claims that:

> children are more … canny than their parents think, and it is this generation of kids – kids growing up in the age of… queer parenting … who will probably recognise, name, and embrace new modes of gender and sexuality.

Some of this work (Gustavson and Schmitt, 2011: 160) claims that children (including adult-children) of LGBTQ parents are 'queered by association', meaning they are regarded as queer by others due to their parents' sexuality irrespective of how they identify themselves. In this case, adult-children may not regard themselves as part of a queer community or feel their parents' sexualities have shaped their subjectivities. However, they may be treated in ways similar to LGBTQ identifying people and experience homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying or discrimination. On the other hand, some (adult-)children may see themselves as dissident, queer or non-conforming in their own right, arguing that their position as a child of an LGBTQ parent has shaped their identity and sense of belonging. The rise in (adult-)children of LGBTQ parents claiming their family as a type of identity in itself may be indicated by the increasing terminology for children of LGBTQ parents, mostly employed in American and Australian contexts, including 'gayby', 'queerspawn' or 'COLAGEr' (Ryan, 2012). Epstein et al. (2013: 175) have remarked that some who identify as 'culturally queer' or 'queerspawn' are 'challenging queer communities to create spaces that are welcoming for them'. Likewise, Gustavson and Schmitt (2011: 161) have argued that the queer community must be broadened beyond same-sex sexual behaviour and/or attraction or gender non-conformity for children of LGBTQ parents to be included.

Studies claiming that 'most of the children of LGBTQI+ parented families could be said to be culturally queer' often frame their arguments on children's experiences within their homes, neighbourhoods, communities and schools (Carlile and Paechter, 2018; Epstein et al., 2013; Gustavson and Schmitt, 2011). Through looking at the narratives of people with LGBTQ parents these studies demonstrate the ways that (adult-)children 'themselves [are] identifying with and defending queer people and cultures'. The next section will look at some of the literature on LGBTQ parenting and queer kinship. This will highlight the different ways LGBTQ-headed families have been conceptualised and demonstrate how LGBTQ parents may (or may not) challenge traditional notions of family, relationships, gender and sexuality for their children.

3.3 Queer(ing) Kinship

In contrast to the previous comparative approach to studying LGBTQ families, a different model has emerged which highlights the way that LGBTQ kinship can challenge convention and produce alternatives to the nuclear family. Much of this work builds on ideas about family as something that is constructed, rather than a static, monolithic institution. Morgan's (1996) work has been influential here, proposing that we use the word family as an adjective rather than a noun, coining the term 'family practices' to describe the way that families' actions construct what is understood by the term itself. This recognises that families are not limited to the genetic family unit, but instead come into being through performative acts. Therefore, families are not a uniform set of characteristics, people and roles, but are socially constructed. This idea of 'doing' rather than 'being' radically alters notions of kinship, moving it away from the family as a given, stable structure, towards a view of kinship as a set of activities and actions that generate meaningful relationships (Morgan, 1996). Morgan's (1996) work has thus been significant for conceptualising the family not as a fixed institution, but one in which we see examples of multiplicity and fluidity through grounding our conception of 'doing' in the everyday actions and habits of the family.

Feminist and queer perspectives have also contributed to these debates around how families can be constructed in radically different ways, and have used such frameworks to explore and analyse LGBTQ families. One example of this is the 'families of choice' literature which demonstrates the ways that some LGBTQ people can extend, rework, or even depart from the nuclear family unit and expected kinship structures (Stacey, 1996; Weeks et al., 2001; Weston,

1991). This line of work suggests that families can, to some degree, be 'chosen', demonstrating how lesbian and gay notions of family include friends and other "non-relations" such as ex-partners. Weeks, Heaphy and Donovan (2001: 48) in their book *Same-Sex Intimacies* suggest that 'kin-like networks' grounded on friendships and non-biological alliances have become significant in the reorganisation of the family. If we are convinced by queer theoretical understandings that sexual identity categories, and all identity categories for that matter, are performed rather than 'biologically determined', then we can see how all families, not just LGBTQ families, come into being through 'poses, gestures and performance' (Freeman, 2007: 307). Thus, families are not static, monolithic institutions; families are a 'process' of construction and performance where once assumed natural positions can be reconceptualised (Valentine et al., 2003: 495). The 'families of choice' literature exhibits how peoples' everyday actions and family relationships have the ability to deconstruct essentialist notions of roles such as mother, father or child, as well as what constitutes the family itself. Roseneil and Budgeon (2004: 150) illustrate this further, demonstrating how friendships (for both heterosexual and LGBTQ people) can also occupy spaces, such as the home, that are conventionally filled by the couple and nuclear family. Through exploring experiences of intimacy and care for people not living with a partner, and highlighting the importance of friendship, Roseneil and Budgeon (2004) blur the 'family/friend dichotomy' and the 'physical space' of caring and intimacy.

For some, the focus on 'doing' within LGBTQ-headed families drew attention to the ways that LGBTQ parents deconstructed and challenged gender and sexual norms within their everyday parenting practices. Dunne's (1998; 2000) work also argues that lesbian parenting signifies a 'radical and radicalizing challenge to heterosexual norms' (2000: 11). Dunne's studies suggest that lesbian mothers' relationships and domestic arrangements are characterised by equality and cooperation, with respect for their partners' right to a life outside the home. Participants in her study stressed the importance of non-biologically related kin, including the non-biological mother, and other important lesbian and gay kinship networks. She also claims that lesbians chose to include gay men into their family arrangements and their children's lives as they were seen as 'representing more acceptable forms of masculinity' (Dunne, 2000: 32). Writing from a US context, Averett (2016) presents a more contemporary version of a similar story; one that highlights the desire of LGBTQ parents to raise their children in ways that contest the heteronormative model of childhood through offering a range of masculine, feminine and non-gendered options. Ryan-Flood (2005: 171) notes some similar conclusions, although she contests the assimilation/transgression binary and the idea that LGBTQ families are essentially radical. In her study on lesbian mothers in Ireland and Sweden she found that housework and paid employment were negotiated through discourses of equality. Furthermore, women engaged in

both maintenance and DIY work within the home, as well as housework and cooking. Participants in her study valued the ways that they could break down ideas about typically gendered tasks for their children (ibid).

Likewise, Gabb (2001; 2004a; 2004b; 2005a; 2005b; 2017) has made an important contribution to the literature on lesbian motherhood in the UK. Much of Gabb's work focuses on the intersection of the 'maternal-sexual' identity, charting the ways that they are often seen as contradictory and paradoxical. In particular, she discusses the ways this maternal-sexual identity is mediated by everyday spaces such as the street, school, work and home (Gabb, 2005a). She considers how children of lesbian parents learn and understand sex and sexuality, noting the uncoupling of sex and reproduction (Gabb, 2004b). Gabb (2001) also gives a different view to that of the 'families of choice' literature, remarking on the continued importance of the biological or 'birth' mother as primary careers in lesbian families and the absence of supportive extended kinship networks of LGBTQ friends (Gabb, 2004a). Gabb (2004a) also refutes the assimilation/transgression binary and suggests that Stacey and Biblarz's (2001) claim (that there is a political motivation behind LGBTQ parenting research) can also be applied to work that stresses the transformative or transgressive character of LGBTQ families. Arguably, '(political) desire to promote the potentialities of lesbian parent families' may lead us to overlook the diversity of accounts and existence of stories that perhaps echo more traditional discourses (Gabb, 2004a: 174). Gabb (2004a: 174) argues that this radical and transgressive family discourse creates an idea of '*The* Lesbian Family' which others measure themselves against. Within Gabb's (2004a) study, she found that many of her participants did not find this radical family discourse useful, rather they positioned themselves beyond its reach, either feeling that they were the same as heterosexual families and/or had failed to live up to this transgressive lesbian ideal.

This non-comparative sociological and queer work on LGBTQ families and parenthood has been crucial to conceptualising kinship in different ways. Despite this, I would argue that much of this research overlooks the importance of time and space (except Gabb, 2001; 2004a; 2004b; 2005a; 2005b; 2017; Ryan-Flood, 2009). Geography is essential to understanding the way we live our everyday lives. As noted by Browne and Ferreira (2015: 5), 'place is more than a backdrop to our activities, it plays an active role in constructing them'. As many accounts of LGBTQ families employ the notion of heteronormativity in their analysis, new research in this area must acknowledge that heteronormativity is not a 'universal' concept of an unchanging 'heterosexual-homosexual binary' (Oswin, 2010: 257). Rather, it is a 'geographically and historically specific coincidence of race, class, gender, nationality and sexual norms' (ibid). As Browne (2004: 339) argues, spaces through which we live our everyday lives can in fact be 'disabling environments' for people who fail to conform to dominant norms. Although her focus here is gender normativity,

many political, social, and institutional spaces also reinforce normative constructions of the broader family that (re)produce or silence the 'abnormal' LGBTQ family. A geographical approach enables us to understand the complexity of family more fully, realising the ways that it moves beyond the confines of the domestic and cannot be positioned within an assimilation/transgression binary.

3.4 Experience across scales

This section will interweave the small, but growing, number of empirical studies that have enabled the voices of those raised by LGBTQ parents to be heard, with geographical work on LGBTQ people and families. Therefore, this section emphasises the value in considering the role of both institutional and everyday spaces when researching non-normative families (for example see, Fairlough, 2008; Garner, 2004; Goldberg, 2007a; Goldberg, 2007b; Goldberg and Kuvalanka, 2012; Hosking et al., 2015; Perlesz, et al., 2006). The majority of work into children who have LGBTQ parents is not geographically focused and thus fails to fully take into account the importance of space and place in the "doing" of family life. Although these studies often do not take geography as their main focus, the spatial elements of the analysis will be highlighted to emphasise the significance of space in the construction and performance of intimate relations.

3.4.1 Home

Domestic space and the home has grown as a site for examination within human geography (Blunt and Dowling, 2006; Gorman-Murray, 2006, 2007a; 2007b; 2012). Geographic work on gender and sexuality has argued that housing has been planned, constructed, and intended for use by the heterosexual nuclear family (Bell, 1991; Blunt and Dowling, 2006; Johnson 2000; Valentine 1993). However, this work has also revealed the complexities of home, indicating that home is more than a site, a house, or a place of shelter; it is also an imaginary space filled with feeling, whether that be 'belonging, desire and intimacy' or 'fear, violence and alienation', or a complex combination of both (Blunt and Dowling, 2006: 2). A 'politicised understanding of the home' helps underline the power relations at work both within everyday homemaking, and the normative notions of what home *should* entail (Gorman-Murray, 2007b: 140). Furthermore, many

(Massey, 1992; Valentine 1993; Wardaugh, 1999; Wilkinson, 2014) have claimed that home is not a fixed place with a guaranteed sense of belonging, rather it is a space which must be constantly 'constructed and negotiated' and may in fact exist beyond the single site of the home/house (Mallett, 2004: 70). What's more, even once young adults leave home it endures as a space they draw on to narrate their own 'individual biographies and expectations' and therefore home can be the site where the 'emotional functioning of the family' occurs (Valentine, 2003a: 481).

Accordingly, sexuality research into experiences of home have highlighted that these spaces can be isolating for those who fall outside the dominant heteronormative and domestinormative[5] conceptions (Johnson and Valentine, 1995). Much of this literature has discussed the home as a space for the heterosexual family and a repressive setting for LGBTQ people, specifically looking at the difficulty and trauma young LGBTQ people suffer when either coming out, or refraining from coming out, to their families within the heterosexual home (D'Augelli, 1998; Savin-Williams, 1998; Valentine, 2003a). Even when families do not explicitly reject or have overtly negative reactions, young people may still feel that they are 'letting their parents down' by not fulfilling the heterosexual expectation (Valentine, 2003a: 484). On the whole, this strand of literature displays the home as a limiting space, one of hostility rather than belonging.

However, some of the work into heteronormative homes as exclusionary spaces also examines the ways that non-normative sexualities can disrupt and resist idealised notions of the home and create alternative home spaces (Wilkinson, 2014). For example, Gorman-Murray (2008a: 34) has conducted research into the 'positive experiences' of LGB young people coming out to heterosexual parents within the 'nuclear family home'. This counters the assumption of the home as always heteronormative and homophobic, while potentially presenting home space as a site for resistance (ibid). Gorman-Murray (2008a: 34) thus argues that this enables a reconsideration of the heterosexual family, one in which heterosexuality is not always coupled with 'heterosexist ways of thinking' and is able to embrace 'sexual difference'. Moreover, Gorman-Murray (2006, 2007a, 2008b, 2012) has demonstrated, across an extensive range of work, that lesbian and gay people are able to 'resist the idealization of the heterosexual family home' and can instead create homes that uphold 'sexual difference' (2007a: 229). He explores how everyday domestic activities can queer the home, using examples of LGBTQ community building within the home and material home-making practices to recreate and reclaim home spaces as 'sites which also affirm and nourish gay/lesbian identities' (Gorman-Murray, 2007b: 209). Gorman-Murray's work, therefore, moves beyond the literature that compares the homes

[5] Kathleen Franke (2004: 1415) uses this term to describe the system which encourages a certain expression of domestic sexuality, and punishes those who fail to follow the marital, coupled model.

of heterosexual and LGBTQ people, which often primarily discusses the egalitarian nature of domestic work within same-sex couples. Instead, he expands understandings of queer domestic spaces, particularly emphasising the importance of the home for maintaining queer and LGBTQ identities and relationships.

Although much of Gorman-Murray's work offers an insight into the ways that LGBTQ people can queer the notion of the heterosexual home space through 'material homemaking practices', it perhaps at times underplays the complexity and contradiction that comes with LGBTQ homemaking. Gabb (2005a: 426), for example, argues that the home can be both a place of escape *and* a site in which we regulate our own actions and bodies to conform to normative expectations. The home can be viewed and analysed as a site in which societal expectations are upheld or disputed though 'domestic practices' and 'sexual identity and behaviour are normalized or subverted' (Barrett, 2015: 194). Likewise, Ryan-Flood (2011: 248) critiques the binary between overly optimistic and pessimistic work on LGBTQ households, arguing that families simultaneously transgress and reinforce heteronormativity through a variety of social institutions and everyday experiences. Additionally, for the most part Gorman-Murray's work focuses on the couple, rather than wider kinships networks, and children.

Geographical work on the home and LGBTQ identity has predominantly looked into either LGBTQ youth and their heterosexual parents, or coupled LGBTQ adults within the home. There is a notable omission of LGBTQ parenting (except Gabb, 2005a, 2005b), the experience of children who have LGBTQ parents, and the ongoing adult-child relationships in LGBTQ-headed families. Valentine (2003a: 281) has argued that the home can shape lives, identities and social relationships within 'the spaces that stretch beyond them', thus the home remains important across the life course. Furthermore, the majority of work looking into sexuality, heteronormativity and the home has focused on gay men and lesbians and their experiences of home. Some work has begun to look beyond this to discuss others 'whose lives and loves fall outside of the conventional…ideal' (Wilkinson, 2014: 2464). An example of this is Wilkinson's (2014: 2457) work into singleness demonstrating that the home is not just a 'space in which heterosexuality is naturalized, but it is also where coupledom and long-term romantic attachments are normalized'. Adults raised by LGBTQ parents may also exemplify a population that may initially appear to be (hetero)normative, particularly if they identify as heterosexual and/or live in heterosexual couples in adulthood. However, by adopting a temporal lens, and examining the life histories of people with LGBTQ parents, we may discover that they have a "queerer" experience and understanding of home.

3.4.2 School

Geographers have recognised schools as an important social site for children, and in fact most people at some point in their lives, and central to the 'social geographies of everyday life' (Catling, 2005; Collins and Coleman, 2008: 281; Thomson, 2005). Collins and Coleman (2008: 283) argue that 'school *is* a place', in that it is a confined geographical space where children's behaviour is regulated and set activities occur within regular time periods. Schools work to separate children from broad social contexts, not only seeking to occupy children for the majority of their days but also striving to shape identities, (re)produce knowledge and create children who are ready for the workforce (Catling, 2005: 326). Therefore, schools are a socio-political institutional space in which children and young adults are measured, controlled, watched and restrained by adults and a space through which certain approved 'identities are (re)produced' (Collins and Coleman, 2008: 285). Schools are also vital *within* wider social 'landscapes' such as the household, neighbourhood and nation-state, often mirroring and participating in the communities they are embedded within (Collins and Coleman, 2008: 283). Furthermore, national discourse and political objectives surrounding children mean that schools become implicated in adult debates and sites within which these debates materialise (Thomson, 1997: 258).

The culture within educational spaces, Ferfolja (2007: 160) argues, is rooted in heteronormativity and preserves the 'silences and invisibility' of LGBTQ issues, people and relationships. Ferfolja (2007: 148) highlights how binary discourses dividing children from adults, constructing children as 'innocent, vulnerable, asexual, unknowing [and] in need of protection from moral turpitude' leads to the invisibility of sexuality in schools. Compulsory schooling guarantees that children are treated as "children", sheltered from adulthood but who are also taught to accept authority (Collins and Coleman, 2008: 288). As LGBTQ people are primarily socially distinguished by their sexuality, LGBTQ issues are seen as inappropriate for children (Hicks, 2011: 109). Schools then utilise their power through only permitting certain heteronormative knowledges and restricting those relating to more deviant sexualities (Ferfolja, 2007). This indicates how scales beyond the school, including national values and social anxieties surrounding morality, impact upon the school as a space for children, their education and identity building. This is highlighted in Luzia's (2008) paper which describes the media outrage over an Australian childcare centre's use of a book about a child with two mothers. Luzia (2008: 319) stresses the importance of the connection between 'morals and space', expressing how it was not the book per se that was the cause of the offence but the suitability of the text for the specific space, deeming it inappropriate for young children. Moreover, within school space LGBTQ issues

are commonly only addressed in relation to bullying. However, as Ferfolja (2007: 151) notes, bullying is conventionally understood as an individual, psychological problem with particular children, rather than associated with larger power disparities (also seek Hicks, 2011: 109). Consequently, it is only individuals that are asked to alter their behaviour, while the societal discourses that they echo, including heteronormativity and heterosexism, go unquestioned. The LGBTQ parent and their children are then out of place within the heteronormative space of the school. Even when "alternative" identities are declared, this need to announce signifies the way they continue to occupy an "other" and oppositional space in relation to the heterosexual norm (Hicks, 2011: 110).

Disclosure, or being open about the sexuality of ones' parents, is significant for the majority of those raised by LGBTQ parents and often becomes particularly important when children enter into and progress through school. School is often the first place that children have to make daily choices about if, when, who and how to reveal that their families are LGBTQ. As Garner (2004: 97) suggests, children are frequently asked to talk about their families at school through pictures and family trees, presenting a conflict for those who do not feel confident or able to speak about their family structure. Furthermore, as Gustavson and Schmitt (2011) note, there is often a break between school policy, which promotes equality and diversity, and practice. They found that the participants in their study (mainly parents) expected teachers to have limited knowledge about LGBTQ families, thus there has a need to tackle this and educate through initial conversations with teachers (Gustavson and Schmitt, 2011: 168). Studies have continually highlighted school as a place of hostility, fear and suppression for LGBTQ students and those raised by LGBTQ parents alike (Holmes and Cahill, 2004; Lindsay et al., 2006; Ray and Gregory, 2001; Ryan and Martin, 2000). The fear of being discriminated against because of parents' sexuality has been shown to be as powerful as actual direct bullying from peers, and this anxiety can lead some to modify their behaviour. Robitaille and Saint-Jacques (2009: 343) discuss how this manifested itself in a variety of ways both within and outside the school setting, including not disclosing parents' sexualities, restricting friendships with peers within school space, and not accepting their parents' new partners within wider social and domestic space. Gustavson and Schmitt's (2011: 173) findings were similar, demonstrating the way that teachers can exacerbate these feelings by 'avoiding any discussion about 'it' (children's LGBTQ-headed families), suggesting that these children's families were off limits or 'unspeakable'. This indicates the way that school settings may, perhaps unintentionally, uphold the traditional family model, assuming heterosexuality, silencing LGBTQ families and creating a hostile environment for children with non-normative families. This is not to suggest that all children with LGBTQ parents face overt hostility or bullying, however to stress

how school space necessitates that children negotiate through a heteronormative setting that may 'other' their families or erase their very presence (Bower and Klecka, 2009: 370).

The current literature suggests that children with LGBTQ parents must constantly navigate often heteronormative social situations, particularly school settings, influencing decisions to disclose or keep quiet (Goldberg, 2007b: 125). This indicates the importance of taking a life course approach, enabling the analysis 'context, process and meaning' over time (Bengtson and Allen, 1993: 471). Experiences of disclosure may shift significantly for children and adults throughout their lives, as studies have linked the disclosure of children and adults raised by LGBTQ parents to the idea of "coming out" by those who identify as LGBTQ (Goldberg, 2007b). This was previously understood as a process through which one recognises their non-heterosexual identity and subsequently publicly declares themselves lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or queer. Now, however, it is more frequently conceived as nonlinear and ongoing, hence one does not just come out once, but must do so repeatedly throughout their lives (Ward and Winstanley, 2005; Lewis, 2012). While some studies focus on the stigma related to having an LGBTQ parent and the impact this has on (non)-disclosure (Perlesz et al., 2006), others (Goldberg, 2007b) stress the contradiction and complexity of instances of disclosure. Goldberg's (2007b: 124) study reported that one fifth of participants felt pride about their families at an early age, which was substituted for 'shame as they grew up' and then later 'positive experiences reaffirmed their pride'. Robitaille and Saint-Jacques (2009: 438) similarly noted that over time, young people's public anxieties regarding their families reduced significantly, and they began to be more open and accepting of their families and more confident handling negative perceptions of their parents, and in turn, themselves (Robitaille and Saint-Jacques, 2009: 438). Overall, Goldberg (2007b: 124) stressed that disclosure for children of LGB families was not a straightforward, steady process of discovery, acceptance, pride and disclosure about ones' family.

3.4.3 Work

Like school space, the workplace is a site which is assumed to be neutral in terms of gender and sexuality, however it is actually a space in which 'gender and sexual identities are enabled, constrained and reproduced' (Lewis and Mills, 2016: 2489). Due to the minimal literature on adults raised by LGBTQ parents, there has been no analysis of the experiences of the workplace for children of LGBTQ parents. However, the focus on school space for this population, combined

with the importance of the workplace for LGBTQ people indicates that this may be a significant, but overlooked, space for adult-children of LGBTQ parents.

Past literature has documented the ways that workplaces can be restrictive spaces for LGBTQ people, with examples of overt homophobia, harassment and employment discrimination found in the work of Griffith and Hebl (2002), Ward and Winstanley (2005, 2006) and Bowring and Brewis (2009). Furthermore, studies have reported how LGBTQ people negotiate their way through potentially challenging aspects of the workplace; tactics include hiding sexual identity, modifying behaviour and appearance and limiting sexual identity to acceptable forms of LGBTQ expression (Bowring and Brewis, 2009: 371; Lewis and Mills, 2016: 2489, 2496). In a similar way to school environments, disclosure or coming out in the workplace has been highlighted as important for LGBTQ people (Bowring and Brewis, 2009: 365). Studies indicate that coming out does not necessarily mean that a person decides to, or is able to, come out in every aspect of their lives. The experiences of coming out in work can be fractured across jobs and within a single workplace, as individuals may decide to come out to some colleagues and conceal their sexuality from others (Humphrey 1999; Ward and Winstanley, 2004: 229).

Furthermore, in his analysis of gay migration Lewis (2012: 2497) highlights that migration to more typically liberal cities do not always alleviate fear or apprehension about coming out at work, as economic and career related issues may in fact necessitate decisions to 'go back (in the closet)'. However, Lewis and Mills (2016) do argue that gay men's migration decisions are based on an intersection of factors including 'workplace experiences, the perceived local concentration of workplaces and sectors with restrictive gender and sexual norms, and the insinuation of those norms into other aspects of life'. In this respect, for gay men, migration should not only be seen as motivated by economic concerns or career ambitions, but intertwined and weighed against the possibility for acceptance within the workplace and a 'fulfilling non-work life' (Lewis and Mills, 2016: 2497). Giuffre et al. (2008: 255) also highlight that although more hostile workplaces continue to exist, 'gay-friendly' workplaces are beginning to arise which actively 'accept and welcome' LGBTQ people. However, despite their 'gay-friendly' status these workplaces were not free from heteronormativity. Giuffre et al. (2008: 273) argue that LGBTQ people continued to experience insensitive and invasive questioning about their sexuality and personal life, 'unique forms of sexual harassment' including jokes about 'converting' them and gendered assumptions about LGBTQ people.

Despite the fact that nothing has been written about the experience of the workplace by those raised by LGBTQ parents, Goldberg's (2007a: 555) study does mention that for her participants growing up with LGB parents heightened sensitivity to homophobia and

heterosexism. She discussed how adult children of LGB parents felt 'personally affronted' by overt homophobic language as well as casual slurs such as 'that's so gay' in everyday speech (ibid). The need to defend their families often led to individuals disclosing about their parents' sexuality in an effort to 'educate' people about LGBTQ people and what it was really like growing up with LGBTQ parents (ibid). Goldberg (2007a) did not specifically discuss the workplace within her study, nevertheless it would be interesting to ascertain if these findings translate into workplace settings and whether there are any parallels with the workplace experiences of LGBTQ people. Likewise, it would be valuable to understand whether workplace experiences relate to current literature on children of LGBTQ parents in schools and the experience of disclosure within institutional settings across individual lives.

3.4.4 (LGBTQ) Communities

Geographies of the home have endeavoured to highlight the instability of the divide between public and private spaces, emphasising the interconnections between the domestic and non-domestic. This particularly stresses that 'home is not separated from public, political worlds but constituted through them' (Pilkey, 2015: 217). Furthermore, others (Wilkinson, 2014) have suggested that places other than domestic homes, including community spaces and neighbourhoods, can produce feelings of belonging and 'at-homeness'. Thus, when looking at LGBTQ kinship, the very valuable focus on the spaces of home needs to be combined with a view of the family beyond, as well as within, domestic space. Likewise, Valentine (2008: 2103) suggests in her discussion of geographies of intimacy, that familial experiences can expand beyond the domestic. She argues that when discussing intimate relations, by focusing only on the domestic we overlook the interconnections across 'spaces and scales' such as the way that home life and work life can impact upon each other (Valentine, 2008: 2105). For children of LGBTQ parents, community spaces exist as bounded places themselves and places within wider scales. Many studies into LGBTQ families discuss how the family is performed beyond the home, within communities, social spaces, schools, work places and commercial premises.

We know that many of those raised by LGBTQ families have been or become part of LGBTQ affiliated organisations and social networks either in childhood and/or adulthood (Formby, 2017: 51; Ghaziani, 2014; Goldberg et al., 2012). The existence of LGBTQ family groups, such as Rainbow Families in Brighton, PFLAG, and COLAGE (a national network of people raised by LGBTQ parents in the US) demonstrate this connection. However, little academic attention has been dedicated to

the way that people raised by LGBTQ parents experience these networks and groups, or their relationship to the so-called LGBTQ or gay "community". As previously noted, Goldberg (2007a: 556) briefly touched on this issue within her paper on adult children of LGB parents, remarking that over one third of her participants noted that they continued to 'see themselves as part of the queer community' as adults due to their parents and the influence of the political values of LGBTQ communities. She argues that these individuals are 'culturally queer', influenced by the context within which they were raised (Goldberg, 2007a: 557, also see Gustavson and Schmitt, 2011). For some, this manifested in their friendship groups, who were made up of either mainly or entirely LGBTQ people. Others involved themselves in LGBTQ community events, organisations and activism. However, the study also highlighted 'tensions' from participants about their 'place within the community' due to their heterosexuality (Goldberg, 2007a: 557). Some felt that, although they considered the queer community "home", as a heterosexual adult (rather than the child of LGBTQ parent(s)), they questioned whether they 'really belonged at all' (Goldberg, 2007a: 557).

Goldberg et al. (2012) later expanded on these findings through a direct study on young adults raised by LGBQ parents and their relationship and identification with LGBTQ communities. They found that while some young people 'disidentify' with LGBTQ or queer communities as they aged, others continued to feel a connection, with some even arguing that their identification increased over time (Goldberg et al., 2012: 71-73). Nonetheless, the rupture between these young people's identifications and where they were "allowed to fit" was heightened within this paper, stressing that even when those raised by LGBQ parents sustained connection with LGBTQ communities, these communities did not always accept them making them feel that their 'queer credibility was invalidated' (Goldberg et al., 2012: 78). In some ways Goldberg et al.'s (2007a; 2012) findings parallel Browne and Bakshi's (2011: 192) findings that 'space can be gay and straight simultaneously' enabling the straight, now adult, children of LGBQ parents to find a place within the 'queer community'. Conversely, Goldberg et al. (2012) also indicate how, for some their identity as a straight adult *and* the child of an LGBQ parent leads them to occupy an indeterminate position. This then steers us back to the influential queer geographical work of Valentine and Skelton (2003) which argues, amongst other things, that rather than being spaces of 'sexual liberation' and freedom, scene spaces can be spaces of 'social exclusion', encouraging normativity, enforcing "correct" behaviours and identities, and sustaining social hierarchy. Gustavson and Schmitt (2011: 175) have commented on this exclusion of the children of LGBTQ parents, arguing that queer communities need to 'reflect on deeply rooted notions of belonging based on sexual practice, in order to include these children as culturally queer'.

Beyond simply seeing children of LGBTQ parents as an included or excluded group within these LGBTQ community spaces, it may be valuable to understand how adult-children consider their membership and belonging within different LGBTQ spaces throughout their lives. While the children of LGBTQ parents may easily interact with other queer community members as part of a LGBTQ family group, complications may become more evident in adulthood, as adult-children gain their own sense of identity.

3.4.5 State

There has been an immense amount of literature on sexuality and citizenship, looking at the wider space of the nation-state (see Bell, 1995; Bell and Binnie, 2000; Evans, 1993; Heaphy et al., 2013; Hubbard, 2001; Richardson 2000; Weeks, 1998). This literature has outlined how the value of a citizen is predicated on their participation in the 'life of the nation in a responsible and desirable manner' (Hubbard, 2001: 52). Bell and Binnie (2000) have argued that 'all citizenship is sexual citizenship' as the nation state controls legal parentage, protection from discrimination, legally recognised partnerships, health care and (sex) education (see also Ryan-Flood, 2009). Full citizenship is often limited, with individual freedoms being curtailed in relation to issues such as sexuality, gender expression, age of consent, reproductive technologies, with political judgements falling back on morality, western ideas of naturalness, biology, and definitions of the *good* citizen (ibid). Historically policies have developed around the assumption that the citizen is heterosexual and that the family consists of one mother, one father and their biological children. Thus, prevailing notions of sexual citizenship are often grounded on 'the normalisation (and encouragement) of the idealised nuclear family' (Hubbard, 2001: 57). Previous research has emphasised the significance of heterosexuality and the ideal family within constructions of the nation-state, with 'good heterosexual citizens… [being] rewarded by the state… whereas sexual dissidents remain largely invisible in terms of rights (though not obligations)' (Hubbard, 2001: 60).

However, the boundaries of who can be included as a "good citizen" have shifted in recent decades. In relation to the LGBTQ community in the UK, some now argue that there has been an erosion of 'compulsory heterosexuality'[6] (Rich, 1980), as a significant number of legislative

[6] Adrienne Rich (1980) founded the phrase 'compulsory heterosexuality' to describe the policing of (hetero)sexuality through social, political and economic means.

reforms have been achieved for LGBTQ people, including employment, family, reproductive and civil partnership legislation, with the most recent being The Marriage (Same-Sex Couples) Act passed in 2013 (Wilkinson, 2013; Heaphy et al., 2013). Many have argued this new equalities legislation does not broaden inclusion for the sexual citizen, but continues to endorse a certain family form and way of living, centred on coupledom and marriage while discouraging other forms of more complex (family) relationships (Bell and Binnie, 2000; Richardson, 2005; Taylor 2011; Wilkinson, 2013). Same-sex marriage and reproductive law are just two examples of state regulation that demonstrates how legislation can be altered to include those who identify as LGBTQ without unsettling the logic of the stable, responsible, productive, couple.

Although there is a growing body of work that discusses how policy and legal changes have impacted on the everyday experiences of LGBTQ people (for example see Davies and Robinson, 2013; Taylor, 2011; Heaphy et al. 2013), little research has looked into how the children of LGBTQ parents themselves experience and view these political shifts. The two studies that have examined these issues are: Goldberg and Kuvalanka's (2012: 34) study into how adolescents and emerging adults with LGB parents think about 'marriage (in)equality', and Hosking et al.'s (2015) research into how children speak about themselves and their families in reaction to public debates into LGBTQ issues. These papers were written in regard to an Australian and US context. However, there are parallels between the UK and US/Australia in terms of the same-sex marriage debate, which could be described as 'triangular', with defenders arguing that it extends lesbian and gay rights, 'traditionalists' who claim it is unnatural and will be a threat to the institution of marriage, and anti-marriage critics who maintain that marriage encourages conformity and normalisation (Clarke, 2003: 527). Therefore, these US and Australian studies are useful when investigating the experiences of children of LGBTQ parents in the UK.

In regard to same-sex marriage, Hosking et al.'s (2015: 341) study indicates that children of LGBTQ parents see same-sex marriage as a way to achieve familial validation and legitimisation. Similarly, within Goldberg and Kuvalanka's (2012: 40) study, nearly 70% of participants were keen supporters of same-sex marriage. Their support was explained in three different ways: the 'legal benefits' to LGBTQ families, the 'symbolic value' of marriage and the way marriage would provide a 'stabilising influence' (Goldberg and Kuvalanka, 2012: 43). The latter two of these identified themes echo dominant discourses about marriage. Participants in this study discussed how marriage would mean others were more likely to view their families'/parents relationship as 'real and valid' (Goldberg and Kuvalanka, 2012: 45). Furthermore, others believed that marriage had the ability to alter and enhance familial relationships, strengthening bonds between children and non-biological parents, as well as discouraging separation. Here, marriage is seen to enhance lives and is positioned as key for the validation, recognition and construction of the family, parenting,

the couple and the good citizen. These discourses resonate with LGBTQ equal rights rhetoric that plays on the story that same-sex relationships are “ordinary”, the same and on par with heterosexual relationships (Heaphy et al., 2013: 5). This same-sex marriage discourse then reinforces the ‘naturalness of coupled centred relationships, families and kinship’ and constructs the normative coupled gay and lesbian as a good sexual citizen (Heaphy et al., 2013: 4).

However, Goldberg and Kuvalanka (2012: 47) found that a minority of their participants expressed misgivings or criticisms of same-sex marriage. One participant argued that it would increase exclusions within the LGBTQ community particularly between those who decide to marry, those who do not and those who live outside a coupled relationship (Goldberg and Kuvalanka, 2012: 47). Others, however, had a more complex view of same-sex marriage, highlighting the legal benefits for couples and families as well as critiquing marriage as ‘an oppressive institution’ that had the power of positioning the couple as a ‘superior’ to other ways of living (Goldberg and Kuvalanka, 2012: 42). Others took a similar position arguing that marriage should not be the highest priority for LGBTQ activists, rather issues such as ‘health care, immigration and homelessness’ should receive more attention (ibid). This indicates that being raised by LGBTQ parents may enable people to understand and challenge limiting discourses and legislation, as well as reconceptualising the idea of the family and its position within the nation. Furthermore, Hosking et al.’s (2015) study demonstrated the ways that children consciously claimed a space within the debates that concern them. Children were often provided with a language by their family which enabled them to convey their “otherness” and interact with politics from an early age. These accounts present children as able to negotiate and resist the “at risk” discourses often associated with LGBTQ parenting, with one participant stating that ‘we shouldn’t have to prove we’re better to be allowed to exist’ (Hosking et al. 2015: 338-9). Therefore, although the children in this study were not overtly critical of same-sex marriage, they were able to challenge and, at times, change the debates regarding their welfare.

Both studies offer an example of literature that considers the children of lesbian, gay and bisexual families (with no mention of people with trans or queer parents) as ‘agents and active speaking subjects’ as opposed to silent objects of study (Hosking et al., 2015: 341). Furthermore, they highlight the complexity in the narratives of children and young adults, thus demonstrating the multiplicity of experiences, acting as a warning against viewing those raised by LGB parents as a homogenous group. For example, Hosking et al. (2015) demonstrate how children interact with current political debates of same-sex marriage and parenting in complex ways, as some children simultaneously oppose homophobic discourses while (re)enforcing heteronormative imaginings of the stable, married, monogamous couple needed at the head of a legitimate family (Hosking et al., 2015: 341).

Although there has been some research on the opinions of children of LGBTQ parents in relation to LGBTQ legislation and national citizenship, little research has looked into the ongoing impacts and experiences of (non-)parental status in regard to adult-children and their LGBTQ parents. Outside the high profile issues of reproductive rights, adoption and same-sex marriage, the state continues to assume adults have two parents (who are biologically and/or legally related) and issues such as elder care, inheritance, mortgages, marriage certificates and guardianship predicated on sexual citizenship may continue to have an impact on everyday life past childhood and adolescence. As Valentine (2003b: 496) argues, the traditional model of child to adult transition postulates that children shift from 'dependency' to 'autonomy', positioning these junctures as opposites. However, she contends that in actuality 'transition processes', such as moving out or having a child, do not always occur simultaneously and are more likely to take place disjointedly and sporadically meaning that 'dependence and independence are not actually distinct processes but rather are interconnected conditions' (ibid). Even in adulthood, children are likely to continue to be connected and, in some ways, dependent on their parents. Additionally, it is vital to acknowledge it is not just children who are dependent on their parents, but that these relationships can be interdependent, and parents can become dependent on their children, particularly when they get older (Valentine and Hughes, 2012). Furthermore, little research has highlighted the fact that many children of LGBTQ families have parents that transcend the boundaries of the normative couple, as families are created, (re)constructed and organised in alternative ways that may include more than two people who may or may not be in a sexual/romantic relationship. Therefore, research is needed that considers the way that both discourses of sexual citizenship and legislative limitations impact upon the ongoing life courses of those raised by LGBTQ parents, particularly those whose families do not follow the two-parent model.

3.5 Conclusion

Work on LGBTQ kinship has moved beyond the comparative psycho-behavioural studies that dominated the earlier literature. Although this psychological literature argued consistently that lesbian and gay parents did not put their children at risk, it also tacitly upheld the superiority of heterosexuality by deeming lesbian and gay parents suitable only to the extent that they performed to the same standard as their heterosexual counterparts. In contrast, non-comparative

studies on children and adults with LGBTQ parents have revealed both challenges and resiliencies among individuals raised in LGBTQ-parent families. Although they face pressures of heteronormativity, (non-)disclosure, and potential discrimination in their lives, they may also have more accepting attitudes towards gender and sexual diversity. At the same time, they encounter ongoing heteronormativity and potential discrimination in many institutions as they age.

These tensions point to the risk in assuming that as the children of LGBTQ parents age they will become more resilient and have more positive experiences of their LGBTQ families. Much like adult LGBTQ individuals themselves, their children will have faced some early-in-life challenges (e.g. experiencing and processing negative comments about LGBTQ people) that prepare them for adult life in an LGBTQ-parent family (Witten and Eyler, 2012). At the same time, adult-children may uncomfortably straddle a line between selectively 'fitting into' heteronormative (and sometimes homophobic) societies and desiring support from a like-minded community. As this population continues to grow, it will be important to understand their challenges and opportunities in increasingly divisive social and political landscapes. The next chapter will discuss my methodological decisions, considering the approaches and methods used to generate and analyse the qualitative life stories of people with LBTQ-headed families that are examined in the latter sections of this thesis.

Chapter 4 Methodology

I wished to explore the life stories of adult-children of LBTQ parents and investigate how their feelings and understandings about their families, and motivations and desires for their own futures, have emerged and shifted across their lives. Due to the fact that these people have so often been talked *about* rather than talked *to,* there was an explicit effort to keep the narratives of participants central to the research project. In order to fulfil this prerequisite and attend to my research questions, it was essential to explore the accounts and stories of adult-children with LBTQ parents. Thus, a qualitative approach was taken to continue the conversation about the experience of having LBTQ parents through the narratives of those who have had it as their lived reality.

This chapter describes and justifies the methodology used to generate the research that this thesis is based upon. I will specifically explain the methodological decisions I made before and during the research process, including the choice to use both a narrative approach and biographical interviews as my main research methods. I begin this chapter by laying out the basic of tenets my research design, including the use of biographic interviews and queer perspectives. The second section discusses my recruitment methods, the execution of the interviews and the narrative approach to analysis. Following this, I discuss my own positionality within the research, insider/outsider status and the power embedded in the academic research process. Finally, I briefly highlight the dilemmas of naming participants' attributes and the use of language in this thesis, noting how existing familial categories are not always suitable for describing current forms of kinship.

4.1 Research design

4.1.1 Epistemological approach

It is important to begin this chapter by setting out the epistemological assumptions underpinning this research. This project is predicated on a queer, post-structuralist position. Queer theory highlights the multiple effects and limits of identity categories, focusing on the production of these categories in relation to broader social norms, particularly heteronormativity. According to

Butler, 'identity categories tend to be instruments of regulatory regimes, whether as the normalising categories of oppressive structures or as the rallying points for a liberatory contestation of that very oppression' and encourages us to leave it 'permanently unclear what the sign [or identity] signifies' (Butler, 1991: 13–14). Through their work, many queer theorists expose the instability and fictitious character of identities, emphasising the regulatory regimes of truth/power/knowledge that steer and police bodies, social roles and desires (Browne, 2006; Giffney, 2004; Nash and Bain, 2007; Oswin, 2008). Drawing on the work of Foucault, Derrida and Austin, Butler argues that discourses ultimately create subjects (Butler, 1990, 2004). Therefore, identities are performative, or in other words, they are brought into being through discursive practices that constitute what they name. In this regard, Butler's work is anti-foundationalist, rejecting the idea that there is a knowable, essential truth, or that people have an essential, natural character.

Furthermore, Butler (2004) argues that identities, including those of gender and sexuality, extending to family and kinship, are a way to maintain socially intelligible norms. Following Foucault, Butler argues that not only are some discourses rejected, but if a certain statement or narrative does not conform to norms it cannot be understood, becoming meaningless (Olsson, 2010: 66). One must follow certain social norms to be recognised as 'something' or 'someone', to be readable or intelligible. Those who do not conform to culturally recognisable social norms are therefore unintelligible and subsequently are denied recognition and 'undone' (Butler, 2004). The power within the framework of intelligibility and (hetero)norms limits what is imaginable and restricts the stories we are able to tell.

However, Butler's work says little about methodological considerations. Queer theorists undertaking empirical work have suggested that for queer theory to be useful in social science research it must be 'grounded in a methodological programme attuned to examining how people accomplish identities in specific settings', as well as how they construct and narrate their identities, relationships and lives (King and Cronin, 2010: 89). I suggest that using a narrative approach enables researchers to attend to the production of intelligible narratives and recognisable identities 'in relation to wider social and cultural norms, such as heteronormativity' (King and Cronin, 2010: 87).

A narrative approach suggests that the "stories" people tell about their lives are a vital part of social science research. However, past research has considered and treated these "stories" as "truthful" accounts that will produce information about people's lives (Rosenweld and Ochberg, 1992). In this way, some life histories were read as objective descriptions and realities. However, more current research dealing with individual stories, including work that takes a narrative

approach, concerns itself with the stories themselves (Riessman, 1993; Rosenweld and Ochberg, 1992). A narrative approach to research provides scholars with a framework to examine how people experience everyday life and how individuals understand their lives according to available narratives. As Phoenix and Brannen (2014: 13) claim, 'narratives are both personal and generic'. While narratives present personal experience and personal history, they often mirror common cultural discourses and social norms and are presented in line with 'structured conventions of narrative and performative genres' (Phoenix and Brannen, 2014: 13). People who are relaying their experiences often 'draw on, and are constrained by, social norms, values and relations of power' (Wiles, et al., 2004: 91). Likewise, norms and values are re-established, or perhaps countered, through telling of these stories. A narrative then creates a way to recognise that stories can be used strategically and to examine the significance of these strategies.

By following Butler's arguments about performativity and intelligibility, I suggest that the "stories" collected within this project do not expose "facts" about the lives of people with LBTQ parents. Instead, these frames of intelligibility direct, regulate and restrict the personal narrative or life story. As Plummer argues:

> The social role of stories: the ways they are produced, the ways that they are read, the work they perform in the wider social order, how they change, and their role in the political process (Plummer, 1995: 19).

In the context of this research, this consideration of the way power works to shape the stories we tell highlights the changing social and political context for LGBTQ families, particularly over the last two decades. Taking account of the life courses of people with LBTQ parents, these stories are then put into social and historical context. Furthermore, considering the geographically and historically specific contexts that these biographies are located, and ways in which these stories are told, enables us to see how stories can provide powerful, counter-narratives to dominant historical knowledge. This type of 'counter-storytelling' can be a way for 'marginalised voices to be heard and new social realities to be forged' (Vaccaro, 2010: 427).

4.1.2 Biographic methods

I decided to use biographic narrative methods for interviewing participants. Biographical research spans disciplines and covers a wide variety of techniques and data sets including 'diaries, letters, autobiographies, biographies, memoranda and other materials' (Roberts, 2002: 2). Despite this

variety, Roberts (2002: 167) describes biographical research as work that aims to 'study the fuller 'life' rather than glimpsing the individual though the selective snippets obtained by traditional methods'. The idea of biography does not simply focus on the individual, but 'bridges the theoretically constructed gap between inner and outer sphere' (Fischer-Rosenthal, 1995: 259). Therefore, through discussing biography, we are actually referring to social structure by way of personal stories that take place within 'socially pattered life courses', while also enabling individuals to tell their own stories (ibid). In other words, biographical research can assist a broader understanding of social change through the individual interpretation of these wider shifts within their families, institutions and personal lives (Roberts, 2002: 5).

Biographical research enables participants to discuss their lives, experiences, pasts, presents and futures from their own self-understanding and in their own way. Biographic interviews have a level of flexibility allowing for participants to take some ownership of their stories, the way they were told, what to tell, and in what order to tell it. This was important here as participants focused on different points, ages and events as important within their pasts, presents and imagined futures. For example, some mentioned traditionally referenced events such as relocating, university, marriage and children, while others highlighted less regularly anticipated incidents including their parents' 'coming out', their own 'coming out', family disputes regarding homophobia, gaining 'new' parents and having children outside romantic relationships. The flexibility of biographic interviews allowed me to focus on the participants' stories rather than preconceived notions of what counts as an important issue, transition or turning point in their lives. Furthermore, despite questions being asked in a linear structure, moving from past to future, participants were encouraged to move backwards and forwards through their biographies in ways that suited them. This approach acknowledges the ways that our lives, experiences and subjectivities are 'contingent, multiple and unstable' and rooted within 'historically, geographically and socially specific social relations' (Browne and Nash, 2010: 4). Likewise, Usher (1998) highlights the relevance of time within biographical work, arguing that there must be a 'decentring of time' within analysis. This means understanding that the past is not an objective reality detached from the present and future. The idea of time is significant here, as the way that an individual narrative travels through past, present and future is not a simple linear process. Rather it is a complex interweaving of past events, memories and experiences with the ever-shifting happenings of the present (Roberts, 2002: 84).

Within qualitative research we do not aim to discover the 'facts' of the social world, however we wish to understand the ways people attach meanings to their experiences and the spaces within which they live (Miller and Glassner, 2011: 133). Interviews are themselves a social and symbolic interaction and although we may hear about events, feeling, views and encounters

beyond the interview interaction, there should always be an acknowledgement of this 'interactive component' (Miller and Glassner, 2011: 133). Thus, an interview itself can be performative and an activity in which knowledge is 'formed and produced' not just imparted (Holstein and Gubrium, 2011: 156). Furthermore, although I see it as vital to understand a life course through the individual narrative, it is just as important to recognise the constructed character of these stories. The constructed accounts in interviews are not 'formulated anew, but reflect enduring and recognizable forms of meaning' (Holstein and Gubrium, 2011: 156). Biographies are thus frequently told (and read) as if they are a "real" portrayals of life events that depict complete, unified or fixed identities. Participants frequently cite "common sense" discourses, rehearsed stories and generally accepted forms of story-telling. However, the subject may actually take shape through the act of telling, re-telling, remembering and re-remembering. Thus, the current sense of self, as well as the recent past, are 'reconstituted rather than being mimetic representations of entities' (Usher, 1998: 20). Narrating personal biographies, then, includes 'not only recalling the past but recreating it – and through this re-creation, discovering and re-inventing the self' (ibid).

4.1.3 'Queering' biographic methods

Although I based my methods on a biographic-narrative approach, queer and feminist reflexive methodological practices informed the way I planned and conducted the research and interpreted the findings. Biographical interviews are not necessarily thought of as a 'queer' method, however, I would agree with Binnie (2007) when they suggest that 'rather than trying to prescribe certain methods as queerer than others, we should pay attention to the queering potentialities of different types of research' (2007: 33; see also Browne and Nash, 2010: 12). In my interviews, this 'queering' included focusing on the constructed characteristics of lived experience, subjectivity and social and cultural context, including what is understood as normative, approved of or correct behavior, actions and practices.

For me, queering biographic methods also comprises of accounting for the ethical concerns within the interview process. The majority of biographical literature suggests that interviewers should begin by asking the participant to recount their life story or biography, then the interviewer should not interrupt until the main narrative is concluded (Rosenthal, 1993; Roseneil, 2012). However, research reflexivity and strict obedience to a set of research methods do not always go hand in hand. Although I wanted to offer participants the time and space to narrate

their biography (Roseneil, 2012: 130), I found that most were not necessarily comfortable with having to speak for such a long period of time uninterrupted or were daunted by the task of having to tell their life story with little direction. Thus, I shaped and re-shaped my practice after every interview and for each participant and found that it was important for me to respond considerately and recognise the difference in participants' confidence to steer the interview. This meant some interviews involved more prompts, suggestions and questions than others, in an effort to meet the needs of my participants. For instance, every interview began with me asking the participant to give me an overview of themselves and their families. Some participants answered this briefly in two or three sentences, while others spoke for up to 20 minutes giving more detailed and in-depth descriptions of their lives. When I did use probes and follow up questions within the interviews this was frequently to encourage a more extensive account of the situation or experience the participant had been discussing. These were effective strategies which encouraged longer stories with more detail and sequence to them (Riessman, 2008). Researchers opening up about their own experience can make the interview feel more conversational and comfortable, while also redirecting power balances between researcher and participants (McDowell, 1992). However, it also has the potential of encouraging certain lines of thought, views or ideas or reiterating the notion that the researcher is right or is looking for certain answers. Accordingly, I did not offer examples of my own experiences in the interviews unless I was specifically asked questions. I did, however, ask all participants if they had any questions for me after the interview, with some participants asking me about my family, personal life or my work. In this way, there was some effort to redress the power imbalance, acknowledging that I had just asked participants to recount very personal stories and information while they knew little about me.

4.2 Participant recruitment and demographics

4.2.1 Recruitment

My participant criteria stated that the study was looking for individuals who were 18 years old or over, who had at least one parent who identified as LGBTQ during their childhood and lived in the UK. I decided that I did not want to interview people whose parents had 'come out' or begun identifying as LGBTQ in their adult lives as they would not have experienced spatial and temporal

transitions of childhood and adolescence with an LGBTQ parent. For example, the space of school was highlighted as an important site within the project, with many discussing the ways that peers and teachers shaped their feelings and how their own ideas about sexuality and having an LBTQ parent shifted throughout their time at school. If I was to interview people who had not grown up with LGBTQ parents these experiences would not have been discussed. That said, I acknowledge that age and the life course are a socially constructed and that being over 18 does not necessarily mean a person will have moved away from home or that they do not continue to be parented by their LGBTQ parents. Likewise, not everyone under 18 years old will live with their parents and/or be raised by them. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this study I needed to limit criteria in some ways and therefore people's parents had to identify as LGBTQ before they were 18 years old. By using the word 'childhood' I left the advert intentionally vague. I made the decision not to set a specific age within 'childhood' that their parents must have identified as LGBTQ by and thus many of my participant's parents came out during their mid-teens. I also made the decision to limit participants to those living in the UK for several reasons. Firstly, societal attitudes and legal limitations surrounding LGBTQ people and issues in the UK are culturally and geographically specific. Secondly, through restricting the study to the UK it meant that, bar one interview, I was able to interview all participants face-to-face and at a location of their choosing.

Before starting this project, I anticipated that this population was likely to be largely invisible and hard to reach. Indeed, it could be described as a 'hidden population', which can be defined as a 'very small subpopulation… of individuals who are unwilling to disclose themselves' (Frank and Snijders, 1994: 53). People with LGBTQ parents may not all be reluctant to disclose themselves, nevertheless current research suggests most people will decide not to disclose their parents' status at one time or another (Hanssen, 2012: 246). Browne (2005: 48) claims that because sexuality is viewed as a 'private' matter, recruitment for this type of research can be one of the most challenging aspects. Although much remains unknown about this population in the UK, including size and demographics, it is assumed to be fairly large and widespread, geographically and across generational boundaries (Tasker and Patterson, 2007: 14). The challenges of recruitment were enhanced by the fact that the UK lacks an established community, social or support network specifically for children and adults with LGBTQ parents. LGBTQ family support organisations in the UK mainly focus on LGBTQ people who are parents or are intending to become parents (e.g. Pink Parents, Rainbow Families, Rainbow Parents), rather than on their children. Thus, there are no specific places that these children or adults can go to connect with each other or find support. Within the small group of in-depth studies into this population that do not use a heterosexual referent group, U.S.-based studies dominate the field and Goldberg's (2007a; 2007b; 2012; 2014) work is notably the most published and well known. Although there

are studies from Australia (Hosking et al., 2015), Canada (Robitaille and Saint-Jacques, 2009) and Norway (Hanssen, 2012), the current research themes are for the most part based on the American context. Many of these studies recruit from and are conducted within the context of COLAGE, a U.S.-based organisation established in the late 1980s for children and adults with LGBTQ parents and carers. This indicates the value of such a network for recruitment purposes and alludes to the fact that this absence in the UK intensifies the difficulties of recruitment. The lack of social support networks for people with LGBTQ parents also means that the use of snowball sampling is limited as there may be few 'contact patters between members of [this] hidden population' (Browne, 2005; Frank and Snijders, 1994: 53).

I began recruitment online using community organisations, LGBTQ social and university groups, LGBTQ specific Facebook pages and twitter. The use of the internet for the recruitment of hard to reach populations can be successful, however comes with problems of homogeneity (Matthews and Cramer, 2008). Not everyone has the same access, skills or desire to use the internet or get involved in online groups. Consequently, despite its value, online recruitment can also be limiting in terms of social class, age and geographical location. For instance, only certain cities and towns had active LGBTQ Facebook pages that allowed me to advertise the study and therefore I may not have been able to access those living in villages, towns and cities with little access to LGBTQ networks. I also tried use some snowball sampling techniques, beginning with my own familial and social networks. Snowball sampling was not hugely effective as a method as often participants stated that they did not, and had never, known anyone else with LGBTQ parents. Saying this, two participants did pass the project information along to their siblings who then agreed to take part and two participants passed on the information to people they had met at a 'lesbian mums' group that they attended with their parents in their childhood.

Like many undertaking a qualitative PhD, the question of 'how many interviews is enough' was raised early in the research process. A higher number of interviews (between 30-40) was initially suggested at the start of project. However, once data collection began this number was proved arbitrary and unhelpful. I more fully acknowledged that in qualitative research it is important to 'build an explanation through a deep exploration of how processes work in particular contexts, under certain sets of circumstances, and in particular sets of social relations', rather than collect a specific number of interviews (Mason cited in Baker and Edwards, 2012: 29). Furthermore, while I did aim to find different 'types' of participant (e.g. people raised by parents of all different sexual identity, genders, ages, and ethnicities), this was not to 'represent' these 'types' of people in the wider population. Instead, I was aiming to understand how different sets of experiences intersect with and shape different life narratives (Mason cited in Baker and Edwards, 2012).

Once I began recruiting participants, my expectation that this is a hard to reach group was confirmed. There are no social or support groups in the UK specifically targeted at children with LGBTQ parents (such as COLAGE in the US). This meant that, unlike research on LGBTQ people themselves, there was no direct organisation to recruit from. While this was a challenge, the fact it was difficult became important for the analysis of the research (Brannen cited in Baker and Edwards, 2012: 16), showing that lack of social acknowledgement or awareness of the experiences or narratives of people raised by LGBTQ parents. This was something that was repeated continuously throughout the interviews and may be the reason recruitment was so challenging. Furthermore, the fact that I did not recruit from an organisation for people with LGBTQ parents may indicate that I have captured some quite different stories, as many of my participants have no other contacts who were raised by LGBTQ parents.

Furthermore, I found that certain 'types' of people were easier to access than others. For instance, most of my participants were white and raised by lesbian mothers, with no participants coming forward who had gay fathers. Towards the end of my data collection period I focused on including people who had been raised by bisexual, gay or trans parents, with my last interview in December 2018 with a participant with a trans parent. While there was a concerted effort made to include stories from different people in the research (including those with male non-heterosexual parents), following Mason (cited in Baker and Edwards, 2012), I decided that it was more important to have a 'smaller number of interviews, creatively and interpretively analysed, than a larger number' where I would run out of time to properly analyse them (Mason cited in Baker and Edwards, 2012: 30).

This study is not representative of a cross-section of people raised by LGBTQ parents in the UK and does not aim to be. The focus of this study was to gain some insight into a range of experiences of people over 18 years old who had been raised by LGBTQ parents, rather than the representativeness of these experiences. This study cannot, therefore, provide any information about the number or distribution of those living with LGBTQ parents. Furthermore, the study does not aim to be generalisable and indicative of all experiences of living with LGBTQ parents in the UK. An essential part of this study is to break down assumptions about those with LGBTQ parents (both positive and negative) which presuppose a homogenised group. However, this does not discount the capacity for findings to have a broader significance in understanding kinship, family and life courses of those raised in families that have been stigmatised or (in some respects) fall beyond approved of or expected practices. Thus, the insight gained from this study may also have some relevance for other groups who may also be considered non-normative in some ways.

4.2.2 Demographics

Table 1 provides demographic information about participants and their family configurations, listing participant pseudonyms, age, gender, sexual orientation, interview location, home location, race and ethnicity and a brief description of their parental situation. Participants were between 19 and 59 years old. Fourteen participants identified as female, five as male and one as queer. When asked about their sexuality, 15 identified as heterosexual, two as bisexual, two as queer and one as gay. Only one person was of mixed heritage, with the rest of the participants being white British. Three quarters (15) of the participants has a partner and six participants had their own children.

The majority of participants had lesbian parents, with 17 out of twenty identifying themselves as having at least one lesbian parent. This group was split between those born to lesbian parent(s) and those whose parents came out during their childhood. Eleven participants had been born to cis-gender heterosexual parents and their mothers had come out as lesbian during their childhoods. Of these eleven participants, ten had mothers who began relationships with women and one participant's mother was single (and never had a serious relationship with a woman). Furthermore, of these ten participants, three saw their lesbian mother's partners as an equal mother/parent, six considered their mother's partners as a step-mother, two participants saw their parent's partners as only 'partners' and not part of their family and one person considered his mother's partner as 'family' but not a 'parent'. This consideration of 'what' and 'who' is family did not easily link to the age at which this new partner came into the participants lives, or whether they lived with them during childhood, but depended on a more complex understanding of family dynamics and personal relationships. Five participants were conceived via donor insemination and had one biological mother and one non-biological mother. Of these five, three participants parents were still together (and one married) at the time of the interview. Two participants' lesbian parents separated during their early childhood, with one mother re-partnering in both cases. Both participants whose parents has separated now considered their mother's new partner as a third mother to them. One participant had three co-parents from birth, two lesbian mothers and a heterosexual father (now deceased). Two participants were born to cis-gender heterosexual parents and one of their parents came out as trans during their childhood. One participant struggled to describe his mother's sexuality, as she rarely discussed it with him. However, the participant assumed she identified as bisexual, as she had indicated to

him that she was still attracted to men despite being in a relationship with a woman. In one case, a participant described her parent's gender as male-to-female (MtF) trans, however this parent's gender and sexuality had shifted somewhat since they came out, including identifying as queer and non-binary at certain times. The fluidity or instability of this parent's identity was ongoing at the time of interview. The last participant described her parent's gender as female-to-male (FtM) trans.

Unfortunately, as stated, I was not able to interview anyone who had been raised by bisexual or gay father(s) (however, Teddy has a strong relationship with his gay donors). Sustained effort was made to reach this group, by asking all participants, posting specifically on social media pages for gay/bisexual/queer fathers and specifically highlighting this when contacting LGBTQ groups to ask about recruitment. Although other studies (Goldberg, 2007a; Joos and Broad, 2007; Robitalle and Saint-Jacques, 2008) have managed to recruit those with gay fathers, often these numbers are smaller than those with lesbian parents. I suggest that this may be because I was only interviewing those over 18-years-old. Therefore, it is possible that fewer gay men were able to have children (through adoption or surrogacy) over 18-years ago, with adoption law only changing in 2008 and surrogacy being an expensive and legally challenging route for gay men. Furthermore, while it is probable that there is a large population of people over 18 years old who have gay/bisexual/queer fathers who came out during their childhoods, it is likely that the majority of these people would have lived with their mothers (as in Goldberg's study (2007a)). Therefore, this group may have been less likely to come forward as a participant in the study, particularly if they did not identify as 'being raised by' a gay/bisexual/queer father.

As stated, the lack of UK research on people raised by LGBTQ parents and anticipated recruitment challenges lead me to keep the criteria for participation broad, including anyone over 18 years old, living in Britain, who identified themselves as being raised by an LGBTQ parent. This meant that in some respects this study has recruited a diverse group of people with LGBTQ parents, particularly when looking at the variation of age, location, sexuality and experience. However, it has also meant that the sample is homogenous in some respects, with some aspects of identity and experience have been missed, specifically experiences relating to race and ethnicity, class and male non-heterosexual parenting. Therefore, I do not suggest this study represents all people with LGBTQ parents in Britain, but instead offers a snapshot of some of the life stories of this particular group.

Table 1: Participant Demographics

Participant (age)	**Gender**	**Sexuality**	**Interview location**	**Home Location**	**Race and Ethnicity**	**Parents sexual/gender identities**
1. Abby (23)	Woman	Bisexual	Home	Tayside	White British	One trans (MtF) parent and one cisgender heterosexual mother.
2. Bella (30)	Woman	Heterosexual	Home	Oxfordshire	White British	One lesbian mother, one lesbian step-mother, one heterosexual father.
3. Camilla (22)	Woman	Heterosexual	Home	Glasgow	White British	Two lesbian mothers.
4. Elliot (36)	Man	Gay/Queer	Café	Glasgow	White British	One lesbian mother and one lesbian step-mother. One heterosexual father and one heterosexual step-mother.
5. Emma (37)	Woman	Heterosexual	Home	London	White British	Three lesbian mothers and one heterosexual father.
6. Eve (46)	Woman	Queer	Home	East Sussex	White British	One lesbian mother and one lesbian step-mother. One heterosexual father and one heterosexual step-mother.

Participant (age)	Gender	Sexuality	Interview location	Home Location	Race and Ethnicity	Parents sexual/gender identities
7. Fran (27)	Woman	Heterosexual	Home	West Midlands	White British	Three lesbian mothers.
8. Jack (34)	Queer presenting male	Queer	Telephone	East Sussex	White British	One lesbian mother.
9. James (26)	Man	Heterosexual	Home	Buckinghamshire	White English	One bisexual mother. One heterosexual father.
10. Jasmine (30)	Woman	Heterosexual	Home	East Sussex	White British	Two lesbian mothers and one heterosexual father.
11. Laura (33)	Woman	Heterosexual	Library	Yorkshire	White British	One lesbian mother.
12. Linda (59)	Woman	Heterosexual	Home	London	White British	One lesbian mother, one lesbian step-mothers and one heterosexual father.
13. Luke (26)	Man	Heterosexual	Café	West Sussex	Mixed British	One lesbian mother and one lesbian step-mother.
14. Mandy (58)	Woman	Heterosexual	Café	Norfolk	White British	One lesbian mother.
15. Mark (54)	Man	Heterosexual	Home	Yorkshire	White British	One lesbian mother, one lesbian step-mother and one heterosexual father.
16. Mary (22)	Woman	Heterosexual	Home	Cambridgeshire	White British	One trans (FtM) parent and one cisgender heterosexual father.

Participant (age)	Gender	Sexuality	Interview location	Home Location	Race and Ethnicity	Parents sexual/gender identities
17. Nadine (20)	Woman	Bisexual	Café	London	White British	Two lesbian mothers and one father (now deceased).
18. Olivia (31)	Woman	Heterosexual	Home	Essex	White British	Two lesbian mothers.
19. Rachael (20)	Woman	Heterosexual	Café	East Sussex	White British	Two lesbian mothers and one lesbian step mother.
20. Teddy (25)	Man	Heterosexual	Café	Norfolk	White British	Two lesbian mothers.

4.3 Conducting interviews

Once a participant expressed an interest in being part of the study, I emailed them a copy of the participant information sheet and consent form and provided a hard copy at the interview. At the start of the interview, participants either read through this themselves or I went through it with them, ensuring participants had the chance to raise any questions or concerns before the interview began. All interviews were audio-recorded on a password protected phone and stored in compliance with the University of Southampton's data storage policy. The interview schedule was loosely based around three main sections. Firstly, I asked about the experience of the past, this included childhood, home, school, friends and parents. Secondly, I asked about what the participant understood as their 'present' life, this frequently covered work, identity, sexual and romantic relationships and their own experience as a parent. Thirdly, I asked about the participants' ideas, plans and expectations for their future, this was the shortest section of the interview with most talking about work progression, finances, traveling and 'settling down'. These were the only three questions I asked every participant, with other questions and prompts asked in relation to the content of each individual interview. This meant that each interview varied, at times dramatically, due to the personal experiences of the respondent and how much they wanted to say. In this way, the participants were able to construct their own stories through

recounting their lives and experiences in their own words. Interviews varied in length, with the recorded section of the interview lasting from 30 minutes to two hours, with most lasting about an hour.

While my preference was to interview participants within their homes, participants were free to choose the location of an interview. The location of the interview is an important element as within each space 'participants are situated differently with respects to identities and roles that structure their experience and actions' (Elwood and Martin, 2000: 655). Accordingly, participants may feel differently about speaking or offering certain information in different spaces. Furthermore, spaces may inhibit or encourage particular levels of power for the participant and within the interviewer-participant relationship. Spaces in which participants may feel more comfortable, at ease or powerful can contribute to the way a participant understands themselves e.g. as an expert, as a source of knowledge or experience (Elwood and Martin, 2000: 655). Conversely, some spaces can enhance the already entrenched idea of the researcher as the 'expert' and participants may feel they need to give the 'correct' answer (ibid). Interviewing participants in their own homes can make them feel more in control, familiar, comfortable and relaxed, particularly when discussing sensitive issues that they may not want overheard in a 'public' space like a café. However, it was also acknowledged that homes are not always spaces of comfort, safety or privacy, so a choice over location was always given. Most participants chose to be interviewed at home, others choosing to meet in cafes and one interview being done over the phone.

All interviews were done on an individual basis. I chose to interview only the adult-children of LGBTQ parents, rather than include their parents in the study or in the interviews. It was decided early on in the project that due to the lack of research specifically focused on people with LGBTQ parents, opposed to the plethora of research on parents themselves, that this group should be the primary focus. Current research states that some children feel a need to present themselves as well-rounded, successful people in order not to bolster negative opinions on LGBTQ parenting (Goldberg, 2007b: 556). There are examples in the literature and in my own study that show that adult-children may have, at times, had negative or conflicting feelings and experiences surrounding their parents. For instance, participants in my study discussed feelings of confusion, non-disclosure, embarrassment, fears of and incidents of bullying. Thus, it was important to allow privacy and space to speak about these issues without parents or other family members present.

All participants were given the option of reviewing their interview once it had been transcribed to check for accuracy and ensure that they were comfortable with what they had said during the interview. Although participants were aware they were being recorded during the

interview, I wanted to be sensitive to the fact that we can easily divulge more to an interviewer in an informal situation, forgetting that what is being said may be published. Likewise, as Browne (2003:138) claims, it is important that participants do not feel 'misrepresented or misquoted' within research. Not all participants chose to receive their transcript, some however did edit, delete and clarify certain points when reviewing their transcript.

4.4 Analysis and presentation of findings

4.4.1 Narrative and Thematic analysis

The principles of narrative theory (Phoenix and Brannen, 2014; Riessman 1993) and thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2019) have informed the analysis of my interviews. Narrative analysis was used to understand how individual life stories were told, constructed and embedded within social and relational structures. Thematic analysis allowed me to explore the spread of certain topics across the data set. These two types of analysis were used in conjunction, informing one another throughout the analytical process.

The term 'narrative' denotes the practice of narrating or telling personal stories. Narrative approaches are concerned with 'analysing and criticising the stories we tell, hear and read', as well as the 'myths that surround us and are embedded in our social interactions' (Webster and Mertova, 2007: 7). Narrative is a 'human centered' approach, positioning life stories as central. Riessman (1993) highlights that narrative is an interdisciplinary approach that cannot be placed within the boundaries of a single discipline. Riessman and Quinney (2005) argue elsewhere that although 'narrative' has become popular in everyday language to describe a personal story, this does not fully encompass the meaning of narrative for scholars.

Furthermore, these tales are crafted collaboratively with their audience members rather than within a vacuum. Narratives of the same events may be told differently depending on the audience and reasons for recounting. In the case of interviews, we must consider the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee, as well as the interests of both parties (Phoenix and Brannen, 2014). Accordingly, context is vital when a researcher is analysing a narrative. This both applies to stories within an interview and the interview itself. Through a close examination of how a story is told we can gain an understanding of the motivations of the speaker and the social

norms embedded within the context (Wiles at al. 2004). Thus, as opposed to understanding personal stories or narratives as completely accurate or 'true' accounts, a narrative approach considers how individuals perform a 'preferred' self (Riessman, 2012: 337). This accounts for the ways that people move between 'personas' or identities throughout their everyday lives and opens up space to question 'static' ideas of identity and a true 'inner self' (Riessman, 2012: 337).

As narrative analysis has been developed within a number of disciplines, including anthropology, education, communication studies and linguistics, there are multiple techniques and approaches to conducting analysis, from 'very formal structural analysis to looser interpretive strategies' (Wiles, et al., 2004: 90). However, most scholars agree on some basic tenets of narrative analysis, including looking at the sequence in which a story is told, the language or techniques used to convey meaning and the motivation behind the constructed story. For instance, Riessman (2008: 11) encourages us to consider:

> For whom was this story constructed, and for what purposes? Why is the succession of events configured that way? What cultural resources does the story draw on, or take for granted? What storehouse of plots does it call up? What does the story accomplish? Are there any gaps and inconsistences that might suggest preferred, alternative, or counter-narratives?'

A narrative approach suggests that researchers begin analysis by identifying the types of stories that are told by participants. Following each interview, field notes or memos were written to retain details of the interview that would not have been captured on the audio-recording, while providing a short description of the longer interview. I transcribed all the interviews myself and this was done as soon as possible after the interview had taken place. Transcriptions were examined to identify stories within participants' biographies. This includes types of stories, directions and the contractions within and between stories. For instance, some participants used a number of different stories to emphasise a particular point, while others told stories that seemed to contradict previously highlighted experience or opinion. Furthermore, as suggested by Fraser (2004: 192) interviews were examined for 'intrapersonal, interpersonal, cultural and structural aspects'. This involved considering stories of intrapersonal emotions, thoughts and feelings; experiences involving other people; stories referring to cultural norms or conventions; and the impact of social systems, legislation or public policy. Likewise, I was attentive to the fact that these different domains may overlap in narratives. This is particularly important for people with LGBTQ parents, who may discuss the way their mundane, everyday experience intersects with social norms and legislative restrictions.

Transcripts were then examined more thematically. Braun and Clarke (2006: 79) describe thematic analysis as a 'method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data'. Thus, I analysed the data for codes (such as biogenetics, coming out, family stories/memories), which were used to identify the commonalities and differences between the stories told by participants. This included comparing the content, style and tone of participants, as well as examining the intersection of codes (e.g. the relationship between 'coming out' and 'space'). Thematic analysis can mean the stories of participants become fragmented and decontextualised, with depth and complexity being lost (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 83). By combining thematic and narrative analysis I aimed to maintain a sense of context and the personal life stories, while also developing some overall themes about the lives of people raised by LBTQ parents.

It was decided early in the analysis process that I was not going to use the computer-assisted software NVivo for data analysis, rather I would do the analysis by hand. While NVivo is frequently used for this type of interview analysis, the dependency on pre-assigned codes gives prominence to the number of times a certain code appears. Furthermore, the fragmentation of interview data, although useful for discussing themes, can risk the loss of context in which a theme occurs (Wiles et al., 2004). Thus, I endeavoured to keep in-depth interview quotes situated within the contexts of the individual stories within the analysis chapters and sustain the prominence of individual stories within this study.

4.4.2 Presentation of analysis

In line with combining thematic and narrative analysis, I chose to combine a conventional thematic writing style alongside a case study narrative approach in the presentation of my findings. In using a combination of narrative and thematic analysis, the difficultly faced in trying to present the overarching themes of the data, whilst not diminishing the complexity of each individual story, became clear. At stages during my research process I considered presenting all analysis chapters in a case study format (similar to that of Chapter 5). Consistent with narrative methods, case studies allow individual narratives to be placed in the context of the wider life story. This enables researchers to examine different personal and family situations in depth, maintain the richness of the data and allowing room to examine the details, complications, slippages and contradictions within individual narratives. Without this close analysis crucial details about the complexity of individual experience, kinship structures and family dynamics would be

lost. However, I was also conscious of the need to analyse broader over-arching issues and themes of my data set. As (adult-)children of LBTQ parents is an under-researched area, and this is a group whose views are not well known (in the UK), it was particularly important to highlight a range of stories/voices. Thus, this thesis experiments with various ways of presenting and analysing the data, with Chapter 5 using a case study model (examining 3 participant stories), Chapter 6 using a combination of case study and thematic presentation, and Chapter 6 and 7 organised as traditionally structured thematic chapters.

4.5 Power and positionality

I have previously mentioned the importance of understanding and accounting for the individual subjectivities of participants, however it is equally important to think about the subjectivity of the researcher in interview-based work. When speaking of subjectivity, I am referring to the 'social traits of individuals' (Gorman-Murray et al., 2010: 98). Gender (including gender presentation), sexuality, race, ethnicity and age are some of many characteristics that we may embody and/or may be attributed onto us by others – these construct our positionality. Our social characteristics are not, however, of equal value with social norms attributing more power, status or worth to some than others. Likewise, these characteristics are always located in time and space as positionality is not a static attribute (Mullings, 1999: 340). Therefore, in conjunction with the outlook of narrative inquiry, it was important that I as a researcher understood my position and my interpretations reflexively. Reflexivity is advocated by many researchers, including feminist and queer authors, as a way of 'situating knowledges' and preventing the 'false neutrality and universality of so much academic knowledge' (Rose, 1997: 306). However, it is not necessarily possible to be completely reflexive, in that we can never fully understand our positions, the positions of others or the relationships we build with our participants. As Rose (1997: 314) contends, 'transparent reflexivity' assumes that we can fully appreciate the 'messiness' of the research process. She then argues, rather than aiming for complete comprehension, we should be aiming for an understanding of reflexivity that forefronts the ideas of performance, in which 'researcher, researched and research make each other' (Rose, 1997: 316). This rests on the idea that our identities do not exist prior to our performance of them, they are never static or certain and thus cannot be proclaimed or understood to embody certain characteristics. This then means that 'we are made through our research as much as we make our own knowledge, and that this process is complex, uncertain and incomplete' (Rose, 1997: 316). Gorman-Murray et al. (2010: 99)

argue that 'thinking queerly' about interviews and interactive research enables an appreciation of this multiplicity and flexibility.

There has been much debate about the value of insider/outsider researcher positions. By insider, I am referring to a researcher who belongs to the same group as their participants, while an outsider is someone who does not. Some writers (for example see Perry et al., 2004; Smith, 1987) have claimed that insider status is advantageous as researchers are able to access insights, knowledge and experiences of the group they are a part of, not available to outsiders. Thus, not belonging to the group being studied, or being an outsider, has been perceived to be a disadvantage within qualitative research. However, there are some who see the distance between a researcher and their participants as a positive feature, enabling objectivity and neutrality (Burgess, 1984; Hellawell, 2006; Tang, 2007). For example, they may be able to notice things that an insider could have considered commonplace and thus overlooked. Many, including Gorman-Murray et al. (2010) and Mullings (1999), have questioned this binary, and rather than looking at the researcher as either an 'insider' or 'outsider', claim that this is a false dualism that does not account for the ways that both the participants' and the researchers' subjectivities are multiple, changing and spatial (also see Acker, 2001; Naples, 1996). Individuals cannot constantly remain insiders within their research, while it is unlikely that anyone could be a total outsider within a research project. Within my work I position myself as an adult-child of lesbian parents and thus a *partial* 'insider' in my research and the group I am interviewing. As Gabb (2004a: 170) highlights, being an insider within LGBTQ research is fairly commonplace, and most LGBTQ researchers who do LGBTQ related work emphasise their sexuality and their position within the research from the start. I chose to disclose this to all of my participants because of the history of homophobia in relation to LGBTQ parents and potential worry or fear from participants that I would portray their families in a negative light. In most cases I also disclosed my own sexuality and family history. This was, in part, to build rapport with, and gain the trust of, my participants with the hope that they would feel comfortable and more willing to open up about their experiences.

However, my position in my research and in relation to my participants is much more complex than just a child of lesbian parents. I am also a 27-year-old, able-bodied, highly educated, white, lesbian cis-gender woman in a monogamous, long term relationship. I am a feminist and queer geographer and a PhD student. I was born within a heterosexual relationship which broke down a few years after my birth. My mother came out as a lesbian in my very early childhood and, when I was six, began a relationship with the woman I also view as my mother. Thus, I have two lesbian parents and one (now estranged) heterosexual father. My lesbian mothers are now separated, but still civil partnered and continue to have a close relationship. I am one of four siblings, one of which came into the family at the age of 16 through a complex fostering situation

and identifies as a gay man. My grandmother also identifies as a lesbian and came out during my early teens. She has a partner, but they live separately. My family members' subject positions are ever present and important within this research as they have shaped my knowledge and perspective on family formation, structure and what kinship means. They have also shaped my ideas about sexuality and what it means to be a lesbian. This family situation impacts the way I see the narratives of my participants and the way I relate through shared understandings and stories. I write from a theoretical perspective of queer theory, and also a personal location as a third-generation lesbian, with a complex, messy and non-normative family. This does not mean that every aspect of my family is non-normative, as there are many privileges within these kinship networks – particularly those of race, marriage, education and wealth. My position and similarities/differences to my participants varied greatly. This variety is not only limited to family structure and identity, but also experience, involvement in LGBTQ cultures and communities, location (some lived in towns and cities I was familiar with or had lived in), profession, age, gender and social/political views. Thus, it is not only 'insider' status that enables a level of understanding, relationship or rapport between participants and researchers, but many other factors.

There is often concern around the hierarchical relationship between researchers and participants (McDowell, 1992), with many feminist researchers aiming to diminish power differentials and encourage equality through reflexivity. In our research we must, of course, be attentive to the ways that our participants may be dis/empowered. Within my interviews, my experience of power relations varied significantly. In some interviews I felt that participants did view me as an 'expert' and a 'researcher' who was looking to extract specific information from them. For example, a few minutes into one interview a participant questioned me about what she should be saying:

> But you have asked me to give you a bit of background about myself and I'm finding I'm telling you the whole story. You must have specific questions? – Mandy (58 – lesbian mother)

After this interview I made an increasingly concerted effort to lay out the structure of the interview to participants more clearly before we began, convey that they were in control of their own interview and that they were free to say as much or as little as they wanted for each question I asked them. In contrast, I had interviewed two senior academics, both older than me, who worked in well-regarded universities in disciplines that in some way connect to my own. Both women in these interviews displayed a great level of confidence and comfort and were able to discuss their experiences articulately. In my view, the participants in these interviews held more

power than me as the researcher. Although we may never achieve equality in power relations, this does not necessarily mean that all power imbalances are unproductive.

Despite the effort to limit unequal power relations, ethical dilemmas and encourage reflexivity, this is not necessarily an easy task or one that can be achieved completely. As stated, our positionality is never static and cannot be fully known. Furthermore, as much as researchers aim to present their participants' voices fully and accountably, ultimately, it is the author who chooses the quotes, what (and who) to include and exclude. As England (1994: 250) argues, it is vital that we accept that 'the research relationship is inherently hierarchical' in that it will never be free of inequity and conflict. I do not maintain that the efforts of reflexivity are futile, as we can go into the field and the research process more aware, but this awareness will not dissolve all 'asymmetrical or exploitative relationships' (ibid). One interview stands out particularly as highlighting issues of ethics, reflexivity, positionality, emotion and researcher power. This will be discussed here as an example of the ways that we can never fully understand or overcome these dilemmas. Daniels summed up my experiences of research well when she said:

> It is in the nature of ethical problems that they are not generally clear-cut, readily or finally resolvable. It is in the nature of fieldwork that you are likely to find yourself up to the waist in morass of personal ties, intimate experiences and lofty and base sentiments as your own sense of decency, vanity or outrage is tried (Daniels cited in McDowell, 1992).

Although I went into the research process aiming not to make assumptions about what my participants and interviews would highlight as important, I also acknowledge that my position and experience shapes what I expected from the research. In some ways, this enabled me to develop insightful research questions, follow up questions and probes. However, one of my early interviews highlighted my position in the research more than any other and led to re-reflect on my place within it. This interview was with Mandy, a 58-year-old woman who had been raised by a lesbian mother and her partner. Mandy's childhood had been very difficult, she always felt pushed aside by her mother who, she felt, had prioritised her partner and gave Mandy very little attention. Mandy also did not know her father during her childhood and first met him when she was 48. Partially due to the fact it was the 1960s, Mandy never spoke to anyone about the fact that her mother was a lesbian and did not disclose it until she was 52 years old, after her mother had died. Mandy's experience of having a lesbian parent led her to believe that children should only be raised by a man and a woman. She stated this several times during the interview, one time claiming that:

> If you do bring a child into the world, bring it in with a mother and a father and allow that child to have a mother and a father in their life. If they don't have a mother and a father in their life, you are hurting that child.

She then re-stated this in a follow up email to me after the interview, particularly mentioning how she felt that being denied a family in which her mother and father were in union was harmful to her. This interview was challenging for many reasons. Firstly, although I expected some people to have experienced homophobia, struggles and difficulties having lesbian parents, I did not expect any participants to actively be against LGBTQ or same-gender parenting. My surprise at the interaction and content of the interview led me to reconsider the way I thought about those raised by LGBTQ parents and how my positive experiences had led me to believe that this would largely be the case for others.

Secondly, after the interview she chose to review her transcript and later told me that she had not enjoyed the research experience. She did not want to remove herself from the study and thanked me for the space I gave her to talk through her experience, however for her, narrating emotive and painful stories to me and then re-reading them was very difficult. Mandy's story gave a different perspective from all my other interviews, both in her generation, experiences and views, and in this way was important to my research. Saying this, it also felt like an exploitative relationship in which I have taken her difficult, and at times traumatic, experiences and she has gained very little. While this was the only interview I felt was explicitly difficult, it does highlight the way that, as McDowell (1992: 409) states, 'the notion of non-exploitative research relations is a utopian ideal that is receding from our grasp'.

Finally, prior to the interview Mandy asked me about myself and my family and I disclosed to her that I have lesbian parents and also identify as a lesbian (who may one day have children). At several moments in the interview, although it may not have necessarily been her intention, it felt like she was talking about my family and/or potential child/ren. For instance, during the interview she stated:

> But, on that subject, this is where you and I may differ, I believe a child comes from a man and a woman, and I believe unless there is a man and a woman for that child, that child is going to have something missing. That child may grow up feeling content, loved, nurtured, cared for, but there will always, always be something missing.
>
> Whilst people can celebrate what they are celebrating nowadays, please don't forget the rights of the child. How does that child feel, two people coming together, two lesbians, two gay people, they want a family, they want a family, they want a child. I'm

> sorry it's not your right to have a child. If you do bring a child into the world, bring it in with a mother and a father and allow that child to have a mother and a father in their life. If they don't have a mother and a father in their life, you are hurting that child. Hurting that child in some way, you might never know that out there, but in some way that child has got to live with that hurt inside of them

This was a highly emotional interview and will be discussed in later chapters. Here, however, I would like to focus on the fact that although the study of emotions of participants is frequently discussed in research, we rarely account for the emotions of the researcher in these situations (Chaitin, 2003; Dickson-Swift et al., 2009; Edwards and Holland, 2013). The work on geographies of emotion have attended to the previous exclusion of emotion and affect in geographical research (for example see Anderson and Smith, 2001; Davidson and Bondi, 2004; Thien, 2005) and enabled an appreciation that the world is 'mediated by feeling' (Thien, 2005: 451). Bondi (2005: 231) has discussed the emotion embedded within doing research and argued that although some do write about this (see Lauier and Parr, 2000; Cupples, 2002; Bondi, 2003), it is most often discussed in the informal settings in supervisions, seminars and conversations with colleagues. She highlights the research interview as one setting that brings about feelings towards and about the interview, the participant or the content. This was one instance where I felt my openness about my personal life left me vulnerable to critique by the participant and, although she *did* express her views about LGBTQ parenting, I felt she may have had stronger opinions than those she voiced to me.

4.6 Limitations and dilemmas

4.6.1 Terminology

It is important to say something within this thesis about the language and terminology I have decided to use to represent the families I am researching. People raised by LGBTQ parents often refer to themselves and their parents' identities/sexualities in varied and multiple ways. While it was important to respect the identities and terms people use to represent themselves, it was also important to have some consistency when writing about these families and minority sexual and gender identities within them. Significantly, these decisions were consciously left unresolved prior to the start of data collection. Participants articulations of their own identities and their family

members identities informed the choices around terminology. I began using the acronym "LGBTQ" as opposed to "LGBT" or "queer" to attempt be inclusive to those who may not feel they are adequately represented by using the word queer as an umbrella term. Likewise, some who do define as queer do so to disidentify themselves from lesbian, gay, bisexual identities, as was the case for one participant. However, because I was not able to interview anyone with gay fathers, I decided to use the acronym "LBTQ" when talking about my study and participants specifically, and LGBTQ when discussing the literature and context more generally. While this does cause some inconsistencies, it felt it was important to limit the acronym to LBTQ, so I was not misrepresenting my data or findings. While LBTQ is not a perfect term, I hope that it was able to capture the range of people I have interviewed.

The usage of the term queer in this thesis predominantly refers to queer theory or queer perspectives. However, this is not to refute the legitimacy of the term as an identifier in itself. Following Carlile and Paechter (2018: 5), my understanding of the term queer as an identity is associated with 'non-binariness, or, at the least to a position disassociated with gender [or sexual] narratives'. The use of trans in this thesis refers to those who may describe their gender identity as non-binary or whose gender identity has 'moved across the binary divide' (ibid). However, following participant narratives, we should keep in mind that the usage of identity categories is unstable and fluctuating for many, with participants referring to both their own and their parents' identities in multiple ways. Consequently, while I used the broad term LGBTQ/LBTQ throughout, within my analysis chapters I endeavoured to highlight the different subjectivities and identities that existed in the families of my participants.

4.6.2 Writing about unnamed and unknown relationships

This thesis documents the lives of people who live in families which may fall outside of the expected convention and some who have lived in ways that open up new possibilities for family relationships. Many participants described their parents in several ways, noting how they have multiple mothers/fathers/parents, and naming them differently including calling them parents, fathers, donors, step-mothers, step-fathers, biological/non-biological mothers and fathers, friends, sometimes interchanging terms as various points in the interview. Writing this thesis, there was a real dilemma about finding the right words to use to write about family relationships that existed beyond the language we have available to us. When family relationships have not only been reconfigured at conception but continued to alter during a person's life then a stable

categorisation becomes difficult to articulate. Part of the dilemma here is that if we understand that truth and knowledge are socially constructed, then when something does not conform to discursive norms it cannot be understood making it literally meaningless (Olsson, 2010: 66). However, if we subsume these relationships under recognised familial categories we may potentially conceal their distinctiveness further. Nonetheless, in order to discuss these families and relationships we must be able to name and categories them somehow, otherwise we have no way of discussing them. I will use two examples to explain my point.

The majority of my participants had lesbian mother/s with many having two or three mothers. For those born to lesbian parents, labelling their mothers either their 'biological' mother or their 'non-biological' or 'other' mother was often a necessary part of their explanation of their family. Saying this, the differentiating between non-/biological mothers was also refuted during interviews. Thus, for me it is important to discuss the influence of bio-genetic relations, however, I do not want to position the biological mother essentially as more important or connected to their child than the non-biological mother. Although I have made a conscious effort to use the terms that have been presented to me by my participants, even the expression 'non-biological mother' creates a sense of lacking, while 'other mother' seems to suggest a secondary position to the 'real' mother. This linguistic problem is something I have struggled with in my own life when referring to my mothers and not an issue that is easily addressed. Living within a culture that highlights the importance of biogenetic discourses (Jones, 2005), it is not surprising that both me and my participants struggle to express familial relationships without prioritising the 'birth' parent.

My second example involves the use of the terminologies of 'donor', 'known donor' and father. Several participants had been conceived using donated sperm, either from a sperm bank or from someone known to their mothers. Despite the terms, 'anonymous donor' and 'known donor' being widely used (Kirkman, 2003) they are not necessarily easily defined. For example, parents' relationships with donors can range from very close friend or family member, to acquaintances, to those met through specific donor adverts (Dempsey, 2010). The relationships between parents and donors is complex and varying, as are the ongoing, changing and negotiated relationships between donors and children. Furthermore, although not the case for any of my participants, from 2005 any children conceived through anonymously donated eggs, sperm or embryos are able to access information about the identity of their donor when they reach the age of 18, meaning arguably they are not completely anonymous. Thus, the distinction between known and anonymous donor is an artificial one. This indicates that the donor categorisations we

have available to us do not adequately capture the 'fluid and expansive constructions of parent-child, family and kin relationships' that are demonstrated in some families that include (known) donors (Goldberg and Allen, 2013: 350). There is no perfect solution to this linguistic problem. I then claim that it is vital when discussing LGBTQ families to be continuously reflexive and aware of the use of categorising language and I therefore aim to be driven by participants meanings, conceptions and understandings of their own relationships.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has explained the motivation and reasoning behind the methods used within this thesis. The decision to use biographical interviews and narrative analysis enabled me to stay rooted in participants' narratives, driven by the data and flexible to the needs of both my participants and the project itself. I have highlighted the necessity for reflexivity as a researcher and a partial insider within my research population. The analysis chapters that follow are based on the biographies and narratives of my participants. My position is vital to keep in mind throughout the research and analysis process, as all subsequent chapters will be informed by my own personal biography, subjectivity, priorities and perspectives. Similarly, participants' narratives presented here are partial and subjective and should not be understood to be objective or represent all experiences of LGBTQ-headed families.

Chapter 5 Negotiating biogenetics and relatedness

Current research suggests that aspiring lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer (LGBTQ) parents go through a process of imagining how their children will understand their kinship circles and how this 'non-conventional' family structure might be explained to children as they grow up (Almack, 2006; Dempsey, 2010; Nordqvist, 2010; Nordqvist and Smart, 2014b). Much of the work in this field has looked at such plans during the moment of conception or adoption, rather than how this story unravels once children arrive. Andreassen (2016) notes how mothers using sperm donors position their future child's needs and wellbeing as central to their donor choices. Likewise, Nordqvist (2014: 280) suggests that parents try to 'avoid denying the child any form of kinship that might be important'. With the exception of Goldberg and Allen (2013), we know very little about what kinship means for children who have LGBTQ parents or how these meanings transform over time. The decisions LGBTQ parents make during conception do not solidify kinship relationships and 'the clinic is not the only space within which genetics is made meaningful' (McLaughlin, 2015: 630). Using rich qualitative data, this chapter explores the following questions: how do children from LBTQ-headed families understand their kinship circle? Does this correspond to their parent's initial ideas and ideals? And how do the imaginings and practices of these families develop through time?

In this chapter I focus on how people raised by LBTQ parents narrate their relationships with their parents and donors. I examine narratives of biogenetic connection and family, while demonstrating the ways this plays out across different family configurations. I divide this chapter into two sections. First, I provide discussion of the scholarship on LGBTQ families, before turning to literature on the emotion work required by children of LGBTQ parents to negotiate their queer family environments and relationships. Then, I move on to my own empirical research on adult-children born to and/or raised by LBTQ parents. Here, I assess the notion of relatedness and how this informs the negotiation of (non)reproductive relationships far beyond initial decisions at the time of conception. I provide three biographical case studies to explore the connection between family discourse and practice across generations. The first case study focuses on the experience of having biological and non-biological mothers, the second on being conceived through anonymous sperm donation and the third on relationships with known sperm donors. I argue that children raised in LBTQ households must negotiate between the creative, non-traditional aspects of their families and the ongoing dominance of genetic discourses which stress the importance of biological connection.

5.1 LGBTQ kinship, family practices, genetic thinking and emotions

There is a growing body of literature in the social sciences on intimacy and kinship beyond the conventional family (Berkowitz, 2009; Gabb, 2018; Luzia, 2010; Wilkinson, 2019; Valentine, 2003a). This includes research investigating LGBTQ parented families and queer kinship configurations that differ considerably from the idealised version of the nuclear family. Widely cited and important studies into 'families of choice' (Stacey, 1996; Weeks et al., 2001; Weston, 1991) have emphasised elective kinship ties over biological links. Paths to LGBTQ parenthood have been investigated, including decision-making around the use of known and anonymous donors (Almack, 2006; Dempsey, 2010; Nordqvist, 2014), the experience of using fertility clinics (Epstein, 2018) and constructing relatedness when children are conceived through donor gametes (Nordqvist, 2010, 2012). Others have investigated the way in which becoming a parent shapes, and is shaped by, families of origin and extended kinship networks (Nordqvist, 2015; Nordqvist and Smart, 2014b). Beyond conception, research has explored stories of adoption, fostering and policy implications for LGBTQ parents (Hicks, 2011). Furthermore, research has highlighted the radical and egalitarian character of lesbian relationships and 'sameness' of biological and non-biological mothers (Dunne, 2000), noting the queer possibilities offered by non-heterosexual kinship structures (Park, 2013). Others, however, demonstrate that biological or 'birth' mothers continue to be the primary carers in lesbian families (Gabb, 2005b) and argue for the need to consider the relevance and complexity of biogenetic reproductive relationships in LGBTQ families (Dahl, 2018). Nevertheless, the ways that children of LGBTQ parents conceptualise relatedness, and experience their relationships with their biological and non-biological parents and donors, remains under-researched. The small body of research that does exist highlights that children's relationships and views of their known donors shifts over time, with children desiring more information and contact in late adolescence or young adulthood (Goldberg and Allen, 2013).

Much of the research on non-heterosexual kinship aligns with Morgan's (1996) concept of 'family practices', which recognises that families are not limited to the genetic family unit, but instead come into being through performative acts. Nevertheless, it is also vital to recognise that the construction of an LGBTQ family does not always imply a complete disregard for traditional ideas of biology, kinship and gendered parental roles. There has been a rapid increase in the development of assisted reproductive technologies and an upsurge in their use by LGBTQ individuals and partners, including the use of IVF, insemination, or surrogacy, which may be done

with donated gametes (HFEA, 2019a). Decisions about how to choose donors can be complex and multiple, as intended parents may choose anonymous donors, identity release donors, known donors, or decide to parent with friends or family. While these developments have generated new opportunities for LGBTQ people to have children and create families differently, many argue that biotechnology has not completely changed our understandings of relatedness and conception (Hayden, 1995; Jones, 2005; Nordqvist, 2010). Rather than becoming inconsequential, biological connections are constructed and 'reinscribed' in multiple ways depending on familial configuration (Hayden, 1995: 56). For example, Jones' (2005: 234) study on biogenetics in lesbian families found that donor sperm can both be 'inscribed with, or be denied biogenetic or cultural meaning' depending on the impact this would have for solidifying a family connection. This may mean highlighting some aspects of kinship such as resemblance, love, and dyadic parenting, while side-lining issues including genes, 'blood', biology or gestation. Therefore, kinship is neither 'completely given' nor completely 'chosen', but creatively and actively engaged in to form meaningful relationships (Mason, 2008: 32).

In line with these arguments, Nordqvist (2017) contends that, despite the shift towards understanding the family as a form of practice, genetic familial discourses are still considered significant in everyday life. While there has been a move towards analysing the family as something that can be socially-constructed through everyday practice, genetic discourses continue to work to sustain ideas of what families *should* look like. For Nordqvist (2017: 868), the notion of 'genetic thinking' brings forward an analysis of the various ways that we understand connection 'in and through the body'. Here, she is referring to the ways in which social narratives surrounding genetics, blood and biology work to steer our ideas, opinions and beliefs, and how these shape everyday life and family relationships. A key part of this argument is the connection and the co-production of 'family practice' and 'family thinking', highlighting the ways that genetic relationships (although not necessarily meaningful in themselves) produce socially desirable possibilities for connection and kinship. Using examples such as having a child, family resemblance and inheritance, Nordqvist stresses that genetic thinking influences how people 'approach genetic and non-genetic' kin and guides how people act in their everyday family lives (Nordqvist, 2017:869). She therefore calls for a development of research that accounts for the 'relationship between activities and the feelings [or] imaginations…with which they are entwined' (Nordqvist, 2017: 878). Capturing the salience of genetic discourses is particularly important when examining at families who have used assisted reproductive technologies, falling outside the idealised heterosexual, genetically related, nuclear family.

This tension between 'genetic thinking' and 'family practices', or the normative biogenetic discourses and the everyday 'doing' between kin, is something that is constantly negotiated

within families. Often this negotiation results in emotion work by both parents, their children and wider kin. These normative conceptualisations of biological relatedness can guide the emotions of LGBTQ parents and their children, and can result in family members working to support each other's emotional wellbeing. While research has stressed that LGBTQ parents consider the emotions of their (future) children (Almack, 2006), few have considered how children work to safeguard the (positive) emotions of parents and wider kinship networks. Hochschild (1983) understood 'emotion work' to be the energy that is put into the management of one's feelings in everyday personal life, whether that be to suppress, change or evoke an emotion. The performance of an emotion is regulated by social norms and 'feeling rules' that dictate what we should feel in certain circumstances (Hochschild, 1983). The notion of emotion work has also been employed to refer to the effort to manage or improve the emotions of others (Riggs, 2009). Applying these concepts of emotion work to LBTQ-headed families enables an understanding of the way that children work to regulate their own actions and emotions in order to enhance the emotional wellbeing of their parents, donors and extended kinship networks. It is important to remember that relationships between parents and children are interdependent, as children 'actively contribute to family life and identity' (Valentine, 2003a: 496). Throughout the rest of this chapter, I outline how emotion work is intimately connected to socially constructed ideas of biogenetics, relatedness and 'genetic thinking'. This chapter builds upon these ideas of family practices, genetic thinking and emotion work to examine an under-researched area of LGBTQ kinship studies, offering an understanding biogenetic of relatedness for people raised by LBTQ parents.

5.2 Case Studies

5.2.1 Nadine - Non-biological mother

The first case study focuses on Nadine, a 22-year-old woman who was born into a co-parenting family with two lesbian mothers, Helen (non-biological) and Rachael (biological), and a heterosexual father, Andrew (biological). She considered both her mothers and father (now deceased) as equal parents. During her childhood she primarily lived with her mothers and her father would stay with them five consecutive nights per month. Her father died when she was nine years-old, however she continues to have a close relationship with his wife and her older

siblings from their relationship. This story particularly concentrates on her experience of having one biological and one non-biological mother, highlighting the way that biogenetic discourses unfurl across generations.

Within her interview, Nadine positioned both her mothers as equal parents and spoke of how biogenetics did not inform who she considered as kin. However, her narrative demonstrated the ways that the dominant discourse of biogenetics continued to shape her kinship practices. These dominant biogenetic discourses are often employed to claim that that families are fixed through genetic relatedness, with genetic narratives used to claim belonging within, and connection to, a certain kinship group (Edwards and Strathern, 2000). Despite the fact she considered biogenetics unimportant, the emotions and actions of those around her gave her an underlying feeling that biogenetics still somehow mattered. Consequently, Nadine suggested that she often acted in ways to reduce the significance of biogenetics for her parents and others around her. She discussed a particular instance during her childhood which was illustrative of her reaction to the fears expressed by one of her mothers concerning her non-biological status, namely that this would render her the less loved or valued parent in Nadine's eyes. Nadine said:

> Nadine: I would say there was some tension when I was younger. I remember being in reception and drawing Christmas cards for my mums and thinking that they have to be exactly the same because otherwise one of my mums will be upset because so many people would not understand that she was my mum and she would be really insecure about, like, about stuff.
>
> Eliza: So, you felt like she felt insecure?
>
> Nadine: Yeah. I was aware of that. When I was like four. I copied it and I had copied it so exactly that I had accidently written the same name twice. So, then I crossed it out and then I crossed it out on the other card and rewrote it so that it would look exactly the same.

Nadine suggests that, at the age of four, she was conscious that Helen, her non-biological mother, had fears about not being seen as a 'proper' parent. Nadine sought to stabilise Helen's parental position and ease her emotional distress by treating her 'exactly the same'. Nadine went on to tell another story that demonstrates how 'family practice and family thinking are intimately interlinked' (Nordqvist, 2017: 878). She narrates an instance where her non-biological mother questioned why she was treated differently:

> With her Mother's Day present, when I was really little I had some paper clips I was going to give them as a present that I just found in my room… there was one really big

> one and one that was sort of shaped like a rocket or something and I was like "that's the coolest one so I will give that to the mum that's" – so they are called Helen and Rachael and Helen is the one that is not my biological mum – so I was like "I will give her the cooler one, that's the rocket one and I will just give the big one to Rachael". I told her "this is what I have done, you have the really good one" and she was upset, she was like "why do I get the weird shaped one?".

Nadine's narrative coincides with Nordqvist's (2017: 872) findings that 'non-genetic parents often sensed a need to "prove" themselves' as they did not consider their parenting role to be as firmly established without genetic connections. This story, however, indicates that children are involved in this legitimisation, often guided by the thinking and emotions of their parents.

Furthermore, Nadine was aware of the way that the fragility felt by Helen, her non-biological mother, would impact on her parents' relationship. She talked of how it 'wasn't a big thing' but something she was definitely 'aware of':

> If Helen was working and Rachael was like "oh I can go to parents evening this time if you want to work" and then Helen would be like "why do you think you should go on your own" and then she would say something like "I know this is about how you think that I think I'm more her mum than you are".

Although all non-genetic kinship relationships are often considered as more fragile or weaker than genetic relationships, this can be particularly pertinent in families with two mothers. Park (2013), in her examination of queer motherhood, claims that we are living in a society that privileges biological motherhood above any other type of motherhood (e.g. non-biological, adoptive, step mothers etc.). She uses the term 'monomaternalism' to describe this 'ideological assumption that a child can have only one real mother', their "real" biological mother (Park, 2013: 3). Lesbian non-biological mothers can be questioned about their parental status, within and outside the family, and deemed something 'other than mother' (Park, 2013: 5). To challenge this notion and legitimise two mother families, lesbian headed families frequently stress the importance of love over biological connection (Dahl, 2018). When discussing lesbian conception and motherhood, Dahl (2018: 1028) contends that lesbian motherhood is grounded in a notion of 'sameness' and equality between mothers. Within a family of two mothers, lesbian women may be aiming to fill a position that is deemed singular. Dahl (2018: 1030) has argued that notions of 'sameness' between lesbian parents risks disavowing and prohibiting differences along the lines of pregnancy and biogenetics. When we understand motherhood as singular, biogenetic connections between biological mothers and children can be seen as a potential risk to this sameness. In this example, the 'investment in sameness' as a means to ensure equality between

mothers was enforced by both the emotions, thinking and subsequent practices of Helen *and* Nadine (Dahl, 2018: 1034). The desire to make the non-genetic relationship insignificant, by easing anxiety through specific family practices, often meant that biogenetics *did* matter and were highlighted as a point of tension between both parents and child. This indicates that even for participants, and families, who aim to refute the prominence of biogenetic connections, dominant genetic discourses can trigger anxiety and seep into everyday relationships.

However, it should be highlighted that Nadine's awareness of Helen's need to prove herself as a legitimate parent decreased over time:

> I was aware of that then, but I think that is easier now. There's not that tension. She doesn't feel insecure about that and then I don't – because I think that made me feel a bit insecure at one point – that she thought about so much but she only thought about it so much because she had had so much crap from people.

This indicates that fears over non-biological parental legitimacy may be limited to early childhood, as the development of a strong social relationship through everyday kinship practices overrides the externally imposed significance of genetic relationality.

Thus, when examining kinship and families, we must look at the inter-relationships between family members. Children often interpret their social worlds through the ideas and actions of those around them. This does not mean, however, that they will always share their parents' notions of genetic relatedness. Like the children in Gabb's study (2005b: 599), Nadine did not understand her family through a 'hetero-gender (reproductive) framework' and did not share her mother's fear of difference. For instance, she claimed that despite the fact that others 'imagine[d] divides in the family [or] conflict…everyone is very close'. Nevertheless, Nadine was aware and responsive to Helen's anxiety about her position as an equal mother. Here, care is shown to be multi-directional within families. Nadine felt a responsibility to protect her mother from emotional pain and exclusion, and to legitimise her role as a mother. Arguably, wider genetic discourses, which insist on sameness between mothers, disallows distinction along biogenetic and gestational lines and thus guides actions of both adults *and* children within LGBTQ-headed families.

5.2.2 Fran - 'good' anonymous donor

The next family narrative relates to Fran, a 27-year-old woman who was born to two lesbian mothers through anonymous sperm donation. Fran's narrative emphasises the significance of the imagined anonymous donor and the continuance of genetic imaginings across generations and throughout the life story. My analysis of this case study considers how genetic discourses are often upheld through discussion of imagined relatedness between children and donors, even when donors are unknown and invisible. Fran was conceived before implementation of the *Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (Disclosure of Donor information) Regulations 2004,* which enables children born through gamete donation to access the details of their donors once they reach the age of 18. Thus, Fran had very little knowledge of her donor and can never find out his identity. Fran indicated that although she always knew she was donor conceived, it became more relevant and discussed within her family as she moved into her adolescence:

> We spoke more about sperm donation when I was a teenager… It was generally when I was on my period I would go, 'well I'm never going to know my father' and would do stupid research on the internet, 'how do I find my sperm donor'. Not that I ever wanted a relationship or expected a relationship but I was interested to know who they were and what they looked like and to say thank you. That's all I was interested in.

There is limited research the experiences of donor conceived people, however Fran's narrative is consistent with Dempsey et al.'s (2019) recent work on donor linking in Australia. Dempsey et al. (2019) found that, like Fran, donor conceived people often sought personal information, physical characteristics and photographs. Furthermore, Fran's narrative resonates with Hertz et al.'s (2013) work on donor conceived people, as they suggest that attitudes and desires to know donors shift over time, often emerging later in their childhood, adolescence or early adulthood. Fran's disinterest in a relationship with her donor also reiterates Hertz et al.'s (2013: 56) study, as they found that only 38% of respondents wanted to build a relationship with their donor. This change in interest in knowledge or contact with donors illustrates that there is need for further research into donor conceived people, as the majority of the current research focuses on parents with young children.

Fran goes on to discuss how, although she did not know much about her donor, she 'knew that there was this person who donated sperm and what a wonderful person they must have been'. This echoes Hertz et al. (2013: 63) who claim that donor conceived children from lesbian

parented families often think of their donor as having performed 'a simple kindness' for them and their families. The idea that her donor was a 'good person' permeated Fran's life story and indicates that this was an ongoing narrative within her family. This was particularly highlighted when Fran described a moment when this image was challenged:

> So, I was in a philosophy RS lesson once and we were talking about, it was an ethics lesson talking about sperm donation and egg donation, IVF and what people think about it. My RS teacher was saying, "but you see the people who donate only do it for the money, they only do it for the money" and I was thinking, "you little bitch" and I said to her – because I have always been very open with my family about sperm donation, our thoughts on it and what an incredible person my biological father must be to have donated sperm and how lovely. I remember asking growing up, "was it just for the money? Or was it because he was a nice man? Who is this person?" and my mum always made it clear that it would have only been expenses and I remember reading that it's only expenses, and I remember saying to her, "you're wrong" and she was like, "no I'm not wrong" and I was like, "no, you're wrong and you need to think about who is in this lesson".

This story sits within the broader discourse of 'altruistic sperm donor' that is widespread and rooted within the fertility industry, as well as those who engage with it (Ekerhovd and Faurskov, 2008; Tober, 2001). In the UK, commercial donation is illegal and sperm donors only receive enough money to cover expenses incurred during the process (HFEA, 2019b). Comparable to blood and organ donation, sperm donation is constructed as a valuable and precious 'gift' that families are forever thankful for (Shaw, 2008). Tober (2001: 149) claims that the 'connection between altruistically donated semen and good, and purchased semen with bad is apparent'. For women using sperm banks and anonymous sperm donations, the 'altruistic character of the donor is important', as there continues to be strong opposition to the association between financially compensated for intimate or reproductive labour (Tober, 2001: 142).

For Fran's family, the construction of this donor did not rest on heritage or looks as is so often examined in accounts of parents using sperm donations (see Jones, 2005; Nordqvist, 2010, 2017). Instead, the family imagined this donor as 'an incredible person'. That said, Fran continued to understand her construction of him through inheritance and genetics, but what was passed on was her donor's positive traits, personality and the idea of him as a selfless person, rather than his physical attributes. Fran continued, saying:

> I was enraged and I went home and it just boiled up in me because I felt like …she was saying…"your dad only did it for the money, your father, biological… your sperm donor

> only did it for the money and that little bit of you that is him is selfish and has no interest in you as a human being". And no, he doesn't have a clue that I exist or he might think that 'oh, maybe some of my sperm was used and maybe there are children who biological have my genetics' and it's not about him wanting to know who I am or anything, it's about her saying 'your biological father only did it for the money' and I was so angry and I went home and I remember telling my mum and she was livid. She was fuming and I was crying and she was like "right" and went onto the internet and printed off reams and reams and reams of documents about how it's just expenses and highlighted it all and I handed it to my RS teacher the next day and said, "you should probably read this before you start teaching".

This good/bad donor dichotomy was resolved by Fran's parents creating a 'positive and non-threatening image' of her donor (Provoost et al., 2018: 391). As Nordqvist (2014) found, parents often tell and re-tell their child their donor stories. Likewise, Layne (2013) argued that mothers who have used donor sperm create 'fantasy fathers' for their children. However, by looking at the narratives of adult-children we can more clearly recognise that LBTQ parents and their children can in fact co-produce narratives of donors way past conception and early childhood. As children age, established discourses surrounding kinship and genetics may be challenged, disputed or condemned by others around them. Fran's formation of a positive emotional narrative about her donor became imperative to uphold throughout her life and led her to publicly confront anyone who questioned this. Within her story, she felt distressed and personally affronted by the public assertion that her donor was 'only doing it for the money'. This declaration by her teacher, a person of authority, threatened her idea of her donor, producing the fear that he had passed on his 'selfish' genes to her, therefore tainting her character (Nordqvist, 2017: 87). Thus, the discourse of the 'good' sperm donor is not only important to parents in their initial imaginings of donors at the point of conception but can span generations. In Fran's case, she received parental support after the incident which reiterated the altruistic motives of her donor and stabilised this notion within her kinship network.

Again, what we see here is that Fran positions her two mothers as equal and she puts very little emphasis on biogenetic connections when narrating her story about her relationship to her two mothers. For example, she says explicitly, 'my mums were always very much my mums, it wasn't my biological mum and my other mum'. During Fran's interview, mothering was constructed through caretaking, deconstructing the notion that biological connection is fundamental to kinship. Therefore, this interview could be read in some ways as an example of chosen and intended families, disrupting heteronormativity. Unlike Nadine's narrative, there was no indication that Fran's non-biological mother felt uneasy about her parental position, perhaps

because they were in a dyadic parental relationship rather than co-parenting. However, Fran's parents did construct a biogenetic narrative of her donor. Fran's discussions of her donor indicate that for her, biological connection is not completely obsolete. This demonstrates the complexity of the relationship between the biological and social, as the donor's relevance in everyday life is minimal but not totally irrelevant. Although unknown and invisible in their lives, her donor remains ever present in her kinship imaginings.

5.2.3 Teddy - Known donors

The last family narrative introduced in this chapter highlights kinship relationships within known donor arrangements. Teddy is a 25-year-old heterosexual man with two lesbian parents and two known donors, a gay couple. Although it is only possible to have one biological donor, Teddy refers to both men as his donors as home insemination was carried out with a combination of both men's sperm. His donors stipulated that they did not want to be 'fathers' at the time of his conception, yet have both continued to play an important role in Teddy and his sister's life since birth. Teddy describes their relationships with their donors: 'Ben and Adam are close so me and Polly [his sister], they are kind of like …instead of having kids they just became very close with me and Polly'. During his interview Teddy referred to them as donors, friends, fathers and parents, indicating that their relationship could not be defined using existing familial categories; they fell somewhere between family friends and parental figures. Teddy also saw himself as part of both Ben and Adam's extended family, having long standing kin-like relationships with their parents, brothers, sisters, nieces and nephews.

This case study develops our understanding of how known donor relationships are negotiated as children grow up and how conventional kinship concepts such as biological connection, transmission and resemblance are narrated by children themselves. Hertz (2002) describes the variety of involvement known donors can have, ranging from minimal involvement, to some involvement, to them being deemed fathers. Hertz (2002) notes that even when donors were regularly involved they did not take on parental responsibility. However, as Hertz (2002: 27) acknowledges, 'donors become relevant to family life in ways the women themselves do not foresee'. Intended parents and donors often draw up contractual arrangements at the time of conception, yet we should remember that relationships are not static but are continually evolving. If what constitutes kinship and family is rooted in creative construction, then notions of what, and who, our families are, is likely to shift over time (Finch, 2007). Teddy's narrative gives us an

example of how the boundaries that are set by mothers and donors at conception are not necessarily permanent, particularly as children grow up and mothers lose their ability to regulate the relationship between donor and child. Teddy's account highlights two issues of significance that will be discussed here: firstly, the importance of resemblance between him and his donor for the construction of connection. Secondly, how adults with donors negotiate decisions that were made for them at birth, their ownership of their genetic knowledge and relationships with genetic extended families.

Although resemblance was not framed as fundamental in his parent's conception decisions, it became central to Teddy's discussions of his donors. Teddy explained how, despite not having done a DNA test, they knew which of the donors was biologically related:

> Adam and Ben, interestingly I have always known they were the donors and I was biologically related to Ben, not because we officially *know*, but because we can just tell. It's always been very obvious, especially with me, that I'm Ben's.

He goes on to explain how he sees himself as a 'copy' of Ben:

> You sit me and Ben together and we clash because our personalities are so similar…You sit at the other end of the table and look at us and it's like looking at twins or something, apart from the fact that one is in their 50s and one is in their 20s.

Teddy refers to his similarity to his donor as 'very obvious' and something that is acknowledged by those around him. This indicates that the recognition of this similarity by others is important to the idea that they are alike and thus genetically related. We can use the ideas of genetic discourses here, noting how 'creatively seeing and mapping family resemblances is a way of tapping into genetic thinking' and this in turn can 'construct connectedness' (Nordqvist, 2017: 874). In this case, proven biological relatedness (i.e. through a DNA test) did not inform who was understood to be the biological 'father', but the observation and discussion of similarity created a sense of a stable genetic relationship. It is crucial to note that Teddy does not at any point position his biogenetic relationship to Ben as more important than his relationships to his mothers. Nonetheless, the discussion of his physical and social resemblance to Ben highlights how genes continue to be thought to transfer the essence or essential components that make up a person (Nelkin and Lindee, 2004).

Teddy went on to discuss the ways that this relatedness to his donors called into question who counts as kin and his entitlement within his kinship network. In Teddy's case, he had detailed knowledge of his conception and the agreement made between his mothers and his donors

regarding his parenting. That said, in his teenage years he found out that his donors' families did not know that they were sperm donors:

> I only found out that their entire families didn't know at the age of 14 while – after I had been socialising with them for many occasions. I said, "how did I not accidentally say something", because I talk about it very openly.

He then spoke at length about his discomfort that Ben's mother did not know that they were genetically related and his uncertainty as to whether to tell her:

> [It's] a weird one because I kind of want to tell [her] because I kind of almost feel like – Adam's mum not so much because Adam has got siblings who have lots of kids so Adam's mum has a big family – but Ben's mum – Ben's brother died quite young, about my age, from a heart problem, so as a result I'm very paranoid about my heart all the time – so Ben is her only kid which means she [Ben's mother] hasn't got any grandkids. So, umm, there is a part of me that really wants to tell her because I know she would absolutely love it, she would love to know it if she doesn't already.

This signifies that kinship for those with known donors encompasses more than the relationships between parents, donors and their children. Kinship can span the donor's extended families, particularly as the children in these families grow up and gain autonomy. Lives are not individual, but 'linked' together across different families and generations (Huinink and Feldhaus, 2009). In this case, Teddy perceived himself to have both a social and genetic relationship to Ben's extended family, who accepted him as part of their family even though they were unaware of the genetic links.

Despite his desire to reveal his genetic relationship to his biological grandmother, he was aware of potential problems that this telling may cause:

> But, then we have got a problem of inheritance. Ben and Adam are lovely guys but they are sometimes a little too money orientated and inheritance is something that they pay a great deal of attention to, umm, and if I was to come out and tell Sarah, Ben's mum, that I was her grandson and then she left a significant amount of that to me and Polly instead of Ben and Adam, I don't know what kind of relationship I would then have with Ben and Adam after that, you know, I don't know how that would – it would be a very complicated, potentially quite difficult scenario to deal with. So, I can't – I don't know whether I should just say or whether I should – whether it is none of my business, is it my business? I don't know. It feels like it's my business, but at the same time it isn't, you know, because Adam and Ben have never been my fathers, they specifically said from

> the beginning that they never wanted to have father roles, they were just happy to help out and be a part of our lives as friends. So, who has more right? Ben as her son to keep things from her, or me as her grandson to inform her of things. It is a very confusing one and I have yet to decide. But, again I still think she kind of already knows anyway so I'm just waiting for someone to clarify it …I can understand why they said about the whole grandparent thing because they weren't being father figures they didn't want their parents to think they had to be grandparents. But, at the same time I kind of feel it is their choice to decide, the grandparent's choice, to decide whether they want to be – well I don't think Val and Beth [his mothers] wanted them to be grandparents either, that's the thing. They wanted – Val and Beth are my parents so they didn't want them getting involved like they were our grandparents when they didn't want them to be our grandparents.

Teddy accepts and respects his donor's decisions to remain 'friends' rather than 'fathers' to him. However, because of the social relationship he developed with Ben's mother, his biological grandmother, he feels compelled to tell her that they are biologically related. The desire to disclose is linked to his social relationship with her, as biological relatedness is deemed important because of their social connection. Likewise, he spoke of the way he had to consider the emotional reactions of his family when making this decision. Teddy's narrative suggests that the negotiations and organisation of kinship at the time of conception continue to shift over time depending on relationships and wishes of those involved.

Smart's (2011: 541) notions of family secrets is useful here, as she understands secrets as a way of creating a 'family story' or 'ideal or mythical family'. Ben and Adam were reluctant to be seen or positioned as 'fathers' to these children. Keeping their genetic relationship a secret from their parents enabled them to maintain their place as 'friends' of the family rather than encompassed within the family network. However, the reproductive secrets Teddy's parents and donors concealed were a point of potential or future conflict, as Teddy highlights his preference for openness with his donor's extended family, in opposition to his donors' wishes. Teddy invokes the ideas of 'rights', in which the 'right to know' as a donor child (Dempsey, 2010), is perhaps transformed into both the grandmother's 'right to know' and Teddy's 'right to disclose'. Teddy assumes that divulging this information would be positive for his biological grandmother but could cause significant damage to his relationship with both Ben and Adam. For Teddy, this was a complex decision and at the time of the interview he still had not decided on his course of action. Teddy's debate on disclosure and relatedness suggests that he wished to do what was 'right' for his grandmother, donors and himself, but what this meant for him in practice was unclear. This demonstrates how adult-children may anticipate the emotions and genetic thinking of others in

their kinship circle and how this anticipation may in turn guide the interactions that occur within their families.

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the narratives of three adult-children raised by lesbian parents in relation to discourses of biogenetic kinship. It has explored the interplay between discourses and practices of kinship for negotiating the complexities of motherhood, fatherhood, origins and family. These narratives suggest that children from LBTQ-headed families may conceptualise kinship in innovative and creative ways. Within these three narratives participants stressed the equality between their mothers and, at times, the unimportance of biology. They spoke of the ways that they were loved and wanted by their intended parents and how it was the daily practices of their families that ultimately made their relationships meaningful. Despite the emphasis put on love for and equality between parents, conventional discourses of biological connection, although complex, continued to seep into life narratives. Children raised in LGBTQ-headed families may engage with and experience opportunities for chosen, creative and negotiated kinship. However, they have to confront the fact that society continues to understand family primarily as heterosexual and genetically related.

Some narratives presented in this chapter were described as shared by all family members and, for the most part, consistent overtime. However, all case studies demonstrated some tension between generations at certain points in their narratives, as children challenged established kinship boundaries as they grew up. The case studies presented begin to address Dempsey's (2010: 1160) questions regarding children's understandings of reproductive relationship with 'non-parental biological mothers and fathers'. She asks, 'how do children's wishes for contact align with those of their resident parents, and how is conflict between adults and children's wishes managed?' (Dempsey, 2010: 1160). Participant narratives signify that the plans parents make regarding kinship relationships are only the beginning of the story. Children's kinship practices and genetic thinking are interwoven throughout their lives, potentially disrupting what might have been thought to be clear, delineated relationships between donors, parents and children at the time of conception. Furthermore, children of LBTQ parents are intricately involved in the construction and legitimisation of relationships, not only for non-biological parents, but for donors and extended family members. The children raised in these families are not only the recipients of the stories and practices parents and relatives use to explain their relatedness, but

conscious actors in this ongoing process of family making. The stories presented here suggest that genetic thinking not only guides the emotions and actions of parents but can shape the behaviour of their children. Through analysing the way that the fragility felt by non-biological parents, donors and extended family can put pressure on children, we can more clearly understand that children's actions are responsive to their family's emotional needs.

Thus, participant's stories suggest that the biogenetic discourses that exist within their families are co-produced, as the adult-children in this study both repeated and actively challenged the kinship narratives that had been set out for them. Thus, whilst children may disrupt their parents' kinship narratives, they also find their own routes to kinship construction, contributing to the redefinition of complex family arrangements. Nordqvist's (2017: 878) use of the concept 'genetic thinking' is valuable here, as we can begin to develop an analysis that is more aware of the interconnection between 'activities… feelings, imaginations, dreams [and] claims'. My work highlights how this concept could be enhanced through focusing on 'genetic thinking' that spans generations, looking at the links and disruptions of biological discourses across kinship networks, including children, parents, donors, extended family and friends. Ultimately then, I argue that even when parents have clear plans for structuring and communicating their (non)reproductive relationships, biogenetic discourses and decisions do not begin and end at the time of conception but continue to be negotiated throughout the life course. Therefore, we must acknowledge the ways that ideas and emotions surrounding biogenetics materialise in everyday practices across time and space, even in families that seem to challenge the dominant thinking surrounding biological relatedness.

Chapter 6 Queering the origin story

As highlighted in the previous chapter, recent research into LGBTQ kinship has explored how reproductive technology might both stabilise and disrupt dominant ideals about the importance of biogenetic relatedness in family formation. However, while understanding the role of genetic and biological discourses is essential for understanding LGBTQ-headed families, this chapter argues that it is equally important to investigate the relevance of LGBTQ culture and history for people with LBTQ parents. Within this chapter, I consider the ways in which many adults raised in LBTQ households were interested in tracing their queer family histories, rather than solely their biological relations. Thus, I highlight how an 'origin story' is not always a genetic story, but a *social* story.

This chapter examines how participants' origin stories relate to their parents' identities and journeys to, and through, LBTQ parenthood. The participants whose parents had provided clear LBTQ origin stories often began their interviews with a description of their parent's "coming out" process, detailed stories of their conception and reactions of their extended kin networks. However, some participants grew up with parents who were quieter or more secretive about their sexualities. In these cases, some participants had strived to create their own LBTQ origin stories in adulthood. This included tracing family memories, the histories of their parents' sexualities and gender identities, and documenting these in films, documentaries and memoirs. For some, this was specific to their own family history, including their own parents within their documentaries. Others took a broader view of LGBTQ parenting and families, investigating the political and historical context for LGBTQ-headed families and interviewing others with LGBTQ parents.

Knowledge of queer origins was hence often pivotal in the process of self-making and enabled participants to produce and express connection between themselves and their LBTQ parents. Furthermore, queer social histories allowed participants to articulate their affinity to LGBTQ communities and culture more widely, particularly noting the ways their lives had been shaped by past socio-legal discrimination against LGBTQ people. Thus, origin narratives of people raised by LBTQ parents highlight that the desire to 'know ones' origins' is not rooted exclusively in biogenetics. In this case, origin stories often disrupted established biogenetic narratives, stressing the importance of LGBTQ culture and history for constructing a connection between collective and individual identity.

Past literature on LGBTQ experience has highlighted the way that, by coming out as LGBTQ, people often become cut off from their parents and families of origin (Weston, 1991). More

recent work, however, has begun to address the importance of families of origin for LGBTQ lives (Almack, 2008; Nordqvist and Smart, 2014a; Pralat, 2019; Valentine et al., 2003). Studies stress that it is vital to examine families of origin to understand how intra-family relationships are negotiated, as heterosexual parents remain an important part of the kinship network of LGBTQ people (Heaphy et al., 2013).

Although this literature demonstrates that families of origin continue to be relevant within LGBTQ-headed families, it conceptualises 'families of origin' as always heterosexual parents or grandparents. Few studies consider how others within LGBTQ-headed families conceptualise their origins. For children of LGBTQ parents, the phrase 'families of origin' is transformed from an assumption of heterosexuality. Origin narratives in this case may refer to non-heterosexual, non-gender conforming or trans parents, their (donor) conception, queer culture and/or wider LGBTQ histories. In their recent book *Relative Strangers,* Nordqvist and Smart (2014b) begin to consider how children of lesbian parents will understand their non-normative origins through examining how lesbian parents tell their children about their genetic origins. They suggest that there has been a shift towards openness for intended parents using donor gametes to conceive, with fertility clinics and organisations such as the UK Donor Conception Network (DCN) advocating parental openness and disclosure to children from an early age. Nordqvist and Smart (2014b: 94) note the ways parents use resources, such as story books, to explain conception to their children. Although they did not find that children respond negatively, they suggest that the process of telling was not always straightforward. Young children often did not fully comprehend the stories they were told and parents were concerned that the reproductive language they provided their children would be used in inappropriate spaces, such as in school.

In early childhood the information about donor conception often rests with parents, as they balance their need for openness and their desire to uphold a level of privacy. However, as children grow up there may be a transfer of ownership of this information from parent to child. Hence, while this research highlights that parents aim to construct origin stories for their children where there is no established narrative, we lack any knowledge of how children make sense of their own origins, both in childhood and as they grow up. Furthermore, the idea of origins in LGBTQ-headed families may not only refer to genetics, but also include notions of family history, culture and community.

Gamson (2017: 204) suggests that stories are 'the stuff from which identities are built' and that 'creation stories, in particular, are about selfhood'. Therefore, while those born to LBTQ parents may seek a narrative or further information about their donors, they may find their parents' queer histories equally important to their self-comprehension and self-construction. How

then, are queer histories and queer origins transferred across generations in LBTQ headed households? Homfray has argued that:

> Given gay and lesbian people are largely brought up within primarily heterosexual family structures, there is no sense of an ongoing inherited gay or lesbian history which passes down through generations, notably through family and kinship networks (2007: 18).

However, my research suggests that children of LBTQ parents often receive narratives that disrupt and challenge dominant ideals of the nuclear heterosexual family. Furthermore, within these narratives, children become aware of the history, culture and politics of non-heterosexuality and the experiences of being an LGBTQ person within different historical and spatial contexts. This chapter analyses how people with LBTQ parents can understand their origins, not only with regard to their genetic origins, but in relation to wider issues of how LGBTQ kinship is remembered and narrated. In particular, it aims to tackle the following questions: how do LBTQ origins stories feature in adult-children's biographies? How do memories of LBTQ inequality get passed between generations? And how do those raised in silent, silenced or "closeted" LBTQ families conceptualise, discover and re-construct their origin stories?

Within this chapter, I will firstly look at the origin stories people have been told during their childhood, as articulated by participants, before moving on to outline some of the origin stories that people have created themselves during adulthood, particularly after a change in their family (i.e. a parent 'coming out) during childhood. To begin, I will discuss those who have had consistent knowledge of their queer origins and family history throughout their lives. These participants positioned their parents' LBTQ histories, reproductive choices and experiences of queer parenthood as central to their own biographies. The second part of the chapter turns to the experiences of participants who created their stories during adulthood, and who worked to 'discover' and re-construct their queer origins in later life. These participants were not presented with LBTQ family history during childhood and so worked to create and imagine their own queer origin narratives. In all of these stories, origins and accounts of 'where we come from' are framed as vital to understanding or re-framing 'who we are', as individuals and kin, in the present.

6.1 Queer origin narratives from childhood

With more children being raised in LGBTQ households (HFEA, 2019a), research has begun to consider how parents are constructing family narratives for their children (Nordqvist and Smart,

2014b). Current research suggests that creating an LGBTQ family narrative is not always simple or straightforward, particularly once children grow up and take this information on as their own (ibid). In the previous chapter, the case study of Fran suggested, as children grow up, parents, children and other family members are involved in co-constructing narratives of family creation and kinship ties. Fran's intimate knowledge of her conception was typical in this study. Every participant who was conceived through reproductive technology (either in a clinic or at home) knew the details of their conception, including number of 'tries', where it was carried out, who was there, how decisions were made and the emotions of those involved. For instance, Fran, born to two lesbian mothers through sperm donation, knew that she was conceived on her parents tenth attempt. Likewise, Rachel, who was also born into a similar family set up, stated that she was: 'their fourth time trying' and that 'they were going to give up after the fourth time because they couldn't afford it but then I was the fourth time'. Teddy, also discussed in the previous chapter, born to two lesbian parents and two gay known donors, recounted how his conception story was told and re-told many times and he 'loved' telling the story to others:

> So, umm, funny thing actually is, I don't remember ever being told but I have always known. Again, that is something my parents had no embarrassment about talking about. The whole turkey baster story has been told to me many times and I love telling other people about it because I find it hilarious, it's just really funny…. It's just simply that Adam and Ben would come over, they would do their thing. They would get a turkey baster and use the turkey baster. Done. I don't remember when I first heard that story, it's always been there as far as I'm concerned. It's just the way I was conceived. It took a lot of efforts for me because – I can't remember exactly, but something was upside down inside my mum so when she was sitting apparently with her legs in the air after she should have actually been sat the other way around unlike everyone else. It took about nine months until she worked that out and then she realised and the first time they did it after that she got pregnant with me.

This intimate knowledge sits in contrast to studies examining relationships between (aspiring) lesbian parents and their own heterosexual parents. Both Pralat (2019) and Nordqvist and Smart (2014a) found that conversations about *how* they were going to conceive were challenging, with heterosexual parents often not wanting to know details. In these studies, the parents of these people understood reproduction as equating to sex. However, when examining children of LBTQ parents, it seems that the traditional 'rules of privacy' that exist between different generations of a family are subverted (Pralat, 2019: 13). As Gabb (2004b) has suggested, children of lesbian mothers separate the notions of sex, reproduction, family and love. Participants in Gabb's study suggest that the stories their parents told them as children (and they continued to tell in

adulthood) were not about sex but about 'creating a family'. This was also seen in Fran's interview, as she discussed being raised as a 'donor baby':

> I was brought up knowing that I was a sperm donor baby and that was really lovely. It was different and it was interesting. I don't remember having the conversation about sex or this is how babies are made. I don't remember that. We clearly had it, I don't really remember it. But, maybe that's because that's not how I was conceived.

These origin narratives not only constructed the idea that participants were wanted by their parents, but worked to create more complex understandings of sex, sexuality, reproduction and kinship. This can be seen in the narratives of my participants. Fran's narrative demonstrates this when she reflects that she has no memory of conversations around 'sex and how babies are made'. Her connection between her lack of memory and the fact that this was because 'that's not how [she] was conceived', highlights that for people conceived through donor insemination (or other reproductive technology) reproduction is not always automatically associated with heterosexual sex, or vice versa. It is important to note, however, that this is often dependent on parents constructing an alternative conception narrative for their children, that often centres around love and the desire to have children.

Nevertheless, within my research, these stories of queer origins and family history were not just limited to conception. While the notions of origins, family history and genealogy have frequently pointed towards genetics, it is important to note the ways in which origin stories can be as much about values, norms, culture, context and geography. As I have already noted, LBTQ parents were described by their children as presenting positive narratives of conception to their children. However, often these positive, affirming and legitimating narratives were accompanied by stories of oppression and rejection. These narratives came from inside and outside their kinship network, including from heterosexual parents, grandparents and other relatives, as well as from those outside their families including from neighbours, within schools and from the state.

The grandparents of participants were particularly highlighted as one such source of rejection. Olivia, born to two lesbian parents by donor insemination in the mid 1980s, discussed her grandparents' reactions when her parents announced their pregnancy:

> They had issues, like I imagine a lot of people would have back then. My mum's dad said, "oh just say you had a boyfriend who was killed in a car accident" and they were like "no we are not doing that". Umm, they always told us the truth.

Like those in Almack's (2008) study, Olivia went on to state that it was something her grandparents came to accept over time:

> I think it's probably something they had difficulty with because obviously they are, you know, that much older, but they came to accept it as time went on.

Teddy, similarly, recounts his knowledge of his grandparent's disapproval and suggestion that his parents lied about conception:

> They said, "oh, can we tell our family that you got drunk and accidently slept with a man?", because they didn't approve or like how she got pregnant but apparently getting drunk and cheating on Val [non-biological mother] and sleeping with a man and getting pregnant is somehow better. Obviously, Beth [biological mother] was like, "no, you can't say that". They didn't speak to her for seven months of the pregnancy. I think it was only until – obviously the birth was coming up they suddenly realised, "hang on we are going to miss out on our grandchild here if we don't fix this". So, I think they resolved it and came to terms with it.

Participants were also aware of the discrimination and ostracism their parents faced in places outside their homes and families. Two participants told comparable stories of the rejection and conflict their mothers faced from their churches when coming out as lesbians. One of these narratives came from Bella, a 30-year-old woman who was born into a heterosexual marriage between her mother and father. Her mother came out as a lesbian when she was 2 years old and began a relationship with her step-mother. Bella describes how, despite being the foundation of Bella's mother's social circle and support system, the church rejected her mother and step-mother when they made their relationship public:

> So, they met through the church, which is not the best way to meet each other if you are gay in the 80s. They met through the choir and I don't know how long it was between them first talking and them getting together. My mum was really involved with the church. She was involved with the church creche, because obviously I went to the church creche, she was involved with the choir, she was doing mum and baby meetings and reading groups. She was there two or three times a week as well as going on a Sunday. Church had always been something that she was really actively involved with from a young age because that's what she was encouraged to do so by her parents. I think it was a really good support network for her. She had a lot of good friends in the church. When all of this then happened, and they got together, the backlash from the church was, like, horrendous. They got kicked out, friends wouldn't speak to them. Weren't allowed to go back to the church, weren't allowed to be involved in any of the meetings, people stopped talking to them, which was obviously a really difficult experience for them. I think from that point they kind of just went back under their shell

> and hid. Sometimes I think they haven't quite come out again because of how horrible a situation it was, especially for my mum with it being her struggling at home in a marriage that wasn't working, and she had postnatal depression, that was her rock. Then she got kicked out of there and got left stranded in a new relationship with a two-year-old, going through a divorce. So that must have been a horrendous time, especially not knowing if it is all worth it.

While Bella would have had no memory of this as it transpired during her early childhood, the stories of hurt, rejection and abandonment by the church were stories that were passed down and had a lasting impact on her family. Bella used her mother's coming out story and experience of discrimination from her church group to explain why her parents now kept their relationship and sexualities 'very quiet'. Kellas and Tress (2013: 391) contend that 'family stories draw people in, teach them lessons, and stay with them long after they've been told. They are at once entertaining and horrifying, sad and hopeful, everyday and far-reaching'. This example demonstrates how LBTQ family narratives often highlight the ways that LGBTQ people are discriminated against. Children learn, from an early age, the history and origins of LGBTQ oppression and become aware of living in a heteronormative and cisnormative society. LGBTQ parents, through their social positions as non-heterosexual minorities, often have an understanding and awareness of past and continuing discrimination that affects their everyday lives. Origin stories, therefore, offer 'lessons…such as how to deal with obstacles' including homophobia or discrimination (Kellas, 2005: 367). For these families, stories such as these are not necessarily exceptions to the rule or isolated incidents, but part of both their family and community history and the ongoing position of their family in a heteronormative system.

6.2 (Re)constructing queer family narratives

As shown, some raised by LBTQ parents will have been raised in households characterised by some level of openness around issues of gender and sexuality. Likewise, some participants were raised by parents that attempted to construct and pass down a clear narrative of children's genetic and social origins. Nevertheless, not everyone raised in an LBTQ-headed family will have been told their family's/parent's LBTQ history. In contrast to the last section, I will now move on to explore the lives of those whose origin stories were shrouded in secrecy and shame. In particular I will discuss two participants, Abby and Elliot, who had to "discover" and create their own origin stories.

Kramer (2011a: 382) suggests that those living in non-normative families, particularly those conceived through donor insemination or adopted, may feel that their identity is 'fractured, partial and/or inauthentic' prompting an 'identity crisis'. I would argue, however, that those in non-normative families may also feel this 'fractured' identity when they are unaware of their social, cultural and historical origins. To explore the significance of an origin story for those whose family narratives have been hidden or concealed from them, it is valuable to look towards genealogy scholarship and family history literature (see Bennett, 2018; Bottero, 2015; Fortier, 2000; Hackstaff, 2010; Kramer, 2011a, 2011b; Nash, 2004, 2005).

Bottero (2015: 537) argues that 'genealogists not only trace ancestors but also find out about their lives and generate 'storied' narratives of connections through time'. Likewise, Kramer (2011a: 383) suggests that genealogy 'plays a central role in identity-projects and the forging of individuality within a collective context'. Furthermore, she claims that the notion that we must know our origins and family histories implies that 'development of the self does not begin at birth, but with having adequate and robust memories and knowledge of one's ancestors' (Kramer, 2011b: 430). In other words, popular conceptions of origins and genealogy suggest that to know who we are, we must know where we come from. Most genealogy scholarship focuses on tracing ancestral connections and family lineage way beyond immediate kin. However, when parental histories are unknown, this work becomes helpful for understanding how and why people trace the lives of their more immediate family. In other words, while much of this work relates to ancestors who have died, the focus on discovering or tracing can connect to families in which histories are concealed or hidden. Similar to examples of individuals re-evaluating their identities and (re-)constructing kinship because of a genealogical discovery, adult-children may experience a similar re-evaluation when uncovering their parents' unknown pasts. Thus, scholarship examining genealogical practices can enable us to recognise how the practices of tracing and documenting family history, even when this is more recent history, 'reworks self-identity' and is seen as important for self-understanding (Bottero, 2015: 535).

While the previous section examined the life narratives of participants who had been told their origin stories throughout their childhood, as stated, this section moves on to analyse the narratives of those who had to create their own origin stories within adulthood. Two participants, within this study, Abby and Elliot, engaged in tracing their parents 'queer' histories and documenting their experiences. Both participants were driven by a desire to understand their parents' histories and experiences of being LBTQ (and LBTQ *parents*). I argue that the family stories they constructed were a method of creative family making, which brought kin closer and went beyond the interpersonal by challenging the myth of the ideal family and engaging with wider LGBTQ 'collective memories' (Hackstaff, 2010: 667). I will briefly introduce the two

participants, and then move on to discuss the ways their narratives show how their identities and sense of self were constituted through an understanding of their parents' biographies.

6.2.1 Abby

Abby is a 24-year-old white bisexual woman, the youngest of two children, born into a heterosexual marriage between her biological parents. When Abby was 16-years-old her parent, who was assigned male at birth, told her they were MtF (male-to-female) trans. Abby continued to live with both of her parents until she went to university at the age of 18. After she moved out, her parents split up and her trans parent (who she now calls 'parent' or uses their name rather than using a gender specific name such as 'mum' or 'dad') moved to another city. During her university years she made a book, chronicling her parent's life, and a film documenting her parent's transition process, which included her own and her mother's experiences. At the time of interview, Abby's trans parent was questioning their gender identity again, and in the process of (what she called) 'de-transitioning'. To the best of her knowledge, her parent was beginning to move towards identifying as queer or non-binary trans rather than MtF trans. However, she stressed the fluctuating character of her parent's sexual and gender identity.

6.2.2 Elliot

Elliot is a 36-year-old white queer man. He is the youngest of three children born within heterosexual relationship between his biological mother and father. His mother and father got divorced when he was in his early childhood and all three children continued to live with his mother. Soon after the divorce his mother began a relationship with a woman who moved into their house. Throughout his life Elliot has had regular contact with his father, step-mother and step-sisters, although he did not live with them. Elliot did not tell anyone that his mother was a lesbian until he was 16-years-old. Since then he has made two documentaries, the first about growing up with lesbian and gay parents and the second about lesbian and gay activism in 1980s.

6.2.3 Hidden family histories

Abby and Elliot spoke about how their parents did not offer them 'queer' family narratives or alternative kinship stories. Elliot described his past understanding of his mother's sexuality, and the relationship between his mother and her partner Nicky, as unclear and vague. Although there was not total silence around their lesbian identities, from his memory, it was not something that was discussed openly. Elliot commented that:

> My mum is really private and quite small 'c' conservative in a weird way anyway about personal stuff. She has always said this thing and she still says it, "on a need to know basis" and I found that really, as a five-year-old, seven year old, I just didn't – and I remember thinking that they held hand in certain parts of town and not in other parts and they would kiss in front of some people and not other people. I knew there was a lot of what I thought was shame around that identity. I definitely took on a lot of that as the youngest.

He then went on to talk about how there was what he called "if you do ask, we will tell policy", however by the time he was old enough to want to ask questions, their identity and relationship was so rarely discussed that he felt unable to ask. This silence led to Elliot inheriting feelings of shame and fear.

Abby described her childhood as being very 'normal' and 'heteronormative'. Before her parent came out to her, she was unaware that they did not identify as cisgender. In contrast to some other participants, Abby experienced a specific 'coming out' moment with her parent. However, she goes on to discuss how it was not until a few years later that she was able to start questioning her family's past:

> I had time to process and I was like, well what happened, like before that. There must be a history there, like "when did you tell mum? And like what was your life like?" and all of this kind of stuff. So, I started doing this project at uni finding out about all of their back story. Umm and yeah it was all very weird and interesting. The lengths that they went to keep it a secret.

Despite the fact that family histories were hidden or masked from Abby and Elliot for the majority of their childhood, their interviews suggest that the story of their parents' gender/sexuality was important to their sense of self, family and belonging. Sutter et al. (2016: 303) claim that 'family stories provide a blueprint for family life'. They argue that family origin stories offer 'rules of

behaviour' which in turn influence relationships, norms and family values, along with 'offering legacies to current and future generations'. Similarly, Bennett (2018: 451) contends that family histories are used to 'make sense of changes in the present'. They argue that the practice of constructing and telling a 'family story' offers a way to 'create social identity' of individuals, families and communities (Bennett, 2018: 454).

The practice of tracing their histories often involved uncovering family pasts that were hidden from them. Within his adult life, Elliot, made a sustained effort to understand the experiences of his parents, how those experiences shaped the way they raised him and his childhood. Elliot consequently made his first short film about people raised by lesbian and gay parents, including interviewing his own brother and sister, and a second film about Section 28[7]. Neither film was *only* about his own family or experience, but documented the socio-historical context in which his lesbian mothers parented him and in which he grew up. Likewise, Abby traced her family's trans history and documented this in both a book and a film:

> So, before I made that film I made the book. The book has all like – loads of diary entries and archive photos and letters between them, and my parent used to blog quite prolifically so I documented all of that in a book – so it was them talking about that experience at the time so I wanted to contrast that with a film of them talking about some of that and remembering those things in present day, just so you had a bit of a contrast. You remember things differently, and that was insightful having all of those conversations with both my parents…I felt like I should document this... I felt the need to continue just to document it, like these things don't happen really often.

Furthermore, when asked about her motivation to investigate her family's history Abby said:

> [My mother] started to talk to me about what my parent would do and basically offload onto me. I found it really interesting and I suppose it is a natural instinct to want to know more and kind of know where you come from I suppose… it also helped me to process a lot of stuff… I suppose it was kind of a processing mechanism.

During this process of uncovering her family's trans history, she found out that both of her parents were aware that her trans parent did not identify as male:

> She [her mother] found out – I think it was a year after they got married. But my parent had known since they were like seven or something that they weren't male. My mum

[7] Section 28 stated that a local authority shall not 'intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality' (Local Government Act 1988: section 28)

> found out two years in and there was obviously a lot of turmoil around that time because my mum was like “are you gay? What does this mean?”.

Here, Abby positions her hidden trans family history as part of her roots or ‘where she came from’, identifying herself with her parents’ past experiences. She draws on the common trope of ‘natural instinct’ to explain her desire to find out about her parents’ histories. Furthermore, reminiscent of genealogical practices which offer opportunities to ‘work through grief and loss’, Abby used the practice of tracing and documenting her family history as a way to deal with emotions relating the changes in her family, including parent’s transition and gender identity (Kramer, 2011a: 382). As Downing (2013: 110) claims, trans people often face ‘initial rejection, hurt, or confusion by partners and family members’. This was true in Abby’s case, as many members of Abby’s family, including her mother, sister and grandparents struggled to accept her parent’s gender transition. It allowed her to negotiate, ‘talk through’ and re-connect with her family (including her mother, parent and sister) over something that had caused a lot of emotional pain in her family: her parent’s gender identity. Thus, these genealogical practices of “discovery” enabled her build stronger kinship relationships, opening a topic for discussion that had long been restricted, or even at times completely off limits. Moreover, it allowed her to re-create and re-shape her family narrative, bringing to light the trans history that had long been embedded in her parent’s identities and relationships.

Moreover, in highlighting the ‘contrast’ between her parent’s experiences and the present day, Abby questions the heteronormative, linear understandings of the life course. Arguably, origin narratives are frequently centred on notions of heterosexual marriage and childbearing (Sutter et al., 2016). Literature on queer temporalities has critiqued the normative scheduling of the life course and encourages the deconstruction of the linear temporal frameworks that accompany normative ideas of gender, sexuality and family (see Halberstam, 2005; Freeman, 2005). Abby’s narrative demonstrates the way that families may change over time, as gender, sexualities and parental roles shifted in unexpected ways during her adolescence. Likewise, Abby’s acknowledgment of her parent’s past, and partially hidden, trans identity highlights the ‘possibility of transgender memory within a heteronormative context’ (Horvat, 2019: 8). In other words, by including her parent’s decades of concealing and hiding their gender in her re-created family narrative, Abby suggests that queer histories and memories can exist in families that initially seem to replicate the heterosexual ideal. Likewise, through investigating and reconstructing family history, the family origin story can shift from one of traditional (hetero)normativity to a narrative that embraces non-normativity.

6.2.4 Constructing connection

In tracing, reconstructing and documenting their queer family histories, both Abby and Elliot engaged in identity building and kinship practices, using their reconstructed origin stories to develop personal relationships. Kramer (2011a: 379) understands tracing family history as a 'creative and imaginative memory and kinship practice' which is used to 'map affinities and connectedness'. For Abby, this meant building closer relationships, not only with her trans parent, but also with her mother and sister:

> We spoke about it a lot, myself and my parent, but my sister didn't talk about it a lot. Around the film my sister started to talk to me a lot more about it and tried to have some conversations with my parent…My sister was very bonded with that person as a dad whereas I wasn't that fussed when I was younger, maybe that is why. But she did try and talk about it more.

> She [mother] didn't talk to anyone about it until I started doing my project so that was like 35 years she ended up not speaking to anyone about it and just having to deal with all of these issues and not understanding.

There has been some acknowledgment of the ways that gender transitions can impact partnering and parenting relationships (Hines, 2006). Nevertheless, Abby's narrative demonstrates that the gender transition of one member of a family can impact the intimate relationships between others. In this instance, Abby notes that her efforts to document her family history provided purpose and opportunity for open dialogue between family members.

Furthermore, it enabled her to reconsider some aspects of her childhood experience in light of her parent's gender. During her childhood Abby characterised her parent as very 'distant' and 'not emotionally connected' to her or her sister. Abby discussed the way that after her parent 'came out' they developed a better, closer and more intimate relationship. Abby went on to speak in more detail about how reflecting on her parent's trans identity enabled her to re-examine her own relationship to the past, her childhood and familial relationships:

> [They were] going through a lot of turmoil and it wasn't their fault that they were very depressed, and they couldn't connect with us – but I ended up getting very emotional. I was like "no I don't want you to apologise, just acknowledge that it was difficult for us as well", because it was really difficult for her, but it was also really difficult for us.

Like Abby, Elliot talked in detail about how making these films altered his perception of his mother and the decisions she made when he was a child:

> Talking to…the lawyer….in my film…. I got a sense of how hard it was for my mum and what she was going through at that time. They ask you if you make noises when you have sex, you know all those things, the kind of things women were put through at that point. It was just unthinkable. Just trying to carve out a space to be a lesbian mother was like completely impossible, well not impossible but it didn't exist really in a lot of ways for them.

Through seeking knowledge of the precarity and discrimination his mother faced both within the lesbian community and wider society, he was able to empathise with her secrecy and fear. This process led Elliot to recognise the way that his own identity was shaped by the experience of being raised in that socio-political context:

> She came out when she must have been like my age now, like 35 or 36, so I just think about how much life she wanted to live when she had these three kids. She was, there was a real separation of, I don't think we were part of that, at that point people were deciding between giving up their male children and joining feminist, lesbian feminist communes so like, that was the reality for my mum. She couldn't take us to events because there were no men allowed. I was five years old, my brother was seven, she was having to think through those decisions while also having to go to parents evening explaining what was going on. I think she was just doing the best she could, and I don't begrudge her that.

Elliot's narrative indicates that through his research, he has been able to imagine what life would have been like for his mother. He engages in what Kramer (2011c: 23) describes as 'the genealogical imaginary', part of which includes 'putting oneself in the shoes of another, as well as…assessing one's own life in the present through the experience of others in the past'. Elliot's mother was parenting in 1980s and 1990s, when lesbian separatist rhetoric was circulating, and 'lesbian mothers with sons were regularly denied access to women's events' (Gabb, 2018: 1007). Gabb (2018: 1007) rightly contends that queer motherhood was shaped by this 'bifurcation of gender' within lesbian circles. Elliot's story indicates that this generational gender division within lesbian culture not only shaped his mother's parenting practice but became part of the family narrative he went on to reconstruct and re-remember. Elliot develops an understanding that, for his mother, there was an enforced division between motherhood, feminism and her lesbian sexuality, particularly because she had male children. Through positioning or imagining himself

within his mother's life experience and socio-cultural context, he is more able to empathise with her feelings and decisions.

Similarly, Elliot talked of how he regretted not being more confident about having lesbian parents in his childhood and had begrudged his mother for hiding it from him. During his childhood he understood the silence surrounding lesbian identity as a form of shame and, as previously highlighted, he inherited this shame for much of his childhood. However, he later repositioned his memory within the context of the social position of lesbian parents in the 1980s and 1990s. Within his adult life was able to re-evaluate this, shifting his narrative to highlight silence as a means of protection rather than shame. When talking about his non-disclosure within school he states that:

> I wish I had been able to make it more my fight but she probably didn't really want that…I might have wanted it to be more my fight looking back because of my personality now, but maybe that wasn't what she wanted me to be like and that's why she protected me more and hid it from me and it never became something I had to take on. I think there would have been a lot of backlash possibly politically around her being the primary carer in that case. Maybe she was nervous, living in fear like that, the act of having your kids taken away from you because it did happen, so like, you can't, I can't begin to imagine how that affected all their decisions from the food we ate, to the places we shopped and the people we were seen with. All those things, I'm sure it was constantly on their minds.

In these cases, we can see how participants are able to 'trace the continuing influence of the past in the present' (Bottero, 2015: 547). Similarly, participants' narratives suggest that, by investigating their parent's LBTQ histories, 'borders between then and now are porous and unfixed' and that past events, even when these are silenced, can still 'permeate the present'. (Horvat, 2019: 5). As Jose Munoz (2009: 28) argues 'the past has a performative nature, which is to say that rather than being static or fixed, the past does things'. Fortier's (2001: 415) discussions on "re-membering" is useful here. She claims that "re-membering" spaces of home can be ways to think about past belongings, people and emotions. She argues that we frequently conceive of a memory as something that has come before, as a retrieval of a fact from the past and something that is now lost (Fortier, 2001). However, through the practice of remembering the spaces of childhood, identities can be reshaped and we see the ways that subjectivity is an enduring process. Within these interviews, participants did not just recount factual instances of their past, but they reassessed the meanings embedded in their family practices and their relationships with

their family members. This suggests it is important to look at the narratives of adult-children of LGBTQ parents, as origin stories are shown to shift though out the life course.

The construction of queer family histories by both Abby and Elliot, through tracing the intimate lives and social, legal and cultural contexts of their parents, worked 'as a bridge linking what is described as 'the family' across time and space' (Kramer, 2011c: 24). These narratives of 'family stories' demonstrate the ways that 'information from the past and the present' can be 'nuanced in different ways at different times, for different purposes' (Kramer, 2011c: 24). In this case, information about parental LBTQ experiences were used to build kinship connections across generations.

6.3 Connecting to LGBTQ history

Each of the family histories documented in this research exists within the broader context of LGBTQ socio-cultural and legal changes. I have demonstrated the ways that constructing an LBTQ family history offers opportunities for identity development and kinship connection, however it also enables people with LBTQ parents to connect their own family memories and everyday practices with broader histories of LGBTQ parenthood and LGBTQ lives. Abby and Elliot offered generational accounts of LBTQ parenting that not only encompassed individual experience but contained a more complex picture of LBTQ parenthood. Both participants acknowledged the social and historical context that shaped their family histories. Consequently, when narrating their experiences, they particularly noted the power of gender and sexual normativity that bound what was possible, or even imaginable, for their parents.

When discussing making his film about Section 28 Elliot argued that through gaining knowledge of LGBTQ history he can more fully comprehend the way that this has shaped both his childhood, adult life and ongoing identity:

> I think I was interviewed about that and I said "I'm a product of lesbian history" because of the way I was bought up…because of Section 28 and because of my lesbian mum. To have a lesbian mum and to be queer growing up in the time of Section 28 your identity and your family are erased and invisible or misrepresented. So, I'm a product of that. The way I talk and behave is definitely because of an understanding of that history as well as my personal history. When I think about my family, I feel like my identity is shaped by them.

Children of LBTQ parents, regardless of their personal sexual orientation, may therefore develop a distinct sense of citizenship based on the state's stance toward their families and their own sense of social justice (Ryan-Flood, 2009). Since there is a history of public debate over the recognition of LGBTQ-parent families, children in those families may feel compelled to claim space within political discussions that concern them (Welsh, 2011: 67). Scholars working on LGBTQ families, such as Ryan-Flood (2009), have explored spatial specificities of LGBTQ parenting, including highlighting the way that everyday spaces of parenting are embedded within a social and political context. I argue that this notion of 'sexual citizenship' is important for both LBTQ parents and their children. Elliot's discussions suggest that, although repealed, Section 28 and its subsequent impact on his upbringing continues to shape his subjectivity. Moreover, Elliot's analysis of lesbian history, both specific to his family and more broadly, indicate that the experiences he had in the everyday spaces of his home and school were connected to the generationally specific dominant discourses of sexual and intimate citizenship. Thus, family life is never just lived in the intimate spheres and is not just a 'private' issue. The political and the intimate are always intertwined, with ideas of 'morality' and 'right and wrong' connecting across a variety of spatial scales from the body, to the city, the region and the nation (Hubbard, 2001: 58). Consequently, when looking at the memories and origin stories of participants, personal histories and political histories were consistently entangled.

Furthermore, it is important to state that although Elliot identifies as queer, when discussing his films, he referred to his position as a child of lesbian parents rather than referencing his own sexuality:

> I realised how little lesbians are written into history…I think my Section 28 film was about – so when I interviewed that lawyer in my first film I realised how my identity was shaped by social and political movements if you like. With Section 28 it was like, this shaped my identity and I want to understand it more and I want to talk to people who were working around it and so that was – and I'm really interested in how family history cuts across political and social history. For me, Section 28, lesbian custody battles, I am the way I am because of things that have happened in public. I think that was really important to recognise.

This indicates that adult life may enable a new comprehension of family life that is not always available in childhood. As they age, children of LBTQ parents may be able to develop an understanding of the limiting legislative context in which their parents had to live through. This suggests that adult-children of LGBTQ parents may be well placed to understand and document the histories, experiences and (for some) activism of their parents. When discussing queer

subcultural production, Halberstam (2005: 177) emphasises some of the ways in which queer generational groups can connect with one another, highlighting the importance of LGBTQ histories to the 'understanding of our present'. These examples demonstrate the possibility that the very thing (family and reproduction) that some queer theorists understand as assimilatory can actually be a means of remembering past LGBTQ struggles and politicising queer life.

Some have argued that LBTQ parents need access to alternative narratives of family to be able to resist the heterosexual imperative (Vaccaro, 2010). However, some adult-children in this study demonstrate that not all LBTQ parents were able to utilise alternative narratives. Horvat (2019: 12) argues that that 'transgender and other queer memories often remain out of family histories, deliberately unspoken and excluded from "official" family narratives'. That said, this does not prevent adult-children themselves creating and disseminating alternative stories of their parents, childhoods and family practices. In this sense, it is possible that there could be a generational break between parents and their children, with children being the ones to respond, changing the cultural scripts of their families and creating new understandings of how family was and is experienced.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter argues that origin narratives and family histories should not be assumed to be heterosexual or cisgender, as children have long grown up in LBTQ families and within queer contexts. Furthermore, despite the rise of 'genetic thinking' surrounding heritage, as shown in programmes such as *Who Do You Think You Are?* (BBC) or websites such as *Genes Reunited* (Nordqvist and Smart, 2014b: 24), within this study most participants placed at least as much emphasis on the significance their cultural and social heritage, as their genetic lineage. Family stories produce emotion and connection, playing a crucial role in creating an identity and distinctiveness for each family. Therefore, this chapter demonstrates the way that LBTQ origin stories and family histories become significant to adult-children of LBTQ parents across their lives.

To begin, this chapter examines the origin narratives of people with LBTQ parents who have always known their queer kinship stories. Many of these findings resonated with current LGBTQ kinship literature (Sutter et al., 2016; Nordqvist and Smart 2014b) which highlights the way that LGBTQ parents often construct alternative family stories, diverging from dominant heterosexualised understandings of 'the family'. This focuses on how people with LBTQ parents

get told their non-normative stories of conception, understand their parents 'processes' of coming out and are aware of their family's histories of discrimination and exclusion, both within and outside their kinship networks. These histories work to link families across generations, building a sense of connection between parents, LGBTQ communities and histories more broadly.

The second part of this chapter suggests that adult-children can also (re)create and adapt these origin narratives within adulthood. Abby began her life seeing her family as a 'normal' heterosexual nuclear unit, but through building her own family archive, with photos, letters and notes, she altered her own family narrative. Likewise, for much of Elliot's childhood he did not understand his mother's lesbian relationships or identity, however, through examining his parents' experiences and the socio-political context in which he was raised he was able to recreate a new queer family narrative. I demonstrate that children of LBTQ parents who have lived in homes characterised by some level of silence, fear and shame, can re-evaluate their childhoods within adulthood. Although this does exemplify a classic shame-to-pride progress narrative, these stories also highlight the difficulty in reconstructing a queer origin story. Participants demonstrated the complex shifting back and forth between past and present, revisiting the pain of their parents (and their own) pasts, taking the time to dwell and reworking their own conceptions of 'where they come from' and 'who they are'. Here, temporality is queered, with family life and relationships being remembered differently, as participants rediscovered and reconceptualised their parents' pasts. As shown, for some, this enabled a new understanding of their parents' family practices, their own comfort levels, pride and understanding of LGBTQ struggles.

Overall, I suggest that origin stories that diverge from traditional heterosexual scripts may have the 'potential to transform the relationships between individuals, be it a member of our family… or of a different social group' (Horvat, 2019: 12). In this sense, queer origin stories, whether actively constructed by parents or re-constructed later in life by adult-children, may function as a resource to build bonds within LGBTQ families, as well as connect people to queer history and politics more broadly.

Chapter 7 Spaces of (non-)disclosure

Disclosure is one of the main themes of existing research on the children of LGBTQ parents (see Breshears and DiVerniero, 2015; Goldberg, 2007b; Joss and Broad, 2007; Paechter, 2000). Although "coming out" is often seen as a process restricted to LGBTQ people, it is important to recognise how other family members are also involved in the process of disclosure and have their own "coming out" moments (Breshears and DiVerniero, 2015: 575). Nonetheless, disclosure for children and adults with LGBTQ parents does not neatly replicate the experience of coming out that LGBTQ people experience. While most discussions of LGBTQ coming out narratives examine moments of confusion and realisation about ones' own sexuality, most often people with LGBTQ parents have either always known (as they have been raised by LGBTQ parents from birth, or from a very early age), or been told at a later point in their life when their parent(s) have decided to disclose to them. However, both LGBTQ individuals and their children face choices surrounding their openness about their (parents) identities and subsequent consequences of either their silence or declaration.

The body of work on children and adults who have LGBTQ parents and their disclosure practices has laid important groundwork upon which others can build. Much of this research, however, fails to consider the complex spatialities of coming out. Geographical work relating to coming out and disclosure emphasises the importance of space, the need for continual disclosures across different landscapes, and the complex and segmented character of coming out migrations (Fortier, 2001; Gorman-Murray, 2007c, 2009; Knopp, 2004; Lewis, 2012). The active negotiation of space was a recurring theme within the interviews I conducted. However, the existing research on people with LGBTQ parents does not emphasise the importance of space explicitly.

Building on existing literature on disclosure, this chapter examines how the power embedded in specific spaces and geographical contexts resulted in different practices of (non)disclosure among (adult-)children of LBTQ parents. I will structure this discussion by identifying the various everyday sites where disclosure becomes most relevant for people with LBTQ parents across their lives. First, I look at experiences of disclosure and discussions within the home. For the most part, this section examines how people with LBTQ parents experience their parent's "coming out" moments and the way that their parents discussed their genders and sexualities within the home. In particular, I analyse the way that some participants narrated home as a space of silence and others as a space of openness, noting the importance of home space and

the way it can shape other spaces of disclosure. Next, I discuss the school as a site of institutional heteronormativity in which teachers and peers regulate the disclosure decisions/discussions of people with LBTQ parents. Finally, I turn to the workplace to examine how various 'adult' spaces and institutions may resemble, counter or reinforce earlier disclosure experiences at home or in school.

7.1 Disclosure and "coming out"

"Coming out" as lesbian, gay or bisexual, trans and/or queer is the phrase most commonly used to explain the 'process' through which people reveal about their sexual or gender identity to themselves and to others (Cant, 2005: 9). It has been described, historically and within psychological literatures, as a set of 'stage-sequential models' which include a 'standard set of experiences' surrounding the realisation and disclosure of one's sexuality (Cass, 1997; Floyd and Bakeman, 2006: 287). Troiden (1989) and Cass (1979; 1984) are widely cited for their models which charted a supposedly universal sequence of the development of a homosexual identity, going from early same-sex attraction, to identity confusion and experimentation, to a point of internal acceptance that one is lesbian, gay, bisexual and then finally to a stage where one begins to disclose this identity to others.

However, empirical research has demonstrated that coming out is not a 'once-and-for-all emergence from the closet' (Lewis, 2012: 213). Rather, coming out can be seen as multiple, nonlinear, repetitive, complex and constantly shifting across space and time (Floyd and Bakeman, 2006; Gorman-Murray, 2007; Gray, 2013). Lynch and Murray (2000: 5) claim that lesbian and gay people may move between 'stages' in relation to their feelings of safety and wellbeing in certain 'environments and interactions'. Likewise, McLean (2007: 153) states that most LGBTQ people are 'both in and out' modifying their levels and methods of disclosure to fit their 'audience' and 'context'. Gray (2013) for instance, indicates how the institutionalisation of heteronormativity within schools creates 'risk' for LGB teachers, many of whom felt unable to be open about their sexuality in this area of their lives.

As Valentine (2003a: 487) argues in her discussion of young people coming out in the family, coming out should not be understood as simply an individual decision or action, but is 'negotiated both *with* other individuals and as a collectivity'. For instance, Paechter (2000: 399) relates the disclosure practices of children with LGBTQ parents to LGBTQ teachers in schools,

arguing that although their roles are different, the power embedded within the school space 'exerts similar controls on the permitted identities and expressions of both teachers and students'. Goldberg (2007b: 121) comments that 'certain situations provoked some closeted participants to come out, whereas some supposedly out participants clammed up in certain contexts'. Although geographical and temporal shifts in the lives of those with LBTQ parents may be the cause of contradictions in their narratives, the existing research does not always highlight these important spatial variations in these stories of disclosure.

7.2 Home

The home is traditionally conceptualised as a space for the heterosexual nuclear family. As Valentine (1993: 399) argues, it is not only the physical set up of houses that mirrors coupled heterosexual lives, but that the 'ideology of the home also derives much of its meaning from this identification with the asymmetrical family'. More recently, geographers have explored queer and alternative domesticities (see Gorman-Murray, 2006, 2007a, 2008b, 2012; Pilkey et al., 2015; Wilkinson, 2014; as discussed in Chapter Three). This research suggests that LGBTQ people can have alternative home-making practices, '*queering* the family home' and establishing homes that maintain their LGBTQ subjectivities (Gorman-Murray, 2008a: 40, emphasis from original). Although this implies that parenting practices may also differ, there has been little research exploring the domestic practices of LGBTQ people with children (except Gabb, 2005a). Moreover, research into the experiences of the children raised in LGBTQ homes is completely absent. This leads me to question: are LBTQ homes more open and accepting places for children? Do these homes have potential to 'queer' a child's domestic experience? Or is heteronormativity still embedded in homes headed by LBTQ parents? In line with Gabb's (2005a) study into the spatial experiences of lesbian parent families, my study found that experiences of home are complex for LBTQ families, particularly when looking at children. Responses about the experience of 'home' were significantly diverse within the data. Home was shown to be contradictory for participants, encouraging, discouraging and complicating 'coming out'.

I suggest that it is not only the way we 'practice' or 'do' domestic life that constructs what and who we understand as family, but it is vital that we consider how the narratives we construct, repeat and tell, shape our intimate connections. This resonates with the work of Finch (2007: 65), who stresses the 'importance of 'displaying' as well as 'doing' family'. Finch (2007: 66) argues that the 'meaning of one's actions has to be both conveyed to and understood by relevant others if

those actions are to be effective as constituting 'family' practices'. Narratives are understood as 'stories which people tell themselves and to others about their own family relationships' and enable families to be recognised and 'as part of an accepted repertoire of what 'family' means' (Finch, 2007: 78). Children of LGBTQ parents are both audience and actors in this process, responding to their parent's display of the family and narrating their own understandings. Ryan-Flood (2011) suggests that the concept of display 'complements work in geographies of sexuality', indicating that certain spaces, such as the home, can become vital sites for 'affirmation of difference'. I would further suggest that these spaces can also inhibit family displays, as secrecy or silence can lead to some families being unable to articulate themselves (Gabb, 2011).

7.2.1 Unspoken sexualities

Arguably, current literature on LGBTQ home-making has tended to be overly-optimistic, focusing on the ways in which these spaces can affirm LGBTQ identities (Gorman-Murray, 2010; Pilkey et al., 2015; Pilkey, 2013, 2014; Scicluna, 2015). In doing so what is often overlooked is some of the negative aspects of these queer domestic spaces. The narratives uncovered in my research often diverged somewhat from this optimistic literature on LGBTQ-homemaking, and often highlighted the hardship felt by some in LBTQ home spaces. Thus, while not all participants in this study spoke of negative home lives, home was presented as a difficult environment by half of my participants. This was particularly prevalent when discussing the silences surrounding sexuality, and in homes where parents were not open with their children. This included participants whose parents came out later in their childhoods, often involving parental separation, and those who grew up within anti-LGBTQ environments. The narratives of some participants suggested that it was these experiences of a closeted domestic space that dissuaded them from disclosing, within and outside the home. This was particularly discussed in relation to the socio-legal context within which they were raised, and particularly prevalent within older generations. Take, for example, the following interview extract with one research participant Mandy, who was raised in 1960s by a lesbian mother and her female partner. As highlighted in Chapter Four, Mandy had what she described as a difficult childhood, however was the one participant in this study to associate and explicitly relate that to her mother's sexuality. While she argued that her upbringing had taught her that all children should have 'a mother and a father', it is important to highlight how the socio-political context in which she was raised shaped her family life. In this case, her mother was not open about her sexuality or her relationship with her partner to anyone within or outside the family,

including Mandy. Mandy links this domestic silence to the illegality of homosexuality during her childhood, along with the widespread social objection to LGBTQ identities and relationships.

> My beliefs are that my – my mother wasn't a lesbian, but I will never know because she never discussed anything with me. There were difficulties…in that era because homosexuality was illegal for men, I mean it's never been illegal for women, but it was illegal for men and of course everything had to be hidden and secret.

For Mandy, the lack of discussion of her mother's sexuality within the home suggested to her that the topic was off limits and unspeakable. This is particularly highlighted in the quote with her stating that she didn't believe her mother was "really" a lesbian. She later expanded on this stating that she believed her mother had been preyed upon or "seduced" by her partner. However, she was not clear on whether this was the case as her mother's relationship and sexuality was never discussed. Consequently, she became confused, ashamed and unable to be open either in the home or outside of it. She went on to describe how, as a child, she believed that no one in her family was aware of her mother's relationship. As an adult she realised that this was in fact well known, however there was a tacit agreement not to mention sexuality:

> My mother led a double life, so she had her lesbian partner, but that word was never out there, it was a woman she shared a home with. That's what it was seen as, that's what my family…my aunties and uncles, her brothers and sisters, accepted Dawn as the woman that my mum lived with. But, subsequently I know in later life, after my mum died when I started to talk to my aunties, they did know that it was a sexual relationship, it was – nobody at all spoke about it, but as a child, nothing was explained to me, I think that damaged me a lot.

Nordqvist and Smart (2014a: 107) suggest that non-discussion of sexuality is a tactic that families use to negotiate their relationships, particularly when disclosure could 'disrupt social expectations and generate conflict'. Mandy's case, however, indicates that for children in these families this silence can cause them ongoing difficulties understanding the intimate relationships around them.

Other participants suggested that sexuality was not completely hidden within the home, however it was seen as a private matter between parents. For instance, Elliot, a white queer man in his late thirties raised by a lesbian mother, her partner and a heterosexual father, spoke of the split between his mother's identity as a lesbian and a parent. This often manifested in the division of physical spaces in their house:

> They have a real separation of those things and they are really private, really private. They always had their bedroom door closed always, that wasn't a space we were allowed to go into unless we knocked on the door. So, there were a lot of things in the house I didn't really understand.

In Elliot's discussion, the home is separated, and his parent's lesbian identities were kept behind closed doors. Gabb's (2005a: 427) study indicates that some lesbian mothers 'retained a sense of sexual self in covert ways, not flaunting it in front of the children or guests, but 'sneaking' moments of intimacy'. In contrast to Mandy, conversations of sexuality were not totally prohibited, nevertheless information was only offered on a 'need to know basis' rather than as part of everyday domestic life.

Furthermore, even if parents decide to be open with their children, this can be resisted by other members of the household. Mary is a 22-year-old woman whose parent came out as FtM (female-to-male) trans in 2007 when she was 13-years-old. She spoke of her experience of her trans parent first coming out. During the first year of transition, her parent continued to live in the family home with his ex-partner (her father). Mary talks of how her trans parent tried to be very open about his gender and transition, but her father would not engage, and this prevented open conversation. She said:

> There was just not that much communication in the house for a while…my dad just wasn't talking about it and wasn't dealing with it and wasn't telling anyone.

She later when on to describe how her father continually, and intentionally, mis-gendered her trans parent:

> My dad would, who hadn't ever said mum before or mummy, would start doing that which was quite malicious. He would certainly say 'she' for several years after that, so it made for a very difficult time.

Thus, Mary's home became a space of discomfort with her father regulating discussion around gender and sexuality and dismissing her trans parent's gender, name and pronouns. This resonates with Choi's (2013) work on trans geographies and home space. They suggest that acceptance, or the lack of, is a key element of shaping the home for trans people (Choi, 2013). Likewise, Haines et al. (2014) suggest that trans parents often experience conflict with co-parents who are not accepting of their transition. This indicates that the responses of trans people's partners can dramatically shape home space for their children as well as trans people themselves.

These stories demonstrate that some children in LBTQ families feel that the 'display' of their non-normative families is limited within the home. Participants discussed the lack of an LBTQ family narrative between them and their parents. Without these narratives participants struggled to 'develop and communicate understandings of their [family] relationships' (Almack, 2011: 109). Children did not always feel negativity about their parents' relationships, sexualities or genders, but this privacy and silence left them feeling unclear. As Elliot said, 'I never felt bad about it, I just didn't really know what it was'. Although it is only possible to speculate on the reasons for parental decisions, it is likely that wider social forces hindered parents from displaying themselves as LBTQ families. Short (2011: 120) suggests that in a 'heterosexist context display can lead to problems' and consequently it is often 'intentionally *not* done'. Historically, LGBTQ parents have been subject to increased scrutiny, compared to their heterosexual counterparts, and parents' non-normative genders and sexualities have been used as grounds for losing custody of their children (Allen and Burrell, 1997). Mandy's story echoes this most clearly, as her mother's display of an openly lesbian relationship could have resulted in significant problems for her family, including social ostracism and legal discrimination. In line with Gabb (2011: 55) I contend that it is vital to consider the 'personal safety' and 'emotional stories' of lesbian parents and the influence this may have on 'what can and cannot be displayed'. Despite what are indeed legitimate reasons for a lack of openness by some LBTQ parents within their homes, this study demonstrates that this can cause inter-family problems. In these instances, parental refusal to talk about their relationships and identities left children feeling unable to ask questions and speak honestly. Furthermore, the absence of LBTQ family narratives within the home left participants unequipped and fearful of coming out to others in everyday spaces beyond the domestic sphere.

7.2.2 Queering the home

While some participant narratives highlighted the silences and absence of LBTQ-family narratives within their homes, others praised their queer homes for allowing them to develop a detailed understanding of their parent's sexualities, genders, intimate relationships and how these may be "different" from the heterosexual norm. Various participants talked of their intimate connection with their parents' LGBTQ friends, communities and culture, with much of these encounters happening within their homes. The following interview extracts from Teddy and Luke are just some examples of the way that participants spoke of how sexuality and the relationships between parents, donors, friends and family was expressed openly within home space:

> There were always conversations about being gay and sexuality and things like that in the house. And then of course there was their friends, Ben and Adam [known donors] would come over for new year… We used to have big New Year's where all the London people would come down and there would just be a massive gathering of gay people. (Teddy)

> Social gatherings, if my mum is like "we are having a party", I know for a fact that at that party you are going to get the four sets of lesbians we are very used to, the friends and then maybe another couple of sets from like, you are meeting like lesbian friends of lesbian mums of lesbian friends again….To be honest with you, I always have a really really good time when I'm with a group of lesbians. It's just, I don't know, it's a slightly different mindset that I have experienced from lesbians than you would get from some straight women. I think you can have a little bit more crack, they seem to be a little bit more liberal [laughs]…which is quite good fun. (Luke)

This resonates with Gorman-Murray's (2007a) work, claiming that social gatherings in gay and lesbian homes can be a way of 'establishing and maintaining wider gay/lesbian communities'. Gorman-Murray (2007a: 204) suggests that using the home as a space for queer connection challenges the 'family-based domestic ideal' and questions the notion that the home is principally a space for 'familial interrelationships'. In contrast, Teddy and Luke's narratives indicate that children can be incorporated into LBTQ domestic space, and that LBTQ domesticity can work alongside family-based practices.

For others, the home was a space that gave them positive messages about their family and demonstrated how to confront instances of bullying or discrimination. Emma, a heterosexual woman raised by lesbian mothers and a heterosexual father in 1980s, narrated an instance where her parents challenged the homophobic language of another family member within their home:

> My aunt…said, 'oh my god Frank you look like a queer judge' and she *did* actually mean that in that way. And Tina [non-biological mother], I remember just flying off the handle, 'how dare you speak like that in my own home, in front of my children, that is absolutely outrageous, how dare you!'. And then my mum piped up as well…That was a really, really pivotal moment in me growing up. I think I thought…'If you're going to have that attitude in our house, you are not welcome actually. No. That opinion is not welcome'. I'm so glad that I was there to witness my mum and Tina sticking up for themselves.

In this example, Emma's account specifically associates her parents anger with the space in which the word 'queer' was used: their 'home' and 'in front of [their] children'. Gorman-Murray (2006:

154) argues that control over the home is vital for 'consolidating a same-sex partnership'. This control is linked to the creation of the 'right kind of environment' to foster a positive relationship away from the social prohibition of same-sex intimacy in more 'public' spaces (Gorman-Murray, 2006: 154). Emma's interview suggests that control over homes may be as important, if not more, when LBTQ people have children. This supports Cloughessy et al. (2018: 391) findings that lesbian parents found it increasingly important to be open about their sexuality when their children were present in order to 'promote a strong sense of pride' and give their children 'positive messages about family membership'. Although it is not possible to know whether this was the intention of Emma's parents, her narrative indicates that for her, this incident provided her with a sense of family legitimacy and the tools and resiliency to manage homophobic language and anti-LGBTQ attitudes in the future.

7.2.3 School-home intersection

For children from LGBTQ-headed families, school is a key space for everyday disclosure decisions. The choice to disclose the sexual identity of their parents is one of the most challenging decisions that children of LGBTQ parents can make. Carlile and Paechter (2018: 109) rightly contend that school-age children with LGBTQ parents 'traverse the home-school boundary day after day'. This is particularly pertinent for children who choose to remain either fully or partially silent about their parents' sexualities. Without openness to peers and teachers it becomes 'difficult to live in a way that integrates ones' home and school life' (Paechter, 2000: 406). Likewise, Pallotta-Chiarolli (2010: 114) highlights that children with polyamorous and bisexual parents can struggle to integrate the 'separate worlds of home and school'. Pallotta-Chiarolli (2010) suggests that school 'imposes silence' on children with non-normative families which was often dropped once they were at home. Participants, such as Mandy and Elliot, whose families lacked a strong LBTQ family narrative related the silences in the home to their secrecy at school. Importantly, it was often these participants who maintained their family 'secret', the fact that their parents were LBTQ, not disclosing to anyone until they were in their late teens or adulthood. Nevertheless, the majority of participants mentioned instances of non-disclosure at some point during their school years. For many, this non-disclosure at school lead to them altering their homes when friends would visit or not bringing peers home at all in order to hide their parents' LBTQ identities. One participant, Nadine, talked about an instance where she asked one of her mothers to leave the house when she was having a party so not to reveal herself as a child of lesbian parents:

> I told them [that I wasn't telling people at school]. I think I felt really guilty about it because – I wasn't ashamed ever…They [parents] told me not to feel guilty about it. There were certain things that – apparently one Halloween party I said could one of my mums go out so it meant that it could look like I only had one mum. They were going to do it and then they were like "no". So, there were certain points like that. But both of them would come to parents evening and stuff. But they were supportive about that that's your identity and your experience of when you want to come out about it.

This resonates with Johnston and Valentine's (1995) work on lesbian identities and domestic environments. They note that the home is not, and cannot be, completely free from surveillance. While some lesbians in their study 'de-dyked' their homes, others changed their behaviour or limited who or where visitors could go within their home space. However, children of lesbian parents do not always have the same power or control over their homes. Nadine's story highlights that although children may, at times, try to conceal their parents' sexualities, parents may refuse them. In this case, although Nadine's parents were aware and understanding about her non-disclosure at school, they would not facilitate this at home. Therefore, (non-)disclosure must be conceptualised as something that is negotiated between parents and children, rather than as an individualised practice or decision.

7.3 School

Non-disclosure in school is often related to the institutionalisation of heteronormativity in school environments. The assumption of heterosexuality is ever present in school space. The curriculum and schooling practices work to produce and reinforce heterosexuality through normalisation and punishment (Foucault, 1982). Historically, this can be seen in the ongoing celebration of heteronormative relationships and the condemnation of those who transgress conventional standards of normativity, which can include discrimination, ostracism, exclusion and silencing (Hunt and Jenson, 2007; Sherriff, et al., 2011). Through everyday routines, schools are involved in upholding heterosexuality and the heterosexual family as the norm (e.g. pretend weddings, assuming children have a mother and father, encouraging heterosexual and gendered play) (Epstein, et al., 2003).

The notion that childhood is a time of innocence and asexuality produces substantial tension between the discourse of sexuality and childhood (Epstein, 1999). Discourses of LGBTQ identities and practices are simultaneously evident and silenced within schools. Homophobic language and slurs are recognised as a common occurrence, such as the use of the word 'gay' as an insult (Carlile and Paechter, 2018). Nevertheless, open discussions of LGBTQ identities are seen as inappropriate for children and consequently schools often deem it unnecessary to include LGBTQ sexuality in their teaching, opting instead to ignore it all together (Cloughessy et al., 2018; Cullen and Sandy, 2009). For most participants in this study, school was a place where sexuality, and the sexualities of their parents, was seen as 'other' or exceptional. This highlights the fact that schools often only view acts and discourses as 'sexual' when they transgress heterosexuality, such as when LGBTQ families become visible in the educational setting. Therefore, LGBTQ sexualities become spatial, as they are forced into the 'private' space of the home, while concurrently condemned, scrutinised and regulated within school (Ferfolja, 2007).

7.3.1 Institutional heteronormativity

Although (non-)disclosure was predominantly discussed in terms of peer disclosure within my data, it is important to understand the way that this intersects with the institution of the school. For older participants, this often came in the form of discrimination and underlying disapproval from teaching staff. Other participants also reported that they did not feel they were accepted or supported by their teachers and faced mistreatment from school staff because of their parent's sexuality. This was particularly prevalent for participants who were of school age in 1980s and 1990s, the time when the effects of Section 28 were most widespread. Eve stated this explicitly, noting that:

> During the time when section 28 was in place…you couldn't talk about homosexuality in schools. So, both teachers and pupils could quite freely express quite homophobic opinions in the name of their opinion.

For others however, the heteronormativity of school space was subtler. This often manifested in teachers upholding the silence and invisibility of LGBTQ-headed families. This was particularly seen in Mary's narrative. Mary's parent came out as a trans when she was 13-years-old. Although Mary was supportive of her parent's transition, she struggled to disclose this to

others, particularly at school. Mary, like other youth with LBTQ parents, felt apprehension and anxiety about parents' evening:

> Parents' evening was approaching and I was very anxious and then on the day I got panicky and I had a panic attack and then I said to my form tutor "I can't do it". He obviously did know because he then said it was ok that I didn't go, and I don't think I ever went to one again because every time I just got to panicked…. The thing is I didn't know he knew. I think Jake [trans parent] talked to my form tutor and I think all my teachers probably knew but no one spoke to me about it so, I don't think that helped.

As Carlile and Paechter (2018: 125) argue, parents' evenings are 'critical moments for coming out experiences' and can become 'a site of negotiation between institution, parent and child'. These are particularly important in secondary school, as parents become less visible in the school and playground as children age. Mary's narrative suggests that the teachers within the school did very little to ease her fears and make her feel comfortable enough to bring her trans parent into the school. Despite the fact that Mary was not openly discriminated against by teachers, her family was encouraged to remain invisible and she felt that it was an unspeakable topic. Payne and Smith (2014) suggest that teachers may fail to adequately support transgender students because of a lack of training and experience, lack of policy, problems maintaining confidentiality, fears for other students and community backlash. Payne and Smith's research indicates that teachers, even when trying to do the best for the transgender pupil, prefer 'to avoid discussion of change' rather than engage in conversations about 'sex, gender and sexuality' (Payne and Smith, 2014: 410). My study indicates that this is an issue not just for trans pupils, but for pupils with trans parents as well. In Mary's case, although her teacher may have been trying to protect her from a forced coming out situation or potential bullying, his failure to engage indicated to her that non-disclosure and invisibility were her best options, keeping 'inappropriate' conversations out of the school. Framing issues of (non-normative) gender and sexuality as 'private' problems that should only be considered in individual cases does not account for the ways in which the 'public' and heterosexualised character of the school and curriculum may inhibit and discourage pupils with LBTQ parents coming out to people in their lives, particularly their peers. As Allan et al.'s (2008: 323) research on the No-Outsiders project indicates, education and discussions of gender and sexuality in school can 'open up the space in which children themselves [can]…talk about same-sex relationships in safety'.

It is important to highlight that these accounts are from adults, some of whom experienced school many years ago. Within my own sample it is clear that over time schools have become less hostile places for children with LGBTQ parents. We have witnessed calls by international bodies

(UNESCO 2009), national organisations (Stonewall, 2019) and government, for greater inclusion of gender and sexuality related education within schools. Nonetheless, this continues to be implemented unevenly across the UK as some schools provide specific LGBTQ education and others continue to ignore the subject (particularly religious schools, many of which continue to maintain a strong heterosexual ethos). The silence around LGBTQ identities is heightened when looking at LGBTQ families, rather than individuals. While LGBTQ people were present in some anti-bullying documentation, Carlile and Paechter (2018: 63) found that 'LGBTQI+ families were invisible in most of the [school] policies' they examined, constructing LGBTQ families as absent within the 'social and educational world of the school'. Carlile and Paechter (2018: 68) go on to argue that invisibility coupled with anti-bullying policies means that LGBTQ families only appear as 'passive victims who need to be rescued by school pastoral services'. When school remains constructed as a space in which 'adult' issues of gender and sexuality, particularly non-heterosexuality and non-gender conforming bodies, are threatening and therefore ignored, children with LGBTQ parents will continue to feel policed by these boundaries.

7.3.2 Fear and secrets

For most participants, coming out decisions related to peer relationships, although as highlighted, these are intimately connected to the heterosexual culture of the school itself. The homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying of children raised in LGBTQ households has frequently been used to discredit and oppose LGBTQ parenting (Clarke et al., 2004). For instance, those opposed to LGBTQ parents have argued that living in an LGBTQ-headed family would be dangerous and harmful to children as it would subject them to hostility, bullying and ostracism from their peers. Furthermore, this type of logic has not only been used as a critique of LGBTQ-headed families, but has previously been used as reasoning for refusing lesbian parents custody of their children (Clarke et al., 2004: 532). However, it has been found that children from lesbian and gay families are not more prone to bullying or harassment than children from other non-nuclear families, such as those from single parent families or step-families (Tasker and Golombok, 1997). Although specific bullying relating to the sexuality of parents was rarely reported by my participants, disclosure choices were often characterised by high levels of fear regarding anticipated negative consequences and reactions from peers. Thus, disclosure of their parents' sexualities was often delayed or avoided because of the fear that they would be bullied. For example, Mary, who was raised by a trans parent said:

> I think it probably affected my friendships to an extent because, I personally didn't experience a lot of transphobic behaviour and things, but I think the fear that I would. I heard a lot of transphobic things on the news and people talking and things. I think I was pretty much terrified…. that people would find out.

School was a space in which children felt the threat of bullying and social ostracism most deeply. For some, this resulted in them never coming out at school, for others it resulted in partial disclosure to trusted friends. Elliot, who had a lesbian mother and lesbian step-mother, explained:

> I literally did not tell anybody growing up that my mum was a lesbian until I was in sixth form…I made friends with two lesbians who were in upper sixth and we were just really, really, really good friends that I started going to gay clubs and I told them, and they thought it was really cool.

Selective disclosure was a recurring theme of participants' narratives of school life (Clarke and Demetriou, 2016). Children would often only tell peers after a sustained period of friendship, when they felt safe to do so. In Elliot's case, coming out was only possible when he was surrounded by lesbian friends he knew would be accepting of his mother's sexuality. This narrative was repeated by Jack, who was raised in rural Southwest of England in 1980s, who claimed that although he was not 'out' at school he had one gay friend who he confided in:

> My best friend was gay…it worked out quite nice in the end because we all relished the fact that we had this queer rainbow family to try and find some refuge in amongst all the conservatism.

Furthermore, many participants reported being surprised by their friends' positive reactions when they finally did disclose. This was the case for Olivia, a heterosexual woman raised by two lesbian mothers, who did not tell any of her school friends until she was 18:

> I just kind of just come out with [and her friends] said, "well we kind of figured but we didn't want to say anything because you hadn't said anything so we thought you didn't want us to know".

As noted in Carlile and Paechter's (2018: 128) study, close, trusting and intimate friendships were vital for children with LBTQ parents, both in their confidence to come out in school as well as their 'resilience within heteronormative and occasionally hostile school environments'.

However, beyond these close friendships, continued fear of social exclusion and discrimination led some participants to fabricate aspects of their family life. For instance, Fran noted that there were times when she was questioned about her father at school and she would

just 'make it up' or discuss her sister's biological father instead. Rather than openly challenge the heteronormative assumptions made about their families, children used strategies of 'passing' to conceal their non-heterosexual families (Ward and Winstanley, 2005: 450). These accounts demonstrate that schools are places where children with LBTQ parents are simultaneously 'in and out' about their families. Children have to negotiate their desire for openness about their families, with the need to protect themselves from (anticipated) negative reactions.

7.3.3 Coming out and questioning

The majority of participants in my research described talking openly about their parents, even if selectively, at some point during their school years. Moreover, several participant narratives indicated that they were comfortable and enjoyed discussing their family dynamics and the genders/sexualities of their parents for the majority of their school life. Fran, for instance, described the way her friends thought her lesbian parents were 'incredible' and that she 'loved not being part of the norm'. Despite this, participants also highlighted that they often experienced questioning about their families in school (Bosisio and Ronfani, 2016; Lindsay et al., 2006). The ongoing enquiries about their families positioned them as the 'extraordinary other' within an institution that assumes the heterosexuality of parents, teachers and students. Although participants were mostly happy to answer questions about their families, invasive and inappropriate questioning, particularly about their conception and sexuality, became exhausting. The wide spread ignorance and unfamiliarity of LBTQ families caused discomfort and strain for those who decided to openly disclose their parents' identities. Rachael discusses how this ongoing curiosity, particularly about her conception, impacted on her daily life within school:

> I just think it's a bit weird asking how I was conceived. It's like, would I ask someone "how were you conceived?". It's a bit of an odd question. I don't mind telling people but it's a bit weird if it's just a random person I have just met and they ask "oh, how were you conceived?". Like, you wouldn't do that to someone with a mum and a dad would you? Because they wouldn't want to talk about it. I don't know, it's just a bit odd. And I get questions like, 'do you know who your father is?' and I'm like 'I don't even know you and that's really personal'.

Even when children feel able to disclose about their parents' identities, they continuously have to negotiate, challenge, narrate, and represent their parents and families. The emotional

labour of coming out and responding to questions from peers can become tiring. As Ahmed (2004: 147) states 'queer subjects feel the tiredness of making corrections and departures'. Clarke and Demetriou (2016: 143) found that openness amongst children of lesbian and gay parents can come at a 'cost', and the narratives told by my participants suggest that this is accurate. Furthermore, the emotional labour led some participants to avoid discussing their families in certain situations in the future, not because they were ashamed or embarrassed, but to escape the potential questions they anticipated. This signifies that experiences of disclosure at school can shape disclosure behaviour across the life course. Carlile and Paechter (2018: 119) noted similar findings, suggesting that 'children found it frustrating to have to do educative work that should have been their schools' responsibility'. Looking at the narratives of my participants, I found that children have extra work to do to make their lives liveable within the heteronormative school setting (Hanssen, 2012). This manifested in various ways, including working to conceal their parents' identities, calculating who was safe to tell, and explaining their families when questioned by peers.

7.4 Work

7.4.1 Silencing occupations

Like schools, the assumption of heterosexuality in the workplace is emphasised through 'language, text and symbolism' (Willis, 2009: 631). As noted, coming out is only necessary because of the persistent assumption of heterosexuality. For adults with LBTQ parents, workplaces are frequently sites in which they continuously come into contact with new people and are put in new situations, thus individuals are either forced 'back in the closet' or made to come out again (Ward and Winstanley, 2005: 452). While almost all participants discussed moments of non-disclosure in school, workplace experiences were more diverse. At the time of the interview, 19 of the 20 participants spoke of being, for the most part, open and comfortable to talk about their parents' genders/sexualities in general within their adult lives. However, when discussing specific sites of disclosure, such as the workplace, participants discussed varying degrees of comfort and disclosure. Significantly, the workplace was the space most commonly highlighted as a site of non-disclosure in adulthood.

As Willis (2009: 631) argues, material objects such as photographs and everyday exchanges about family life are 'common currency at work'. Despite the fact Willis (2009) is discussing queer experiences of the workplace, this is relevant to people with LBTQ parents, particularly when discussing family visits, holiday plans and parental occupations. In contrast to literature on LGBTQ experiences of workplaces (Griffith and Hebl, 2002; Smith and Ingram, 2004; Ward and Winstanley, 2003, 2006), participants did not discuss experiences of hostile or overtly discriminatory workplaces. They did, however, describe the ways that they often upheld their invisibility as a child of LBTQ parents in the workplace, self-regulating their speech and actions as a mode of protection. This was particularly highlighted in relation to low-paid or temporary jobs, such as those in the food sector. Passing techniques often involved avoiding the subject, not correcting assumptions and lying about the gender of their parent(s) (Ward and Winstanley, 2005). For instance, Abby, who had made a documentary about her trans parent and her family, said when she was asked about it at work she would 'talk in third person' as if it was not about her and her family. She elaborated by saying:

> When I'm working in my café job it's like not everyone knows, and I use non-gendered pronouns and kind of just avoid the subject especially if it is people who I get the feeling from them that they would be fine about it, but I wouldn't know if they were actually fine about it. So, I definitely try not to talk about it in some settings.

Some work environments were seen as markedly more heterosexual than others. Teddy's narrative was one that particularly demonstrated the power embedded in heterosexualised workplaces. For the majority of his interview Teddy spoke of the ease he felt discussing his experiences of being raised by lesbian parents, even to people he imagined having differing views (i.e. religious people). That said, he also spoke of the way he regulated his disclosure within the masculine space of the construction site:

> Sometimes you can't be bothered with it though, work for example, especially in the industry I'm in, in the construction industry, sometimes you really don't want to get into it. Builders are notoriously – you get all sorts of rowdy ones. Most of the ones I work with are really nice people, I'm good friends with so I don't mind. Of course, sometimes they will say, "oh what does your dad do?" and I will just be like, "Oh works in TV" and then quickly change the subject, because I don't like lying about it but at the same time sometimes I just don't want to bring it up.

In this case, it was not particular individuals that discouraged him from coming out, but the overarching culture of the construction industry. In some workplaces, heterosexual and masculine practices, often taking a 'highly sexualised form', have the power to shape the everyday

experiences of others (Wright, 2016: 348). This has been particularly noted in relation to women in male-dominated work (Wright, 2016). However, the enforced heterosexuality embedded in some male-dominated work spaces can also impact those with LBTQ parents. For Teddy, coming out about his parents' lesbian identities and resisting 'rowdy', masculine and sexualised environment was not worth facing potential harassment. In cases like this, participants often spoke of 'choosing their battles' and prioritising the liveability of work environments over a need to establish themselves as being from an LBTQ family. Teddy did not narrate this as a particularly distressing instance of non-disclosure, rather it was just one of the ways he negotiated this heteronormative space.

7.4.2 LGBTQ friendly workspaces

The workplace was not always experienced as a space of heterosexuality, exclusion or silencing. This was particularly seen in participants who worked in LGBTQ or gender related occupations, including academia, community organisations, and film and media. Within these spaces, people with LBTQ parents felt their experience was of value. Four participants used their own life story (as a person raised by LBTQ parents) to inform their work and creative practice, with two making documentaries about themselves and others with LGBTQ parents, one in the process of writing a book about her family and one writing a paper. For some, this 'public' display of their family through their work was a reaction to the lack of representation of LGBTQ families from the child's perspective. When discussing her motivation to make her film, Abby talks of how, frequently, the children in these families are not heard in the debates that concern them:

> These stories don't get told by the people whose stories they are in the media, they are always told by a straight 40-year-old man. I thought "well I'm a film maker, I'm a creative person, I should utilise… my position to be able to talk about these things". And that's why I made it I suppose.

This suggests that workplaces can be key sites in which people with LBTQ parents are able to comprehend, voice and affirm their non-normative family structure. In these instances, creative work provided an outlet for people with LBTQ parents to tell their own stories, often complicating dominant notions of either the 'damaged' or 'idealised' child of gay parents. Another case suggests that people raised by LGBTQ parents may feel comfortable in LGBTQ focused workplaces. Bella worked for an LGBTQ sports organisation. For her, while she did note that

'everyone who works there is queer and I'm not' she also highlighted that her experience growing up in a lesbian-headed household equipped her with knowledge she needed to fit into such a workplace. Bella did discuss how in the past she had worried that her heterosexuality would exclude her from a queer workplace or culture, she had 'settled into' her identity as 'ally with extra experience'. This signifies that for people with LBTQ parents, work is not only a site in which they can feel included/excluded, but a space in which their experience of growing up amongst LBTQ parents and queer culture can prove to enhance their careers and inform the occupations they take up.

7.4.3 Resisting institutional heteronormativity

Some participants were able to actively resisted and re-shape the institutional heteronormativity embedded in their workplaces. Coming out as a child of LGBTQ parents was the primary strategy used to promote change in spaces that traditionally assumed and catered to heterosexuality. The motivation to push the boundaries of workplace heteronormativity was often to educate and support others, particularly those identifying as LGBTQ or having LGBTQ family members. One participant, Emma, a secondary school teacher raised by lesbian mothers, spoke about of her proactive discussions of sexuality and her own family with her students:

> I'm a teacher and I'm very open with my students, especially the LGBT kids. I will tell them quite early on that I have gay parents because I think it's important for them to realise that they have – I don't want to be their role model in any way, but a person that they can trust, that they can talk to if they need to at school, a sounding board, someone who understands.

She noted that challenging homophobia and creating inclusive spaces was not necessarily a school wide project. Instead, Emma relates her desire for open discussions with her students to her own experience of school: one of silence and fear.

> In my previous school there was a real culture of 'oh, that's gay' and I hate it. I hate it so much that I makes my blood boil and yet other teachers are just really blasé, 'now we are not meant to say that', whereas I would be writing out a report, I just absolutely hate it. I hate it so much it makes me feel sick and that probably is to do with how I have grown up but that is right I think. That's right. So, society has got used to being able to use it as an insult when it absolutely shouldn't be.

This demonstrates the ongoing character of coming out through time and space, with the school transforming into the workplace and the student becoming the teacher. Her first-hand knowledge of the isolation that school can bring for people with LBTQ parents encouraged her openness with staff and students. In contrast to LGBTQ teachers, adult-children of LBTQ parents may feel less threatened within the school space and may, therefore, be more able to challenge heteronormative space than LGBTQ people themselves. For instance, Edwards et al. (2016: 308) state that the lesbian teachers in their study felt that 'coming out could have an impact on their career choices and professional relationships'. However, Emma's position as a heterosexual woman, despite her connection to LGBTQ communities and culture, meant she was able to discuss LGBTQ topics more easily. In other words, adult-children of LBTQ parents who identify as heterosexual continue to benefit from heterosexual privilege. This may make it easier for them to disrupt heteronormativity and act as an agent of social change without fear that their personal lives would be exposed, that their own sexuality would come under scrutiny, or that their careers would be impacted.

Similar to the young adults in Goldberg's (2007a) study, the personal experience of being raised in a lesbian household made Emma feel sensitive to and offended by overt homophobia and heterosexism. Like in Goldberg's (2007a) findings, Emma felt the need to defend her family and 'educate' others. Using her position as a teacher, Emma was able to move this education into the formal spaces of the classroom, challenging the boundaries of acceptability within school. Scholarship on geographies of sexualities and queer geographies have consistently argued that while spaces are shaped by norms and expectations, these are not immovable or static but can be contested and renegotiated (Browne et al., 2007; Doan, 2010; Hines, 2007, 2010; Valentine, 2003a; Valentine and Skelton, 2003). Thus, the heteronormative power embedded within institutional workplaces is not constant or unrelenting. My research highlights some of the ways in which those raised in LBTQ households may use their knowledge and past experience to destablise and 'queer(y) such boundaries, thus disrupting spatial identities and discourse' (Ryan-Flood, 2009: 79).

7.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown how (adult-)children are not necessarily always either open or secretive about their LBTQ parents. I have highlighted how the binary between disclosure and secrecy is a complex and constant (re)negotiation for adults raised by LBTQ parents, one that is

shaped by (and shapes) the spaces in which they live, play, learn and work. Previous work suggests that motivations for disclosing a parent's LGBTQ identity can vary. However, the current literature lacks spatial analysis of how people come out about their families, and the disclosure practices and strategies they employ to negotiate, create and contest the spaces they move through on a daily basis. Hence everyday spaces of intimacy and kinship are in fact the spaces in which 'cultural values and practices are transmitted, contested, and transformed' (Luzia, 2010: 361). As Gabb (2005a: 422) states, public spaces are not asexual but are in fact 'sites of naturalised heterosexuality'. Likewise, Ahmed (2004: 148) has noted that 'heteronormativity functions as a form of public comfort by allowing bodies to extend into spaces that have already taken their shape'. She notes that spaces can cause (dis)comfort for those who live outside the parameters of heteronormativity and consequently shape their disclosure practices.

Consequently, this chapter demonstrates that (adult-)children have multiple moments and spaces of disclosure. Although coming out for (adult-)children of LBTQ parents differs from experiences of LGBTQ people themselves, it is often a significant aspect of the experience of being a child of LBTQ parents. My data suggests, in line with Hassen's (2012: 252) argument, that this is due to the fact that people with LBTQ parents have to learn to 'live with the effects and affects of dominant heteronormativity'. However, as many feminist and queer geographers have argued, heteronormativity is more complex than a 'universal policing of a heterosexual-homosexual binary' (Oswin, 2010: 257). Rather, it is a 'geographically and historically specific coincidence of race, class, gender, nationality and sexual norms' (ibid). Consequently, coming out as a child of LGBTQ parents involves negotiating the dominant norms in the spaces they inhabit and move between in their everyday lives. This analysis therefore helps to further understand these complexities by exploring how families are entrenched within a culturally and politically interlaced 'range of scales from the home and community to the city and region' (Valentine, et al., 2003: 481). Although homes are frequently considered to be most influential spaces within the lives of children and teenagers, they also interact collectively to shape the norms of the state and their broader institutions (Schulman, 2009). In this sense, homes not only shape an individual's social understandings and expectations that persist later into life, they also influence our ability to negotiate other spaces (e.g., schools, workplaces and healthcare settings) that individuals encounter later in life. Therefore, when looking at intimacy, family, and personal relationships it is vital we consider the intersection of multiple spaces, rather than assuming the intimate equates to the domestic.

Chapter 8 Negotiating notions of normality and normativity

As highlighted in previous chapters, current disciplinary and theoretical strands conceptualise LGBTQ families in profoundly different ways, emphasising sameness, assimilation, normativity (Berlant, 1997; Bersani, 1995; Edelman, 2004; Halberstam, 2005), as well as radical difference and the potential for queering 'the family' (Dunne, 1996, 1998, 2000; Giddens, 1991; Stacey, 1996). In this chapter, I build upon queer theoretical and conceptual debates around normativity, to consider what it means when your kinship structure is simultaneously considered 'normal' *and* radical. How are notions of normativity and anti-normativity drawn upon in the narratives of those who have been raised by LBTQ parents? Accordingly, in this final analysis chapter, I explore how people with LBTQ parents relate to notions of normality, normativity, radicalism and resistance in their life stories. To investigate this, I turn to theoretical conceptualisations of radical queer(ness) including Edelman and Halberstam, which position queerness as a radically anti-normative project. I also draw upon more recent critiques of queer anti-normativity, which challenge this idea that queer lives should always be conceptualised as radically other (Wiegman and Wilson, 2015). These debates are primarily based in the US humanities and have been largely theoretical. Consequently, they fail to pay sufficient consideration to how everyday lives are performed, experienced or narrated (Brown, 2012; Seidman, 1994). For instance, while Edelman makes use of the 'figure of the Child' in his work, he has little to say about actual children themselves. It is in this gap that this chapter is situated, using social science to examine how people draw upon narratives of normality and radicality when constructing their life stories.

I ask how adult-children from LBTQ-headed families locate themselves in relation to discourses of normality, difference and radicalism. I trace the various ways participants employ narratives of 'normal' family lives to legitimise and communicate their upbringings. However, I also draw out some of the complexities and ambiguities in these narratives, highlighting some of the mundane and everyday ways in which non-normativity is expressed and practiced by participants. Thus, I highlight the way that participants often oscillated between the radical and the ordinary in their life stories. I utilise recent discussions about the 'ordinary' and the 'normal' ways in which we live our everyday lives, in order to think about how LBTQ kinship may not always represent queer defiance, yet can still disrupt norms surrounding intimacy, kinship and the life course (Brown, 2012; Heaphy, 2018). Through looking at the contradictions, inconsistencies and messiness of these narratives, this chapter complicates the boundaries between the normal

and the radical. I conclude by suggesting that the insistence that LBTQ parenting is essentially 'unqueer' or fails to generate adequately 'queer' life courses, denies the multiplicity of intimacies that exist in LBTQ kinship networks.

8.1 LGBTQ families as assimilatory or radical

As highlighted elsewhere (see Chapter Two), queer theory has often been premised on the notion of 'resistance to regimes of the normal' (Warner, 1991: 16). Moreover, this anti-normative stance has frequently positioned the family, reproduction and childrearing in contrast to queer, resistant or 'oppositional' ways of living (Bersani, 1995). Edelman (2004), in his widely cited book *No Future,* contests the logic of 'reproductive futurism' and states that 'queerness' must not accept or participate in kinship and reproduction, rather we must reject or have 'no future'. For Edelman, 'queerness names the side of those not "fighting for the children", the side outside the consensus by which all politics confirms the absolute value of reproductive futurism' (2004: 3). This anti-social or anti-relational politics conceptualises the family as primarily an oppressive structure that sustains heteronormative and homonormative values (Duggan, 2002). This is demonstrated by Bersani (1995: 5), who argues that there is a danger in trying to 'queer' the family from within:

> Suspicious of our own enforced identity, we are reduced to playing subversively with normative identities – attempting, for example, to "resignify" the family for communities that defy the usual assumptions about what constitutes a family. These efforts whilst valuable, can have assimilative rather than subversive consequences; having de-gayed themselves, gays melt into the culture that they like to think of themselves as undermining... De-gaying gayness can only fortify homophobic oppression; it accomplishes in its own way the principal aim of homophobia: the elimination of gays.

Edelman (2004) contends that queers should dismiss claims of 'rights' or 'equality', particularly equal access to social structures that enable same-sex marriage and reproductive rights. By refusing to aspire to a 'better future' and embracing the position of Other, the subversive force of queer sexuality can be achieved (Edelman, 2004). Thus, anti-relational queer theorists argue for a queerness that is in opposition to 'normative sociality' and aims to uphold 'forms of queer rebelliousness' (Ruti, 2008: 113).

However, many have critiqued the idea that the family and reproduction are essentially or automatically oppressive and assimilatory. There have been suggestions that gay and lesbian families are in fact radical and innovative both in the ways that they conceive children and practice family. For instance, Nelson (1996: 137), in her study on lesbian motherhood, claims that lesbian families are a 'a revolutionary force in our understanding of motherhood and the family'. Similarly, Dunne (2000: 33) understands lesbian motherhood as demonstrating a 'fundamental challenge to the foundation of the gender order'. Furthermore, scholars such as Epstein (2005: 11) have predicted that children raised in LGBTQ families may be offered more 'possibilities' because such families may 'challenge profoundly historically entrenched gender dynamics, and where there may be an openness to sexual, and other kinds of, diversity'.

Nevertheless, like Weiner and Young (2011: 229), I doubt the use of a 'binary that situates gay and lesbian on one side and queer on the other'. As Ahmed (2004: 143) states, 'assimilation and transgression are not choices that are available to individuals, but are effects of how subjects can and cannot inhabit social norms and ideals'. Through this lens, Ahmed argues that LGBTQ families, even when considering themselves as 'normal', will have 'moments of "non-sticking"' that will require active forms of negotiation in different times and places (Ahmed, 2004: 143). Similarly, those who may see themselves as non-normative, radical or queer, may have instants where they want to 'fit in', feel normal and comfortable (Ahmed, 2004). People with LGBTQ parents represent and narrate their families in diverse and varied ways. While some of these narratives could initially be seen as falling into binary categorisations of 'normal' or 'radical', many narratives are inconsistent and contradictory. This demonstrates how people with LGBTQ parents 'do not cite or reiterate the existing norms; instead they repeat and work on them differently and with variation' (Hassen, 2012: 251).

Following the direction of scholars such as Neal and Murji (2015), Heaphy (2018), Wilkinson (2019) and Browne et al. (2019), this chapter will look to the mundane and everyday, to move beyond the polarising arguments over the extent that LBTQ-headed families are assimilatory/transgressive or included/excluded. Neal and Murji (2015) claim that in examining everyday life we are able to account for the ways that:

> experience and practices are always more than simply or straightforwardly mundane, ordinary and routine. Rather, everyday life is dynamic… characterised by ambivalences, perils, puzzles, contradictions, accommodations and transformative possibilities (Neal and Murji, 2015: 812).

Heaphy (2018: 165) argues that debates over homonormativity, assimilation, and queerness can overlook a vital point, that for LGBTQ families 'claims to ordinariness can be simultaneously

normative and non-normative'. Wilkinson (2019: 5), in her study on single life and non-reproduction, suggests that through exploring the 'mundane, everyday and ordinary' we can understand the ways that 'non-normativity [can] represent something quieter and not necessarily oppositional', radical or anti-normative. Browne et al. (2019: 2) make a related argument, suggesting using idea of 'liveability' and exploring 'what makes life liveable for LGBTQ people'. Other scholars, including Cuthbert and Taylor (2019) and Nordqvist (2015), have also used the concept of 'liveability' or a 'liveable life'. Influenced by Butler (2004: 39) who states that 'when we ask what makes life liveable, we are asking about certain normative conditions that must be fulfilled'. For Butler (2004) those who did not conform to normative notions of sex, gender and sexuality were unintelligible, unthinkable and 'often regulated to the domain of space that are not liveable' (Browne et al., 2019: 5). Living a liveable life includes 'being able to be literally alive… and being able to live in a way that is not 'loathsome' to the individual' (Cox et al., 2009: 176). By focusing on notions of the everyday, the ordinary and liveability, researchers are able to move past the 'inclusion/exclusion binary' and concentrate on the everyday lives of LGBTQ people (Brown et al., 2019: 3). Furthermore, by examining the discourses participants draw on to tell their life stories, including the complex negotiation and oscillation between the 'normal' and the 'radical', researchers can complicate the assimilatory/transgressive binary attributed to (and used by) LGBTQ families.

Through an empirical investigation into the way people with LBTQ parents consider the notions of 'normal' and normativity, this chapter aims to utilise queer theory 'without assuming a position of antinormativity from the outset' (Wiegman and Wilson, 2015: 2). This chapter does not aim to answer the question: does being raised by LBTQ parents make you similar or different to those raised by heterosexual parents? Or, in other words, are people raised by LBTQ parents heteronormative or non-conforming? Rather it examines how people with LBTQ parents, from different geographic, temporal and social contexts, manage to negotiate liveable lives and how they draw on ideas of normality and radicalness to construct their life stories (Butler, 2004).

First, I will discuss how people with LBTQ parents were often made to feel that their families were non-normative in everyday encounters with others. I will then turn to examine how participants employed narratives of 'normality' or 'sameness' as a discursive tool to legitimise their families. Consequently, these life stories highlight that families are not essentially radical or assimilatory, but use normalising narratives to make their lives liveable. Next, I discuss how participants involved themselves in moments of everyday activism. While participants did not view themselves as radical activists, they often took part in mundane, everyday forms of resistance. This further complicates the binary between radical/ordinary, showing the ways in which children of LBTQ parents aim for social transformation through quieter acts of resistance.

Finally, I discuss how people with LGBTQ parents conceptualise their life courses. I examine how participants consider and practice normative life events such as marriage and child rearing, as well as noting the ways that adults challenge, re-shape and resist these life events, or even the notion of the idealised 'life course' all together. Again, this enables me to consider how the life stories of adult-children of LBTQ parents fall between and complicate the assimilatory/transgressive binary.

8.2 Spaces of 'difference' and discomfort

When narrating their kinship stories, many participants stressed the way that their families were 'normal' to them and simply part of their everyday life. The narrative of 'normality' when discussing LGBTQ parenting has also been highlighted in other studies on children raised by LGBTQ parents. For instance, Clarke and Demetriou (2016: 139), in their study of people with lesbian, gay and trans parents, suggest that 'there was an explicit emphasis on sameness, normality, ordinariness and universality'. Similarly, Goldberg (2007a: 556) comments that some adults with LGBTQ parents highlighted the ordinariness of their childhoods and emphasised their 'normal development'. This was particularly true for participants who had been raised by LBTQ parent(s) from birth or from a very early age. For example, Bella's narrative was typical when she said:

> It felt like the most normal thing in the world that I saw daddy at weekends and once a week…and I lived with mum during the week and then Stef was there. So, it was really normal for me…It has always been like that.

Despite this common narrative of normality and claims that 'it has always been like this', this was not the reaction many participants received as they grew up, started school, university, moved into the workplace and began being 'visible' with their families in public spaces. Many participants discussed how they would often be viewed by others as essentially different from heterosexual-parented families. Furthermore, being visible in public space and experiencing the reactions of others to their non-heterosexual families made participants feel out of place and 'different' from the 'normal' family. Thus, while narratives regularly begun with claims of normality, participants often went on to stress the ways they had been made to feel deviant and different, particularly in public spaces. Thus, life stories highlighted that people raised by LBTQ parents can understand their families as simultaneously normal and ordinary while also different and deviant (in public).

For some participants it was the fear of being visible as a child of LBTQ parents that made public space uncomfortable. One participant, Emma, noted how as a young child she felt uneasy about being with her mothers in public spaces, such as the street or supermarket, for fear of being 'found out'. She describes one instance of leaving a lesbian mothers' group with her parents and being seen by a peer from school:

> One time, the place we would meet each other is not far from here and one time a kid from my primary school spotted me coming out of there and I was only probably eight at the time and I thought that that building was a building for lesbians, it wasn't really, it was just a community hall thing. For ages I denied to him, I lied to him about being there, 'no, it wasn't me, it wasn't me, you have got the wrong end of the stick' because I was just terrified, I was terrified of the social suicide and I was so scared about what might happen if people knew, so I just kept it under wraps … the language of the day was so incredibly anti-gay.

As Luzia (2013) has discussed, lesbian mothers' groups can be a huge support to lesbian parents and their children, offering a space outside traditional lesbian and gay scene spaces. However, what has not been discussed is the way that moving to and from community networks and support groups, such as LBTQ parenting groups, can place children in situations where they are seen (or think they are seen) as 'different' from their peers. Choi (2013) recounts similar stories in their study on trans geographies. Although community events provided positive experience for trans people, going to and from these events were problematic because of the 'prying eyes of neighbours' (Choi, 2013: 129). Therefore, while these groups may help children in LBTQ families view and connect with other children, it is important to understand the distinction between the value and safety of LGBTQ community events and the safety children (and LBTQ people themselves) experience on their way to and from these events. This argument does not deny that LBTQ parenting groups may increase the feelings of 'normality' for the children in LBTQ families, as Emma noted it was 'good to meet other people'. Nevertheless, her account indicates that the experience of moving to and from these groups can heighten feelings that LBTQ-headed families are different and vulnerable.

Furthermore, in the context and era that Emma was growing up, London in the 1980s, heterosexuality remained dominant and taken for granted in everyday public space, such as the street. Despite the affirmation that she received in the lesbian parenting group, Emma's account implied that this was limited and did not reduce her feelings of difference and vulnerability beyond its confines. In her wider biography Emma discusses her self-censorship in spaces such as the school, where she is not physically with her parents. However, in public spaces, such as the

street, she became visible as a child of lesbian parents which left her feeling vulnerable and open to attack. Arguably, this awareness of the risk of being visible as a child of lesbian parents is not just a 'problem but a sign of discrimination in itself' (Rodó-de-Zárate, 2015: 420). The feeling of vulnerability in everyday public space was reiterated by Emma when she discussed shopping with her lesbian mothers:

> I was constantly having to think, "oh my god I'm at Sainsburys with mum and Julia, what if someone sees me from school and then they will see that I have two mums and then I will get bullied forever more".

Here, we can see how the notion of a 'normal' family for children with LBTQ parents is fragmented across time and space. Despite the fact that Emma's lesbian mothers may be normal for her at home and in specific LGBTQ (parenting) spaces, moving into public space caused a significant amount of anxiety and fear. Thus, homes and supportive community spaces do not stand alone but exist within potentially unsafe neighbourhoods. While children of LBTQ parents may feel 'normal' in their homes and other safe spaces, these spaces are intertwined with other sites in which gender and sexual minorities are policed, and thus are 'parts of the…. moral frame of society' (Choi, 2013: 130). It was often not the 'queer' sites of homes or community groups that produced notions of differences or queerness, but the way that children growing up in LBTQ families experienced heterosexualised and heteronormative public space.

While Emma indicated that it was the fear of being visible as a child of LBTQ parents that made public space uncomfortable, for other participants, it was the reaction of others which encouraged them to view their families as different and transgressive. In some cases, the unintelligibility and misrecognition of kinship relationships between LBTQ parents and their children worked to highlight the differences of these relationships. Teddy discussed one instance where he was questioned about his relationship to one of his mothers:

> Beth had taken me to the library and someone, a parent of someone else at school who knew Val, saw me there and came up to me and said, "hey, where is your mum?" and I pointed at Beth. She said, "that's not your mum, where is Val, where is your mum?". I point at Beth again and said, "that *is* my mum". Beth had to come over and explain the whole thing.

This case indicates that when children in LBTQ families move into public space they can face incomprehension from heterosexual society. For Teddy, who has a broader conception of what family is (with his two mothers and two known donors) experiences like this in early childhood indicated that his family was deviating from the heterosexual norm. Following Butler (2004: 24), it

would seem that heterosexuality offered a powerful grid and 'matrix of intelligibility' that a family with two mothers could not, at least initially, be understood and thus required explanation. In this case, Teddy did not narrate this instance with hurt or fear of being different, however it did make clear to him that his lesbian parents would not always be understood past the confines of their home. Despite his lack of distress in this instance, he did report feelings of awkwardness and discomfort from both his mother and the other parent. This suggests an awareness from Teddy that LBTQ kinship ties can be culturally invisible and that disclosure and explanation may not always be met with positive reactions.

These examples highlight how (adult-)children of LBTQ parents remain different from their heterosexual peers, in that their position as 'outside' heteronormativity shapes their narratives and interactions. As stated, anti-relational queer theory has dismissed LGBTQ families as assimilatory and heterosexual-like, failing to truly disrupt heteronormative logic (Edelman, 2004). The participant stories in this study, however, indicate that social norms around sexuality, gender and kinship are contested by the very existence of LBTQ families. Through their narratives, participants positioned their families as disruptive, even when they were not striving to be radical or deviant. These stories of being different and outside the norm were often experienced as a sense of discomfort (Ahmed, 2004), as (adult-)children may exist within *and* outside normative structures of the family.

This was further expanded upon by two participants with trans parents, who highlighted their feelings of deviance and difference when visible in public space with their parents. Public space is not only created as (hetero)sexual but can also be understood as gender normative (Browne and Lim, 2010). Geographers have begun to acknowledge the importance of space and place for theorising trans, non-binary and gender variant people's lives (see Browne and Lim, 2010; Doan, 2010; Hines, 2010; Nash, 2010; Rooke, 2010). Much of this work aims to understand the 'creation of gender through socio-spatial relations' (Browne et al., 2010). Doan (2010: 639) contends that 'individuals who persist in violating gender norms are marginalised in both queer and other public spaces'. That said, there is little research on how transition affects trans peoples' intimate relations and/or relationships, particularly their children (except see Tabor, 2019; Veldorale-Griffin, 2014). I want to expand this geographic analysis to think about how those with trans and/or non-binary parents also feel the consequences of a gender binary that assumes man/male/masculine and woman/female/feminine as a constant. Furthermore, I wish to suggest that through interacting and living in hetero and cis-normative society, some people with trans parents may conceive of themselves as alternative, transgressive and living in radically different families.

Participants narrated their experience of their parents' shifting self-identifications and their transforming gender embodiments. As Tabor (2019: 206) suggests, family members of trans people can be understood as 'transitioning with' their relative. Although both participants were wholeheartedly supportive of their parents' transition and gender identities, they too were faced with the 'expectations and practices of the inhabitants of the places' they were in (Nash, 2010: 587). Despite Abby's ongoing assurances of support for her parent, she described her discomfort at meeting them in public, particularly when her parent's gender presentation was not consistently female/feminine. When we spoke, Abby's parent was considering 'de-transitioning' as they did not feel that a medical transition was the right decision for them. Abby discussed how this made things more complicated for her when discussing and being with her parent publicly:

> It was less clear cut before the transition because I was like "my parent is trans, my parent is coming to meet us here but I don't know if they are going to be male or female when they arrive, I don't know". I was a bit nervous because I would have to tell people, warn them because they are expecting your dad to arrive and then this woman shows up and lots of people got confused.

Abby's need to 'warn' people about her parent suggests that she views her family as something that needs explaining, and thus is incomprehensible and unreadable without such explanation. For Abby, this discussion largely focused on the difficulties that accompany the subversion of gender binaries and norms. She goes on to discuss how, despite her positive view of her family as non-normative, the loss of a clear gender identity to attribute her parent complicated her feelings, making her feel more 'judged':

> I quite like the fact that I am in a non-heteronormative family, it works for us and I am proud of my family. But now it is more difficult because I feel like I have gone back into a stage where we might be being judged because it is not clear cut again. And people like it when there is a binary… It's weird because it feels like, there is this dynamic within the trans community that if you are not transitioning then you are not really trans, it's horrible but it exists.

Abby uses the discourses of pride to discuss what she calls her 'non-heteronormative family', embracing the difference she sees in her family. However, the uncertainty and instability of her parent's gender pushed her outside of the realms of intelligibility and acceptability, in heterosexual and LGBTQ spaces.

Other studies have noted that rather than children 'reversing the parenting nouns of "mum" and "dad"' children of trans parents often began calling their parents by their names or chosen

nicknames (Hines, 2006: 336). However, this does not consider the terms that (adult-)children use to describe the *relationship* they have with that parent. We continue to attribute gendered parental categorisations onto men and women, namely 'father' and 'mother' (Hines, 2006). Thus, when people discuss their fathers or mothers, there is an assumption that these social roles have a stable gender attached to them. Both participants highlighted that although they call their parents by their names, they had to negotiate what relational terms they would utilise. For Abby, she decided that she would use the term parent rather than mother/father or mum/dad. However, Mary, had a FtM trans parents, continued to use the term 'mother' to describe their relationship to one another. This creative family practice and ability to negotiate gender roles demonstrates the ways people with trans parents are able to disrupt the gender binary. However, the disassociation between man and mother became problematic for Mary when introducing her parent, Jack, in public space:

> There have been a few times when people have met Jack and said "hi" and then after they would say something like "who is he?" and then I would say "that's my, mother, he is transgender" and from then on they start using a female pronoun. So that's very interesting but frustrating.

For children of trans parents who have negotiated and resisted enforced gender binaries within their kinship networks, the 'cultural inconceivability of male mothers or female fathers' in public spaces make them feel unintelligible and thus out of place (Tabor, 2019: 516). Despite the fact that others read Jack's embodied gender as male, his relational position as Mary's mother seemed to be principal in determining his pronouns, indicating the power of the binary relational categories of "mother" and "father".

Furthermore, as care is reciprocal between parents and children, children may feel a need to protect their parents from the harm or emotional pain that comes with misgendering or transphobic comments, ensuring that they have a liveable life. While children may feel a desire to disclose that their parents are trans this can, as it did in this case, have negative consequences for both the (adult-)child and the parent. Thus, Mary later noted that she needed to find a balance between being open and respecting Jack's identity as a man:

> I equally want Jack if he wants to, to be able to go around and not everyone know he is transgender if he doesn't want them to, just be a guy. Equally there is the fact that I also have a dad, wanting to be honest.

Again, we see the importance of geography for understanding the experience of people with LBTQ parents and how they comprehend and negotiate their intimate relationships. Thus,

children of LBTQ parents may feel out of place in mundane and everyday spaces of the street, supermarket or library, as fear of discrimination or misrecognition heighten their sense of difference and opposition from the norm.

The experience or expectation of confusion, disapproval or surprise shown in these participant narratives suggests that LBTQ families were seen (or were expected to be seen) as different, transgressive or deviating from ideal notions of 'the family'. People with LBTQ parents often learnt that, in some contexts, their families were considered unusual because they contradicted 'cultural and societal expectations about what a family should look like' or who parents 'should' be (Vinjamuri, 2015: 270). Therefore, we can see that 'being different is not a unitary status', instead our understanding of who and what is different 'depends upon the immediate context in which it is being negotiated' (Oswald, 2002: 341). While some may feel comfortable living outside the norm, others narrated moments of discomfort when positioned beyond the limits of intelligibility and acceptability. Conceptualisations of queerness that demand a radical rejection of existing social structures fail to account for the everyday violence LGBTQ people and their families face. My interview data highlights some of the ways in which many participants expressed a desire *not* to be marked as other, to pass as 'normal'. In some instances, the only route to recognition accessible to (adult-)children was to emphasise the ordinariness of their family connections. The use of the normality will be explored in the next section, expanding on the ways that people with LBTQ parents at times use normalising narratives to make their lives liveable.

8.3 Legitimising LBTQ-headed families

When looking past theoretical insights into LGBTQ-headed families, towards empirical examinations, we continue to see scholars using claims of 'normality' as evidence for the assimilatory desires of parenthood for LGBTQ people (Langdridge, 2013). However, I argue that, when looking at the biographies of adult-children with LBTQ parents, these narratives of normality should more accurately be explained as a discursive tool rather than essential to the character of LBTQ-headed families. Following Ahmed (2004: 153) I contend that although LGBTQ-headed families may see themselves as 'like any other', 'maintaining an active positive of "transgression" not only takes time, but may not be psychically, socially or materially possible for some individuals and groups'. Influenced by the concept of liveability, I argue that, by looking to the broader biographies of people raised by LBTQ parents, 'normality' is not necessarily a

constant in family life, rather the notion of normality is used to legitimate family structure and practices when required.

Browne et al. (2019: 15) argue that liveability should not only be fixed to 'the presence or absence of legislation' but should also include 'individual circumstance and the need for recognition, acceptance and support from family, community and collectives'. As stated, many participants described their families as 'normal' and stated that their parents' sexualities did not impact their personal development. In spite of this, as demonstrated in the previous section, people with LBTQ parents are often made to feel that their families were non-normative in everyday encounters with others. The 'difference' of their families was commonly communicated to them through the discourse that LGBTQ-headed families were either damaging and destructive, especially for children, *or* that they were inherently radical and resist tradition. Most often, the 'damaging' discourse was experienced in childhood and by older participants who were growing up in 1970s and 1980s. The 'radical' narrative, however, was often experienced in late adolescence and early adulthood as participants left home and began building their own social circles. The social and historical context is vital here, as individuals construct their life narratives by negotiating wider societal narratives in circulation. Life narratives are thus not only a presentation of personal history but reflect dominant discourses and social norms (Phoenix and Brannen, 2014). When participants speak of their families, and construct their kinship narratives, they are drawing on, and are restrained by, dominant social norms. When examining the notions of 'normal' and 'radical' in life stories, it is therefore vital that we recognise the ways stories were used strategically, particularly in reference to their social, historical and geographic context.

Eve, for example, explained that when her mother first 'came out' in the 1980s there was an overwhelming notion that, because of her lesbian identity, she was an 'unfit' mother. Similarly, Jack, who was raised by a lesbian mother in 1990s experienced a teacher once say to him that 'it would be good to get out of the home' that he was in because his mother's sexuality was damaging him. However, Eve and Jack, like other participants also experienced people assuming their families were different in a positive way, finding them interesting, 'cool' or radical. For instance, Eve went on to say:

> I remember at one point it gained me quite a lot of capital really, "Oh, Eve has lesbian parents", like other lesbians, particularly lesbians who are older than me. It's like, "oh, she has lesbian parents, wow". It's kind of like it seemed like that gave me an added element of queer.

However, this was not only discussed in relation to LGBTQ spaces, but also experienced in more 'liberal' spaces. Mark describes how, when he was living on a 'hippy' commune, lesbian-parented families were viewed as a positive, interesting and radical way to live:

> When I was 17 living in a commune it was more, it was much more something to talk about… I think there were assumptions that I had been bought up in a much more radical household than I had been, because my mum was a lesbian and most lesbians were living in that whole world…they [his parents] didn't want to do any of that they were just getting on with their lives.

For Mark and many other participants, the discourse of LGBTQ-headed families as 'different', whether positive or negative, did not fit their lived experience. Mark goes on to state that, 'it's interesting how little relevance the fact that my mum is a lesbian has had'. While many participants may have enjoyed people viewing their families positively, they still felt that their parents were 'just their parents'. Often these claims of 'normality' have been used as evidence that LGBTQ families are assimilationist, homonormative and stand in opposition to queer politics (Langdridge, 2013). However, I argue that claims of normality were often employed to counter the assumption of difference that was attributed to them. Narratives of normality were used to claim legitimacy for their LBTQ-headed families or used as a device to protect their families from legal, societal and institutional discrimination.

Rachael was one participant that spoke in ways that highlighted her 'normality'. Rachael was conceived using donor sperm and raised by two lesbian mothers until she was five, when they separated. One of her mothers now has a new partner and she considers all three women her mothers. Rachael said that the main reason she wanted to contribute to the study was that she wanted to 'to let people know that you can be gay and still have children and them not have any problems and they will turn out perfectly fine'. This stands in reaction to the longstanding opinion that children of LGBTQ parents will be damaged by their parents' sexualities or by adverse impacts of homophobia.

Furthermore, she went on to use the concept of 'love' to validate her family, stating 'I have two parents that love me…I have never felt like I have missed out on anything because I have two parents who love me and give me everything'. The discourse of 'love' and commitment has regularly been used to support claims for LGBTQ parenting and relationships more widely (Hicks, 2005; Hosking et al., 2015). Through presenting 'love, care [and] stability' as the foundations of family life, proponents present LGBTQ-headed families in a way that demonstrates their normality and depicts them as 'familiar and nonthreatening to the heterosexual majority' (Clarke and Kitzinger, 2004: 205). Clarke and Kitzinger (2004: 206) argue that the discourse of love fails to

resist the 'primacy of the nuclear family' and does nothing to encourage social change. Furthermore, Rachael employed the kinship discourse of 'the couple', prioritising and commending the dyadic romantic couple as the centre of a family. This resonates with Wilkinson's (2014) argument that there has been an undeniable move towards 'compulsory coupledom'. Wilkinson (2014) highlights that 'coupledom' has been naturalised and privileged, noting the ways that couples have been constructed as the basis for strong families, whether that be heterosexual or lesbian/gay couples. Thus, Rachael utilised the narratives of her parents as a 'couple in love' to legitimate and normalise her family.

However, importantly, the narrative of her parents as a 'couple in love' that Rachael used to legitimise her family did not reflect her day-to-day life. This was most clearly seen when she was articulating why she had no need to trace her sperm donor:

> I have never really seen him [sperm donor] as my dad or anything like that, I have two parents. I mean, I have three parents. That's more than enough.

In this example, Rachael cites her 'two parents' as the reason she does not need a father and does not see her sperm donor as a 'dad'. However, she then recognises that she has three parents, as she includes her mother's partner as an equal parent to her two intended mothers at birth, rather than a step-parent. Furthermore, her intended mothers had not been in a romantic relationship since she was five years old. This slippage in her interview suggests that normalising narratives of LBTQ intimacy do not always reflect lived experience. Rachael had grown up and continued to live in a much more complex kinship network than her narrative sometimes suggested. Nevertheless, when aiming to justify her choices, or the choices of her parents, she utilised conventional family discourses.

Eve used normalising discourses for slightly different purposes: to defend her mother from legal, societal and institutional discrimination. Eve spoke of her need to present herself and her family as normal:

> It was difficult at the time because it was in the 80s and my mother felt under threat. She felt like she might lose custody of the younger children because of all these narratives about her being an unfit mother. So, she did say to me once…'it would be really great if all the children would be really normal because then it won't look like I'm an unfit mother'

In general, children are considered the 'public face of families' and represent their parents in the next generation (Valentine, 2003a: 484). Although this has often been seen as a positive, with parents desiring 'better' for their children, it also means that if children deviate from the norm,

others may blame parents for their failure to raise a well-adjusted child (Valentine, 2003a). Valentine (2003a: 484) suggest that, for this reason, gay and lesbian young people feel a 'duty to remain in the closet' to protect their parents from hurt and criticism. However, this need to protect parents from condemnation has also been documented in work on children with LGBTQ parents. Goldberg (2007a: 559), in her study of adults with LGB parents, notes that adult-children are 'aware of their self-presentation' and endeavour to 'represent themselves as successful, psychologically healthy, and heterosexual'. In responding to the notion that LGBTQ parents are "dangerous others", whose sexualities could damage their children, adults and children of LBTQ parents may withhold personal difficulties, including struggling with parental separation or their own sexualities. This was a noted by many of my participants. For instance, Eve later considered how the need to present as normal impacted her personal identity. She talks about how she knew she was not heterosexual before her mother came out, but that she hadn't fully 'articulated or explored that':

> It took me quite a long time to negotiate my own sexuality in relation to that…I probably would have come out myself earlier on if it wasn't for this broader context.

This suggests that the stories children and adults of LBTQ parents tell about their families, particularly those narratives that normalise LBTQ households, do not necessarily fit their everyday experiences. Participant narratives from this study suggest that these normalising narratives are in reaction to the binary representations of LBTQ-headed families; that of difference (positive and negative) or of total normality. In reality, the majority of participants viewed their families as neither totally normal nor totally unique.

While having a LBTQ parent did not always place participants completely outside the boundaries of liveability, at times, it was important that children of LBTQ parents narrated their kinship connections in ways that conform to normative understandings of 'the family'. In this way, through using utilising dominant familial discourses to describe their relationships, children with LBTQ parents place themselves back into the grid of intelligibility and liveability. The need to present the LBTQ family as normalised and intelligible was explicitly expressed by Nadine when talked about trying to explain her family. Nadine stated that she has to use 'reference points' to enable others to understand her family and that although for her it is a very 'normal' experience it can be extremely 'complicated [for] people who haven't been raised in queer families'. She went on to describe that when trying to explain her relationship with her non-biological mother she used normative tropes of 'the family' and 'motherhood':

> I tell stories to try to get people to recognise my family, but I think that the stories that I chose to tell in the past to get people to understand that my non-biological mum are based on a lot of respectability politics and essentialist ideas about motherhood.

For some participants, this normative presentation was unreflected upon, others like Nadine however, were all too aware of the additional work they must do to make their lives liveable. In this way, Nadine can be seen to inhabit norms differently, as her story shows that an assimilatory kinship narrative is something which is worked for and constantly (re)constructed, rather than something that her family essentially *is*.

8.4 'Working on' heteronormativity

By taking a biographical account of the experience of growing up with LBTQ parents, I have been able to account for the ways that expectation and reaction towards the societal ideal of 'the family' can shift as people with LBTQ parents age. While misunderstanding or misrecognition in childhood often led to moments of passing or normalising their LBTQ families, some participants narrated these situations differently when experienced in adult life. Although very few of the participants I interviewed described themselves as LGBTQ activists or engaged in LGBTQ politics, many of them engaged in what could be termed 'everyday activism' or took part in mundane forms of resistance. Fish et al. (2018) have argued that traditional forms of activism, including protests and direct action, should be analysed alongside smaller scale 'quotidian activism' that furthers social change. These smaller and quieter actions do not add up to a radical refusal of normativity or futurity, as called for by queer anti-relational theorists. However, small acts of telling or narrating can be seen as acts of resistance, with the potential to bring about larger social transformation and alter assumptions about what 'family' can include.

These quieter, smaller moments of resistance often came in the form of challenges to heteronormative or homophobic language, attitudes or restrictions. It was common for participants to claim that they would, or had, directly opposed homophobic language or behaviour. For instance, Rachael stated that:

> With my friends I feel like I'm more, if someone says something like offensive or homophobic I'm more likely to jump in there and say something.

These challenges were not only about defending themselves or their own families but aimed to contest wider heteronormativities and social structures. Participants often positioned themselves as 'part of' LGBTQ culture and community, thus felt a strong desire to defend it against harmful views and language. This was similarly noted in Goldberg's (2007a) study, as she found that adult-children with LGBTQ parents felt protective and defensive of their parents and took a stand against homophobic remarks. Furthermore, this challenge does not only concern LGBTQ identity but includes LGBTQ kinship, encouraging others to broaden their notions of who counts as family. In this way, children of LBTQ parents seek to counter traditional discourses of kinship and parenting. In contrast to an anti-relational queer stance that argues that investment in the future will inevitably lead to normalisation, participant stories show that LBTQ-parented families, and children of LBTQ parents specifically, can strive for social change. Furthermore, for these adult-children, it is the *relationality* (i.e. their position in relation to LBTQ family members) that encourages and shapes their desire for a 'queerer' world and a different model for understanding our intimate lives. Therefore, rather than LBTQ families always being assimilatory, the children of LBTQ parents actually can be seen as part of, what Fish et al. (2018: 1204) considers, the important 'everyday work of sustaining social change for LGB[TQ] communities'. This more 'everyday' form of resistance complicates the binary of the ordinary versus the radical queer subject.

The desire to 'queer' and challenge social relations often stemmed from the relationship adult-children have with their families. This was seen in Teddy's narrative. By growing up in a society that questions the legitimacy of LGBTQ families, Teddy's narrative shows that (adult-) children with LBTQ parents can learn how to challenge the assumptions that all children will have one mother and one father. He discussed how, when asked about his 'mum and dad', he enjoys encouraging people to work it out themselves and presses others to use the terms lesbian or gay:

> They will say, "oh what do your mum and dad do?" and I say, "well actually I have two mums" and then I don't say anything. I watch the cogs go around in their heads as they are trying to process this information and what is quite amusing sometimes is that some people are really terrified of saying "oh, you have gay parents" because they think they are going to insult me or something, or upset me, or they are just not used to saying it, it's not the first thing that comes into their head. So, they sit there, and one person literally spent 10 minutes trying to figure it out. They were like, "so did your parents get divorced and then?" and I'm like "no, no, no". Sometimes I just don't say anything, I have other people sat there saying, "Teddy, just tell them, just tell them already". And I'm like "no, no, no", I wanted them to figure it out because I'm just determined to make

> them say “do you have gay parents?”. I will be like “Yes! You figured it out, you said it out loud as well”. Which is quite fun, so I have always been quite happy doing that.

Teddy’s unashamed refusal to explain his family stands in contrast to his earlier story in the library. Some participants demonstrated that, in adulthood, ignoring or overlooking heteronormative assumptions becomes uncomfortable. Within his story, Teddy demonstrates how he ‘embrace[s] a sense of discomfort, a lack of ease with the available scripts for living and loving’ (Ahmed, 2004: 155). In this sense, he finds a sense of excitement in ‘working on the (hetero)normative’ assumptions surrounding the ideal family (Ahmed, 2004: 155). Teddy demonstrates his knowledge of the power of heteronormativity, as he is aware that people continue to feel that asking if his parents are gay would be an ‘insult’. Furthermore, in refusing to explain his family structure and pushing them to use the terms ‘gay’ or ‘lesbian’, he speaks about the ways that he works to cause discomfort in others.

Laura, a woman in her mid-30s who was raised by a single lesbian mother, tells a similar story of the ways she works to challenge homophobic or transphobic comments from friends or acquaintances in order to ultimately help others, both LGBTQ people themselves and other children with LGBTQ parents:

> I’m like, “really, umm humm, that was your response. Cool”. I don’t try and hide the awkwardness I let it linger, I let them feel it. “You just made things really awkward, how could you not do that in future to people it might hurt a lot more than it would me”. I’m peoples proving ground because I’m not going to be hurt by it in the same way as a person for whom it is their identity. It’s not my identity it’s my mum’s. It’s going to hurt me but in a once removed kind of way. So, in some small way I suppose I’m trying to get it out of people’s system. It’s like, “those stupid things that you are going to say when people first bring it up, you get it out of your system to me, I will make you feel stupid and you maybe will think about it the next time”.

Often, LGBTQ people are asked ‘not to make heterosexuals uncomfortable…however, queer politics may seek to do the opposite’ (Hanssen, 2012: 240). Both Teddy and Laura attempt to invoke emotion in others in an effort to re-shape heterosexual social relations. Through talking of the ways that they make people feel ‘awkward’, ‘stupid’ or ‘terrified’, confused or frustrated, they discuss how evoking feelings of discomfort can challenge the ‘scripts of compulsory heterosexuality’ and the heterosexual family (Ahmed, 2004: 152). Moreover, Laura suggests that her heterosexual privilege offers her a level of projection from the emotional pain homophobia can cause. Because of this, she sees herself as more able to challenge everyday discriminatory language and to reshape conventional ideas around sexuality. Although neither participant

positioned themselves as an LGBTQ activist, we can see the ways that children of LBTQ parents are able to counter traditional discourses on gender, sexuality and parenting in small and mundane ways through the lens of the 'everyday'. Consequently, we cannot wholly position the life stories of adult-children of LBTQ parents as either radical *or* normative, as adult-children endeavour to articulate a sense of 'difference' and engage in resistant social practice, while not completely rejecting notions of sameness and normality.

8.5 'Queering' and querying the life course

Through using biographical accounts, I have also been able to explore how people raised by LBTQ parents consider and imagine their own life courses. In particular, in this section I focus on how adult-children view their own future plans in relation to traditional heteronormative life course sequences and transitions. As previously noted, dominant social norms inform the life course choices that individuals make. However, some have suggested that children of LGBTQ parents will have expanded notions of gender, sexuality and family life (Epstein, 2005). Accordingly, children of LGBTQ parents are seen as a group that could choose 'alternative' or 'queerer' life courses because of their upbringing.

Within this study, participants did not clearly conform or resist the dominant notions of a 'respectable' life course trajectory – namely coupledom, marriage and children – which should be accomplished in certain order, and at a certain age, within the life course (Halberstam, 2005: 5). Instead, many participants actively worked to negotiate these constructed social norms and life stages, noting their discomfort at both totally rejecting or living within heteronormative conventions. Thus, this analysis does not fall into conventional life course scholarship looking into traditionally referenced life course events, such as marriage and childrearing. However, it also does not necessarily fulfil the aims of queer temporality scholarship, which calls for new 'life narratives and alternative relations to time and space' away from those associated with the 'normal' life course (Halberstam, 2005: 2). Instead, my analysis highlights how many participants often simultaneously drew upon both traditional and more radical understandings of the life course.

During the interview, each participant was asked about their ideas, plans and desires for their futures. This often centered on expected life trajectories, with participants speaking of what they had already accomplished and their future aspirations. Many of these discussions referenced

conventional life course stages such as coupledom, marriage, children and careers. However, some participants noted their ambivalence about such issues. Fran, a heterosexual child of lesbian parents, talked about her feelings about marriage and her recent engagement to her partner:

> We are recently engaged so – but again it was a funny one because I never thought I was going to be the married type. I had always – because our parents couldn't do it initially marriage was never something that was talked about and I never aspired to have a white dress or get married. It was always that I dreamt of having a family not dreamt of having a wedding. We have started talking about what kind of wedding we want, and we know it's going to be not traditional at all because I'm not traditional and I never thought we would have a traditional wedding.

This reiterates some of the findings in Goldberg's (2014) study, examining the views and desires for marriage by people with LGB parents. She suggested that living in a family in which parents develop and maintain romantic relationships without being married could lead to children placing less emphasis on the importance of 'traditional (heterosexual) marriage' for themselves (Goldberg, 2014: 158). Furthermore, people growing up with LGBTQ parents before 2013 when marriage became legal in the UK, do not have equivalent experiences to those with unmarried heterosexual parents. Rather, children are often aware of the legal restrictions placed on their parents and the limited state recognition of LGBTQ relationships. Although Goldberg's (2014) study suggests that many people with LGB parents continue to desire traditional and idealised weddings and marriages, she highlights that some feel the ambivalence that Fran expresses. For Fran, the experience of being raised by unmarried parents, and being surrounded by unmarried LGBTQ couples, meant she saw traditional marriage as unimportant and potentially limiting. She went on to speak about how her decision to marry was based on her partner's desires rather than her own. Although she accepted her partners proposal, she spoke of her discomfort at living inside heteronormative life course conventions, joking that she could not use the word 'fiancé' and instead introduced her partner as 'her boyfriend she was going to marry'. To ease this discomfort, Fran wished to challenge convention by having a non-traditional wedding, ruling out an 'aisle', 'white dress' or anything traditionally associated with a (hetero)normative wedding, mirroring what she saw in her own non-traditional family.

Nadine, a bisexual woman raised by two lesbian mothers and a heterosexual father, discussed her desire to have children later in life. However, her imagined future intimacies and reproductive choices do not mirror a heteronormative path:

> I do want kids. Somewhere between 27 and 30 I will start having kids maybe. I think, I have never been in a polyamorous relationship, but I think I like the idea of kids having loads of parents and maybe having a big polyamorous family.

While she did plan on having children, Nadine's comments suggest that, in imagining her future family and children, she may have been less constrained by normative relationship and reproductive expectations. Despite her parents being in a co-parenting arrangement rather than a polyamorous relationship, Nadine's experience of being raised by three parents showed her the benefits of living in a family with multiple parents.

Furthermore, like Fran, she was aware of the legal restrictions placed on her three parents. Despite significant changes to the legal, biological and practical possibilities for LGBTQ parenthood, the nuclear family model remains entrenched. Although legislation, such as the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008, have broadened who can be understood as a legal parent, they do little to fundamentally challenge the two-parent model. Thus, although this act enabled non-birth lesbian mothers to be named on a birth certificate, the debate around this piece of legislation never considered third parents. In their analysis of the HFEA 2008 McCandless and Sheldon (2010: 191) claim that 'the two parent model retains a grip on the law which appears to have outlived any inevitable relationship between legal parenthood and either biological fact or marital convention'. However, in the face of these legal challenges, Nadine's parents, step-parents, siblings and wider kin were able to build intimate relationships and ways of living that move beyond convention. Therefore, Nadine's notions of reproduction and future family making challenge conventional ideas, not only of sexuality, but also monogamy and the dominant two parent model.

In one way, both Nadine and Fran were planning on engaging in, what are often considered, normative life events. Equally, the timing of these life course transitions fits with dominant understandings of the 'correct' and appropriate age to marry and begin having children. However, it would be a mistake to simply construe Fran and Nadine as simply conforming or assimilating to a heteronormative script. In this respect, Fran and Nadine inhabited norms in slightly different ways than those raised by heterosexual parents. Normative milestones and traditional life events may still be aspired to or accomplished by children of LBTQ parents, rather than radical responses or rejections of existing social structures and conventional life course trajectories. Nevertheless, the ways that people with LBTQ imagine themselves 'doing' or 'practicing' these life events suggest a reluctance to conform completely. Neither participant positioned themselves or their future choices as a radical or queer act of resistance. Yet, both spoke about how they would experience discomfort living within normative boundaries because

of the ways they were raised. Consequently, this indicates that some children of LBTQ parents go on to contest the division between radical and assimilatory queer families, seeing themselves as within and outside of both the heteronormative and queer ideal.

Fran and Nadine's narratives demonstrated that growing up in LBTQ families can enable people to challenge their own notions of traditional life events. However, other participants, such as Rachael, contested the very idea of 'imagined futures', including the taken for granted meanings and assumptions attributed to certain stages of life. When asked about her plans or ideas about her future she stated:

> I have never really been – some people literally plan it out don't they, 'I'm getting married at this age, having children at this age, they will be named this, I will have a boy and a girl'. I have never really thought about it. I feel like because I have had such a diverse family and upbringing and that kind of thing I have just kind of been like, 'you never really know what's going to happen'. So, I have never really considered it, maybe I will want kids in the future, maybe I won't. Who knows….Maybe my aunty thought she was going to have children and my mum wasn't because my mum was the gay one and now it turns out it being the other way – my gran thought 'oh I'm not going to have a grandchild from my mum, I'm going to have a grandchild from the other one' and it's turned out to be the complete opposite…and Liz (non-biological mother) definitely wasn't expecting to have grandchildren at like, well anytime soon. She was expecting the only grandchildren to be from me and now she has four of them. She just, she wasn't expecting to have three step-sons, 20 something year old manly men. So, I don't know, I guess you just never know what's going to happen and I have always seen that, so I have never really planned anything out. I mean some of Liz's friends have come out and got with a woman and then gone back to a man, so you never really know anything.

Rachael argues that being raised in a family in which roles of parenthood and kinship are so frequently reshaped across the life course has led her to dismiss the imagining and planning of the life in line with normative expectations. Her narrative suggests that in her experience, these notions of the normative life are unhelpful and unrealistic. This narrative of the fluidity and diversity of the life course was voiced by others, however this quote articulated the connection between LBTQ families and openness to future experiences most clearly.

Life course theorists have demonstrated how life courses are socially constructed. Holstein and Gubrium (2007: 339) argue that the 'life course can be viewed as a series of life-long alterations of roles and self-definitions that proceed with age' and that the meanings of certain phases of life are constructed from common ideas about 'age-related roles and role transitions'.

This case indicates that LBTQ families can enable children to challenge essentialist ideas about life course trajectories. For Rachael, living in an LBTQ-headed family, specifically living with separated lesbian parents, offered her the opportunity to contest the notion that following an expected path, 'straight line' or 'liv[ing] the right way' will bring happiness and approval (Ahmed, 2006; 2010). Rachael deconstructs familial roles, highlighting the ways that people can take up parenting and grandparenting roles in unexpected ways, as well as emphasising the temporal (and sometimes temporary) character of these roles and relationships. Rachael is not necessarily deviating from the heteronormative life trajectory and her narrative does not indicate she will reject coupledom and/or childrearing. However, it does suggest that through deconstructing sexual, gender and temporal frameworks she is open to possibilities beyond its confines, enabling space for new and unexpected future intimacies.

8.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have illustrated that the multiple and intersecting identities and relationships for people with LBTQ parents produce complex negotiations of the meaning of normality, normativity and radicalism. Through examining the everyday and mundane ways people with LBTQ parents live their lives, move through the world and imagine their futures, I have demonstrated that, as Ahmed argues, 'to conserve and to deviate are not simply available as political choices' (2006: 174). Through richly varied and diverse life stories of the adult-children cited, I have shown the fallacy of the sameness/difference dichotomy, as ideas and practices shifted in light of personal geographies and temporalities.

Children of LBTQ parents are frequently positioned as either deviating from the norm (positively or negatively) or the same as any other child, thus assimilating into dominant culture. Many participants viewed their families as 'ordinary', particularly highlighting the everyday family and parenting practices to demonstrate the way that their families were just 'normal to them'. However, these notions of normality were not constant for people with LBTQ parents, rather mediated by space and time. As shown, public spaces, such as the street, shops and libraries, often led to exclusionary experiences, causing children to feel out of place, unintelligible and abnormal. Moreover, feelings of difference and exclusion produced a sense of anxiety, and in some contexts, a need to protect themselves and emphasise the 'sameness' of their families. Through using biographical narratives, this study demonstrates that normative family discourses can be used as a tool to protect, explain or legitimise their families, rather than reflecting

normative lived experiences. These stories were not simply reiterations of norms, but methods of negotiating norms differently and orienting themselves in ways that were less threatening, negative or constraining (Ahmed, 2004). This demonstrates notions of 'inherent radicalism or assimilation' cannot sufficiently explain how family narratives by the adult-children of LBTQ parents 'demonstrate complex assertions about their everyday ethics and struggles' (Hicks, 2005: 304).

Furthermore, although some adult-children of LBTQ parents highlighted their discomfort in their families living beyond the norm, others highlighted that this discomfort transformed in adulthood. As participants aged, many found that they were uncomfortable inhabiting heterosexual spaces without challenging dominant narratives. Many participants developed tactics to disrupt heteronormative assumptions surrounding their families, as well as gender and sexuality more broadly. I demonstrate how participants worked on heteronormativity through producing discomfort in others and exposing the continuing power of dominant kinship, gender and sexual logics. Likewise, taking a biographical approach enabled me to investigate how people with LBTQ parents conceptualise their life courses, including how people think about, imagine and practice traditionally referenced life events, including marriage and reproduction. This suggested that adult-children of LBTQ parents may fulfil approved of life events, conform to 'reproductive time' and continue to be shaped by 'respectable scheduling' (Halberstam, 2005: 5). Nevertheless, through participant narratives, we can see the ways that non-normative upbringings led participants to feel discomfort taking part in idealised heteronormative acts. Thus, adult-children may actively re-shape and re-imagine these life events. This suggests, in contrast to theoretical arguments that position queerness as 'anti-relational' or 'anti-social', that connectedness and kinship can encourage everyday practices of resistance and allow children of LBTQ parents to explore alternative organisations of intimate relationships and ways of living. Families and kinship bonds enabled children to build strong family narratives and showed children how to live their lives in different ways, opening up possibilities for their own futures. For some, this meant shifting and reshaping existing modes of family building, while for others it meant rejecting the very notion of an idealised life course, instead opting to focus on possibility, fluidity and unexpectedness of life, kinship roles, relationality and belonging. Although no one articulated this in terms of radical queer activism, by looking at the smaller, quieter or more mundane ways people negotiate normativity we can consider alternative modes of living. This demonstrates the limits of conceptualising queer radicalism only through commitment to iconic and anti-relational queer activism.

Building on this, I have suggested that classifying reproduction, family making and kinship practices as (homo)normative, as articulated by anti-normative queer theorisations, restricts

possibilities for investigating and recognising the alternative methods of resistant social practice within LBTQ-headed families. I argue that the either/or position of transgression and assimilation should be challenged. Essentialist understandings of LBTQ-headed families ignore the multiple and varied life stories of such families. Participants within this study neither completely rejected nor conformed to normative understandings or practices of kinship, sexuality or gender. Rather, these normativities were negotiated depending on access to alternative models, space and place, socio-political context and life stage.

Chapter 9 Conclusion

This thesis has examined how people who have been raised by LBTQ parents narrate their life and family stories, drawing on the biographical narratives of 20 adult-children. The project began with a few key research questions. These included: How do people with LBTQ parents make sense of their own families and the notion of 'the family'? How do LBTQ family stories feature in their life narratives? How does having an LBTQ parent shape the ongoing choices and family practices beyond early childhood? And how does place and space inform the everyday lives of people with LBTQ parents? I was particularly interested in the position of people with LBTQ parents, as although they are mostly not LGBTQ themselves, they may still experience stigma, discrimination and similar life events to LGBTQ people (e.g. repeated coming outs). Like those who identify as LGBTQ, the sociohistorical context in which adult-children of LGBTQ parents are raised is clearly crucial to how their life course unfolds. Participants in the current study have noted the impact of legal restrictions, such as Section 28, on their encounters at school and within their peer groups. However, the narratives of children with LBTQ parents do not entirely replicate LGBTQ stories but include unique and distinctive experiences. In this conclusion, I will revisit some of the main themes and issues examined in the preceding chapters of this thesis. I will also note the implications of this work, as well as the limitations and potential avenues for future research.

9.1 Overview

In the early chapters of this thesis, I identified gaps in the existing literature on LGBTQ-headed families across the social sciences. I argued that although there has been a significant amount of work on the "outcomes" of children with LGBTQ parents, much of this has been quantitative research and compares children of lesbian and gay parents to children of heterosexual parents in an effort to prove their "normality". This research, therefore, positions the legitimacy of LGBTQ families on their ability to raise "normal", heterosexual, gender conforming children. While work on LGBTQ kinship has recognised the importance of non-comparative research (Dempsey, 2010; Gabb, 2004a, 2004b, 2017; Nordqvist, 2012; Stacey, 1996), much of this focuses on parenting and overlooks the experiences of the children in these households. Although there are some examples of studies which include both parents and children (Gabb, 2005a), studies specifically focused on

people raised by LGBTQ parents continue to be limited, particularly when looking at the UK context.

Within this thesis, through combining life course and queer theory, I endeavoured to examine the complex and messy everyday spatialities and relationalities in the life stories of adult-children raised by LBTQ parents. Theoretical work on queer temporality can be useful for examining the life courses of those raised in less traditional families. However, throughout this thesis I have challenged the binary between assimilation/transgression that has been attributed to LGBTQ individuals and families by some queer theorists (Edelman, 2004; Halberstam, 2005). Through combining these theoretical approaches, this framework enabled me to highlight the importance of social and historical contexts, while challenging heteronormative assumptions regarding phases of life, age, relationships, gender and sexuality.

I will highlight three main themes that have cut-across the empirical chapters of this thesis. Firstly, I will discuss the how participant's narrations of their everyday family lives and family practices fall within wider socio-political narratives, such as social normativities of family, (genetic) relatedness, gender and sexuality. I will then discuss the importance of liveability for people with LBTQ parents and the way adult-children work to make their lives liveable. Finally, I will highlight the importance of using a temporal lens for studying (LBTQ) family life, noting shifts within kinship networks over time.

The thesis was interested in examining how adults raised by LBTQ parents narrated their family lives, and how they engaged with and negotiated wider societal norms and conventions around what a family should be. Participants within this study lived in complex families and narrated messy and multifaceted lives. The biographies that were told often simultaneously included assertions of uniqueness *and* normality, of difference *and* sameness. These stories frequently centred on a desire to feel comfortable and belong, to feel understood for what made their families ordinary *and* what made them distinctive. This was something that many participants struggled to reconcile as they grew up, finding a balance between highlighting their parents' minority genders and sexualities as vital parts of their identities, as well as normalising their experiences to 'fit' into specific spatial and temporal moments.

Chapter Five particularly highlights the interplay between discourses and practices of family life. Through examining three narratives in depth, this chapter showed how some children raised by LBTQ parents experience opportunities for chosen, creative and negotiated kinship. Nevertheless, I also demonstrate how dominant ideas of genetic relatedness guide the practices, emotions and actions of people with LBTQ parents. While adult-children of LBTQ parents may embrace their non-normative families, considering non-biological parents as equal parents or

donors as kin, the stories within this thesis also suggest that dominant notions of genetics still matter and continue to inform how, and who we understand as family.

Furthermore, Chapter Seven explores how the dominant norms and conventions within specific spaces (such as home, school and work) shaped everyday experiences and performances. This chapter also highlights how growing up in an LBTQ home can influence adult-children's ability to negotiate other spaces, including school and work. For instance, growing up with LBTQ parents, who demonstrate how to negotiate discrimination and heteronormativity, can teach children of LBTQ parents how to deal with such issues in later life. This then shows how family practices within LBTQ households can encourage (adult-)children to actively resist and re-shape institutional heteronormativity and conventional ideas about what a family should be.

Another related aspect of this thesis highlights the importance of legitimacy and liveability for (adult-)children of LBTQ parents. Many participants expressed a desire to be recognised and to have their families legitimised by both the state and within their social circles. This meant that many utilised dominant narratives of "the family" to place their families within the realms of intelligibility. While this can highlight how children of LBTQ families may draw upon (hetero)normative ideals of family life, we must acknowledge the ways that being unrecognised, invisible, erased or excluded can be emotionally painful and mean we are unable to live a 'liveable' life. In Chapter Eight I showed how normative family narratives were often used to counter assumptions that LBTQ-headed families were essentially "different" from heterosexual families. However, normative family discourses were used to protect or legitimise adult-children's LBTQ families, rather than illustrating the everyday lives and realities of these families. This challenges the idea that LBTQ families are either radical or normal, demonstrating that assimilatory or intelligible kinship narratives are often (re)constructed rather than representative of essentially normative families.

Furthermore, in some instances, the idea of liveability meant understanding and asserting their difference (from heterosexual families) or challenging entrenched gender and sexual norms. For some participants, living in ways that hid the "uniqueness" of their families was uncomfortable, while others felt that they could not ignore moments of homophobia or discrimination. Chapter Eight demonstrates how adult-children of LBTQ parents may engage in small and everyday forms of activism. While these quieter acts may not equate to a radical refusal of heteronormativity, they may still be able to bring about social change or alter traditional assumptions about what families should look like.

Moreover, Chapter Six focuses on how participants related their own identities and origins to their parents' minority gender and sexual identities. Here it was noted how family histories and

origin stories were vital for living a liveable life—a yearning for a sense of knowing one's roots. This chapter highlights how LBTQ origin stories and LBTQ cultural / social heritage were deeply significant in the narratives of people who have been raised by LBTQ parent(s). Through examining the narratives of participants who grew up with, and without, a clear notion of their LBTQ origins, I demonstrate the way that knowledge of their parents' journeys to and through LBTQ parenthood was vital for comprehending or re-framing who they were, as individuals and kin. In particular, the stories in this chapter which described how participants traced their LBTQ family histories indicated how, in order to feel comfortable with their own identity, participants reconstructed the cultural scripts of their families and created new understandings of how family was experienced. This demonstrates how people with LBTQ parents do not necessarily follow or accept conventional scripts of family, but actively work to construct their own meanings of family.

This thesis also emphasised the importance of temporality when examining the everyday lives and practices of families. By exploring the biographical narratives of adult-children with LBTQ parents I have shown the ways that relationships, feelings, emotions and knowledge about living in an LBTQ family change over time. This can be particularly important for those who grew up in times when LGBTQ equalities legislation was limited, and discussions of LGBTQ families were restricted. Likewise, many of those who grew up in households who were quieter about their LBTQ identities and relationships experienced shame about their parents' genders/sexualities in childhood. However, through exploring their biographies, I have shown how feelings of shame were often transformed or challenged in adulthood.

For instance, Chapter Six demonstrates that LBTQ origin stories, whether told in childhood or recreated in adulthood, offered people with LBTQ parents a chance to connect their own family memories and everyday practices with broader LGBTQ histories. Furthermore, Chapter Five demonstrates how the plans LBTQ parents make before conception or their children's early years are just the beginning of the story. The children of LBTQ parents are involved in the (re)construction of family relationships and can re-shape what parents initially thought would be clear, delineated relationships between donors, parents, grandparents and children. This highlights how children in these families are not only the recipients of the stories and practices used to explain their relatedness, but continuously involved in the process of family making. Moreover, Chapter Seven emphasises how coming out, or disclosing, a parent's sexuality or gender is not a one-time event but is continual across the life course. Instances of coming out are not restricted to childhood, instead they are ongoing as participants move through adolescent and adult lives. For some, past experiences of coming out informed how they went on to tell people about their parents. Negative reactions or persistent unwanted questioning often discouraged participants from coming out to people, preferring to 'pass' as having heterosexual

parents in some circumstances. That said, these negative experiences resulted in some participants challenging homophobic or heteronormative views, and wanting to educate people about LBTQ lives and families.

9.2 Contribution

This thesis contributes to geographical and sociological work on family and intimate life, particularly in reference to LGBTQ kinship. Recent sociological work investigating the family has often drawn upon Morgan's (1996) claim that families are something which are 'done'; they are produced through active and continual practices. This has encouraged the examination of everyday processes, practices and intimate relationships, to uncover the challenges and negotiations of everyday life. Moreover, many argue that family practices must be analysed alongside the discourses of "the family" and what the proper families *ought* to be (Edwards and Gillies, 2012; Nordqvist, 2017). This does not necessarily mean that dominant discourses of "the family" guide all family practices. However, we must acknowledge the continued importance of normative family ideals and the interconnection between everyday practices and wider social discourses. As Tarrant and Hall (2019: 4) argue, exploring everyday lives reveals the 'complex micro-politics, spatialities and dynamics of family life'.

The connection between the discourses and practices of family are particularly significant when exploring LGBTQ families, many of which are constructed in a myriad of different ways, most of which do not follow the idealised heteronormative script. In order to become parents, LGBTQ people in these families may have: had children in heterosexual relationships before coming out, adopted, used artificial reproductive technologies such as insemination or IVF, or inseminated at home. Furthermore, parents may have decided to have children alone, in a couple or co-parent with another LGBTQ/heterosexual individual or couple. Likewise, when LGBTQ parents use donors or surrogates, these are not always standardised relationships, with some being known and involved, known and uninvolved, or unknown. Exploring the everyday kinship practices within these families enables an understanding of how they are actively and continually reproduced. However, no matter how innovative these families may seem, they do not live beyond the realms of powerful social norms, that govern what is and what is not legitimate and intelligible.

My own findings further this existing body of scholarship, demonstrating how children in LBTQ families are intricately involved in the coproduction of what it means to 'be' and 'do' family. I offer a geographically and generationally nuanced analyses of individuals with LBTQ parents. The multiple geographies of this group mean that their experiences are not universal or constant. Therefore, throughout this thesis I have highlighted the importance of understanding the influences of power, place, and identity in their everyday lives. By using a geographical lens, I have shown that when we are exploring families we are not only looking at domestic relationships, but also 'memory and possibility, traditional and queer, identity and difference, across space, time and society' (Tarrant and Hall, 2019: 2). I particularly highlight how family space can move beyond the domestic site of the home and the temporal space of the present, including examinations of remembered and re-constructed family histories, imagined futures and intersections of social spaces across time.

I have also provided important empirical findings that have not yet been discussed in existing literature on (adult-)children with LBTQ parents. The workplace is one aspect which has not yet been examined in existing scholarship. Participants in this study voiced how work choices were linked with their experience of growing up in an LBTQ-parent family. For instance, some participants represented their families through film, digital media, and autobiographical books; by focusing on gender and sexuality in academic work; and supporting LGBTQ communities and policies in their public-sector jobs. Additionally, although past research has suggested that children of LGBTQ parents may have different notions of what family means, no study has investigated the processes or practices surrounding the creation of their own families in later in life. This study has shown that some adults raised by LBTQ parents have sought to create non-normative families or families of choice that extend beyond heteronormative family models.

Furthermore, although I have used life course and queer theory to analyse the narrative accounts of my participants, I have endeavoured to retain the diverse narratives and viewpoints of the adult-children I interviewed. As I have argued, there is limited research on children with LGBTQ parents. However, the research that does exist often highlights the normality and sameness of these families (in comparison to children who grow up in heterosexual-households). Equally, some research has shown that children of LGBTQ parents feel pressure to live up to this notion of normality and adjustment (Goldberg, 2007a). Therefore, I have striven to include narratives that show the diversity of experience. Including those stories which stressed the positivity of having LBTQ parents, but also incorporating those which were predominantly about the struggle, pain and distress of being a child of LBTQ parent(s). We are only at the start of understanding the ways that individuals raised in non-heteronormative households navigate society over time. By building knowledge about life courses within this distinct population, we can

create a space for people with LBTQ parents to have their voices heard in the debates that concern them.

9.3 Implications

During the three years I have been researching and writing about adult-children of LBTQ parents, several books have been published by, and about, people who have been raised by LGBTQ parents (Perry, 2017; Epstein-Fine and Zook, 2018). Although both of these come from a North American context, they demonstrate a desire to carve out a space for the voices of people raised by LGBTQ parents 'without the pressures of having to conform to a narrative that demands perfection…[or] that we turned out alright' (Epstein-Fine and Zook, 2018: 5). As highlighted earlier in this thesis, North America has more formal and informal networks for children with LGBTQ parents than the UK. One participant in this study, Nadine, who was raised by two lesbian mothers and a heterosexual father, had engaged in the US organisation COLAGE, but found it difficult to find other people with LGBTQ parents in the UK. She said:

> I have tried to find community here. I emailed people…but it was all parent groups and no one replied. I couldn't really find anything.

Although an organisation like COLAGE in the US may not fit the UK context, the interviews did highlight a lack of social support, beyond their own families, for people with LBTQ parents. Participants in this research discussed feeling isolated in their experiences when they were describing what they saw as the more unique aspects of being raised by LBTQ parents. Many, therefore, believed they would have benefited from knowing more people who had LGBTQ parents and specifically having a space in which they could talk through the difficulties and challenges they faced as a child. This suggests that some sort of community group, which focuses *specifically* on children raised by LGBTQ people (rather than parents or families as a whole), is needed within the UK.

Furthermore, some participants narrated instances where their experiences were overlooked, ignored or misunderstood in institutional settings. Participants identified experiences in schools and healthcare settings, particularly when seeking support for their mental health, in which they had to work to be understood. In these cases, councillors and teachers, rather than supporting children and young people, demanded greater emotional labour from participants. This suggests that the findings from research on people with LGBTQ parents should be used to

update and inform training material for teachers and healthcare professionals to include an understanding of the challenges that those with LGBTQ parents or carers experience.

9.4 Limitations and future research

The current study has some clear limitations. As highlighted in Chapter Four, the challenges encountered when recruiting participants for the study meant that the sample was fairly homogenous, particularly in terms of the gender and sexuality of parents. Although families were constructed in a variety of ways, 17 of the 20 participants were raised by at least one lesbian parent, with only one participant being raised by a bisexual parent and two participants being raised by a trans parent. Therefore, I had no life stories from people who were raised by gay male parents. Although some of the findings of people with lesbian or trans parents may echo the experiences of people with gay male parents, there are also likely to be some distinctive experiences which I have not been able to capture within this thesis. In particular, it would have been interesting to investigate the experiences of people who were raised exclusively by gay fathers, due to the ongoing emphasis on the importance of mothers (over fathers) for children (Goldberg, 2012). This may be an area that requires more research in the future, as more gay men, without female co-parents, are increasingly having children through surrogacy and adoption (Dempsey, 2013; Gianino, 2008).

Furthermore, my interviews with people with trans parents were limited to two. These two interviews highlighted some important findings that have not yet been acknowledged in work on people with LGBTQ parents. Specifically, there were discussions around gender, the social and medical transitions of their parents, and changing names and pronouns, that were unique to these two interviews. Furthermore, the increased social debate surrounding trans identities shaped the everyday experiences of people with trans parents, in a different way from those with cis-gender LGBQ parents. As Hines (2006: 363) argues, although there are many trans people who are parents, 'there is a cultural reticence to speak about trans people as parents'. Consequently, there continues to be very little literature on trans parents themselves, and even less on the experiences of their children. Therefore, I would argue that more research is needed to explicitly explore the experiences of intimacy, family and kinship for people with trans parents.

Additionally, while this study offers examples of connection between genetic discourses and family practice for (adult-)children of LBTQ parents, this is an area that requires more

attention. The shifting landscape of reproductive law will no doubt shape future family formations and relationships. The participants in this study, conceived through the use of a donor, were conceived prior to the removal of donor anonymity in the UK in April 2005 (HFEA, 2019b). Individuals conceived after April 2005 will be able to access identifying information in 2023 (at the age of 18). It remains unknown how children conceived after this time will think and feel about their donors with options for future contact. How will this alter the genetic thinking of children, the stories told by parents and the inter-personal relationships within families? These are important questions to flag, as the number of people using donor eggs and sperm continue to increase each year (HFEA, 2019a).

Finally, many participants speculated that children raised by LGBTQ parents in the present would have a better experience than their own, as the equalities landscape has shifted to include increased rights and legitimisation of LGBTQ relationships and families. However, Nash and Browne's (2019) recent work suggests that there has been an increase in opposition to these legislative equalities. This has encompassed opposition to school support for trans children and protests against Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) which include teaching about same-sex relationships and LGBTQ identities. Thus, moving forward, it is important to consider how children of LGBTQ parents will experience these new oppositional strategies or forms of 'heteroactivism' (Nash and Browne, 2019). This is especially significant when these debates are taking place within classrooms and around schools, therefore visible to children, some of which may have LGBTQ parents themselves.

Appendix A Participant information sheet

Study title: Life Course Perspectives of Adults Raised by LGBTQ Parents

Researcher: Eliza Garwood

Ethics number: 26719

You are being asked to take part in a research project. Please read this information carefully before deciding to take part in this research. Get in touch if there is anything that is not clear, or if you would like more information. Take your time deciding whether or not you wish to take part and discuss it with others if you wish. If you decide to participate you will be given a hard copy of this sheet and asked to sign a consent form.

What is the research project about?

This research project will form the basis of my PhD. The project seeks to give a voice to those who have been raised by LGBTQ+ parents. Although there has been lots of attention given to LGBTQ+ parents, we often don't hear the voices of those brought up in these families. This research will seek to understand more about how people's everyday lives have been shaped by their families, both in childhood and ongoing adult lives.

Do I have to take part?

It is completely your decision whether you would like to take part or not. If you do decide to take part, you will be given a copy of this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. However, even after you have agreed and signed the consent form, you are still free to withdraw from the study any time before or during the interview and can withdraw your interview data within 30 days of the interview. You do not have to give a reason for your withdrawal.

What do I have to do?

You will be invited to take part in a one-to-one interview. The interview will be scheduled at a time that works for you and will take place at a location of your choosing, this could be your home or a quiet public place. The interviewer will travel to you, so you won't have any travel expenses. The interview is likely to last between half an hour and two hours depending on how much you wish to say about your experiences. I anticipate that this will only involve one interview, however there may be a few follow up questions if I need to confirm any of your comments, please note that you are not required to answer these if you do not wish to. If you feel that you didn't cover everything you wanted to say in the interview, a follow up interview can be arranged.

What sort of questions will I be asked in the interview?

The interview will start by asking you about your past and the family you have grown-up in to understand more about your background and your past experiences. Next, we will talk about your recent experiences, this can include experiences of home life, family life, relationships, education, work etc. After this we will discuss any plans or aspirations you have for your future. Finally, we will go through a few demographic questions. The interview will be very informal and mostly led by you and your experiences.

Will I be recorded?

Interviews will be recorded on a dictaphone. These will later be transcribed (written down) and the audio recording will be deleted.

Are there any risks involved?

There are no particular risks involved with this research project. As stated, the interview will be led by you, so you are free to say or not say whatever you like. However, there may be points in the interview where we cover issues or experiences that could be distressing for you. In this case, you

are welcome to have a break, move on to the next topic or stop the interview.

What's in it for me? Why should I take part?

For the majority of people, taking part in a research project like this is a positive experience as it's an opportunity for you to share your experiences and opinions. There is also a small cash incentive for being interviewed. You will receive £10 for taking part.

Will my participation be confidential?

All information gathered during your interview will be kept strictly confidential for the course of the research project. All data will be kept in compliance with the Data Protection Act. The data will be analysed and saved on a password protected computer at all times. The findings of the project will be anonymised so that no participants will be able to be identified in the final written-up project or any subsequent publications.

What happens if I change my mind?

If at any point before, during or up to 30 days after the interview you decide you don't want to take part in the project anymore, you have a right to withdraw with assurance that the interview will be deleted/destroyed. Withdrawal is only possible within the 30 days following the interview, as to withdraw data following this time period would unduly affect the study.

Who is funding the research?

The research is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC): the ESRC is the UK's leading research funder addressing economic and social concerns.

Appendix A

What happens if something goes wrong?

In the unlikely case of concern or complaint, please contact:

Head of Research Governance, University of Southampton,
rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk
+44 (0) 2380 595058

Where can I get further information?

Please contact me with any questions via email.

Eliza Garwood

Geography & Environment

University of Southampton

SO17 1BJ

Email: e.g.garwood@soton.ac.uk

Thank you

Thank you for taking the time to read the information sheet and considering taking part in the research.

Appendix B Interview Consent Form

Study title: Life Course Perspectives of Adults Raised by LGBTQ Parents

Researcher name: Eliza Garwood

Ethics reference: 26719

Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the information sheet (dated 15/05/17 version 1.1) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study. ☐

I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to be recorded and used for the purpose of this study. ☐

I understand that my responses will be anonymised in reports of the research, and that I will not be identified or identifiable in the publications or reports that result from the research. ☐

I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw from the study at any time within 30 days of the interview. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question then I am free to decline. ☐

Data Protection

I understand that information collected about me during my participation in this study will be stored on a password protected computer and that this information will only be used for the purpose of this study.

Name of participant (print name)……

Signature of participant……

Date……

Appendix C Sample Interview Schedule

Project title: Life Course Perspectives of Adults Raised by LGBTQ Parents

1. Can you tell me a bit about your childhood and what it was like growing up with an LGBTQ+ parent?
   (you can go back as early as you like)

   Possible follow up questions:

   - How and when did you know your mother(s)/father(s)/parent(s) was/were LGBTQ+?
   - Did you live in one home or between various homes? Did you move during your childhood?
   - What was your school life like?
   - Did your family change at any point? Did anyone come into the family or leave the family?
   - Were there any particularly difficult points for you in your childhood/adolescence and family life?
   - Were you aware of any policy or legislation that impacted on your family? Were you aware of any changes to this? How did you feel about that?

2. Can you tell me a bit about your current life/adult life (this includes home life, family, work, social/friends)?

   Possible follow up questions:

   - Do you think having LGBTQ+ parent(s) has shaped your adult life? Why?
   - What are your relationships with your family like now? Are these similar/different to when you were growing up?
   - Do you still live close to your family members?
   - How do you feel about having LGBTQ+ parent(s) now and have these feeling shifted over the years?
   - Do you tell people about your family - this might include friends, colleagues, acquaintances? Why/why not?

3. What are your hopes and aspirations for the future (this includes home life, family, work, social/friends)?

   Possible follow up questions:

   - Do you think any of your future plans have been shaped by your experience of having LGBTQ+ parent(s) or the way you were raised? Why?

4. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experiences?

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