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Abstract

With the global rise in the number of children raised by same-sex parents, societal attitudes toward same-sex parenting have gained significant academic attention. Previous studies indicate that same-sex parents often face negative experiences, and such negativity toward same-sex parenting persists across generations. On the other hand, few studies have focused on societal perceptions of children with same-sex parents themselves. Using a qualitative design in the Netherlands, this study fills this gap by exploring university students' perceptions of a boy raised by gay parents and the rationales behind these perceptions. Sixteen semi-structured interviews, followed by a video vignette assignment, revealed generally positive perceptions of the boy with gay fathers and their parenting. The boy was often perceived as happy and having no issues with socializing, being independent, or his relationship with his two fathers. The parents' sexual orientation was reported to have relatively positive impacts on the boy, while their full-time employment was often believed to have negative impacts. Participants showed supportive attitudes toward gay and lesbian individuals and their parenting. Although some remarks indicated subconscious beliefs regarding the necessity of traditional gender roles in parenting, these beliefs did not affect evaluations of the child. This study demonstrates that Dutch youths generally see children with same-sex parents through an unbiased lens, focusing on children's and parental qualities rather than parental sexual orientation.

Keywords: youths, attitudes, children, same-sex parents, gay fathers

How do Dutch University Students See a Boy with Gay Parents?

Under the international trend of introducing same-sex marriage and adoption, the number of children raised by same-sex parents has been increasing globally. In the Netherlands, about 700 children have been born into a same-sex family, and this number has only been growing since 2001 (CBS, 2019). In the UK, adoption by same-sex couples has seen a notable rise, with 14% of children being adopted by same-sex couples in 2018 and 17% in 2020 (Jardine, 2022). In the US in 2019, more than one million households headed by same-sex couples had at least one child who is under 18 years old (Taylor, 2020). Coupled with this trend, the parenting skills of same-sex parents and the resulting impacts on children have been gaining considerable attention both publicly and academically.

Most studies indicate favorable outcomes in both the parenting capabilities of same-sex couples and the development of their children. For example, gay parents showed higher psychological well-being and parenting skills than heterosexual parents (Golombok et al., 2014). Additionally, the systematic review by Zhang et al. (2023) revealed that same-sex parents had better relationships with children and that preschool-aged children with same-sex parents had fewer psychological problems. School-aged children with same-sex parents showed better academic performance in both primary and secondary education (Mazrekaj et al., 2020). Studies further confirmed no difference in both internalizing and externalizing behavioral outcomes (Mazrekaj et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2023) as well as mental health outcomes (Mazrekaj & Jin, 2023) between children with same-sex parents and those with different-sex parents.

Despite the relatively positive outcomes of same-sex parenting, gay and lesbian parents still face negative circumstances. These parents are often discouraged from adopting a child and face prejudice from social workers (Messina & D'Amore, 2018). In the UK, 54% of gay and

75% of lesbian parents reported such negative experiences during the adoption process (Mellish et al., 2013). Additionally, negative views toward same-sex parenting persist across generations (Battista et al., 2021), including among university students (Costa et al, 2014) and elderly adults (Baiocco et al., 2013). Especially parenting by two men is more likely to be perceived negatively than by two women (Baiocco et al., 2013; Kamenov et al., 2019; Webb et al., 2017).

The present study aims to explore how Dutch youths perceive children with gay parents. The Netherlands is widely recognized for its progressive stance on human rights, particularly regarding same-sex couples. The Netherlands is the first country to legalize same-sex marriage in 2001. In 2023, a constitutional amendment was enacted to expand protections against discrimination for sexual minority communities (The Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, 2023, p. 5). Dutch university students grew up in an environment where same-sex couples were legally acknowledged. This is the first study in the Netherlands to examine people's perceptions of children with gay parents. Hence, this study can contribute to our knowledge of these views in a nation that has accepted same-sex parenting for over two decades. However, despite these advancements, there exists a legal distinction in parentage between gay and lesbian couples in the Netherlands. Lesbian two-mother couples are granted the right to be recognized as legal parents if one of them is the birth mother, whereas gay two-father couples are not (Government of the Netherlands, 2021). This disparity reflects not only the unequal treatment of gay couples in parenting laws but also broader societal biases and stereotypes regarding gay parenting. Therefore, the present study focuses specifically on perceptions of children with gay fathers to explore the unique challenges and stigmas faced by this demographic within the context of parenting and family dynamics. Dutch university students' positive attitudes toward children with gay fathers would suggest the feasibility of integrating gay parenting into the

existing parenting laws. Conversely, negative attitudes would indicate the continued challenges to such integration. Either way, the present study can offer valuable considerations for informing parenting laws worldwide. Based on these objectives, this study is guided by the research question: "How do university students who have grown up in the Netherlands see a boy with gay parents?" To answer this overarching question, the study answers three sub-questions:

1. "What are the attitudes and beliefs of Dutch university students regarding gay and lesbian individuals and same-sex parenting?"

2. "Which aspects of the boy's characteristics do Dutch university students consider noteworthy and mention?"

3. "How do Dutch university students rationalize their perceptions of the boy with gay parents?"

One frequently mentioned reason for opposing same-sex parental rights is the concern over the risk of social stigma and discrimination that children with same-sex parents may face (Costa & Salinas-Quiroz, 2019; Hermosa-Bosano et al., 2021). People tend to refrain from explicitly stating that same-sex parenting goes against traditional gender norms, choosing instead to refer to concerns about the well-being and experiences of these children. Directly exploring people's perceptions of children with same-sex parents thus helps to interpret nuanced ways in which parental sexual orientation may influence perceptions of family dynamics, child development, and social integration. This also contributes to revealing implicit biases and societal norms that shape attitudes toward same-sex parenting and its impact on children. Under the trend of increasing numbers of children raised by same-sex parents, such studies are becoming increasingly important.

Frias-Navarro (2014) established the Beliefs about Children's Adjustment in Same-Sex Families Scale (BCASSFS) to assess people's perceptions regarding the negative impacts of

same-sex parenting on children's psychological and social development. Several studies used this scale to examine societal beliefs about children with same-sex parents (e.g., Baiocco et al., 2020; Frias-Navarro et al., 2014). However, the BCASSFS holds limitations related to its item characteristics. Since the aim of this scale is to interpret societal rejections of same-sex parenting, each item within the scale presents a negative assumption or stereotype about children raised by same-sex parents, such as "If children are raised by a gay or lesbian couple, they will have more problems with their own sexual identity than when they are raised by a heterosexual father and a heterosexual mother" (Frias-Navarro, 2014). The use of negatively worded items may introduce acquiescence bias, wherein respondents tend to agree with statements regardless of their actual beliefs (Dalal & Carter, 2015). This bias can potentially interrupt the scale's ability to comprehensively capture people's perceptions. Furthermore, while the scale primarily focuses on perceptions about the effects of same-sex parenting on their children, these items inherently imply attitudes towards same-sex parenting itself. The BCASSFS thus might unintentionally conflate these two distinct concepts of children with same-sex parents and same-sex parenting itself. This can cause confusion in interpretation and analysis.

Only a few studies focus on people's perceptions of children with same-sex parents rather than the perceptions about the effects of child-rearing and educational practices of same-sex parents as in the BCASSFS. The findings of these studies vary. In Australia, compared to children with different-sex parents, those with gay and lesbian parents were perceived to struggle with gender identity and sexual orientation, forming friendships, and facing stigma (Morse et al., 2007). In Portugal, Gato & Fontaine (2013) found that boys with lesbian parents were perceived by university students as experiencing greater challenges with their normative gender role behavior than girls with lesbian parents. In Czechia, Tušl et al. (2020) revealed that psychology

students evaluated the behavior of boys with same-sex parents as less problematic than those with heterosexual parents. While providing unique insights into societal views on children with same-sex parents, these previous studies, including those using the BCASSFS, were conducted quantitatively. Consequently, the underlying reasons and influencing factors behind these perceptions were not fully explained.

This study aims to address these limitations by providing a more comprehensive understanding of societal attitudes toward children with gay parents. Employing a qualitative approach allows for delving into nuanced perspectives and underlying beliefs. The use of a video vignette is particularly useful as it can enhance the reality of the situation, revealing how participants might react in real-world situations (Sleed et al., 2002). As the first study to explore this academic interest in the Netherlands, where same-sex parenting has been legally recognized for over two decades, this study can contribute to offering unique insights into societal attitudes toward children with gay parents. Considering that young people often show negative attitudes toward same-sex parents, recruiting Dutch university students with such exceptional backgrounds holds particular value. Moreover, the study contributes to shedding light on the unique challenges and stigmas faced by gay parents.

Theory

Several determinants have been examined that influence negative attitudes toward same-sex parenting and their children across multiple academic fields including psychology, sociology, and economics.

First, the intergroup contact theory suggests that contact and interaction with members of a specific group can reduce negative views toward people belonging to that group (Allport, 1954; Herek and Capitanio 1996; Pettigrew et al., 2011 as cited in Baiocco et al., 2020). The less

familiar people are with gay and lesbian individuals, the more negative attitudes they may show toward same-sex parenting (Costa et al., 2015; Hermosa-Bosano et al., 2021; Iraklis, 2021) and their children (Frias-Navarro et al., 2014; Yang et al., 2023). Logie et al. (2007) assert that "human response to the unknown can often bring feelings of fear or anxiety" (p. 215). These heightened emotions can be evoked by uncertainty about unfamiliar individuals or situations, as it is challenging to anticipate the future (Sillince & Shipton, 2013). Therefore, people would rather avoid unfamiliar situations and show refusal attitudes to such situations in order to protect themselves from potential harm. According to Yang et al. (2023), however, the quantity of contacts is not sufficient but the quality plays a more crucial role in determining positive attitudes toward same-sex parenting and their children. On the other hand, Sprajcer et al. (2022) suggest that while quantity does not predict attitudes toward same-sex parenting, both the quantity and quality of contacts predict attitudes toward the psychological adjustment of children with same-sex parents. In the Netherlands, same-sex marriage and adoption have been legalized for over two decades and more than 80% of LGBT+ individuals are fairly or very open about their sexual orientation (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, n.d.). Hence, it is conceivable that university students in the Netherlands have a high familiarity in both quantity and quality with gay and lesbian individuals, including those who are parenting, resulting in positive attitudes toward same-sex parenting.

Second, the essentialist theory suggests that the more distinct gender roles people believe, the more negative attitudes they show toward same-sex parenting (Battista et al., 2021; Frias-Navarro et al., 2015; Ioverno et al., 2019; Kamenov et al., 2019; Pacilli et al., 2017) and their children (Frias-Navarro et al., 2014). Distinct gender roles refer to the belief that mothers and fathers play distinct roles in parenting respectively and children benefit from both maternal and

paternal input, which cannot be perfectly replaced by one another (Allen, 2013). Specifically, the belief is that mothers are to give children nurturing care and emotional support, while fathers are to teach children societal expectations and principles (Pacilli et al., 2017). Since one of the indispensable roles is missing in same-sex parenting, people who believe the distinct gender roles consider that same-sex parenting would miss offering either necessary elements and it would negatively impact their children. Consequently, they would show negative attitudes toward same-sex parenting. The Netherlands ranks among the highest in Europe for gender egalitarianism (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2022). Furthermore, the higher education attainment rate, which is associated with gender egalitarianism (Thijs et al., 2019), is higher than the EU22 and OECD average (OECD iLibrary, 2022). Considering these trends, Dutch people are less likely to hold distinct gender role beliefs, resulting in positive attitudes toward same-sex parenting.

Finally, the prejudice theory suggests that sexual prejudice can lead to negative attitudes toward same-sex parenting (Morse et al., 2007; Pistella et al., 2018; Ioverno et al., 2019; Vecho et al., 2019), and their children (Baiocco et al., 2020; Frias-Navarro et al., 2014; Zhao & Zheng, 2021). People with strong sexual prejudice tend to believe that same-sex parents do not align with conventional gender roles and the nuclear family structure (Morse et al., 2007). They perceive same-sex parenting as deviating from norms and thus show negative attitudes toward these parents. Additionally, sexual prejudice is associated with being male, highly religious (Herek & McLemore, 2013), and politically conservative (Baiocco et al., 2020; Herek, 2000). Being male (Frias-Navarro et al., 2014; Zhao & Zheng, 2021), highly religious (Baiocco et al., 2020; Iraklis; 2021; Yang et al., 2023) and politically conservative (Baiocco et al., 2020) are further confirmed to predict negative attitudes toward same-sex parenting and their children. In

the Netherlands, around 70% of LGBT+ school-aged children report having supportive people around them (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, n.d.). This indicates a relatively low level of sexual prejudice among Dutch individuals. Furthermore, sexual prejudice is justified by the perception of controllability of sexual orientation (Collier et al., 2015; Costa & Salinas-Quiroz, 2019). People with such beliefs, that homosexuality is learned rather than genetically determined, would be concerned that children with same-sex parents may be influenced by their parents to be homosexual (Zhao & Zheng, 2021). Consequently, they are more inclined to show negativity toward same-sex parenting and their children (Frias-Navarro et al., 2014; Zhao & Zheng, 2021). Collier et al. (2015) further examined that Dutch adolescents tend to view sexual orientation as uncontrollable, and the view was associated with positive attitudes toward gay and lesbian individuals. Given the lower levels of sexual prejudice and the prevalent belief that sexual orientation is uncontrollable, it can be predicted that Dutch youths would show positive attitudes toward same-sex parenting.

Methods

Procedure

Data was collected in April and May 2024. The entire process was done in English for reproducibility. Additionally, as people in the Netherlands have high proficiency in English (EF EPI, 2023), it was considered appropriate to do so.

Participants were recruited through snowball sampling. The eligibility criteria for participation included: having grown up in the Netherlands and currently being a university student aged 18 or above. International and Dutch students whom I knew shared brochures with their eligible acquaintances. All participants volunteered for the study.

Participants completed a demographic questionnaire online via Qualtrics. In the following week, semi-structured interviews were conducted in person. The interviews were audio-recorded and lasted 38 minutes on average, ranging from 27 to 47 minutes. Although most interviews were conducted in person, some participants opted for online interviews via Microsoft Teams due to geographical constraints. Participants were asked general questions, watched the video after receiving information about the protagonist, and then evaluated the protagonist. Participants did not receive any compensation for participation. Theoretical saturation appeared to have been reached by the 11th interview, but interviews were conducted with 16 participants to ensure further validity and representativeness.

Sample

As Table 1 shows, the sample consisted of 12 women and four men (aged 19 to 25). Eight participants were from cities, eight from villages, and none from the countryside. All 13 participants who were currently in a romantic relationship reported having partners of a different gender.

Ethics

This research was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences of Utrecht University and the Ethical Review Board of the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences of Utrecht University.

Participants were informed about the purpose of this research, voluntary participation, withdrawal rights, confidentiality, and that identifiable characteristics would be pseudonymized in the final work. They were also informed about an independent contact person and complaints officer. Consent for participation was confirmed by signing a consent form. Participants also gave permission to audio-record the interview.

As a researcher with a background in psychology, my perspectives may influence the research process and interpretation.

Instruments

The demographic questions included age, gender, area in the Netherlands where they mainly grew up, major field of studies, gender of their romantic partner, and email address. The general questions were open-ended and consisted of participants' general thoughts on gay and lesbian individuals, their familiarity with such individuals, and their beliefs regarding same-sex parenting and gender roles in parenting (see Appendix B for more details).

The 5-minute-long video depicted a boy named Jake spending time at a kindergarten. Jake was around four years old, White, and spoke English. In the video, Jake first played on his own, using a drill-like toy to build a sandbox. He then interacted with a teacher, offering her a hotdog and explaining its taste. He also interacted with a girl playing with a doll, asking her the doll's name and gender. Following playtime, Jake joined in for snack time, sitting next to one boy and across from three girls. In the final scene, he sang and danced in a circle with his peers. Throughout the footage, Jake maintained a neutral facial expression and mood. The video was specifically chosen because there were no scenes where Jake exhibited specific strong emotions through his behavior or facial expressions.

Evaluation of the Protagonist

Participants were informed that the boy in the video had been raised by a gay male couple. He had no siblings and lived with his two fathers in an urban area. Both his fathers worked full-time. This background information was partially adopted from the case vignette in Gato & Fontaine (2013). We specifically informed that the family lives in an urban area and the

fathers work full-time, reflecting the common high socio-economic status among same-sex parents in the Netherlands (Mazrekaj et al., 2020).

The open-ended questions included three main types. These asked participants: (1) about their impressions of the boy, (2) to imagine a situation where the boy is spending time in a park, and (3) to imagine a situation where the boy is spending time at home (see Appendix C for more details). These questions aimed to comprehensively capture participants' perceptions of the boy's behavioral and personality traits, including his demeanor both within and outside of kindergarten. By imagining scenarios beyond the video, participants were encouraged to articulate their impressions of the child. To avoid suggestiveness, follow-up questions were based entirely on participants' responses and ideas.

Analysis Plan

Analysis followed each step of the thematic analysis process, as this approach allows for recognizing unanticipated perspectives within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). First, audio-recorded interviews were transcribed. To maintain participants' anonymity, identifying information was removed or pseudonymized. Second, recurring topics were identified by examining similarities and significant trends within the data, and then codes were developed to capture recurring patterns. Third, codes representing analogous concepts were grouped to establish overarching themes (see Appendix D for more details).

For further interpretation of the data within the theoretical perspectives, the transcriptions were coded based on three dimensions: participants' attitudes toward gay and lesbian individuals and familiarity with such individuals, thoughts on same-sex parenting, and thoughts on gender roles in parenting. This approach of employing both inductive and deductive coding allowed for a more comprehensive analysis of the interview data.

Results

After the thematic analysis, three themes emerged that summarized how participants perceived the boy raised by gay fathers: (1) impression of the boy with gay fathers, (2) potential negative experiences later in life, and (3) attribution of the boy's characteristics: emphasis on family dynamics.

Additionally, participants' general beliefs were analyzed within the following theoretical perspectives: (1) attitudes toward gay and lesbian individuals, (2) thoughts on same-sex parenting, and (3) thoughts on gender roles in parenting.

Impression of the Boy with Gay Fathers

All participants described their impressions of the boy in the video, using words such as "normal", "regular", and "nice." Participant I talked as follows:

Well, I didn't see anything out of the ordinary, so... Yeah. He just did his own thing, I guess. [...] Like, he just seemed like a normal kid to me, yeah. Nothing special. If you didn't tell me he had gay parents, then I wouldn't have noticed, I don't think. (Participant I, man, large village, Social Sciences and Humanities)

Ten participants perceived the boy as "happy." Additionally, in hypothetical situations in a park or at home, 14 participants imagined the boy would be "happy." The perceived happiness in the boy was often linked to his good relationship with his fathers. Thirteen participants noted this good relationship, as exemplified by Participant K:

Jake looked happy, so I hope he has a great, just a normal relationship with his parents. Like, they let him play and do what he wants. He didn't behave badly and he listened quite well. So, I think his parents teach him well, what to do and what to do not. So, I think his parents care about him. (Participant K, man, city, Business and Management)

Almost every participant mentioned that the boy had both characteristics of being social and independent. On the other hand, Participants J and K presumed that the boy was "autistic," both citing the scene where he played by himself building a sandbox. Additionally, only Participant J perceived the boy's difficulty in communication:

> He was a bit maybe autistic. I don't know if he's autistic of course, but like the playing by himself and really focusing on what he's doing and finding it hard to say something to somebody else. But it could also be because somebody's filming him you know that that's why he's a bit more aware of what he's doing. But he looked really content and happy. [...] Other children who are playing are more busy with other kids so he was more focused on himself. (Participant J, woman, small village, Law)

Potential Negative Experiences Later in Life

Three participants suggested potential negative experiences the boy might encounter later in life. While these experiences were perceived to be rooted in his parents being gay fathers, participants believed that parenting style and the contemporary educational climate would help mitigate the impact of such incidents on him. Participant D speculated that the boy may feel a sense of disconnection from his birth mother:

> ... it could be that he has a time in his life that he thinks if it was different if he has a mother. [...] You could hear sometimes that mother love is different from father love. Because the child's also growing inside the mother. And maybe he could feel a disconnection with that because it's not his biological mother. So that could be difficult. (Participant D, man, large village, Biomedical Sciences and Humanities)

Participant H expressed concerns about puberty, a time when children seek conformity and often target those who deviate from the majority. Given that the boy has two fathers, a

difference from the majority, he could become a target for bullying. However, she added that her perception of the boy's parents raising him in a secure and supportive environment would help him develop resilience against potential bullies. Similarly, Participant P highlighted her belief in the positive impact of current education efforts:

> Worst case scenario, he's like having difficulties with his dad being two dads and maybe some other children now are like saying, "oh, you have two dads and that's weird" or something. But I hope that we're further than that. Children nowadays are being teached that having two dads or two moms or two other people is just fine. (Participant P, woman, city, Health and Medicine)

Attribution of the Boy's Characteristics: Emphasis on Family Dynamics

Participants tended to refer to the boy's behavior in the video and his innate nature as reasons for their impressions of him. Attributions were also seen in other factors, which were often linked to the boy's family dynamics, namely having gay parents, both parents working full time, and being an only child.

Only several participants referred to the boy's gay male parents. Participant C mentioned that having gay fathers, growing up predominantly surrounded by men, might have impacted the boy's behavior of asking about the gender of a doll.

> I think the way he asks is like, "is he a boy or a girl?" It just reminded me of a friend I had who had two brothers and everyone was "a he" to him. [...] "He [emphasis placed by Participant C] went to the supermarket," even though he knew it's a girl. [...] Maybe for him as well. If he's got like gay parents, he's around them all the time. So yeah, maybe that influences that as well. But yeah, still asking whether it's a boy or a girl. So he does

know the difference, but it's just the word that's the most important to him. It's a he.

(Participant C, man, large village, Social Sciences and Humanities)

Participant P also referred to this scene, although she did not specifically mention the sexual orientation of the parents:

I think it [the boy asking the girl the doll's gender] shows that maybe the dads have informed him about different people and maybe using different pronouns, for example. Just making sure it's a boy or a girl or whatever. So do not assume something based on your thoughts. (Participant P, woman, city, Health and Medicine)

In the same scene, Participant H pointed out the boy's curiosity toward a girl playing with a doll. She suggested that being raised by two fathers, the boy may have become curious about traditional gender roles in parenting, a girl caring for a baby doll, which he might not have encountered. Additionally, Participant H ascribed the boy's inclination to be surrounded by girls to his limited exposure to toxic masculinity stemming from his parents being gay:

Often you see like gay guys have a lot of female friends, you know? But it's not like he's necessarily gay because his parents are. But um, yeah. I don't know, maybe he did grow up to be a bit less masculine, like toxic masculine like um, because his both his parents were gay or something so he was also interested in the girls. It could be yeah. [...] in a heteronormative family in which the norms are a bit more conservative, I can imagine as a boy maybe you play more with other boys and stuff like um whilst if you have a gay parents could be that you're just more open to other girls. Like in a like, I may have a preconception that if you have gay parents they might raise you in a healthy way without like the toxic male male standards. (Participant H, woman, city, Social Sciences and Humanities)

Participant G also mentioned the boy's curiosity, attributing it to the open-mindedness of his gay parents:

I think it [the boy's curiosity] could be just his character. But maybe his parents could have brought him up more with an open mind. Because they probably are more open minded. I don't know. I wanted to say average person. But I don't know if that's true. More open minded upbringing. [...] Because they are different than the mainstream. Because they are not straight. If you are not 100% mainstream, then I feel you experience things that give you a more open mind. (Participant G, woman, city, Communication and Media)

Participant G further suggested that the boy's parents being gay influenced her perception of him as having feminine characteristics:

Maybe because I knew that his parents were gay that you kind of start looking at it like... Does he also show some, I don't know how his dads are, but a bit more female characteristics? Maybe a bit, but maybe because I was just kind of looking at it from that perspective. (Participant G, woman, city, Communication and Media)

Participant K noted that, contrary to his expectation, he did not see any difference between the boy with gay fathers and other peers:

Uh, he's just a normal kid. Yeah. Because you told me he has two fathers. In the beginning he was, like, playing with the planks and stuff. I was, like, one thought was like, oh yeah, of course he's playing with like, materials, because he has two fathers. He has, like, more a, uh, more a mind of, like, playing with, uh, manly toys than other boys. But yeah, another boy would, like, of course, do exactly the same. And after that, there

was, like, nothing. Even, like, looking at him and comparing him with other children, I was not seeing a single difference. (Participant K, man, city, Business and Management)

Similarly, Participants I and O articulated that "I would not notice that he had two dads." Of the limited references regarding parental sexual orientation, none indicated the negative influences on the boy. Both gay parenting and its impact on the boy's behavior and personal characteristics were perceived relatively positively. However, some remarks could be interpreted as reflecting stereotypical beliefs about gay individuals, such as finding feminine characteristics in the boy and expecting manly conduct exhibited by him.

Nine participants mentioned both parents' full-time employment. While some presumed that he might have a babysitter and imagined the babysitter as his playdate in hypothetical situations, others expressed concerns about the negative impacts on the boy's emotional well-being and development. Participant E specifically mentioned, "You get separation anxiety or abandonment issues. That could very well happen." The boy's feeling of difficulty in his relationship with the parents due to insufficient time spent together was also mentioned. Participant D further noted the long-term negative impact on the boy:

As parents, I think it's important that you can show them [children] love. And maybe it doesn't really matter if it's both fathers, but if you're working all the time and you don't have enough time to spend with your kid, it can impact him. Maybe not feeling the love. You don't know for sure when you're younger, but maybe when you're older, you think about when you were younger and thought, "no, my parents were never there." (Participant D, man, large village, Biomedical Sciences and Business)

Four participants mentioned the boy not having a sibling. This was perceived to impact his ability to entertain himself while playing independently, his sociability, and his shyness.

Six participants perceived similarities between the boy in the video and the children they knew. They likened the boy to their siblings, friends, relatives, and even themselves as a child. Notably, all these individuals, who reminded the participants of the boy, were raised by heterosexual parents.

Attitudes toward Gay and Lesbian Individuals

Based on the intergroup contact theory, familiarity with gay and lesbian individuals leads to positive perceptions of children with such parents. This familiarity includes both the quantity and quality of relationships with these individuals. In this study, all participants showed positive attitudes toward gay and lesbian individuals, citing their close relationship with such friends and family members. Two participants identified themselves as bisexual. All participants emphasized that irrespective of sexual orientation, gay and lesbian individuals are simply people and valued members of their social circles. Participant H mentioned that being gay and lesbian is so normalized around her that she began to question her own sexual orientation, adding that it has now become "a bit trendy to be gay:"

> Well in my friend group, it's really normalized to like also have sex or like intimate relationships with like the same gender, I think. So it's just it's something that doesn't even, it's not even that special to me anymore. Like it's really normal for me to see it happening and hearing about it. [...] I sometimes even feel like because they all had this relationship or have been gay, I feel like, I myself have also started to doubt things because of that. Because it's so normalized, and like it's almost like I would say like a bit trendy to be gay, you know. (Participant H, woman, city, Social Sciences and Humanities)

Twelve participants were aware of the persistent negative attitudes toward these individuals, particularly among those residing in smaller villages, those with Christian beliefs,

younger and older generations, and those with right-wing political views. Four participants noted that they were in a "bubble," reflecting on their positive stance and where they came from.

> For example, me and my environment is very progressive. But I live very much in a bubble. My whole family has had university education. But that's the minority in the Netherlands. The majority is not high educated. It's a very small portion of the higher educated people. I think it's like 40% or something like that. And the normal education is a larger group. And I feel like in these groups there's a bit of a less progressive mindset. Although I feel like the youth is getting more progressive. (Participant G, woman, city, Communication and Media)

Participant H shared a story about her friend who struggled with reconciling her Christian beliefs and her stance toward gay and lesbian individuals. Her friend was very upset about her church not allowing gay marriage and recently came to the conclusion that "God doesn't judge and we must treat everyone as an equal." Conversely, Participant K talked about the church he used to attend, which had an accepting stance toward gay people:

> I have a Christian family. I was raised Christian. I'm not Christian anymore. But in the church where I was going, there were a lot of gay people, because in our church it was allowed. Even the pastor [...] was, in our church, even gay. That says a lot about churches, because not many churches are allowed to have like a gay people leading the church. So we were actually quite accepting into it. (Participant K, man, city, Business and Management)

Younger generations, often referred to as "teenagers," were noted for expressing negative attitudes through teasing and joking such as saying, "You paint your nails, that's gay," as cited by Participant C. Nevertheless, these attitudes were often viewed as a phase that many grow out of

as they mature and eventually realize the mistake in such behavior. Moreover, Participant F cited a lack of knowledge as a reason for showing negativity, reflecting on her own experience of being raised by two mothers. She further suggested that laws and regulations helped the visibility of same-sex parents, resulting in positive changes in people's perspectives.

> When I was really young like in primary school, they would often ask me, like, "oh, how does that [having two mothers] work?" Because they just didn't know. And then I get older, I noticed that more people just know about it and they're like, "oh, cool." (Participant F, woman, big city, Agriculture and Environmental Studies)

Participant G articulated certain communities as less open-minded. She suggested lower educational level, home situation, and their own insecurity as possible reasons for their homophobic attitudes:

> So Moroccan people or Turkish people or people from Suriname. A lot of cultures live here and those people are not really accepting towards those people [people from outside the Netherlands]. And maybe a bit more accepting towards gay people. But also not that much. I feel like in every subculture there are still people who are conservative. And not only towards immigrants, but also towards gay people. And then, for example, the Moroccan community, the Islamic communities in the Netherlands. They are homophobic for the most part. So yeah, what I said, in every subculture there are still very much conservative people. (Participant G, woman, city, Communication and Media)

Toward gay marriage, all participants showed positive attitudes. Additionally, many participants showed their pride in the Netherlands as the first country to legalize same-sex marriage. However, six participants noted that the country still has room for improvement due to persistent homophobia. Additionally, four participants felt a recent shift toward conservatism.

This shift was attributed to last year's election where the far-right party won, and to new transgender laws. Furthermore, six participants mentioned prevalent violence directed toward LGBT+ individuals. However, none had personally encountered such situations. Instead, they learned about these incidents through news reports or from their gay friends. This, along with their awareness of the current societal shifts in the Netherlands, suggests that they are actively informed about current news and issues affecting the LGBT+ community.

Thoughts on Same-Sex Parenting

According to the prejudice theory, the belief in the abnormality of same-sex parenting may lead to negative views toward children raised by same-sex couples, since people with such beliefs perceive that these children can be negatively influenced by their parents. However, all participants showed positive and supportive attitudes toward same-sex parenting. As Participant B mentioned, "it doesn't matter who's the parent as long as they love the child and take care of them," six participants mentioned the importance of parental love irrespective of sexual orientation or gender. Furthermore, five participants acknowledged the importance of proper parental guidance, two emphasized spending sufficient time with children, and two stressed parental responsiveness.

I, um, sometimes see people on the internet saying like, you have to have a mother, mother and a father figure to get like both of these. ... to look up to [children] and stuff like that. But I think that's, yeah, that's just not true. You can, you can have two mothers and grow up as a fantastic child or two fathers and that doesn't matter. They can, they can be great parents. The most important part, uh, of two parents raising a kid is that they love the kid and they love each other. And if there's like men and men or men and

women, like whatever, it doesn't matter. (Participant M, woman, small village, Social

Sciences and Humanities)

Participant E shared a story about her ex-boyfriend raised by two mothers and that he was

close to his biological father, noting that children with same-sex parents do not necessarily miss

having a mother or father figure as growing up. Similarly, two participants talked about their

friends with same-sex parents, noting no differences found in them.

Besides, Participant F shared her experience of being asked if she missed a father as a

child with two mothers:

Sometimes people would ask like, "oh, don't you miss like a dad?" And I'm like, well, I

don't really know how it would be with a dad. So I don't really know what I'd be missing.

And I think generally it's pretty similar. You just have two parents. Like moms and dads

have different personalities, it's like moms and moms have different personalities.

(Participant F, woman, big city, Agriculture and Environmental Studies)

Positive effects of having same-sex parents were noted by seven participants, including

fewer gender roles taught to their children and greater open-mindedness. Participant G

mentioned that reduced exposure to traditional gender roles could be "helpful for the children" in

developing their individuality and characteristics without being constrained by societal gender

norms. Participant P perceived same-sex parents as more loving than different-sex parents

"Because I think they also know what could be wrong with the world sometimes."

Conversely, three participants noted their concern about the prejudice that children could

face because of their parents being gay or lesbian:

... maybe you have some more prejudice, of course, from other parents as a same-sex

couple. So for example, if they go to school then other parents maybe act a bit different or

like ask stuff like... yeah. ... for example, if it's two men and if there's not a woman in the

household, so you probably get a different experience from other people but not from

yourself. I feel like as a parent it's [same-sex and different-sex parenting are] probably

similar. But from other instances, institutions like other parents or friends or like maybe

even doctors or like maybe a bit different. (Participant B, woman, small village, Social

Sciences and Humanities)

Thoughts on Gender Roles in Parenting

Based on the essentialist theory, the belief about distinct gender roles in parenting may

result in negativity toward same-sex parenting. Although 12 participants mentioned their

knowledge about conventional gender roles in parenting, all noted that the absence of one

gender, having same-sex parents, does not make a difference from having different-sex parents.

Eight participants emphasized that "it depends on the person and also depends on the type of

parents you are," as cited by Participant E. Three participants highlighted that those who teach

children gender-specific skills do not need to be parents.

> I think it's, it can be important to have like an influence of both males and females in your
>
> upbringing. But that doesn't necessarily have to be like a female parent and a male parent.
>
> [...] So for example, cousins or nephews or uncles and aunts or something like that or
>
> grandmothers. So I don't think that it's only should be a father and a mother. ... like, for
>
> example, the more nurturing kind that may be inherent to to a woman figure, which
>
> doesn't which doesn't necessarily need to be that all women are nurturing types. But I
>
> think that's, that's something that comes maybe more natural to women. And that's
>
> something that's really important, I think, for a child to experience and to see. (Participant
>
> J, woman, small village, Law)

Four participants shared their personal experiences of seeing no difference in gender roles in their parents' parenting.

It [skills taught by mother and father in their parenting] can be different also depends on the, on what kind of person the father or mother is. For me, I, uh, my parents, uh, are divorced and so my mother mostly, uh, uh, learned me all the things. So, and also, uh, and I don't got the feeling that I missed things from my father kind of. So from my own experience, I know it doesn't, it doesn't really matter. Like the gender doesn't really matter. (Participant D, man, large village, Biomedical Sciences and Business)

Participants K and O talked about their belief that within same-sex couples, each partner takes on a specific gender role, one partner embodies femininity while the other embodies masculinity. Because of this resemblance to the traditional mother-father dynamic, they presumed that children with same-sex couples would not experience differently from different-sex couples. Participant O cited the drama "Modern Family" where "Cam is more the mom. [...] Mitchell is more the dad," also noting "For every gay couple I've seen, usually there's always one more female type and one more manly type."

Often in a gay marriage, like, you have still like the same gender, one acts more like the mother type or more on acts more like the father type. One is often more feminine and the other is more manly. So in that sense, then they become pretty much pretty the same. I don't know. Maybe it's not exactly the same. Maybe still a feminine man is, on average, still less feminine than a woman. (Participant K, man, city, Business and Management)

Discussion

The present study explored university students' perceptions of children raised by gay parents and examined the rationales behind these perceptions. Additionally, it investigated

societal views surrounding gay parenting. Dutch youths showed generally positive perceptions, consistent with previous work (Tušl et al., 2020). The boy with gay parents was often perceived as happy, social, and independent. These perceptions were attributed to his behavior in the video, his innate nature, and his family dynamics. Of the family dynamics, both parents' full-time employment was often believed to negatively influence the boy, while his parents being gay was reported to have relatively positive impacts. Participants held supportive beliefs about gay and lesbian individuals and their parenting. Additionally, they demonstrated a high awareness of the LGBT+ related issues and their underlying causes. However, some remarks reflected ambiguously expressed negativity toward gay parenting.

Every participant had several friends or family members who were LGBT+, identifying them as very close. Additionally, several participants were familiar with children with same-sex parents, including one participant raised by two mothers. This high level of familiarity contributed to positive attitudes toward the boy with gay parents, supporting the intergroup contact theory. This familiarity also suggests that young people in the Netherlands generally are, and feel able to be, open about their sexual orientation, consistent with existing reports (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, n.d.).

The essentialist theory was also supported, as no participant explicitly mentioned a negative influence of the absence of either gender in parenting on children's development. Rather, positive effects, such as same-sex parents' open-mindedness and less masculinity taught to their children, were noted. Nevertheless, one belief raised by two participants needs to be considered: in gay male couples, each partner takes on either a feminine or masculine role, thereby making their parenting similar to that of different-sex parents. Previous research showed, however, that this belief was a stigma and not a common practice among same-sex couples

(Napier et al., 2023). They further reported that internalized homonegativity led to such practices by gay individuals. Considering these points, it is inferable that this stigmatic belief of the participants reflects implicit negativity toward gay parenting and a perceived need for traditional gender roles in parenting. Notably, both participants further mentioned that they would not have noticed if the boy in the video had two fathers if they had not been informed. This implies that despite their strong, often subconsciously expressed beliefs that parenting requires both a masculine and a feminine figure, they focus more on behavior than parental gender roles when evaluating children. Additionally, potential negativity that the boy could encounter, such as bullying, was suggested, consistent with Morse et al. (2007). Previous studies revealed that social stigma and discrimination toward children with same-sex parents were often used as an excuse for implicitly expressing their opposition toward same-sex parenting (Costa & Salinas-Quiroz, 2019; Hermosa-Bosano et al., 2021). Nonetheless, the participants believed that effective parenting and education could help children with same-sex parents to be resilient against such negativity. That is, participants do not view gay parenting itself as problematic but rather emphasize the role of education by parents and teachers.

Lastly, the prejudice theory was supported. No participant described same-sex parenting as abnormal, indicating a lack of sexual prejudice. As the boy with gay parents was often linked to other children raised by different-sex couples, the abnormality was neither perceived in evaluating the boy. Instead, the factors associated with sexual prejudice mentioned by participants were consistent with existing findings, namely high religiosity and conservative political views (e.g., Baiocco et al., 2020; Herek & McLemore, 2013). Participants were also aware of negative attitudes in other groups, such as younger generations and specific communities. This suggests that participants are highly aware of the causes of negativity toward

LGBT+ individuals and their parenting. Although Christianity is linked with negative attitudes toward same-sex parenting (Herek & McLemore, 2013), the shared stories about Christians and gay-supportive churches indicate a gradual shift in how modern individuals reconcile their religious beliefs with their supportive views on homosexuality.

It is noteworthy that two participants speculated the boy might be autistic. Stigma toward individuals with autism spectrum disorder is more frequently experienced by "families from traditionally marginalized groups" (Zuckerman et al., 2018). Although its original definition does not include sexual minority parents, it is conceivable that the participants subconsciously associated gay parenting, a traditionally deviated parenting style, with their perception of the child's atypical behavior.

The findings provided a new perspective, which was seen in the participants' attribution of the boy's characteristics to his parents' full-time employment. Rather than the parental sexual orientation, Dutch university students expressed concern about the insufficient time spent between parents and children. Given that many participants emphasized that good parenting depends on the individual qualities of the parents, they may perceive sexual orientation as only an innate characteristic. This aligns with previous findings that Dutch adolescents view sexuality as uncontrollable (Collier et al., 2015). Consequently, Dutch youths showed more concerns about controllable factors, such as the decision of both parents to work full-time, rather than attributing children's development to their parents being sexual minorities.

While providing unique insights, this study holds several limitations. One limitation is the convenience sampling, as multiple participants acknowledged the "bubble" they were in. Therefore, the representativeness is limited. Future research should recruit more diverse groups of participants for greater generalizability. Another limitation is that this study exclusively

explored perceptions of a boy raised by gay fathers. Future research should examine perceptions of different types of families, such as a girl raised by gay fathers or lesbian mothers, or a child of transgender parents for a more comprehensive understanding of societal attitudes toward children with sexual and gender minority parents.

The findings of generally positive societal perceptions of children with gay parents could influence changes to the current parenting law in the Netherlands, where gay two-father couples are not granted the same rights as lesbian two-mother couples to be recognized as legal parents of their children. The societal stigma that seems to support this law appears to be diminishing, suggesting the time to reconsider and reformulate these legal restrictions. Nevertheless, it needs to be considered that younger generations were mentioned as showing negativity toward gay and lesbian individuals. This negativity could also be directed toward children with same-sex parents. Participant F, raised by two mothers, mentioned that a lack of knowledge contributes to such negativity. Therefore, an intervening approach aimed at school-aged children is recommended to promote greater acceptance of LGBT+ individuals and their families across the generations.

This study demonstrated Dutch young people's detailed perceptions of children with same-sex parents and suggested the feasibility of reformulating current parenting laws. While participants generally expressed positive attitudes toward same-sex parenting and the children involved, some showed subconscious beliefs regarding the importance of traditional gender roles in parenting. Nevertheless, these beliefs did not influence their evaluation of such children. Furthermore, Dutch youths recognized controllable factors that could be improved for the better development of these children. Overall, same-sex parents are viewed simply as parents, and their children are seen just as children. Parental sexual orientation generally does not influence Dutch youth's perceptions of children with same-sex parents.

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Table 1

Demographic Statistics (n = 16)

Participant	Gender	Age	Area of upbringing	Major of study	Gender of the current romantic partner
A	Woman	24	City	Brain and Cognitive Sciences	Man
B	Woman	24	Small village	Social Sciences and Humanities	Man
C	Man	25	Large village	Social Sciences and Humanities	Woman
D	Man	23	Large village	Biomedical Sciences and Business	Woman
E	Woman	25	Big city	Social Sciences and Humanities	Man
F	Woman	19	Big city	Agriculture and Environmental Studies	Man
G	Woman	22	City	Communication and Media	Person is unpartnered
H	Woman	24	City	Social Sciences and Humanities	Man
I	Man	24	Large village	Social Sciences and Humanities	Woman
J	Woman	23	Small village	Law	Man
K	Man	23	City	Business and Management	Woman
L	Woman	22	Small village	Social Sciences and Humanities	Man
M	Woman	24	Small village	Social Sciences and Humanities	Man
N	Woman	24	Large village	Social Sciences and Humanities	Person is unpartnered
O	Woman	23	City	Social Sciences and Humanities	Person is unpartnered
P	Woman	21	City	Health and Medicine	Man

Note. Gender and the area in the Netherlands where participants mainly grew up were selective questions. The options for gender were: man, woman, non-binary, other, I do not know, or I prefer not to answer. The options for the area were: big city, city, large village, small village, or countryside.

Appendix A

A Reflection on the Interdisciplinarity of the Thesis

Integrating multiple scientific disciplines allowed me to bridge gaps between my understanding and the factors influencing that understanding. With an academic background in psychology, my interest in researching people's perceptions of children with same-sex parents was initiated by my curiosity regarding preconceptions and their impact on perceptions of certain others. The psychological perspective provided a foundation for this interest, focusing on cognitive processes, stereotypes, and biases. However, as I researched related topics, I realized the insufficiency of relying solely on a psychological perspective to explain what shapes these preconceptions. By incorporating insights from sociology and economics, I highlighted the societal context and economic characteristics that shape these views. This interdisciplinary approach provided a comprehensive framework to understand how different factors interplay to form people's attitudes.

In this research, perspectives from psychology, sociology, and economics were essential. Psychology helped explore cognitive biases and stereotypes. Sociology provided insights into societal norms and cultural contexts. Economics offered insights into how educational attainment impacts societal attitudes. For instance, Dutch participants attributed their positive attitudes toward LGBT+ individuals to their higher educational attainment. This finding allowed me to comprehend how higher educational attainment broadens the acceptance of socially marginalized groups and how scientific knowledge shapes and reinforces these attitudes. This insight also underscored the importance of random sampling. Given that those who complete higher education are nearly half of the population in the Netherlands, the findings may not be fully generalizable. To comprehensively understand societal attitudes, higher generalizability is

needed. These realizations would not have been achieved without interdisciplinary perspectives in understanding the findings.

Even though the research revealed supportive attitudes of Dutch university students toward same-sex couples and their children, teenagers were often mentioned as showing negative attitudes toward gay and lesbian individuals. Recently, a sharp decline has been reported in the percentage of young people aged 13 to 16 in Amsterdam who consider homosexuality to be normal. In 2023, 43% viewed it as normal, which was a 20% decline from 2021 (GGD Amsterdam, 2024). This negativity could also be directed toward children with same-sex parents. As one participant noted, teenagers go through puberty, contributing to their mental instability. For both students who are part of LGBT+ and those who have LGBT+ parents to thrive, education should focus on how to navigate puberty and recognizing how mental instability during puberty can lead to harmful behaviors that may lead to serious consequences. Addressing these points, potential stakeholders, including schoolteachers and parents as well as children themselves, should be aware of the unique vulnerabilities of these children and how to foster an inclusive environment.

While the interdisciplinary approach provided valuable insights, monodisciplinary approaches remain crucial for building a strong foundation for interdisciplinary work. They allow for comprehensive exploration within a single discipline, providing detailed insights that can later be integrated into interdisciplinary research. Monodisciplinary research ensures depth and rigor in understanding specific aspects before combining them with other perspectives. The interdisciplinary approach in this study was achieved because of compiled studies employing both monodisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches. That is, interdisciplinary research is possible only when sufficient amounts of studies are done in one disciplinary field.

Monodisciplinary approaches are crucial for creating a strong foundation for interdisciplinary work since they can comprehensively explore one perspective, unlike the broader approach.

For the present study, I employed a video vignette assignment and conducted interviews partially based on the video. Not solely interviewing participants about how they perceive specific groups of people and their practice but also providing some visual context encouraged participants' imagination and sharing of their views and beliefs. For example, although some participants showed a subconscious belief that parenting needs both maternal and paternal figures, this belief did not impact the evaluation of children with same-sex parents. This tendency of Dutch people not to attribute children's characteristics to their parental sexual orientation would not be revealed without employing multiple methodologies.

This study mainly focused on people's perceptions, and thus the analysis was primarily based on the individual level. However, as mentioned above, these perceptions were influenced by multiple analytical levels, from personal environments (friends and family members) to distant environments such as laws and regulations. For instance, Dutch laws increasing the visibility of gay and lesbian parenting led to more supportive perceptions among Dutch people. These multiple analytical levels led to an understanding of how people's beliefs are formulated in a complexly intertwined manner. Analyzing these different levels jointly provided a comprehensive understanding of how societal attitudes are shaped and how they influence individual behaviors and perceptions.

Reference

GGD Amsterdam. (2024, May 28). *Gezondheid in Beeld: Seksuele gezondheid en identiteit.*

https://ggdgezondheidinbeeld.nl/mosaic/gezondheid-in-beeld/seksuele-gezondheid-en-identiteit

Appendix B

General Questions

Before the video vignette assignment, participants were asked about their beliefs regarding gay and lesbian individuals, same-sex parenting, and gender roles in parenting. Follow-up questions were entirely dependent on the participants' responses.

- What do you think about gay and lesbian people? You can tell me anything you feel about them.

- What do you think about gay marriage?

- What do you think about two men kissing in public? How about two women?

- What do you think about parades, about gay pride, or people who advocate gay pride?

- Did you know that the Netherlands is the first country to have legalized gay marriage in the world? What do you think about this?

- How many gay and/or lesbian acquaintances, friends, and family members do you have?

◊ One or more ->Tell me about them.

    o Who are they?

    o How do you feel or think about them?

    o How often do you see them?

◊ Zero -> Do you know any gay and/or lesbian people?

    o Could you imagine having gay and/or lesbian acquaintances?

    o If you had one, how would you feel about them?

    o If you had one, how often would you see them?

- Next, I would like you to tell me about what you think about gay and lesbian people as parents.

- What do you think about gay and lesbian people being parents, meaning having kids and raising kids?

- What do you perceive as the differences and similarities between gay and lesbian couples and different-sex couples in terms of parenting?

- What do you think about the skills that parents teach? Would you say they teach different skills to the children?

- Did you know that the Netherlands opened the first clinic where gay male couples could obtain a child through surrogacy in 2019? What do you think about this?

Appendix C

Questions for Evaluation of the Boy in the Video

After watching the video, participants were asked about their impressions of the boy in the video. Follow-up questions were entirely dependent on participants' responses.

- Tell me about your impression of this boy.

What did you think about him?

  ◊ What do you think about his behavior?

  ◊ What do you think about his personality?

  ◊ What do you think about his relationship with peers?

  ◊ What do you think about his relationship with teachers?

  ◊ What do you think about his relationship with his fathers?

- Imagine a situation where this boy is spending time in a park.

  ◊ What would he be doing?

  ◊ What would he be like? His facial expression or his mood?

  ◊ Would he be with someone else?

- Imagine a situation where this boy is spending time at home.

  ◊ What would he be doing?

  ◊ What would he look like? His facial expression or his mood?

  ◊ Would he be with someone else?

Appendix D

Coding Scheme of Interviews

Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the interview transcriptions regarding participants' evaluations of the boy in the video. Three themes emerged from the analysis and each theme included the following number of codes: five, two, and four, respectively. Table 1 presents descriptions and example quotes for each code.

Themes and Codes

Theme	Code	Description of Code	Example Quotes
Impression of the Boy with Gay Fathers	"Just a Normal Boy"	Participants' perceptions of the boy as normal.	"Like, he just seemed like a normal kid to me" (Participant I)
	"He Seems Pretty Happy"	Participants' perceptions of the boy as happy.	"He's happy. He seemed happy in the video, so." (Participant L)
	Happy Boy, Good Parents	Perceived happiness in the boy was linked to his good relationship with his fathers.	"Jake looked happy, so I hope he has a great, just a normal relationship with his parents." (Participant K)
	The Boy Being Independent and Social	Participants' perceptions of the boy as being social and on his own.	"He liked to be social, and he likes to be doing stuff alone." (Participant K)
	"A Bit Maybe Autistic"	Participants' perceptions of the boy as autistic.	"He was a bit maybe autistic." (Participant J)

Theme	Code	Description of Code	Example Quotes
Potential Negative Experiences Later in Life	Disconnection from Birth Mother	A participant's concern about the boy's sense of disconnection from his birth mother.	"... he could feel a disconnection with that because it's not his biological mother" (Participant D)
	Bullying by Peers	Participants' concerns about the possibility of the boy getting bullied in later life.	"... some other children now are like saying, 'oh, you have two dads and that's weird'" (Participant P)
Attribution of the Boy's Characteristics	Parents being Gay Male Fathers	The boy's curiosity toward a baby doll was impacted by his parents being gay fathers.	"... he did grew up to be a bit less masculine like toxic masculine like um, because his both his parents were gay." (Participant H)
	Both Parents' Full-Time Employment	Concerns about negative impact of parents' full-time employment on the boy's well-being and development.	"... his parents both work full-time, so yeah. Maybe that's difficult for him." (Participant C)
	Being an Only Child	The boy's sociability and independence were attributed to him as an only child.	"... if you're an only child, you'll probably have to be more social." (Participant F)
	Likening the Boy to Acquaintances with Heterosexual Parents	Participants' perception of similarities between the boy in the video and the children they knew.	"Like my niece would probably do the same." (Participant B)