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Difference in Parental Reactions When Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Gender-Diverse Individuals Come Out

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Difference in Parental Reactions When Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Gender-Diverse Individuals Come Out

By
Hannah Dahlke

Presented in Partial Completion
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science, Experimental Psychology

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Hannah Dahlke

March 7, 2024
Difference in Parental Reactions When Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Gender-Diverse Individuals Come Out

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of
Western Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science

by
Hannah Dahlke
March 2024
Abstract

In general, attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community have been becoming increasingly more favorable in the United States in the past two decades (Rosenfeld, 2017). However, in recent years there has been some pushback, particularly regarding transgender and gender-diverse (TGD) identities, as opposed to lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) identities. Growing transphobia is evident, especially in the political realm, as several anti-TGD bills are being introduced that limit access to bathrooms, sports, and gender-affirming care (Freedom For All Americans, 2022). As the difference in acceptance between LGB and TGD people is becoming more evident on a large scale, it raises the question: is there a difference in acceptance on a smaller scale? Or rather, would a parent be less accepting of their child if they were TGD compared to if their child were LGB? Few studies have directly compared parental acceptance levels of LGB youth versus TGD youth. Those that have used qualitative methods and small TGD samples (Abreu et al., 2021). The current study used a retrospective design with quantitative methods and large, comparable samples of adult TGD and LGB participants to understand if there is a difference in parental acceptance levels of LGB versus TGD and what factors may predict parental acceptance. Overall, we found TGD children perceived less parental acceptance, more parental rejection, and more psychological control when they came out compared to LGB children. In addition, participants who rated their parent(s) as being more politically conservative and as having less knowledge of the LGBTQ+ community, tended to rate their parent(s) as being less accepting, more rejecting, and more controlling. These results reveal a gap in parental acceptance between TGD and LGB children when they come out and underline a need for further education and advocacy in support of the TGD community.
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“Mom, Dad...I’m transgender.”

How would you react, as a parent, if your child came out as transgender, with a new name and different pronouns? Would your reaction be different if your child came out as lesbian, gay, or bisexual? How parents react to their child coming out is the first step in the journey of accepting their child’s identity. However, the journey to acceptance is not the same for every lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) individual. Sexual orientation and gender, while related, are not the same. Gender tends to be more of a core aspect of identity compared to sexual orientation, and parents may struggle more to accept a transgender child compared to a cisgender, non-heterosexual child (Pullen Sansfaçon et al., 2020). Yet, few studies have directly compared parental acceptance of lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) children to parental acceptance of transgender and gender-diverse (TGD) children, and the ones that have generally included small samples of TGD children and used qualitative methods (Abreu et al., 2021). By using quantitative methods, larger TGD and LGB samples, and directly comparing the coming out experience and the parental reactions from adult LGB individuals versus TGD individuals, we sought to determine if there was a difference in perceived parental reactions between TGD children compared to LGB children. Moreover, we aimed to contribute to the literature by examining the relationships between political ideology, intergroup contact with the LGBTQ+ community, and parental acceptance, rejection, and psychological control. These insights can be used to promote education and advocacy in order to address the gap in the parental acceptance rates of these children. Establishing a difference in parental acceptance rates
will help to inform initiatives that support parents in understanding their child’s sexual and gender diversity. Providing informative resources to parents will create a foundation to enhance the lives of TGD children.

**Sexual Orientation Versus Gender**

There is a large spectrum of sexual orientations and gender identities included in the LGBTQ+ acronym. It is important for these identities to be recognized and validated, however, in order to be parsimonious, in this paper, identities will henceforth be described using the terms “LGB” to represent all non-heterosexual sexual orientations, and “TGD” to represent all non-cisgender gender identities. People can be simultaneously TGD and LGB, however, because this study focused on the differences in the coming out experience regarding sexual orientation and gender identity, participants were categorized into separate groups.

Sexual orientation refers to the degree and direction of one’s sexual and emotional attraction towards other people. For example, some individuals are solely attracted to men, some are solely attracted to women, some are attracted to both men and women, some are attracted to others regardless of gender, and some experience little to no attraction to other people (American Psychological Association, 2019b). Gender identity, in contrast, refers to a person’s psychological sense of gender (American Psychological Association, 2019a; Gülgöz et al., 2022). Oftentimes one’s sex assigned at birth aligns with their gender identity, but not always. Those who identify as a different gender than what they were assigned at birth are generally considered transgender, and may be referred to as transmasculine, and a transman/boy, or may be referred to as transfeminine, and a transwoman/girl in order to specify the gender they identify as (Thelwall et al., 2022). Additionally, some people do not identify with discrete, binary gender
categories and may instead identify as nonbinary, gender nonconforming, genderqueer, gender fluid, or gender diverse (Kaltiala & Ellonen, 2022). Commonly, any TGD person may also be called “assigned female at birth” (AFAB), or “assigned male at birth” (AMAB).

In terms of coming out as LGB, an individual may change who they seek intimate relationships with. By contrast, coming out as TGD usually involves making changes physically and/or socially, and involves the people around them (Grossman, 2005; Lev, 2004). For example, changing one’s gender identity generally entails changes such as clothing and hairstyles, a new name and pronouns, and sometimes even gender-affirming hormones or surgery. Therefore, it is not surprising that parents might react differently if their child comes out as TGD versus if they come out as LGB, because gender is such a forefront piece of identity.

It is not to say that a child coming out as LGB may not be difficult for parents to accept, because it can be. However, it is well documented that children begin to understand gender from as young as two years old (Etaugh et al., 1989; Fagot et al., 1986). Given that gender conformity is somewhat expected, it can be shocking to their parents when the child discloses that they feel like another gender. Sexual orientation also begins developing in childhood, and although heteronormativity is usually expected, this process does not usually involve changing the child’s identity (name, pronouns, clothing, body, etc.). Instead, the gender of the child’s intimate interests changes. In other words, there is less of a disconnect between the parent and the LGB child because their child’s identity does not change, only their preferences in other people.

Interestingly, it is not uncommon for parents to ask their child if they identify as LGB when the child instead comes out as TGD (Grossman et al., 2005). In some instances, parents may interpret their child’s discomfort with their assigned gender and their child acting outside of typical gender norms as an expression of a non-heterosexual sexual orientation (Pullen
Sansfaçon et al., 2022). In cases like these, the parents misinterpret the signs of their child’s gender nonconformity, and it can negatively impact the reaction the parent has to the child’s disclosure of their gender (Pullen Sansfaçon et al., 2022).

After a child comes out as TGD, usually there is a sense of relief for the child as they can begin living as their authentic self, while parents sometimes describe feeling a sense of grief for their child and mourning the “loss” or even “death” of them because the parent’s reality of their child is shifting in a major way (Pullen Sansfaçon et al., 2020; Pullen Sansfaçon et al., 2022). Parents may mourn the child they thought they knew, the name they had chosen for their child, and the future they imagined having, including having gender-typical experiences. For example, one mother whose two AFAB children came out as transgender and nonbinary explained, “So I find myself with the loss of both my daughters… my grief at the moment is that, you know, to not go shopping with my daughter… to go do our nails…” (Pullen Sansfaçon et al., 2020). According to parents, this is one of the most important challenges in accepting their child’s gender identity because there is a disconnect between who they thought and expected their child to be, compared to who the child actually is (Pullen Sansfaçon et al., 2020). Additionally, the American singer, actress, and television personality, Cher, has a son who is transgender and has opened up about the experience of having a transgender child. Cher explains, “I think it's about the fear, mostly. I felt, who will this new person be? Because I know who the person is now, but who will the new person be and how will it work, and will I have lost somebody?” (Azzopardi, 2018). These are challenges that parents of LGB children usually do not have to face.

A child coming out as TGD can be especially difficult for parents at this time because of the generational divide. Generation X (born 1965-1980) will be the most common demographic of the parents in this study, while Generation Z (born 1997-2012) will be the most common
demographic of children. In previous generations, gender identity and gender roles were more defined and more strictly followed the gender binary. Today, newer generations are resisting gender stereotypes and creating more fluidity and nuance (“Gender Roles”, 2014).

Although Generation X has lived through and seen major events relevant to gay and lesbian people, only in recent years have they and all other generations been exposed to gender diversity and TGD issues. For example, Generation X lived through the uprise of the Christian right and the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s and 1990s (Saguy, 2020), as well as Bill Clinton’s presidency, which included two laws impacting LGB people, “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” and the Defense of Marriage Act of 1996. The law popularly known as “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” (DADT) was originally intended as a compromise between those wanting to end the ban on LGB people serving in the military and those who thought openly LGB service members would cause problems (Pruitt, 2019). DADT allowed LGB people to serve in the military on the condition that their sexual orientation remained a secret. Although DADT was intended as a positive step forward for LGB people, it instead enforced stigma and prejudice against LGB people and forced their identities into secrecy lest they be discharged. The Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) had less positive intentions. DOMA strengthened the definition of marriage as the union between one man and one woman (Wex Definitions Team, 2022). Although both laws further oppressed LGB people at the time, public opinion on gay rights began to reverse during this time too (Rosenfeld, 2017). The change occurred in part because Bill Clinton embraced LGB people in a way that no president had done before, and also because many people came out of the closet causing a sharp increase in the number of Americans who had an LGB family member, friend, coworker, or acquaintance. Throughout the 80s, 90s, and then 2000s, massive improvements were made in how the public perceived LGB people.
In contrast, TGD issues have only started to become mainstream in recent years. Although TGD people have existed across several cultures in history (e.g. two-spirit people in Native American culture), European colonization enforced the binary definition of gender, marginalizing TGD identities in the process (University College London, n.d.). There is a renewed focus on TGD people currently, and especially in the US government. Multiple bills and laws have appeared around the United States in response to a quick uprising in gender diversity, limiting TGD peoples’ access to bathrooms and locker rooms, sports, and gender affirming care (American Civil Liberties Union, 2023). Many of these bills are being proposed under the guise that they are “protecting the children”, but similar to DADT, they are suppressing TGD identities and enforcing stigma and prejudice against TGD people.

Given the current cultural climate, parents may be less likely to be accepting toward their TGD child compared to a LGB child because they do not understand gender diversity or believe it is wrong, or because they believe that discouraging their child’s identity may protect them from stigma. Both parents of TGD children and parents of LGB children will likely face struggles from being in a cisnormative and heteronormative culture, but at this point in time, LGB parents do not have to face this to the same extent that TGD parents do.

**Parental Acceptance and Rejection**

Parental acceptance and rejection have previously been measured on a bipolar continuum (Rohner et al., 2005). However, research exploring parental relationships with LGBTQ+ youth argue parental acceptance and rejection are more complex and can even occur simultaneously (Ryan et al., 2009). The parent-child relationship is commonly operationalized through three constructs: parental acceptance, parental rejection, and parental psychological control (Barber, 1996; Mills-Koonce et al., 2018; Rothenberg et al., 2022). LGB and TGD children may
especially resonate with these constructs throughout the development of their gender identity or sexual orientation. Parental acceptance, for the purposes of this paper, refers to a parent’s positive engagement with the child, including any expressed warmth, affection, approval, or support after the child has disclosed their gender identity or sexual orientation (Mills-Koonce et al., 2018; Rothenberg et al., 2022). In contrast, parental rejection would be signified by any expressed coldness or lack of affection, hostility, or even neglect. Parental psychological control, for our purposes, refers to any attempts from the parent to impose their own beliefs or desires on the child after the disclosure of their gender identity or sexual orientation, which undermines the child’s individuality and autonomy (Barber, 1996; Mills-Koonce et al., 2018). These constructs are helpful for gauging the parent’s reaction to their child’s sexual orientation or gender identity.

Parental reactions to disclosure vary, but acceptance for LGB children in the US has been rising over the decades (Cramer & Roach, 1988; Ryan et al., 2009; Ryan et al., 2010; Samarova et al., 2014). In 1979, a comprehensive survey distributed across the United States and Canada found that only 31% of mothers and 21% of fathers reacted positively to their son coming out as gay (Jay & Young, 1979), while 40.5% \((n = 213)\) of gay respondents in another study reported an initially positive reaction from their families (Spada, 1979). Less than four decades later, 81% \((n = 111)\) of participants reported their families as being mostly or entirely accepting of their sexual orientation (Fuller & Rutter, 2018). Notably, the data in Fuller and Rutter’s study were gathered in 2015, shortly after the United States Supreme Court granted marriage equality to same-sex couples nationwide.

Acceptance levels for TGD children do not yet appear to be rising as quickly as those of their LGB counterparts. In 2005, one study found out of 43 mothers and 26 fathers, only 25% \((n = 11)\) of mothers and 22% \((n = 6)\) of fathers first reacted positively or very positively to the
disclosure of their child’s gender identity (Grossman et al., 2005). In the early 2010s, only 34% 
\( (n = 84) \) of TGD children felt that their gender identity was strongly supported by their parents  
(Travers et al., 2012). Other TGD adolescents perceived a lack of explicit support, negative 
neutrality, or blatant rejection from their parents (Pullen Sansfaçon et al., 2018). Quantitative 
data on parental acceptance for TGD children is sparse, however, the available data from the 
aforementioned studies seem to suggest there may be a difference in parental reactions 
depending on whether their child comes out as LGB versus TGD.

The Importance of Acceptance

Although it may be difficult for some parents to accept their child’s sexual orientation or 
gender identity, parents’ acceptance and approval has important implications for children’s 
lifelong psychological adjustment. Children look first to their parents for acceptance and 
approval, and those who find acceptance fare better than children who face rejection. A child 
who perceives their parents as accepting is less likely to be hostile and aggressive, is more likely 
to be independent and emotionally responsive, and is likely to have higher self-esteem, self-
adequacy, and a positive worldview (Khaleque, 2013). In contrast, children who feel rejected by 
their parents are more likely to be psychologically maladjusted and may struggle with anger, 
independence, and self-esteem (Khaleque, 2017). LGBTQ+ children who are accepted by their 
parents tend to show similar rates of depression and anxiety compared to their cisgender, 
heterosexual counterparts (Durwood et al., 2017; Ryan et al., 2010).

How a child perceives their relationship with their parents significantly impacts their 
psychological development and future. For instance, children who perceive parental acceptance 
in pre-adolescence are likely to attain higher levels of education in adulthood (Lorjin et al., 
2021), whereas children who perceive parental rejection are more likely to engage in risky
behaviors, such as abusing alcohol and other substances (D’Amico & Julien, 2012). Additionally, LGBTQ+ youth have a higher risk of becoming homeless, either from being kicked out, or from leaving because of disagreements with their family about their sexual orientation or gender identity (Cochran et al., 2002; Durso & Gates, 2012; Seibel et al., 2018; Whitbeck et al., 2004). It is important for parents to reach some level of acceptance with their children in order to set them up for success later in life.

Transgender youth may be particularly susceptible to negative outcomes if their parents do not accept their gender identity (Buckloh et al., 2022). When a parent shows a lack of adjustment to their child’s identity, such as through rejection and disapproval, a child tends to show more depressive and anxiety symptoms and even increased suicidality (Pariseau et al., 2019). Thus, it is important to determine if there are differences in parental acceptance levels between LGB and TGD children to further research the impacts on adjustment and wellbeing. A thorough literature review did not bring up many studies directly comparing parental acceptance of LGB youth versus TGD youth. Ryan et al. (2010) is one of the only studies available, to our knowledge, that directly compared parental acceptance based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and they did not find any statistical differences between the two groups. However, their study included a much smaller TGD sample \((n = 22)\) compared to their LGB sample \((n = 213)\), and therefore more research should be done to compare large sample sizes of both LGB and TGD.

**Predictors of Acceptance Before Disclosure**

Several demographic factors can be used to predict parents’ reactions when a child discloses their sexual orientation or gender identity, including parental gender, political ideology, religiosity, education, and contact with the LGBTQ+ community. These characteristics are
interconnected and may be important in conjunction with other characteristics as well as alone. It is important to note that there is variability in these predictors, but the overall trend of the data shows that parents who are more educated, more politically liberal, less religious, and have more contact tend to be more accepting of their child’s LGBTQ+ status compared to parents who are less educated, more politically conservative, more religious, and have less contact (Cramer & Roach, 1988; Loftus, 2001; Pew Research Center, 2014; Rosenfeld, 2017). Mothers also tend to be more accepting than fathers (Grossman et al., 2005; Jay & Young, 1979; Rosenkrantz et al., 2020; Samarova et al., 2014). While it is important to note that many factors are involved in parental reactions, it is beyond the scope of this study to include all of them. Instead, we focused on political ideology and contact with the LGBTQ+ community as the main predictors of parental acceptance.

**Political Ideology**

Various studies have shown that in the United States political culture conservative ideologies tend to be associated with less accepting attitudes towards LGBTQ+ individuals and issues (Cramer & Roach, 1988; Dessel & Rodenburg, 2017; Smith-Osborne & Rosenwald, 2009). Conservative groups tend to be less accepting of LGBTQ+ identities in part because of ties to religious beliefs and often an opposition to change (van der Toorn et al., 2017). Although general acceptance levels for LGBTQ+ identities are increasing, stigma and discrimination against LGBTQ+ individuals persist, even at the institutional level. For instance, in February of 2022, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis signed the “Parental Rights in Education” bill, better known as the “Don’t Say Gay” bill which limits classroom instruction on sexual orientation or gender identity for kindergarten through the third grade (Diaz, 2022). Bills similar to this convey
the message that being LGBTQ+ is inappropriate or offensive, and it can further stigmatize these marginalized groups.

Several other bills considered across the United States during the 2022 and 2023 legislative session pertain to LGBTQ+ discrimination, but especially discrimination against transgender individuals (Freedom For All Americans, 2022). For example, in February of 2022, Texas Governor Greg Abbott proclaimed any “sex change” procedures including hormone treatments, puberty-blocking procedures, and reassignment surgeries would be considered child abuse under Texas law (Abbott, 2022). Previous anti-TGD laws have focused primarily on limiting bathroom access to TGD individuals (e.g., Kralik, 2019), while newer bills are infringing on the rights of TGD individuals and their families to access gender-affirming care (Abreu et al., 2021). Bills and laws such as this are harmful to the physical and mental wellbeing of TGD individuals and their families because they are oppressive and violating, and they also promote increased violence against TGD individuals (Lee, 2017).

One far-right commentator, Michael Knowles, went as far to say “…transgenderism must be eradicated from public life entirely” on stage at a Conservative Political Action Conference in March of 2023 (Luneau, 2023). His choice of words is violent and alludes to genocidal ideals, which should not be taken lightly. One reason why TGD youth may perceive their parents as less accepting of their identity compared to LGB youth is because the United States’ political culture seems to consider TGD identities as more controversial. Overall, political ideology will likely be an important predictor of parental acceptance for both LGB and TGD children, specifically, children who have parents who are more conservative will likely perceive less acceptance.
While the other predictors are more subtle indicators of parental attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community, there are more direct ways of predicting attitudes. For instance, more positive attitudes may be predicted by being an ingroup member, or through intergroup contact with the LGBTQ+ community, such as by having LGBTQ+ family or friends (Rosenfeld, 2017). In contrast, cisgender, heterosexual parents may hold more negative attitudes on the basis that they do not have a personal understanding of the LGBTQ+ community and live in a culture in which cisgenderism and heterosexuality is the norm, and straying from that is seen as deviant.

Gay and lesbian adults tend to be more gender nonconforming than heterosexual adults starting in childhood (Li et al., 2017; Rieger et al., 2008). Many LGBTQ+ parents also take a gender nonconforming approach to raising children, such as through offering a wider variety of options for clothes and toys (Averett, 2016; Biblarz & Stacey, 2010). Because these LGBTQ+ parents expressed more gender nonconformity and their identities were more often misperceived (as being cisgender and/or heterosexual are the norms), these parents are unlikely to limit their child’s expression of their identity and have a better understanding of their child’s needs as they disclose their identity. LGBTQ+ parents can use their own experience to inform their reaction to the disclosure of their child’s identity. In that way, LGBTQ+ parents have less internalized homophobia and transphobia, and are less biased toward the LGBTQ+ community.

Similarly, intergroup contact through being family or friends with members of the LGBTQ+ community can help dismantle bias toward the LGBTQ+ community. Intergroup contact theory is the idea that individuals from different groups may reduce intergroup bias through specific kinds of contact. Intergroup contact is the most successful when it meets the following requirements: parties are equal status in the contact situation, there is intergroup
cooperation, common goals, support from authorities or law, and there is an opportunity for personal acquaintance or friendship (Allport, 1954; Dovidio et al., 2017). In addition, intergroup contact seems to be more successful for sexual minorities than other minority groups (i.e. gender or racial minorities) because those with a non-heterosexual identity are more difficult to identify or categorize (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Rosenfeld, 2017).

Intergroup contact may be less effective in reducing anti-transgender prejudice and bias because there are fewer TGD people compared to LGB (Jones, 2022), being TGD is more stigmatized (James et al., 2016), and TGD people may not wish to disclose their gender identity to protect themselves from stigma or prejudice and to avoid gender dysphoria (Hoffarth & Hodson, 2018; Levitt & Ippolito, 2014). Therefore, it is unsurprising that a TGD child may perceive their parent as having more negative attitudes, compared to an LGB child, if the parent is not an ingroup member or in close proximity with the ingroup because it less likely that they would have past positive experiences with TGD people.

**Methods of Disclosure and Parental Reactions**

Disclosure of one’s sexual orientation or gender identity, or “coming out” is the process in which an LGBTQ+ person reveals their identity to another person. Oftentimes, LGBTQ+ individuals disclose their identity to themselves as the first disclosure milestone before telling others (Martos et al., 2015). Disclosure of one’s sexual orientation or gender identity is not a one-time thing, but rather a lifelong venture, or a series of realizations and disclosures because there will likely always be new people to disclose the identity to (Lev, 2004).

However, similar to parental demographic factors, the method of disclosure may affect parental reactions to their child’s sexual orientation or gender identity. There are an infinite number of ways in which a child’s identity may be disclosed, however the most common ways
are direct disclosures, such as coming out face-to-face, or through a letter, an email, or a text message (Birnkrant & Przeworski, 2017). In contrast, an indirect disclosure could look like a parent discovering their child’s identity accidentally through other people, or even speculation.

Few studies have examined the method of disclosure, and there are mixed results on the subject. In one study, parents of LGB children reacted more positively when their child’s sexual orientation was disclosed directly rather than indirectly (Ben-Ari, 1995). However, another study looking at disclosure from TGD children found no significant group differences depending on the method of disclosure (Birnkrant & Przeworski, 2017). These results suggest that although parents may prefer certain types of disclosure, a positive reaction may be more reliant on the parent’s demographic factors.

**Facilitators of Acceptance After Disclosure**

Although many parents are accepting of their child’s sexual orientation or gender identity when it is disclosed (Samarova et al., 2014), other parents may never fully accept their child’s identity (Greif et al., 2019; Grossman et al., 2005) and some parents will remain feeling ambivalent about their child’s identity over time. Fortunately, many parents, whether they initially respond with positivity or negativity, eventually come to terms with or become more accepting of their child’s identity over time and potentially with the help of resources (Cramer & Roach, 1988; Pullen Sansfaçon et al., 2020; Samarova et al., 2014). Sometimes time is the only thing needed to improve acceptance. Sometimes acceptance is facilitated through continuous conversations, educational resources, and support groups with people experiencing similar situations (Pullen Sansfaçon et al., 2020; Samarova et al., 2014). Although this study focuses on parental acceptance, or lack thereof, at the time of disclosure, acceptance is a process that can be improved with patience, dedication, and resources over time.
**Research Questions and Hypotheses**

The goal of this quantitative, correlational study was to examine if there is a difference in parental acceptance between LGB children and TGD children. Participants were asked to recollect their coming out experience and how they perceived their parents’ response. We were interested in gaining insight from the child’s perspective, currently, of their coming out experience and how they perceived their parents’ reactions because the children are at the center of this experience.

Research Question 1: Do TGD children perceive less parental acceptance, more parental rejection, and more psychological control when they come out to their parents compared to LGB children?

Hypothesis 1: TGD children will perceive less parental acceptance, more parental rejection, and more psychological control when they come out compared to LGB children.

Research Question 2 (Exploratory): Is there an association between parental demographic backgrounds, specifically political ideology and knowledge of the LGBTQ+ community, and amount of parental acceptance perceived by TGD and LGB children?

Hypothesis 2: Children who have more conservative parents will perceive less acceptance than children who have more liberal parents. Children who have parents with little to no contact or knowledge of the LGBTQ+ community will perceive less acceptance than children who have parents with more contact or knowledge of the LGBTQ+ community.
Method

Open Science Agreement

All research questions, hypotheses, our analytical plan, and materials were pre-registered and available on the Open Science Framework in order to ensure transparency, collaboration, and accountability: https://osf.io/xnhkm/?view_only=b22d06353e1f4a4085e3845b3c208468.

Participants

In order to better compare LGB and TGD groups, we sought to include similar sample sizes of LGB and TGD participants. An a priori power analysis using G*Power 3.1.9.7, suggested 105 participants per group were necessary for a medium effect of a two-tailed, two group mean comparison with power = .95.

Participants were recruited through Prolific, an online research tool. In order to participate in this study, participants needed to be 18 to 25 years old and identify as LGB and/or as TGD. We chose to limit the age of participants because this range includes a cohort of emerging adults likely dealing with similar issues on the generational level. In addition, this group likely has Generation X parents, which also helps control for variability in attitudes toward LGBTQ+ identities. Screeners were put in place to deter cisgender, heterosexual participants.

Initially, 245 participants were gathered through Prolific. Five were removed for being both cisgender and heterosexual. One more participant was removed for misunderstanding a demographic question which led to them being placed into the wrong group from the survey flow. After these exclusions, 239 participants remained.

Once participants met the screening requirements, they were asked to input their age, and asked to indicate their gender identity and sexual orientation, by either selecting one or more of many provided options, or filling in a blank with a label that better fit them. Options for gender
identity included cisgender male/female, transgender male/female, nonbinary, genderfluid, genderqueer, gender nonconforming, and a fill in the blank option for other identities. Options for sexual orientation included straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, asexual, queer, and a fill in the blank option for other identities. Many options were provided for participants to choose from in order to be inclusive of the many labels that people use to identify their gender identity and sexual orientation, despite us using limiting acronyms throughout this paper for brevity (i.e. LGB & TGD).

Detailed participant demographics are available in Table 1. Participants were 18 to 25 years old with a mean age of 22.77 years old ($SD = 1.79$). There were 146 cisgender participants (35.6% male and 64.4% female). There were 93 noncisgender participants, most of whom identified as nonbinary (60.2%, $n = 56$). Notably, there were no TGD participants who identified as heterosexual, as the only heterosexual participants were excluded for also being cisgender ($n = 5$).

Table 1.

Demographic Data of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>LGB</th>
<th></th>
<th>TGD</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$n$</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>$n$</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Identity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>64.4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonbinary</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>60.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genderfluid</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants were asked to identify up to two primary parent(s) or guardian(s). In addition to biological parent(s), options included stepparent(s), adoptive parent(s), grandparent(s), aunt(s) and uncle(s), or older sibling(s). Participants were asked whom they were referring to before taking the survey. If participants came out to two parents and experienced similar reactions from both, they were asked to indicate that they are answering the survey about both parents. However, if a participant indicated that one parent had a worse reaction, they were instructed to answer the survey with regards to that experience. Additionally, if a participant only came out to one parent or if they only identified one parental figure, they were instructed to answer the survey with regards to that parent.

We did not exclude participants who have not come out to their parents. However, only participants who reported coming out to their parents were directed to complete the accept,
reject, and control scales. Thus, it is important to note that in our sample, 168 participants (101 LGB and 67 TGD) indicated that they have come out to their parents, while 71 were not out at the time of our survey and did not complete the full survey.

Questions were also asked about the parent’s demographic information. Participants answered whether their parent has had any contact with the LGBTQ+ community through any personal relationships, which was indicated by answering whether the parent(s) are LGBTQ+, whether the parent(s) have LGBTQ+ friends and/or family, and how much knowledge the participant thinks their parents have of the LGBTQ+ community. In addition, participants were asked to indicate their perception of how important politics to be to their parent(s), and their perception of what political ideology their parent(s) identify with.

Measures

The Coming Out Experience

Participants were asked both when they first realized their identity, and when they decided to come out to their parent(s). If something forced them to disclose their identity to their parent(s), participants were asked to report that it happened, but not the specific circumstances. For participants who identify as both LGB and TGD, they were asked if their identities were disclosed separately or at the same time. Additionally, participants were asked what factors may have facilitated or impeded their coming out process by selecting potential factors such as their parent’s political orientation, or amount of contact with the LGBTQ+ community.

Parental Acceptance and Parental Rejection

Parental acceptance was measured by three concepts: parental acceptance, parental rejection, and psychological control.
Parental acceptance and parental rejection were measured by adapting and combining items from two scales: The Parental Acceptance and Rejection of Sexual Orientation Scale (PARSOS; Kibrik et al., 2019), and the Parental Attitudes of Gender Expansiveness Scale for Youth (PAGES-Y; Hidalgo et al., 2017). Each scale has two similar subscales regarding perceived parental acceptance and perceived parental rejection or nonaffirmation of a child’s sexual orientation or gender identity, so we chose items from each of the subscales that best represented what we were seeking to measure.

For the present study, the items from the PARSOS & PAGES-Y scales were combined and modified in order to create a measure that would be appropriate for both LGB and TGD participants. While the PARSOS scale was originally developed with separate mother and father versions, I modified the wording to ask about a generic parental figure or figures, which the participant indicated at the beginning of the survey. Additionally, the language of the questions was modified slightly so questions from both scales could be answered about either one’s sexual orientation or gender identity. In order to reduce the number of questions and redundancy, two researchers compared the list of scale items and removed repeat questions and any items that could not accommodate both sexual orientation and gender identity answers. After this process, 12 items measuring parental acceptance and 10 items measuring parental rejection remained. The combined scale was measured on a 5-point Likert scale from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” (see Appendix A). A higher acceptance score means the participant perceived strong parental acceptance, while a higher rejection score means the participant perceived strong parental rejection after coming out. Both subscales were highly reliable. The acceptance subscale ($M = 3.00, SD = 1.11$) consisted of 12 items ($\alpha = .94$), one of which was reverse coded, and the rejection subscale ($M = 2.29, SD = 1.22$) consisted of 10 items ($\alpha = .95$).
Parental Psychological Control

Parental psychological control was measured using the 10-question subscale of psychological control from the shortened version of the Child’s Report of Parent Behavior Inventory (CRPBI-30; Schludermann & Schludermann, 1988). The original CRPBI-30 is measured on a 3-point scale from “not like” to “a lot like”. However, for our purposes, the control scale was changed to be measured on a 5-point scale from “definitely untrue” to “definitely true”. The questions asked in this subscale are not specific to LGBTQ+ youth and their coming out experiences, but participants were asked to remember their parent’s behavior in the days immediately after coming out (see Appendix B). The language of the items was slightly modified to be worded in the past tense rather than the present tense. This change was made because participants were asked about their experience in retrospect.

A mean psychological control score was generated for each participant. Item response options ranged from -2 to +2, so mean scores could range from -2 to +2. However, to match the acceptance and rejection scale ranges, we rescaled the mean scores to be positive by adding 3, so the rescaled mean control scores ranged from 1 to 5. A low score means the participant perceived their parents to be uncontrolling and likely supportive, while a high score means the participant perceived their parents to be controlling and unsupportive of their identity. The control subscale ($M = 2.04, SD = 1.21$) was highly reliable (10 items; $\alpha = .96$).

Results

Parental Acceptance, Rejection, and Psychological Control

TGD participants ($M = 2.66, SD = 1.13$) reported significantly less perceived parental acceptance compared to LGB participants ($M = 3.23, SD = 1.05$), $t(166) = 3.34, p = .001, d = .53$. TGD participants ($M = 2.72, SD = 1.32$) also perceived significantly more parental rejection
compared to LGB participants ($M = 2.01, SD = 1.07$), $t(166) = -3.84, p < .001, d = -.61$. TGD participants ($M = 2.37, SD = 1.33$) reported significantly more perceived parental psychological control than LGB participants ($M = 1.82, SD = 1.09$), $t(166) = -2.92, p = .004, d = -.46$ (See Figure 1). These results supported our hypothesis that TGD children would perceive less parental acceptance, more parental rejection, and more psychological control than LGB children.

**Figure 1.**

*Perceived Parental Acceptance and Rejection*

The three subscales were highly correlated. The control scale and the reject scale were highly positively correlated, $r(168) = .823, p < .001$, the control scale and the accept scale were highly negatively correlated, $r(168) = -.574, p < .001$, and the accept and reject scales were highly negatively correlated, $r(168) = -.786, p < .001$. These relationships mean participants who perceived high acceptance tended to perceive low rejection and low psychological control. The high correlation between the accept and the reject subscales may suggest that they are not
distinct scales, however, the researchers who developed these scales (PARSOS; Kibrik et al., 2019; PAGES-Y; Hidalgo et al., 2017) argued for two distinct subscales, therefore, we decided it was important to analyze them separately.

Predictors of Acceptance

Participants were asked about their parents’ potential knowledge of the LGBTQ+ community. When participants were asked if either of their parents were LGBTQ+, the majority said “no” (91.2%, \( n = 218 \)), while some responded “yes” (5.4%, \( n = 13 \)), and some responded “I don’t know” (3.3%, \( n = 8 \)). When asked if their parents had any LGB friends or family, most participants chose “yes” (\( n = 135 \)), while others said “no” (\( n = 63 \)), or “I don’t know” (\( n = 41 \)). In contrast, when asked if their parents had any TGD friends or family, most responded “no” (\( n = 154 \)), while some said “yes” (\( n = 43 \)), or “I don’t know” (\( n = 40 \)). Interestingly, parents of TGD kids were significantly more likely than parents of LGB kids to have TGD friends or family. These results are illustrated in Figure 2. In addition, participants were asked on a five-point scale from “none at all” to “a great deal”, “How much knowledge do you think your parent(s) have of the LGBTQ+ community?”. Most responded “a little” (Parent 1: \( M = 2.60, SD = 0.96 \); Parent 2: \( M = 2.18, SD = 0.90 \)).

A supplementary analysis indicated a main effect of group identity, \( F(1, 202) = 9.39, p = .001, \eta^2 = .044 \), suggesting parents of LGB kids tended to be more knowledgeable (P1: \( M = 2.74, SD = 0.92 \); P2: \( M = 2.35, SD = 0.96 \)) than parents of TGD children (P1: \( M = 2.47, SD = 0.98 \); P2: \( M = 1.92, SD = 0.75 \)). There was also a main effect of Parent on parent’s knowledge of the LGBTQ+ community, \( F(1, 202) = 52.47, p < .001, \eta^2 = .206 \), suggesting Parent 1 tended to be more knowledgeable than Parent 2.
Additionally, participants were asked on a scale from 1 to 5, “How important are politics to your parent(s)”. Most participants responded “a moderate amount” (P1: $M = 2.99$, $SD = 1.21$; P2: $M = 3.13$, $SD = 1.20$). Participants were asked what political ideology their parent(s) seem to identify with on a seven-point scale from very liberal (1) to very conservative (7). Most said their parents were moderately liberal (P1: $M = 3.68$, $SD = 1.84$; P2: $M = 4.22$, $SD = 2.00$). A supplementary analysis indicated a main effect of Parent, $F(1, 185) = 30.83$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .143$, suggesting Parent 2 was often rated as more conservative. This could relate to parental gender as “biological dad” was most frequently chosen as Parent 2. There was no main effect of participant identity (LGB versus TGD) and no interaction.

Participants who perceived their parents as more accepting tended to rate their parents as being more liberal and as having more knowledge of the LGBTQ+ community (See Table 2). Those that perceived their parents to be more rejecting rated their parents as being more
conservative and as having less knowledge of the LGBTQ+ community. In addition, participants who perceived their parents to be more controlling also rated their parents as being more conservative and having less knowledge of the LGBTQ+ community. In a post hoc analysis we discovered the relationships between the subscales and parental demographics were stronger for TGD children than for LGB children, suggesting knowledge of the LGBTQ+ community and political ideology had a larger influence on parental acceptance, rejection, and control for TGD children.

Table 2.

Correlations Between the Control, Accept, and Reject Subscales and Parental Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Parent 1 Perceived Political Ideology</th>
<th>Parent 1 Perceived Knowledge of the LGBTQ+ Community</th>
<th>Parent 2 Accept</th>
<th>Parent 2 Reject</th>
<th>Parent 2 Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LGB</td>
<td>TGD</td>
<td>LGB</td>
<td>TGD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accept</td>
<td>-.399**</td>
<td>→ -.747**</td>
<td>.369**</td>
<td>→ .672**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>.477**</td>
<td>→ .696**</td>
<td>-.242*</td>
<td>→ -.606**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>.376**</td>
<td>.526**</td>
<td>-.173</td>
<td>→ -.464**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** ** indicates \( p < .01 \), * indicates \( p < .05 \). Political ideology is measured on a 1-7 scale with higher scores indicating greater conservatism. → indicates a significant difference between correlations, with TGD correlations tending to be stronger.
Demographics/Frequency Statistics

We asked participants to identify up to two parental figures. For the first parent, 86.2% (n = 206) of respondents selected “biological mother”. Others selected “biological father” (9.6%, n = 23), “adoptive mother”, “grandmother”, “grandfather”, and “aunt” (4.2%, n = 10) as their first parental figure. For the second parent, 66.1% (n = 158) of respondents selected “biological father”. Other responses included biological mother (9.2%, n = 22), stepmother/father, grandmother/father, adoptive father, uncle, and sister (14.6%, n = 35) as the second parental figure. Ten percent of participants (n = 24) selected “not applicable” for the second parental figure.

Some participants first realized they were not straight or not cisgender when they were 12 years old or younger (22.2%, nLGB = 53; 9.6%, nTGD = 23). Most first realized when they were a teenager between 13 to 17 years old (27.6%, nLGB = 66; 18%, nTGD = 43). Others first realized when they were 18 years old or older (11.3%, nLGB = 27; 11.3%, nTGD = 27). Most participants said that they came out to their parents prior to participating in the survey (70.3%, n = 168), while 54 participants said they have not come out and do not plan to (22.6%), and 17 participants said they have not come out, but plan to (7.1%). The age that participants came out did not significantly differ between LGB and TGD participants. Overall, most participants came out because they wanted to (75.6%, n = 127), as opposed to being forced to come out (8.9%, n = 15), coming out on accident (7.1%, n = 12), or another reason (8.3%, n = 14). At the time of the survey, most participants said they came out to their parents over five years ago (48.8%, n = 82), while some came out three to four years ago (29.2%, n = 49), some came out one to two years ago (13.7%, n = 23), and some came out less than a year prior (8.3%, n = 14). Participants were

1 “Biological Mother” was the first response option for this question, which may have increased the number of people who chose it for Parent 1.
asked if they came out to their parents separately, as in one parent at a time, and 97 participants (57.7%) responded “yes”, 51 participants (30.4%) responded “no”, and 20 participants (11.9%) responded “not applicable”.

Over a third of participants who came out (41.1%, \( n = 69 \)) said their identity changed over time (e.g. they identified as gay but later identified as bisexual), while 99 participants said their identity did not change (58.9%). Of those that said their identity changed, most responded that they did not come out more than once because of it (52.2%, \( n = 36 \)), while several said they had come out twice (34.8%, \( n = 24 \)), some said they had not and do not plan to (8.7%, \( n = 6 \)), and a few said they had not but plan to come out again (4.3%, \( n = 3 \)). Interestingly, the proportion of TGD participants whose identity changed over time (66%, \( n = 44 \)) is significantly higher than the proportion of LGB participants (25%, \( n = 25 \)), \( \chi^2 (1, 168) = 27.87, p < .001 \).

However, no further questions were asked to understand how their identities changed over time.

Participants reported if they thought their parents would be accepting when they came out on a five-point scale from “definitely not” to “definitely yes”. The most frequent response was “probably yes” (\( M = 3.33, SD = 1.22 \)). Participants were also asked to rate each of their parent’s (if applicable) overall reaction when they came out on a one-item question with a five-point scale from “very unaccepting” to “very accepting”. Overall, most participants thought their parents reacted in a very accepting way, or they thought their parents were “a little accepting” (Parent 1: \( M = 4.02, SD = 1.19 \); Parent 2: \( M = 3.59, SD = 1.52 \)).

A supplementary analysis indicated a significant main effect of LGB versus TGD identification on overall perceived parental reaction, \( F(1, 132) = 6.68, p = .011, \eta^2 = .048 \). This result is in line with our hypothesis, with TGD participants reporting significantly less favorable

\(^2\) There was a nonsignificant effect of parent gender on overall parental reaction, \( F(1, 123) = 3.64, p = .059, \eta^2 = .029 \).
reactions compared to LGB participants. In addition, the analysis indicated a significant main effect for Parent, $F(1, 132) = 6.26, p = .013, \eta^2 = .045$, with Parent 1 reactions being significantly more favorable compared to Parent 2. This could correspond with parental gender as “biological mom” was most often picked for Parent 1 and “biological dad” was most often picked for Parent 2. There was a nonsignificant interaction of parent and group identification on perceived parental reaction (See Figure 3).

**Figure 3.**

*Overall Perceived Parental Reaction*

![Bar chart showing overall perceived parental reaction for Parent 1 and Parent 2.]

**Discussion**

Although past qualitative studies have found low parental acceptance of TGD children, few have directly compared this to the experience of LGB children. Additionally, few studies have investigated *why* parents may be less accepting of their TGD child. The present study adds to the literature because we sought to quantify the difference in parental acceptance between
LGB children versus TGD children using large, comparable samples, and to explore the relationship between parental demographic factors and acceptance of LGBTQ+ children.

As we predicted, we found TGD children perceived significantly less parental acceptance, more parental rejection, and more psychological control compared to the LGB group. In addition, we found moderate correlations between our subscales, acceptance, rejection, and psychological control, and the parental demographic factors, political ideology and knowledge of the LGBTQ+ community. These relationships support our hypothesis that parental demographic factors may influence parental acceptance, rejection, and psychological control. This result also supports past findings that being more politically conservative tends to be associated with being less accepting of LGBTQ+ identities (Cramer & Roach, 1988; Dessel & Rodenborg, 2017; Smith-Osborne & Rosenwald, 2009). Additionally, our results support the idea that intergroup contact with the LGBTQ+ community is associated with more accepting attitudes of LGBTQ+ identities (Rosenfeld, 2017). We now know there are fewer people who have TGD friends and family compared to LGB friends and family, and that is associated with a difference in perceived parental acceptance between TGD children and LGB children.

The disparity between the groups in our study speaks to a larger problem in American society that TGD folks are less accepted and may face more bias, prejudice, and discrimination than LGB people. Consequently, TGD people may have more anxiety and depression as they struggle to feel accepted by the people around them and society at large and may even face more verbal and physical violence compared to LGB people. Understanding that gaining knowledge about the LGBTQ+ community through intergroup contact is associated with acceptance gives hope that as people become educated about the LGBTQ+ community, there will be more acceptance and possible change in attitudes toward the community and especially of the TGD
community. There is hope that in the future TGD people will have a history like LGB people, that society will accept them more as time goes on.

**Limitations and Future Directions**

Although our results paint a clear picture of parental acceptance of LGB children compared to TGD children and why that may be, there were a few limitations to this research. In this study we sought to quantify parental acceptance between LGB and TGD children with more comparable sample sizes. We sought to have 105 LGB and 105 TGD participants, and although our groups were more comparable in number, we did not have quite enough TGD participants \(n = 93\), unfortunately.

Initially, we hypothesized there would be four participant subgroups in this study: cisgender+heterosexual participants (who would not be included), cisgender+LGB participants, TGD+heterosexual participants, and TGD+LGB participants. The cis+LGB participants would make up the LGB group and the TGD participants, regardless of sexual orientation, would make up the TGD group. We were surprised that all TGD participants identified as non-heterosexual, although TGD adults tend to identify as LGBQ more than non-TGD adults (Dawson et al., 2023). We suspect this could be because younger generations are more resistant to gender stereotypes and seem to identify more fluidly in both gender identity and sexual orientation than previous generations (“Gender Roles”, 2014). Gender identity and sexual orientation were once thought to be on opposite ends of a bipolar scale, but newer generations are redefining gender and sexual orientation with more nuance. Thus, it is not so surprising that TGD folks may not strongly identify as heterosexual.

While all TGD participants being non-heterosexual could be a limitation of our study, it may potentially make these groups more comparable as the only main difference between the
groups is their gender identity (cisgender versus TGD). The difference we found in parental acceptance between LGB and TGD participants seems even more significant considering this fact. It would be interesting to do a follow-up study with a similar sample that identifies as both TGD and LGB to investigate them further and see truly if they felt a difference in parental acceptance between their gender identity and sexual orientation.

Another limitation to this study is that participants were not asked about their race and ethnicity. Although we chose not to ask about race and ethnicity because at the time it seemed to be beyond the scope of this study, we missed out on some interesting and important information. Other research has suggested that being able to come out is a privilege for White people, and when other races come out it can ostracize and oppress them further as they are already categorized as a minority (Villicana et al., 2016). A future study could consider how race and ethnicity affect parental acceptance of LGB versus TGD children. Interestingly, one study found that Black college students were significantly less accepting of LGBTQ+ students compared to White, Asian, and Native American students (Worthen, 2018). However, this finding only holds up in the context of religious background, patriarchal gender norms, and parental disapproval of LGBTQ+ identities, showing that all of these background factors are interrelated and important for understanding acceptance and rejection of the LGBTQ+ community.

Another future study could look at the correlations between politics, education, religion, and parental acceptance of LGB versus TGD children. It is well known that level of education strongly correlates with political ideology, specifically in that people who receive more education tend to be less disapproving or more tolerant of LGBTQ+ people (Glenn & Weaver, 1979; Herek, 1988; Loftus, 2001). In addition, numerous studies have seen a correlation between higher religiosity and lower acceptance of LGBTQ+ identities (Larse et al., 1983; Rosenkrantz et
al., 2020; Rowatt et al., 2009; Ryan et al., 2010). Although parental education and religion were not included as predictors in this study, they likely affect parental acceptance, but it is unclear whether they would predict a difference in parental acceptance for LGB children compared to TGD children.

Although we did not seek to investigate the role of parental gender and its correlation with parental acceptance in this study, we noticed an interesting pattern in our results. Most participants chose “biological mother” as their first parent. This may be because it was the first response option on the survey but could also be because mothers tend to be seen as the primary nurturing parent. Parent 1 tended to be rated as more accepting, less rejecting, and less controlling than Parent 2 overall. Parent 1 also tended to be perceived as more politically liberal and more knowledgeable of the LGBTQ+ community. These results seem to align with past research findings of mothers being more accepting than fathers (Grossman et al., 2005; Jay & Young, 1979; Rosenkrantz et al., 2020; Samarova et al., 2014). One reason mothers may be more accepting than fathers is because they tend to be the primary parent by being more involved in their child’s life and may in turn be more in tune with their child’s gender identity or sexual orientation (Kibrik et al., 2019). Men may also adhere more to masculine gender norms and be less tolerant of people who deviate from stereotypical gender norms (Light, 2022).

It would also be interesting to explore acceptance over time for these groups as parental acceptance may change from the time of disclosure with more knowledge and resources. Past research seems to suggest that the main two elements needed to facilitate acceptance after disclosure are time and resources (Cramer & Roach, 1988; Pullen Sansfaçon et al., 2020; Samarova et al., 2014). Although, overall, parents tended to be accepting of their child’s identity at the time of disclosure, it would be interesting to explore if acceptance improved over time and
if acceptance rates were more comparable between LGB and TGD children after a period of time. Additionally, it may be important to know, on average, how much time it took for parents to be mostly-to-fully accepting, and what was necessary or helpful along that journey. Related research has found continuous conversations, educational resources, and support groups help to facilitate parental acceptance (Pullen Sansfaçon et al., 2020; Samarova et al., 2014), but future research could investigate this further.

With this study we were able to quantify parental acceptance between LGB and TGD children and show there is a significant difference between the groups. We also learned that parental political ideology and knowledge of the LGBTQ+ community is related to parental acceptance. Knowing this information opens the doors for positive change, such as by informing initiatives that support parents in understanding their child’s sexual orientation or gender identity that may someday close the gap in parental acceptance rates between TGD and LGB children. Sharing knowledge and educating others may create a positive shift in attitudes toward TGD identities, which may enhance the mental health and wellbeing of TGD individuals.
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Appendix A

Parental Acceptance and Parental Rejection Scales

Adapted from the Parental Acceptance and Rejection of Sexual Orientation scale (PARSOS; Kibrik et al., 2019) and the Parental Attitudes of Gender Expansiveness Scale for Youth (PAGES-Y; Hidalgo et al., 2017). The combined scale was measured on a 5-point Likert scale from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”.

Acceptance Items:
1. My parent(s) have told their friends and/or coworkers about my [sexual orientation/gender identity]
2. My parent(s) proudly identify themselves as being a parent of a [LGB/TGD] person
3. My parent(s) tell me they accept my [sexual orientation/gender identity]
4. My parent(s) encourage me to be myself as a [LGB/TGD] person
5. I can be myself around my parent(s)
6. My parent(s) are supportive of my [gender expression/same-sex partner(s)]
7. I can talk to my parents about [my romantic relationships and dating/ gender expression]
8. My parent(s) ask me questions about [my romantic relationships/gender expression] in a curious, caring, and non-judgemental manner
9. [R] My parent(s) avoid the issue of my [sexual orientation/gender identity] when we talk
10. My parent(s) are supportive when I share experiences of [homophobia/transphobia]
11. My parent(s) protect me and defend me against others prejudice against [TGD/LGB] people
12. My parent(s) have told extended family members about my [sexual orientation/gender identity]

Rejection Items:
13. My parent(s) think that my [sexual orientation/gender identity] is a bad thing
14. My parent(s) have problems with my [gender expression/sexual orientation]
15. My parent(s) sometimes make comments (directly to me or in my presence) that [same-sex attraction/gender expansiveness/being trans] is negative
16. My parent(s) think that there is something wrong with me, because of my [sexual orientation/gender identity]
17. My parent(s) make me feel that my [sexual orientation/gender identity] has caused difficulties for them and for our family
18. My parent(s) tell me I cannot be open about my [sexual orientation/gender identity] with some family members because it might hurt them
19. My parent(s) probably believe they are bad parent(s) because I am [TGD/LGB]
20. My parent(s) sometimes make comments or imply that I haven’t tried enough to know what my [sexual orientation/gender identity] is
21. My parent(s) think that my [sexual orientation/gender identity] is a wrong choice I made
22. My parent(s) think they know better about my [sexual orientation/gender identity] than I do
Appendix B

Psychological Control Subscale

The psychological control subscale comes from the shortened version of the Child’s Report of Parent Behavior Inventory (CRPBI-30; Schludermann & Schludermann, 1988). The control scale was measured on a 5-point scale from “definitely untrue” to “definitely true”.

Soon after I came out, my parent(s)...
1. …told me of all the things they have done for me
2. …said, if I really cared for them, I would not do things that cause them to worry
3. …told me how I should behave
4. ….wanted to be able to tell me what to do all the time
5. ….wanted to control whatever I did
6. ….tried to change me
7. ….only kept rules when it suited them
8. ….were less friendly with me, if I did not see things their way
9. ….would avoid looking at me when I have disappointed them
10. ….if I have hurt their feelings, stopped talking to me until I pleased them again