Addressing Family Diversity: Creating a LGBTQ Inclusive Program for Early Childhood
Educators

Jessica Figuly

Wagner College

Wagner College

Division of Graduate Studies

Master's Thesis

Author: Jessica Figuly

Title of thesis: Addressing Family Diversity: Creating a LGBTQ Inclusive
                           Program for Early Childhood Educators

Degree: MSED: Early Childhood Education & Special Education

Date of Graduation: May 2014

Thesis Review Committee:

Thesis Advisor: _____   _____
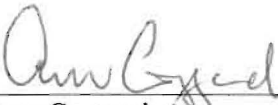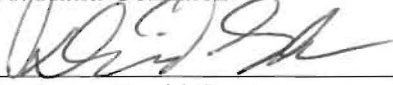   Dr. Ann Gazzard   Date

Reader: _____   _____
                       Dr. Katia Gonzalez   Date

Reader: _____   _____
                       Professor David Gordon   Date

Table of Contents

Abstract

Between 1 and 13 million children are being raised by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ) parents in the United States. This means that in early childhood settings across the country, many students are coming to school with diverse family configurations. There has been much research done to show the importance of a positive relationship between school and home life, especially for children in early childhood classrooms. A positive bond formed between families and early childhood educators is a key factor in a child's development and leads to better social, behavioral, and academic outcomes. Students tend to perform better and have higher self-esteem. Therefore, it is imperative that children see their diverse families represented in materials and lessons in schools. LGBTQ diversity training is needed for both pre-service and in-service teachers so they can learn appropriate ways of creating an inclusive classroom.

The purpose of this study was to explore the idea of LGBTQ inclusion in early childhood settings. This study surveyed current early childhood teachers to learn what inclusive practices they are currently employing in their classrooms, as well as their background knowledge in LGBTQ issues. LGBTQ parents who have or have had children in early childhood classrooms were interviewed on their experiences in an effort to gain real life understanding and insight into the struggles LGBTQ families face. LGBTQ parents were also questioned about their hopes and expectations for inclusive schools. Finally, the information gathered from the parent focus group and teacher surveys was used to develop a framework for an LGBTQ inclusive workshop for teachers to learn more about family diversity and how to incorporate these issues into their classrooms.

Conceptual Framework

LGBTQ Families & The Law

The definition of "family" is ever-changing and evolving. Over the past few decades, the implication of the word family has come to include a variety of different meanings. In today's world, families come in a range of structures and forms. More and more children are attending school without a traditional mother and father at home supporting them. Some of these children live in single parent homes. Others live with grandparents or relatives. Numerous children are being raised by members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning (LGBTQ) community. In fact, closest estimates of the number of children in the United States who have a lesbian or gay parent range from 1 to 13 million (Fairtlough, 2008, p. 521). The estimates on the number of children living with LGBTQ parents are not concrete because census information can only measure the number of unmarried same-sex couples who reported having children under the age of eighteen in their household (Kintner-Duffy, Vardell, Lower, & Cassidy, 2012, p. 211). However, reports show that in the United States 33% of female same-sex couples and 22% of male same-sex partners have children under the age of eighteen (Kintner-Duffy et al., p.211).

Even within the LGBTQ community, there are many varieties of families. Some children come from blended families. In these cases, children are born to heterosexual parents who separated when one or both parents began identifying as LGBTQ. Other children are conceived by sperm donor insemination, surrogacy, or other forms of assisted reproduction. Still other children are fostered, adopted, or raised by single

parents (Fairtlough, 2008, p. 521). In fact, research suggests that two out of every five adopted children are placed with LGBTQ families (Kintner-Duffy et al., 2012, p. 211). Some children have more than two parental figures in their family. Diverse families are becoming more widespread. This growth of the non-traditional family can be attributed to positive social changes and the increasingly optimistic public responses to LGBTQ members of the community.

As of December 2013 in the United States, there are sixteen states that issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples. Three other states provide the equivalent of state-level spousal rights to same-sex couples (Human Rights Campaign, Marriage Equality and Other Relationship Recognition, 2013). Twenty one states currently allow same-sex couples to jointly petition for adoption. Two states, Mississippi and Utah, specifically prohibit same-sex couples from adopting (Human Rights Campaign, Parenting Laws: Joint Adoption, 2013). Six others have created obstacles for equal treatment. In the rest, parenting and adoption laws are unclear. Sometimes, adoption rights are treated on a case by case basis and ultimately left up to local judges. As of December 2013, twenty one states allow same-sex couples to file for a second parent adoption. Eight states prohibit same-sex couples from applying (Human Rights Campaign, Parenting Laws: Second Parent or Stepparent Adoption, 2013). Few states have any legislature concerning transgender parents. However, change is coming. Support for same-sex marriage is at an all time high in the United States. With the repeal of the Defense of Marriage Act in June of 2013, the federal government no longer defines marriage as just between one man and one woman. (Human Rights Campaign, Respect for Marriage Act, 2013). With this change, many states are taking a closer look at their laws that relate to

LGBTQ individuals and families. Diverse family structures are becoming more common and accepted. That is why it is more important than ever to properly reflect this diversity in schools and have early childhood educators work closely with families to ensure collaboration and communication that will impact student learning and growth.

Struggles for LGBTQ Families

Despite recent advances, there is still a long way to go for LGBTQ citizens and their allies. One of the many areas that demand improvement includes early childhood education. As teachers and parents alike understand more about child development and school readiness, an additional focus has been placed on early childhood education and its role in student development. A strong early childhood foundation can lead students to develop a lifelong love of learning and the skills and abilities needed to succeed in the future. LGBTQ families are mostly ignored throughout the early childhood field, whether in the classroom or through teacher training (Burt, Gelnaw, & Lesser, 2010, p. 98). Some children from LGBTQ households who attend early childhood programs are subjected to negative responses for the first times in their lives. In fact, many children that had been raised by homosexual parents their whole life are often confused when they find out that other people do not approve of their family. Casper, Shultz, & Wickens (1992) discussed this discovery:

> Young children with gay parents who enter school for the first time, and who previously held an unquestioning acceptance of the naturalness of *their* family, are suddenly confronted with countless situations in which totally different family configurations are the norm. These children must contend with the

frequent representation of *their* family configuration as deviant or, perhaps most common, with the fact that it is not represented at all (p. 115).

Students that have LGBTQ parents may face prejudice or biases from their teachers, school officials, peers, or other families. Students often encounter homophobia, which can range from name-calling and bathroom graffiti to implied heterosexual literature, where characters in stories are assumed to be heterosexual (Duke & McCarthy, 2009, p. 386). The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network released a report in 2008 that found that 40% of students with LGBTQ families have been verbally harassed in school because of their families. 23% of students reported that they felt unsafe in school because of their LGBTQ parents (p. 16).

In addition, students from LGBTQ families may not see their families represented in books, materials, or lessons in their classrooms. This exclusion can lead to feelings of shame and doubt. Some students react by trying to hide their true family structure, while others worry about being teased or bullied.

For many teachers, incorporating LGBTQ inclusive material in their classroom means overcoming their own prejudices and biases for the common good of their students. This hesitance that educators feel about LGBTQ inclusive materials may be founded on prior experiences, religious beliefs, or popular mistaken stereotypes. For example, a common misconception among teachers and parents is that teaching students about LGBTQ issues involves sex education. Burt, Gelnaw, and Lesser (2010) point out:

> When we speak about the parents of a child who has one mother and one father, no one assumes we are talking about sex. Yet, if we speak of a child's two mommies or two daddies, all of a sudden, the topic of sex often seems to be in the

forefront. It is important to examine this discrepancy, explore where it comes

from, and understand that in both instances, we are simply speaking about

families – the most constant, central, and formative presence in children's lives

(p. 98).

Teaching children about same-sex families does not have to be directly related to

discussions about sex. The point of these inclusive teachings is to open student's minds

and leave them with a sense of gratitude for diversity (Carter, 1998, p. 86).

Some teachers accidentally send the wrong message to parents and children

because of their lack of knowledge on how to handle LGBTQ issues. For example,

Cahill and Theilhelmer (1999) discuss a situation that many teachers face, where parents

have approached them to ask if they think their young child may be gay (p. 51). Parents

expressed that their male child was only interested in playing with girls or that he enjoyed

wearing dresses. Numerous teachers report that their standard response was that all

children enjoy dressing up and playing with children of the opposite gender and this was

normal behavior for young children. The underlying message in this response is that the

parents should not worry because this is "normal" behavior, which implies that

homosexuality is not normal and therefore is something that should be worried about.

Casper, Cuffaro, Schultz, Silin & Wickens (1996) discuss a similar situation, where

teachers were asked to describe their responses to parents when asked about a little boy

who enjoys wearing dresses. Their responses were similar:

The need to reassure parents that dressing up in clothing of the other gender was

within the range of normal behavior reverberated throughout our conversations.

Although most teachers used the idea of normal behavior with the best intentions

to reassure parents, we found it could convey a hidden and less positive message

about homosexuality. If it is normal for a six-year old boy to dress in clothing of

the other gender then he is okay, he is not gay. But, if he continues with this

behavior in later years, then when is he no longer okay? When is it no longer

normal? Do we imply by our language that being gay is abnormal? Do we also

confuse questions of dressing in clothing of the other gender with questions of

sexual orientation? (p. 277)

These kinds of negative reactions and comments may confuse or trouble a young child

who is a member of an LGBTQ family or who could eventually become a member of the

community themselves. Teachers need to ensure that children feel safe and welcome in

early childhood classrooms by making the classroom an inclusive place for all types of

people and families. Early childhood students should feel safe to make their own choices

and a developmentally appropriate environment encourages the utilization of diverse

materials that allow for self-expression.

Importance of LGBTQ Inclusion in Early Childhood Classrooms

It has been proven that a child's sense of self and identity is closely tied to their

family (Burt et al., 2010, p. 97). Therefore, it is imperative for teachers to begin focusing

on LGBTQ inclusion in the classroom. Research has found that how comfortable and

supported a child feels in school and their academic and developmental performance has

a deep rooted connection. Students flourish when there is a positive relationship between

their home and school life. Students tend to perform better academically and socially

when early childhood settings work cooperatively with families. In addition, students tend to have better self-esteem (Burt et al., 2010, p. 98).

Parental involvement in early childhood classrooms benefits everyone involved, from children to families to school staff. A positive relationship formed between families and early childhood educators is a key factor in a child's development. A strong relationship allows parents to be involved in their child's learning both in the classroom and at home. It also helps foster beneficial conversations between the parents and the teacher so that information can be exchanged freely. Research proves that positive family involvement in early childhood education leads to better social, behavioral, and academic outcomes (Morrison, Storey, & Zhang, 2011, p. 21). Families and parents that are involved in a child's school have a better understanding of what their child is learning in the classroom. This results in the parents being able to reinforce school lessons at home. In addition, teachers who have positive relationships with families often feel more rewarded and appreciated in their work (Morrison et al., 2011, p. 22).

Other researchers agree that this school to home connection is essential. Fedewa and Clark (2009) wrote:

> The benefits of strong home-school partnerships (referred here also as home-school collaboration or home-school connection) on children's developmental outcomes have been documented extensively in the research. When ties between children's families and schools are firmly established, children's academic and social competencies flourish. Children's academic achievement thrives when schools and families act as a team and communicate as well as exchange information (p. 313).

In fact, studies have shown that parental involvement in early childhood programs leads to higher literacy skills in vocabulary, reading comprehension, and writing (Fedewa & Clark, 2009, p. 313).

Teachers have a special responsibility in the words and actions they demonstrate for their students. A teacher's role is not just to educate students on academic matters, but to guide and impact students' feelings, attitudes, and perspectives. Teachers educate students about the world and prepare them to serve as caring citizens (Szalacha, 2008, p. 67 & 68). It is important for teachers to understand that the words they use when discussing LGBTQ issues can stay with children their entire lives. "What she says-and does not say-affects what the children are learning about their own and other people's sexuality" (Cahill & Theilheiner, 1999, p.55). Therefore, a teacher that discusses LGBTQ issues in a positive light is showing students how to be open-minded and loving. This affirmative message will help students coming from LGBTQ families to feel validated and appreciated.

Teacher Preparedness in LGBTQ Inclusion

One big obstacle for LGBTQ families is teachers' lack of preparation in LGBTQ issues. Duke and McCarthy (2009) found that "many teachers of young children do not have the knowledge, skills, or power to effectively challenge homophobia, heterosexism, and sexism in their classrooms and communities" (p. 387). Many schools do not provide professional training or development for teachers on important LGBTQ issues (Greytak, Kosciw, & Boesen, 2012, p. 81). There are many teachers who try to reach all children and their families. These teachers recognize that all distinctions of families are relevant

and important. According to Biblarz and Stacey (2010), "Every family form provides distinct advantages and risks for children (p. 17). These teachers may want to incorporate LGBTQ inclusive materials, but are unsure of how to do so. Robinson (2005) writes:

> There is generally an element or risk in doing social justice education, regardless of the specific issues being addressed….For some, broadening the anti-bias agenda in early childhood education to include sexuality can mean shifting out of one's comfort zone into more 'difficult knowledge' or more 'risky business' (p. 176).

Some teachers may feel uncomfortable talking about LGBTQ issues because of prior experiences or personal biases. GLSEN reported in 2012 that 48% of teachers would feel comfortable answering questions from their students about lesbian, gay, or bisexual people. 26% of teachers stated they would feel uncomfortable, the other 25% reported they would feel neither comfortable nor uncomfortable. Only 41% of teachers responded they would feel comfortable addressing transgender people with their students. 34% of teachers reported they would feel uncomfortable and 24% stated they would feel neither comfortable nor uncomfortable (p. 21).

Some teachers would like to incorporate LGBTQ inclusive materials into their curriculum but fear responses from other educators, families, school officials, and members of the community. These teachers fear a variety of responses. Some teachers are met with a lack of support from school officials, a questioning of their teaching practices, or a refusal to allow the material into the school. Others face hostility and harassment from their colleagues, higher administration, or parents in the school. Still

others fear forced removal from their jobs or ostracism within the workplace (Robinson, 2005, p. 179).

Some educators may be harming children and LGBTQ families unintentionally because of ignorance or lack of preparation (Burt et al., 2010, p. 98). Teachers that never expose students to diverse family structures are implying that only heterosexual families are accepted. By implying heterosexuality is the norm, children are getting the message that anything else is unwanted and unwelcome (Burt et al., 2010, p. 98).

For educators, it is important to realize that often the risk of not teaching anti-bias education outweighs the risks of teaching it. Robinson (2005) states:

> It is certainly on the broader societal level that the consequences of *not* taking
> risks in doing anti-homophobia and anti-heterosexist education with
> children in their early childhood education are most obviously noticeable. The
> stark reality of an array of homophobic and heterosexist violence, hate crime
> murders, and gay and lesbian adult and youth suicide clearly supports this
> claim (p. 177).

Administrators and teachers need to recognize the need for programs that protect and identify all types of family units. It is essential for students to recognize their own familial structure as acknowledged and important in school. Early childhood educators can facilitate this inclusion by incorporating LGBTQ appropriate materials and topics in their classrooms. With this in mind, the current study sought to explore four questions:

1. What studies have been done regarding children being raised by LGBTQ parents?

2. What current methods of educating students in LGBTQ and diverse family structures exist? How do current early childhood educators deal with LGBTQ issues and families in schools today?

3. What are the real-world experiences of LGBTQ families in early childhood classrooms? What would LGBTQ parents like to see being done in classrooms?

4. How can we use the information collected from interviews and surveys to create an LBGTQ inclusive program for teachers regarding family diversity?

Literature Review

Studies Regarding LGBTQ Families

There have been numerous studies and research done on the abilities of same-sex couples to raise children. A large majority of these studies come back with positive results. In one study conducted by Bos, Van Balen, and Van Den Boom (2007), one hundred lesbian parents were compared to one hundred heterosexual parents on the basis of parental characteristics, child rearing, and child adjustment (p.45). This study used questionnaires, personal diaries, and observations to collect data. The conclusion of this study was that "Children in planned lesbian-parent families do not differ in well-being or child adjustment compared with their counterparts in heterosexual-parent families based on parental reports of the CBCL" (Bos et al., 2007, p. 45). In fact, the study found that lesbian social mothers, or the non-biological mother, are more effective and committed than heterosexual fathers (Bos et al., 2007, p. 45). Researchers credit this discrepancy to the long and difficult process of getting pregnant for many lesbian couples. Therefore, lesbian parents are more likely to place value on their relationship with their child (p. 45).

Studies have shown that it is necessary for children to form secure relationships to adults in early stages of their lives. One study researched children's play narratives and examined them for signs of appropriate developmental stages. Some of these children had heterosexual parents and others lesbian parents. Results of this study showed no difference in the developmental attachment formed by children with lesbian parents as compared to children with heterosexual parents (Perry, Burston, Stevens, Golding, Steele, & Golombok, 2004, p. 468). The authors state the benefits of children who have formed secure relationships with adults. They state that children that have positive

representations of themselves portray the child doll as being valuable and worthy. They depict the mother doll as providing safety and protection. This was the case in both the lesbian and heterosexual families (Perry et al., 2004, p. 468).

There have also been various researches done on the effect that a parent's sexual orientation has on their child. The results of the majority of these studies have found that sexual orientation and gender identity do not affect the development of a child (Farr, Forssell, & Patterson, 2010, p. 166). Instead, universal factors such as the relationship of parent and child, parenting skills, and parent relationships seem to factor more into the development of a child. This has been proven true for a variety of family structures, including those with biological children and families that have been formed through adoption.

In fact, studies show that children of lesbian and gay parents develop as normally as children of heterosexual parents. Stacey and Biblarz (2001) state:

> Lesbigay parents and their children in these studies display no differences from heterosexual counterparts in psychological well-being or cognitive functioning. Scores for lesbigay parenting styles and levels of investment in children are at least as "high" as those for heterosexual parents...Because every relevant study to date shows that parental sexual orientation per se has no measurable effect on the quality of parent-child relationships or on children's mental health or social adjustment, there is no evidentiary basis for considering parental sexual orientation in decisions about children's "best interest" (p. 176).

In addition, research has proven that children adopted or born to gay and lesbian parents show the same stages of gender development as children born to heterosexual

couples. Boys and girls showed similar gender behavior across the board between heterosexual and gay and lesbian parents (Farr et al., 2010, p. 175).

Growing up with a LGBTQ parent has been described by children as having many benefits. In a study done by Fairtlough (2008) on the affects of growing up with a gay parent, she analyzed 67 young people's accounts on their experiences. Researchers used diaries to examine the life experiences of these children. Categories included emotional responses to their parents' sexuality, their experiences of homophobia and the factors that helped them survive this, the decision about whether to be open about their family situation, and the impact on the young person's identity (p. 523). The participants in this study were different ages and recounted experiences throughout their lives. Results of this study were mixed. 31 children gave predominantly positive accounts. 6 accounts were neutral and 27 were ambivalent. Only 3 young people gave somewhat negative accounts. Results found that many children identified having a gay parent as making them more open minded and honest people (p. 524). Others admired their parents for their courage and bravery on coming out. Still others attributed their parents' sexual orientation as helping to make their parents the wonderful people they were. The children who spoke of problems with their gay parents often stated that it was others' prejudices that led to negative accounts. For example, Fairtlough (2008) found that most of the young people she interviewed identified other people's negative reactions as a problem. Even with this prejudice, the subjects recounted that it did not lead to major struggles or unhappiness on their part. In fact, one girl stated "I understood deep inside he was gay and I totally accepted it. The disadvantage is that others don't accept it." (p. 524)

Unfortunately for many of these young children, despite the fact that they have had happy lives, they have experienced pain because of bias and prejudice aimed at their families. Fairtlough (2008) explains "For some the level of anti-lesbian and gay prejudice they had experienced was so devastating or extreme, that despite positive feelings towards their parents, negative experiences dominated their narratives" (p. 525). These children held no feelings of ill-will or hostility for their parents until they found out how much the rest of the world disproved of their lifestyle. These children were not born intolerant, they were taught hate from the outside world. Fairtlough (2008) states:

> What came over most strongly in the young people's accounts was that they identified that the problems they experienced with having a lesbian or gay parent arose almost entirely from other people's negative views about lesbian and gay people. Fifty-nine young people gave instances in one or more of three domains: the general or institutional, the family, and peers or friends (p. 525).

For many young people it is the negative words they hear from their peers in school that affect them most. Nearly half the young people in the study done by Fairtlough (2008) stated that they had heard homophobic comments from other children or parents at school. Others stated that they had experienced physical or verbal abuse (p. 526). Many times these children heard these negative comments at the hands of their friends. Others heard them over and over through the use of heterosexist television, books, movies, and other media that subtly tell children that homosexuality is wrong. "Frequently it arose from the widespread use of words associated with lesbian and gay sexuality as an insult, homophobic jokes, disparaging comments about individuals and

from general anti-lesbian and gay sentiments voiced in the media and in the environments they lived in" (Fairtlough, 2008, p. 525).

Other young people turned to trusted adults, only to be disappointed by them as well. Fairtlough (2008) writes:

Several young people gave instances of where judges and court welfare

officers made judgments based on homophobic stereotypes....Although the

young people sometimes had positive experiences of welfare professionals,

others had negative ones; for instance, one disabled young person spoke of how

his school 'helper' told him that lesbians were disgusting. Another spoke about

how his social worker had presumed that his difficulties were related to his

lesbian parents and not to the abuse he had experienced from his stepfather

(p. 525).

Unfortunately, many parents feel the extra pressure and stress that being an LGBTQ parent can cause. Some parents felt they needed to prove their parenting skills more than their heterosexual counterparts. Others felt different pressures:

Significant differences also emerged on parental justification and child-rearing

goals; that is, the lesbian social mothers feel significantly more often than the

heterosexual fathers that they have to justify their quality of their parenthood (Bos

et al., 2007, p. 42).

Lesbian parents, especially a non-biological lesbian parent, felt the need to justify the way they parented their children more often than a heterosexual male parent. This unfortunate phenomenon occurred because of the social stigma that often surrounds

LGBTQ parents. In addition to normal parenting pressure, there are numerous extra social and psychological stresses added to LGBTQ parents.

One of these psychological stresses that LGBTQ parents may face is the issue of "coming out" to their children's teachers and administrators at school. Less than half (48%) of LGBTQ parents reported they spoke to school administrators at the start of the school year about their diverse families. 67% stated they had spoken to their child's teacher regarding their family (GLSEN, 2008, p. 15). LGBTQ parents often feel stress confronting their sexual orientation with school officials (Casper et al., 1992, p.120). These parents often fear rejection. Worse, some parents fear the repercussions their admission could have for their children. LGBTQ parents often fear a lack of respect by school officials if their sexuality is revealed. In other cases, they are afraid of things like violence, job loss, or loss of custody of their children (Duke & McCarthy, 2009, p. 392).

While many LGBTQ parents fear the repercussions of coming out in schools, others feel the fear of coming out to the school is often smaller than the fear of not coming out. Numerous LGBTQ parents believe the hazards of not coming out outweigh the anxieties of their revelations. They believe their children can not have a positive outlook on their family configuration if it is hidden because it sends the message that their family is wrong or bad (Casper et al., 1992, p. 121).

It is essential for teachers to understand the feelings of anxiety and fear that parents can have about "coming out" to school officials and teachers. Many teachers work hard to create a warm, accepting environment in their classrooms. In some states, laws are in place to protect the rights of LGBTQ families. Unfortunately, even when laws are in place to protect families, attitudes and personal biases may not be swayed by

these laws. Therefore, LGBTQ parents may still be reluctant to come out for personal reasons (Casper et al., 1992, p. 121). In these cases, teachers need to be understanding and sensitive when dealing with families.

Current Teaching Practices

While multicultural educational programs are rising, there is still a long way to go for LGBTQ issues. 81% of teachers reported that their school has implemented anti-bullying policies in their schools, but only 24% report that these include policies that specifically mention sexual orientation or gender identity (GLSEN, 2012, p. 20). Anti-bullying policies are essential for schools to minimize hate speech and LGBTQ violence. The statistics on school climates and bullying are frightening. 84.9% of students report that they have heard the term "gay" used in a negative way in schools. 91.4% state that this type of negative language distresses and upsets them (Kosciw, Greytak, Bartkiewicz, Boesen, Palmer, & Gay, 2011, p. 14). Another 71.3% report that they have heard homophobic remarks frequently or often. 61.4% report hearing frequent negative statements about gender expression, and an alarming 56.9% of students state they have heard homophobic remarks from teachers or school staff (Kosciw et al., 2011, p. 14). Unfortunately, only 48% of students who reported experiencing harassment or assault in school said that they ever reported the incident to a teacher or school administrator (GLSEN, 2008, p. 16).

There seems to be a severe deficit in diversity training for teachers who are looking for the best ways to address LGBTQ issues in their classrooms. Unfortunately, many schools have not taken the necessary steps to make school a safe, inclusive place

for all students and families. Sadowski (2010) points out "Few schools are currently taking active, institutional-level steps to include families in the discussion of LGBT-related issues" (p. 15). As a result, many teachers and school officials are not educated in LGBTQ issues. In fact, "the majority of teachers did not have much knowledge of LGBT issues and had not been exposed to professional experiences or materials on homosexuality" (Kintner-Duffy et al., 2012, p. 214).

In regards to professional development and diversity education classes for teachers, few studies have been done in this field. Those that have been done usually address the issue of safety, which includes protection from homophobic slurs and physical violence, and equality, which gives teachers the knowledge to treat all students and families with the same respect and value (Szalacha, 20084, p, 69).

In some newer cases, professional development courses are offered to pre-service teachers. The visibility of LGBTQ issues in teacher education courses varies because of a number of factors. Geography, accreditation requirements, and the expertise of faculty are all factors in determining the quality or existence of diversity training regarding LGBTQ issues (Payne & Smith, 2012, p. 269). Unfortunately, frequent results of the diversity training that teachers currently go through show that more training is needed. Payne and Smith (2012) state:

> These courses were crafted to help pre-service teachers address *difference* with "sensitivity", "tolerance", and "competence", but "they were not designed to prepare teachers to identify or eliminate educational inequities or to create equitable learning environments. In other words, multicultural teacher education curriculum does not provide future educators with tools for understanding and

analyzing the cultural norms being reproduced through institutional structures like curriculum, school-sponsored ceremonies and events (i.e. athletic events, prom, and homecoming), or procedures for recognizing student achievement (p. 267).

For teachers that are already in classrooms, LGBTQ training is usually done through workshops. These workshops can vary in length and topic, but most focus on personal attitudes, homophobia and heteronormativity in schools, and practices, tools, and curriculum to combat homophobia (Szalacha, 2004, p. 73).

In regards to LGBTQ inclusive materials in the classroom, resources have been limited. One study on LGBTQ early childhood literature was done by Jeff Sapp (2010). He found that books from the past decades were mostly published by alternative presses and were one-dimensional and explicit in their messages. In the past decade, however, literature has become more interesting. Storylines have improved and same-sex parents have become supporting characters as children take the lead role (p. 38). However, these books are not always made available to teachers. Sapp (2010) notes:

> One aspect that has not changed is the swiftness of conservative groups who ban books with any kind of gay or lesbian themes. Most of the books in this study have been banned; some of them are among the most banned books of all times. An examination of the American Library Association's list of the most challenged books between 1990 and 2000 showed 515 books were challenged because of homosexual themes (p. 38 & 39).

Some teachers send mixed signals to children unintentionally with heterosexist messages. "Heterosexism, which includes both personal and institutionalized bias against gay people, is responsible for the assumption that everyone is heterosexual unless proven

otherwise" (Casper et al., 1992, p. 112). Heterosexism can be damaging to children who have LGBTQ parents or could be LGBTQ themselves in the future. Many teachers perform these heterosexist acts without thinking of the consequences. For example, Neal Lester (2008) gives example of a Kindergarten class learning that the letters "Q" and "U" go together by performing a mock wedding between "Mr. Q" and "Miss U". This implied heterosexuality is unconsciously impacting young children (p. 57).

As a result of the deficit in diversity training, students are not being exposed to information that may represent themselves or their families. Only 16.8% of students reported that they were taught positive representations about LGBTQ people, history, or events in school. 44.1% of students stated they could find information about LGBTQ-related issues in the school library. In addition, 42.1% of students reported they were able to access LGBTQ related information online via school computers (Kosciw et al., 2011, p. 16).

Overall, there has not been much research done on teacher preparation courses dealing with LGBTQ issues. Minimal studies have been done on the topic of preparing pre-service teachers to work with LGBTQ youth and their families. This provides a unique challenge for educators looking to fix this problem. An easy way to resolve this challenge is to begin addressing LGBTQ issues in teacher education courses (Dykes, 2010, p. 37).

There is hope for the future. GLSEN released a report in 2012 regarding the climate of diversity in elementary schools in the United States. GLSEN reported that 57% of teachers in schools would be supportive of efforts to address LGBTQ families. In

addition, 55% of school administrators and 51% of other school staff were also receptive to these efforts (p. 19).

The need for LGBTQ diversity training is apparent. While 85% of teachers reported that they have received diversity training on multicultural issues, only 37% reported that the content included LGBTQ families or gender issues. 37% of teachers reported they had received professional development training on gender issues, and only 23% have received training on families with LGBTQ parents. When surveyed, one in three teachers addressed the need for further professional development on LGBTQ prejudice and harassment, and working with LGBTQ families (GLSEN, 2012, p. 21).

Studies on Pre-Service and In-Service Diversity Programs

While studies regarding LGBTQ diversity training and their results are not common, there has been some research done in the past decade. Most of these studies were only published in 2012, with the earliest study dating back to 2005. Results of these studies are generally similar and show a need and a desire for a more thorough diversity training course. Most studies demonstrate that a diversity training or workshop is an effective way to make teachers aware of diverse family structures.

One study on pre-service teachers' attitudes regarding LGBTQ issues was done at a large Midwestern university. The authors of the study were instructors of ED200: Human Diversity and Education, which was a required course on issues of diversity and justice. In 2008, the authors recorded twelve class sessions devoted to lesbian, gay, and bisexual issues. There were 84 pre-service teachers taking place in the discussions.

These participants were primarily straight, white, Christian females (Schmidt, Chang, Carolan-Silva, Lockhart, & Anagnostopoulos, 2012, p. 1179).

The results of this study showed that the majority of pre-service teachers identified LGBTQ issues and homophobia as very real subjects that needed to be addressed in schools. These pre-service teachers identified the slurs, harassment, and physical violence that LGBTQ youth and families are often faced with. They empathized with these students and families and recognized the injustices these students faced. These teachers viewed homophobia as unacceptable, and stressed that protecting the victims was imperative. In addition, the pre-service teachers stated that it is the teachers' responsibility to protect all children, especially LGBTQ youth and LGBTQ families. The participants called for teachers to be educated in LGBTQ issues and "focused on teachers' twofold need to be proactive in preventing harassment and reactive to issues that arise in classrooms" (Schmidt et al., 2012, p. 1180). The students suggested steps teachers could take to achieve safety and openness, including monitoring students' speech, modeling respectable behavior, and challenging offensive language.

Caroline Clark (2009) conducted a study to analyze the attitudes of educators in teacher education programs. Participants in this study were English Language Arts pre-service teachers in the 2005-2006 cohort. Seventy-six participants completed two surveys to assess their feelings on diversity and respect. Pre-service teachers also wrote papers reflecting on their invisible privileges based on factors like language, race, ethnicity, sexuality, etc. Additionally, participants shared short reading responses to prompts.

Results of this study showed that many pre-service teachers felt it was their responsibility to stop any homophobic remarks or hate-talk they overheard. However, some teachers felt that was where their duty stopped. One teacher conveyed the message that students could hold any homophobic views they wanted, as long as they didn't express them in the classroom. Another teacher took the opposite stand and stated that by teaching tolerance and acceptance, she was sending a positive message to her students and could perhaps open some minds. A majority of the teachers stated that while forbidding hate speech is beneficial, there is much more that can be done. Many of these teachers discussed their limitations and described not knowing what more to do besides expressing that certain language is not tolerated. Many articulated desire for more training. Clark (2009) states: "When these pre-service educators were asked how they could be better prepared to teach against heterosexism and homophobia, students pointed out how their teacher education courses could take on these issues more directly, particularly through texts, and then provide some models for discussion in depth" (p. 710). The results of this study showed that while many teachers have positive intentions, many teachers in the United States are unprepared for teaching LGBTQ youth and their families.

Another study was conducted by Elizabeth Payne and Melissa Smith and published in 2012. This study examined the Reduction of Stigma in Schools (RSIS), which is a professional development program that aims to educate teachers on how to create welcoming environments for LGBTQ youth and their families. Between 2006 and 2009, over one thousand educators in the Central New York area were trained using the Reduction of Stigma in Schools program. Data for this study included workshop

evaluations, interviews, and follow-up questionnaires. The RSIS model includes six

areas: 1) the connection between social stigma and behaviors of "at risk" youth 2)

connection between school culture and academic success 3) "sites of stigma" for LGBTQ

youth which can include home, school and community 4) heteronormtivity in K-12

schools 5) youth narratives and 6) tools for change (Payne & Smith, 2012, p. 270).

Results of this study showed that the most important lesson learned by teachers as

a result of this training was how to stop LGBTQ harassment and homophobic remarks in

schools. Many teachers expressed the need to end hate speech in their schools and make

their classrooms a safe space for LGBTQ youth and their families. After the workshop, a

majority of the teachers felt the need to display "safe space" stickers on their classroom

doors so that LGBTQ students and their families knew they were allies. These teachers

stated that they felt creating a safe space for LGBTQ youth and families relied mainly on

the language that was allowed and forbidden in the classroom. Overall, there were

positive lessons taken away from the workshop, but most teachers expressed the desire

for continued education on the topic (Payne & Smith, 2012).

As part of a study done at a southeastern university, faculty designed a course to

prepare early childhood teacher education students to create welcoming, inclusive

environments for LGBTQ families. All nineteen students that were enrolled in the course

were invited to participate in the study. Two participants identified as LGBTQ

themselves, while the other seventeen identified as straight (Kintner-Duffy et al., 2012, p.

222). Students were asked to complete questionnaires prior the class and again after their

experiences in the class. Participants were asked about their knowledge of LGBTQ

issues in regards to education, as well as ways to incorporate these topics into the classroom.

The results of this study showed marked changes in the attitudes of the pre-service teachers as compared to their pre-test questionnaire answers. Many participants reported an increased awareness of LGBTQ families and issues, as well as the prejudices that these families face. The majority also agreed they had learned invaluable tools and ideas that would assist them in creating an inclusive environment in their classrooms. Many students felt much more open discussing LGBTQ issues and thought they would now be more comfortable addressing these topics in the classroom. Some felt they needed to find a balance between their personal beliefs and professional responsibilities. Those teachers who had never dealt with LGBTQ issues stated they felt more comfortable with the topics. Those who were more familiar with these issues stated they felt they could move from silence towards advocacy and becoming an ally. As a result of this study, the authors suggest necessities that early childhood teacher diversity programs should include: 1) experienced and knowledgeable faculty who are able to respond to personal conflicts that may arise because of discussion of LGBTQ issues 2) opportunities for the students to experience the similarities and differences between families headed by heterosexual parents and those headed by LGBTQ parents 3) teaching strategies to be implemented in their classrooms to create a welcoming and inclusive environment and 4) opportunities for students to create narratives (Kintner-Duffy et al., 2012, p. 222).

One study was done in Northern California with 89 pre-service teachers in relation to *The Laramie Project. The Laramie Project* is a play based on interviews done with the citizens of Laramie, Wyoming where a 21 year old gay college student named

Matthew Shepard was murdered. This study used *The Laramie Project* as an educational tool in a teacher education course to educate pre-service teachers about homophobia and harassment. The professors of the course allowed four to eight hours to discuss sexual diversity. Students read material on LGBTQ issues and watched the video *It's Elementary: Talking About Gay Issues in Schools* (Elsbree & Wong, 2008, p. 102 & 103). Students were also required to attend a production of *The Laramie Project*. Then, the professors led the students in discussions about homophobia and the impacts of homophobia in schools. This study used pre- and post- questionnaires to gather data. The area of study was divided into five topics: 1) how aware pre-service teachers were about LGBTQ issues 2) how comfortable pre-service teachers felt addressing LGBTQ issues 3) how knowledgeable pre-service teachers were about LGBTQ issues 4) how pre-service teachers' attitudes were impacted by *The Laramie Project* and 5) how were pre-service teachers' sense of responsibility and teaching pedagogy changed by *The Laramie Project* (Elsbree & Wong, 2008, p. 102 & 103).

Results of this study found that classroom dialogues and education made a positive difference in the attitudes and views of pre-service teachers. In addition, a majority of the students made reference to the fact that they were pleased *The Laramie Project* were a part of their curriculum. Results showed that LGBTQ teacher education programs are essential to solving homophobia in schools. In addition, students reported that instructional interventions such as attending the play in combination with instruction alone helped them become more aware of LGBTQ issues, and more comfortable discussing these topics.

Another study was done to evaluate a two-day training in the New York City public schools that focused on the experiences of LGBTQ students and families in schools and the action educators can take to create a safe and welcoming environment. Two-hour training workshops on bullying and harassment of LGBTQ youth were provided to all teachers, administrators, and mental health providers working in schools in New York City. 77% of the participants were teachers, 10% were school administrators, and 13% were mental health professionals (Greytak et al., 2012, p.84). The experience level of the teachers ranged from one year to sixteen or more years teaching. Exactly 1,647 educators completed surveys before the training. 459 completed post-training questionnaires six weeks and then six months after the workshop. Responses were also compared to teachers who had not gone through the training yet. Participants were rated on four points: awareness, empathy, importance of intervention, and self-efficacy.

Results of this study found that the training increased participants' knowledge of the appropriate terminology, empathy for LGBT students and their families, communication with students and other staff members on LGBT issues, and engagement in activities to create safer school environments. It also found that LGBTQ diversity training increases teacher's awareness of LGTBQ issues and their willingness to become LGBTQ allies and advocates. (Greytak et al., 2012, p. 92).

Laura Szalacha (2008) wrote about the need for LGBTQ diversity training for both pre-service and in-service teachers. She detailed a study done on 97 pre-service teachers at a large California state university who received lessons on educating LGBTQ youth and their families in schools. Results found that while some students were

resistant, many pre-service teachers were open and welcoming to this type of curriculum. Many of the students understood the importance of learning about LGBTQ diversity issues and spoke of their future plans to be allies and advocates in schools (p. 72). Szalacha (2008) also details training programs available for in-service teachers. Results of these programs indicated that over half the students in schools where staff had received diversity training felt more supported compared to one quarter of students who reported feeling supported at schools without diversity training. Many of these teachers expressed desire for continued education. In fact, 45% of professional staff members reported the need for more training (Szalacha, 2008, p. 74).

Elizabeth Payne and Melissa Smith (2011) wrote an article describing the benefits and possible flaws of various diversity training programs. One such program was the Massachusetts Safe Schools Program, which is the only workshop that addresses LGBTQ issues on a statewide level (p. 178). This program emphasized the need for Gay-Straight Alliances and the importance of establishing supportive policies for LGBTQ youth and their families. However, this program did not require any professional development for teachers. Another program the authors discussed was "Out For Equity", which was adopted in 1997. This program included class presentations, Gay-Straight Alliances, and staff development. Results of this workshop showed that while teachers believed the program was beneficial, they desired more information and resources (Payne & Smith, 2011, p. 178).

Another program the authors studied was Gender Equity in Model Sites, which was a year-long professional development program for teachers. Results of this professional development found that teachers were more aware of cultural differences

and diversity. Participants discussed how homophobia was the hardest obstacle to face when dealing with diversity and that they hadn't realized how homophobic their schools could be (Payne & Smith, 2011, p. 179). A final workshop was a long-term diversity training program that was implemented in New Paltz Central School District. This professional development was a 30-hour long course that included issues such as racism, sexism, heterosexism, and homophobia. Over 50 teachers participated in this course. Those who completed the program reported being more committed to addressing homophobia and heterosexism in their schools.

Suggested Practices for LGBTQ Inclusion

Inclusion of LGBTQ materials and lessons is extremely important to LGBTQ youth and LGBTQ families, as well as teachers and school officials. There has been much research done to assess the best tips and practices for implementing a welcoming, inclusive curriculum into early childhood classrooms.

Author Laurel Dykstra (2005) offers advice for teachers and parents on addressing transgendered youth or students with transgendered parents. She states:

> Gender is not synonymous with biological sex. A person's gender does not
> necessarily correspond to their chronological make up or their external genitals.
> There are people who identify as male or female, people who claim neither
> gender, and people who are both male and female (p. 8).

Dykstra (2005) suggests proper ways to communicate with young children. She proposes using the words "some" and "most" when talking to children about gender, rather than "all". For example, "Some girls grow up to be men" or "Most men don't have breasts"

(p. 9). In addition, she advises encouraging children to question gender stereotypes and assumptions. Another recommendation is pointing out people and instances that do not follow typical gender stereotypes, like a woman who is a construction worker. An important tip is to always discuss bullying and intolerance. She suggests that teachers should allow students to ask questions in the classroom and implores teachers not to shy away from hard questions. In addition, she advises calling students by whatever pronouns they feel comfortable with.

Dykstra (2005) also suggests practical classroom lessons and activities for teachers. She suggests "color days" where students dress in that color for the day, including days for pink and purple. She recommends having extra items of that color for students in school, and allowing students who choose not to participate to share pink snacks or drinks with their classmates. Having a non-gendered toy or doll in the classroom is another beneficial tip (p. 11). In addition, Dykstra (2005) proposes not identifying this toy by pronouns and stating that it is neither a boy nor a girl. Having a well-stocked dress-up chest with a variety of costumes is another suggestion the author makes. As for materials in the classroom, the author advises to find non-traditional items, such as sparkly tools or pastel colored trucks to appeal to all students. Dykstra (2005) also recommends choosing stories, coloring books, and other literature that show smart, fierce girl characters and sensitive, gentle boy characters. The author recommends not shying away from discussing stereotypes with the students, but teaching students the definition of stereotyping and helping students identify stereotypes in their own lives. She also encourages teachers to inspire their students to try new activities outside of their comfort zone (p.11).

The Southern Poverty Law Center released a guide for educators about teaching tolerance. This article suggests numerous ways to support LGBTQ youth and their families and recommends several steps teachers can take in the classroom. One suggestion the article makes is to enforce dress codes among students equally. The article recommends allowing male students to wear dresses or skirts if girls are allowed to wear them. The article encourages teachers to empower students to express themselves through their clothing (Teaching Tolerance, Creating an LGBT-Inclusive School Climate, p. 3). The article advises having a gender neutral bathroom for students and families to feel comfortable in.

The article also addresses bullying. It suggests enforcing strict anti-bullying policies that forbids harassing language or violent behavior. In addition, educators can become anti-bullying coordinators who are trained to prevent bullying incidents. The article recommends communicating openly with students and families about bullying and educating students and teachers about bullying myths and misconceptions. The authors propose identifying bullying hot spots in the school and taking immediate action to eliminate them as places where students feel threatened. Another suggestion is to clearly define bullying and the behaviors and actions that constitute bullying, and ensure that teachers and students alike know the consequences for such actions (Teaching Tolerance, Creating an LGBT-Inclusive School Climate, p. 3 & 4).

Other strategies for teachers trying to create a welcoming, inclusive classroom involve the language that teachers use when talking with their students. For example, instead of saying "Take this home to your mother and father", teachers can say "Take this home to your family" or "Give this to the grown-ups at home" (Burt et al., 2010, p. 100).

In fact, asking parents how they describe their families and what words they would like teachers to use can also be beneficial. Another recommendation is reviewing the language that is used in the classroom to ensure it does not exclude anyone. In addition, teachers can celebrate Family Day instead of Mother's Day or Father's Day. Teachers also need to ensure the language they use promotes gender equality. For example, boys and girls can both be praised on their actions as well as their looks (Burt et al., 2010, p. 101).

Inclusive language and images should always be utilized in parent and staff orientations. Carter (1998) advises editing parent forms with general terms to allow for multiple mother or father roles, guardians, or other members of the family (p. 86). Another suggestion the author makes is interchanging pronouns when speaking to staff and parents, and avoiding gender and heteronormative stereotypes. The author suggests not assuming that a woman will have a boyfriend or husband, and vice versa.

Author Kay Emfinger (2007) suggests a variety of strategies to be used by teachers in early childhood classrooms. She suggests using media that portrays a variety of family structures. She also recommends talking openly with nontraditional parents. The author then goes on to list many books that are age appropriate for early childhood students that address nontraditional families. For example, *And Tango Makes Three*, written by J. Richardson and P. Parnell, is a wonderful story about two male penguins that raise a baby together (p.19).

Jill Hermann-Wilmarth (2007) also provides teachers with beneficial resources. The author discusses numerous books for young children that are wonderful depictions of LGBTQ families. For example, *Felicia's Favorite Story*, is a pleasant book that tells the

story of Felicia's adoption by her two mothers. Other stories depict LGBTQ families but do not make them the main focus. For example, *The Family Book* and *1 2 3: A Family Counting Book*, are different from other books in their genre only in that they depict families with same-gender parents (p. 353). The author also suggests other media, such as the film *It's Elementary: Talking About Gay Issues In school*, and books for teachers that can make them more comfortable discussing LGBTQ issues in their classrooms.

Other suggestions involve incorporating inclusive books into various academic subjects. Rowell (2007) advises "choosing appropriate, inclusive literature that addresses early childhood standards and promotes goals and objectives related to self-affirmation, self-esteem, and learning about human diversity" (p. 25). The author gives examples of how to incorporate LGBTQ inclusive literature into all areas of academics. She suggests reading *Flying Free* by Jennifer C. Gregg, which tells the story of a five-year old with two moms who captures a firefly and learning about fireflies. *Postcards from Buster: Buster's Sugartime* by Marc Brown can be used to discuss a family with two moms and the process of making maple sugar. Books such as *All Families Are Special* by Norma Simon, *The Family Book* by Todd Parr, and *How My Family Came to Be – Daddy, Papa, and Me* by Andrew R. Aldrich, can all be used in social studies lessons to discuss different types of families (p. 28).

Regarding classroom materials, there are many things teachers can do to ensure diversity. One suggestion is making a display entitled "Who lives with you?" for all children and staff to show off their families. Classroom materials such as puzzles, posters, photos, and dolls should be representative of all different family configurations (Burt et al., 2010, p. 100). Teachers are also advised to bring in guest speakers to

sensitive issues that they might not have much experience with (Wolfe, 2006, p. 201).
Teachers can bring in LGBTQ parents to speak about challenges they've faced and
answer any questions students may pose.

The Human Rights Campaign in collaboration with Welcoming Schools formed a
starter kit of suggestions and tips that teachers can utilize in their classroom. One of
these suggestions is using gender neutral terms with the students. For example, saying
"good morning everybody" instead of "good morning boys and girls". In addition, the
article also proposes teaching students what it means to be an ally. The article
recommends providing plenty of resources for students to see people acting outside of
gender stereotypes. Teachers can demonstrate to students that there are many different
ways to be a boy or a girl. The authors also recommend avoiding situations where
students are forced to choose based on gender, such as girls sitting on one side and boys
on another.

GLSEN released a guide for teachers and administrators in 2012 dealing with
LGBTQ diversity in their classrooms. The toolkit suggests grouping students by another
factor other than gender, for example birth month. The authors also suggest being
inclusive in all areas of the classroom by writing math problems that involve LGBTQ
characters (p. 4). The toolkit also recommends lessons to be done in the classroom to
promote diversity awareness. The first set of lessons focus on name-calling, bullying,
and bias. These messages bring attention to the concept of bullying and the fact that one
student can make a difference. It identifies the roles of all students in their classroom and
community. These lessons also enable students to understand what it feels like to be
included and excluded from the majority. The next set of lessons call for students to

explore the definition of the world family, as well as the roles and responsibilities of various family members. Others focus on families that children see on television and the importance of showing respect to diverse family structures. The last set of lessons looks at gender roles and diversity. It focuses on the negative effects of gender stereotyping and explains how to be an ally to students who get teased. Others help students identify the expectations and messages that are received in terms of gender roles in society and asks how students can challenge those stereotypes (p. 9-48).

Methods

Overview

This study looked at the issue of diversity in early childhood classrooms from a variety of perspectives. Five LGBTQ parents were interviewed regarding their experiences and their children's experiences in early childhood classrooms. They were asked to recount specific incidents, both positive and negative. Participants were also questioned on their reception as an LGBTQ family from teachers, administration, staff, and other parents and families. Parents were prompted to give examples of activities, lessons, and materials they would like to see in future early childhood classrooms. By examining the experiences of actual LGBTQ families in early childhood classrooms, the study sought to examine the types of lessons and materials that are useful for teachers to utilize in a diverse classroom, as well as drawbacks and pitfalls to avoid.

The second part of this study surveyed eighteen early childhood educators. Teachers were asked short questions concerning their pedagogy regarding family diversity. They were questioned on current teaching practices, available classroom materials, developmentally appropriate lesson plans, and communication with parents. Participants were also asked to discuss any previous diversity training they had received. Teachers were asked whether they would be interested in learning more about diversity issues and how likely they would be to attend a workshop. The goal of this survey was to explore the current practices that are being utilized in early childhood classrooms to engage and welcome all families, including LGBTQ families. The information gathered

from these surveys is also vital to construct modifications and adjustments to curriculum, lessons, activities, and materials in order to make them more diverse.

In addition to interviews and surveys, two visits to early childhood centers were conducted to gather additional qualitative information. Specifically, the purpose of these visits was to assess personally the atmosphere of each center. Observations were made regarding the materials available in the classrooms, the wording on all notices sent home to parents, and the general feeling of acceptance and welcoming.

Participants

There were 23 total participants engaged in this study. These participants consisted of 5 LGBTQ parents and 18 early childhood educators. Parents who participated in this study lived in New York, New Jersey, or Massachusetts. Of the 5 LGBTQ parents, four were females that identified as lesbians. The other parent was a male who identified as gay. All 5 parents are in a relationship with or married to a member of the same sex. All of the parents have more than one child. Three of the families consist of a household with 2 children, one family has 3 children, and the last family has 4 children. Three out of five of the families had 1 set of twins. Parents who participated in this study and their children live in either New York, New Jersey, or Massachusetts. Participants were chosen based on willingness to partake in this study.

Eighteen teachers participated in this study. The teachers came from a variety of public and private schools in Staten Island, New York. They were a mix of male and female teachers, of different ethnicities, and came from different personal and educational backgrounds. Of the 18 contributing teachers, 1 currently taught Birth-

Toddlers, 3 currently taught Pre-Kindergarten, 2 currently taught Kindergarten, 4 currently taught 1st grade, 2 currently taught 2nd grade, 3 currently taught 3rd grade, and 3 currently taught 5th grade. Those educators currently teaching 3rd and 5th grade expressed that they taught in an early childhood classroom in the past 5 years. Teachers who participated in this survey came from a variety of public and private schools on Staten Island, New York. The teachers who participated in this survey reported on the socioeconomic status of the families that attend their schools. Of the 18 teachers, 2 reported that their school had both upper and lower class families, 2 teachers stated the socioeconomic status of their school was upper class, 2 stated middle class, 3 said lower class, 4 reported upper middle class, and 5 stated they were unsure.

Site Selection

The setting for this study took place in several different locations throughout the East Coast. Three participating teachers were from the Wagner College Early Childhood Center, located in Staten Island New York. Families at this school come from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and are typically middle to upper class.

Some teachers surveyed teach at P.S. 3: The Margaret Gioiosa Pleasant Plains School. This school is located on the South Shore of Staten Island and has 1007 students enrolled. The students are mostly Caucasian, at 83.12%.

Another school that surveyed teachers came from was P.S. 50: The Frank Hankinson School. This school has 873 students enrolled in grades Pre-Kindergarten through 5th grade. The students in this school are predominantly Caucasian, at 76.06%

with a smaller Hispanic population at 12.37%. Teachers from this school describe the socioeconomic status of the families as middle class.

Teachers from P.S. 65: The Academy of Innovative Learning also participated in this survey. This small school on the North Shore of Staten Island has 395 students enrolled. This school has a more diverse population with 31.39% of its students being Caucasian, 24.05% African American, and 34.18% being Hispanic.

Other teacher participants in this survey teach at P.S. 23: The Richmondtown School. This school has 498 students enrolled in grades Pre-Kindergarten through 5th grade. The majority of the students are Caucasian, at 79.12%.

Teachers from P.S. 55: The Henry M. Boehm School also participated in this survey. This South Shore elementary school has 667 students enrolled. Its families are predominantly Caucasian and are middle to upper class.

For the purpose of this study, I also visited two early childhood centers. The two centers were located in different cities. The first was The Learning Experience in Edison, New Jersey. The Learning Experience offers full and half day programs for children ages 6 weeks to 5 years old. The classrooms and teachers provide a welcoming environment for students and families. In addition, the center provides a variety of enrichment programs such as music and art. This center has a very large Indian population, most of whom are middle class.

The other center that I observed for this study was Bumblebees-R-Us, located in Brooklyn, New York. This early childhood center enrolls children ages 3 months to 6 years old. This center offers full and half day programs and has an extremely diverse

population of families enrolled in their center. This center has mostly middle class families.

Procedure

I began this study by seeking and receiving approval from Wagner College's Human Subject Review Board (Appendix A). I then began the first part of the research, which was to seek out LGBTQ parents to interview. Parents were interviewed through e-mail, phone conversations, or in person based on convenience to the participants. All parents were provided with a detailed description of the purpose of the study, as well as the informed consent form (Appendix B). All contributing parents were made aware that their participation in the study was voluntary and confidential. They were told that they could choose not to answer any questions they felt uncomfortable with and could choose to end the interview at any time without consequence. All data gathering occurred in February and March of 2014. Parent interview questions can be found in Appendix C. Information collected from parent interviews was compared and contrasted in a search for common themes regarding prior experiences. Parents' experiences was then compiled as qualitative data.

Next, I created a short, electronic survey for early childhood educators (Appendix D). Forty teachers were sent the survey through e-mail and given the option to partake. Eighteen teachers chose to contribute to the study. Participants were informed of their confidentiality and privacy through the informed consent form (Appendix E). They also had the option to skip any questions they did not feel comfortable answering. All

information was collected from the teachers in February and March of 2014. Teacher responses were recorded as quantitative data.

Finally, I reached out to the directors at the two centers for permission to visit. I visited each center for an hour or more, and was given access to look at forms that went home to parents, classroom materials, and everyday classroom activities. I was also given the opportunity to observe teacher interactions with parents, as well as student-teacher exchanges.

Results & Findings

Instruments

The interviews and surveys were the main sources of gathered information for this study.   Interviews and survey questions were created by the researcher. Transcripts of interview conversations were destroyed at the conclusion of the study. All quantitative survey responses were analyzed and evaluated.

Parent Interview Results – Positive Findings

Out of the 5 LGBTQ parents that were interviewed, all reported mostly positive experiences when dealing with administrators, teachers, staff, and other families at early childhood centers. All 5 interviewed parents stated that for the most part, teachers and administration had been accepting and welcoming to their diverse family. Two of the 5 parents stated that they felt their diverse family has been completely accepted by everyone they encountered. As one participant stated, "Everyone has been wonderful. The teachers have always made a special effort to make us feel welcome and to make my kids feel included. I couldn't be happier." Another parent expressed that she was so comfortable with teachers and staff at her child's school that she often volunteers for parental activities. She states, "We have never experienced any outward discrimination. I am an active member of the school's Parent Teacher Organization as well and have always been out with them. There currently seems to be no issues surrounding our family. The people in this school system have been nothing but warm and welcoming. To date, we have not experienced any prejudice, not from the school or our neighbors,

young or old. I consider myself lucky!" The 3 other parents all expressed that they had mostly positive experiences with the schools in general, with reactions from others ranging from indifference to curiosity.

All 5 of the interviewed parents were able to come up with at least one positive experience that truly stood out as memorable. One father recounted his concern that the class was creating special Mother's Day projects, and that his children would feel left out. He recalls, "I talked to the teachers about it ahead of time, and she was very understanding and helpful. She had them work on their Father's Day gifts early." Another parent told a story about her eldest child's first day of Kindergarten. The family had just moved to this township a week earlier and were unsure of the type of reception they would face. She says, "I went to the principal and addressed how they handled twins in our school system and I stated 'by the way, our family is lucky enough to have two Moms.' The principal, without skipping a beat said, 'twins are always placed in separate classrooms and families are families!'" Other participants recounted how they felt grateful to teachers and staff for treating their families normally. One interviewed parent articulated that the staff consistently and inconsequentially refers to her wife as such, which is allows her to feel ordinary. Another parent credited a specific teacher for creating a welcoming environment. She says, "We had one teacher who was so supportive and helped our 8 year old have no fears talking about her family in the classroom, as well as encouraging my wife and me to go volunteer with her class."

Two of the 5 parents stated that they have heard numerous teachers using inclusive language in their classrooms. One parent stated, "I know the teachers talk openly to my kids about their two Dads in front of the other kids. One teacher told us a

story about how she made a mistake one time and my daughter said, 'oh sure, my Daddy makes mistakes all the time.' The teacher asked, 'Daddy D or Daddy J?'" Another parent stated, "I do feel that the teacher refers to me as my family name of 'Ima' which is the Hebrew word for 'Mom'. My daughter's teacher definitely uses the terms Ima and Mommy for my wife with ease." The rest of the parents stated that the ease with which teachers used inclusive language seemed to be based on the individual teacher's feelings and thoughts about the LGBTQ community.

Parent Interview Results – Negative Findings

Despite the mostly positive stories, 3 out of the 5 parents recounted harmful experiences as well. Some of these negative feelings came from subtle homophobic remarks made from teachers, staff, or other families. One participant spoke about how their experiences have been mixed based on the reception from different individuals. She stated that while some teachers, parents, and staff were extremely supportive, others kept their distance. She recounts, "Some teachers support our girls and tell them 'there are all kinds of families and it's so exciting that you have two moms' and such. Other teachers say little remarks to our kids, or just don't seem to want to engage with us as parents. Our kindergartener this year came home a few times wanting a 'normal' family with a Dad and a Mom based on some of her teacher's comments." She also discussed how this homophobia isn't always blatant disrespect, but often takes the form of subtle comments such as, "you don't have a normal family." Another participant spoke about her daughter, who was being bullied on the school bus because of her family. She said, "My daughter was bullied on the bus this year, not in a malicious way, but where kids would

say 'I've never heard of a family having two Mom's'. I immediately contacted the

school counselor, who is doing a great job of working with our daughter on her feelings

and how to handle such situations. But I don't feel the school has addressed the bigger

situation. Diversity is still not embraced on a school wide level." This same participant

also expressed frustration that more isn't done at the school to promote diversity. She

states, "I have to say, knowing that they will have an 'alternative' family in their school

system for at least 6 years, I would have expected a more proactive stance in changing

terminology on standard forms, etc. I often have to cross out the 'Dad' section, which is

frustrating when the easy answer is to write parent 1 and parent 2!"

Parent Interview Results – The Desire For More

A common theme throughout all parent interviews was the desire for more to be

done for inclusiveness in schools. One participant stated that despite their numerous

attempts to reach out to their children's teachers to be a resource for diversity, they have

never been contacted to contribute. She also stated, "I often have to remind the teachers

at the beginning of the year to use inclusive language. Often times it is as simple saying

"parents" verses "Mom and Dad." This mother also expressed a desire to see more

resources available in her children's classrooms. The participant said she has not seen

any diverse materials in her children's classrooms, but "we have had absolutely no

problems with bringing in books that represent our family. Our daughter's first grade

class had a family session. The teacher was very excited when we sent in the Todd Parr

Family Book to help the discussion." In fact, none of the 5 parents stated that they have

seen books and other materials in the classroom that reflect the makeup of their family.

One parent did describe seeing a book on family diversity in the classroom that featured cross-racial adoption, but was unsure if it featured a LGBTQ family.

All 5 parents expressed desire for teachers to continue to embrace and welcome diversity and to communicate this with their students. One participant stated, "I hope that teachers, if they overhear a tricky conversation about why my kids have two moms, will impart wisdom that all families are different and wonderful in their own ways!" Another participant expressed her desire for teachers to be better equipped with appropriate language and curriculum for the classroom. She spoke about a need for teachers to be more inclusive when speaking about family matters in the classroom, which in turn helps children be more accepting as well. Yet another contributor stated, "I always stress the use of inclusive terminology, and am slowly correcting the "standard forms" in our school district."

All of the parents interviewed also discussed how having a diverse family plays a major role in decisions they make for their family. All parents talked about how their family situation helped them decide on a place to live, school district, and other important life decisions. One parent stated, "We chose to move to our current town based on the quality of the school system, so it was a very large factor for us. We wanted to send our children to a public school in which they would feel nurtured and challenged. Because we live in Massachusetts State, we felt that our kids would have a good chance of experiencing at least a little bit of diversity and/or tolerance in the school system, so after choosing to move to this state, we simply narrowed down the towns by school ratings." Another parent stated, "I visited a few different schools to check out the facilities and talk to the administrators about their educational approach. I chose based on my comfort with

the school and the people running it, though I admit price was also a factor." Yet another said, "We looked at school systems in Massachusetts and chose a town to move to that scored well in MCAs and other tests/rankings. The most important factors in our decision process was affordable housing and good school systems, as we chose public schools for our children."

One parent articulated that she felt the pressure of being the only diverse family in the neighborhood. She stated, "We do not live in a very diverse community. We do not know of any other family that looks like ours in this community. In the process of immerging our family into this community, we look, feel, and act like any other family. And in the long run, that is all I wish for any of our kids to see us all as equals!"

In addition, all 5 parents expressed that prior to a new school year, they address their unique family situations with teachers and staff at the school in one way or another. One parent voiced, "I informed every school I visited that we were a two-Dad family. Everyone was perfectly welcoming. I also spoke to my kids' teachers both last year and this year about our family structure to make sure they'd be sensitive." Another parent stated, "Discussion happens before each school year- with each teacher! By the time our eldest got to 2nd grade (in the same school since Kindergarten), the answer was 'yeah ... I heard already' so I assume the teachers talk! But, I can tell by their reaction how 'accepting' they will be. We are very active parents: Class Mom, field trip chaperone, etc. so it makes a difference if the teacher 'says the right things' without really embracing them." Other parents felt they didn't need to directly communicate with their children's teacher and took a more back seat approach. One participant said, "I did not hold a specific meeting with either of the 2 teachers, but both lead teachers have been very

forthcoming about requesting information about our family dynamic. They have asked me questions regarding what our children call us, for example, and have been very good at modifying their language when speaking to us and our kids regarding parental and family dynamics. I have never received any inclination that they were uncomfortable in any way with our family situation." Another said, "It was made clear in the admission forms we sent in, but not more than that. My wife and I are very clear when we first talk to our children's teachers that our family has two moms. Our girls are vocal about it too."

Many parents also communicated their desire to act as a protector and model for their children and other families. One parent expressed, "I think we are so involved that we set an example without an explanation. It becomes the norm that one of both of their Moms will be at something. The teachers are often connecting with us to make sure they have their labels correct, Mommy vs. Mama." All parents voiced how they prepare their children to face any possible homophobia or negative reactions. A parent stated, "My son, who is 6 years old, seems to have no questions or issues with having two moms. So far, he sees it as normal, and when asked by classmates if he has two moms, he seems to reply with a simple 'yup!' My daughter, who is 4, does not seem to show any understanding of having an alternative family, but oftentimes plays 'mom and dad' with her toys. To date, I have not tried to have any deep or meaningful conversations with either of them regarding our family structure. I am sure I will when the time comes." Another parent stated, "We talk all the time about how our family is different from most, so they're aware that other kids might not recognize our family structure. We always present our family in a positive light and say 'what makes us different is what makes us

special', and we hope that positive attitude will help combat any prejudice they may face. We don't specifically tell them about homophobia because we don't want them to feel like they're on the defensive when meeting new kids or that they need to be worried about telling them about our family. When homophobia does arise, we will deal with it immediately. My kids will be entering kindergarten this fall, in a public school. If they ever encounter homophobia or closed-mindedness from a teacher or administrator, I will be marching through the door of their school immediately to address the situation." Many of the parents credited immediate clarification as the best course of action to take when met with confusion about their family structure. One parent stated, "We are very involved parents. Besides school volunteer positions, we coach various teams in the township wide recreational system. We are not afraid to clarify when someone mistakenly asks about a 'father/dad' in our family. We never have been afraid to correct strangers in the supermarket, so correcting people within the school district is not uncomfortable either. We also speak up early and often when introducing ourselves, for example, at back to school night. We prepare our children for possible negative reactions in various ways. First, we set an example, by never letting an innocent comment go uncorrected. Strangers will make comments that are easily brushed off, but I never ever brush them off when my kids are present. That has happened since infancy. I also give them all the age appropriate words to share with kids their own age. For example, 'Yes, two Mom's can have children together with the help of doctors.' Sadly, we have had to share more detailed information that we wished about our family. Just to prepare our children for questions that will inevitably come. Our 8 year old now understands that it takes a sperm and an egg to make a baby, and two Mom's provide only two eggs.

Without the help of the sperm donor, there would be no babies in this family. We could have pushed this conversation off at least a year or two, but because she might be faced with other kids at school, we felt it was important to have this discussion 6 months ago to prepare her." Another contributor discussed how exposure helps her children feel proud of their family. She stated, "We tell them there are all kinds of normal, and normal for us is 2 Moms. We have taught them to be proud of their gay Moms. They love going to gay pride parades, and we march with other families, and this helps them identify with this group of people in a positive way. All of our girls are proud of our family. We also give them language to use if kids are unkind. We are lucky enough to have another "gay Moms" family in our school. This helps the girls identify, and we have other friends that are gay so that our children see more than the typical Mom-Dad version of family."

One parent voiced that she teaches their children to combat any homophobia they might face with love. She stated, "We have raised our kids that all families have to have is 'love' no matter what the family looks like – single parents, two Dads, two Moms, Grandparents etc. In some ways we feel like we have not prepared them for the possible bully who will only emphasize their differences. But we hope that they know they are loved and supported – no matter what comes their way!"

Teacher Quantitative Survey Results

The survey for teachers focused on how, if at all, teachers address diversity in the classroom. Of the 18 teachers surveyed, most (83%) responded that they teach lessons on

family diversity at least once a year, while only 3 teachers (17%) responded they never

teach inclusive family diversity lessons (Figure 1):

- How often do you teach lessons that deal with family diversity?

How often do you teach lessons that deal with family diversity?

■ Never   ■ 1 - 2 times a year   ■ 3 - 4 times a year   ■ 5 + times a year

Figure 1
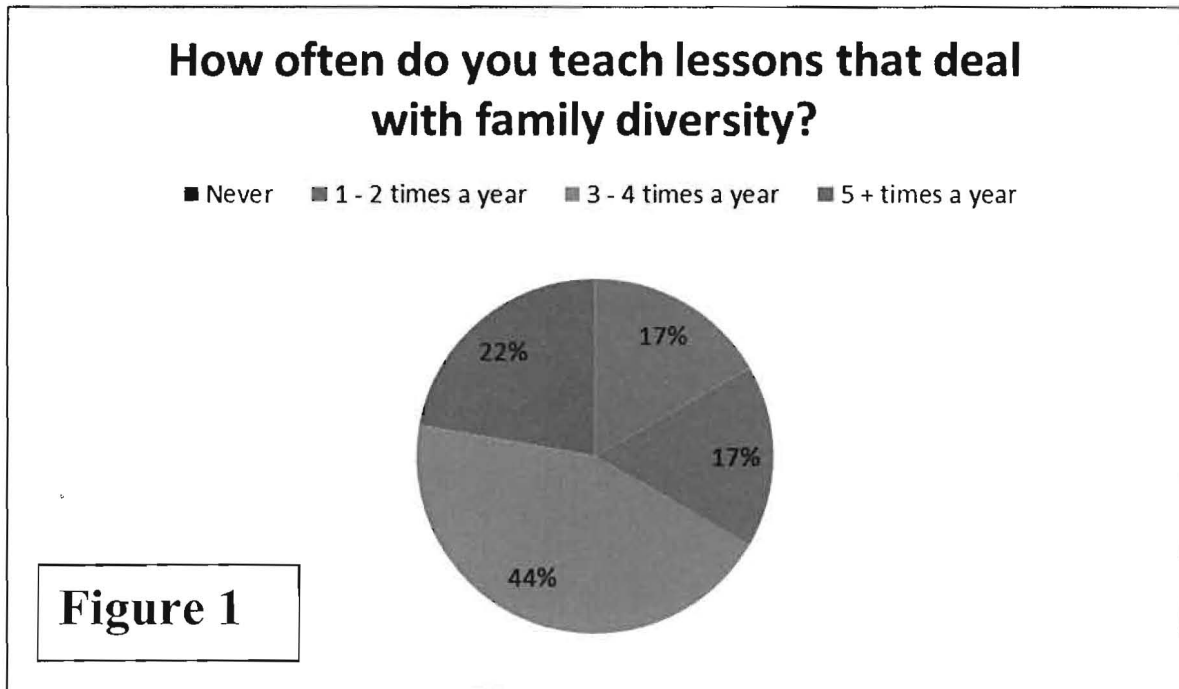
The teachers also reported the various ways they incorporate family diversity into

their lessons. One teacher responded "As part of our unit on families, we discuss all the

different types of families. Some have two people, some have many people. All families

are different, but all families love and care for each other." Another reported, "I have

family members come to the classroom to read with, do cooking lessons, and visit circle

time with the children. Simple exposure to our families illustrates to the children how we

live together." Other teachers stated that they incorporate diversity issues into health

lessons, anti-bullying lessons, and social studies lessons. A major theme that occurred

throughout the teacher responses was that they addressed family diversity through culture and tradition lessons. As one teacher puts it, "Our social studies curriculum has an entire unit focused on families. Some of the lessons include: All Kinds of Families, Families Change, Families Have Customs and NYC Families. In other units about "Self," we also include lessons on cultures and beliefs." Another responded, "During social studies we spoke about how families have different cultures and traditions. We spoke about different celebrations that different families take part in. We spoke about how families are made up of different types of people who come from different places around the world." The teachers also reported that they used conversations and children's books as a stepping stone to addressing this issue.

The surveyed teachers also reported on the kinds of materials they had available in their classroom that showcased family diversity. The most common material used to express diversity was books. 15 out of the 18 teachers surveyed (83%) reported that they had books in their classroom library that reflected family diversity (Figure 2). Other popular choices included classroom pictures that depicted families, neutral wording on forms sent home to parents, and dolls:

- What kinds of materials are available in your classroom that reflect diverse family structures?
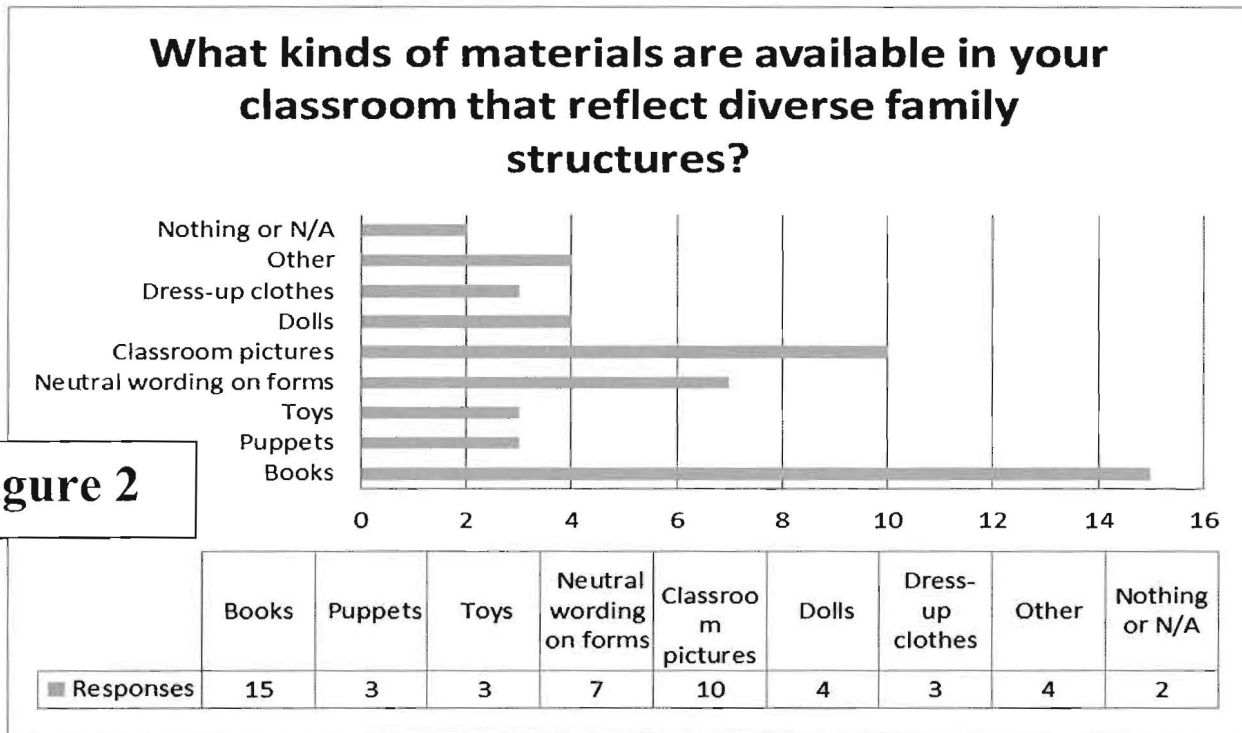
What kinds of materials are available in your classroom that reflect diverse family structures?

	Books	Puppets	Toys	Neutral wording on forms	Classroom pictures	Dolls	Dress-up clothes	Other	Nothing or N/A
Responses	15	3	3	7	10	4	3	4	2

Figure 2

Teachers also described the various ways they use inclusive language in their classroom. While half of the teachers admit to using the terms "Mom/Mommy" or "Dad/Daddy" when addressing their students, most also report they change this vocabulary based on the student they are talking to because they know the living situations of all the children in their classroom. Four of the teachers (22%) reported they use the word "parents" or "guardians" when speaking to their students. Five teachers (27%) used creative terms such as "the grown-ups at home", "the adults that love and care for us", or the "adults at home".

As Figure 3 shows, the number of teachers that specifically address family diversity such as LGBTQ parents as opposed to the number of teachers that do not address the issue are split. Out of the 18 surveyed teachers, one-third agree that they address these issues with their students (Figure 3):

- I address diverse family structures (such as LGBTQ parents) in my classroom.

I address diverse family structures (such as LGBTQ parents) in my classroom.

■ Agree   ■ Neither agree nor disagree   ■ Disagree

22%   33%

45%
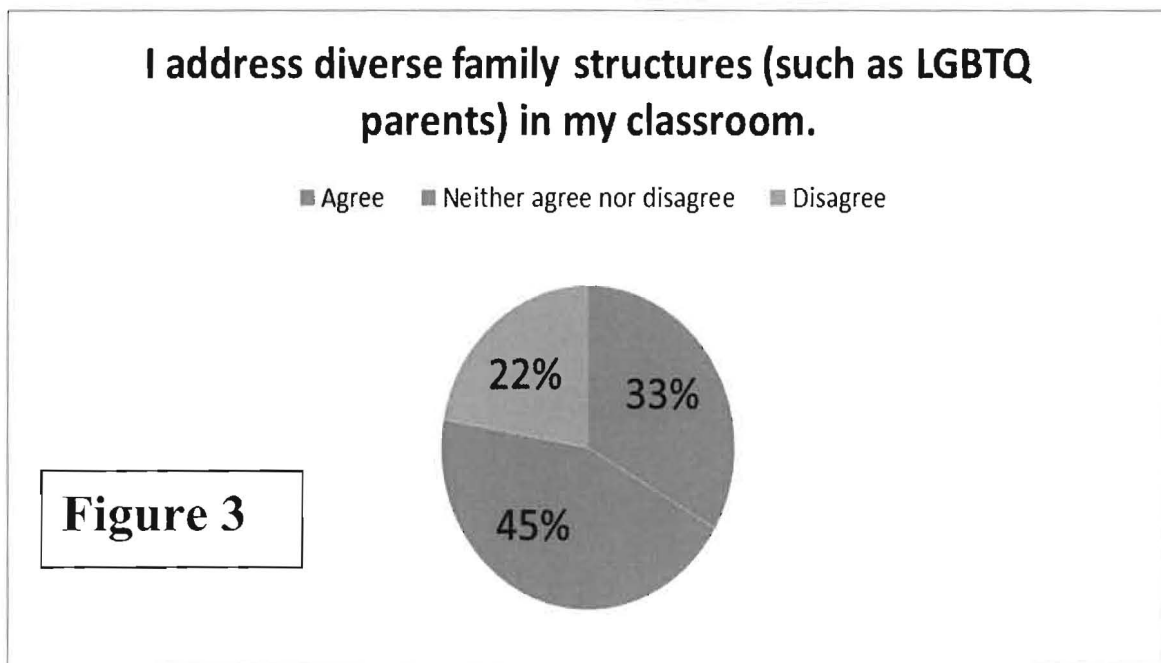
Figure 3

Thirteen out of the 18 teachers (72%), state that they use general terms when addressing students' families as opposed to gender specific pronouns and phrases (Figure 4). Only 2 teachers (11%) stated that they do not general terms:

- I use general terms when addressing students' families as opposed to gender specific pronouns and phrases.

I use general terms when addressing students' families instead of gender specific pronouns or phrases.

■ Agree   ■ Neither agree nor disagree   ■ Disagree

11%

17%

72%
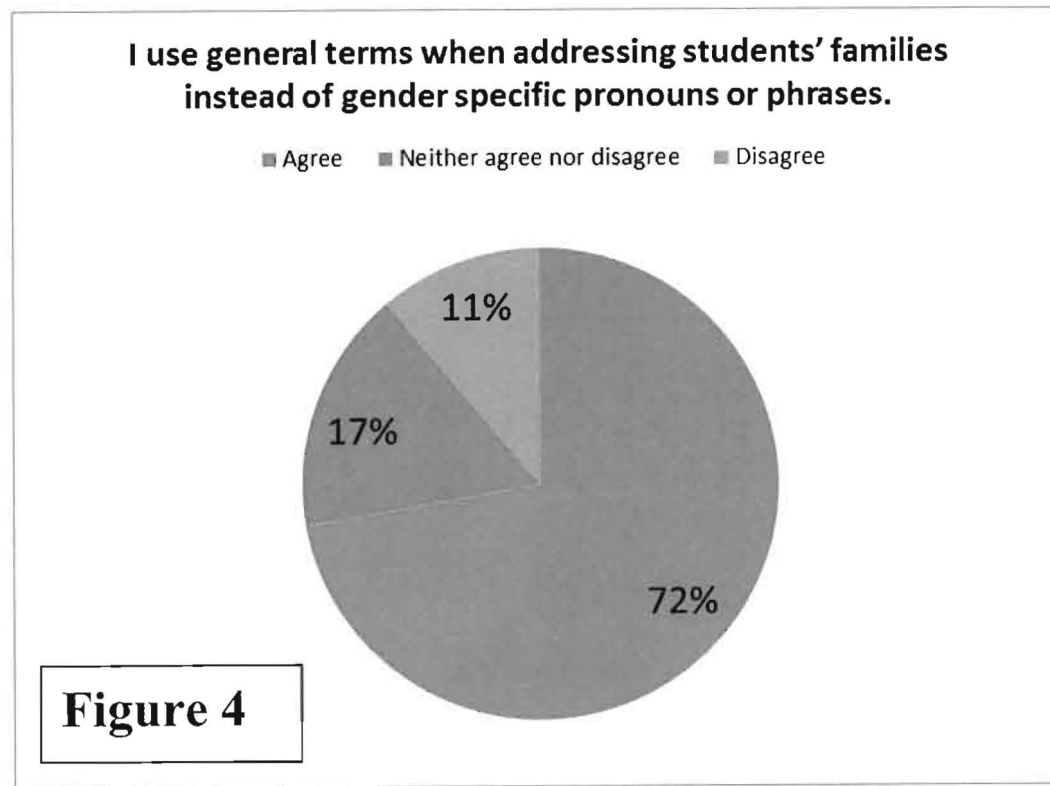
Figure 4

As Figure 5 shows, most teachers (56%) do not enforce gender stereotypes with their students:

- I enforce gender stereotypes with my students.

I enforce gender stereotypes with my students.

■ Disagree   ■ Agree   ■ Neither agree nor disagree

22%

22%   56%
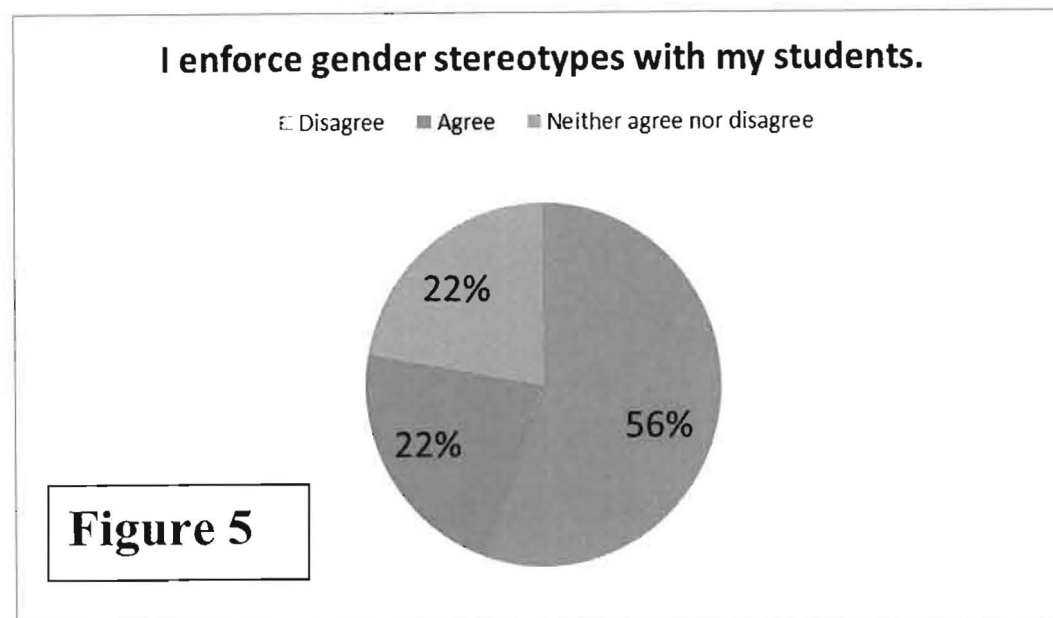
Figure 5

In regards to inclusive wording on forms, most teachers (78%) reported that the wording on forms for parents is gender neutral to include diverse family structures (Figure 6):
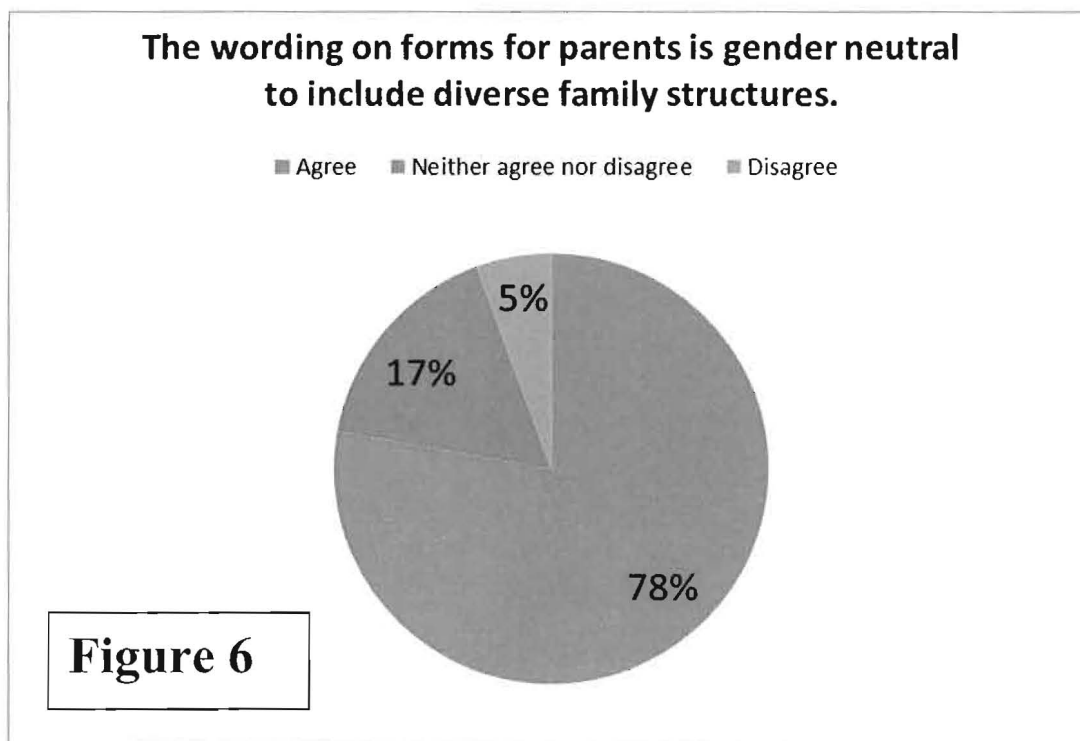
- The wording on parent forms is gender neutral to include diverse families.

The wording on forms for parents is gender neutral to include diverse family structures.

■ Agree   ■ Neither agree nor disagree   ■ Disagree

5%

17%

78%

Figure 6

A large majority of teachers surveyed have requested more diversity training. Out of the 18 teachers surveyed, 14 stated that they had never attended some sort of diversity training or workshop (78%). Of the 4 that have attended, only 1 reported it had been in the last 5 years. While most teachers haven't attended a diversity training program, a majority of teachers (56%) have had a student with an LGBTQ parent in their classroom (Figure 7):

- Have you ever had a child with LGBTQ parents in your class?

Have you ever had children with LGBTQ parents in your class?

■ Yes ■ No ■ Unsure

5%

39%

56%
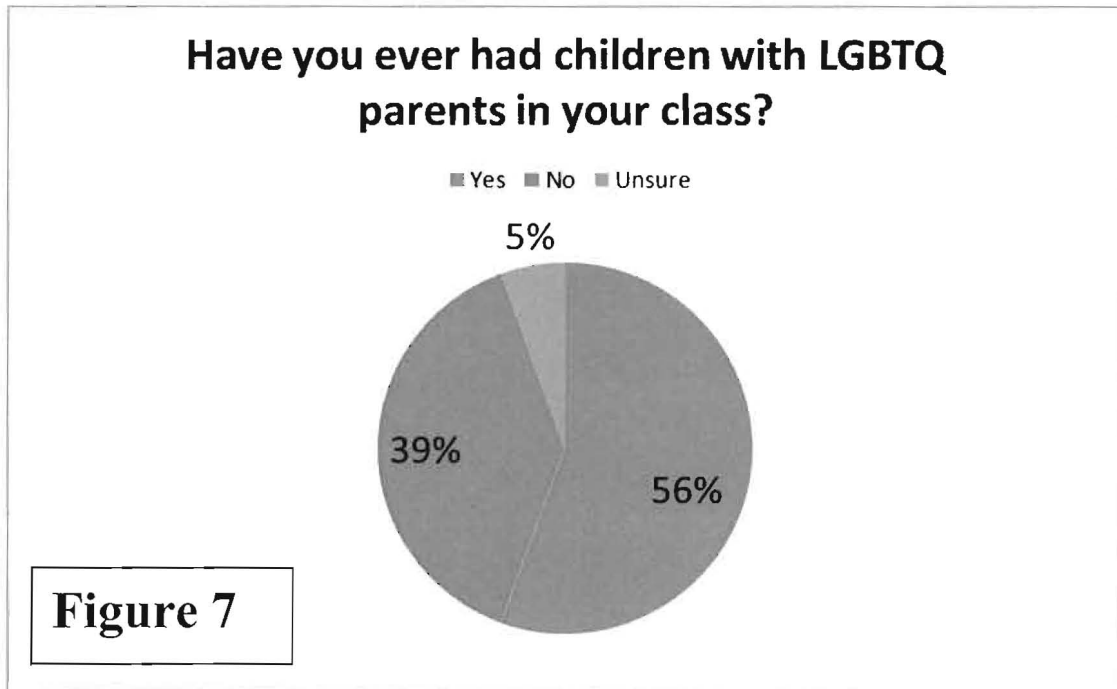
Figure 7

72% of teachers reported that they felt a need for diversity training. As Figure 8 shows, a majority of teachers reported that they would like to know more about creating an inclusive classroom for students with diverse families. All 18 teachers reported interest in attending a diversity training workshop. 95% of teachers surveyed stated that they would be either very likely (39%) or likely (56%) to attend (Figure 9):

- Would you like to know more about diverse family structures and creating a welcoming classroom environment for these families?

Would you like to know more about diverse family structures and creating a welcoming classroom environment for these families?

■ Yes ■ Unsure ■ No

11%

17%

72%

Figure 8

- If your school offered a diversity training program, how likely would you be to attend it?

If your school offered a diversity training program, how likely would you be to attend it?

■ Very likely ■ Likely ■ Unlikely ■ Would Not Attend

0% 0%

39%

61%

Figure 9
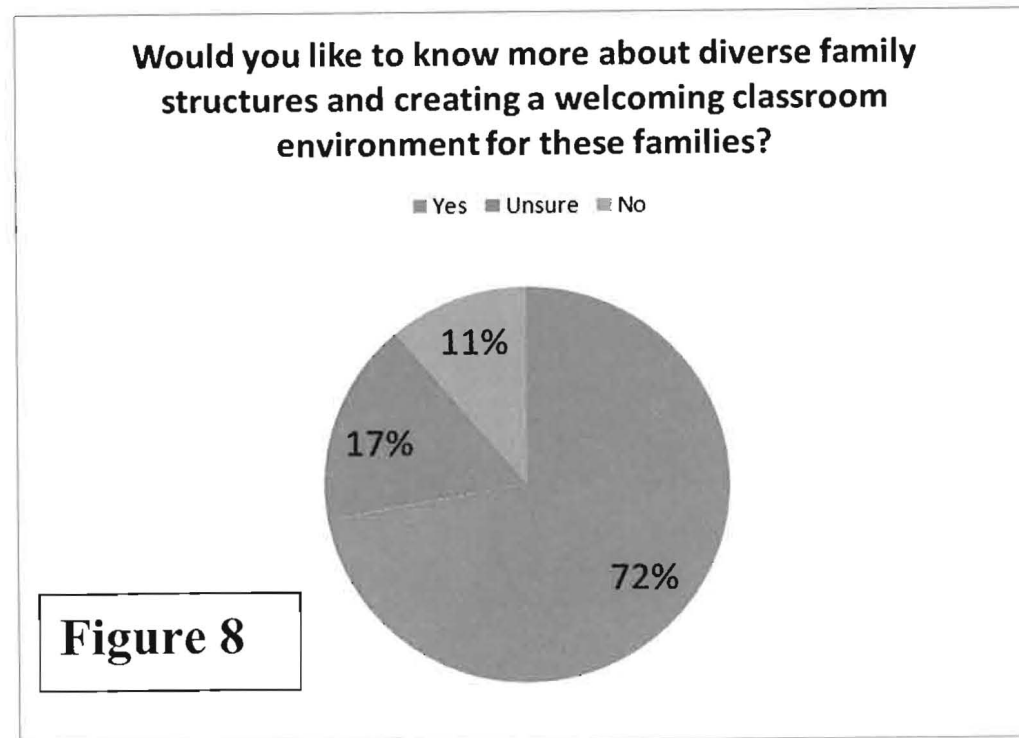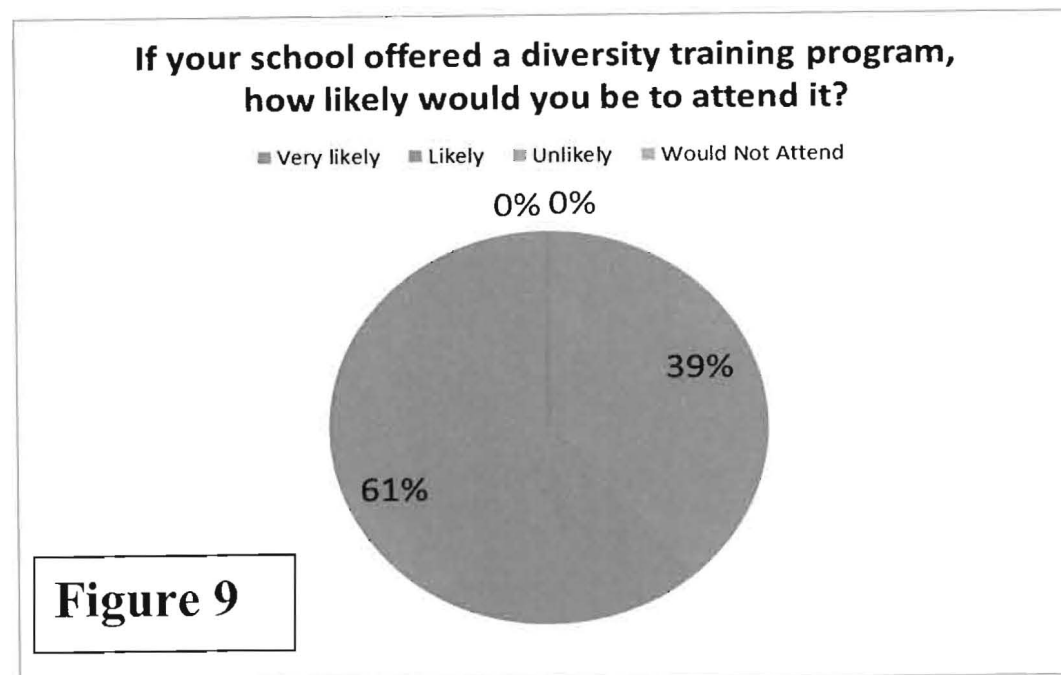
Discussion and Implications

The Future of Inclusive Classrooms

The results of the parent interviews and teacher surveys reflect the obvious need for diversity training workshop for early childhood educators. Research has shown that children perform better academically, socially, and developmentally when their parents are involved both in the classroom and at home (Morrison et al., 2011, p.22). In order for children that have LGBTQ parents to have the same opportunities and benefits as their peers, LGBTQ parents need to feel welcomed and included in the classroom. By creating an all-encompassing environment, LGBTQ parents have the opportunity to be more involved in their children's schooling.

While the parents interviewed for this study have had mostly positive experiences in early childhood centers, the overwhelming consensus is that there is more training needed. Most parents reported that some teachers and administrators were ill prepared to deal with their diverse family structure. Some parents reported teachers who let their personal bias or opinions influence their children. For example, one teacher often used the words "normal family" in the classroom. Mostly, parents discussed administrators and educators who did not know the best ways to approach their family. In addition, other parents expressed their uncertainties on the best ways to address teachers and administrators about their families.

An unexpected positive result of the study was that many parents reported they are willing to bring in materials to their children's classrooms. After the interview, I kept in touch with several of the parents. One mother wrote me that "I want you to know that

you have inspired me to get some literature for our little one's classrooms for the future."
She expressed that she realized how important it is for her family to be represented in
school and was more willing to make suggestions and get involved with the classroom.

In regards to the teachers that were surveyed for this study, a large majority
expressed interest in learning more about diverse family structures. Most reported they
attempted to create a welcoming, inclusive environment for all families using diverse
lesson plans and materials. While many teachers are currently doing the best they can to
create inclusive, diverse classrooms, more is needed. Most teachers did not feel
completely prepared to welcome diverse families and expressed a desire for more training
on the subject. All of the participants expressed that they would be likely or very likely
to attend a workshop if it was offered by their school.

The major implications from this study was the crucial need for an LGBTQ
training workshop for early childhood educators. A diversity training program would
make teachers more sensitive to the needs of all the children in their class and allow
families of a variety of structures to feel welcomed.

Limitations

There were several limitations to this study. The first was the small number of
parents and teachers who participated in the research. If this study was replicated, I
would suggest interviewing a larger number of parents to get more viewpoints and
experiences. In addition, I would attempt to find a larger pool of teachers to survey. The
positive results of this study suggest that further research would be beneficial.

In addition, the geographical location of the parents and teachers could affect their responses in the surveys and interviews. Although the experiences of the parents did not seem to be influenced by location, the sample size is too small to be definitive. Two of the parents were from towns close to each other in Massachusetts. One parent expressed mostly positive reactions and welcoming experiences, while the other had faced more adversity. However, the parent who expressed the most positive responses lives in New York City. This could be the result of a more urban environment. New York City is one of the most diverse areas in the world, and therefore it makes sense that educators in this area would be more tolerant and sensitive. Finally, another limitation could be inconsistencies such as teachers coming from a variety of schools. With a larger sample size, this variable could have been evaluated.

LGBTQ Diversity Training Program

As the need for LGBTQ diversity workshops grows, there are some schools and organizations that are beginning to host trainings for pre-service and current teachers. These trainings come in a variety of forms: single day workshops, online trainings, curriculum enhancements, or diversity toolkits that can be purchased for a school. After looking at the results of my research, I created a diversity training program that addresses the needs shown here for such a workshop as well as helpful tips and guidelines for teachers.

Before creating this workshop, I considered the options that are currently available for educators and administrators regarding diversity training. I reviewed

multiple toolkits and online information and utilized the data gathered from my research

to construct a basic framework for a diversity training program.

LGBTQ Diversity Training Framework

Part 1: Introduction

Quiet Reflection

Think about your answers to the following questions:

- Did you ever see representations of diverse families (such as adoptive

    families, interracial families, LGBTQ families, single-parent families, etc.)

    represented when you were in school? Do your own students see

    representations of these diverse family structures through books, pictures,

    discussions, or lessons in your own classroom?

- Think about a time in your childhood when you or someone you knew was

    teased or bullied. How did you feel? What might an educator have done to

    disrupt this behavior and/or use it as a "teachable moment?"

- Sharing and discussion

Why Is Diversity Training Necessary?

- Between 1 and 13 million children are being raised by lesbian, gay, bisexual,

    transgender, or queer (LGBTQ) parents in the United States. This means that in

    early childhood settings across the country, many students are coming to school

    with diverse family configurations. Early childhood is a time of learning and

development for children. They learn about themselves and their place in the

world and begin to develop relationships. Research has proven that a positive

connection between school and home life is a key factor in a child's development

and leads to better social, behavioral, and academic outcomes. Therefore, it is

imperative that children see their diverse families represented in materials and

lessons in schools.

- Group Discussion

Workshop Goals

- Learn about the correct terms and phrases associated with LGBTQ individuals
  and families.
- Understand the need for the representation and inclusion of diverse families in
  classrooms.
- Learn tips and examples for how to welcome diverse families into the classroom.

Part 2: Hear it Firsthand

- Watch the short documentary *In My Shoes: Stories of Youth with LGBT Parents*,
  which shows what life is like for children with LGBTQ parents from the
  children's viewpoint.
- Discussion about the video

Part 3: What is LGBTQ?

Basic Terms and Vocabulary

LGBTQ vocabulary and glossary from The Anti-Violence Project – www.avp.org

(Appendix F)

Part 4: Tips

Dealing with Difficult LGBTQ Situations

Discussions on:

- Bullying

- Name-calling and teasing

- Answering students' questions

- Personal or religious conflict

Tips for Teachers on Creating a Welcoming Environment

- Expose students to a variety of literature, lessons, and classroom guests

- Give examples of various family structures during discussions

- Don't rely on heteronormative examples

- Use inclusive language on all forms and sheets that go home to parents

- Teach students inclusive language such as "respect" and "diverse"

- Teach lessons about bullying and teasing

- Discourage gender stereotypes

- Post a "safe zone" sign on classroom so students know that bullying and teasing is not accepted in your classroom

- Confront homophobic remarks

- Incorporate contributions from LGBTQ members of society into classroom lessons

- Enforce gender neutral dress codes

- Empower students to express themselves

- Designate a gender neutral bathroom if possible

- Do not make assumptions about a student's family

Example Lessons

Appendices G, H, I, and J

Materials and Literature

Appendix K

Part 5: Questions from Teachers

- Discussion

Next Steps

Further research on this topic could be very beneficial to teachers, administrators, parents, students, and families. As the world becomes more accepting and tolerant towards LGBTQ individuals, the need for diverse classrooms grows. It is essential for

teachers to become more aware of diverse family structures. A stimulating addition to this research would be follow-up surveys with the teachers who participated. It would be interesting to see if making teachers more aware of their actions would make them more conscious of the potential harmful effects their actions could have on their students. In the future, it would be beneficial if all pre-service teachers and current teachers could attend a diversity training program to educate themselves on the most effective ways to engage and welcome all families.

References

Biblarz, T. J., & Stacey, J. (2010). How Does the Gender of Parents Matter?(Author

abstract)(Report). *Journal of Marriage and Family*, (1), 3. doi:10.1111/j.1741-

3737.2009.00678.x

Bos, H. M. W., Van Balen, F., & Van Den Boom, D. C. (2007). Child Adjustment and

Parenting in Planned Lesbian-Parent Families. *American Journal of

Orthopsychiatry*, *77*(1), 38–48. doi:10.1037/0002-9432.77.I

Burt, T., Gelnaw, A., & Lesser, L. K. (2010). Creating Welcoming and Inclusive

Environments for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Families in

Early Childhood Settings. *YC: Young Children*, *65*(1), 97–102.

Burt, T., Gelnaw, A., & Lesser, L. K. (2010). Suggestions for Children's Books that

Include Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Families. *Young

Children,* 1-4.

Cahill, B., & Theileimer, R. (1999). Helping kids (and teachers) not to hate.(social

aspects of teaching young children). *Education Digest*, (4), 50.

Carter, M. (1998). Strategies to Strengthen Our Anti-Bias Practices. *Child Care

Information Exchange*, (121), 85–87.

Casper, V., Cuffaro, H. K., Schultz, S., & Silin, J. G. (1996). Toward a most thorough

understanding of the world: Sexual orientation and early childhood education.

Harvard Educational Review, *66*(2), 271–293.

Casper, V., Schultz, S., & Wickens, E. (1992). Breaking the silences: lesbian and gay

parents and the schools. *Teachers College Record*, (1), 109.

Clark, C. T. (2010). Preparing LGBTQ-allies and combating homophobia in a U.S.

teacher education program. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, (3), 704.

doi:10.1016/j.tate.2009.10.006

Duke, T. S., & McCarthy, K. W. (2009). Homophobia, Sexism, and Early Childhood

Education: A Review of the Literature. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher

Education*, *30*(4), 385–403. doi:10.1080/10901020903320320

Dykes, F. (2010). Transcending Rainbow Flags and Pride Parades: Preparing Special

Education Preservice Educators to Work with Gay and Lesbian Youth. *SRATE

Journal*, *19*(2), 36–43.

Dykstra, L. A. (2005). Trans-Friendly Preschool. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues In

Education*, *3*(1), 7–13.

Elsbree, A. R., & Wong, P. (2007). "The Laramie Project" as a Homophobic Disruption:

How the Play Impacts Pre-Service Teachers' Preparation to Create Anti-

Homophobic Schools. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education*, *4*(4), 97–

117.

Emfinger, K. (2007). Rethinking welcoming literacy environments for LGBT

families.(educating children about sex differences). *Childhood Education*, (1), 24.

Fairtlough, A. (2008). Growing up with a lesbian or gay parent: young people's

perspectives. *Health & Social Care in the Community*, *16*(5), 521–528.

doi:10.1111/j.1365-2524.2008.00774.x

Farr, R. H., Forssell, S. L., & Patterson, C. J. (2010). Parenting and Child Development

in Adoptive Families: Does Parental Sexual Orientation Matter? *Applied

Developmental Science*, *14*(3), 164–178. doi:10.1080/10888691.2010.500958

Fedewa, A. L., & Clark, T. P. (2009). Parent Practices and Home-School Partnerships: A

Differential Effect for Children with Same-Sex Coupled Parents? *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, *5*(4), 312–339. doi:10.1080/15504280903263736

Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN). (2012). *Playgrounds and Prejudice: Elementary School Climate in the United States. A Survey of Students and Teachers* (No. 978-1-   93409209-5). Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN).

Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN). (2012). *Ready, Set, Respect! GLSEN's Elementary School Toolkit*. Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN).

Gilomen, Jen & COLAGE Youth Leadershop and Action Program. (2005). *In My Shoes: Stories of Youth with LGBT Parents*. (Available from Forward Films)

Greytak, E. A., Kosciw, J. G., & Boesen, M. J. (2013). Educating the Educator: Creating Supportive School Personnel Through Professional Development. *Journal of School Violence*, *12*(1), 80–97. doi:10.1080/15388220.2012.731586

Hermann-Wilmarth, J. M. (2007). Full inclusion: Understanding the role of gay and lesbian texts and films in teacher education classrooms. *Language Arts*, (4).

Kintner-Duffy, V. L., Vardell, R., Lower, J. K., & Cassidy, D. J. (2012). "The Changers and the Changed": Preparing Early Childhood Teachers to Work with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Families. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, *33*(3), 208–223.

Kosciw, J. G., Diaz, E. M., & Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), New York, NY. (2008). *Involved, Invisible, Ignored: The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Parents and Their Children in Our Nation's K-12*

Schools (No. 1-9340-9202-9). Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN).

Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Bartkiewicz, M. J., Boesen, M. J., Palmer, N. A., & Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN). (2012). *The 2011 National School Climate Survey: The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth in Our Nation's Schools* (No. 978-1-9340-9210-1). Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN).

Lester, N. A. (2007). (Un)Happily Ever after: Fairy Tale Morals, Moralities, and Heterosexism in Children's Texts. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education*, *4*(2), 55–74.

Morrison, J. W., Storey, P., & Zhang, C. (2011). Accessible Family Involvement in Early Childhood Programs. *Dimensions of Early Childhood*, *39*(3), 21–26.

Payne, E. C., & Smith, M. (2011). The Reduction of Stigma in Schools: A New Professional Development Model for Empowering Educators to Support LGBTQ Students. *Journal of LGBT Youth*, *8*(2), 174–200.

Payne, E. C., & Smith, M. J. (2012). Safety, Celebration, and Risk: Educator Responses to LGBTQ Professional Development. *Teaching Education*, *23*(3), 265–285.

Perry, B., Burston, A., Stevens, M., Golding, J., Steele, H., & Golombok, S. (2004). Children's play narratives: what they tell us about lesbian-mother families.(Author Abstract). *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, (4), 467.

Robinson, Kerry. (2005). Doing Anti-homophobia and Anti-heterosexism in Early Childhood Education: moving beyond the immobilizing impacts of "risks", "fears" and "silences". Can We Afford Not To? *Contemporary Issues in Early*

Childhood, *6*(2), 175–188.

Rowell, E. H. (2007). Picture Books Reflecting Gay and Lesbian Families. *YC: Young Children*, *62*(3), 24–30.

Sadowski, M. (2010). Beyond gay-straight alliances. *Education Digest*, (1), 12.

Sapp, J. (2010). A review of gay and lesbian themed early childhood children's literature.(Report). *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, (1), 32

Schmidt, S. J., Chang, S.-P., Carolan-Silva, A., Lockhart, J., & Anagnostopoulos, D. (2012). Recognition, responsibility, and risk: Pre-service teachers' framing and reframing of lesbian, gay, and bisexual social justice issues.(Report). *Teaching and Teacher Education*, (8), 1175. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2012.07.002

Skolnik & Torres. (2007). Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Terms and Definitions. *Anti-Violence Project*. Retrieved from http://www.avp.org/storage/documents/Training%20and%20TA%20Center/2007 _AVP_Glossary_of_Terms.pdf

Southern Poverty Law Center. (2013). *Best Practices: Creating an LGBT-Inclusive School Climate. A Teaching Tolerance Guide for School Leaders*. Southern Poverty Law Center.

Stacey, J., & Biblarz, T. J. (2001). (How) Does the Sexual Orientation of Parents Matter? *American Sociological Review*, *66*(2), 159–183.

Szalacha, L. A. (2004). Educating Teachers on LGBTQ Issues: A Review of Research and Program Evaluations. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education*, *1*(4), 67–79.

Welcoming Schools and the Human Rights Campaign Foundation. (2012). *Welcoming*

Schools: An Inclusive Approach to Addressing Family Diversity, Gender Stereotyping, and Name-Calling in K-5 Learning Environments. Human Rights Campaign & Welcoming Schools. Retrieved from: http://www.hrc.org/welcoming-schools/documents/Welcoming_Schools-Starter_Kit.pdf

Wolfe, R. B. (2006). Choosing to Include Gay Issues in Early Childhood Teacher Preparation Coursework: One Professor's Journey. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education, 27*(2), 195–204. doi:10.1080/10901020600675174

Appendices

Appendix A
HERB Approval Form

WAGNER COLLEGE

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

April 21, 14

Reference: Human Subjects Proposal #: ____Jessica.Figuly.001_____

Dear Jessica:

Your application for research involving human subjects has been reviewed under federal guidelines as a project qualifying for the following type of review:

_____ Exempt   X_Expedited   _____ Full

The outcome of the review is as follows:

X___ Approved as submitted   _____ Approved with recommendations
_____ Approved with required revisions to resubmit   _____ Not approved

If you have any questions, please contact the faculty member with whom you are working on this research.

On completion of your study, you must fill in the study completion form, found on the Student Resources page of the Education Department's website.

The Department wishes you a productive study, and we look forward to learning from your research.

Sincerely,

Karen DeMoss
Education IRB Chair
IORG#: 0003977   Education IRB#: TIRB50100

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form for Participation in Research: Parents

As part of my master's degree requirements at Wagner College, I am conducting research on family diversity in early childhood programs in order to learn what materials and curriculum are being implemented that is LGBTQ inclusive. You are invited to participate in this research project, and this document will provide you with information that will help you decide whether or not you wish to participate. Your participation is solicited, yet strictly voluntary.

For this study, I will be using a qualitative research method to understand your experiences. During the course of the project, I will be interviewing LGBTQ parents to learn more about their past experiences with early childhood classrooms and school systems. If you were to participate, I would ask you to tell me about your experiences with teachers, administrators, and other parents. I may also ask you to recall specific instances of positivity or prejudice you faced. This will be a short interview that will take about 20 minutes. All information you provide during the project will remain confidential and will not be associated with your name. My final thesis will also be cleared of any possible identifying information in order to ensure your confidentiality.

The project does not carry any foreseeable risks. It is possible that some participants might feel uncomfortable discussing some of the topics related to LGBTQ prejudice. If for any reason you felt uncomfortable, you could leave study at any time with no penalty, and any information you may have provided would be destroyed.

If you have any questions concerning this study please feel free to contact me at Jessica.Figuly@wagner.edu, by phone at (718) 986-0167 or Dr. Karen DeMoss at Karen.Demoss@wagner.edu, or by phone at (718) 420-4070. Thank you for considering being part of a study related to my research for a master's degree in Education at Wagner College.

Please sign below to indicate your understanding of the project and your consent to participate. I have provided two copies so that you may keep a duplicate for your records.

Signature of Participant	Date	NAME	Jessica Figuly

Appendix C

Parent Interview Questions
Addressing Family Diversity: Creating an LGBTQ Inclusive
Program for Early Childhood Educators

1. How many children do you have? What are their ages and grade levels? Are they adopted or biological children?

2. How did you choose a school to send your children to? What were the most important factors in your decision process?

3. Did you address the teacher / faculty / principal about your family structure prior to enrolling your children in the school? Prior to each new school year?

4. How was your reception as an LGBTQ family from administrators? Teachers? Other families? Has the teacher / administrators made you and your family feel accepted, safe, and included? Why or why not?

5. Tell me one great experience your family had at school regarding teachers, staff, or other families.

6. Tell me one negative experience your family faced. Did the school address it? If so, how?

7. Have you or your child faced any prejudice or homophobia from parents, teachers, or children?

8. Do you prepare your children for possible negative reactions from classmates? If so, how?

9. Did you see diverse materials (books, lessons, etc.) in your child's classroom that represents your family and their values? If so, what kinds?

10. Was there inclusive language used in the classroom? Tell me about specific cases where inclusive language has or hasn't been used.

11. What kind of things do you hope to see in the future for your children's classrooms and schools?

Appendix D

Survey Questions for Teachers

*Addressing Family Diversity: Creating an LGBT Inclusive
Program for Early Childhood Educators*

1. What grade level do you currently teach?

☐ Birth – Toddlers

☐ Preschool

☐ Kindergarten

☐ 1st grade

☐ 2nd grade

2. How long have you been a teacher?

☐ 0 – 1 years

☐ 2 – 3 years

☐ 4 – 5 years

☐ 6 – 10 years

☐ 10+ years

3. How would you describe the average socioeconomic condition of the students that attend your school?

4. How often do you teach lessons that deal with family diversity? (Check one)

☐ Never   ☐ 1-2 times a year   ☐ 3-4 times a year   ☐ 5+ times a year

5. Give a short explanation of how you teach lessons on family diversity / examples of lessons:

6. What kind of materials do you have in your classroom that reflects diverse family structures? (Check all that apply)

☐ Books

☐ Dolls

☐ Puppets

☐ Dress-Up Clothes

☐ Pictures

☐ Toys

☐ Neutral Wording

☐ Lessons

☐ Other:_____

7. What kind of vocabulary do you use when speaking about students' families? (for example, "take this home to mommy and daddy" or "take this home to the grown ups at home"

8. I address diversity family structures (such as LGBTQ parents) in my classroom (Check one)

☐ Disagree   ☐ Neither agree nor disagree   ☐ Agree

9. I use general terms when addressing students' families instead of gender specific pronouns or phrases (Check one)

☐ Disagree   ☐ Neither agree nor disagree   ☐ Agree

10. I have books in my classroom library that showcase diverse family structures (Check one)

☐   ☐   ☐

Disagree   Neither agree nor disagree   Agree

11. I enforce gender stereotypes with my students. (For example: grouping students by "boys" and "girls" / allowing for different behavior based on gender)

☐ Disagree   ☐ Neither agree nor disagree   ☐ Agree

12. The wording on forms for parents is gender neutral to include diverse family structures.

☐ Disagree   ☐ Neither agree nor disagree   ☐ Agree

13. Have you ever attended a diversity training program / workshop? If so, when and where? Did you feel like it was informative?

14. Would you like to know more about diverse family structures and creating a welcoming classroom environment for these families?

☐ Yes   ☐ No   ☐ Unsure

15. If your school offered a diversity and sensitivity training program, how likely would it be that you would attend it?

☐ Very likely   ☐ Likely   ☐ Not Likely   ☐ Would Not Attend

16. Have you ever had children with LGBTQ parents in your class? (LGBTQ = Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning)

☐ Yes   ☐ No   ☐ Unsure

17. Other Comments:

Appendix E

Informed Consent Form for Participation in Research: Teachers

As part of my master's degree requirements at Wagner College, I am conducting research on family diversity in early childhood programs in order to learn what current teaching practices are being implemented that is LGBTQ inclusive. You are invited to participate in this research project, and this document will provide you with information that will help you decide whether or not you wish to participate. Your participation is solicited, yet strictly voluntary.

For this study, I will be using a qualitative research method to understand your experiences. During the course of the project, I will be surveying teachers to learn about the materials, curriculum, and vocabulary they use that is LGBTQ inclusive. If you were to participate, I would ask you to recall teaching materials or lessons you have used in your classroom that is inclusive of LGBTQ families. I will also ask you about your opinions on attending an LGBTQ inclusive diversity training if it were to be provided at your school. This will be a short survey that will take about 5 minutes. All information you provide during the project will remain confidential and will not be associated with your name. My final thesis will also be cleared of any possible identifying information in order to ensure your confidentiality.

The project does not carry any foreseeable risks. It is possible that some participants might feel uncomfortable discussing some of the topics related to LGBTQ issues. If for any reason you felt uncomfortable, you could leave study at any time with no penalty, and any information you may have provided would be destroyed.

If you have any questions concerning this study please feel free to contact me at Jessica.Figuly@wagner.edu, by phone at (718) 986-0167 or Dr. Karen DeMoss at Karen.Demoss@wagner.edu, or by phone at (718) 420-4070. Thank you for considering being part of a study related to my research for a master's degree in Education at Wagner College.

Please sign below to indicate your understanding of the project and your consent to participate. I have provided two copies so that you may keep a duplicate for your records.

_____ _____

Signature of Participant   Date   NAME   Jessica Figuly

Appendix F

LGBTQ Glossary

SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

A Note on Definitions: Please know that all definitions and labels do not mean the same to all people. Use the preferred terminology of the person/people with whom you are interacting. This list represents common usages and meanings of these terms within communities, but is not exhaustive nor universal.

1) **Gender:** The wide set of characteristics that are constructed to distinguish between the two institutionally recognized sexes: male and female. Gender is not static and can shift over time. Gender has at least three parts:

  a) **Physical Markers** – Aspects of the human body that are considered to determine sex and/or gender for a given culture or society, including genitalia, chromosomes, hormones, secondary sex characteristics, and internal reproductive organs.

  b) **Role/Expression** – Aspects of behavior and outward presentation that may (intentionally or unintentionally) communicate gender to others in a given culture or society, including clothing, body language, hairstyles, socialization, relationships, career choices, interests, and presence in gendered spaces (restrooms, places of worship, etc).

  c) **Gender Identity** – An individual's internal view of their gender. Ones own innermost sense of themselves as a gendered being and/or as masculine, feminine, androgynous, etc. This will often influence name and pronoun preference for an individual.

2) **Sexual Orientation:** The culturally-defined set of meanings through which people describe their sexual attractions. Sexual orientation is not static and can shift over time. Sexual orientation has at least three parts:

  a) **Attraction** – Ones own feelings or self-perception about to which gender(s) one feels drawn. Can be sexual, emotional, spiritual, psychological, and/or political.

  b) **Behavior** – What one does sexually and/or with whom

  c) **Sexual Identity** – The language and terms one uses to refer to their sexual orientation. It may or may not be based on either of the above and can also be influenced by family, culture, and community.

3) **Transgender:** A term used broadly that refers primarily to individuals who identify differently from the sex assigned at birth or a term used by people for whom the sex they were assigned at birth is an incomplete or incorrect description of themselves. The term "genderqueer" has the same basic meaning but is used somewhat more loosely.

  Transman – Typically refers to an individual assigned as female at birth who at some point, starts to identify in a more male-oriented way or as a man.

  Transwoman – Typically refers to an individual assigned as male at birth who at some point, starts to identify in a more female-oriented way or as a woman.

4) **Intersex:** A term referring to people who have physical markers that differ from the medical definitions of

male or female. Most commonly, it is used to speak about people whose genitalia is not easily classifiable as 'male' or 'female' at birth but it can be used to refer to any biological marker that falls outside medical norms for masculine and feminine.

5) **Gay:** Most frequently used by male-identified people who experience attraction primarily or exclusively for

other male- identified people.

6) **Lesbian:** Most frequently used by female-identified people who experience attraction primarily or exclusively for other female-identified people.

7) **Bisexual:** A term used to indicate attraction or potential for attraction to more than one gender.

8) **Pansexual:** A term used to indicate attraction or potential for attraction to any gender, preferred by some

over 'bisexual' because it does not imply the existence of only two genders.

9) **Heterosexual/Straight:** A term used to indicate attraction primarily or exclusively for people of the 'opposite' sex..

9) **Same Gender Loving:** A term created by African American communities and used by some people of color

who may view labels such as 'gay' and 'lesbian' as terms referring to and/or representing white people.

11) **MSM:** Abbreviation for Men who have Sex with Men, a term used to describe men who engage in same-

sex sexual behavior but who may choose not to label themselves as "gay/bisexual."

10) **Two Spirit:** An English translation of a concept present in some Indigenous cultures that refers to someone

who is assigned one sex at birth but fulfills the roles of both sexes or of another sex.

12) **Femme:** An identity term most frequently used by people with a more feminine gender identity and/or

gender presentation

13) **Butch or Stud:** An Identity term most frequently used by people with a more masculine gender identity

and/or gender presentation

14) **Queer:** A political and sometimes controversial term that some LGBT people have reclaimed, while others consider it derogatory. Used more frequently by activists, academics, and some younger LGBT people, the term can refer either to gender identity, sexual orientation, or both and can be used by any gender.

15) **Questioning:** A term that can refer to an identity, or a process of introspection whereby one learns about

their own sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Can happen at any age in and multiple times throughout ones lifetime.

16) **Cross dresser:** One who dresses, either in public or private, in clothing that society assigns to the opposite
     sex. Cross-dressing is not an indication of one's sexual orientation or gender identity.

17) **Drag:** Drag performers parody gender for an audience, usually for entertainment value. Drag performers do
     not necessarily identify as the gender they are parodying.

18) **Gender Nonconforming:** This term can refer to gender identity, or gender role and refers to someone who
     falls outside or transcends what is considered to be traditional gender-norms for their assigned
sex.

19) **Androgynous:** Can refer to a person's gender presentation or identity. An androgynous person may
     identify and appear as both male and female, or as neither male nor female, or as in between
     male and female.

20) **Transphobia:** Societal, systemic, and interpersonal oppression against people of transgender experience.
     Also something experienced by some gender queer and gender nonconforming people.

21) **Homophobia:** Societal, systemic, and interpersonal oppression against LGBTIQ people and communities.
     Also can be experienced by those who are perceived to be LGBTIQ.

22) **Heterosexism:** Systemic belief that heterosexuality and the binary gender system are superior. Also, the
     overall creation of institutions that benefit heterosexual people exclusively and/or oppress
     LGBTIQ people.

A note on gender pronouns: People tend to refer to someone as either 'he' or 'she' based on physical appearance. Like names, pronouns are identity terms that can be chosen or rejected. A person can identify as 'he', 'she' or both, or another pronoun altogether. When an individual voices a pronoun preference, it is considered basic respect to use the preferred gender-language consistently.

Appendix G

Lesson 1

Grade: Pre-School

Aim: Identifying and understanding the feeling of empathy and how to show empathy to others.

Objectives: Students will be able to:

- Define the feeling of empathy.

- Identify and recognize what empathy is.

- Recognize the need to be understanding of others.

- Recount ways to be empathetic and understanding towards others.

Materials:

Popsicle stick with red unhappy face and green happy face on each side

Pictures of the scenarios the teacher is describing

Empathy poster

Props / costumes for students to utilize when acting out their scenes

References:

Sesame Street video clip on empathy with Mark Ruffalo

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9_1Rt1R4xbM

Procedure:

1. The teacher will tell the students that today they will be playing a game. The teacher will show the students the directions for this lesson, which includes verbal directions, words, and pictures.

2. The teacher will hand out a Popsicle stick to each student that has a green happy face on one side and a red unhappy face on the other side.

3. The teacher will ask the students to identify the faces on each side of the stick.

4. The teacher will tell the students that sometimes the look on our faces can tell other people how we are feeling.

5. The teachers will read the following scenarios out loud and hold up an accompanying picture and ask the students to raise the green happy or red unhappy face to show how they would feel in each case:

   a. You drop your ice cream on the floor

   b. You go to a museum

   c. You have a play date with your friends

   d. Your friend takes your favorite toy

   e. You get a present for your birthday

   f. Your teacher tells you "good job!"

   g. You friend calls you a mean name

   h. Your best friend moves away

   i. Your cousins/aunts/uncles/family come to visit

   j. Your friend pushes you on the playground

   k. Your friend tells a new student that she can't play with you

l.   Your friend tells you they don't want to play with you anymore

6. After each scenario, the teacher will ask the students to raise their unhappy or happy sticks signaling how they would feel. The teacher may call on a student to explain why they would feel that way. They may also ask if there are any other words they would use to describe how they would feel.

7. The teacher will place pictures of each scenario under the happy or unhappy face on the board based on the majority answer.

8. The teacher will then ask the students about the unhappy answers. She will ask, "When your friend takes your toy away, why does that make you feel sad? When your friend calls you a mean name, how does that make you feel inside? When your friend pushes you on the playground, what do you want to do?" The teacher will discuss these questions with the students.

9. The teacher will tell the students that today they are going to talk about the feeling of empathy. She will tell the students that empathy means understanding another person's feelings, experiences, or emotions.

10. The teacher will then show the students the YouTube clip of Mark Ruffalo discussing empathy on Sesame Street.

11. The teacher will then ask the students if they can come up with any examples of times they felt empathy. She will take answers from the class.

12. The teacher will tell the students that they are going to be acting out scenes. The teacher will ask groups of two or three students to come up to demonstrate empathy. The teacher will provide students with ideas (I broke my favorite toy / I

fell and scraped my knee) along with visual representations of these scenarios or students may come up with their own ideas.

13. Students will then act out the ways they can show empathy to their friends.

14. After all the students have had a chance to act out empathy, the teacher will remind students that we need to show our friends empathy every day.

15. The teacher will finish by showing the students the empathy poster she will be hanging in the classroom and explaining each letter. "E" is for everyone needs somebody, "M" stands for modeling good behavior, "P" stands for putting yourself in other people's shoes, "A" is for asking others if you can help, "T" is for treating others the way you want to be treated", "H" stands for choosing to hurt or help your friends, "Y" stands for you feeling better and your friends feeling better too.

Assessment:

The students will act out ways they can show each other empathy. The teacher can provide examples for the students, or they can come up with their own scenarios where empathy is appropriate.

Accommodation:

Autism. This student will like to know the order of events in the activity and like to see structure. The teacher will explain what the students will be doing before the activity, and create a visual set of directions that the students can follow. In addition, children

with autism may rely on visual representations. Therefore, the teacher will create picture

representations of each scenario she discusses, as well as verbally stating them.

Appendix H

Lesson 2

Grade: Preschool

Aim: To define bullying and bullying behaviors and identify how bullying can make a person feel.

Objectives: Students will be able to:

- Define bullying.

- Identify bullying behaviors.

- Recount how bullying can make people feel.

Materials:

"Llama Llama and the Bully Goat" by Anna Dewdney

Construction paper

Crayons

References:

Sesame Street: The Good Bird's Club video on YouTube

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kGhLeDugztY

Procedure:

1. The teacher will have the students sit in a circle.

2. The teacher will have the students name something that they like one at a time. The teacher will go first to model the activity. She will say "I like pizza". Then she will ask if there is anyone who doesn't like to eat pizza. The teacher will invite that student to express themselves and say "I don't like pizza. The teacher likes pizza, and that is okay". The teacher will remind the students that everybody likes different things, and that it is great to have different interests, ideas, and likes from your friends.

3. The teacher will tell the students today they are going to be talking about bullies. She will then read the book "Llama Llama and the Bully Goat" by Anna Dewdney. As she reads, the teacher will stop and ask the students to think about times they encountered a bully.

4. The teacher will ask the students to tell her what a bully is. She will take answers from the class. She will then tell the students that bullying is when someone does something on purpose to make you feel bad or hurts you more than once.

5. The teacher will ask the students to give her examples of bullying, and write it on a piece of chart paper. The teacher will explain that hitting, pushing, teasing, calling names, taking things without permission, talking behind a person's back, not letting friends play, and sending mean notes are all examples of bullying.

6. The teacher will then show the Sesame Street YouTube clip The Good Bird's Club. This video shows Big Bird being bullied by a pigeon who won't let Big Bird join his club. He tells Big Bird his feet are too big, he is too yellow, and his beak is too long. Big Bird goes to Abby to have her change him but each time he goes back, the mean pigeon tells him something else is wrong. By the end of the

video, Elmo, Abby, Big Bird and their friends form their own club called the Happy To Be Me Club.

7. The teacher will discuss the video with the students. She will ask the students how Big Bird felt when he wanted to be in the club and pigeons wouldn't let him. She will explain how bullying makes people feel sad, mad, scared, and alone.

8. The teacher will then ask students about the various roles of the people and animals in the video. The teacher will ask the students to identify who the bully was. She will then ask the students who the victim was and explain that the victim is the person being bullied. Finally the teacher will ask the students who the bystanders were. She will explain that bystanders are people that see bullying happening but don't do anything to stop it. She will explain to the students that if we see bullying, we should act to stop it from happening.

9. The teacher will then have the students draw a picture of a time they encountered bullying, whether they were the bully, victim, or bystander. The students will display their artwork in the classroom.

10. The teacher will then put all the students' names in a hat. She will have each child pull a name. The teacher will then have the student say something nice about the person whose name they pulled. She will remind students that words hurt and that they should be nice to all their friends in school.

Assessment:

Students will discuss in a group setting the Good Bird's Club video they watched. They will talk about the roles of the different people in the video and identify the forms of

bullying they witnessed. They will discuss how Big Bird felt when he wasn't allowed to be a part of the group. The students will also draw pictures of bullying they have encountered in their own lives.

Accommodations:

Hearing impairments: Students with hearing impairments will be allowed to watch the video on their own using a headset. The teacher will also read the book with them privately and will be allowed to keep a copy in their lap to follow along with the teacher.

Appendix I

Lesson 3

Grade: Preschool

Aim: Understanding appropriate and inappropriate ways to express yourself

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Identify appropriate ways to express themselves

- Compare and contrast appropriate and inappropriate behaviors

Materials:

Brown paper bags

Crayons

Glue / glitter / pomp-poms

Scenario pictures

Resources:

No online resources are used in this lesson.

Procedure:

1. The teacher will tell the students that today they are going to talk about feelings. The teacher will say that sometimes people feel angry, frustrated, disappointed, or discouraged.

   The teacher will say, "Today we are going talk about some positive ways to show that you are angry, frustrated, disappointed, or discouraged. First we are going to be making puppets. Everybody will be given a brown paper bag, markers, and other art materials. This can be any type of puppet you would like so please use your imagination!"

2. The teacher will walk around assisting the students making their puppets.

3. The teacher will say, "Now we are going to talk about what we should do if we are feeling angry, frustrated, disappointed, or discouraged. If you are angry, what do you do? How do you show you are frustrated? What are the best ways to show you are disappointed?"

4. The teacher will reveal pictures of appropriate ways to deal with anger, frustration, disappointment, or discouragement (draw a picture, go to a quiet place until you feel calm, take deep breaths, stop and think, express your feelings, take some time alone, do jumping jacks, using your words, speaking to an adult, etc.)

5. The teacher will say, "Now we are going to use our puppets to show the best ways to express our negative feelings"

6. The teacher will read out scenarios and have 2 volunteers act it out.

7. Scenarios:

a. You bring your favorite stuffed animal to school for show and tell. At play time, your friend takes it without asking. How do you feel? How do you respond?

b. Your brother/sister/friend breaks your favorite toy.

c. Your friend is taking a long time on the money bars, but you really want a turn.

d. All your friends at school want to play in the make-believe section but you want to play blocks

e. A classmate asks to play, but you would rather play alone.

8. The teacher will then discuss what would happen if instead of dealing with their negative feelings, these people instead hit their friends or said mean things to them. The teacher will say that everybody gets angry or frustrated sometimes, and that's okay. It is important to remember not to hit or hurt our friends or family. We must show that we are angry or frustrated using our words and positive actions. The teacher will tell students that in the classroom, we will always use these positive actions to demonstrate our negative feelings.

Assessment:

Each student will act out a scenario with their puppets demonstrating an appropriate reaction to the feelings of anger, frustration, discouragement, or disappointment. Students will discuss why it is not appropriate to use mean words or hit their friends.

Accommodations:

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: This student will fully participate in all activities. The teacher will allow this student to work standing up if needed. They will be allowed to take frequent breaks to help the teacher hand out supplies.

Appendix J

Lesson 4

Grade: Preschool

Aim: Bullying situations: what to do if you are bullied or see someone being bullied.

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Identify bullying behaviors.

- Respond appropriately to bullying situations.

Materials:

Chart paper

No Bullying Pledge

Large sheets of paper

Markers

Art material

References:

Stop Bullying: Power in Numbers

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WwD0Zgk8jGA#t=98

Procedure:

1. The teacher will show the students the video "Stop Bullying: Power in Numbers" by Wild Brain.

2. The teacher will ask the students to identify the bullies, victims, and bystanders in the video. The teacher will then ask the students to identify the bullying behaviors that are seen in the video.

3. The teacher will ask the students what they can do if they are being bullied or see someone else being bullied. She will record the answers on chart paper.

4. The teacher will then discuss the proper steps to take if you or someone you know is being bullied. The teacher will instruct the students to:

    a. Stand up tall and straight like a superhero.

    b. Speak in a clear and strong voice.

    c. Tell the bully to stop and that you don't like it. For example: "Stop doing that. I don't like it when you take my things without asking. Stop calling me names, I don't like it."

    d. Repeat yourself.

    e. If speaking up seems too hard or unsafe, walk away and stay away.

    f. Find an adult to stop the bullying.

    g. Talk to an adult you trust. Do not keep your feelings inside.

5. The teacher and class will come up with a "No Bullying" pledge for their classroom and have all the students write their names underneath it.

6. The teacher will then divide the students up into groups. The teacher will tell the students that their job is to draw "The Greatest American Hero" or someone that

can "Stop Bullying in a Single Bound!" Using the arts and crafts supplies, the students will trace a person and create their own superhero against bullying.

7. The students will come up with a name for their superhero and draw what they would look like. They can also decide on characteristics their superhero has.

8. The teacher will hang the superheroes around the classroom to protect the students against bullies.

Assessment:

Students will create a "No Bullying" pledge together for their classroom. In addition, they will work together to create superheroes for the classroom that protect against bullying.

Accommodations:

English Language Learners – ELL students will be allowed to draw their answers about what they would do if they see someone being bullied. In addition, ELL students will be allowed to speak in one word phrases or act out how they stand up to a bully.

Appendix K

Suggestions for Children's Books that Include Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Families

Tracy Burt, Aimee Gelnaw, and Lee Klinger Lesser

Reading children's books that are inclusive of LGBT families is an essential strategy both for supporting the self-esteem of children from these families and for teaching all children about the diversity of families. Building the skills and readiness to include these books in your curriculum is a process. Here are some suggestions for responding to common questions and concerns.

If a child asks, "Why doesn't Tyrone have a mommy?" or "Why does Tyrone have two daddies?" a simple response might be, "Isn't Tyrone lucky? He has two daddies who love him." When we focus on the love and care from whoever is in the child's family, we are focusing on what is most important. We can move from there to explore, in a fun and positive way, the many ways in which families are the same and different.

If children ask questions you don't know how to answer, you can say you are not sure, but you will find out and get back to them. Be sure to follow up with an answer that is age appropriate.

If you are nervous about reading a story, think about the questions children are likely to ask. You can practice answering them and review your answers with an early childhood colleague.

If the books are new to your center, it is important to be prepared for different responses from families and the community. Starting with a book that surveys all different kinds of families might be easier than starting with a book that focuses only on LGBT families. Children usually do not need much of an introduction or explanation; issues arise when adults challenge your choice to read a specific book. Listen to peoples' concerns and create a space for dialogue, but be clear about your own commitment, and the commitment of the program, to diversity and to respect for all families.

The NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct (NAEYC 2005) provides a foundation early childhood educators can rely on when explaining the reason for reflecting diverse families throughout the curriculum.

Family survey books

These books include many kinds of families, including LGBT families.

All Families Are Special, by Norma Simon. Illus. by Teresa Flavin. 2003. Morton Grove: Albert Whitman and Company.

 A teacher talks about her own family while children in the class share stories of their families in this warm and simple book that affirms its title: All families are special.

Everywhere Babies, by Susan Meyers. Illus. by Marla Frazee. 2001. San Diego: Harcourt Inc. A charming, award-winning board book for infant/toddlers, that features
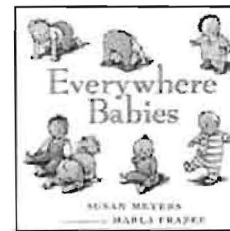
 illustrations of babies and their parents—including LGBT parents—in loving and caring moments together.

One Hundred Is a Family, by Pam Munoz Ryan. Illus. by Benrei Huang. 1994. New York: Hyperion Paperbacks for Children. Playful illustrations that include many different kinds of families fill this book that counts up to 100.

Who's in a Family? by Robert Skutch. Illus. by Laura Nienhaus. 1995 Berkeley: Tricycle Press. With fun illustrations, of people and animals, diversity of families is described in an engaging way for children.


naeyc 1, 2, 7

Stories that happen to be about LGBT families

The main characters in these stories come from LGBT families.

And Tango Makes Three, by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell. Illus. by Henry Cole. 2005. Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing. Based on a true story of two male penguins at the Central Park Zoo who raised a baby penguin together, this is a heartwarming and fun story.

Emma and Meesha My Boy, by Kaitlyn Considine. Illus. by Binny Hobbs. 2005. www.twomombooks.com. A very simple book in which Emma learns from her two moms how to be nice to her cat. It is easy and engaging for children with cartoonlike illustrations.
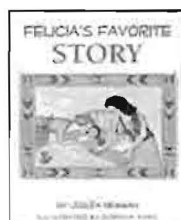
Felicia's Favorite Story, by Lesléa Newman. Illus. by Adriana Romo. 2002. Ridley Park, PA: Two Lives Publishing. In this simple book children learn about a loving family with two moms and an adopted daughter. They listen in on Felicia's favorite bedtime story—how her family came to be.

Daddy, Papa, and Me, by Leslea Newman. Illus. by Carol Thompson. 2009. Berkeley: Tricycle Press. A toddler and his two daddies spend the day together. Everyday activities are colorfully drawn and written about in rhyming text.

Mama Eat Ant, Yuck! by Barbara Lynn Edmonds. Illus. by Matthew Daniele. Eugene, Oregon: Hundredth Munchy Publications. A playful, funny story about one mother in a two-mom household who eats some ant-covered raisins by mistake and inspires her youngest daughter to begin speaking: "Mama eat ant, yuck!"

Uncle Bobby's Wedding, by Sarah S. Brannen. 2008. G.P. Putnam's and Sons. This tender story, using animals as the characters, focuses on Chloe, who is sad because her Uncle Bobby is marrying his partner; she is afraid that she will not be special to him anymore. She ends up discovering that she now has two uncles who love and cherish her

Books that address issues concerning LGBT families

These books raise and address some of the conflicts or issues that may arise in relation to LGBT families.

Antonio's Card/La Tarjeta de Antonio, by Rigoberto Gonzalez. Illus. By Cecilia Concepción Álvarez. 2005. (Bilingual English/Spanish). San Francisco: Children's Book Press. In this book for children 5 or older, Antonio searches for a way to express his affection for his mother and her partner on Mother's Day.

Asha's Mums, by Rosamund Elwind and Michele Paulse. Illus. by Dawn Lee. 1993. Toronto: Women's Press. Asha has to face the bias and ignorance of her teacher, who doesn't accept her family. Asha's moms advocate for her, and all the children learn more about the diversity of families.

Molly's Family, by Nancy Garden. Illus. by Sharon Wooding. 2004. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux. While happily drawing a family picture for back-to-school night, Molly is confronted by a classmate who tells her that she can't have a "mommy and a mama." The teacher's response and resolution are valuable role models.

One Dad, Two Dads, Brown Dad, Blue Dads, by Johnny Valentine. Illus. by Melody Sarecky. 1994. Los Angeles: Alyson Wonderland. In a whimsical and playful manner, a child learns about another child's family composed of blue dads. Many of the questions asked about having blue dads are the same questions often asked about having two dads.

Gender

The main characters in these books come to a new understanding of gender stereotyping and gender identity in themselves and others.

10,000 Dresses, by Marcus Ewert. Illus. by Rex Ray. 2008. Seven Stories Press. A very well-written story about Bailey, who in her dreams is a young girl. Every night she dreams about magical dresses. Unfortunately, when Bailey wakes up, nobody wants to hear about her beautiful dreams because she is anatomically a boy, and her family and friends say she shouldn't be thinking about dresses at all. However, Bailey meets an older girl who is touched and inspired by Bailey's dreams and courage. Eventually they start making dresses together that represent Bailey's dreams coming to life.

Carly: She's Still My Daddy, by Mary Boenke. Illus. by Dolores Dudley. 2004. PFLAG/TNET. (Available from Two Lives Publishing.) This booklet, written from a child's point of view, is about a father's transition from Carl to Carly. This is the only early elementary text for children that we have found on a transgender family.

Pugdog, by Andrea U'Ren. 2001. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. Gender biases and assumptions are explored in this fun book about the mistaken gender identity of a dog. This is a lively, engaging way to open up the topic of gender biases and roles with children.

Resources

NAEYC. 2005. Position statement. NAEYC code of ethical conduct and statement of commitment. Rev. ed. Brochure. Washington, DC: Author. www.naeyc.org/positionstatements/ethical_conduct