

# Space

The theme of space was threaded throughout our research findings as we consistently returned to the meaning of space for LGBTQ+ birthing women. How perinatal care providers either created space with difference or closed such spaces, cultivating exclusory practices that denied LGBTQ+ existence. When space was made to feel exclusionary, participants felt alienated, disrespected and often invisible.

*"I kind of refer to myself as the invisible queer...[a]nd I kind of don't usually provide a lot of information about myself in terms of polyamory or queer, unless somebody asks. If someone asks, I have no problem telling them. But it's kind of on a need to know basis ... You know, unless it was going to become an issue or something came up related to it, I wasn't really going to, you know, put it out there because I figured it would have just made people uncomfortable or whatnot." -Anne*

In the context of our study, the exclusionary nature of the birthing space perpetuated heteronormativity. Minimal space outside

the hetero-norm was provided for alternate birthing trajectories. LGBTQ+ women who were accompanied by their cisgender male partners were assumed to be heterosexual. For those participants who were accompanied by partners who were women, stories resonated with compelling exemplars of the limitations of language and its discriminatory power during birth; participants felt exposed, vulnerable and often without voice. Findings showed how a lack of autonomy for LGBTQ+ birthing women, as members of a marginalized community, often diminished opportunities for embodied safety and furthered participants' feelings of powerlessness.

*"There was no access to any type of midwifery services, any type of spiritual practices, or any person that would go into the labour to talk about anything - spirituality, gender, sexuality, comfort, comfortability being naked and what the boundaries are for this person who's about to expose their body and to give life."  
-Jackson*