

would mean I'd probably know her, and that was good enough, right?

I spent two weeks of every summer with my aunts in Massachusetts, and like stand-in parents, they always made room for me; so, when they told me to do what felt comfortable, I felt a little selfish. And yet, I couldn't admit to my friends that I was so different from them, I couldn't admit that my stand-in parents were lesbians.

I stood at my Bat Mitzvah reception and chatted giddily with my seventh grade friends. Coyote and Maura came up to congratulate me and I froze. Would telling the truth make me lose face in my friends' eyes or in my own? After talking with my aunts for several minutes, I turned to my friends and took a deep breath. "These are my aunts, Stephanie and Maura, the ones who I visit in Boston in the summer." My face drained of color as I waited for a reaction.

"Cool, nice to meet you," one of my friends said, and they turned back to chatting about the boys on the other side of the room.

Relief. They hadn't questioned, they hadn't asked for clarification. They seemed to have accepted. Whether my friends thought my aunts were aunts because they were sisters or because they were partners, I still don't know. By high school I knew kids at school who were gay or lesbian, and finally it again felt okay to reveal my own connection to the LGBTIQ world.

By now, the end of my junior year of college, I love that I have lesbian aunts. They're supportive and great fun to be around. I can't imagine having grown up without them. Had it not been for them, I would be lacking (among other things) a personal sense of what it's like to be so "different" that you cannot comfortably reveal critical aspects of your identity to new friends or acquaintances; or, even if you can, to have family members who cannot.

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