

LGBT parents' perceptions of, and suggestions for, Australian school supports.

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Abstract

Australian educational policy and guides dictate school inclusion of LGBT identities within schools typically privileging the perspective of LGBT students; possibly excluding the perspective of LGBT parents as a recognised member of school communities. This study explored the perspective of Australian LGBT parents in terms of positive experiences and supportive structures commonly endorsed by educational authoritative bodies. It employed an online survey informed by Bronfenbrenner's Theory of Ecological Development; 73 LGBT identifying parents with children currently enrolled in Australian schools responded. Results indicated a high level of uncertainty regarding whether schools included key supports, with the most common supportive structures provided by schools being inclusive school forms. Supportive structures deemed most important were teacher training and inclusive school forms, followed by resources and activities that reflect LGBT parented families in schools. Leximancer assisted qualitative analysis indicated all supportive structures shared similar perceived benefits in creating welcoming school environments including; raising awareness, tolerance and knowledge of different forms of diversity within school environments; addressing potential misconceptions held by school community members and overcoming potential exclusionary experiences. The findings – particularly LGBT parents' rejection of *exceptional status* – have implications for educational stakeholders including school administration, policy development authorities, teachers and LGBT researchers.

Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

(Signed): 

Date: 13/10/19

Trent Mann

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Introduction

Australia has recently held considerable debate regarding the legislative rights, inclusion in policy and educational access of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) identities (Ecker, Riggle, Rostosky & Byrnes, 2019; Law, 2017). This thesis explores the experiences of LGBT Australian parents in terms of the structural school supports they experience and desire, to inform policy development in school contexts. The study it reports on employed positive psychology as a framework to explore LGBT parents' perspectives on the importance and benefit of inclusive Australian educational policy in creating welcoming school environments. This chapter introduces the background and contexts of this thesis; details the purpose of this research; describes the significance, scope and definitions employed within this study; and concludes with an outline of the remaining thesis.

1.1 Background and Context

Australians have recently indicated majority support for marriage equality laws, potentially indicating increased acceptance in general society of LGBT diversity including coupling and parenting aspects of LGBT identities (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2017).

Considerable media, policy and political debate have been dedicated to what this legislative change means in terms of potential amendments to public service policy, procedures and practices; particularly in school systems (Law, 2017). Current educational policy and guides privilege the perspective of LGBT *student* members of school communities, with little inclusion of LGBT *parent* perspectives of desired supports in schools in research or policy (e.g. Hillier et al., 2010). Yet, national and international research in LGBT parented families

indicates LGBT parents experience unique challenges and stressful experiences within school contexts (Goldberg, 2014).

Given the progressive changes to laws, there is an evident need for social organisations to investigate, develop and implement inclusive policies, procedures and practices to reflect the new legal equality offered to LGBT parented families. Yet, given the highly politicised and polarised views of the inclusion of LGBT identities within school systems in Australia (Evans & Ujvari, 2009; Walsh, 2014), little research has explored the perspective of LGBT parented families in Australian school research, or incorporated the views of LGBT parented families in policy development. Current Australian LGBT and school research predominantly explore the perspective of youth indicating high levels of bullying (Hillier et al. 2010) and resistance to making progressive supportive policy developments (e.g. Safe Schools; Law, 2017).

1.2 Purpose of this Research

Generally, parental involvement with schooling communities is related to benefits in student outcomes including prosocial behaviour, academic achievement and higher levels of education attainment (See Henderson & Mapp, 2002 for a review). Australian teaching professional standards and educational policy recognise the importance of parent-school relationships in school communities emphasising collaborative practices between parents, teachers and schools to accommodate the diversity represented within school communities (Equal Opportunity Commission of Western Australia, 2013). Yet, LGBT parented families are unlikely to be explicitly mentioned or recognised as a possible form of family diversity. This thesis attempts to meet this gap within research and policy by exploring positive

experiences and perspectives of LGBT parents on common inclusive strategies endorsed by schools to support LGBT parented families in school communities. Additionally,

1.3 Significance, Scope and Definitions

Broadly, this study attempts to add to current research exploring the experiences, challenges and supports LGBT parented families experience in school communities. More specifically, this study aims to explore the experiences of LGBT parented families in schools, their suggestions for school improvements and supportive structures from their own perspective to inform school policy, procedures and practices in Australia. As Australian educational policy stresses best-practice to be informed by evidence-based empirical research (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2018), this thesis has been designed to include quantitative and qualitative evidence to support the inclusion of LGBT supportive strategies proposed by governing educational authorities. Additionally, I acknowledge my own bias in the development of this research as a white, male, queer-ally that values equality in Australian school systems.

This thesis employs the commonly used acronym 'LGBT' as an umbrella term in a *broad sense* to denote individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans – and also those people crossing into these categories without publicly declaring their identities. For example, the thesis extends the term to include individuals who identify as non-heterosexual and non-cis gendered. The thesis extends the term 'parents' in a similarly *inclusive* way to denote adult individuals who have primary care of children including biologically/non-biologically related legal/non-legally bound guardians of children who are responsible for managing and maintaining child(ren)'s membership within school communities. 'School

communities' denote the various social, physical, policy and procedural environments of schools including all members within the community (e.g. parents, students and school staff).

1.4 Thesis Outline

This introductory chapter locates the thesis within highly politically charged social debates regarding the accommodations that should be offered for LGBT parents within school environments (particularly the right to discriminate in schools based on sexual orientation/gender identity; Brown & Carrie, 2018; Law, 2017; Ruddock, et al., 2018) and a relative dearth of empirical studies in Australia to inform policy development of the needs of LGBT parents. This chapter discussed the scope, significance and importance of the study asserting the need for research to explore and report the positive experiences and supportive needs of LGBT parents within Australian school communities.

Chapter Two presents a thematic and historical review of research related to LGBT parents generally and studies exploring LGBT parents' experiences within schools. Chapter Three reviews theoretical lenses previously adopted within LGBT parent-school research and introduces the social-psychological framework employed within this study. Chapter Four provides the research design adopted in the study and Chapter Five reports the findings of data gathered from this study. The thesis concludes with Chapter Six, which discusses the findings in relation to theory, previous research findings and offers implications for policy developers and future research.

Chapter 2: LGBT Parents Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

The literature on LGBT parents is growing and changing in time. Studies completed in this area mainly come from U.S. samples (Goldberg, 2011; Kosciw & Diaz, 2008) emerging from the 1960s (Bene, 1965), with more recent growth in emergent literature from Australia (Lindsay et al., 2006). Research into LGBT parents has developed from anecdotal aetiological studies to exploring LGBT parent experiences within specific contexts (Bene, 1965; Lindsay et al., 2006). This literature review aims to identify the evolving themes in LGBT parented family research over time. There are four dominant conceptual framings for studies on LGBT parents (see Table 1). These include what this paper terms Anti-LGBT Studies, LGBT Parent and Child Development Studies, LGBT Parented Family Diversity and Family Functioning Studies, and LGBT Parents Within Schools Studies. A section on each of the four portions of the literature follows, outlining their:

- conceptual framing,
- timeline of emergence,
- key researchers, and
- identified themes.

This chapter then provides a discussion of the education laws, policies and guides that LGBTIQ research more broadly has contributed to, and the extent to which LGBT Parent studies contributed to it. It concludes with a summary of the key findings and gaps identified from the literature review, and the research questions developed for the study this thesis reports upon, in order to address these gaps.

Table 1:

Dominant conceptual framings of LGBT parent research.

	Anti-LGBT Studies	LGBT Parent and Child Development Studies	LGBT Parented Family Diversity and Family Functioning Studies	LGBT Parents in School Contexts Studies
Dominance:	1960s – 1990s	1980s – 2000s	1990s+	1990s+
Key Researchers:	Bene; Cameron & Cameron; Snortum, et al.,; West.	Andersen, Amelie & Ytteroy; Golombok et al.,; Stacey & Biblarz; Tasker, Patterson.	Dempsey; Eliason; Gahan; McNair, et al.,; Perlez, et al.,; Power, et al.,; van Dam.	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority; Cloughessy & Waniganayake; Goldberg; Kosciw & Diaz; Lindsay; Robinson.
Themes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Medical view of LGBT individuals and families. -Focus on aetiology of mental health disorder. -Gender norms/parenting traits of parents of homosexuals. -Anecdotal evidence of risks of non-traditional forms of family including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Sexual orientation transmission; *Developing Psychopathologies; & *Maladjusted child development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Developed to inform legal practitioners and courts in custody battles. -Comparative studies of child development in heterosexual/ homosexual parented children. -Sets heterosexual parents as Gold-Star in childhood development. -No statistically significant difference found in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Gender roles; *Pro-social behaviour; *Cognitive development; & *Psycho-sexual development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -LGBT parented family diversity demographics including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Roles/configurations of parental figures; *Pathways to conception; *Peer/familial relationships; *Education; *Income; & *Employment. -Family functioning in different contexts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Supportive peers/familial ties; *Stigma, exclusion and discrimination from service providers; & *Schools and health care particularly stressful contexts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Barriers/Stressors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Exclusion, discrimination and stigmatising experiences; *Teachers - attitudes, religious values, professional concerns; *Peers – both student and parent beliefs/values and reactions to LGBT parented families; & *School administration – religious beliefs, recognition of diverse family structures. -Guides: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Policy; *Explicit inclusion of diverse families in brochures/websites/documents *Teacher and administrative staff training/education; *Inclusion of diverse families in curriculum; *Inclusion of artefacts that reflect family diversity in classrooms; *Diverse families accommodated in forms/paperwork; & *Collaborative relationships between families and schools to develop inclusive school communities and welcoming environments.

2.1 Anti-LGBT Studies (Individuals and Parents)

The earliest empirical Anti-LGBT Studies were mostly based in the United States and Britain. These studies emerged in the 1960s-70s and mainly used psychological, psychanalytic and aetiological lenses toward the development of homosexual identities in individuals (Apperson & McAdoo, 1968; Bene, 1965; Bieber et al., 1962; Drescher, 2015;

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Evans, 1969; Macklin, 1980; Snortum et al., 1969; West, 1959). The prevalent medicalised research on gay males at this time was reflective of the criminalisation of homosexuality by most western countries and its categorisation as a mental health disorder in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Health Disorders* (1st edition; DSM-I; American Psychiatric Association [APA], 1952; 2nd edition; DSM-II; APA, 1968; Drescher, 2015). Common aims within this research were to identify family dynamics associated with the development of homosexuality in individuals to inform clinical practice and potential treatment (Bene, 1965; Bieber et al., 1962). Methods commonly utilised included comparisons between heterosexual and homosexual samples using retrospective accounts of traditional 'gendered' parental roles, characteristics of involvement from parental figures and quality of relationships between parents and children (Bene, 1965; Evans, 1969). Prevailing conclusions within this research consisted of arguments that family environments that fail to uphold 'traditional' gender norms, and fail to offer exposure to dual-gender parent-role-models, may cause psychological harm in children including the 'development of homosexuality' and other 'psychopathologies' (Apperson & McAdoo, 1968; Bene, 1965; Bieber et al., 1962; Evans, 1969; Snortum et al., 1969; West, 1959). However, these studies include noted flaws, such as rigidity in traditional concepts of gender norms/roles for 'optimal' child development; overlooking the inclusion of lesbian, bisexual or trans individuals and predominantly focus on homosexual individuals *without including* LGBT parents or their children.

Religious Anti-LGBT parent research and arguments can be found in peer-reviewed articles and grey literature, which draws on research from 1960s to justify their arguments against LGBT parented families (Cameron, 2006; Cameron & Cameron, 1996a; Cameron & Cameron 1996b; Clarke, 2001; Morgan, 2002; Schumm, 2010; van Gend, 2016; Wardle, 1997). These publications first emerged in the 90s and were commonly authored by known affiliates to conservative Anti-LGBT religious institutions such as the Christian Concern,

Australian Marriage Forum, Family Research Institute and Christian Institute (CCFON LTD, 2019, Family Research Institute, 2019; The Christian Institute, 2019, van Gend, 2019). This literature commonly explored 'potential risks' to children from LGBT parent rearing: sexual abuse, incest, social/psychological maladjustment and sexual orientation transmission (Cameron, 2006; Cameron & Cameron, 1996; Schumm, 2010). Moralistic arguments in grey literature state that LGBT parented families are unnatural, non-generative, deprive children of having a mother and father and use children as political pawns (Morgan, 2002; van Gend, 2016). This research has commonly drawn on health and wellbeing research (e.g. LGBT suicide and drug use research) to justify arguments against LGBT parented families (e.g. Morgan, 2002). However, these works have been discredited in academic research for evident religious-bias, misrepresentation of data and failure to engage with LGBT parent empirical research (Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) Board of Directors, 1996; Hicks, 2005; Morrison, 2007). Additionally, this misrepresents the potential for psychological research to be supportive of LGBT parents; reflecting modern shifts in school and LGBT psychologies towards non-pathologising frames positioning the school as supportive of LGBT health and wellbeing (Jones & Lasser, 2017).

2.2 LGBT Parent and Child Development

LGBT Parent and Child Development Studies emerged in the 1970s-80s+, in response to LGBT parents losing custody of their children due to assumptions of risks to the development their children (Beargie, 1988; Bradley, 1987; Kleber, Howell & Tibbits-Kleber, 1986). This is the largest body of research exploring LGBT parented families. These studies were often conducted by US and UK psychologists and psychiatrists utilising psychological development theories and measurements in comparative studies between heterosexual and LGBT parented children (Anderssen, Amlie & Ytteroy, 2002; Golombok & Tasker, 1994;

Lambert, 2005). Developmental outcomes assessed in these studies included gender role norms, gender identity, psychological adjustment, social functioning, sexual orientation and quality of parent-child relationships (Anderssen, Amlie & Ytteroy, 2002; Tasker, 2005; Tasker & Patterson, 2007). Generally, they argued that the sexual orientation of parents has no impact on the developmental outcomes of their children; this research is still contested (Golombok & Tasker, 1994; Marks, 2012; Stacey & Biblarz, 2001).

It is beyond this study to review and critique the various developmental factors explored and methodologies employed within this research. However, as this research has served as an impetus for legislative/policy amendments (e.g. Dempsey, 2013; Short et al., 2007) and acceptance of LGBT parented families in general, common findings within empirical research (and its contestations) are worth mentioning. Commonly held myths and *misconceptions debunked* by this empirical research include:

- LGBT parents lead to confusion in children regarding sexual orientation, socially accepted gender roles and gender norms (Anderssen et al., 2002; Bos & Sandfort, 2010; Goldberg & Garcia, 2016; Golombok, Spencer & Rutter, 1983; Gottman, 1990; Green, 1978; Green et al., 1986; Hoeffler, 1981).
- LGBT parented children are more likely to experience psychological difficulties including behavioural problems, emotional functioning, school adjustment, self-concept and moral judgements (Anderssen et al., 2002; Chan, Raboy & Patterson, 1998; Farr, 2010; Flaks, Ficher, Masterpasqua & Joseph, 1995; Kirkpatrick, Smith & Roy, 1981; Tasker, 2005; Tasker & Patterson, 2007; Vanfraussen, Ponjart-Kristoffersen & Breways, 2002; Wainwright, Russell & Patterson, 2004).
- LGBT parented children are more likely to experience social difficulties including bullying, isolation and difficulty with peers (Freedman et al., 2002; Golombok & Tasker, 1994; Vanfraussen et al., 2002; Wainwright & Patterson, 2006).

- LGBT parented children are more likely to identify as LGBT than heterosexual parented children (Allen & Burrell, 1996; Anderssen et al., 2002; Crowl, Ahn & Baker, 2008; Gottman, 1990; O'Connell, 1993; Tasker, 2005; Tasker & Gollombok, 1997).
- LGBT parents are 'unfit' to care for children or provide quality parent-child relationships to their children (Bigner & Jacobson, 1989; Bos et al., 2016; Golombok et al, 1983; Vanfraussen et al., 2002; Wainwright et al., 2004).

Commonly, this research indicates that there are no statistical differences between the developmental outcomes of children within heterosexual or homosexual parented families.

In fact, this research has indicated in some cases LGBT parented families offer children noted benefits in developmental outcomes when compared to heterosexual parented families, including:

- Female children of LGBT parented families considering occupations (then) deemed exclusively masculine such as astronauts, lawyers and doctors (Greene et al., 1986).
- Children indicating greater levels of attachment and perceived dependability of their LGBT parents (compared to heterosexual parented children) and greater openness in communication regarding emotional or sexual issues (Golombok et al., 1997; MacCallum & Gollombok, 2004; Vanfraussen et al., 2002).

Generally, this research argues the sexual orientation or gender diversity of parents is not influential in the developmental outcomes of children termed the 'no statistical difference consensus' (Stacey & Biblarz, 2001). However, this research is still contested in literature with arguments including: the methodological and sampling techniques employed in studies (Amato, 2012; Dempsey, 2013; Marks, 2012), the positioning of heterosexual parents as the 'gold star' of optimal child development (Lambert, 2005) and the failure to explore stigmatising incidents or discriminatory events that adversely influence LGBT parented child

development (Crouch et al., 2014; Knight et al., 2017; Tasker, 2005). Rather, researchers have argued it is the experiences, contexts and diversity of LGBT parented families that warrants further investigation (Tasker, 2005). The study that this thesis reports on will consider the research gap on experiences, contexts and diversity of LGBT parents and their family constellations.

2.3 LGBT Parented Family Diversity and Family Functioning

LGBT Parented Family Diversity and Family Functioning Studies emerged during the naughties and continue developing (e.g. Gartrell et al., 2000). As social attitudes toward LGBT parents became more tolerant, the research shifted focus to documenting their characteristics and experiences (Perlesz & McNair 2002; Power et al., 2010). Researchers aimed to gain descriptive statistics of family formations, identify LGBT parents' pathways to parenthood, explore their experiences in different contexts (e.g. school settings, health care providers, peer/family relationships) and inform service providers of their unique needs (Rawsthorne, 2009; van Dam, 2004). Family functioning research has commonly employed critical psychological (Power et al., 2010), queer and feminist lenses (Gabb, 2005) in qualitative (Rawsthorne, 2009) and quantitative (Power et al., 2010) research designs. It is predominantly based in Australia (Dempsey, 2013), U.S.A (Stotzer, Herman & Hasenbush, 2014; Goldberg, Gartrell & Gates, 2014) and the U.K. (Gabb, 2005). Commonly, the research indicates that LGBT parented families are unique in terms of demographic statistics (ABS, 2016), methods of forming a family (Power et al., 2010) and challenges experienced in social networks/interactions with institutions (McNair et al., 2002; Rawsthorne, 2009).

To date the frequency and rate of LGBT parents within Australia is unknown. Although census data on same-sex parents residing in a shared household indicate LGBT parents are becoming increasingly common with numbers more than tripling in size since

1996 (ABS, 2013; ABS, 2016). Current estimates indicate around 10,500 same-sex parents are raising children within Australia. Although the actual number may be argued to be larger given the Australian census requiring LGBT parents to be in a current relationship/shared household to be identified (ABS, 2016) and LGBT parents notably reticent to disclose their identities to official organisations for fear of possible negative repercussions to their family including loss of custody of children (Casper, Wickens & Schultz, 1992).

Generally, the data indicates that LGBT parents are more likely to earn higher incomes and attain higher levels of education compared to heterosexual parented families (ABS, 2016; Power et al., 2010; Crouch et al., 2014). Although research contests whether this is a unique characteristic generalisable to the entire population of LGBT parented families or only representative of those who participates in research (Perlesz et al., 2010). Like heterosexual parented families in Australia, LGBT parent family research indicates most families uphold traditional two-parent nuclear family formations or single parenting status but may also include co-parenting/blended family formations between more than two actively engaged parents (Power et al., 2010; Power et al., 2012).

Unlike heterosexual parented families, LGBT parented families are commonly unable to experience unplanned conception and require the assistance of others in forming families (Mitchell & Green, 2007). Generally, research indicates a shift in methods of conception from previous heterosexual relationships to planned LGBT parented families via informal and formal sources of support (Crouch et al., 2014; Power et al., 2010). The methods of forming families are diverse including conception within previous heterosexual relationships, surrogacy agreements, Assisted Reproduction Technologies (ART) and fostering/adoption arrangements (Power et al., 2010; Short et al., 2007). Australian research indicates LGBT parents are more likely to prefer conceiving children where there is a biological relationship between the child and parent (e.g. surrogacy, conception with donor assistance) than

adoption/foster care arrangements (Crouch et al., 2014; Power et al., 2010). However, this may reflect LGBT parents' access to reproduction technologies and foster/adoption services which previously depended on state legislation (Dempsey, 2013; Riggs, Power & von Doussa, 2016). The frequency and trends of LGBT individuals seeking parenthood within Australia may change given various changes relating to LGBT parents in terms of equality in legislation, social acceptance and more affordable/accessible reproductive technologies (Goldberg, Moyer, Weber & Shapiro, 2013; Perales, Reeves, Plage & Baxter, 2019; Riggs et al., 2016).

Family functioning research has explored the challenging and supportive nature of LGBT parented families with informal (family of origin, peer networks) and formal (schools, health professionals) sources of support (Gabb, 2005; McNair, Dempsey, Wise & Perlesz, 2002; Mitchell & Green, 2007; Power et al., 2010; Rawsthorne, 2009). Generally, research indicates the majority of LGBT parented families are privileged in the support of families of origin which has been attributed to a greater likelihood of seeking parenthood (Riggs, Power & von Doussa, 2016). Common themes in the literature indicate parenthood may bond LGBT individuals with families of origin where their child's predominant identity becomes that of a parent rather than an LGBT individual (e.g. Bergman, Rubio, Green & Padron, 2010).

Although, not all LGBT parents experience the support of their parents in family formation with themes of lack of recognition of alternative pathways of forming families and illegitimacy of LGBT individuals as parents (Rawsthorne, 2009; Power et al., 2012). LGBT parented families experience similar levels of stress to heterosexual parented families upon becoming parents with a noted shift of peer networks from predominantly LGBT social circles and community involvement to fellow parent social groups (Bergman et al., 2010; Goldberg & Smith, 2014). In the case of weak informal sources of support or social networks, formal sources of support (such as schools) may be particularly important in providing

supportive strategies and connections to supportive networks (De Lira & Morais, 2016; Rawsthorne, 2009).

Studies on the experiences of LGBT parents interacting with potential sources of support such as education providers and professional health services indicate LGBT parented families experience unique challenges interacting with contexts outside of the family (Rawsthorne, 2009; van Dam, 2004). Research of this type has identified common themes within service providers that may pose as barriers in provision of supportive environments, these include; knowledge gaps in public service providers relating to LGBT parented family formations (Eliason, 1996; Gahan, 2017), lack of policy and procedures inclusive of LGBT parented families (Eliason, 1996; Perlesz et al., 2010) and concerns of potential negative backlash to disclosing sexual orientation/gender identity to public service personnel (Rawsthorne, 2009; van Dam, 2004). As LGBT parents have been identified at risk of stigmatising experiences that may negatively impact on mental health and wellbeing, and stigma is experienced by LGBT parents in education and health care environments (Crouch et al., 2014), common suggestions for service providers and researchers include developing policies and procedures inclusive of LGBT parented families (Power et al., 2010; Rawsthorne, 2009) and exploration of methods to protect LGBT parented families from stigmatising events within different contexts (Crouch et al., 2014). However, this research did not explore the school context in-depth, limiting its ability to highlight LGBT parents' common experiences within Australian school communities and the potential supportive role schools may play in LGBT parents' lives. The study this thesis reports on will address these gaps in the data on LGBT Parents' experiences within Australian school communities and views on potential/actual support.

2.4 LGBT Parents Within School Contexts

Studies explicitly focussing on LGBT parents within schools emerged in the 1990s due to rising recognition of the unique challenges LGBT parented families faced in these environments, including perpetuation of heterosexuality as 'normal' and the exclusion or 'othering' of LGBT identities (Casper, Schultz & Wickens, 1992; Gray, Harris & Jones, 2016). These studies have predominantly come from Abbie Goldberg in the U.S.A. (Goldberg & Smith, 2011; Goldberg, 2014; Goldberg & Smith, 2014; Goldberg & Smith, 2017; Goldberg et al., 2017; Goldberg et al., 2018; Kinkler & Goldberg, 2011) with growing research in the U.K. (McDonald & Morgan, 2019) and Australia (Lindsay et al., 2006; Cloughessy, Waniganayake & Blatterer, 2018; Cloughessy et al., 2019; Riggs & Willing, 2013). The theoretical lenses in these studies have been drawn from queer theory, post-modern theory, grounded theory, Michael Foucault and psychological/ecological development frameworks utilising predominantly qualitative interview methodologies to explore experiences of LGBT parents in school environments (Cloughessy, Waniganayake & Blatterer, 2019; Goldberg & Smith, 2014; Leland, 2017; Lindsay et al., 2006).

From this research various school characteristics have been associated with more positive and supportive school environments for LGBT parents within school contexts including metropolitan vs. remote locations (Lindsay et al., 2006; Power et al., 2014), representation of diversity within school communities (Casper et al., 1992; McDonald & Morgan, 2019), local attitudes toward and representation of LGBT parented families (Goldberg, 2014; Goldberg et al., 2017), explicit inclusive school policy on family diversity (Kosciw & Diaz, 2008) and personal attitudes/professional training of school personnel (Cloughessy & Waniganayake, 2015; Robinson 2002).

Unlike other forms of diversity such as multiculturalism, special needs and English second language; sexual orientation and gender identity are unique forms of diversity in

being largely invisible (Casper et al., 1992) requiring either verbal disclosure or secondary signals such as significant others for identification. Commonly, schools are argued to reflect dominant family formations and social attitudes, which in the case of most westernised countries denote traditional dual-gendered parented families (Casper et al., 1992; Gray et al., 2016; Kozik-Rosabal, 2000; Mercier & Harold, 2003). Schools endorse traditional forms of heterosexual families and suppress LGBT identities within schools by explicitly excluding LGBT parented families within school curriculum/practices/pedagogical approaches and implicitly through the exclusive representation of heterosexual parented families (Casper et al., 1992; Goldberg et al., 2017). Predominant themes identified in previous LGBT Parent within Schools research has identified common experiences within school contexts including: how/why LGBT parents disclose their identity to school community members (Cloughessy et al., 2018; Lindsay et al., 2006;), LGBT parent supportive and marginalising experiences within school environments (Bower, 2010; Casper et al., 1992; Goldberg & Smith, 2014); teacher/administrator perspectives on LGBT parented families (Robinson, 2002; Cloughessy & Waniganayake, 2015) and recommendations for best practice inclusive school support structures (Robinson, 2002; Goldberg et al., 2017; Mercier & Harold, 2003).

Not all LGBT parents disclose their sexual orientation and gender identity within schools (Casper et al., 1992; Jones, Del Pozo de Bolger, Dune, Lykins and Hawkes, 2015). The decision to disclose family constellations vary depending on concerns of the individual and characteristics of the surrounding environment (Casper et al., 1992; Lindsay et al., 2006). LGBT parents that choose not to disclose their identity in schools generally relate to participants deeming family constellations a private matter not relevant to schools (Casper et al., 1992; Goldberg, 2014), as protective measures against possible negative treatment toward children and parents from school community members (Goldberg et al., 2017) and concerns of negative repercussions from the local community or formal social services (Casper et al.,

1992). Conversely, active disclosure of gender identity and sexual orientation has been related to avoiding the burden of identity management (Morgan & McDonald, 2019), ensuring school staff are aware of the diversity within schools and meet the needs of students within classrooms (Casper et al., 1992; Cloughessy et al., 2018), to role-model pride in family diversity to children (Cloughessy et al., 2019), in response to exclusionary experiences within school contexts (Cloughessy et al., 2019) and as a method of gauging school community stances on inclusivity when considering school selection (Goldberg, 2014). A common finding in this research is all LGBT parents ('out' or 'closeted') experience anxiety when considering disclosure (Casper et al., 1992; Cloughessy et al., 2018; Mercier & Harold, 2003) and prospective parents perceive greater challenges within schools systems than experienced by LGBT parents in school communities (Mercier & Harold, 2003; Ray & Gregory, 2001).

Common methods of disclosure include altering school forms to include diverse family constellations, verbal disclosure to teachers and administrators, or parents being visible and involved with schools (Casper et al., 1992; Cloughessy et al., 2019). Earlier research indicated LGBT parents were more likely to adopt 'closeted' disclosure techniques in schools and explored LGBT parents' challenges and difficulties (Bliss & Harris, 1987; Casper et al., 1992; Goldberg, 2014; Lindsay et al., 2006). While more recent research highlighted LGBT parents as mostly; 'out' within school contexts, having positive relationships with school communities and exploration of suggestions to improve school policies and practices (Cloughessy et al., 2018; Goldberg et al., 2017; Leland, 2017; McDonald & Morgan, 2019). This potentially reflects changing social attitudes and legal rights.

Identified challenges in schools include: lack of recognition of LGBT parented families as valid forms of family from school community members (Lindsay et al., 2006),

lack of inclusive language within school classrooms and school forms that may exclude children with families not consisting of dual-gendered parents (Goldberg et al., 2017; Mercier & Harold, 2003), experiences of homophobia and transphobia by school community members (Kosciw & Diaz, 2008; Lindsay et al., 2006; Ray & Gregory, 2001), lack of representation of LGBT families or individuals within school environments (Casper et al., 1992), assumptions of teachers that students of LGBT parents may be LGBT or experience behavioural difficulties (Casper et al., 1992; Cloughessy et al., 2019) and general 'clumsiness' in school personnel around addressing LGBT parent family structures (Cloughessy et al., 2018; Goldberg et al., 2017; Riggs & Willing, 2010). Although more recent research indicates only a minority of participants experience significant discriminatory events (Cloughessy et al., 2018; Farr, Oakley & Ollen, 2016; Mercier & Harold, 2003).

Positive experiences in schools generally include proactive or reactive measures taken by schools to accommodate LGBT parented families in school contexts (Cloughessy et al., 2019; Leland, 2017). These supportive strategies include: inclusive language and differentiated classroom activities for students of LGBT parents particularly during traditional family celebration days such as 'Mother's Day' (Cloughessy et al., 2019), collaborations between parent and schools on how to approach/accommodate diverse family structures in classroom activities (Bower, 2010; Goldberg et al., 2017; Mercier & Harold, 2003), inclusive language and classroom activities that include LGBT topics/issues alongside other forms of family diversity as part of the curriculum (Bower, 2010; Goldberg et al., 2017), schools that value representation of diversity (Goldberg & Smith, 2014; Leland, 2017) and the presence of other LGBT parented families within school communities (Farr et al., 2016; McDonald & Morgan, 2019). This thesis expands on this literature by exploring the positive experiences LGBT parents derive from Australian school communities, their

suggestions to create welcoming school environments and their perspective on commonly advocated supportive strategies suggested in educational guides.

2.5 Guides

This section summarises the policies and guides for schools relevant to LGBT parents.

Various policies at national and state levels offer schools general guides on how to support parents and LGBT individuals within school systems (See Appendix A). These policies are commonly developed in recognition of the benefits strong school-family relationships have on student wellbeing, academic achievement, creating welcoming school environments and endorsing inclusivity within the local community (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2019; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Generally, these policies suggest the inclusion of facets of family diversity within school policies, procedures, school staff professional development and curriculum to ensure schools build respectful and welcoming environments for students and their families. Additionally, these policies suggest schools work collaboratively with parents to improve school procedures and employ evidence-based practice to adapt current school practices. However, states vary in the explicit mention of LGBT parented families: some states focussing on English as Another Language or Dialect (EAL/D), capabilities, disabilities and multicultural forms of family diversity without including gender identity or sexual orientation.

States with school policies explicitly mentioning LGBT parents offer specific inclusive strategies (Tasmania & WA; see Appendix A): gender-neutral communication to families, professional development on LGBT topics/issues, collaboration between schools and families to develop school supports, inclusive curriculum, resources/materials that support LGBT students and families (e.g. posters, books) and explicit inclusion of LGBT

school community members within school policies/documents. However, these policies typically refer to LGBT students specifically, citing statistical research (e.g. Hillier et al., 2010; Jones, 2012) rather than LGBT parent studies or their experiences within school environments. Additionally, international and Australian research indicates that schools do not commonly include school supports such as inclusive curriculum of LGBT topics/issues, gender-neutral language in school documents, professional training of school staff in LGBT diversity and resources/materials that reflect LGBT families (Bishop & Atlas, 2015; Ferfolja, 2009; Kosciw & Diaz, 2008). This thesis addresses this gap in the literature by providing empirical evidence specifically from LGBT parents regarding the provision of school supports in Australian schools and explores school supports valued by LGBT parents to inform inclusive school practices.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter explained four approaches in existing LGBT parents' literature and the frames, theorists and themes associated with them. The review highlighted several gaps in the literature including: the exploration of the experiences of LGBT parents in Australian school contexts, the demographic diversity within LGBT parented families and the inclusion of LGBT parents' perspectives on commonly endorsed inclusive strategies within educational policy. This chapter (and Appendix A) showed portions of laws, education policies and guides that existing literature in the broader field ultimately led to, mainly drew on empirical LGBTIQ research *but not the existing LGBT Parents Studies*. This is perhaps because LGBT Parents Studies rarely used statistics (possibly because the phenomenon of LGBT parenting was not yet then, as it is now, assumed common enough to support a study). Further, LGBT Parents Studies had explored challenging experiences within schools, or supportive features of early childhood educational contexts exclusively, but not support features offered to LGBT

parents from schools in Australia (Cloughessy et al., 2018; Lindsay et al., 2006; Riggs & Willing, 2008). Therefore, this thesis attempts to meet the demands in law for inclusive policy to accommodate the growing LGBT parent minority group by supplying statistical and narrative research with the intention of informing policy development and inclusive school practices for the first time in an Australian study. It also attempts to embrace the mostly overlooked potential of a positive psychological lens. The next chapter of the thesis outlines the theoretical framework used to explore LGBT parents' diversity and experiences/supports in schools in the study.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

3.0 Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed current literature and school policy relevant to LGBT parented families in Australia. This chapter establishes the privileging of particular theories in the existing field and describes and justifies the use of critical social psychology. It specifically outlines Bronfenbrenner's theory of ecological development (Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1986) as a theoretical framework to explore LGBT parents' family diversity, experiences within school systems and perspectives on advocated strategies for inclusive school environments. It highlights the unique contexts LGBT parents currently develop within and offers a theoretical deconstruction of school characteristics that may be influential in LGBT parents' lives as identified in LGBT parent research.

3.1 Psychology's Conceptualisations of LGBT Parents

Chapter Two highlighted traditional and liberal psychologies previously utilised in LGBT parent research, that may prove problematic in the positioning of LGBT parents as pathologies or suboptimal family formations for healthy child development. Anti-LGBT Studies' in the 1960s+ utilised traditional psychological, psychoanalytic and aetiological lenses to explore family characteristics related to the development of homosexuality or gender identity disorders reflecting the classification of LGBT as symptomology of various mental health disorders (DSM-I; APA, 1952). LGBT Parent and Child Development Studies in the 1970s+ employed more liberal psychological development theories, however, may prove problematic in utilising comparative methods between LGBT and dual-gendered parents that position heterosexual cis-gendered (someone who's gender is aligned with their allocated sex) family formations as the 'gold star' for adaptive child development (Lambert,

2005). Psychological approaches to LGBT minority groups are becomingly increasingly progressive and inclusive reflecting social attitudes and legislative amendments with LGBT identities being removed from mental health diagnostic materials as diagnosable mental health disorders. As such, this thesis rejects pathologising views of LGBT minority groups within psychology.

LGBT parent centric research that explored LGBT Parented Family Diversity and Family Functioning Studies, and LGBT Parents Within Schools Studies arising in the nineties and naughties offered practical empirical evidence to inform the development of inclusive professional practices, procedures and policies inclusive of LGBT parented families. Commonly, these studies utilised more affirming broad theorisation of LGBT parents through critical psychological lenses using post-modern, queer and feminist concepts of gender and sexuality as socially or discursively constructed (including in Gabb, 2005; Power et al., 2010 and others). These frameworks recognise and highlight the importance of supportive structures such as social networks and social institutions in LGBT parent mental and social wellbeing (McNair et al., 2002; Rawsthorne, 2009). Therefore, critical social psychology lenses offered the potential for exploring LGBT parents in affirming ways useful for the study.

3.2 Critical Social Psychology

Social psychology explores the influence of social contexts on an individuals' development including mass media, education and family; blending scientific methods with sociological lenses (DeLamater, Myers & Collett, 2018). Critical social psychology retains this focus on broad social influences; however, it instead centres on including the perspective of underrepresented minority groups in the development of best inclusive professional practices

while utilising traditional psychological methodologies (Gundlach, 2015; Worth & Smith, 2017). Endorsed methodologies within this research include 'scientific' quantitative measures and the exploration of perceptions/behaviours via qualitative sociological approaches influenced by feminist, social justice and critical emancipatory frames (Worth & Smith, 2017).

Positive psychology (or strength-based psychology) similarly seeks to inform the best inclusive practices in individual and organisational contexts using qualitative and quantitative methodologies (Vaughan & Rodriguez, 2014). However, positive psychology focusses specifically on supportive structures in recognition of the predominant deficit or pathologizing approach adopted in traditional psychology and potential identification of solutions to pre-existing challenges faced by minority groups in social contexts (Vaughan & Rodriguez, 2014; Vaughan et al., 2014). Endorsed methodological considerations within positive psychology in LGBT research include; research designs inclusive of sexual orientation and gender diverse individuals (LGBT), utilisation of quantitative and qualitative mixed methodologies, and a focus on minority group supportive experiences with social organisations (Vaughan et al., 2014). The study this thesis reports on employs positive psychology and critical psychology's use of mixed-method research designs, the exploration of supportive experiences and supportive structures provided to LGBT parents in Australian schools with a focus on constructing empirical evidence to inform inclusive educational policy development. Specifically, it applies Urie Bronfenbrenner's psycho-sociological Theory of Ecological Development (Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1986) as a theoretical framework to explore LGBT parents' positive experiences in school community contexts and their perspectives on commonly endorsed inclusive practices in guide research.

This study's focus on foregrounding the perspective of LGBT parents was utilised in several ways including; collaborative design of data gathering instruments with LGBT

individuals (Respondent Debriefing Approach: Diamontopoulos, Reynolds & Schlegelmilch, 1994) and informed consent models of disclosure in sexual orientation or gender identity (Kondou, 2016). These approaches were adopted in the study to build measurements inclusive of LGBT identities and respect participants self-categorisation of LGBT identity while limiting researcher-led categorisation. As this study is positioned within an intersection of sociological and traditional psychological research methods, concerns regarding reflexivity (Anderson, 2010; Meyrick, 2007) and objectivity (Fisher, 2000) of the research need to be addressed. As such, I acknowledge I identify as a white, male, queer ally that values equality in Australian educational systems and employed computer-assisted qualitative analysis (Leximancer, 2018) to reduce the potential of researcher-led bias within the research.

3.3 Bronfenbrenner's Theory of Ecological Development

Urie Bronfenbrenner's Theory of Ecological Development (Bronfenbrenner, 1974) is a theoretical framework of the relationship between human development and the environment. This theory has developed over 30 years (Bronfenbrenner, 1974; Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1986; Bronfenbrenner, 1999) and is an extension of nature vs. nurture theories in developmental psychology. This study has adopted the Ecological Theory of Development as previous LGBT parent and school research has commonly explored political debates with little inclusion of theoretical frameworks or scientific methodologies which may limit the growth of LGBT parent research (Farr, Goldberg & Tasker, 2017). Additionally, the Ecological Theory of Development has been endorsed for use in LGBT parented family research (Allen & Demo, 1995), has been used in previous critical psychological studies in LGBT Parent Within Schools studies (Goldberg, 2014; Goldberg & Smith, 2014) and has been noted as particularly beneficial in informing inclusive school policies and procedures for known minority groups (Burns, 2011).

The Theory of Ecological Development (Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1986) states that individuals develop embedded within five overarching systems. These include; characteristics of the Individual, Microsystem, Mesosystem, Exosystem, Macrosystem and Chronosystem (See Figure 1). I have adapted the model to position LGBT parents at its centre similar to Goldberg & Smith (2014). At the centre of ecological theory is the individual, including characteristics of the individual such as gender, age, income, education, sexual orientation, location, religion (and in the case of parents) number and age of children. Various characteristics of the individual (e.g income, age, marital status) may differentially influence an individuals' interactions with other levels in the Ecological system.

The Microsystem includes institutional and social contexts individuals repeatedly interact with during their lifespan. In the case of parents, this may include schools, health services, religious organisations, the family of origin and neighbourhood environments. The Mesosystem includes the influence of at least two settings in the development of the individual, such as work and school contexts. The Exosystem conceptualises distal factors that may influence an individuals' development which an individual is unable to control and are less frequently exposed to such as mass media, legal services and social welfare services. The Macrosystem encapsulates broad social attitudes and ideologies of the culture in which individuals develop and the Chronosystem denotes how these systems continually change over time. A break-down of recent social and political factors that may impact on the development of LGBT parents in Australia is highlighted in Figure 1. Some key factors were greater social acceptance of LGBT parented families in the Australian population, recent political debates and mass media highlighting positive and negative views of LGBT identities, greater equality in legislative rights and protections, positive and negative experiences with informal sources of support and social organisations (such as schools and health services) and unique demographic characteristics of LGBT parented families. Given

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the significant changes in Australian legislation, policy and public opinion post-plebiscite (a postal survey whether same-sex individuals should be able to marry or not) this thesis has included only LGBT parents with children currently enrolled in Australian schools.

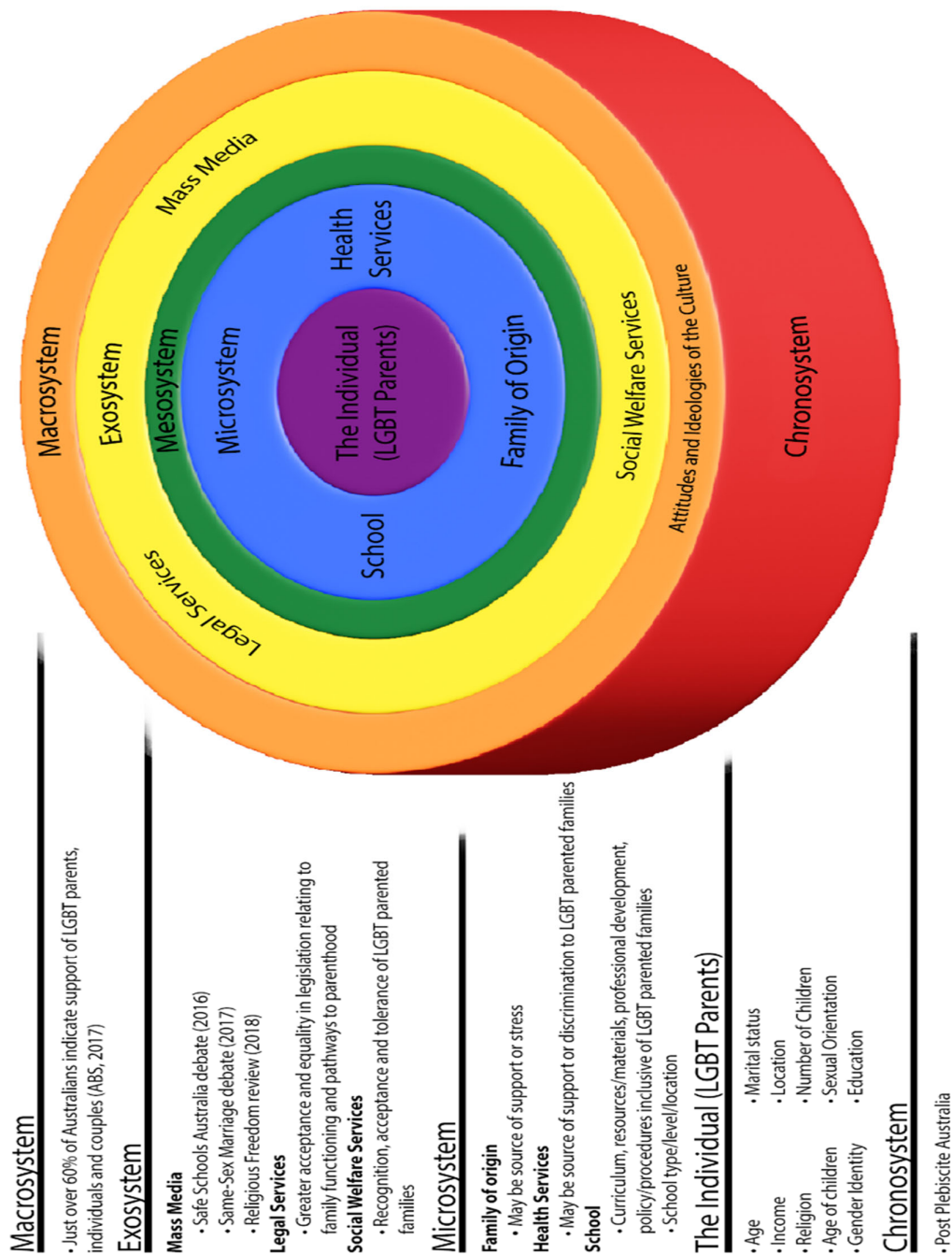


Figure 1. Bronfenbrenner's (1986) Ecological Theory of Development Relevant to LGBT Parents in Australia.

An individual's entire ecology of development is beyond one study to capture entirely (Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1986), as such this study explored characteristics of the Individual (LGBT parents) and school Microsystems. Microsystems are structured environments that consist of:

- physical,
- social, and
- material

characteristics that may influence the development of Individuals (Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1986).

In school contexts, these characteristics include:

- activities,
- interpersonal relationships,
- physical attributes of the schools (location, school type, school level),
- materials and resources accessible within school contexts, and
- school policy/procedures (Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1986).

Previous LGBT parent research indicates that school Microsystems include characteristics that prove problematic to the development of individuals including;

- a lack of curricular activities and items that reflect LGBT parented families (activities and materials),
- difficulties with school staff including lack of knowledge of family diversity and LGBT issues/topics (social interactions), and
- school documents/communications/forms that use gendered language assuming parents are cis-gendered heterosexuals (policy/procedure).

National and state policy offer strategic guides ranging from generic collaboration with parents in schools to specific strategies in developing welcoming environments for LGBT students and parents (Appendix A). Bronfenbrenner's Theory of Ecological Development (Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1986) offers an appropriate theoretical framework or lens to explore LGBT parents' current provision of inclusive practices within Australian school communities, LGBT parents' perspectives on advocated inclusive strategies within school contexts and suggestions on how to improve school contexts for LGBT parents.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined Macrosystem, Exosystem, Mesosystem, Microsystem and Individual factors that may influence LGBT parents' life experiences within Australia. School Microsystem and Individual characteristics were described as especially relevant to previous LGBT parent research and factors to be explored in this study. The next chapter of the thesis outlines the methodology utilised to explore LGBT parents' Individual and school Microsystem characteristics utilising this framework.

Chapter 4: Methodology and Methods

4.0 Introduction

Chapter Three described and justified the applicability of Bronfenbrenner's Theory of Ecological Development in informing inclusive school policy and procedures. This chapter presents the research design created to answer the research questions identified in Chapter Two; identifying the demographic characteristics and diversity of LGBT parents and their child(ren)'s school Microsystems, opinions and perceptions of commonly endorsed LGBT parent supportive strategies in school environments and desired/valued supportive features offered by school contexts. Different components of the methodology for this study are thus discussed in greater detail including the justification for the design of the research, participants, instruments used in the study, procedures, data analysis strategies and ethics.

4.1 Research Design

I constructed this study utilising a mixed-method approach adopting qualitative and quantitative measurements in a non-experimental cross-sectional web-based survey. A mix of qualitative and quantitative data have the potential to provide stronger results by drawing on the strengths of each (Creswell & Garrett, 2008; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner 2007) and is endorsed within positive psychological lenses (Vaughan et al., 2014). As such, this study employed quantitative techniques to gain insight into the various characteristics of Individuals and school Microsystems, complemented by qualitative techniques to explore the perceived benefits and positive experiences LGBT parents derive from different characteristics within school Microsystems. Thus, the inclusion of a mixed-method approach enabled a holistic view of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory of Development, aspects of the environments and potential impact on the development of

Individuals, more holistically than would be achieved by utilising quantitative or qualitative data exclusively (Cresswell & Garrett, 2008; Creswell, Plano & Clark, 2011).

Therefore, the study this thesis reports on, which aims to explore LGBT parents' valued and desired supports in schools, will attempt to meet the identified gaps utilising a mixed-methodology approach by answering the following research questions (RQs):

- RQ1.: What are the demographic descriptive statistics of Australian LGBT parents and the characteristics of their child(ren)'s schools?
- RQ2.: What school supports do Australian LGBT parents' value or desire in their child(ren)'s schools to create welcoming school environments?
- RQ3.: What positive experiences do Australian LGBT parents derive from their child(ren)'s school communities and suggestions for more inclusive schools?

This focus is justified by the lack of research systematically exploring the perspective of Australian LGBT parents in developing inclusive evidence-based policy in education.

I employed a web-based survey in this study as it is a highly useful method for accessing greater numbers of otherwise difficult to reach LGBT populations in a timely manner at minimal cost (Jones et al., 2015). Additionally, the distribution of the survey via social media was employed as the reliance of schools for distribution may be problematic in schools deeming LGBT research as taboo (Duke, 2007) and potential negative impacts on participants including embarrassment or stigmatising/discriminatory events (UNESCO, 2019, p. 16).

4.2 Participants

Participants included 73 LGBT parents with children currently enrolled in Australian schools.

I was guided in my selection of the sample by Bronfenbrenner and Crouter's (1984)

theoretical framework, particularly the characteristics of Microsystems and Chronosystems. Chronosystems refer to how social environments change over time and Microsystems refer to environments that Individuals have frequent and repeated contact. Thus, I limited the sample to LGBT parents with children currently enrolled in Australian schools to ensure some current contact with their child(ren)'s school and in recognition of the legalisation of same-sex marriage as a significant historical event within the lives of LGBT parents. In total, 150 complete and incomplete surveys were submitted to Qualtrics. Upon review of responses, 64 were removed as non-responses, two were removed for disagreeing to participate, six were removed as identifying as cis-gendered heterosexuals and five were removed as not having children currently in Australian schools. I recruited participants for this study from the general LGBT parent community with children enrolled in Australian schools via convenience and snowballing non-random sampling techniques.

4.3 Materials and Measures

4.3.1 Participant information and consent form

I developed a participant information and consent form to inform participants about the study. Participants were informed of implied consent, confidentiality, a brief background to the study, selection criteria to take part in the study (being an 18+ LGBT parent with a child enrolled in Australian schools) and contact details for supportive organisations in case of concerns or distress while participating in the survey (Appendix B).

4.3.2 Demographics

I constructed a self-report measure for this study to record demographic information of LGBT parents (Individuals) and the characteristics of their child(ren)'s school

(Microsystem). The demographic questionnaire included items measuring different aspects of Individuals including age, gender identity, sexual orientation, relationship status, income, residing state, education level, religious denomination, number of children and age of the youngest child. Characteristics of child(ren)'s school Microsystems were gathered using items measuring the type of school, regionality of the school and child(ren)'s grade. I included similar demographic categories as reported by Perlesz and her colleagues (2014) to facilitate comparison of demographic information across the two samples. The complete LGBT Parent School Support Survey is provided in Appendix C.

4.3.3 Supportive features in school Microsystems

I developed three quantitative items in the survey to measure; the provision of supportive strategies within school Microsystems, opinions on the important supportive structures in creating in welcoming school Microsystems and the perceived benefit of supportive strategies in creating welcoming school Microsystems.

These measures were specifically designed to contrast the deficit-model seen in the literature reviewed on LGBT parents' experiences within schools and to inform policy development/educators/researchers on the possibilities for schools to be supportive of LGBT parent identities, in line with positive psychological research (Vaughan et al., 2014). First, I created a measure of the respondent's awareness of supportive structures currently provided in children's schools. An example item of this questionnaire included, 'Please indicate to your knowledge if your child's school include the following supports'. Respondents were requested to respond to each item on a three-point scale (1 = Yes, 2 = No, 3 = Unsure). I included this measure to enable a comparison of school supports provided in Australian

schools to studies conducted in the United States (Bishop & Atlas, 2015; Kosciw & Diaz, 2008).

The second measure recorded participants' perceptions of the importance of supportive strategies in creating welcoming school Microsystems. An example includes, "Do you think the following supports are important for creating a welcoming environment in your child's school?". Respondents were requested to respond to each item using a dichotomous scale (1 = Yes, 2 = No). Finally, I created an item to measure the perceived benefits of key supports in creating welcoming school environments. An example item includes, 'Do you rate the following supports as beneficial or unproductive in creating a welcoming environment in your child's school?'. Respondents were asked to respond to each item using a dichotomous scale (1 = Beneficial, 2 = Unproductive). Supportive structures rated included; items that reflect LGBT families in classrooms, mention of LGBT families in brochures and documents, teacher training in LGBT topics/issues, LGBT inclusive forms and specific mention of LGBT families in school policy.

4.3.4 Positive experiences in school Microsystems

Positive experiences were explored via two open-ended questions that requested participants to indicate whether they had positive and inclusive experiences with their child(ren)'s school and to give examples. These items further built on strength-based psychological research to explore possible supports that may diminish identified challenges LGBT parents experience in school environments. Examples of these items include, 'Have you had any positive experiences with your child's school or teacher as an LGBT parent? Please explain/give examples' and 'Has your child's school included your family in some way as an LGBT parented family? Please explain/give examples'.

4.3.5 Opinions on supportive school structures

I created five open-ended questions that explored participants' perceptions of the benefits of suggested school supports and justification for their inclusion in creating welcoming school Microsystems. Examples of these five items include, 'Do you think teacher's being educated about LGBT family structures and common challenges would benefit your relationship with your child's school? Why or why not?' and 'Do you think lessons and books covering LGBT information would be beneficial to your experience of your child's school? Why or why not?'. Additional open-ended questions included other school supportive strategies including; items that reflect LGBT families in classrooms, mention of LGBT families in school brochures and documents as well as school forms that are inclusive of LGBT parented family structures.

These items were included in the study as previous research on LGBT parent-school supports has adopted predominantly quantitative methods that may overlook the perspectives of the participants under investigation (Bishop & Atlas, 2015; Kosciw & Diaz, 2008; Lambert, 2005). Additionally, qualitative research may prove influential in informing policy development and public opinion by providing descriptive narratives of perceptions and experiences with social organisations (Lambert, 2005; Vaughan & Rodrigues, 2014).

4.3.6 Suggestions for schools

I created one open-ended item to explore LGBT parents' suggestions for creating welcoming environments in their child(ren)'s school Microsystems. This item was 'Please list any suggestions you have for schools or teachers, in terms of making LGBT parented families feel more welcome in your child's school community'. I adapted this item from Goldberg

(2014) to explore and gain insight into the opinions of LGBT parents on desired characteristics within their child(ren)'s school Microsystems.

4.4 Procedures

4.4.1 Questionnaire and website development

At the initial stage of this research project, I developed a qualitatively driven mixed methodology survey to be advertised and distributed widely via Facebook social media. In creating this survey, I adhered to the guidelines advised by Johnson & Christensen (2014).

Namely, ensuring the use of simple language, ensuring items included were relevant to my research questions and conducting a pilot test with 10 participants prior to distributing the survey (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). I adopted a respondent debriefing approach (Diamontopoulos, Reynolds & Schlegelmilch, 1994) to the pilot test which included inviting 10 known LGBT individuals to complete the constructed questionnaire with a five-item analytical tool to ensure a collaborative approach to the development of the survey and elicit information about respondents' interpretations of the incorporated measures (Appendix D).

All respondents indicated the survey was easy to complete, personally relevant, of value to LGBT parents, beneficial in gaining insight into LGBT topics and how to create more welcoming school environments for LGBT parented families. Feedback and comments elucidated from the analytical tool were positive with no constructive comments. The questionnaire was finalised with the supervision of Dr Tiffany Jones.

Following approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC; Appendix E) at Macquarie University, a Facebook page was constructed containing a hyperlink to the online survey via Qualtrics (Qualtrics, Provo, UT). The Facebook page titled 'LGBT Parent

School Support Survey' (LGBT PSSS; www.facebook.com/lgbtpss) contained a brief description of the study, links to support organisations (e.g. Q-Life and Beyond Blue) and the requirement for participants to be LGBT parents over 18 years of age with children enrolled in Australian schools. The Qualtrics survey included participant information and consent forms notifying participants of confidentiality, implied consent, selection criteria and a brief background to the study. The 20-minute online Qualtrics survey was anonymous and voluntary consisting of 18 closed-ended items as well as 8 open-ended items.

4.4.2 Advertising and recruitment

Participants for this study were recruited via three methods; paid Facebook advertising, Facebook messenger invitations to LGBT support organisations and informal social networks from the 15.05.19 to 16.05.19. Firstly, I constructed paid advertising campaigns utilising the Facebook ad manager function to target broad Australian audiences between 18 to 65 years of age. After two days and a low response rate, I adapted the target audience to include potential participants with specific interests related to LGBT identities (Appendix F).

Second, I sent the advertisement for recruitment via email and Facebook messenger to LGBT related services and interest groups including various PFLAG divisions, ARCSHS and Rainbow families. I conducted broad searches on Facebook for groups linked to LGBT parenting/families. I then sought permission from page moderators and administrators to post advertisements within their Facebook groups. Some of the LGBT parent interest groups were closed, granting access to only LGBT parents. I contacted the administrators of these groups directly via Facebook messenger and linked email accounts informing of the study and advertising. In the interest of confidentiality of these informal supportive groups, I have not disclosed their titles. Advertising was approved and distributed via Facebook pages, email

lists and newsletters. Finally, I shared the Facebook page with informal social networks including my own friend list and known associates to Dr Tiffany Jones such as Noeline Bedford, Leanne Coll, Lisa van Leent and Jennifer Power.

4.4.3 Online monitoring

It is important to note that after the Facebook advertisement went live it became a priority to regularly monitor comments and emoticon reactions made on the Facebook page. In the second day of advertising, homophobic comments and angry emoticons appeared on the Facebook page (Appendix F). These comments were hidden using Facebook tools to ensure respondents were not adversely influenced while participating in the study. Although, negative emoticons such as angry faces were unable to be removed from the Facebook page.

4.5 Data Analysis

4.5.1 Quantitative analysis (descriptive)

The quantitative analysis component of this study comprised creating frequency tables and graphs for 18 closed-ended items included in the survey through the Qualtrics (Qualtrics, Provo, UT) data analysis tab, describe function. A filter was created and applied to each analysis ensuring respondents data met the selection criteria, namely being 18+ LGBT parents with children currently enrolled in Australian schools. Descriptive data were then tabulated in figures relating to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological levels including characteristics of the Individual (LGBT parents and their child(ren)), physical characteristics of school Microsystems, LGBT support structures provided within school Microsystems, as well as

LGBT parent opinions on the importance and benefit of supportive strategies within school Microsystems.

4.5.2 Qualitative analysis (thematic and Leximancer-driven)

The qualitative analysis included two approaches, qualitative thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and utilisation of Leximancer computer software (Version 4.0; Leximancer Pty Ltd, 2018). Thematic analysis followed the guidelines of Braun & Clarke (2006) specifically, familiarising myself with the data, creating initial codes, searching for common themes, reviewing themes, creating themes and producing the report. Additionally, I utilised Leximancer software to act as a guarantor of objectivity and reproducibility.

Traditional methods of establishing valid and reliable qualitative research compare inter-reliability scores between groups of researchers that are intensive in terms of time, funding and collaboration with others (Thomas, 2014). As I categorised this project as independent and short-term, I adopted Leximancer as a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis tool. Leximancer addresses concerns of producing valid and reliable qualitative research by removing researcher bias (Penn-Edwards, 2010), reducing selective case reporting (Watson, Smith and Watter, 2005) and offers reliability in its stability and reproducibility (Rooney, 2005; Smith & Humphries, 2006).

Leximancer is particularly appropriate in exploratory studies containing large volumes of data (Soltiriadou & Le Andrews, 2014) and has been used in various qualitative approaches including phenomenography research (Penn-Edwards, 2010), grounded theory (Harwood, Gapp & Stewart, 2015) and thematic analysis (Cretchley, Gallois, Chenery & Smith, 2012). Leximancer has been found particularly relevant in qualitative research in

identifying saturation points (Harwood, Gao & Stewart, 2014) and themes missed by manually coded data (Angus, Rintel & Wiles, 2013).

Leximancer is a scientifically validated computer software program that employs Bayesian-based statistical algorithms to analyse text-based data (Leximancer, 2018, Smith & Humphries, 2006). Leximancer performed automated conceptual and relational analysis of the text with a lexical knowledge base that identified frequent, reoccurring concepts and relationships between those concepts (Leximancer, 2018). Leximancer produced a two-dimensional visual report of identified concepts, the relationships between concepts, overarching themes and the relationship between themes. Identified concepts are reflected as grey nodes on the concept map, larger nodes indicate the re-occurrence of the concept in the text and nodes positioned together share similar concepts. Nodes that share similar concepts are compiled as themes denoted by circles surrounding the nodes. A themes prominence is reflected in its size and heat-mapped colouring while the relationship between themes is denoted by proximity. Grey lines connect nodes between themes that share similar concepts. The visual display act as a companion to data on identified concepts, overarching themes and concept typical quotes extracted from the text.

Following the guidelines in the Leximancer Manual (2018), I prepared the text for analysis by; applying a filter to Qualtrics to ensure the data-set analysed met my selection criteria (LGBT parent with a child currently enrolled in Australian schools) and exporting qualitative data for each open-ended item into separate documents. I used default Leximancer settings for the Generate Concept Seed, Generate Thesaurus and Generate Concept Map stages of analysis. Concept seeds were altered minimally by merging singular and plural nouns (teacher/teachers), capitalised and uncaptialized words (teacher/Teacher), and past/present/continuing tenses for verbs (taught/teaching/teaches/teach). I established

reproducibility and stability by running the analysis multiple times. This process was repeated for each open-ended survey question.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethics approval was granted by the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) at Macquarie University (Reference Number: 5201953938547, Approved: 02.05.19). In creating this online survey consideration was given to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of potential LGBT participants around education themes (following UNESCO, 2019). This survey protected the anonymity of participants by excluding the collection of IP Addresses in Qualtrics, adopting broad age brackets to limit the identification of participants and the use of pseudonyms.

Informed consent is especially important in LGBT education studies (UNESCO, 2019). A plain-language information statement informed potential participants of the purpose of the study, the selection criteria, implied consent, the use of pseudonyms, dissemination strategies of the results and a debrief including support services in case of distressful experiences while participating in the study.

Aside from providing initial consent in order to participate, participants were not obligated to respond to any item and could opt-out at any time. Physical research materials and raw data were stored in key-locked filing cabinets within secure offices on campus at Macquarie University. Digital information was stored under password protection within Macquarie University Cloudstore. Only my supervisor and I had access to the physical and digital data sets.

4.7 Conclusion

In summary, this chapter outlined the positive psychology methodology and its relevance to this study's guiding assumption of the need for both objectivity and empowerment of the focal participants. This was met by the combined use of qualitative and quantitative methods in a non-experimental cross-sectional web-based survey. These frames also informed the collaborative development of the survey and the utilisation of Leximancer as a tool to reduce researcher bias while optimising objectivity and reproducibility of data analysis.

Justifications were made for some key choices, including the utilisation of a mixed-method approach to collecting data from participants and the inclusion of specific questions to allow international comparison. Direct efforts were made to contribute to strength-based LGBT research from the perspective of LGBT parents, for LGBT parented family-inclusive policy. The results of the study are reported in a single findings chapter detailing Bronfenbrenner's Individual and school Microsystem characteristics and desired supportive structures in schools incorporating qualitative and quantitative data.

Chapter 5: Findings on Australian LGBT Parents & Schooling

5.0 Introduction

Earlier chapters described the study's three aims to explore LGBT parents' demographic diversity, gain insight into their school Microsystem characteristics and supportive school features desired/valued by LGBT parents. This chapter reports on the findings of the 2019 Australian LGBT Parent School Survey designed specifically to meet these aims. Findings of Australian LGBT parents are reported under the three research question themes they relate to, with: RQ1) characteristics of Individuals and their Microsystems; RQ2) perceptions on the benefit of supportive school features, and RQ3) LGBT parents' positive experiences and suggestions for creating welcoming school Microsystems.

5.1 LGBT Parents' Characteristics and School Microsystems Characteristics

The first research question informing the study considered characteristics of Individuals and their Microsystems. This section of the chapter outlines detailed descriptive statistics of participants, physical characteristics of their schools, and supportive structures in school environments, from the 2019 '*LGBT Parent School Support*' survey.

5.1.1 Individual-level characteristics – LGBT parents demographic diversity

The demographic characteristics of LGBT parent survey participants are shown in Table 5.1. The age of participants ranged from 25-64yrs. Almost half of the sample were 35-44yrs. Participants were mostly located in eastern states; primarily Queensland followed by N.S.W, Victoria, S.A, W.A and the N.T.

The gender of parents in the sample was predominantly female followed by male, other and transgender. Of those who responded 'other', four respondents identified as non-binary, one as trans-male, one as trans-female and one as female-bodied. The majority of participants identified as lesbian followed by 'another option', gay and bisexual. Of participants who responded 'another option', four identified as queer, three as pansexual, two as trans and one as bisexual polyamorous.

The sample was predominantly affluent and highly educated. Nearly 70% of the sample earned annual incomes over \$90,000 and over 60% held university (undergraduate and postgraduate) qualifications. Close to 70% of the participants were in married or committed relationships followed by divorced, another option and single. Of those participants selecting 'another option', five were dating, three were single and one was in a polyamorous relationship.

Table 5.1 also shows over half of participants identified as Atheist, followed by Christianity, another option, Agnostic/undecided, Judaism and Islam. Of the four indicating another option, six identified as pagan, two as none, one as yoga and one as ex-Christian. Most participants indicated having two or more children. The age of participants youngest child ranged from 0-18yrs; most children were aged under 14yrs.

Table 5.1:

Frequency distribution of participant demographic characteristics (n=73).

Characteristic	%		%
Age		Income	
25-34yrs	16.4%	Less than \$30,000	8.2%
35-44yrs	48.0%	\$30,000-\$59,999	8.2%
45-54yrs	31.5%	\$60,000-\$89,999	13.7%
55-64yrs	4.1%	Over \$90,000	67.1%
Gender		Prefer not to say	2.7%
Female	72.6%	Education	
Male	12.3%	Up to four years high school	2.4%
Transgender	5.5%	Completed high school	9.6%
Another option	9.6%	Diploma or certificate	21.9%
Sexual Orientation		Undergraduate university degree	24.7%
Lesbian	61.6%	Postgraduate university degree	41.1%
Another option	13.7%	Religion	
Gay	12.3%	Christianity	14.5%
Bisexual	12.3%	Judaism	1.5%
Relationship Status		Islam	1.5%
Single, never married	4.1%	Atheist/None	56.5%
Married, committed de facto relationship	68.5%	Agnostic/Undecided	11.6%
Divorced, separated	15.1%	Another option	14.5%
Another option	12.3%	Age of Youngest Child	
State		0-4yrs	27.4%
New South Wales	23.3%	5-9yrs	42.5%
Northern Territory	1.4%	10-14yrs	23.3%
Queensland	37.0%	15-18yrs	6.8%
South Australia	9.6%	Number of Children	
Victoria	23.3%	1	31.5%
Western Australia	5.5%	2	39.7%
		3 or more	28.8%

5.1.2 Microsystem physical characteristics – School type/location

The physical characteristics of LGBT parent-school Microsystems are displayed in Table 2.

The majority of children in the sample were enrolled in Public schools, followed by Catholic, Independent and Other. Of those respondents who indicated other, one was in a special needs

school and one was in an Anglican private school. Over 60% of the sample had children enrolled in primary school, followed by kindergarten/prep, and high-school. The majority of the sample had children enrolled in schools in metropolitan areas, followed by regional and rural locations.

Table 5.2:

Frequency distribution of child(ren)'s school characteristics (n=73).

Category	%
Child's School Type	
Public	69.9%
Independent	13.7%
Catholic	13.7%
Other	2.7%
Child's Grade	
Kindergarten/Preparatory	17.8%
1-3	30.1%
4-6	36.9%
7-10	8.2%
11-12	6.9%
Location of School	
Inner Metropolitan	28.8%
Outer Metropolitan	35.6%
Regional	31.5%
Rural/Remote	4.1%

5.1.3 Microsystem environmental characteristics – supportive structures in schools

The Microsystem environmental characteristics of participants were explored by asking LGBT parents awareness of their child's school providing supportive strategies identified in school guide research. As can be seen in Figure 5.1, inclusive school forms was the most common supportive strategy present in schools followed by items that reflect LGBT families in classrooms, specific mention of LGBT families in school policy, teacher training in LGBT parented families, lessons on LGBT topics and mention of LGBT family structures

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in school brochures/documents. Figure 5.1 also indicates that more LGBT parents rated their child(ren)'s schools as not including LGBT related supportive strategies than those that included such supports. There was a significant amount of uncertainty in the sample regarding the provision of many supports: particularly teacher training in LGBT family structures/issues and explicit mention of LGBT families in school policy, followed by LGBT lessons, LGBT reflective items in classrooms, LGBT inclusive forms and documents and mention of LGBT families in brochures or websites.

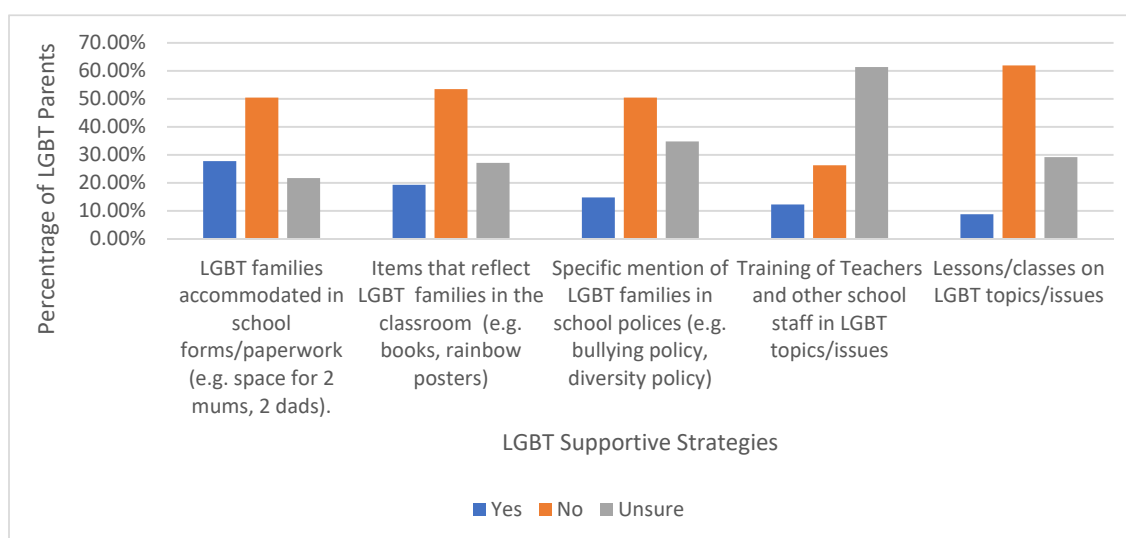


Figure 5.1: Support features in schools reported by Australian LGBT parents in schools (n=73).

5.2 LGBT Parent Perceptions on the Benefit of Supportive Features in School

Microsystems

The second research question of this study considered LGBT parents' perceptions of the benefit and importance of supportive strategies in creating welcoming school environments. This was explored via two quantitative measures of perceived importance/benefit of supportive structures in schools and open-ended qualitative justifications for why supportive

structures may be important in creating welcoming school environments. The following section describes results from the quantitative measures on LGBT parents perceptions on supportive strategies within schools, the selection of qualitative data used in Leximancer analysis, Leximancer analysis of responses to the importance of staff training on LGBT parented families, Leximancer analysis of responses to LGBT inclusive forms and Leximancer analysis of responses to inclusion of LGBT related curriculum.

5.2.1 Perceived importance and benefit of supportive structures in school environments

In the survey, there were two quantitative questions about the perceived benefit and importance of various supportive strategies in creating welcoming school environments. As shown in Table 5.3, over 80% of participants deemed all supportive strategies as important and beneficial in forming positive school environments. Participants were unanimous in deeming school staff training in LGBT topics and LGBT inclusive forms as particularly pertinent in creating welcoming environments at schools, followed by items reflecting LGBT families in classrooms, mention of LGBT families in brochures/documents, explicit mention in school policy and lessons/classes on LGBT topics/issues. Results indicate that all supportive strategies are perceived to be of some value in creating welcoming school Microsystems.

Table 5.3:

Perceived importance and benefit of supportive structures in school environments (n=73).

Support Strategies	LGBT parent perceptions of school supportive strategies			
	Importance		Benefit	
	Yes	No	Beneficial	Unproductive
Teacher Training	100.0%	*	100.0%	*
LGBT Inclusive Forms	100.0%	*	100.0%	*
Items that Reflect LGBT Families	95.9%	4.1%	95.9%	4.1%
LGBT Families in Website	86.3%	13.7%	90.4%	9.6%
LGBT Inclusive School Policies	83.6%	16.4%	90.4%	9.6%
LGBT Inclusive Curriculum	80.8%	19.2%	88.7%	11.3%

5.2.2 Selection of Microsystem characteristics for thematic analysis

The amount of qualitative information gained from the survey proved too large to be all included in one study. To address this limitation this study followed the guidance of Braun & Clarke (2006) by discussing dominant and divergent data within qualitative studies. Thus, this study conducted Leximancer content analysis on justifications for the inclusion of school staff training on LGBT topics, LGBT inclusive forms and LGBT lessons in schools as the two most supported and least supported inclusive strategies within school contexts. Additionally, the two dominant and least dominant theme reported by Leximancer content analysis is exclusively discussed. Least dominant themes being depicted by Leximancer as the most distant from theme clusters.

5.2.3 Leximancer analysis of justifications for teacher training in LGBT parented family structures in school environments

In the survey, participants were asked 'Do you think teacher's being educated about LGBT family structures and common challenges would benefit your relationship with your child's

school? Why or why not?'. The Leximancer map (Figure 5.2) and content analysis report indicate the dominant themes were 'family' (56 Hits), 'school (28 Hits), 'feel' (24 Hits), 'inclusive' (10 Hits) and 'unsure' (Six Hits).

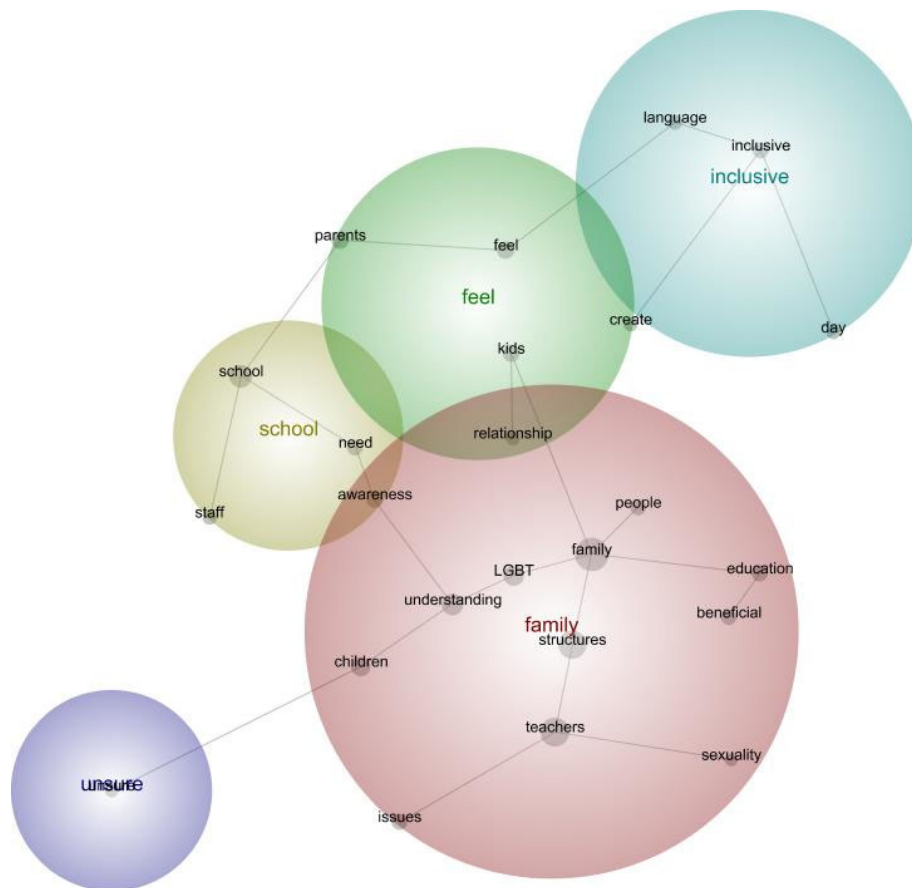


Figure 5.2: Leximancer map of LGBT parents' justification for teacher training on LGBT family structures in school Microsystems (n=69).

The first theme Leximancer identified, ‘family’, was composed of arguments that school staff training in LGBT families; should be included within the education of all forms of family diversity, may normalise LGBT parented families as a recognised form of family diversity and may aid in supporting children of LGBT parented families. Leximancer selected typical quotes for this theme include:

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... it should be embedded in being educated in broader not common family structures, ie accepting of diverse family structures not just LGBT (Kerry, 46yrs, VIC).

...it may assist normalize LGBT families for teachers however there is a risk that education like this becomes tokenistic. LGBT families are as diverse as any other family there is a risk that assumptions are made' (Sophia, 38yrs, QLD).

I think it's important for teachers to understand the differences and similarities of our family to help other children/families to have an awareness and to facilitate any difficulties my children might encounter (Mary, 37yrs, VIC).

The second most dominant theme identified by Leximancer was 'school'.

Justifications within this theme included arguments that LGBT competency in school staff may overcome challenging social interactions, raise awareness of family diversity and address identified knowledge gaps in teacher knowledge. Leximancer selected the following quotes as exemplars of this theme:

...approaching the staff regarding LGBT issues would not need to include a social skills lesson first (Diane, 33yrs, QLD).

Sometimes people just need a little awareness. The smallest changes can make families feel included and welcomed (Lauren, 31yrs, SA).

definitely because being a Catholic school, the awareness of challenges faced by lgbtq+ parents is very low among staff, and perpetuates over time (Bronwyn, 38yrs, SA).

The most unique theme identified by Leximancer was 'unsure' which comprised of arguments that teacher training in LGBT parented families may overcome LGBT parent uncertainties within school environments. Namely, concerns about the provision of support given to students after coming out and the response of school staff to the disclosure of family constellations. For example, Emma (38yrs, QLD) said '*because I try to not be noticed at the school because I'm unsure if there would be any support for my son*', Isobella (29yrs, QLD) said '*...because teachers are often shocked or unsure with how to react when learning that my children have two mothers*'; and Harriet (45yrs, SA) said '*I am unsure whether all the school staff are as comfortable with us as I hope*'. The themes identified by Leximancer thus

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indicated that teacher competence in LGBT parented families is a desired aspect of LGBT parent-school Microsystems. Justifications for teacher competence in LGBT parented families in school contexts include educating school staff about all forms of family diversity, addressing knowledge gaps in teachers and potentially alleviating concerns of disclosure of LGBT family structures.

5.2.4 Leximancer analysis of justifications for LGBT inclusive forms in school environments

Participants were also asked ‘Do you think forms and documents that allow for different family structures (e.g. two mums and two dads) would be beneficial to your relationship with your child’s school? Why or why not?’. The Leximancer map (Figure 5.3) and content analysis report indicates the dominant themes identified by Leximancer were ‘forms’ (46 Hits), ‘families’ (32 Hits), ‘feel’ (13 Hits), ‘inclusive’ (Seven Hits), ‘accepting’ (Four Hits) and ‘gender’ (Four Hits).

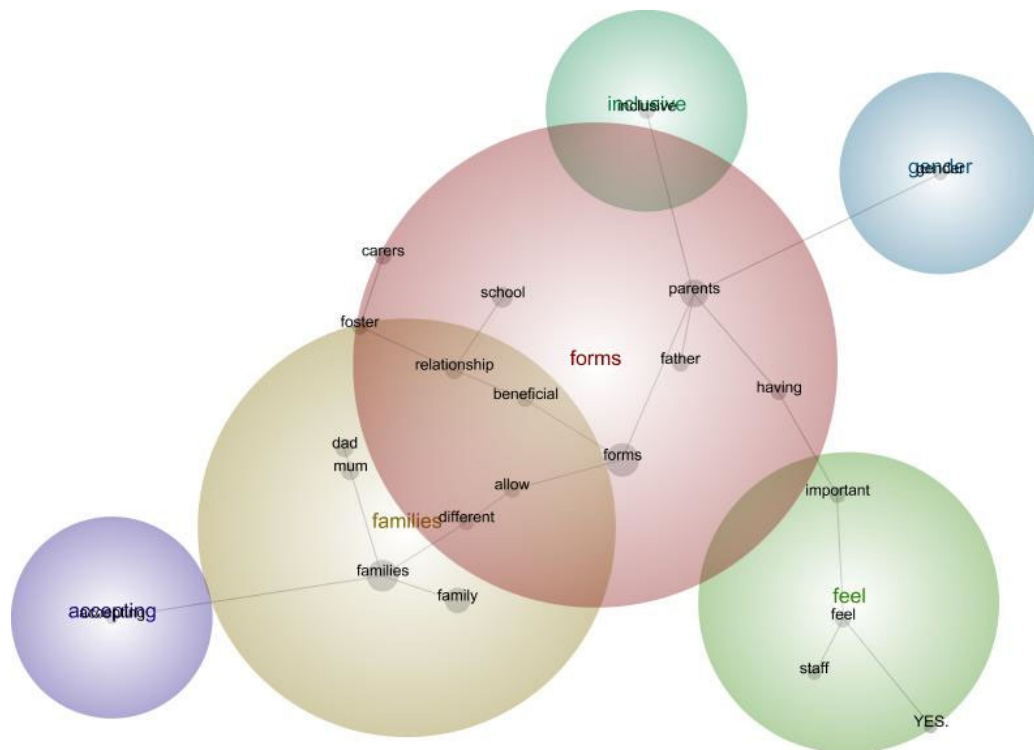


Figure 5.3: Leximancer map of LGBT parents' justifications for inclusive school forms in school Microsystems (n=69).

Leximancer identified the dominant theme within the qualitative data as 'forms'. This theme included evidence of parents having to adapt forms, evidence of schools providing inclusive forms and value in forms reflecting all forms of family diversity. Example extracts from Leximancer include:

I often have to modify forms in order to accurately describe the relationship between my son and my partner. Inclusive forms are also helpful for single parents, step-parents, foster carers and indigenous families (Trinity, 50yrs, VIC).

My school already has that. It just says name and relationship to student. it also caters for other family structures. grandparents/ foster carers/other family (Emilia, 39yrs, QLD).

Forms can easily be gender inclusive (simple language such as parent) and can help make those filling in the form more comfortable (Ben, 49yrs, QLD).

The second most dominant theme identified by Leximancer was 'families'. This theme included examples of how non-inclusive school forms can pose unique challenges to LGBT parents. Leximancer extracted quotes typical of this theme include:

It's just basic discrimination to be honest. With the diversity of families why do our forms all have mum and dad on them? It says that LGBT or any family without a mum or dad are not ok. (Sophia, 38 yrs, QLD).

It is incredibly offensive to assume each family is made up of a mum and dad. We intentionally rewrite forms at our child's school (Violet, 36yrs, VIC).

The least dominant theme was named 'gender' by Leximancer. This theme contained arguments highlighting the non-issue when parent forms were LGBT inclusive and negative experiences when forms were not adequately inclusive. For example, Rose (45yrs, VIC) stated *'I'm tired of crossing out gender specific titles'*, Stan (49yrs, SA) responded *'they generally are non-gender specific anyway'* and Rowan (45yrs, VIC) stated *'our school is about parents not gender'*. The themes identified by Leximancer thus indicated that inclusive forms were a desired and valued aspect of LGBT parent-school Microsystems. Justifications for inclusive forms in school contexts include being conditional on inclusivity for all forms of

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family diversity, overcoming exclusionary experiences and evidence of the 'non-issue' when schools provide adequate inclusive forms.

5.2.5 Leximancer analysis of arguments around LGBT related lessons and books in school environments

To explore LGBT parents' perceptions on inclusive curriculum practices, participants were asked 'Do you think lessons and books covering LGBT topics/issues would be beneficial to your experience of your child's school? Why or why not?'. The Leximancer map (Figure 5.4) and content analysis report indicate the dominant themes identified were 'families' (42 Hits), 'school' (32 Hits), 'children' (17 Hits), 'kids' (15 Hits) and 'understanding' (10 Hits).

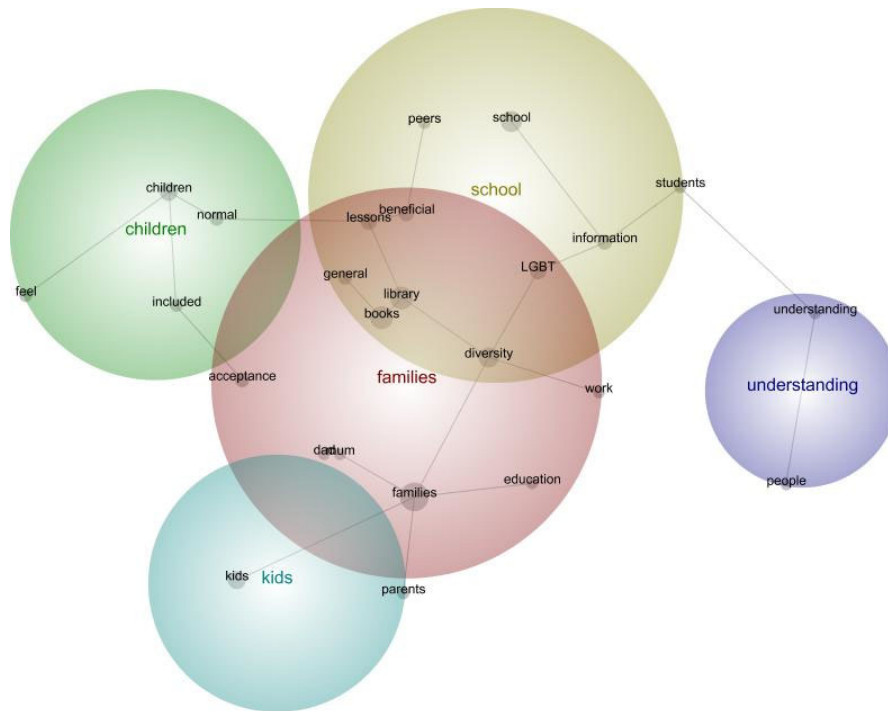


Figure 5.4: Leximancer map of LGBT parents' justifications for LGBT inclusive lessons and books in school Microsystems (n=69).

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The first theme, which Leximancer identified as 'families' comprised of arguments of the benefit of LGBT lessons when included with other forms of family diversity, may overcome over-reliance on materials reflecting heterosexual parented families, raise awareness of school communities on diversity and improve children's sense of belonging in schools. Leximancer identified typical quotes within this theme include:

I think lessons on family diversity in general which also included 2 mums or 2 dads as normal as well as single-parent families, multigenerational families, kids who live with other relatives or foster care etc and books which also reflect this family diversity would be beneficial for all children and our wider community (Hannah, 50yrs, VIC).

Our teachers have been great at altering activities to be more inclusive but there is still a lot of educational resources that have mum dad and two kids as the basis of the discussion (Sophia, 38yrs, QLD).

Our children live in a world of a mum and a dad (despite the family diversity that is within our schools and communities.) For them to have readers, see posters and library books that depict families similar to theirs helps to give a child a sense of belonging and a sense of acceptance (Maya, 48yrs, NSW).

The second dominant theme identified by Leximancer was 'schools'. Arguments included in this theme focussed on the benefits of LGBT inclusive curriculum in educating other school community members on diversity. Leximancer extracted quotes from this theme include:

Any information that can be provided to students about LGBT families is valuable in the sense that it provides education on a topic that isn't going to go away. It teaches diversity and tolerance of minority groups (Ivy, 52yrs, NSW).

Not beneficial as such, however would give other students an understanding of how the dynamics work for their fellow peers (Harriet, 32 yrs, NSW).

At the moment our children's peers are getting information from their homes only about same sex families and this is not always positive. Our children are having to address that themselves, which can lead to a feeling of isolation in the school yard (Alex, 40yrs, NSW).

The most unique theme identified by Leximancer was 'understanding'. Arguments in this theme related to the benefits of an inclusive school curriculum in normalising LGBT

parented families as one of many forms of family diversity. Leximancer extracted quotes typical of this theme include:

Visual indicators of safe spaces for LGBTI people are vital. Plus it normalizes our families and gives positive talking points (Amelia, 48yrs, NSW).

I think it helps show there are all different types of families - and this has a positive impact for everyone in understanding we are the same, not different (Michael, 37yrs, VIC).

I think talking about it would provide more understanding and also shift that it is just another part of people. It's about inclusion and diversity (Denise, 36yrs, QLD).

The themes identified by Leximancer thus indicated that lessons and books that cover LGBT topics/issues were a desired aspect of LGBT parent-school Microsystems.

Justifications for inclusive curriculum materials and activities included normalising LGBT parent families as an acknowledged form of family diversity, educating school community members on family diversity and addressing possible exclusion of LGBT parent families being depicted within school environments.

5.3 LGBT Parent Positive Experience Within School Microsystems

The third research question of this study explored LGBT parents' positive experiences within school environments, instances of inclusivity within schools as LGBT parent families and suggestions for creating welcoming school environments. This question was explored via quantitative and qualitative analysis. The following section describes results from the quantitative analysis of rates of positive experiences within schools, Leximancer qualitative analysis of positive experiences within schools, and Leximancer qualitative analysis of suggestions for creating welcoming school environments.

5.3.1 Quantitative analysis of positive experiences within schools

Three broad questions were asked of participants exploring positive experiences within schools, experiences of inclusivity as LGBT parents and suggestions on how to make LGBT parented families feel more welcome in schools. As can be seen in Table 5.4, most participants had positive experiences within schools and suggestions for improving school environments. The majority of responses to experiences of being included in schools as LGBT parented families were 'missing' or simple statements of 'no' (45 responses). As this limited the amount of raw text data available for content analysis by Leximancer, this study included qualitative analysis of positive experiences and suggestions for creating welcoming schools only.

Table 5.4:

LGBT Parent response rate to positive/inclusive experiences and suggestions for schools (n=73).

Questions	Response Rate		
	Yes	No	Missing
Positive Experiences	51	17	5
Inclusive Experience	28	39	6
Suggestions for schools	52		21

5.3.2 Leximancer analysis of LGBT parents' positive experiences within schools

To explore LGBT parents' positive experiences within school systems, participants were asked 'Have you had any positive experiences with your child's school or teacher as an LGBT parent? Please explain/give examples'. The Leximancer map (Figure 5.5) and content analysis report indicate the dominant themes identified were 'school' (45 Hits), 'teachers' (29 Hits), 'positive' (22 Hits), 'mums' (15 Hits) and 'plebiscite' (Seven Hits).

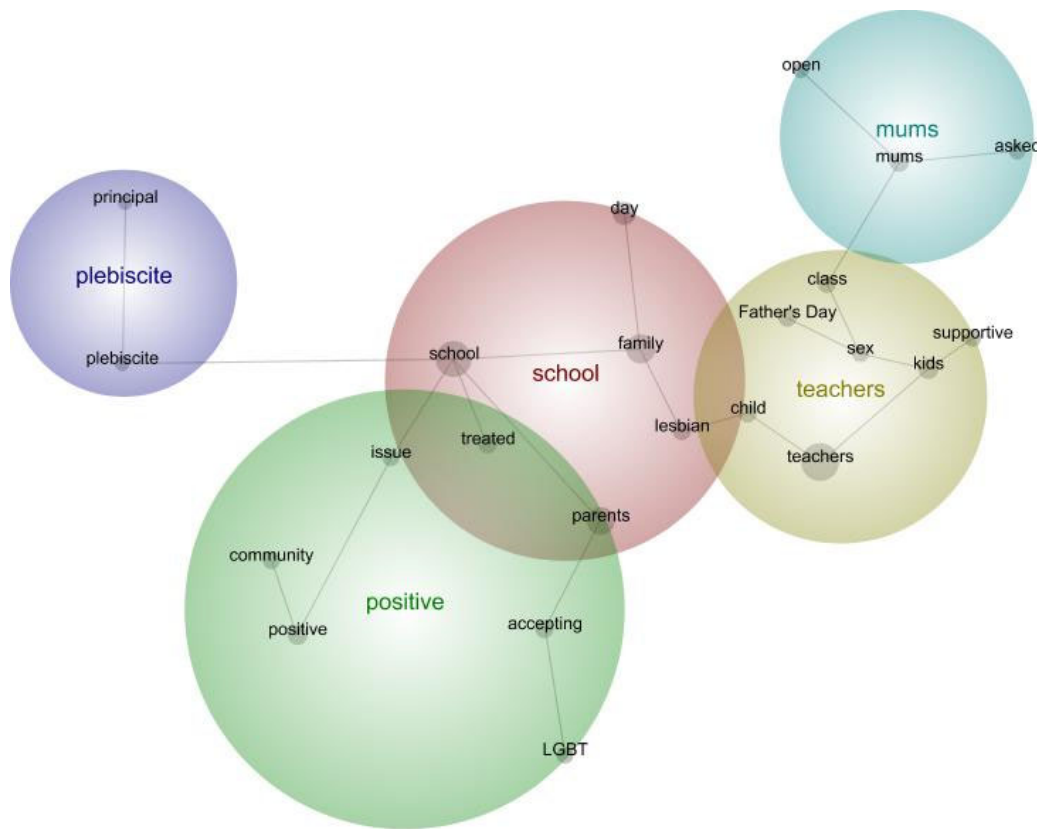


Figure 5.5: Leximancer analysis of LGBT parents' positive experiences within school

Microsystems (n=69).

The predominant theme identified by Leximancer was 'school'. This theme included experiences of LGBT parents being treated the same as other family constellations and inclusive classroom activities. Typical quotes of this theme identified by Leximancer include;

At our intake interview our daughters whole family was welcomed this included lesbian mum, transparent and her two dads....was just a non-issue (Zoey, 46yrs, NSW).

We are not treated any differently by the teachers at our school. They are always accommodating around Mother's day and Father's Day (Mary, 37yrs, VIC).

Our sons school has treated us as any other family. The school is very warm and welcoming of us. The teachers have always treated both myself and my wife as equal parents (Ivy, 52yrs, NSW).

The second predominant theme identified by Leximancer was 'teachers'. This theme included examples of teacher inclusive practices appreciated by LGBT parents including; language use, collaborative flexibility in teaching practices and accommodations on celebratory days traditionally intended for dual gender parents. Leximancer identified exemplar quotes of this theme include:

Our child's teacher has a lesbian sister with kids and so she is very aware of the language she uses when talking about family and also consultative around days like Father's Day so that kids with two mums can discuss how they'd like their child included (Sarah, 46yrs, WA).

...went out of way to make 2 of every Mother's Day present and respected our request to call Father's Day, family day on my sons cards and make presents for his siblings as well (Emilia, 39yrs, QLD).

The least dominant theme identified by Leximancer was 'plebiscite'. The positive experiences described in this theme included instances where schools pro-actively addressed the potential negative impact of the plebiscite on school community members. For example, Fiona (37yrs, SA) stated '*during the plebiscite the principal several times checked in with us to see how we were travelling and if we were being too badly impacted, which was just lovely*', Violet (36yrs, VIC) noted '*The school chaplain released a lovely article to parents during the plebiscite to support the local lgbt community which was nice*', and John (47yrs, VIC) responded '*Lots of support during the marriage equality plebiscite. Lots of support and questions in discussing our son's 2 dad family*'.

The dominant concepts identified by Leximancer in textual data centred on welcoming school environments, including; LGBT parents being treated as a legitimate form of family (non-issue), flexibility on family celebratory days associated with 'traditional' heterosexual parented families, inclusive language use, collaborative flexible teaching practices and proactive supportive messages from schools.

5.3.3 Leximancer analysis of LGBT parents' suggestions for schools

The survey included a question exploring LGBT parents' suggestions for creating welcoming school environments. Participants were asked 'Please list any suggestions you have for schools or teachers, in terms of making LGBT parented families feel more welcome in your child's school community'. The Leximancer map (Figure 5.6) and content analysis report indicated the dominant themes identified were 'kids' (34 Hits), 'families' (30 Hits), 'inclusive' (22 Hits), 'school' (21 Hits), 'day' (18 Hits), LGBT (13 Hits) and education (Six Hits).

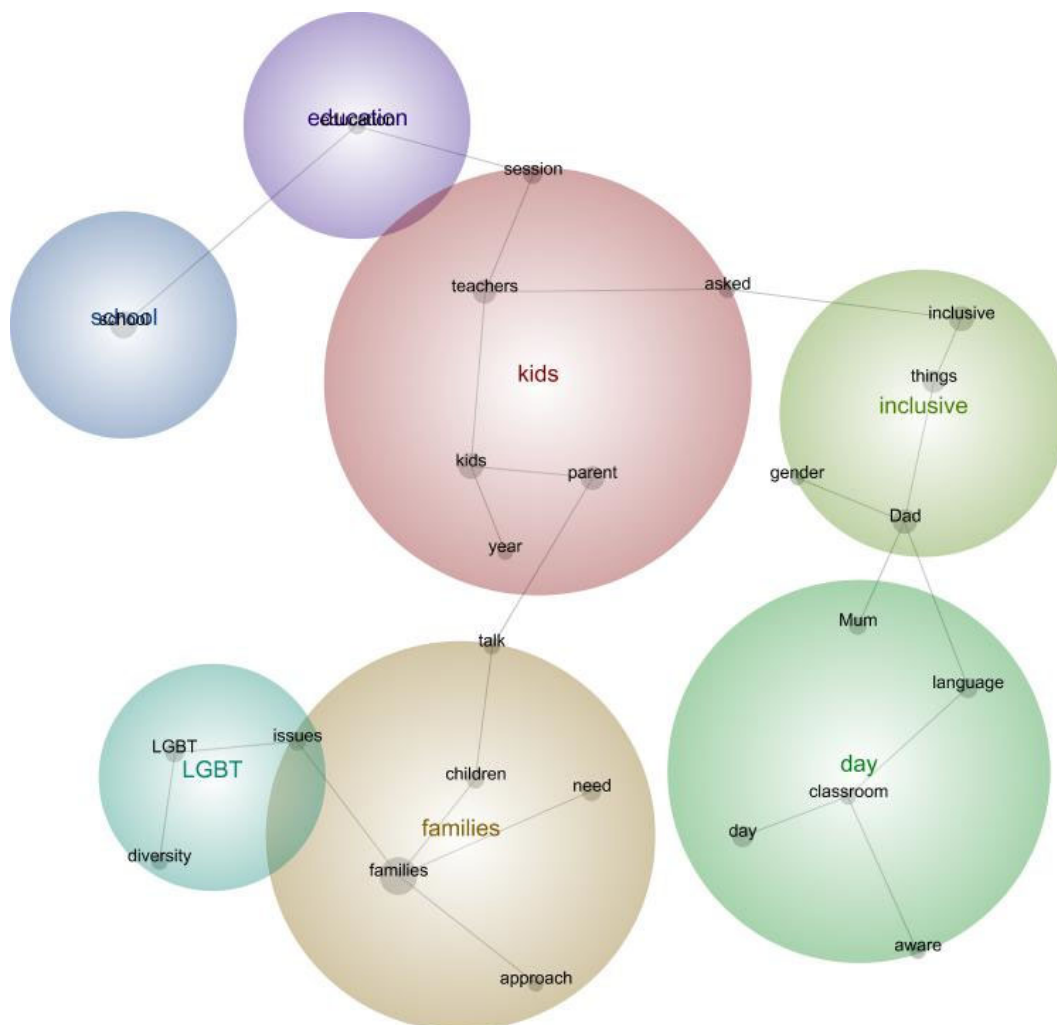


Figure 5.5: Leximancer analysis of LGBT parents' suggestions for creating welcoming environments in schools (n=68).

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Leximancer identified 'kids' as the most dominant theme within the raw text data.

Arguments within this theme included examples of inadvertent exclusionary experiences of LGBT parented children within school environments. Quotes extracted from Leximancer as exemplars of this theme include:

One day, a teacher asked 'Hands up if you do chores for your Mum and Dada'. Our youngest kept her hand down - not because she doesn't do chores but because she thought they were asking if she had a Mum and Dad. A section in the curriculum on ancestry caused some problems because the teacher just hadn't thought through what that looked like for kids living with one or more non-genetic parents. They were receptive but a little naïve (Hope, 35yrs, QLD).

Just more understanding from outsiders who generalize and have misconceptions of family. One incident with a teacher which upset our child would have been avoided if they asked our child for an explanation (Rebecca, 37yrs, NT).

The second dominant theme identified by Leximancer analysis was 'families'.

Suggestions within this theme were practical approaches for schools to be more inclusive including language use, normalising LGBT parented families and specific inclusion of LGBT parented families within bullying policies. Leximancer identified extracts typical of this theme include:

Teachers need to be aware of language used in classrooms and on notes. Ensure that all children are taught that all family structures are ok and there is nothing wrong with not having a Dad or not having a Mum (Hannah, 50yrs, VIC).

Talk about all types of families. Have a zero tolerance approach to bullying/teasing of any kind (Lauren, 31yrs, SA).

Acknowledging the family dynamic and understanding the extra support needed for lgbt children families..eg bullying due to a child being from a lgbti family (Ivy, 52yrs, NSW).

The least dominant theme identified in the Leximancer visual display was 'school'.

Comments within this theme indicated satisfaction with school environments and no suggestions provided. Leximancer extracted quotes from this theme include:

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We are so welcome at our school there isn't anything I would change in that way
(Rowan, 45yrs, VIC).

All schools should be like ours. Safe schools will help (Christine, 42yrs, VIC).

The themes identified within LGBT parents' suggestions for creating welcoming school Microsystems included; raising awareness and knowledge on LGBT parented families in school environments to overcome misconceptions, care in inclusive teaching practices to overcome points of exclusion, normalising LGBT family formations as part of normal family diversity in school communities, explicit bullying policy including LGBT parented families and little suggestion for improvement when satisfied with provision of school supportive features.

5.4 Conclusion

In summary, this chapter outlined strong overarching themes in the data. Firstly, the Australian LGBT parent respondents were largely highly educated lesbian women of strong financial means aged 34-55yrs in committed relationships, based in Australia's most populated states. They are largely atheist with two or more children, aged from 0-14 yrs. However smaller portions of the group also include a cross-section of diverse sexualities, religious backgrounds and financial demographics. Physical school Microsystem characteristics indicate their children are mostly enrolled within metropolitan public primary school grades 1-6; however, they are represented across all levels and types of school education and locales. In terms of LGBT supportive structures within school Microsystems, the findings suggest LGBT parents are uncertain in whether supportive structures form part of their school environments and schools differ in the provision of supportive features. Yet, all supportive structures are endorsed as important and beneficial in strengthening

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relationships between LGBT parents and their child(ren)'s schools. The most likely form of support offered by schools being inclusive forms (close to 30%). LGBT parents particularly considered teacher training in LGBT family structures and inclusive forms as the most important supportive structures in creating welcoming school environments.

Qualitative justifications for the inclusion of such Microsystem characteristics included overcoming potentially exclusionary experiences within school environments as well as encouraging knowledge, acceptance and normalisation of all forms of family diversity in school communities. Positive experiences and suggestions for school improvements included similar themes of being treated as non-issue/'another' form of family diversity and care in inclusive language/classroom practices, with specific suggestions of LGBT parented children to be included within school bullying policy. The following discussion and conclusion chapter will provide a discussion of these overarching themes and draw key conclusions positioning the study, in relation to both the theory used for this thesis and the broader domestic and international studies in the field.

Chapter 6: LGBT Parented Families in Australian Schools: 'Another' or an 'Other' Form of Family Diversity

6.0 Introduction

Earlier chapters outlined justification and development of research questions (Chapter Two), Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory of Development as conceptualised within this study (Chapter Three), the development of an online survey to explore different facets of school Microsystems (Chapter Four) and report the findings drawn from participants responses (Chapter Five). This chapter incorporates Bronfenbrenner's Theory of Ecological Development (Individual and School Microsystem characteristics) with empirical evidence derived from an online survey and existing LGBT Parents Within Schools research. The chapter then presents conclusions in response to the study's research questions, the study's limitations and implications for school stakeholders.

6.1 Descriptions of the Individual and Characteristics of the Microsystem

6.1.1 Characteristics of the Individual: LGBT parent demographic descriptive statistics

The predominant Individual characteristics identified within this sample of Australian LGBT parents included above-average income and education attainment, parents located within eastern Australian states and predominantly atheist lesbian mothers. The majority of family structures consisted of parents in committed or married relationships with two or more children under the age of 14 years. These demographic characteristics are consistent with previous Australian LGBT Parented Family Diversity and Family Functioning studies (ABS, 2016; Crouch et al., 2014; Power et al., 2010).

Various Exosystem and Individual characteristics may be attributed to the over-representation of lesbian, high income and high education social trends. Exosystem characteristics influential in the identified income and education trends of LGBT parents include costly alternative pathways to parenthood such as private surrogacy arrangements, Assisted Reproductive Technologies and may require the inclusion of a 'third party' to facilitate conception (Crouch et al, 2014; Power et al., 2010). Given the 'non-accidental' nature of conception in LGBT parented families (Green & Mitchell, 2002), 'sufficient' financial security and education may be significant considerations in family formation.

There are no current statistical estimates of the number of LGBT parents within Australia, although census data indicates female same-sex couples are more likely to be parents compared to male same-sex couples (ABS, 2016). The predominance of lesbian identities in this study and previous Australian research (Crouch et al., 2016; Power et al., 2010) may reflect LGBT parents being mostly lesbian identifying females. Unlike lesbian parents, GBT parents may be limited by the individual biological reproductive potential within families when seeking parenthood. Those families with the potential to become pregnant may be privileged with less costly or formal alternative pathways to seeking parenthood including known/unknown donors (Power et al., 2010) while non-generative families require more formal/medical support services.

The predominance of atheism within the sample and previous research (ABS, 2016) warrants further investigation on whether 'non-denominational identification' forms a 'social trend' in LGBT parented families and informs the ecological framework relevant to LGBT parented families. As the Ecological Theory posits that Microsystems are only significant and influential in an Individuals' development with frequent and repetitive contact (Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1986), religious social organisations may not be a significant social context directly related to LGBT parent development (although religious affiliations

may change-over-time). However, given the intense debate regarding LGBT identities within schools in Australian politics, society and mass media, religious social organisations may be more appropriately placed within the Exosystem for the majority of participants; as an influential factor in a person's development but are outside of the control of the Individual.

6.1.2 Characteristics of the Microsystem: Physical characteristics and supportive features within school contexts

Physical characteristics of LGBT parented child(ren)'s school identified in this study represent predominantly early education and primary levels of schools within public Australian education environments. The majority of participants indicated their child(ren) were enrolled in inner-metropolitan and outer-metropolitan schools with a greater representation of parents from Queensland than other states or territories. There was a high level of uncertainty in the sample whether LGBT related supportive features formed part of school Microsystem characteristics, particularly teacher training in LGBT parented families (Close to 60%). Inclusive school forms were the most frequently cited provided support (Close to 30%).

In contrast to previous international studies (Kosciw & Diaz, 2008), this study indicates LGBT parents may prefer public educational systems over private or independent schools, reflective of Australian samples (ABS, 2018). LGBT Parent Within School Context research reports LGBT parented families are purposive in school selection favouring diversity in schools and inclusive supportive features (Bower, 2010; Goldberg & Smith, 2014). In contrast to international settings (Leland, 2017), Australian public schools may be viewed as a more inclusive and diverse educational alternative compared to private or independent systems. Future research is required to explore Australian LGBT parents experiences and considerations in selecting schools for their children.

Although LGBT parents ratings of school supportive features has been questioned as potentially ill-informed of actual service provision (Bishop & Atlas, 2015), from the perspective of parents school Microsystems do not commonly include advocated LGBT related inclusive practices, consistent with international research (Bishop & Atlas, 2015; Kosciw & Diaz, 2008). Particular common findings include that schools differ in the provision of supportive school features (Kosciw & Diaz, 2008), schools are more likely to offer inclusive documentation than other supports (Bishop & Atlas, 2015) and LGBT parents may be uncertain in the provision of LGBT-related teacher training in schools (McDonald & Morgan, 2019).

LGBT Parents within School Context research has consistently reported school environments that lack inclusive school practices and procedures that accommodate/reflect LGBT parented families as challenging Microsystem characteristics for LGBT parents (Casper et al, 1992; Goldberg, 2014; Goldberg & Smith, 2014; Kosciw & Diaz, 2008). Rather than overtly discriminating or stigmatising LGBT parents, such school contexts have been argued to exclude and inadvertently 'other' LGBT parented families (Casper et al., 1992). As a result, school community members may not be offered educational opportunities to address possible misconceptions/commonly held stereotypical beliefs and inadvertently encourage a lack of awareness of LGBT forms of family diversity (Casper et al., 1992; Goldberg & Smith, 2014). Such 'gaps' in the knowledge of school communities have been attributed to experiences of 'clumsiness' in school staff when dealing with LGBT parents (Goldberg et al., 2017).

Various Microsystem and Exosystem characteristics may be attributed to the evident non-uniform and low provision of inclusive supportive features in schools. Microsystem characteristics attributed to greater likelihood of supportive features in schools range from geographical location (Lindsay et al., 2006), local community socio-demographic contexts

(Casper et al., 1992), individual school community members stance on LGBT identities (Robinson, 2002) and representation of LGBT parented families in schools (Goldberg & Smith, 2014). Chi-square analysis was run to test whether school regionality of state was related to supportive features in schools, but the various categories adopted in the study proved problematic. Exosystem factors that may be influential in school provision of LGBT supportive features include national/state educational policy-guides and debates within media, religious and political fields regarding mainstream integration of LGBT identities within schools (Law, 2017). As educational policies vary in the accommodation and explicit inclusion of LGBT parented families (Appendix A), schools and their communities may not be appropriately informed of best-practice inclusive strategies to adopt in schools. The dearth of strategic explicit instructions on inclusive practices may prove particularly problematic in the highly politicised and intensely debated rights of LGBT identities within Australian schools (e.g. Safe Schools, Same-sex marriage postal vote, Religious Freedom Review). With the realistic potential of schools to receive political and social backlash to progressively inclusive practices and lack of inclusive practices endorsed by educational authorities, school Microsystems may be reticent to include 'controversial' supportive features within school environments. Speaking to school-based key informants could be a next step in understanding the provisions beyond parents' perceptions, though answers might be highly politicised in the current environment.

However, given that Australian LGBT parents are now recognised legally and accepted widely by general society (ABS, 2017), there is an evident need to build more inclusive and explicit school policy regarding LGBT parented families. Given the predominance of research exploring challenging experiences within schools and the commonality of suggestions for school improvements (Casper et al., 1992; Goldberg, 2014; Goldberg & Smith, 2014; Kosciw & Diaz, 2008), this thesis reversed the order by exploring

LGBT parent perceptions of suggestions for school improvements acknowledging the predominant deficit-model in research. The following section discusses the perceived importance and justification for the inclusion of LGBT parent supportive features in schools from the perspective of LGBT parented families.

6.2 LGBT Parent Perceptions of Supportive Features in School Microsystems

Results indicate LGBT parents were unanimous in deeming teacher training and inclusive school forms as important and beneficial supportive features in creating welcoming school environments for LGBT parented families. Although, over 80% of the sample indicated all supportive features were important and beneficial in school environments including items that reflect LGBT families followed by; LGBT families mentioned in documents/websites, LGBT inclusive school policies and LGBT inclusive curriculum. Notably, when viewed alongside the Australian Professional Standards of Teaching (AITSL, 2011) the preference for supportive structures reflect the predominant interactions dictated by national professional policy; teacher interpersonal interactions with parents and school-based communications (e.g. forms, newsletters). However, as the study specifically explored LGBT parent relationships and perceptions in schools, some parents may be able to discern between supports relevant to parents specifically and support more beneficial for their child(ren).

As it was beyond this study to explore justifications for the inclusion of each aspect of school Microsystems individually, this thesis reports on LGBT parent justifications for the inclusion of supportive; interpersonal characteristics (teacher competency in LGBT family structures and challenges), resources (LGBT inclusive school forms) and activities/materials (LGBT related lessons and books) within Australian school Microsystems.

6.2.1 Interpersonal characteristics within school Microsystems: Teacher competency (training) in LGBT family structures

Interestingly, LGBT parents were highly uncertain whether teacher-training in LGBT family structures was a component of their school Microsystems yet, deemed it as one of the most beneficial and important supports in creating welcoming school environments. Qualitative analysis identified common justifications for the inclusion of teacher training in LGBT family structures including; normalising LGBT parented families as a recognised form of mainstream family diversity, aiding in the support of LGBT parented children, overcoming challenging parent-school social interactions and raising school-community awareness of LGBT parented families. Examples of challenging social interactions with educators included identified gaps in school staff professional knowledge on LGBT parented family structures, teacher clumsiness when responding to discussions of LGBT identities and concerns of potential negative reactions to disclosure of sexual orientation or gender identity to school personnel; consistent with previous LGBT Parent Within School Context research (Casper et al., 1992; Goldberg & Smith, 2014; Goldberg et al., 2017; Lindsay et al., 2006).

Predominant arguments advocating the inclusion of teacher training in LGBT family structures as part of school Microsystems include; changing school climate (Goldberg, 2014), educating educators on diverse family constellations within classrooms (Riggs & Willing, 2010), addressing potential biases/stereotypes held by educators (Casper et al., 1992; Cloughessy et al., 2017) and developing sensitive practices to meet the needs of diverse families (Goldberg et al., 2017). International research has also found that LGBT parented families value 'business as usual' mindsets and pluralist views of family diversity, where LGBT parented families are offered the same treatment and accommodations as other families within school communities (Bower, 2010; Goldberg et al., 2017). Additionally, consistent with international research, this study indicates that not all LGBT parents are 'out'

within school environments, and list concerns of potential negative reactions to disclosure of LGBT identity to school staff (Casper et al., 1992; Lindsay et al., 2006). From the perspective of LGBT parents, teacher training in LGBT topics and forms of family diversity may thus be a method of overcoming a range of unique barriers LGBT parents experience within school Microsystems including gaps in teacher professional knowledge of family diversity and creating informed school communities for LGBT parented families' intended or unintended disclosures.

6.2.2 Resource characteristics within school Microsystems: School forms inclusive of LGBT parented families

Within this sample, school forms and documents inclusive of LGBT parented families were deemed equally as important as teacher training; and was the most common supportive structure (close to one third) provided within LGBT parent-school Microsystems. Dominant themes identified in justifications for use of inclusive forms within school Microsystems include; valuing gender-neutral wording inclusive of all forms of family diversity, evidence of LGBT parents is a 'non-issue' within school Microsystems and the potential to overcome negative exclusionary experiences with gendered language in school documents. Identified negative experiences with school forms included having to adulterate school forms to accommodate LGBT parented family structures and the negative/exclusionary effect of school documentation assuming nuclear family formations. This Australian study thus echoed US research showing school forms were not accommodating of diverse family structures (Casper et al., 1992; Goldberg, 2014). School forms that fail to acknowledge diverse family structures may act as 'first signals' to parents their families are not accommodated within social organisations and may be deemed 'other' in Microsystems (Casper et al., 1992). The

frequency of school communications to parents further makes these reminders repetitive and 'othering' process cumulative.

Similar to arguments for teacher training, the qualitative analysis of comments indicated LGBT parented families preferred school forms inclusive of all family structures, as opposed to specialised/differential additions *only* for LGBT parented families. This finding builds on US research previously arguing that LGBT parents assess school environments most positively when family differences are treated equally with 'business as usual' mentalities (Goldberg et al., 2017).

Predominant arguments for the provision of school forms inclusive of diverse forms of family include; overcoming the potential of devaluing diverse family structures (Mercier & Harold, 2003), endorsing multiculturalism and anti-LGBT bias in schools (Casper et al., 1992) and creating pro-active environments that remove the onus placed on parents to advocate for the inclusion of their family structures (Goldberg, 2014). Consistent with international research, this study showed LGBT parents repeatedly adulterate forms to adequately accommodate their family structures; which have been reported to cause confusion in school staff in how to interpret the modifications and concerns in how to broach the topics with parents (Casper et al., 1992) This indicates that Australian school Microsystems commonly include resources that fail to incorporate the diversity of family structures represented within school communities. Given that LGBT parents may be required to individually modify forms to ensure their family structures are appropriately explained to school organisations, it signifies through symbolism and physical acts that LGBT parents may not be adequately acknowledged within school environments.

6.2.3 Activity/material characteristics within school Microsystems: Inclusion of lessons and books on LGBT topics/issues within school contexts

The results indicated 'inclusive curriculum and books' was deemed the least important and least beneficial support for creating welcoming environments in schools, though nonetheless over 80% of the sample indicated some importance and benefit. Additionally, it was the least likely support offered within school Microsystems with over 60% of the sample indicating inclusive curriculum was not a component of their school context. Dominant themes identified within qualitative analysis indicated inclusive curriculum and books that reflect LGBT parented families were of benefit in school Microsystems in terms of; addressing concerns of over-representation of heterosexual parented families exclusively; raising awareness of LGBT topics/issues, tolerance and acceptance within school communities; embedding LGBT forms of family diversity as one representation of many family structures; and beneficial in raising awareness of child(ren)'s peers in family diversity to alleviate the onus placed on LGBT children to describe and justify their families.

Inclusive school curriculums and materials that reflect LGBT parented families have been argued to endorse consideration of multiculturalism (Casper et al., 1992), address the potential marginalisation of LGBT parented families in schools (Goldberg et al., 2017; Riggs & Willing, 2013) and are endorsed within the national curriculum where the inclusion of family/cultural backgrounds of students serve as familiar foundational experiences drawn on in learning environments (ACARA, 2018). The lack of inclusion of activities and resources reflecting LGBT parented families in this sample lends support to sociological arguments that schools typically assume all families within schools are heterosexual and exclude 'other' diverse forms of family (Casper et al., 1992; Goldberg et al., 2017; Rawsthorne, 2009). Through only representing one dominant form of family diversity schools may contribute to the lack of awareness of LGBT parented family formations in school communities generally.

Such lack of representation and knowledge of family diversity has been attributed to unique challenges experienced by LGBT parented children including misunderstandings between children, teachers and other students; where it is up to children to advocate, explain and justify their family structures to others (Casper et al., 1992; Lindsay et al., 2006; Ray & Gregory, 2001). Similar to previous international research, this sample also indicates LGBT parents' value inclusive curriculum reflecting all forms of family diversity, rather than the exceptional inclusion of only one form of family structure diversity (Bower, 2010; Goldberg et al., 2017).

Inclusive school activities and resources that reflect LGBT parented families (alongside other forms of family diversity) may aid in educating school communities and raise awareness about diverse forms of family, reduce difficulties experienced by LGBT parented children in school environments and address concerns of the predominance of schools reflecting traditional heterosexual family formations. However, the provision of LGBT inclusive curriculum and materials may prove problematic to some school systems given current debates and media coverage of LGBT identities being introduced to schools (Law, 2017).

6.3 LGBT Parent Positive Experiences Within and Suggestions for Australian School Microsystems

6.3.1 Valued school Microsystem supportive features: LGBT parent positive experiences within school contexts

Most (70%) of LGBT parents in this study had positive experiences within their child(ren)'s school Microsystem. Dominant themes identified in responses included experiences where; LGBT family diversity was treated as a non-issue, inclusive practices from teachers

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particularly during traditional family celebratory days (such as Mother's Day and Father's Day) and supportive messages from school community personnel during the plebiscite. Previous research has similarly found LGBT parents value 'business as usual' mentalities where schools offer equal treatment regardless of family structures (Goldberg et al., 2017) and collaboratively differentiating lessons on traditional family days to accommodate LGBT parented family structures (Cloughessy et al., 2018; Goldberg, 2014).

Thus, this study underscored previous research arguing that LGBT parents see their family structures being treated equally and similarly to other forms of family diversity as 'positive' (Bower, 2010; Goldberg et al., 2017). Affirming the positivity of placing LGBT parented families within and amongst other forms of diversity was heavily stressed by respondents throughout this study, where LGBT parents deem supportive structures as beneficial conditional on the inclusion of all forms of family diversity. This may possibly indicate LGBT parents desire more mainstream recognition but also may indicate an ideological commitment to pluralism within school Microsystems.

The findings of schools offering support during the marriage equality survey highlight the differential stance and provision of supports across school Microsystems, and how some support types are only temporarily important, conditional on changing facets of Exo- and Chronosystems. The evident pro-actively supportive stance of some schools during the plebiscite in 2017 indicates some school environments deemed Exosystem political climates as potentially significant in school community members' individual development and made attempts to address possible negative impacts. Further research is needed to explore what school characteristics are related to more progressive/inclusionary or conservative/exclusionary school engagements with Exosystem (e.g. political debates) and Microsystem (e.g. inclusive curriculum) components. Additionally, further research may be

needed to explore challenging experiences within school Microsystems as close to 30% of the sample indicated no positive events within schools.

6.3.2 Desired supportive features in school Microsystems: LGBT parents' suggestions for creating welcoming school environments

As this study explored LGBT parents' perspectives on commonly endorsed supportive school structures, it became imperative to explore what supportive structures LGBT parented families may encourage and value not already captured within research. Thematic analysis of 52 responses identified dominant typical suggestions for school improvements included; suggestions for teachers to be mindful of language and activities that may potentially exclude students, knowledge and awareness of different facets of family diversity in teachers to challenge stereotypes or misconceptions, educating all school community members of family diversity and endorse tolerance/acceptance within school contexts, specific inclusion of LGBT parented families within bullying policy/supports and lack of suggestions for schools when LGBT parents' needs are adequately met. The findings relating to LGBT parented families suggesting schools be mindful of inclusive practices and stereotypes of LGBT parents and their children are congruent with previous research finding school staff may hold negative stereotypical beliefs or employ language that may inadvertently exclude children parented by LGBT identities (Casper et al., 1992; Lindsay et al., 2006). Arguably, the samples predominant themes in suggestions for schools could be categorised as teacher training in LGBT parented families, as inclusive language, awareness of family diversity and differentiation of school activities to accommodate LGBT parented children may be incorporated within pedagogical approaches and inclusive practices respectful of diversity.

The suggestions relating to more supportive structures centred on bullying warrants further research. Previous research has indicated LGBT parented children are no more likely to be teased within schools but are more likely to be bullied regarding LGBT issues (Tasker, 2005; Ray & Gregory, 2001). However, this research is somewhat dated and may not report LGBT parented child(ren)'s experiences today. LGBT parents have been notably concerned about isolation, bullying and adverse social contexts for their children (Casper et al., 1992; Rawsthorne, 2009), yet little contemporary studies (particularly in Australian samples) have explored the frequency, rate or nature of challenging social contexts for the children of LGBT parents. The findings that some parents were satisfied with their school environments and had no suggestions for improving school Microsystems highlights the differential provision of supportive structures within schools, LGBT parents' 'positivity' in 'business as usual' mentalities (Goldberg, 2014; Goldberg et al., 2017).

6.4 Limitations

Constrained by MRES program requirements, the study had limitations in time allocation (under 1yr) and accordingly, scope. The researcher thus privileged survey questions around meeting the most urgent policy goals and used opportunistic sampling. Therefore, the data was:

- predominantly from the perspective of lesbian parents, with a minority of responses from GBT identities; and
- mainly inspired by set constructs established by educational policy and guides, possibly too limiting on the responses/supports desired or required by LGBT parented families.

Given the distinction between sexual orientation, gender diversity identification, and intersex variations (not explored here), studies exclusively on these concepts may be required. Further, findings may not be transferable in contexts where LGBT people are less protected or less debated in law.

6.5 Implications for Stakeholders

Despite these limitations, the study nonetheless has clear implications for education stakeholders. These include:

- **Politicians and Policy Makers** – LGBT parents value and desire inclusive school practices that normalise LGBT family structures as one of many mainstream forms of family diversity, rather than exceptional inclusion strategies. Strategies to meet the desired 'business as usual' mentality in LGBT parents includes; the explicit mention of LGBT parented families within educational guides, development of standardised inclusive school forms and the inclusion of diverse family structures within teacher professional standards.
- **University Teacher Educators** – LGBT parents value teachers who are aware of family diversity, adopt inclusive pedagogical approaches within classrooms and build collaborative relationships with parents. Teacher educators should include professional content on LGBT parented families alongside other forms of diversity present in school communities such as multicultural, single parent and intergenerational families.
- **School Educators** – LGBT parents encourage mindfulness within teachers in creating inclusive classroom environments including; careful language use, differentiation of lessons to include/reflect diverse family structures and competent professional knowledge of diverse family structures.

- Researchers – Interviews could offer more in-depth exploration of unique issues/experiences arising at the intersection of LGBT parents (Individuals) and Microsystem (school) environments. Key informants (such as school psychologists) may offer greater accuracy in the provision of supportive features in school Microsystems compared to LGBT parent perceptions. Further exploration of Exosystem influences on LGBT parented families, and their experiences within school Microsystems in national and international contexts may aid in contextualising and comparing LGBT parent experiences within schools including school selection and perceptions of inclusivity.

6.6 Conclusion

Important conclusions to be drawn from this study include that overall, like US samples Australian LGBT parented families desire and value being included within a pluralistic 'business as usual' model of schooling diversity, as opposed to exceptional forms of inclusion. Justifications for the inclusion of supportive features within school contexts were commonly conditional on the inclusion of all forms of family diversity, rather than specific accommodations designed exclusively for LGBT parented families. Potentially indicating LGBT parented families desire to be perceived as 'another' form of recognised family diversity instead of being perceived as an 'other' family structure. However, even a study *intentionally pitched* at revealing positive experiences and strengths derived from school community membership indicated school environments inclusive of diverse families were rare, as were the provision of LGBT related support features within school Microsystems. The identified lack of supportive features in schools may not be surprising given considerable debate and contention within Australian Exosystems regarding how LGBT identities (if at all) should be included within Australian educational policies, procedures and practices (e.g. Safe

Schools Coalition, Same-sex postal survey and Religious freedom review). Reflecting these Exosystems and not LGBT parents' ideals, this thesis showed Australian LGBT parents are largely treated as business 'unusual' in schools: *an 'other' diversity*, not *another diversity*.

Despite (and perhaps in part because of) highly charged social, political and religious debates regarding 'controversial' inclusions of LGBT identities within schools informed in part by varying conceptions of LGBT parents seen in the bodies of literature this thesis reviewed, results from this study indicate LGBT parents value aspects of schools they are most often exposed to. Specifically, they value teachers and school forms, rather than for example potentially more politicised representation on school websites. Generally, all supportive school structures were deemed of benefit in creating more welcoming, tolerant and accepting school environments. Additionally, supportive structures were commonly justified as methods to overcome known challenges LGBT parented families face within school Microsystems including marginalisation, exclusion and lack of knowledge of diverse family structures in school community members. This places Australian schools in unique positions of authority, having the power to selectively develop and implement several supportive features within school Microsystems... particularly those deemed important, beneficial and relevant in creating safe school environments for LGBT parented and other types of families.

LGBT parents with child(ren) in Australian schools also noted schools provided supportive features in Microsystems differentially, with some school contexts including more supportive structures than others. Commonly, LGBT parents were either unaware of or not receiving endorsed collaborative/reflexive inclusive supports advocated within school policy/guides. Most have had at least one affirming experience; however, these were one-offs or reliant on individual staff choice rather than systematised. Schools should work on systematising and better communicating positive supports within educational contexts.

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Specific supports most urgently endorsed by this sample included training of staff in LGBT family structures – which should be clearly announced by schools where it already occurs – and inclusive school forms. Inclusive school forms may be an *immediately viable* supportive feature within school Microsystems, given the relatively low amount of time and cost required to systematise the support; whilst building training endeavours.

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Appendices

Appendix A – National and State Guidelines on Parent Inclusion in School Practices

Level	Policy/Source	Policy Topics	Suggested Strategies
<i>National</i>	Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (Ministerial Council on Employment, Training and Young Affairs, 2008).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding and respect for social, cultural and religious diversity. Provide school environments free of discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender. School's collaborative with family and local community to develop inclusive practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional development for school staff. Partnerships between families, students and broader community. School environments improved with evidence-based data to inform policy, resources, family-school relationships and teacher practices.
	Australian Professional Standards for Teaching (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership Limited, 2011).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed from Melbourne Declaration. Focus on professional guidelines to be met by current Australian teachers. Create and maintain supportive learning environments; engage in professional learning and engage professionally with families and the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers know diverse cultural backgrounds and social characteristics of students and are accommodated within classroom activities (1.1). Teachers adapt teaching strategies/processes to meet the needs of students (1.3). Inclusive school activities and communications (3.5). Ongoing assessment, reflection and adaptation to teaching practices, school procedures and professional development (3.6, 4.4, 6.2, 7.2). Teachers build professional relationships with families and contextualise teaching practices (3.7, 7.3).
	Australian Curriculum and Assessment Reporting Authority (ACARA, 2019).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed from Melbourne Declaration. Focus on students with disability, gifted and talented students and English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD). Provision of services and resources available differ by state. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EALD directions: Inclusive curriculum in consideration of culture and linguistics. Ensure teaching practices and procedures take into account additional or alternative understandings to family relationships, utilise student's cultural understandings and build shared knowledge. Including: resources that reflect cultures, different perspectives in classrooms; personalise learning by drawing on family/cultural background or histories; professional development in cultural/linguistic diversity and inclusive practices in schools.
	Family-School Partnerships: A Guide for Schools and Families (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2019).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building collaborative Family-school relationships. Engage families in school processes and procedures. Respect and understand family diversity in school community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborative effort of family and school to improve processes, practices and policies. Inclusive teaching practices. Professional training of school staff. Policies/documents that explicitly outline focus on school-family relationship strategies.
<i>Australian Capital Territory (ACT)</i>	Strategic Plan 2018-21: A Leading Learning Organisation (Department of Education ACT, 2019).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embrace diversity and collaborative partnerships. Personalised and flexible pedagogy for each student. Ongoing school system improvements and focus on engaging parents in schools Evidence based practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional development in staff. Sourcing and utilising feedback from families to improve policy, procedures, resources and teaching practices.
<i>New South Wales (NSW)</i>	School Excellence Framework (Department of Education NSW, 2017).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidelines on best practice school procedures and practices. Teachers engage with students and families collaboratively to meet the needs of students and families in schools respective of diversity. Evidence-based practice and ongoing improvements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborative development of school policies, procedures & practices with families. Inclusive differentiated curriculum, practices and policies to accommodate students and families.
<i>Northern Territory (NT)</i>	Framework for Inclusion 2019-2029 (Department of Education NT, 2019).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School system improvements for students, families/communities and school staff. Focus on disabilities, behavioural difficulties, identified vulnerable students. Inclusive education with focus on differentiated support, community engagement. Continual improvement to practices/professional development of staff to meet student needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusive curriculum, policies, practices to meet individual student needs. Collaboration with parents/community in improving school systems. Meet the holistic needs of students and families. Professional development on inclusivity.

LGBT PARENTS' SCHOOL SUPPORT

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration with parents/external services for system improvements. • Evidence-based practice. 	
<i>Queensland (QLD)</i>	Advancing Partnerships – Parent and Community Engagement Framework (Department of Education QLD, 2017).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidelines to improve collaborative respectful relationships between schools and families. • Respect and understanding of cultural differences in families and accommodations of diversity in school systems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative design and implementation of school-wide inclusivity in practices, policies, procedures and teaching approaches. • Professional development in school staff.
<i>South Australia (SA)</i>	Wellbeing for Learning and Life: A Framework for Building Resilience and Wellbeing in Children and Young People (Department of Education SA, 2016).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build collaborative and respectful relationships with schools and families. • Inclusive practices that value diversity including gender identity and sexuality • Evidence based practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging with school community members including students and families to build inclusive welcoming environments.
<i>Tasmania</i>	Guidelines for Supporting Sexual and Gender Diversities in Schools and Colleges (Department of Education Tasmania, 2012).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating safe school community environment for LGBT students, teachers and families. • School community members uphold acceptance and understanding of LGBT being another form of 'normal' diversity. • Evidence based proactive approach/response. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicit mention of LGBT school community members in policy. • Inclusive/gender-neutral language. • Inclusive curriculum, policy, professional development for staff, physical representation (posters/books), resources and materials.
<i>Victoria</i>	Framework for Improving Student Outcomes (Department of Education Victoria, 2019).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active engagement with parents and carers to improve school policy, procedures and practice. • Evidence-based approach with ongoing review. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure school policies, practices, procedures and curriculum are inclusive of family diversity.
<i>Western Australia (WA)</i>	Guidelines for supporting sexual and gender diversity in schools (Equal Opportunity Commission, 2013).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on safe learning environments, discrimination and bullying. • Inclusivity of LGBT students and family diversity as reflection of normal form of diversity. • School to accept and understand all forms of diversity in schools. • Evidence-based proactive/responsive school-wide approach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive policies, plans, language and curriculum that promote positive school culture. • Provision of supportive networks in schools. • Explicit school commitment to inclusive schools reflected in communications to all school community members. • Gender neutral language in school communications. • Professional development for staff on LGBT topics/issues. • Collaborative work between parents and schools to develop supports in schools. • Provision of resources/materials to support LGBT students e.g. posters/books.

Appendix B – Participant Information and Consent Form

Department of Educational Studies
Faculty of Human Sciences
MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY NSW 2109



Phone: +61 (0)2 9850 7854
Email: tiffany.jones@mq.edu.au

Participant Information and Consent Form

Chief Investigator's / Supervisor's Name & Title: **Dr Tiffany Jones**

Name of Project: **LGBT Parent Support Experiences in Australian School Communities**

You are invited to take part in the LGBT Parents School Support Survey because you may be a LGBT parent (18 years or older) with experience of having a child enrolled within an Australian school. The purpose of this study is to explore LGBT parents' positive experiences within Australian schools. Particularly, opinions on how to best include LGBT parents in schools and experiences of welcoming school environments.

This study is being conducted by Trent Mann (email: Trent.mann@hdr.mq.edu.au) to meet the requirements for the degree of Master of Research under the supervision of Dr Tiffany Jones (contact telephone number: 02 9850 9437, email: tiffany.jones@mq.edu.au) of the Department of Educational Studies at Macquarie University.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked a series of questions about your family demographics and your child's school type. You will also be asked to describe positive experiences with your child's school and your opinion on how schools could be more welcoming for LGBT parented families. The survey is expected to take around **20 minutes**.

Any information or personal details gathered in the course of the study are confidential, except as required by law. No individual will be identified in any publication of the results. Only Dr Jones and Trent Mann will have access to the raw data, however results including direct quotes may be reported in peer-reviewed publications, a future PhD and academic publications aimed at improving teacher education. The final report and results will be made available via the researcher's webpage: <https://mq.academia.edu/TrentMann>

Participation in this study is completely voluntary: you are not obliged to participate and if you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence.

You may feel that some of the questions we ask are stressful or upsetting. If you do not wish to answer a question, you may skip it and go to the next question, or you may stop immediately. If you become upset or distressed as a result of your participation in the research project, you are directed to contact appropriate services such as Lifeline on 13 11 14, Beyond blue 1300 22 4636 or Q-Life 1800 184 527.

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Committee through the Director, Research Ethics & Integrity (telephone (02) 9850 7854; email ethics@mq.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

- ☐ Yes, I agree to participate. I have read and understood the information above and I agree to participate in this research survey, knowing that I can stop at any time but that I cannot withdraw my response once the survey has begun. (1)
- ☐ No, I do not agree to participate in this study. (2)

Appendix C – LGBT Parent School Support Survey (LGBTPSS)

Q2 What is your age?

- ☐ Under 18 years old (1)
- ☐ 18-24 years old (2)
- ☐ 25-34 years old (3)
- ☐ 35-44 years old (4)
- ☐ 45-54 years old (5)
- ☐ 55-64 years old (6)
- ☐ 65 years or older (7)

The following questions list common supports related to LGBT parented families in school communities. Please indicate the most appropriate response below.

Q3 Please indicate to your knowledge, if your child's school include the following supports:

	Yes (1)	No (2)	Unsure (3)
Lessons/classes on LGBT topics/issues (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Items that reflect LGBT families in the classroom (e.g. books, rainbow posters) (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mention of LGBT families in brochures websites or documents (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Training of Teachers and other school staff in LGBT topics/issues (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
LGBT families accommodated in school forms/paperwork (e.g. space for 2 mums, 2 dads). (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Specific mention of LGBT families in school policies (e.g. bullying policy, diversity policy) (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

LGBT PARENTS' SCHOOL SUPPORT

Q4 Do you think the following supports are important for creating a welcoming environment in your child's school?

	Yes (1)	No (2)
Lessons/classes on LGBT topics or issues (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Items that reflect LGBT families in the classroom (e.g. books, rainbow posters) (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mention of LGBT families in brochures, websites or documents (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Training of Teachers and other school staff in LGBT topics/issues (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
LGBT families accommodated in school forms/paperwork (e.g. space for 2 mums, 2 dads). (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Specific mention of LGBT families in school policies (e.g. bullying policy, diversity policy) (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q5 Do you rate the following supports as beneficial or unproductive in creating a welcoming environment in your child's school?

	Beneficial (1)	Unproductive (2)
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LGBT PARENTS' SCHOOL SUPPORT

Lessons/classes on LGBT topics or issues (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Items that reflect LGBT families in the classroom (e.g. books, rainbow posters) (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mention of LGBT families in brochures websites or documents (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Training of Teachers and other school staff in LGBT topics/issue (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
LGBT families accommodated in school forms/paperwork (e.g. space for 2 mums, 2 dads). (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Specific mention of LGBT families in school policies (e.g. bullying policy, diversity policy) (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The following questions ask your opinion on school supports for LGBT parented families within your child's school. Please be honest in your responses.

Q6 Do you think teacher's being educated about LGBT family structures and common challenges would benefit your relationship with your child's school? Why or why not?

Q7 Do you think the use of LGBT objects in your child's school such as rainbow flags and posters that reflect LGBT-parented families would improve your experience of your child's school? Why or why not?

LGBT PARENTS' SCHOOL SUPPORT

Q8 Do you think lessons and books covering LGBT information would be beneficial to your experience of your child's school? Why or why not?

Q9 Do you think forms and documents that allow for different family structures (e.g. 2 mums and 2 dads) would be beneficial to your relationship with your child's school? Why or why not?

Q10 Do you think it would be beneficial for your relationship to your child's school to include LGBT-parented families in all brochures, websites and documents? Why or why not?

The following questions relate to positive experiences you have had within your child's school and your suggestions on how schools can be more welcoming to LGBT parents. Please be honest in your answers.

Q11 Have you had any positive experiences with your child's school or teacher as an LGBT parent? Please explain/give examples.

LGBT PARENTS' SCHOOL SUPPORT

Q12 Has your child's school included your family in some way as an LGBT parented family? Please explain/give examples (e.g. speeches/events/mothers day).

Q13 Please list any suggestions you have for schools or teachers, in terms of making LGBT parented families feel more welcome in your child's school community.

The following questions relate to your child's school. Please tick the appropriate response for ONE child only.

Q14 Do you have a child currently enrolled in an Australian school?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No, I have had a child previously enrolled in an Australian school (2)
- ☐ No, I have never had a child enrolled in an Australian school (3)

Q15 What type of school is your child enrolled in?

- ☐ Public School (1)
- ☐ Independent School (2)
- ☐ Catholic School (3)
- ☐ Other (4) _____

Q16 What grade is your child enrolled in?

LGBT PARENTS' SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Kindergarden/Preparatory (1)
- Lower Primary (Years 1-3) (2)
- Upper Primary (Years 4-6) (3)
- Secondary School (Years 7-10) (4)
- Senior Secondary School (Years 11-12) (5)

Q17 Where is your child's school located?

- Inner metropolitan (1)
- Outer metropolitan (2)
- Regional (3)
- Rural/remote (4)

The following questions relate to characteristics of your family and household. Please indicate the correct response below.

Q18 Which of the following do you consider yourself to be?

- Heterosexual (straight) (1)
- Lesbian (2)
- Gay (3)
- Bisexual (4)
- Another option (5) _____
- Prefer not to say (6)

Q19 Regarding the question above, what does this identity mean to you?

Q20 How do you describe yourself?

- Female (1)
- Male (2)
- Transgender (3)
- Another option (4) _____
- Prefer not to say (6)

Q21 Do you identify with a specific religious denomination?

- Christianity (1)

LGBT PARENTS' SCHOOL SUPPORT

- ☐ Judaism (2)
- ☐ Hinduism (3)
- ☐ Islam (4)
- ☐ Buddhism (5)
- ☐ Atheist/None (6)
- ☐ Agnostic/Undecided (7)
- ☐ Another option (8) _____
- ☐ Prefer not to say (9)

Q22 What is your estimated annual household income?

- ☐ Less than \$30,000 (1)
- ☐ \$30,000 - \$59,000 (2)
- ☐ \$60,000 - \$89,000 (3)
- ☐ Over \$90,000 (4)
- ☐ Prefer not to say (5)

Q23 How many children are there in your family?

- ☐ (1)
- ☐ 2 (2)
- ☐ 3 or more (3)
- ☐ Prefer not to say (4)

Q24 What is the age of your youngest child?

- ☐ Prospective parent (9)
- ☐ Expecting (8)
- ☐ 0-1(1)
- ☐ 2-4 (2)
- ☐ 5-9 (3)
- ☐ 10-14 (4)
- ☐ 15-18 (5)
- ☐ 18 years or over (6)

LGBT PARENTS' SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Prefer not to say (7)

Q25 What is your highest level of education?

- Up to four years high school (1)
- Completed high school (2)
- Diploma or certificate (e.g. Trade certificate) (3)
- Undergraduate university degree (4)
- Postgraduate university degree (5)
- Prefer not to say (6)

Q26 What is your current relationship status?

- Single, never married (1)
- Married, committed defacto relationship (2)
- Widowed (3)
- Divorced, separated (4)
- Another option (5) _____
- Prefer not to say (6)

Q27 Which state/territory are you located in?

- Australian Capital Territory (1)
- New South Wales (2)
- Northern Territory (3)
- Queensland (4)
- South Australia (5)
- Tasmania (6)
- Victoria (7)
- Western Australia (8)
- Prefer not to say (9)

Appendix D – Pilot study analytical tool

Please provide your feedback on the LGBT Parent Survey.

Q1 How easy was the survey to complete, how long did it take?

Q2 Did you understand what you had to do?

Q3 Are the questions on teaching strategies and positive experiences relevant to you?

Q4 What is the value of the survey to you?

Q5 Any other feedback or comments about the survey?

Appendix E – Ethics Approval



02/05/2019

Dear Dr Jones,

Reference No: 5201953938547

Project ID: 5393

Title: LGBT Parent Support Experiences in Australian School Communities

Thank you for submitting the above application for ethical review. The Human Sciences Subcommittee has considered your application.

I am pleased to advise that ethical approval has been granted for this project to be conducted by Dr Tiffany Jones, and other personnel: Mr Trent Mann.

This research meets the requirements set out in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007, (updated July 2018).

Standard Conditions of Approval:

1. Continuing compliance with the requirements of the National Statement, available from the following website: <https://nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/national-statement-ethical-conduct-human-research-2007-updated-2018>.
2. This approval is valid for five (5) years, subject to the submission of annual reports. Please submit your reports on the anniversary of the approval for this protocol. You will be sent an automatic reminder email one week from the due date to remind you of your reporting responsibilities.
3. All adverse events, including unforeseen events, which might affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project, must be reported to the subcommittee within 72 hours.
4. All proposed changes to the project and associated documents must be submitted to the subcommittee for review and approval before implementation. Changes can be made via the [Human Research Ethics Management System](#).

The HREC Terms of Reference and Standard Operating Procedures are available from the Research Services website: <https://www.mq.edu.au/research/ethics-integrity-and-policies/ethics/human-ethics>.

It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to retain a copy of all documentation related to this project and to forward a copy of this approval letter to all personnel listed on the project.

Should you have any queries regarding your project, please contact the [Faculty Ethics Officer](#).

The Human Sciences Subcommittee wishes you every success in your research.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Naomi Sweller".

Dr Naomi Sweller

Chair, Human Sciences Subcommittee

Appendix F – Facebook Advertising Strategies**Facebook Page**

The Facebook page created to advertise to, and recruit participants can be found on the following link. This page has been kept open to the general public as an intended method of disseminating findings to interested participants and the general public.

<http://facebook.com/LGBTPSS>

Facebook advertising campaign strategy

Audience targeting was broad in the first two days of the paid advertising campaign. This included specifying participants as 18-65 years of age in Australia. After the second day of advertising (and a low response rate), the audience targeting strategy was adapted to focus on participants in Australia, 18-65 years of age with an interest in: LGBT movements, LGBT parenting, Australian Marriage Equality, LGBT culture, LGBT community, same-sex marriage, same-sex relationships and BuzzFeed LGBT.

Evidence for requirement of ongoing page monitoring

As advertising gained greater momentum with increased participants and viewers of the webpage, negative emoticons and comments were posted as seen in Figure C1 and Figure C2. Facebook page moderator controls enabled the 'hiding' of comments prior to being officially posted to the website.

LGBT PARENTS' SCHOOL SUPPORT



Figure C1: Negative emoticon reaction to survey advertisement.



Figure C2: Evidence of negative sentiment toward LGBT parented families.