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On the Border: Young Adults With LGBQ Parents Navigate LGBTQ Communities

Abbie E. Goldberg, Lori A. Kinkler, Hannah B. Richardson, and Jordan B. Downing
Clark University

Little research has examined the perspectives of young adults with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) parents, particularly in relation to their identification with the LGBTQ community. To address this gap, we conducted a qualitative study of 42 young adults (ages 18–29) who were raised by LGBQ parents. We found that participants often described their sense of belonging to the LGBTQ community as shifting over the life course. Some participants, particularly those whose parents had always been out, felt connected to the LGBTQ community as children. Of these, most maintained those connections over time. However, some increasingly deidentified with the LGBTQ community, which they sometimes attributed to their own heterosexual identification. Others, particularly those whose parents came out later in life, described a lack of connection to the LGBTQ community as children. Of these, most became increasingly identified with the community, which they often attributed to their own and their parents' increasing sense of comfort with their parents' sexuality. Heterosexual participants who sought out LGBTQ-oriented groups in young adulthood sometimes encountered resistance from these groups, whereby participants' reasons for wanting to become involved were not readily apparent or appreciated. Our findings highlight the need for practitioners to understand the complex and often changing role of the LGBTQ community in the lives of young adults with LGBQ parents.

Keywords: community, LGBTQ, life course, qualitative, young adults

Children who are raised by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) parents may be viewed as bordering two communities: the LGBTQ community and the mainstream heterosexual-dominant community (Garner, 2004; Goldberg, 2007a). As children, these individuals may access and be welcomed into the LGBTQ community on the basis of their parents' membership and identification. As they become young adults, however, those who identify as heterosexual and/or who move away from their parents may increasingly deidentify with the LGBTQ community. Alternatively, some individuals may retain a sense of identification with and connection to the LGBTQ community but feel ousted from it based on their heterosexual identification. Indeed, while the LGBTQ community may offer opportunities for identification, support, and belonging, a community also "automatically carries with it margins and borders; it is a practice that denotes exclusion" (Drevdahl, 2002, p. 11).

The current study explored the experiences of 42 young adults (ages 18–29) with LGBQ parents, with attention to how they described navigating their membership in the LGBTQ community

during childhood and young adulthood. This research is important in that little scholarly attention has been paid to the community identifications or needs of young adults with LGBQ parents, in spite of research and clinical evidence that this population may struggle with feeling like outsiders to both LGBTQ and mainstream communities (Garner, 2004) and may have unique needs related to peer support and community building (Kovalanka, Teper, & Morrison, 2006). Thus, our findings have implications for scholars who study young adults with LGBQ parents and counselors who work with this population. Our specific research questions are the following:

1. How do young adults with LGBQ parents explain their sense of connection to or disconnection from the LGBTQ community as children? What are the perceived contributors and barriers to identification and connection?
2. What are the perceived positive aspects of involvement in the LGBTQ community? That is, (how) do young adults with LGBQ parents view their connection to the LGBTQ community as offsetting the impact of minority stress and as supporting their development?
3. In what ways do young adults with LGBQ parents perceive their patterns of identification and involvement with the LGBTQ community as shifting across the transition to young adulthood, and how do they understand or account for such change?
4. How do young adults with LGBQ parents navigate issues of membership in the LGBTQ community during young

Abbie E. Goldberg, Lori A. Kinkler, Hannah B. Richardson, and Jordan B. Downing, Department of Psychology, Clark University.

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Abbie E. Goldberg, Department of Psychology, Clark University, 950 Main Street, Worcester, MA 01610. E-mail: agoldberg@clarku.edu

adulthood (when their association with the community is not obvious), and how do they respond to challenges in this regard?

In the following sections, we describe (a) the potential benefits of involvement in the LGBTQ community for LGBTQ adults,¹ (b) the limited research on the LGBTQ community involvement of young adults with LGBTQ parents, and (c) our theoretical perspective.

LGBTQ Community Identification and Involvement

For individuals who identify with a minority status, particularly one that is denigrated by the larger culture, access to and contact with other individuals who share that minority status can be profoundly important. Sexual minorities (i.e., LGBTQ people) are one such minority group. Indeed, theoretical models of coming out denote finding community as one of the central developmental stages in establishing a proud LGBTQ identity (Cass, 1979). For example, individuals may seek out people, groups, places, and literature that function to support their emergent LGBTQ identity (Munt, Bassett, & O’Riordan, 2002). Involvement in LGBTQ communities may in turn have an effect on well-being: Sexual minorities who feel identified with and involved in an LGBTQ community often demonstrate better mental health than those who feel alienated or isolated from it (Garnets & D’Augelli, 1994; McLaren, Jude, & McLachlan, 2008).

Although the mechanisms through which involvement in the LGBTQ community lead to better mental health are not clearly understood, it is widely suggested that they include mutual identification, fostering of a group identity, diminished feelings of isolation, shared beliefs and concerns, enhanced personal empowerment, and feelings of greater self-acceptance (LeBeau & Jellison, 2009). Involvement with groups that are often considered to be part of the LGBTQ community (such as LGBTQ student groups, LGBTQ-affirming religious groups, and LGBTQ rights organizations) are often identified as important in facilitating individuals’ sense of belonging and empowerment (Goodenow, Szalacha, & Westheimer, 2006; Lee, 2002). LGBTQ youth, for example, often describe their involvement in gay/straight alliances (GSAs) as helping them to develop a sense of personal empowerment (Lee, 2002; Russell, Muraco, Subramaniam, & Laub, 2009) and relational empowerment (i.e., solidarity with other LGBTQ youth; Russell et al., 2009), as well as skills for coping with heterosexism (Lee, 2002). LGBTQ adults describe similar types of benefits associated with their identification with and involvement in the gay community as a whole (Fraser, 2008). Involvement in LGBTQ groups and communities can foster valuable opportunities for the exchange of support and information, which can help to offset the stigma that LGBTQ people may encounter in society (Garnets & D’Augelli, 1994; LeBeau & Jellison, 2009).

LGBTQ Community Identification and Involvement: Children and Young Adults With LGBQ Parents

Children and young adults with LGBTQ parents are uniquely defined by the fact that they typically identify as heterosexual, but as a function of their membership in an LGBTQ-parent family, they are exposed to minority stress and experience the effects of

cultural heterosexism in their communities (Goldberg, 2007a). In other words, regardless of whether or not they personally identify as sexual minorities, they are vulnerable to the effects of minority stress due to the sexual minority status of their parents. For example, laws that discriminate against LGBTQ people, antigay remarks by politicians, and homophobic schoolyard taunts such as “fag” or “lezzie” may be experienced as inherently personal by children with LGBTQ parents. In turn, youth with LGBTQ parents may feel unsafe at school (Russell, McGuire, Lee, Larriva, & Laub, 2008), are vulnerable to teasing about their families (Kosciw & Diaz, 2008), and show poorer mental health in the presence of high levels of perceived heterosexism (Gartrell, Deck, Rodas, Peyser, & Banks, 2005).

Although little work has examined the role of the LGBTQ community in the lives of children and young adults with LGBTQ parents, the existing research suggests that LGBTQ community involvement may be beneficial. Bos and van Balen (2008) studied 8- to 12-year-olds with lesbian/gay parents in the Netherlands and found that children who had more frequent contact with other children with lesbian/gay parents were less vulnerable to the effects of stigmatization on their self-esteem. Bos, Gartrell, van Balen, Peyser, and Sandfort (2008) studied 10-year-olds in the United States and the Netherlands and found that children whose lesbian mothers were more involved in the lesbian community were more resilient to the effects of homophobia than children whose mothers were less involved. These findings suggest that for children with LGBTQ parents, involvement with other LGBTQ-parent families and the broader LGBTQ community may provide opportunities for support and belonging that may buffer the effects of societal heterosexism. Thus, a general question of interest in this study is, What are the perceived positive aspects of community involvement for children with LGBQ parents? To what extent do they describe support, belonging, and other hypothesized benefits of the LGBTQ community as protective resources during their development?

As children, individuals with LGBTQ parents may feel strongly connected to the LGBTQ community (Garner, 2004; Goldberg, 2007a), particularly if they identify as members of the queer cultural context in which they grew up (a context defined by shared values, community gatherings, expressions of celebration, and, in some cases, political activism). Individuals who identify as culturally queer may continue to feel connected to and benefit from involvement with the LGBTQ community even as they grow older and possibly move away from their LGBTQ parents (Garner, 2004). Goldberg (2007a) interviewed 46 adults (ages 19–50) with LGB parents and found that about half noted that even as adults, living apart from their families of origin, they continued to see themselves as part of the LGBTQ community, having “taken on the political values and strivings of the gay community” (p. 556). Half of participants, then, did not perceive themselves as part of the LGBTQ community. This finding, which was not explored in depth, raises the question of what factors facilitate versus impede identification with the LGBTQ community, both in childhood and

¹ We use the term *LGBQ* to describe the parents of our participants because no participants identified their parents as transgender. We use the term *LGBTQ* in reference to communities because this is a more inclusive term.

adulthood. Thus, a central question in this study is, How do young adults with LGBQ parents explain their sense of connection to or disconnection from the LGBTQ community, both as children (while growing up with LGBQ parents) and as young adults?

A related question involves how young adults describe changes in their community identification across time. Most of the participants in the current study were in college or had recently graduated (41 of 42). Thus, the transition of beginning college (or moving away from home) was an identifiable landmark in their transition to young adulthood (Berman & Sperling, 1991). The transition to early adulthood—and, even more specifically, the departure from one's childhood home—often marks a change in adolescents' attachments and identifications (Hiester, Nordstron, & Swenson, 2009). It entails a process of separations from one's family of origin (Levinson, 1978) and often represents a period of increased autonomy and exploration (Arnett, 2000; Hiester et al., 2009). Thus, it is reasonable to expect that as young adults begin to separate from their LGBQ parents both emotionally and physically, they may experience a decreased sense of attachment to the LGBTQ communities and organizations that they associate with their parents.

Of course, the nature and degree of change in individuals' attachment to the LGBTQ community during the transition to young adulthood are likely influenced by several factors. Goldberg (2007b) found that some of the adults with LGB parents whom she interviewed described reclaiming a sense of pride in their parents' LGB identity upon reaching high school or college. Thus it is possible that individuals' own changing feelings about their parents' sexuality might cause shifts in their sense of affiliation with the LGBTQ community over the life course. Furthermore, individuals' own emergent sexual identities might also shape their relationship to and sense of belonging in the LGBTQ community in young adulthood. A heterosexual identification, for example, may lead some individuals to feel less connected to the LGBTQ community over time, whereby they seek out other sources of support and connection.

However, some heterosexual persons—particularly those who identify as culturally queer—may continue to feel identified with the LGBTQ community into young adulthood but may encounter challenges to their membership, in that their relationship to the LGBTQ community is no longer obvious. Goldberg (2007a) observed that some heterosexual participants in her study described uncertainty or tensions surrounding their place within the LGBTQ community, and yet their years of involvement in the community “led them to feel at home in, and even entitled to belong in, that community” (p. 557). This theme, which was not explored in depth, raises questions about the tensions that heterosexual young adults with LGBQ parents may encounter in relation to LGBTQ communities. For example, they may turn to LGBTQ communities for support and solidarity but face resistance from LGBTQ persons who question their membership in the community. Thus, another question of interest is, To what extent do heterosexual young adults find their membership questioned, and how do they respond to instances of confusion or rejection?

Likewise of interest is how the experiences of sexual minority young adults with LGBQ parents may differ from those of heterosexual young adults with LGBQ parents with regard to their identification with and connection to the LGBTQ community. In that the former group may access LGBTQ communities primarily

or at least in part because of their own sexual identification, they may experience a greater sense of entitlement regarding their right to belong. Additionally, in that shared identity and experiences are often understood to be hallmarks of and perhaps criteria for membership in the LGBTQ community (Fraser, 2008), sexual minority individuals are likely more readily recognized as true members of the LGBTQ community.

Theoretical Perspective

A theoretical framework that integrates ecological, life course, minority stress, and bicultural perspectives informs the study. An ecological approach to human development acknowledges that individuals exist within and are influenced by multiple intersecting contexts, which are in turn influenced by the individual (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). At the most immediate level, the person is shaped by his or her family, friends, and school. At a broader level, the person is influenced by his or her neighborhood, the mass media, and the legal system, as well as the societal ideologies embedded within these distal contexts. As the person develops, the influences of particular contexts may shift or become more or less salient. The ecological approach is useful in examining young adults with LGBQ parents in that they may interact within several, possibly conflicting ecosystems (e.g., their parent's community, their peers, the broader heteronormative society), the nature and salience of which may change over time. Thus, their perceptions of their connectedness to the LGBTQ community may be shaped by these shifting multiple contexts.

An additional context of interest is the influence of time. A life course perspective emphasizes that understanding development requires awareness not only of the broader contexts in which it occurs but of the particular life stage a person is in, how that stage is interpreted by the person, and how the person changes over time (Elder, 1994, 1998). For example, children's experience of their parents' LGBTQ identity might shift over time (e.g., from a sense of shame to a feeling of pride; Goldberg, 2007b). Furthermore, a life course perspective emphasizes the transitions and trajectories that occur in a person's life. A single individual's life course can be viewed as a sequence of socially defined, age-graded events and roles that the individual enacts over time (Elder, 1998). Transitions into and out of social roles across the life span involve changes in personal and social status and identity. Moving out of the family home, for example, may involve gaining new roles (e.g., college student) as well as making adjustments to already held roles (e.g., daughter). In addition to the expected or normative transitions that the individual enacts over the life course, unexpected transitions may also occur (e.g., a parent's coming out as LGBTQ). Both expected and unexpected transitions stimulate changes in roles, the quality of close relationships, and individual identity. According to a life course perspective, the timing of life events and transitions is key and may have implications for the individual's developmental trajectory, as well as the trajectories of those with whom one's life is “linked” (e.g., family members; Elder, 1994, p. 5). For instance, one's experience of one's parent coming out might differ depending on the timing of this event, in terms of the age and developmental stage of both parent and child.

Within their varied contexts and across time, individuals with sexual minority parents may be exposed to minority stress, or psychosocial stress derived from one's minority status (Meyer,

2003). Although the experience of *secondary minority stress* has been noted to impact family members of LGBTQ people (Arm, Horne, & Levitt, 2009), minority stress has rarely been examined in the context of young adults with LGBQ parents, even though their stigmatized minority structure may expose them to similar types of prejudice as their LGBQ parents, at least when they are children and their membership in this family structure is obvious. Of note is that minority status may not only result in experiences of stigma but may also present opportunities for group affiliation, which may buffer the negative effects of minority stress (Miller & Kaiser, 2001). Yet children and young adults with LGBQ parents may not seek out LGBTQ-oriented sources of support for a variety of reasons. For example, they may live in a rural area and may not have access to LGBTQ-specific resources. Or they may not recognize the need for such communities because they and/or their parents are not out and they therefore do not perceive stigmatization of homosexuality as threatening to their sense of self. Finally, some persons may simply not identify with the LGBTQ community, particularly if, as young adults, they identify as heterosexual.

On the other hand, some individuals may identify as heterosexual (and thus as part of the dominant mainstream society) and may also continue to feel connected to the LGBTQ community. Indeed, similar to persons who are members of more than one cultural, ethnic, and/or racial group, heterosexual individuals with LGBQ parents may identify as members of two dual, sometimes opposing contexts (i.e., as bicultural; Marks, Patton, & Garcia-Coll, 2011). Research suggests that bicultural persons often describe feelings of pride and uniqueness related to their bicultural identities but may also encounter identity confusion, dual expectations, and value clashes, where biculturalism is experienced as “a dichotomy and a paradox; you are both cultures and at the same time, you are neither” (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005, p. 1016). Heterosexual young adults with LGBQ parents, particularly those who were highly identified with the LGBTQ community in childhood, may experience themselves as straddling two communities and may thus describe similar tensions in navigating their dual membership in the LGBTQ community and the dominant community as young adults. Some heterosexual persons with LGBQ parents, on the other hand, may align themselves largely with the mainstream dominant culture once they reach young adulthood (Marks et al., 2011). Finally, LGBTQ young adults with LGBQ parents may position themselves largely within the nonmajority culture (i.e., the LGBTQ community).

Method

Description of the Sample

A total of 42 young adults participated in the study. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 29, with a mean age of 23 years ($Mdn = 23$, $SD = 2.87$). With regard to gender, 33 participants identified as female, eight as male, and one as gender queer. With regard to sexual orientation, 32 participants identified as heterosexual, five as queer, two as gay, two as bisexual, and one as lesbian. Most participants ($n = 36$) were White; three identified as Hispanic/Latin American, two as multiracial, and one as African American. In terms of education, one participant had a high school diploma but was not in college, 18 participants had a high school diploma and were in college, 11 participants had a college degree and were

currently employed, 10 held a bachelor's degree and were currently in graduate school, one had a master's degree, and one had a law degree.

Participants grew up in a variety of family situations. In 17 cases, participants were born to two mothers via donor insemination and had a biological mother and a nonbiological mother. In 19 cases, participants were born to heterosexual parents, one or both of whom later came out as LGB (in 10 cases, their mother; in eight cases, their father; in one case, both). One participant was born to a single lesbian mother, one was born to a bisexual mother and a gay father, one was born to a lesbian couple and a gay male couple (and all four coparented), one was adopted by two lesbian mothers at birth, one was adopted by two gay fathers at birth, and one was born to heterosexual parents but later adopted by a lesbian couple after entering the foster care system.

The participants in the study grew up in a variety of states. Sixteen participants were raised in California; five in Pennsylvania; three in Massachusetts; two each in Georgia, Minnesota, and Ohio; and one each in Arizona, Delaware, Florida, Idaho, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, New York, Oregon, Texas, Virginia, and Washington state.

Participant Recruitment

Participants were recruited in a variety of ways. Young adults (which we specified as individuals between the ages of 14 and 29) with LGBQ parents were invited via several Listserv announcements to participate in a study focused on understanding their perspectives on and experiences with marriage (in)equality, as well as several other topics—including, relevant to this study, their experiences with various communities.² For example, calls for participants were placed on Listservs maintained by COLAGE, an organization run by and for individuals with one or more LGBQ parents, and the Safe Schools Coalition, a partnership of organizations that seek to promote tolerance in schools by providing resources for students, parents, and schools. LGBTQ centers on several university campuses also disseminated study information. Several chapters of PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) also provided information to members.

Procedure

Abbie E. Goldberg's contact information was included with the study description, and potential participants contacted her for more information. If interested, the participant was mailed a consent form ensuring confidentiality and detailing the conditions of participation and a packet of questionnaires. The participant then completed an in-depth, semistructured telephone interview (about 1 hr) with Abbie E. Goldberg or a trained research assistant. The interview questions, which were informed by the literature on youth with LGBQ parents, were originally pretested on several young adults with LGBQ parents and then revised based upon

² Although the larger study did include participants who were under 18, these participants were excluded from the current study inasmuch as they were typically still residing at home with their parents and therefore their perspectives and vantage points differed from participants over age 18, who were able to reflect on their experiences both as children/adolescents and also as individuals living on their own.

participant feedback as well as additional themes that emerged in the early interviews. We involved participants as much as possible in the formulation of our study design to promote reciprocity and to avoid “othering” our population of interest (Harrison, MacGibbon, & Morton, 2001, p. 333). The current study is based primarily on our analysis of the following open-ended interview questions:

1. Tell me a little bit about the community/communities you grew up in. (Standard probes: How gay-friendly were they? How comfortable did you feel in them?)
2. As a person with one or more LGBQ parents, do you currently feel connected to, or a part of, the LGBTQ community? Which specific communities do you feel a part of? What about when you were a child? Have your feelings of connection changed over time? (Standard probes: Why do you think that you feel/felt connected/not connected? Why do you think that your feelings of connection have changed/stayed the same?)
3. Have there been times where you felt excluded from the LGBTQ community (e.g., people thought you didn’t belong because you were not LGB)? How did you deal with this?

Data Analysis Process

Interviews were transcribed and analyzed using qualitative methods, which are particularly suited to grounding participants’ constructions within their specific sociocultural context (Morrow, 2005). Specifically, we engaged in a thematic analysis, which involves carefully sorting through data to identify recurrent themes or patterns (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). We chose thematic analysis because it is a versatile qualitative technique in which the themes or patterns that emerge are strongly linked to the data and not primarily driven by the researcher’s prior presumptions or theories (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Our thematic analysis is grounded in a social constructivist philosophy of science, whereby we view participants’ discourse as illustrative of their meaning-making processes, rather than of any presumed objective reality (Gergen, 1985; Ponterotto, 2005). Although we emphasize the emergence of themes, we recognize that any analysis of the data involves the researchers’ constructed interpretation of the participants’ discourse (Gergen, 1985).

Using techniques described in detail below, we examined participants’ descriptions of their connection to the LGBTQ community, paying attention to how these themes might vary based on gender, sexual orientation, and family structure (i.e., whether they grew up in an LGB-parent family or their LGB parent[s] came out postdivorce). Because we specifically asked participants about both their childhood and current connection to the LGBTQ community, we paid specific attention to emerging patterns related to change (or stability) of connections over time, and we developed themes, which were derived from the codes that were most substantiated in the data, to reflect these patterns. We approached our analysis using our integrative theoretical lens, which sensitized us to attend to ecological, life course, minority stress, and bicultural issues.

To develop themes from the data, we utilized a process of analytic triangulation, by which we independently coded the data

and compared our findings throughout the coding process. Analytic triangulation ensures that multiple interpretations are considered and lends itself to verification of the soundness of the emerging descriptive scheme (Patton, 2002). We engaged in a systematic process of data analysis (Patton, 2002), where we first engaged in line-by-line analysis of each participant transcript to generate initial theoretical categories (Charmaz, 2006). We discussed the emerging codes and our differences in interpretation at regular coding meetings. We resolved coding differences through in-depth discussion, which usually involved returning to the narratives themselves. In analyzing the data, we recognized that our theoretical perspective, choice of methods, and unique worldviews necessarily shaped our interpretation of the data. Therefore, much of our discussion during coding meetings centered on carefully considering our own biases as individuals and as a group. In this way, we examined not only the data but ourselves in an effort to foster reciprocity and therefore trustworthiness as researchers (Harrison et al., 2001).

As we moved through this initial coding process, we expanded and collapsed codes where appropriate and created new codes based on emerging theoretical constructs. Once we had developed clearly articulated codes, we applied focused coding to the data, using the most significant codes to sort the data. At this stage, we further specified our codes by developing subcodes, which denoted information about how or why participants felt a particular way (e.g., some participants attributed their lack of connection to the LGBTQ community to their parents’ lack of outness). We also attended to relationships among key categories (Charmaz, 2006). For example, we systematically coded participant gender, sexual orientation, and family structure and examined these constructs in relation to participant responses regarding community identification and change in identification over time. Our focused codes were created by identifying the most frequent and significant codes to sort the data across participants (Charmaz, 2006), and these focused codes became the basis for what we refer to as the themes developed in our analysis.

To illustrate our process of moving from initial to focused coding, we provide an example. In initial coding meetings, all four of us discussed our interpretations of passages of text, such as the following response from a 22-year-old heterosexual woman named Elise³ about her sense of connection to the LGBTQ community as a child: “I felt really comfortable in the gay community. My mother’s friends were all supportive and involved and they were really important role models.” The initial codes that we developed based on our independent reading of this passage were: *comfortable in the community* and *importance of adult LGBTQ role models*. These initial codes were relatively short and precise, the goal being to stay close to the data and to capture participants’ perceptions. After completing several rounds of coding, we discussed which codes should be integrated, and the process of focused coding began as all four of us returned to the data, applying the most significant and frequent codes (Charmaz, 2006). At this stage, we attended to relationships between codes across time (how participants described their connection to the LGBTQ community as a child and how they described their current connection) and according to participant gender, sexual orientation,

³ Pseudonyms were assigned to all participants to protect confidentiality.

and family structure. For example, we examined Elise's description of childhood connection to the LGBTQ community in relation to her description of her current sense of connection: "Now I'm less connected and involved than I was in high school or college. And I think that's just because I'm a lot more busy. . . . And I'm straight so I don't identify as much." We coded this part of the narrative as *decreased sense of connection* and also further specified this code by developing a subcode that denoted Elise's interpretation of the reason for this decreased connection: *developing own interests*. These codes were reapplied to all of the data, whereby we examined other participants' narratives for similar shifts in connection due to enhanced autonomy, with special attention to whether these themes were especially salient for particular groups (e.g., sexual minorities, participants whose parents came out postdivorce).

The results are organized around the final coding scheme (which is described in the Appendix). The final coding scheme was established once we had verified agreement among all the independently coded data and all of us agreed on the final codes that best fit the data. We discuss patterns that differed according to participant gender, sexual orientation, and family structure only where relevant.

Results

We first present data on young adults' descriptions of their connection to the LGBTQ community as children—that is, before age 18, when they were living at home with their parents. We specifically attend to which communities they described feeling connected to (or disconnected from) and the perceived valued or positive aspects of those communities. We also attend to factors that appear to distinguish individuals who described themselves as strongly identified from individuals who described themselves as weakly identified with LGBTQ communities and, related to this, factors that seemed to promote versus inhibit identification.

Identification and Connection With the LGBTQ Community as Children

The young adults in this sample were fairly diverse with respect to how they perceived their identification with and involvement in the LGBTQ community as children.

Strong identification and connection. Slightly more than half of the sample ($n = 23$; 19 women, three men, one gender queer individual) viewed themselves as having been strongly connected to the LGBTQ community as children (while growing up with their LGBQ parents). Most of these young adults (all but four) were raised by LGBQ parents from birth or very early childhood. In turn, many described their parents as fairly out to friends, family, and their general communities. As Maia, a 22-year-old multiracial heterosexual woman who had been raised by two fathers, said, "[They] always introduced [us] as 'I'm Pop, I'm Dad, this is Maia. We are a family. We are gay, we adopted her.'" Their parents' outness, in turn, facilitated their families' involvement in the LGBTQ community. Yet some of these participants emphasized that their sense of connection to the LGBTQ community did not mean that they were out in all aspects of their lives. Although they were involved in the LGBTQ community, they were relatively closeted about their families at school. Ivy, a 22-year-old

White heterosexual female college student who grew up with two mothers, recalled that she felt "very connected to the community" but noted that "a lot of my peers didn't know [I had lesbian parents]. So in that regard it was hard. I didn't feel comfortable a lot of times talking to my peers about that." Participants like Ivy described fairly compartmentalized communities, perhaps reflecting the tension they felt in trying to reconcile the differing demands and values of the dominant and minority cultures (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005).

More than half ($n = 13$) of the young adults who felt a strong identification with the LGBTQ community described this connection as occurring primarily via their parents' friends. These participants often identified their parents' friends as "strong role models" and as sources of "unconditional support." They viewed the "older gay community" as "very safe and welcoming" and also as facilitating their personal awareness of "inequality and a really strong sense of fairness and justice." Ivy, for example, described her lesbian mothers' friends as "very accepting" and a key source of support. Rochelle, a 25-year-old White heterosexual-identified woman who was raised by a lesbian mother, similarly recalled, "I felt really close with the gay community, like a lot of my mom's friends and everything were good role models and I felt totally comfortable there."

Some ($n = 10$) participants described their childhood connection to the LGBTQ community as occurring primarily through COLAGE (an organization run by and for children of LGBTQ parents), as well as through camps aimed at children from LGBTQ-parent families. Involvement in these organizations enabled participants to gain direct support and also helped to normalize their experiences. Marianne, a 20-year-old White heterosexual female college student whose mother had come out as a lesbian when Marianne was 10, explained that joining her local chapter of COLAGE had helped to alleviate her fears associated with having a lesbian mother and, more importantly, had joined her to a group of individuals with similar experiences:

It was like, you're not alone. . . . Just to have someone to talk to and be like, "Oh, I had a really rotten day in fifth grade today. This kid said this and blah, blah, blah." And they're like, "Oh yeah, that happened to me!" Just to be able to bounce ideas and have support and know that other people are there for you [was great]. They get it.

Ava, a 24-year-old White heterosexual woman raised by two lesbian mothers, viewed her experience attending a gay family camp every year as providing her with a loving community of "really inspirational people. . . . It's a kind of continuity that I think a lot of people don't have in their lives. I think it's important to have that shared experience to talk to people about, because we're a minority." These participants described a strong sense of solidarity and community as a result of their connection to places and spaces specifically designated for LGBTQ families. They often contrasted their feelings of vulnerability in society with their sense of safety in these LGBTQ family spaces, underscoring their role as key sites of refuge and support (Miller & Kaiser, 2001).

In addition to direct support, five participants cited political advocacy as a benefit of involvement in organizations such as COLAGE and gay family camps. Tracy, a 21-year-old queer-identified White female college student who was raised by two lesbian mothers, observed that "a lot of my political ideas about marriage were shaped by the people I interacted with at CO-

LAGE.” For Shari, a 25-year-old White heterosexual woman who was raised by a bisexual mother and a bisexual father, attending a camp for gay families had inspired her to engage in political activism: “We made some videos and put them on YouTube when California was voting on Prop 8.”

Weak identification and connection. Slightly less than half of the participants ($n = 19$; 14 women, five men) described a fairly weak identification with the LGBTQ community as children. Most ($n = 13$) had parents who had come out later in life (when participants were 10 or older), underscoring the salience of the timing of key life events, such as a parent’s coming out, in the life course (Elder, 1998). Having come out later in life, their parents were often slow to develop connections to other sexual minorities and to LGBTQ communities more broadly, which precluded participants’ own sense of identification. In some cases, their parents were described as struggling to accept their sexuality, which inevitably restricted their ability to connect with the LGBTQ community. For example, Laura was a 27-year-old Hispanic heterosexual woman whose heterosexual parents divorced when she was 13 and whose mother subsequently disclosed her attraction to women (although never actually labeled her sexual orientation). In explaining her own lack of identification with the community, Laura remarked that

[it] took a while for my mom to get comfortable with the situation, and I think she perceived my sister and I to be uncomfortable with it, although now we’re not at all. I think it was just a transition period.

Laura, her sister, and her mother, then, experienced the impact of her mother’s coming out differently over time.

Some of these participants ($n = 9$) observed that as children, it did not even occur to them that community and support for their experiences might exist, given the lack of a visible LGBTQ presence in their immediate communities or simply the lack of discussion of LGBTQ issues in general in their neighborhoods and communities. Jeremy, a 22-year-old White heterosexual college student whose mother had come out when he was 12 in the context of his parents’ divorce, attributed his own lack of affiliation with any LGBTQ community to the fact that his hometown was “very rural, and so as far as gay-friendly, I think if they—if they were even aware that homosexuality existed, they would be very, very anti-homosexual or very homophobic.”

In some cases, participants described multiple developmental and contextual factors as precluding their identification with and connection to the LGBTQ community (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). For example, they described their parents’ delayed coming out plus their parents’ own lack of outness plus the lack of a gay-friendly community as impeding their personal sense of connection. Erika, a 21-year-old White lesbian college student, described how her parents divorced when she was 5 and her mother began dating a woman several years later—but never identified herself as a lesbian. Living in a small Christian town in the South at the time, Erika understood why her mother was not open about her sexuality. In fact, she recalled preferring that her mother stay in the closet: “I felt totally uncomfortable. I didn’t like it at all. I felt really . . . I felt like people were judging me all the time.” Rather than considering how her mother’s coming out could open up doors of community and support for the family, Erika feared how it might invite increased negative attention and thus preferred to conceal her mother’s stigmatized identity (Meyer, 2003).

It is notable that more than half (five of eight) of the men in our sample described a lack of connection to the LGBTQ community as children. While all five men attributed their lack of connection to living in a conservative community, it is interesting to consider whether their lack of connection to an LGBTQ community may be understood partially in terms of men’s tendency to display less help-seeking behavior when compared to women (Koydemir-Ozden, 2010). Also, given the centrality of heterosexual self-presentation to dominant masculine norms (Parent & Moradi, 2009), men may have been particularly sensitive to the ways in which their parents’ sexuality might seem to challenge their own masculinity (e.g., by calling into question their own sexual orientation), leading them to distance themselves from LGBTQ communities more than women.

Trajectories of Community Connection in Young Adults With LGBQ Parents

Many participants—most of whom were in college or had recently graduated from college—described relatively recent shifts in their relationship to LGBTQ communities.

Strong connection maintained. Most of the young adults who described a strong connection to LGBTQ communities as children (18 of 23; 14 women, three men, one gender queer individual) continued to identify with these communities even though they were older and not living with their parents. They often described their continued involvement in LGBTQ-oriented groups as a means of illustrating their ongoing identification with and commitment to LGBTQ communities. Trevor, a 20-year-old White heterosexual male college student who was raised by a lesbian mother, asserted, “In high school I was involved in the Gay/Straight Alliance. . . . Now, I’m president of the LGBT Jewish club at [college]. I feel a pretty strong connection to the LGBT community.” Individuals like Trevor described a heterosexual sexual orientation but identified strongly with the LGBTQ community, somewhat mirroring research that suggests that some persons identify as racially Black but culturally identify with Whiteness (Samuels, 2010).

In some cases ($n = 8$; all women), participants maintained their identification with the LGBTQ community but encountered difficulty establishing connections in the communities in which they now resided. For example, they described having reached out to the gay-oriented groups on their college campuses (e.g., gay student unions, LGBTQ groups) or to gay-oriented groups in their larger communities. Yet they encountered confused reactions or even explicit rejection by group members who did not seem to understand or accept their reasons for wanting to join or who questioned how much participants could really understand their experiences. As Amy, a 22-year-old White female heterosexual college student who was raised by two mothers, stated,

I guess I never questioned my connection with the LGBT community til I came to college. Because in [hometown], I’m absolutely part of the LGBT community. . . . But at college, I showed up to the Queer Community Alliance lunch, and it’s absolutely an exclusionary group. . . . It’s like you have to prove how gay you are, and the gayer you are, the more legitimate you are, and there’s absolutely a hierarchy . . . so it’s kind of preposterous, really exclusive, totally cliquy My first immediate thought was, “I’m way more legitimate than you will ever be.” And I know that’s wrong, and I know that people

need safe spaces, and I don't discredit them for wanting that in any way. But the way that they've gone about that—I think that it's a really broken system, because no one can do anything alone.

Likewise, Savannah, a 19-year-old White heterosexual female college student who was raised by two mothers, recalled,

I tried to become a part of the [LGBTQ group] at my college. They're all really politically correct, and they're just coming out, so they're just becoming comfortable with themselves. I am already way past being comfortable, and my parents are the same way; they had been out for 20 years by the time I was born, so they're really comfortable with themselves, and they can make jokes and talk really openly about everything. I encountered a lot of people who aren't like that, and that was really hard for me, 'cause I don't think they really understood how I could understand. I mean, I can't understand completely . . . but I feel like . . . Yeah, and I was raised by so many lesbians that I always joke that I'm a straight lesbian. But they didn't really get that. Jokes almost felt—not offensive, but they didn't really get the jokes yet, because they're still kind of figuring their own stuff out, I guess. I've never felt excluded from my parents' lesbian community.

Participants like Amy and Savannah maintained their strong sense of connection with the LGBTQ community, as well as a sense of entitlement about their right to belong. Yet they ultimately felt that their “queer credibility” was invalidated, leaving them to feel “not at home there.” Their perception of such groups as overly exclusive led some of them to seek connection and support elsewhere. For example, Gina, a 23-year-old Hispanic heterosexual woman whose mother had come out when she was 10, observed, “[They're] like, ‘Well if you're not gay, then why are you here?’ which is kind of the reverse prejudice. So I seek out groups that are kind of in the middle, that are very open to everybody and allies.” Other participants, rather than seeking out alternative groups, articulated that they had simply come to a place where they privately accepted that they had a unique perspective that neither LGBTQ nor heterosexual communities would necessarily fully understand. As 27-year-old Maia recalled, about her experience in college,

I felt like I wasn't accepted in either community. I was an outsider in the gay community because I identify as heterosexual and I didn't fit in with the straight community because I had two gay parents and I was very active in speaking out about my beliefs. That was kind of difficult, but I think I just grew to accept myself for who I was and I just stopped really caring what everybody else thought about me, and I just kept doing what I know, what I'd always been doing, and that was just activism.

Individuals like Maia described a fairly marginalized identity during college, in that they did not fully identify with or feel accepted by the LGBTQ community or the dominant community (Smith, Stewart, & Winter, 2004). Yet, for Maia and a few others, this sense of marginalization was replaced by a more nuanced sense of identity characterized by autonomy and independence.

Notably, the participants who ultimately identified as nonheterosexual themselves ($n = 3$) did not encounter this type of rejection or confusion from LGBTQ-group members. In part, this is because these individuals, by their own admission, tended to lead with information about their own sexual identification and then later disclose their parents' sexuality. Indeed, they did not need their parents' sexual orientation to gain credibility in such

groups. Yet one bisexual woman, 26-year-old Dawn, resented that she had to lead with her own queerness to be accepted: “I shouldn't have to defend myself, right? I shouldn't have to say, ‘Well, you know, I do date ladies. Back off.’”

Strong connection to weak connection. Some participants ($n = 5$; all women) who strongly identified with the LGBTQ community as children described feeling less connected to and involved with it over time, particularly after making the transition to college. They observed that as they grew older, they were increasingly developing into their own person, such that “who my parents are doesn't define me in the same way anymore.” Although they had strongly identified with the LGBTQ community as children, they no longer felt the same sense of connection inasmuch as they were living on their own, without their parents. The transition to college and to living on their own therefore marked an important shift in their social network, their salient communities, and their sense of self (Crosnoe, 2000). As Cassandra, a 22-year-old White heterosexual woman who was adopted by two lesbian mothers when she was 12, explained,

I was more [involved] in high school but I kind of lost interest. I've gotten distracted by things that are of more interest to me on a passion level, you know? Versus just—I was more interested in that because it affected my family.

Thus, developing one's own identity and interests outside one's family sometimes led individuals to become less interested in the LGBTQ community. For three of these participants, the fact that they identified as heterosexual was also viewed as contributing to their lessened investment. Kiki, a 27-year-old White heterosexual woman who was born to two mothers, said that she continued to go to LGBTQ functions with her parents but noted that “it's different being an adult now and being straight. So I feel connected, but not in the same way as I did as a kid.”

Identifying as straight, then, in combination with living apart from their families of origin, was viewed by several participants as facilitating their choice to affiliate primarily with the dominant heterosexual community. These findings highlight how constructions of identity and community identification are mediated by situational and life course factors (Doyle & Kao, 2007).

Weak connection to strong connection. Almost three quarters (14 of 19; 12 women, two men) of participants who described themselves as lacking connection to the LGBTQ community as a child—typically because of their parents' delayed coming out or closeting or their conservative communities—pursued greater involvement in the LGBTQ community when they matured into adulthood and, specifically, went away to college. Colleen, a 23-year-old White heterosexual woman who grew up with her lesbian mother and her mother's partner, did not experience a concrete sense of connection to the LGBTQ community as a child, which she attributed to an absence of such a community where she grew up. As an adult, she felt like a member

more now [than before]. I think precollege I don't—I wouldn't say that I really did. I just really didn't feel like that was something that was a big part of my life. But going into college and going into the new world, I felt a lot more connected to it . . . I think I actually do feel more connected to it, just because of my mom; more and more, she is becoming connected to it. She's doing a lot more things that are, I think, gay- and lesbian-themed or associated as opposed to just for

everybody. And so that's something I feel comfortable being around and I feel comfortable supporting and I do feel a part of.

Here, Colleen suggests that her mother's increased outness, as well as, possibly, her own increasing acceptance of her mother's lesbianism, prompted her greater feelings of connection to the LGBTQ community. Her narrative highlights the linked lives of family members (Elder, 1994): Indeed, Colleen's shift in perspective and connection in relation to the LGBTQ community was a function not only of her developmental stage but of her mother's own shift in identity.

Similarly, Amelia, a 19-year-old White female college student who was raised by two lesbian mothers, did not feel a sense of connection to the LGBTQ community as a child because, growing up in an "extremely conservative" town in the Midwest, she "had to lie about my parents . . . I would always say, 'one of them is my mom and one of them is my aunt.'" Now that she was away at college in a progressive area of the country, Amelia felt free to become more involved in the LGBTQ community and had recently begun to volunteer for COLAGE: "I'm slowly getting my way into the community . . . It feels really good. I don't have to bottle things up anymore, and—there are still things I don't like to talk about, but now I can do it freely." For Amelia, becoming involved with COLAGE as a young adult was experienced as cathartic and freeing, as it allowed her to be honest about her family in a way that she had been afraid to as a child, growing up within the context of minority stress (Arm et al., 2009).

Half of the participants ($n = 7$) who felt an increased connection to the LGBTQ community described having encountered challenges in finding community. Like those who maintained a consistently strong identification, they sometimes sought out gay-oriented groups (e.g., on their college campuses) but found them to be exclusive and not a good fit. Yet, because these participants did not have a strong sense of entitlement to belong, they tended not to assert as strongly their status as a child of a gay parent. Renee, a 20-year-old White heterosexual female college student whose mother came out as a lesbian when she was a teenager, explained,

I would try and go to their meetings for the LGBT group. I definitely feel left out just because it's supposed to be gays and lesbians and the people who support them, but a lot of the time, you just kind of sit back because you're not going through the same things they are, going through college as an LGBT person. You're just kind of an outcast in that group.

Renee's statement that she tended to just "sit back" contrasts with the statements of participants who, having "grown up in the gay community," tended to be more vocal about their personal connection to it. Participants like Renee were sensitive to the ways in which they did not necessarily belong, and they did not tend to lay claim to their membership in the same way. Similarly, Merrett, a 24-year-old White heterosexual man who grew up with two mothers but whose family was highly closeted due to the conservative nature of their community, stated,

I do feel a part of the community, but I think that it's also a question of whether or not they see me as part of their community . . . Sometimes I feel really welcomed, [but sometimes] I don't really feel like I am. I think I kind of straddle the border.

Merrett's sense of identification and belonging was fluid and partially dependent on the reactions of LGBTQ people. Indeed, for

bicultural persons, the degree to which their minority status is validated or questioned by the minority community can have a profound influence on their identity construction and community identification (Khanna & Johnson, 2010).

Notably, seven of the 14 participants who described themselves as moving from a weak to strong connection to the LGBTQ community identified as nonheterosexual in adulthood. In fact, the majority of our nonheterosexual participants (seven of 10) described an increasing connection to the LGBTQ community. Thus, very few LGBTQ-identified participants felt a strong connection to the LGBTQ community as children, and their own emerging sexual identification helped to strengthen their feelings of connection as adults.

It appears that LGBTQ participants may tend to retrospectively perceive their connection to the LGBTQ community in childhood as weak since they experience their current connection as particularly strong as a result of belonging as sexual minorities. They may also wish to emphasize their personal feelings of agency in creating a unique type of community engagement that extends beyond the kinds of community involvement that their parents forged when they were children. For example, 24-year-old Kate explained that her lesbian mother's LGBTQ community was significantly different from her own: "They're more conservative in their social openness than I and my friends are. Also, they socialize at different venues. I go to gay clubs; my mom goes to church." For Kate and others, it was important to make a distinction between the LGBTQ communities to which their parents belonged and those they called their own. Indeed, according to life course theory, seeking communities of friends outside their parents' purview is a developmental milestone for young adults, facilitating their process of trying on new identities and roles and developing worldviews distinct from those of their parents (Crosnoe, 2000).

Weak connection maintained. Several individuals ($n = 5$; two women, three men) who lacked a strong sense of connection to the LGBTQ community growing up observed that this had not really changed. Henry, a 26-year-old White heterosexual man whose father had come out as gay when he was a teen, said, "I am sort of involved peripherally but I have outsider syndrome." Henry acknowledged that he did not feel a strong sense of connection in that he was not gay and he was not close with his father. Likewise, Eve, a 21-year-old White heterosexual woman whose parents divorced (and her father came out) while she was in high school, described herself as "not very active" in LGBTQ-oriented issues in high school. She further noted that this had not changed in college: "I either don't know about [LGBTQ-oriented events or groups] or I'm so involved in other things on campus in my major that I just don't have time." At the same time, Eve noted that she was helping out her father in his duties as an officer for a local gay men's chorus, something she used to indicate her increased acceptance of her father's sexuality. Yet she further stated that "I don't really feel like I'm part of the gay community. I feel like I'm someone who is a friend of that community, respectful. I hope just that everybody gets treated fairly." Individuals like Eve asserted that although they had increasingly accepted their parent's sexuality, this acceptance had not extended to feelings of connection to the LGBTQ community. In this way, they positioned themselves as allies of the community (Stotzer, 2009) but did not identify themselves as members, or as bicultural in the sense that they were members of multiple communities (Marks et al., 2011).

Significantly, most ($n = 4$) of the participants who maintained a weak connection to the LGBTQ community had parents who came out later in life. A life course perspective suggests that youths' communities of friends are shaped not only by family dynamics but also by parents' involvement in the community (Crosnoe, 2000). Since the parents of participants like Henry and Eve were minimally involved with the LGBTQ community for most of their lives, it is reasonable that these participants would also feel minimally connected to such communities. It is also notable that three of these five participants were heterosexual men and that, of these three men, two had gay fathers. Inasmuch as heterosexuality is a central aspect of hegemonic masculinity (Parent & Moradi, 2009), such that men generally have more negative views about homosexuality (Wilkinson, 2004), men (particularly men with gay fathers who came out late in life) may struggle with fully accepting their parent's sexuality and, in turn, engaging with the gay community.

Discussion

This is the first study to explore, in depth, how young adults with LGBQ parents perceive and relate to the LGBTQ community. Our findings complement prior work highlighting the potential benefits of LGBTQ community involvement for children with LGBQ parents (Bos et al., 2008) and build on previous research suggesting that individuals with LGBQ parents may struggle to claim their place within the LGBTQ community (Goldberg, 2007a).

As we have shown, many young adults felt connected to the LGBTQ community as children. Some experienced this connection via their parents' friends, whereas others' connections were forged primarily within more distal contexts, such as organizations for youth with LGBTQ parents. These connections were described as offering opportunities for support, belonging, and activism, echoing prior work on the perceived benefits of affiliating with GSAs, student-led LGBTQ groups, and organizations such as PFLAG (Arm et al., 2009; Lee, 2002). Thus, affiliations with the LGBTQ community appeared to facilitate the development of intrapersonal and interpersonal resources, which may help to buffer the stigma that these individuals faced in the broader society (Garnets & D'Augelli, 1994). Notably, young adults who described themselves as strongly identified with the LGBTQ community as children were not necessarily open about their families in all contexts, highlighting the need to recognize persons as members of multiple communities (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998), which may contain different values and pressures (Meyer, 2003). It is possible that heterosexual persons with LGB parents may feel the need to compartmentalize communities to satisfy the dual expectations of both the dominant and minority cultures in which they are embedded (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005). Yet their membership in compartmentalized communities must not be viewed as necessarily maladaptive; particularly in childhood, persons with LGBQ parents may feel proud of their LGBQ families but may have concerns about safety that lead them to limit disclosures about their families in the dominant community (James, 2002).

Some participants described their sense of connection to the LGBTQ community as weak or absent during childhood. These individuals sometimes attributed their lack of identification and

connection to parental factors (i.e., their parent[s] were closeted during their childhood; their parent[s] came out later, during their emerging adulthood). These findings illustrate the importance of the timing of life events in shaping the course of development (Elder, 1994). Others attributed their lack of identification and connection to broader community factors. Growing up in an area that lacked a visible LGBTQ community or was relatively homophobic was experienced as a barrier to accessing and in turn identifying with the LGBTQ community (Oswald & Culton, 2003). Of note is that living in states with antigay laws has been linked to poorer mental health in lesbian and gay parents (Goldberg & Smith, 2011). It is possible that access to LGBTQ communities might lessen the negative impact of state-level discrimination on LGBQ family members' well-being. In other words, access to LGBTQ supports at the proximal level might help to buffer the effects of stigma at the level of the macrosystem (Miller & Kaiser, 2001).

As young adults, participants were able to reflect on changes in their sense of connection to the LGBTQ community from childhood to early adulthood. We found that individuals who maintained a strong sense of connection to the LGBTQ community tended to be persons who grew up with LGBQ parents from birth or early childhood. This finding builds on prior work indicating that persons whose parents came out before they were born often have a greater sense of pride in their parents' LGBQ identities than those whose parents came out later in life (Goldberg, 2007b). Perhaps a sense of pride in one's family facilitates a desire to connect to an LGBTQ community (or vice versa), or spending more years in an LGBQ-parent-headed family structure may simply foster greater identification with that family structure and thus a greater connection to the LGBTQ community, such that the LGBQ community was "in [their] blood," as one participant asserted.

Some of these strongly identified individuals described challenges in maintaining a tangible connection to the LGBTQ community. Their stories of exclusion should perhaps encourage people to think about queer identity and community more broadly (Garner, 2004). Queer identity and community are arguably relevant and personally meaningful constructs for people in LGBTQ families, not just for people who identify as LGBTQ. In other words, for people in LGBTQ families, identifying with queer communities may be a cultural identity rather than a sexual identity (Samuels, 2010). Yet heterosexual individuals in LGBTQ families may feel that their authenticity as culturally queer persons is questioned, particularly as they progress into adulthood and their LGBTQ affiliation is no longer obvious. In turn, in the absence of their "gay passport" (i.e., their parents), they are viewed as suspicious interlopers (Garner, 2004).

It is interesting to consider how heterosexual individuals' self-perceptions as authentically culturally queer may be challenged by LGBTQ individuals, who view them as outsiders. In some ways, this phenomenon mirrors that of Black-White biracial individuals, whose own racial identity is to some extent contingent on the responses of their monoracial Black counterparts (Khanna & Johnson, 2010). Like biracial individuals whose phenotype is White (i.e., they look White), individuals with LGBTQ parents may experience a disconnect between the way they see themselves and the way that group members see them (Khanna & Johnson, 2010). Our findings indicate these individuals manage this tension in a

variety of ways: by asserting their membership more strongly (particularly if they have a strong sense of entitlement, by virtue of growing up with LGBQ parents), by turning away from and perhaps deidentifying from these groups, and in some cases, by pursuing other avenues for connection and expression of their queer cultural identity.

For individuals who, in addition to having LGBQ parents, also identified as LGBTQ, such exclusionary practices were less salient since their legitimacy in LGBTQ communities was not questioned. Yet notably, these individuals typically described seeking out LGBTQ communities that differed from the kinds of communities to which their parents belonged. Perhaps in an effort to form their own autonomous identities (Arnett, 2000), they sought out communities of other LGBTQ young adults and, in turn, found themselves accepted as a result of their personal sexual identification, rather than their parents' sexual identities. Indeed, the literature on sexual minority identity formation suggests that the development of group membership identity is an important stage in developing one's autonomous sexual identity (Fassinger & Miller, 1996). Notably, the findings of our study mirror prior research with LGBTQ young adults with lesbian mothers, which found that many young adults chose to emphasize the ways in which their own sexual identity formation was different and distinct from that of their parents (Kuvallanka & Goldberg, 2009).

Several individuals who described a strong connection to the LGBTQ community as children described a shift to a lesser sense of connection as young adults. They articulated that living apart from their parents had facilitated the development of interests and social networks that were not predicated on their identification as a child of an LGB parent. Also, for some, their sexual identification as heterosexual was viewed as fueling a lessened sense of connection to the LGBTQ community. Thus, it seems that their process of differentiating from their parents and families of origin—a central task for adolescents and emerging adults (Arnett, 2000)—involved disconnecting somewhat from the LGBTQ community. As heterosexuals who happened to be raised by LGBQ parents, they had the freedom to choose whether to affiliate primarily with the LGBTQ community or the heterosexual dominant community, and, consistent with their own identity development, they chose the latter. Indeed, considerable diversity exists regarding sexual identity development (Savin-Williams & Diamond, 2000), which may explain the fact that heterosexual group membership identity appeared to be more salient for some heterosexual participants than for others.

Other participants, however, described an opposite type of shift. Most of the individuals who described themselves as weakly identified with the LGBTQ community in childhood described themselves as becoming more connected in young adulthood. They often attributed this increased connection to their parents' increased comfort with their sexuality and corresponding outness, underscoring the linked nature of family members' lives (Elder, 1994). Given that most persons who started out weakly identified with the LGBTQ community had not grown up in an LGBQ-parent family from birth, it is likely that their increased feelings of connection also reflect their own growing acceptance of their parents' sexuality. Moving away from their (often conservative) communities of origin to more progressive locales may have also facilitated their openness to and desire to connect with LGBTQ communities. Also, their own sexual identity development likely

played a role: Of those who described themselves as becoming increasingly identified over time, half identified as LGBTQ. Clearly, their identification as sexual minorities influenced their increased connection to the LGBTQ community as young adults; it also may have contributed to their tendency to describe their childhood sense of connection as weak. When juxtaposed against their current sense of connection—which was driven by their own sexual minority identification—their connection to the LGBTQ community in childhood may have paled in comparison.

Finally, some participants described a consistently weak connection to the LGBTQ community. These participants were typically raised within the context of a heterosexual nuclear family, with parents who came out when participants were older. Furthermore, they were often not exposed to LGBTQ communities as children. Thus, they did not experience either a desire or an opportunity to join these communities as they became aware of their parents' sexual orientation. The fact that their parents had come out later, coupled with participants' own heterosexual self-identification, may have contributed to their lack of connection to the LGBTQ community. However, it is also notable that in most cases, their parents had come out relatively recently; thus, they had not yet had the time to become fully comfortable with their parents' sexuality and/or feel fully linked to this aspect of their parent's lives. The timing and context of important life events, then, shaped individuals' community identification and connection (Elder, 1998).

Limitations

It is likely that our findings in part reflect our methods of recruitment. Young adults who were at least somewhat identified with the LGBTQ community were more likely to hear about the study, given that we recruited in part from explicitly LGBTQ organizations. Yet it is important to note that in some cases, participants contacted us because they heard about the study through their parents, friends, or relatives, not through their own affiliation with LGBTQ organizations. Our reliance on snowball sampling likely also helped to mitigate the tendency for only highly identified persons to volunteer for the study; in some cases, participants heard about the study through a friend who happened to know that they had LGBQ parents. Finally, as our findings illustrate, some individuals who were currently identified with the LGBTQ community were not highly identified as children. Thus, despite our method of recruitment, we were able to document and explore variability in participants' trajectories of connection over the course of their lives. Also, although participants did discuss positive aspects of LGBTQ community connection (e.g., feelings of solidarity and legitimacy) in response to open-ended questions regarding community connection, future research should employ more direct questions regarding perceived benefits of LGBTQ community involvement, to gain a more in-depth understanding of the valued aspects of community connection. Furthermore, we did not directly ask participants about the impact of LGBTQ community connection on their well-being. Future work should inquire about the impact of LGBTQ community connection on the well-being of young adults with LGBQ parents.

Our findings reflect the participants' developmental stage (ages 18–29). Presumably, their sense of connection and the importance of connection may continue to change over time. The college

setting was salient to many of the individuals in the study because many had recently navigated or were currently navigating that setting. Also, the fact that all but one of the participants were enrolled in or had gone to college speaks to the privileged nature of our sample. College-educated individuals may have more access to resources and more opportunities to seek out like-minded groups of people. It is interesting to consider whether less affluent young adults with LGBQ parents seek the same connections to an LGBTQ community. Also, given the fact that most of our participants were White and highly educated, their membership in these dominant groups may have further influenced their experiences related to sexual orientation (e.g., potentially making their stigmatized family identity more or less salient than those who endure multiple forms of minority stress).

An additional limitation is that participants with gay fathers were underrepresented in our sample. Furthermore, in all but one case, participants' fathers had come out later in life, after a heterosexual divorce. Thus, it was not possible to tease apart the role of how parents' gender (i.e., having an LGBQ mother vs. an LGBQ father) might be related to participants' community identification, since, for participants with gay fathers, this variable was confounded with timing of coming out. Future studies should explicitly recruit participants from planned gay-father families to better address the varied influences on youths' community identification.

Finally, although we did have some variability with regard to gender and sexual orientation, our participants were largely female and heterosexual identified. Our findings provide tentative support for the notion that men with LGBQ parents may be less likely to connect with the LGBTQ community, a finding that echoes prior research on the potential costs associated with masculine gender conformity, such as negative attitudes toward help seeking (Parent & Moradi, 2009). Thus, more research that focuses on how boys and men with LGBQ parents experience and perceive the LGBTQ community is needed. Our findings also suggest that participants' sexual identities have implications for their connection to and identification with the LGBTQ community over time; that is, group membership identity is regarded as an important developmental component of one's sexual identity (Fassinger & Miller, 1996). More research is needed to examine community connection in the context of sexual identity development.

Implications for Practitioners

Our findings hold many implications for practitioners who work with children and young adults with LGBTQ parents. First, counselors are advised to recognize the diversity in participants' feelings about the LGBTQ community and to appreciate the multiple developmental, family-related, and contextual factors that may impact children's and young adults' connection to the community. The degree to which individuals with LGBTQ parents may desire or benefit from connection to the LGBTQ community depends on many factors, including their position within the life course trajectory (Elder, 1994). Our findings highlight the need to recognize the transition to young adulthood as a period when identity, social networks, and community affiliations are in flux. In turn, young adults with LGBTQ parents may show changes in how they relate to the LGBTQ community. They may also, over time, encounter changes in how the LGBTQ community responds to them—

responses that may have implications for their identity development and social networks (Khanna & Johnson, 2010). The varying role of the LGBTQ community in young adults' lives over time may create feelings of confusion and tension, especially for heterosexual persons who are navigating their dual membership in the LGBTQ community and the dominant mainstream community as they transition to college. College is "explicitly designed as a bridge between a student's family and the wider society" and can provide a great deal of support and services to students as they begin to explore their autonomy (Settersten & Ray, 2010, p. 32). Thus, college counselors in particular should ready themselves to encounter students with LGBTQ parents who may be experiencing challenges related to community identification and support, particularly those with bicultural identifications, such as heterosexual children of LGBQ parents.

Young adults with LGBTQ parents are often forging a new identity as autonomous adults, and yet, as members of a minority family structure, they sometimes express a desire to connect with a supportive LGBTQ community that can understand their unique experiences. It is important for practitioners to be aware that there are a number of ways in which young adults can connect with such communities (e.g., through organizations such as COLAGE) and also to recognize that the type of connections that are valued will vary widely from person to person. Counselors are advised to be knowledgeable about the types of LGBTQ resources that are available in their communities, as they will be better able to serve their clients if they are aware of local options for support (James, 2002). Knowledge about opportunities for community building for children of LGBTQ parents (as opposed to those for LGBTQ people or parents) is important, given the unique experiences and perspectives of this population (Kuvallanka et al., 2006). Finally, college counselors are encouraged (alongside faculty and administrators) to meet with LGBTQ student organizations to raise awareness about how these groups can be more welcoming of students with LGBTQ parents, particularly those who do identify as culturally queer.

Conclusion

These findings highlight the utility of an integrated framework that incorporates ecological, life course, minority stress, and bicultural theories in understanding the complex perspectives of children and young adults with LGBTQ parents. In particular, they underscore the importance of a life course perspective in understanding how, why, and when individuals may develop a sense of identification with and connection to the LGBTQ community. Furthermore, they highlight the utility of applying a minority stress framework to the experiences of family members of LGBTQ persons, inasmuch as these individuals are exposed to secondary minority stress (Arm et al., 2009), which may be particularly salient in certain contexts and at certain developmental stages. Finally, they illustrate the utility of frameworks—such as bicultural identity theory—that can help to account for the unique perspectives of heterosexual individuals with LGBTQ parents, who may be seen as actively negotiating their identification with and connection to two communities or cultures. Indeed, our integrative theoretical framework enabled us to richly document the wide range of experiences among this group of young adults with LGBQ parents, diversity that is contextually influenced by the

timing of life events and the salience of their parents' sexual minority identity.

Young adults with LGBTQ parents construct their emerging identities within the context of developing family dynamics, changing LGBTQ politics, and systemic heteronormativity. Ultimately, the young adults in this study speak to shifting connections and disconnections to a diversity of communities, rather than any singular LGBTQ community. As LGBTQ families are increasingly validated legally and socially by the society at large, the meanings and values regarding LGBTQ community connection will continue to change and emerge in novel ways. Of interest is how future generations of children with LGBTQ parents will negotiate minority stress and community involvement throughout their development within an ever-changing yet systemically heteronormative cultural paradigm.

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Appendix

Final Coding Scheme

Table A1

Identification and Connection With the LGBTQ Community as Children

Pattern	<i>n</i>
Strong identification and connection	23
Raised by LGBQ parents from birth or early childhood	19
Connection via parents' friends	13
Connection via LGBTQ organizations	10
Weak identification and connection	19
Parents came out later in life	13
Lack of visible LGBTQ community	9

Note. LGBTQ = lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer.

(Appendices continue)

Table A2
Trajectories of Community Connection in Young Adults With LGBQ Parents

Pattern	<i>n</i>
Strong connection maintained	18
Encountered challenges establishing connections	8
Personal identification as LGB	3
Strong connection to weak connection	5
Personal identification as heterosexual	3
Weak connection to strong connection	14
Encountered challenges establishing connections	7
Personal identification as LGB	7
Weak connection maintained	5
Parents came out later	4

Note. LGBQ = lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer.

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