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RESEARCH

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LGBTQ parent concerns and parent–child communication about the Parental Rights in Education Bill ("Don't Say Gay") in Florida

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Abstract

Objective: The current study sought to understand LGBTQ parents' concerns about how Florida's Parental Rights in Education Act (commonly referred to as the "Don't Say Gay" bill) would impact their children and family unit and whether and how they communicated with children about it.

Background: Florida's Parental Rights in Education bill, which was signed into law in 2022, has implications for educators, youth, and families, including LGBTQ parent families. Indeed, children in LGBTQ parent families already face marginalization and erasure in school settings, where curricula and policies often primarily center and reflect heterosexual parent families.

Method: We surveyed LGBTQ parents ($N = 90$) in Florida in 2022. The sample was primarily cisgender women (62%) and cisgender men (26%), with most participants identifying as lesbian (52%) or gay (23%). Almost two thirds of participants (63%) were White, and almost one third (32%) were Latinx.

Findings: More than three quarters of participants were worried about the bill. Primary concerns centered on how it would restrict their children's ability to speak freely about their families in the classroom and impact their sense of self by cultivating a climate where their families were marginalized. Parents also highlighted broader concerns about how the legislation would fuel further anti-LGBTQ sentiment. Parents with few concerns typically had very young or high-school–age children or had children in private school. Parents who talked about the bill with their children tended to be parents of older children, with parents of younger children often emphasizing family diversity to foster a sense of pride.

Conclusion: The Parental Rights in Education Act and other anti-LGBTQ legislation have the potential to impact a range

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of vulnerable children and families, including LGBTQ parent families.

Implications: Youth and family advocates and practitioners should work to educate others about the effects of this legislation and support LGBTQ parent families in collective action and resiliency efforts.

KEYWORDS

"Don't Say Gay", Florida, discrimination, LGBTQ parents, parental rights in education, schools, stigma

Florida's Parental Rights in Education Act, which is often labeled the "Don't Say Gay" bill, was signed into law in 2022. This bill has implications for educators, youth, and families (Lenson, 2015). It may contribute to hostility toward LGBTQ teachers and youth who are out about their identities and create a chilling effect whereby LGBTQ youth are afraid to come out in school (Kline et al., 2022). It may also impact the learning environment and well-being of children with LGBTQ parents, as well as school engagement and sense of belonging in LGBTQ parents (Kline et al., 2022; Lenson, 2015; Luterman, 2022; Sosin, 2022). This mixed-methods exploratory study, which is grounded in an integrated framework that incorporates ecological and minority stress perspectives, uses a non-representative sample to understand LGBTQ parents' (a) concerns about how the bill would impact their children and family and (b) if and how they sought to communicate with children about it. This exploratory study brings attention to how a select group of LGBTQ parents are making meaning of the potential impact and implications of this legislation.

According to Bronfenbrenner's (1986) ecological framework, development occurs within multiple interacting contexts, with influences ranging from distal contexts (e.g., national political climate, state laws) to proximal settings (e.g., neighborhood, family). Children are impacted by state laws and policies, as well as their schools and communities, which may reflect the broader norms and attitudes of state politics. Bronfenbrenner emphasized the role of context in shaping development and has urged scholars to adopt an interactionist approach that integrates personal and contextual variables in predicting adjustment.

One factor with personal and contextual manifestations that is relevant in the lives of LGBTQ parent families is minority stress (Brooks, 1992; Meyer, 1995). Minority stress describes the added stress that people from marginalized groups experience related to the stigma, prejudice, and discrimination they encounter because of their identities and lesser social power (Meyer, 2003). Discriminatory laws at the distal level may trickle down to more proximal settings (e.g., community, schools), creating a sense of disharmony between individuals and the oppressive social context in which they live, resulting in stress (Meyer et al., 2011). Both children and their LGBTQ parents may experience stigma and exclusion in their communities and schools, which constitute stressors that may result in poor mental health outcomes (Goldberg & Byard, 2020; Meyer, 2003). Similarly, the introduction and passing of anti-LGBTQ laws and policies have been found to cause significant stress for LGBTQ people and their families (Abreu et al., 2022a, 2022b; Rostosky et al., 2009).

HISTORY AND EFFECTS OF LEGISLATION RELATED TO THE PARENTAL RIGHTS IN EDUCATION ACT ("DON'T SAY GAY" BILL)

On March 28, 2022, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis signed into law the Parental Rights in Education bill (HB 1557). It went into effect on July 1, 2022 (Strauss, 2022). This bill asserts that curricular instruction by school personnel that deals with sexual orientation or gender

identity cannot (a) occur in kindergarten through grade 3 or (b) occur in a manner that is not age-appropriate or developmentally appropriate for students in accordance with state standards. This bill is the latest in a flood of laws that have been introduced to limit LGBTQ related topics in the classroom: In 2022 alone, 20 other states have introduced "Don't Say Gay" laws, and in several states, versions of the legislation (e.g., that curtail or ban LGBTQ topics in the curriculum) have existed for decades (Sosin, 2022).

Supporters of the legislation assert that it allows parents to determine if, when, and how to introduce LGBTQ topics to their children. Opponents worry that it will negatively affect schools beyond K–3 because it suggests that LGBTQ identities are invalid or inferior, and such messaging will harm LGBTQ parents, youth, and teachers as well as their families (Goldstein, 2022; Paluska, 2022). Critics have voiced particular concerns about LGBTQ youth—who already experienced high levels of discrimination in schools before the bill was passed—as well as LGBTQ parents and their children, who are also marginalized in schools (Diaz, 2022; Luterman, 2022).

SCHOOLS IN CONTEXT: EFFECTS OF SCHOOL CLIMATE ON LGBTQ YOUTH

Schools—a primary context in which children develop—may reflect or be infused by the norms and attitudes of the regions in which they are located, as well as the specific laws and policies introduced or passed in their states or regions. LGBTQ youth living in the South and Midwest (whose residents report less tolerant attitudes toward LGBTQ people than those in other regions: Baunach, 2012), for example, have been found to experience higher levels of victimization in school related to their gender expression than LGBTQ youth in the Northeast (Kosciw & Diaz, 2008). A 2018 study found that school district voting record moderated the relation between LGBTQ identity and bullying, such that LGBTQ students in more conservative districts, or districts with more votes for Donald Trump in the 2016 election, experienced more bullying, which was linked to higher distress (Hobaica et al., 2021). In more conservative-leaning districts, LGBTQ students have reported less teacher intervention, which in turn is related to more bullying and greater psychological distress for LGBTQ students (Hobaica et al., 2021). Thus, school culture—and the degree to which it reflects broader community and state attitudes related to LGBTQ and other marginalized statuses—may have important implications for all students, including but not limited to LGBTQ youth.

Research examining school culture (without attention to the broader social context or political climate) also points to the impact of curricula, policies, and school climate on LGBTQ youth's educational, social, and mental health outcomes. Snapp et al. (2015) found that among both LGBTQ and heterosexual students, attending a school with LGBTQ-inclusive curricula was related to higher reports of safety and less bullying. Further, LGBTQ students in districts with antibullying policies that are inclusive of sexual orientation and gender identity/expression are less likely to be victimized and feel unsafe at school than LGBTQ students in districts with generic antibullying policies or no identifiable policy (Kull et al., 2016). Research has also established that the presence of Gender-Sexuality Alliances (GSAs) in schools can benefit all students, but especially LGBTQ youth (Abreu et al., 2016; Marx & Kettrey, 2016). Significantly, LGBTQ youth who possess multiple marginalized statuses (e.g., students of color, trans students) may report different, or higher, levels of school victimization (e.g., Zongrone et al., 2020).

LGBTQ PARENT FAMILIES

LGBTQ parent families represent an understudied group in the context of the Parental Rights in Education Act and similar legislation. LGBTQ parent families may be impacted

by this legislation insomuch as it shapes school climate and curricula related to diverse sexualities and genders, but they are rarely highlighted when discussing the consequences of the bill. Like LGBTQ youth, children of LGBTQ parents may face stigma in schools—but as a function of their family structure as opposed to their own identities (Goldberg & Byard, 2020). For example, they face implicit exclusion as a function of curriculum and language that do not acknowledge their families' existence (Gabb, 2004; Goldberg et al., 2017). They may also face bullying at higher levels than children with heterosexual parents, including verbal harassment because of their family structure and/or their presumed or actual sexual orientation (Fairtlough, 2008; Goldberg & Byard, 2020; Kosciw & Diaz, 2008).

Research suggests that although young children with LGBTQ parents may have relatively limited experiences with homophobia, elementary and middle school are more challenging in this regard (Cody et al., 2017; Gartrell et al., 2005; Goldberg & Byard, 2020). Experiences with marginalization and victimization in school have in turn been linked to these children's mental health outcomes. Multiple studies have found that perceptions of heterosexism and stigma (Bos & van Balen, 2008; Vyncke et al., 2014) and experiences of victimization (Farr et al., 2016; Goldberg & Garcia, 2020) are related to poorer psychological adjustment in children of LGBTQ parents.

As noted, schools are influenced by the communities and regions in which they are embedded and thus shape outcomes among children with LGBTQ parents. Goldberg and Garcia (2020) found that in more rural areas, children of lesbian and gay (LG) parents experienced more victimization than children of heterosexual parents, according to parent reports. Similarly, Power et al. (2014) found that LGBTQ parents in less urban areas were more likely to report that their children experienced homophobic bullying and discrimination at school, highlighting the importance of region and urbanicity (and perhaps connections to other LGBTQ people and a visible LGBTQ community) to children's and family's safety and well-being.

Aware of the potential for alienation and victimization and the potential for certain schools and communities to be more accepting than others, LGBTQ parents may seek out certain geographic regions and schools in an effort to protect their families (Goldberg, 2014; Goldberg & Byard, 2020). One study found that two thirds of LG parents considered the gay-friendliness of the school or daycare in their preschool selection process (Goldberg & Smith, 2014a). The ability to choose one's daycare or school is enhanced by economic resources, such that affluent LGBTQ parents have the option of choosing more LGBTQ-inclusive schools (Goldberg et al., 2018). Yet LGBTQ parents' school priorities are layered and complex and are informed by their families' children's intersectional identities, such that LGBTQ parents of color and LGBTQ parents of queer or trans children may have additional concerns related to child safety and bullying (Goldberg et al., 2016; Kuvalanka et al., 2018; Radis & Nadan, 2021).

In addition to choosing certain communities or schools to protect their children from stigma, LGBTQ parents may rely on other strategies as well. They may be especially likely to be involved in their children's schooling (e.g., volunteering, donating books and resources), in part to prevent or interrupt problematic school practices (e.g., curricular exclusion, bullying) and ensure that their children are being treated fairly (Goldberg & Byard, 2020; Goldberg et al., 2017). One study found that LG parents were more likely than heterosexual parents to talk to school administrators if their children were being victimized (Goldberg & Garcia, 2020). In addition to advocating for greater inclusivity and acceptance within their children's schools, LGBTQ parents also talk to their children about heterosexism and homophobia and also teach them to advocate for themselves (Gabriele-Black et al., 2021; Ollen & Goldberg, 2015).

COMMUNICATION WITH CHILDREN ABOUT DISCRIMINATORY LEGISLATION

Some research has begun examining aspects of how LGBTQ parents talk to their children about, and socialize them to understand, their LGBTQ family identity and the parallel existence of societal homophobia (Gartrell et al., 2000; Goldberg et al., 2016; Goldberg & Smith, 2016). LGBTQ parents have been found to balance a desire to prepare their children for heterosexism and homophobia with the wish to facilitate pride in their families (Breshears, 2011; Gartrell et al., 2000; Goldberg et al., 2016). In preparing their children for homophobia, lesbian mothers often accompany such messaging by emphasizing the existence of different types of families and the value of their family form—and view their children as benefiting from such dual messaging and being able to cope better with adversity because of it (Gartrell et al., 2000). Some parents may be cautious in the extent to which they engage in preparatory socialization, wishing not to "overly focus" on the ways that their children's family structure may differ from their peers (Goldberg et al., 2016). Goldberg and Smith (2016) found that among LG parents, parents of older children tend to engage in more socialization and preparation around heterosexism. The authors suggest that perceptions of emotional and cognitive readiness may influence parents such that they view older children as more capable of engaging in such conversations.

Heterosexism may at times take the form of institutionalized discrimination, including legal discrimination. Notably, little work has examined the discourse within LGBTQ parent families about specific legislation that might affect them—although whether and how LGBTQ parents communicate with their children about the Parental Rights in Education bill is potentially important because it may help children to prepare for and deal with adversity at school and beyond (Gartrell et al., 2000). One exception is a study by Ollen and Goldberg (2015), who interviewed 22 parents in Florida after the lifting of the gay adoption ban about if and how they had talked with their children about the ban and legal inequities more generally. Most parents who discussed the ban had teenage children whom they saw as capable of understanding the ramifications of such legislation. They initiated discussions to prepare their children for bias and also foster pride. Parents who chose not to engage in conversation about the ban most often had young children and said they planned to initiate such discussions in the future (Ollen & Goldberg, 2015).

CURRENT STUDY

Research shows that LGBTQ parents may possess concerns about how their children will be treated in school, both via curricular exclusion and marginalization by school staff and peers. Such concerns may inform parents' school selection process (e.g., seeking out LGBTQ-inclusive educational environments) as well as their involvement within schools (e.g., advocacy for inclusivity). Research shows that some LGBTQ parents discuss with their children the negative consequences of oppressive laws on their families, yet no work to our knowledge has explored LGBTQ parents' worries and concerns about the "Don't Say Gay" bill, which has a specific impact on children's experiences in educational settings, or how parents are communicating these to their children. To address this gap, our study is guided by the following research questions:

1. At a descriptive level, how concerned are LGBTQ parents about "Don't Say Gay"?
2. What specific worries do LGBTQ parents describe about how the bill may affect their children and family?
3. To what extent, and how, are LGBTQ parents communicating with their children about "Don't Say Gay"?

METHOD

Participants

See Table 1 for detailed demographic information. The current sample of 90 parents was mostly made up of cisgender (cis) women ($n = 55$, 61.1%); one quarter were cis men ($n = 23$, 25.6%), and the remainder were trans, nonbinary, or "something else." Most identified as lesbian ($n = 47$, 52.2%) or gay ($n = 21$, 23.3%). Most identified as either White ($n = 57$, 63.3%) or Latinx ($n = 29$, 32.2%). The sample is more likely to be Hispanic and less likely to be Black or Asian compared with data on Florida's population: In 2020, 61.6% of Florida residents were White only, 18.7% Hispanic, 12.4% Black only, and 6% Asian only (Florida Census, 2020).

The sample is well educated, with most ($n = 80$, 88.9%) having at least a college education. Most parents were employed ($n = 75$, 83.3%). Most participants ($n = 71$, 78.9%) reported a family (household) income of over $100 K. They were somewhat more affluent than the average resident in Florida, where the average household income is about $83 K (Income by Zip Code, 2022). Most described themselves as middle-class ($n = 34$, 37.8%) or upper middle-class ($n = 33$, 36.7%), with fewer endorsing upper ($n = 16$, 17.8%) or working ($n = 7$, 7.8%) class. None indicated lower class.

Most ($n = 75$, 83.3%) were married. The majority ($n = 72$, 80%) reported a political party affiliation of Democrat. Forty-four participants (48.9%) were biological parents to at least one child, 24 (26.7%) were nonbiological (e.g., via insemination) and legal parents to at least one child, and 28 (31.1%) were adoptive parents to at least one child. Smaller numbers were stepparents ($n = 4$, 4.4%) and foster parents ($n = 4$, 4.4%). Forty-one (45.6%) had one child; 38 (42.2%) had two children; and 11 (12.2%) had three to six children. Across all 90 families, respondents were the parents of 163 children: 74 cisgender girls, 74 cisgender boys, and nine trans/nonbinary children, with six missing gender information. Respondents were parents of 68 children under 6 years, 57 children ages 6 to 17 years, and 38 children 18 years or older. (All parents of ≥18-year-olds had at least one child under 18.) Respondents were parents of 98 White children, 35 Latinx children, 15 biracial/multiracial children, 10 Black children, and four Asian children, with one missing response.

Geographically, the sample resided in a few key counties. Almost half lived in either Miami-Dade ($n = 23$, 25.6%) or Broward ($n = 19$, 21.1%) County. Miami-Dade County, which includes Miami, Miami Beach, and Hialeah, has a large percentage of Latinx/Hispanic (69.1%) residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). It leans Democratic: 38.0% of voters are registered as Democrats, and 28.6% as Republicans (Florida Department of State, 2022). It is generally regarded as LGBTQ+ friendly, although some parts of the county (e.g., Hialeah) are seen as less LGBTQ+ friendly than others (Human Rights Campaign, 2021; Zane, 2018). Broward County, which includes Fort Lauderdale, Pembroke Pines, and Hollywood, has a large population of Latinx/Hispanic (32%) residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). It leans Democratic (48.0% of voters are registered as Democrats, 21.2% as Republicans; Florida Department of State, 2022) and is generally regarded as LGBTQ+ friendly (Human Rights Campaign, 2021).

Smaller numbers of participants resided in Alachua County ($n = 10$, 11.1%; e.g., Gainesville), in which 11% identify as Latinx/Hispanic and 47.8% are registered Democrats; Leon County ($n = 7$, 7.8%; e.g., Tallahassee), where 7% identify as Latinx/Hispanic and 51.9% are registered Democrats; and Palm Beach County ($n = 5$, 5.6%; e.g., Boca Raton), where 23.9% identify as Latinx/Hispanic and 40.0% are Democrats; (Florida Department of State, 2022; U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). Four participants or fewer resided in an additional 14 counties, including Seminole, Pinellas, Orange, Hillsborough, and Saint Lucie counties.

TABLE 1 Demographic characteristics of participants ($N = 90$)

Demographic characteristic	*n* (%)
Gender	
Cisgender women	55 (61.1%)
Cisgender men	23 (25.6%)
Nonbinary individuals	5 (5.6%)
Trans woman	1 (1.1%)
Something else (e.g., womon)	5 (5.6%)
Missing	1 (1.1%)
Sexual orientation	
Lesbian	47 (52.2%)
Gay	21 (23.3%)
Bisexual	9 (10.0%)
Queer	5 (5.6%)
Something else (e.g., pansexual, asexual and lesbian)	6 (6.7%)
Race	
White	57 (63.3%)
Latinx	29 (32.2%)
Asian	2 (2.2%)
Black	1 (1.1%)
Something else (e.g., Middle Eastern)	1 (1.1%)
Education	
High school diploma	1 (1.1%)
Some college/associates	9 (10.0%)
College degree	24 (26.7%)
Master's degree	31 (34.4%)
PhD, MD, or JD	25 (27.8%)
Family (combined) income	
Under $50 K	4 (4.4%)
$50 K–$100 K	15 (16.7%)
$101–$150 K	24 (26.7%)
$151–$200 K	16 (17.8%)
$201–$250 K	7 (7.8%)
More than $250 K	23 (25.6%)
Employment	
Employed full time	69 (76.7%)
Employed part time	6 (6.7%)
Unemployed	2 (2.2%)
Retired	2 (2.2%)
Homemakers	11 (12.2%)
Marital status	1 (1.1%)
Married	75 (83.3%)
Partnered, not married	7 (7.8%)
Divorced/separated	6 (6.7%)
Widowed	1 (1.1%)

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Demographic characteristic	*n* (%)
Political affiliation	
Democrat	72 (80.0%)
Independent	6 (6.7%)
Republican	5 (5.6%)
Green Party	1 (1.1%)
Something else (e.g., no party affiliation, socialist, libertarian)	4 (4.4%)

Procedure

Interviews and correspondence with key stakeholders (e.g., attorneys in Florida) and LGBTQ parents in Florida informed the development of the survey instrument. The principal investigator (PI) also received feedback from several LGBTQ parents in Florida who participated in a previous study of hers approximately 10 years ago. The PI has extensive experience doing research with LGBTQ parents, with particular attention to the contexts that shape their lives. The final survey instrument was reviewed by stakeholders, who shared that it captured the objectives of the study, the questions were easy to read, and the language used was accessible to community members. The survey was also proofed for ease of use by two doctoral students in psychology. Minor edits were made to the survey such as rewording questions to be shorter and clearer.

Respondents were invited to participate if they were an LGBTQ parent of at least one child under 18 years of age and currently lived in Florida. The survey was hosted on the online platform Qualtrics and took about 25 minutes to complete (median duration = 27 minutes). It contained a variety of closed- and open-ended questions. Participants were recruited widely, using personal and professional contacts, LGBTQ and Florida-specific groups and organizations, and attorneys and other professionals who work with LGBTQ people and parents in Florida. Both graphic (e.g., jpg) and text-based materials describing the study were distributed. Individuals were asked to share the information with others who met the study criteria. To avoid bots and fraudulent responding, study information was not posted on Twitter or Instagram, and organizations and individuals with whom the survey link was shared were asked not to post it there to preserve the integrity of the survey. The survey was available to complete from June 13 through September 9. Respondents had the option to be entered into drawings for one of five $50 gift cards. The survey was approved by the institutional review board at Clark University.

All data were carefully inspected for evidence of inconsistent responding (e.g., providing two different responses for how many children the respondent had), unusually low response times, duplicate responses to open-ended survey questions, or completion of <75% of the items. This resulted in the deletion of four responses. From the remaining sample of 113 participants, 23 were eliminated from the current analysis because of partial data: they Typically responded only to the quantitative items, and our primary focus was the open-ended questions. A total of 90 participants had data on all items of interest, and thus, we report data for these participants only as they responded to the focal study questions involving concerns and parent–child communication about "Don't Say Gay."

Measures

The survey contained a number of demographic items. It also contained closed- and open-ended questions focusing on parents' concerns about "Don't Say Gay" and its effects on their children

and families and their communication with children related to the bill. These questions included the following:

1. How worried are you about the effects of the Parental Rights in Education Act ("Don't Say Gay" bill/law) on your children and family? 1 = *not at all worried*, 2 = *not very worried*, 3 = *neutral*, 4 = *somewhat worried*, 5 = *very worried*.
2. If relevant: What are your concerns about your children? How do those differ, if at all, from your partner's concerns? Your children's concerns?
3. In light of the bill, have you considered moving your child to a new school?
4. How have you talked with your children about it (or other recent bills/legislation)? What have you said, and how have they responded? Please share their ages if relevant.
5. What are your major reasons for living in Florida? Major downsides? Please elaborate/explain.
6. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience as an LGBTQ parent in Florida?

Data analysis

Counts and descriptive statistics were calculated for closed-ended items (e.g., concern about children). Responses to the open-ended survey portions ranged from one sentence to one page of text, with most respondents providing responses of three to five sentences. We used qualitative content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004) to examine responses from the open-ended portions of the survey. Content analysis is a standard method for examining open-ended responses to survey questions, generating new insights through the process of systematically identifying, coding, and categorizing primary patterns or themes in the data. Through careful exploration and classification of qualitative data, we condensed words to text into a smaller number of content categories to develop a coding system to organize the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

For this article, the first author's analysis focused on parents' descriptions of their concerns and worries about the effects of the bill on their children and families and whether and how they communicated information about the bill or their concerns about it to their children. The first author first read all open-ended responses to gain familiarity with the data, including overarching themes in responses. Responses were then annotated—that is, via line-by-line coding, the first author labeled phrases relevant to the primary domains of interest (e.g., worries). These codes were abstracted under larger categories and subcategories, which were positioned in relation to each other, such that connective links were established in an effort to capture participants' responses in a meaningful way. For example, parents whose children were very young or older (e.g., high school age) voiced less concern about the effects of the laws on their child, as did parents of children in private school. A tentative coding scheme was produced and reapplied to the data, such that all data was then recoded according to the revised coding scheme.

Afterward, two student research assistants served as auditors and analyzed half of the open-ended portions of the survey as a basic "check" on primary themes and respondent counts to strengthen the credibility of the analysis. Author and auditor counts for various codes and subcodes were highly similar; interrater agreement was typically more than 92%. Minor discrepancies were discussed and reconciled with the first author. For example, one coder counted bullying and peer mistreatment under one code, whereas another differentiated between more explicit and aggressive forms of peer mistreatment (bullying) and more implicit forms (e.g., isolation). This led the author to make minor modifications in the scheme—such that, for example, these forms of peer mistreatment were differentiated. Finally, once the main coder and auditors had reached consensus, the second author provided further feedback about the finalized coding structure, resulting in rearranging several sections for cohesion and flow.

FINDINGS

Parents' concerns about the "Don't Say Gay" Bill

Regarding their level of worry about the effects of the Parental Rights in Education Act on their children and families, more than half ($n = 53$, 58.9%) were "very worried." Twenty-six (28.9%) were "somewhat worried," four (3.3%) were "neutral," two (2.2%) were "not very worried," and five (5.6%) were "not at all worried." Asked if they were motivated to make any changes to their children's schooling, 10 (11.0%) had considered moving their child to a new school, three (3.3%) had taken steps to do so, and three (3.3%) had considered homeschooling.

Regarding concerns about their children related to the bill, parents' primary concerns centered on how the bill would not only restrict their children's ability to speak freely about their families in the classroom but would impact children's sense of self and safety by cultivating a climate where their families marked as "other." Parents also highlighted broader concerns about how the legislation would foster a hostile climate in Florida and beyond. Some had few concerns, which they attributed to child and school factors. A small group voiced no concerns. We first discuss parents who voiced concerns about school and increased political hostility, followed by those parents with mitigated concerns and those without concerns. We end by discussing how parents communicated with their children about the effects of the law.

School-related concerns and worries

Parents who described concerns related to the bill consisted of all 53 of those who said that they were very worried, plus five of the 26 who said that they were somewhat worried ($n = 58$, 64.4%). They described a variety of school-related concerns about the effects of the "Don't Say Gay" bill: (a) children's inability to participate fully in school, (b) hostile school climate, (c) peer exclusion and bullying, (d) internalized shame, and (e) parent engagement and inclusion.

Inability to participate fully in school

Many participants ($n = 28$, 30.8%) spoke to their fears that their children would be unable to participate fully in school, either because (a) they were prevented from talking openly about their family or referring to them in school assignments and activities ("I worry about censoring and silencing in the classroom"), or (b) they simply feared talking about their family amid an invalidating environment. Parents voiced anxiety that their children would "feel neglected by the school system," and worried about their children "not being treated equally in the classroom." A Latinx lesbian cis woman wondered, "Will she be able to complete family-themed assignments? Will she suffer from lack of positive representation of families that look like hers?" This type of marginalization, parents felt, would have a negative impact on their children's ability to access an equal education; indeed, it placed restrictions on their "freedom of speech" and "educational opportunities," as well as their ability to "get the resources and support [they] need." The possibility of their child not having access to an adequate education angered many parents, who felt that "no child should have to pass on talking about their family because they have gay parents." Significantly, parents who voiced the most intense concerns about their children's ability to participate fully in school typically had school-age children in public schools. Said one White lesbian cis woman,

> The Don't Say Gay bill claims to be for parent rights, but my rights have been taken away: My rights to send my daughter to school freely, my right to live without fear of who I am, my right to not be discriminated against based on my sexual orientation, and my daughter to not be discriminated against based on her parents' sexual orientation.

Parents worried, too, about the consequences of speaking freely about their families, fearing that their children might be chastised or reprimanded. One White bisexual cis woman was concerned about what might happen to children who did not stay silent: "[Given that] my children's experience is now required to be invisible. … Are they going to start arresting kids with rainbow T-shirts that say 'love is love'?"

Some parents were concerned that teachers would feel unable to support their children in the classroom and would become partners in mandating silencing surrounding their families, contributing to structural exclusion and educational inequity. A Latinx queer cis woman shared her concern that teachers would be "scared to say or do anything that will acknowledge or be positive about the shape of his family, and the gender identity of his other parent, who is nonbinary, which is bound to make him feel different and invisible."

In some cases, parents worried not just about teachers feeling unable to support or stand up for their children—as well as LGBTQ children—but also about teachers actively contributing to an unequal and hostile school environment for their children, "saying negative things about LGBTQ people and parents" and "ostracizing them" or, in one case, their children becoming "a target of fanatical and religious educators."

Hostile school climate: "LGBTQ is bad"

At a broader level, some participants ($n = 18$, 19.8%) worried that their children would not simply be unable to talk about their family in the context of classroom discussions or assignments but would be surrounded by a "chilly" or even hostile school climate surrounding LGBTQ issues and identities and diverse family formations. They pointed out that "the clear message is that LGBTQ issues are shameful and must be hidden … and so perverse that no children should ever be around a discussion of the existence of LGBTQ people," which served to communicate to children that LGBTQ identities are "wrong" and they and their families were "less than," thus contributing to closeting, shame, and alienation. "I worry that the school will brainwash them into feeling that they are abnormal," said a Latinx pansexual nonbinary parent. Some of them also referenced the ways in which the general intolerance of difference might extend to other identities, including diverse gender identities, races, and ethnicities.

Six of these parents noted amplified or multilayered concerns about the effects of a stigmatizing climate given that their children were LGBTQ themselves. These parents worried that their children would feel unsafe not only sharing details about their family structure (i.e., the nature of their parents' relationship, or their parents' sexual/gender identities) but expressing their own sexual/gender identities and, in turn, "might feel ashamed of being gay." One parent wondered if her child, who not only had same-sex parents but was adopted, might face exclusion and harm because of the multiple ways in which his identity deviated from dominant norms and depictions of family "since the whole ideology of these people is about the normative family."

Peer exclusion and bullying

Relatedly, some participants ($n = 26$, 28.6%) worried that a hostile school climate would contribute to peer mistreatment of their children, including more implicit manifestations of stigma (i.e., peer exclusion and isolation) and explicit forms (i.e., bullying and harassment).

They "fear[ed] exclusion for our kids" and worried about their children "feeling that they are not a healthy part of society, school, etc." and being "made uncomfortable at school." A few referred explicitly to the trickle-down effect of community attitudes to other families. An Asian American lesbian cis mother said, "I worry that they will have friends who embrace the extremist ideas and will be very hurt by these. Other parents will talk to their children about this which will create a judgmental environment for him." Some spoke to their concerns about how the legislation would stoke homophobia among their children's peers, reinforcing the idea that "LGBTQ people are someone to be ashamed of or afraid of," leading to greater homophobia in the "next generation." Some, too, were not confident that teachers would intervene if their children were bullied because of their parents' or own LGBTQ identities. Thus, fears about peer mistreatment were amplified by worries that youth would be not even be able to access support from caring adults.

Internalized shame and mental health issues

Some participants ($n = 15$, 16.5%) spoke to the ways in which school exclusion, a chilly climate, and peer mistreatment could collectively affect their children, contributing to shame, poor self-esteem, and mental health issues. Participants sometimes referred to their own experiences as LGBTQ people in contextualizing their pain and frustration surrounding such forced silence and invisibility ("Having to hide the truth about their family is wrong. … We know the pain, shame of closeting"). These participants feared that their children would feel ashamed or embarrassed about their family and possibly resent their parents. "I worry about internalized shame for not having a father, all because his family is not reflected in that week's discussion of home and family," said a Latinx lesbian cis woman.

Beyond shame, parents worried about trauma, depression, and suicidality. A White gay cis father, for example, was aware that children exposed to "homophobic environments are going to be at higher risk of depression and suicide" and voiced fear about how a hostile school and community climate might impact his child over time.

Parent engagement and inclusion

Four parents worried about their own ability to be involved and engaged at their child's school, including volunteering in the classroom. They also voiced concerns about their connections with other families both inside school ("I worry that as a parent volunteer I may confront conservative parents who perceive me as a groomer") as well as how they might be treated outside of the school, such as at community events and children's birthday parties.

Concerns about increased political hostility

Significantly, one third ($n = 30$, 33.3%) of parents also commented on the larger sociopolitical climate of Florida in discussing their reactions to the Parental Rights in Education Act, noting that it was just the most recent example of a shifting movement toward greater conservativism and increased hostility toward marginalized groups. In turn, they noted growing fear related to not just the "Don't Say Gay" legislation, but the broader and increasingly hostile climate in Florida. A White queer nonbinary parent said,

> It feels like we have Nazis taking over our state and they are infiltrating our school system to instill hatred of others who do not fit into what they perceive as the

> 'correct' norms. Even the word "equity" is banned from Florida school systems. They are presenting a skewed history and banning books … so that White people do not have their feelings hurt.

Similarly, a Latinx gay cis father observed:

> Florida is an aggressive and hatefully conservative state overall. Growing up Cuban-American in … Miami, there is a strong Republican, conservative, *machista* view on sexuality and other areas of politics. This same sentiment is shared by rural and other towns in Florida. I want my daughter to feel safe to go anywhere in the state … to have self-esteem, feel self-love, be confident, feel welcomed to talk about any topic, have love and compassion for others from different backgrounds and identities, and love whomever they wish. These bills deter that [and] are not in line with my values.

Some parents mentioned other legislative efforts, many education-related, about which they were concerned. A White gay cis father pointed out, "The Don't Say Gay law is just one of many horrible policies being imposed by Republicans like DeSantis," noting that "they're also trying to prohibit gender affirming care, stop the teaching of racism and homophobia, and defund organizations that support equality and protect vulnerable populations."

Indeed, 18 participants (19.8%) specifically mentioned the "Stop W.O.K.E. Act" (Stop Wrongs Against Our Kids and Employees; HB 7), which aims to regulate how schools and businesses address race and gender (also known as the anti–critical race theory [CRT] bill). Said one White bisexual cis woman with several children of color, "Between the Woke Act and Don't Say Gay, I'm not sure my family and I are safe here anymore." In addition, four participants mentioned anti-trans laws that had the potential to affect children's educational experience (via regulating restroom use or athletic participation, for example).

Thirteen parents (14.3%) mentioned their concerns that the bill might not simply be a signal of an increasingly hostile sociopolitical climate within Florida but might be a harbinger of future attacks on LGBTQ rights, such as the right to marry or adopt (or retain custody of) children. Indeed, they worried that it might represent a "steppingstone to bigger antigay laws," as well as reintroducing culture wars that would likely play out in a variety of ways, including "in the coming years with school board politics."

Mitigated concerns

Some parents ($n = 27$, 30%) expressed less intense worries, which they grounded in the type of school their children attended (i.e., private) or their children's age (very young or older). This group consisted of 21 of the 26 parents who were "somewhat worried" about the effects of the bill, the four who were "neutral," and the two who were "not very worried."

Specifically, seven parents (7.8%) said that concerns about the legislation were in part mitigated by the type of school that their children attended. They were less worried given that private schools were not bound to the same rules as public school and/or generally offered more progressive or protected environments. In turn, they felt their children were somewhat protected from the effects of the legislation. A Latinx lesbian cis mother shared, "Things like this are exactly why my children will never attend public school in Florida. We have a private school that is incredibly progressive and welcoming and would absolutely never enforce this law." A White bisexual cis woman said, "Fortunately our son is in a private school so we are sheltered a bit from the direct impact of the Don't Say Gay bill" but also acknowledged that "the general political climate in Florida is scary." These participants

were indeed startled by the bill but felt that their children were somewhat protected from its impact because of their educational context.

Six parents (6.7%) cited their children's young age (not yet school age) in explaining their lessened or mitigated concern. Several hoped that the legislation would be overturned or be proven unenforceable by the time their children entered school. Several were considering moving out of the state before they entered school or were entertaining homeschooling.

Eleven parents (12.2%), on the other hand, asserted that their children were older (e.g., high school) and thus "we don't have to worry about this [as much]." They believed that their children would be less affected by the bill, which was more focused on elementary school grades, and they noted that their children were almost done with K–12 schooling, and thus their sense of self was more firmly established and less vulnerable to the bill's impacts. A White gay cis woman said, "Luckily our daughter is in a private high school and [will] graduate next year. She has been emboldened to help fight against anti-LGBTQ legislation and can't wait to leave the state to go to college [in a] more liberal setting." Some of these parents of older children emphasized that they would be much more concerned if they had young children.

Finally, three parents (3.3%) said that their children were in college. By extension, they said, their children were unaffected by the bill. In one of these cases, a participant noted that their child attended a college outside of Florida and was "not sure our daughter will ever return."

No concerns

A minority of parents ($n = 5$)—those who said that they were "not at all worried"—described an absence of concerns. They agreed with the "Don't Say Gay" bill, based on their interpretation of its meaning, function, and scope. They felt that information related to LGBTQ identities and sexuality should be "taught at home" or agreed that young children specifically should not be taught or exposed to such subjects. Said a White lesbian cis woman, "there are some things that should not be discussed with young children in a school environment." Another parent, a Latinx gay cis man, said:

> Before third grade I don't see the need to discuss anything further than just saying a child might have two dads or two moms. Conversation should just end there and be accepted as being ok. No need to explain anything about sexuality to children that young.

Communicating with children about the effects of the law

Eighty-five (94.4%) participants described various ways in which they communicated with their children about the Parental Rights in Education Act and its impact on them and their family, including (a) open and explicit discussion about the law (and sometimes encouraging resistance); (b) focus on family diversity, love, and acceptance (and sometimes preparatory socialization); and (c) no discussion about the law.

Open and explicit discussion about the law

Thirty participants (35.3%) said that they had discussed "Don't Say Gay" with their children, including, "what the law means and why many LGBTQ people are concerned." Most of them ($n = 23$) explicitly said that they had spoken about it with their older children. They generally noted that these conversations were open, frank, and engaging. The conversations often

involved discussion of the reasons why the bill was problematic, as well as its potential detrimental effects. Some noted that their children were "liberal" and shared their anger, frustration, and incredulousness. Said a White lesbian cis woman, "My kids are fairly sophisticated with their thoughts and arguments; we share a sense of disbelief; we sometimes talk about what we could possibly do other than vote and/or escape." A Latinx lesbian cis woman said, "Our oldest child is 19 years and is madder than we are in the injustice." Importantly, six parents said their children had expressed concerns about how their peers would react. A White bisexual cis woman said,

> When my son was younger, we were out and proud. No issues. His friends would say, "I want to have two mommies too!" Now he's in 8th grade and worries that his teachers, friends will find out. He's terrified of being bullied/hurt because he has two moms.

Encouraging resistance

Seven of these parents (8.2%) shared that these conversations included discussion of what families could do together to fight the legislation ("she helps sell the stickers I made"; "we stress the importance of voting") and how children could resist or challenge the harm that it seemed poised to cause. Said a White gay cis man, "I've explained to my daughter what types of actions we are trying to take to challenge the law and make sure more people understand how the Republican government is scapegoating and demonizing LGBTQ people." Said a Latinx queer cis woman,

> We have told them they can talk about it with peers and that it's important they have good info and challenge incorrect information, especially information that can hurt someone with less power. To us, this isn't really new. It's a continuation of other ways we have to code shift.

Five parents (5.8%) described discussions in which they encouraged resistance in their children, such that they supported them in speaking about their families at school regardless of explicit or implicit guidance not to do so. A White gay cis man emphasized, "I won't have the school mute my children or give them coded messages of shame for who they are or how their family is structured." Speaking about their nonbinary 11-year-old child, a White lesbian cis woman said, "They shared our rage and righteous indignation and have vowed to refuse to comply." Two parents noted that they had also encouraged their children to inform them about any issues they faced in school ("We have had discussions about the possibility of someone telling them not to discuss having two dads, [and] if that happens they need to let us know"), thus reinforcing their presence as staunch advocates and supporters of their children.

Focus on family diversity, love, and acceptance

Some participants ($n = 20$, 23.5%) said that they had not talked about the bill with their young children but had talked about family diversity in ways they hoped would normalize and encourage pride in their family, and perhaps offset the negative effects of the legislation and any marginalization they might face beyond their home. They emphasized that "love is what matters" and "love makes a family." In this way, they prioritized positive socialization messages that emphasized pride ("We emphasize the unique nature of our family and talk about how families come in all shapes and sizes"). A White lesbian cis woman said, "She's still too young to understand but I talk to her [about her family]—I want her to always know that she is perfect just how she is and that the state is wrong, not her family or her."

Preparatory socialization

Eight of these parents (9.4%) focused at least in part on preparation for stigma. Indeed, they emphasized love and pride while also acknowledging the potential for discrimination ("We have emphasized how unique and beautiful our family is [but] that there are people who do not like us"). Notably, the reality that "there are people who don't support families like ours" was sometimes met with confusion. "It has been difficult to help him understand how others can be so hateful," said a White queer nonbinary parent. A Latinx lesbian cis woman shared:

> We read a children's book about the Stonewall Inn and the start of Pride. I talked about how there are people still today trying to hurt LGBTQ people and families, and to let me know if they ever have any problems with kids or grownups at school or after school. We also talk about how crazy it is that anyone could have a problem with our amazing family that is so full of love.

No discussion about the law

Thirty-five participants (41.2%) said that they had not talked about the bill/legislation with their children. In most cases ($n = 25$), this was because of their children's young age: In most cases, they were infants and toddlers ("they're still sweet innocent babes"). These parents often noted that their children lacked the cognitive and developmental skills to understand such information and were relatively unaware of bias more generally ("Our child is too young at age 3 to have experienced much [bias] yet, aside from invasive questions from fellow 3-year-olds"). Four parents of young children acknowledged that they were avoiding talking about the bill because doing so would be introducing the notion that some people believed that their families or their parents' sexuality was an inappropriate topic, which would likely upset their children: "This bill makes being gay seem likes 'it's a bad thing' we can't discuss." Two parents said that they had not discussed it because their children did not seem interested. Five parents simply said they had not spoken to their children about the bill, which in four cases reflected a lack of concern about it—that is, they believed that sexuality should be taught at home.

DISCUSSION

The current study represents a snapshot into some LGBTQ parents' worries and experiences related to the potentially harmful effects of state legislation on their families. More than three quarters of the sample expressed that they were somewhat or very worried about the effects of the bill on their family, and almost 15% had considered or were taking steps to make changes in their children's schooling (e.g., homeschool, private school). Of note here are the ways in which such choices are inevitably constrained by privilege and economic resources. Most LGBTQ parent families who are experiencing or fear stigma do not have the option of moving their children from public school to homeschooling or private school (Goldberg et al., 2018). Certain LGBTQ parent families, such as those who reside in rural or more politically conservative communities and who are in turn more vulnerable to victimization (Goldberg & Garcia, 2020; Power et al., 2014), may unable to "opt out" of the schools embedded in these communities. This highlights the inequitable impact that the Parental Rights in Education Act may ultimately have on families, such that those with lesser power to resist or opt out of certain schooling practices—or to move out of Florida altogether—may be most vulnerable to its ill effects.

Schools as salient contexts of oppression, marginalization, and exclusion for families

Participants' concerns about the law were varied. For almost one third of parents in the sample, particularly those with school-age children in public school, a central concern was that it would restrict their children's ability to speak freely about their families and impede their ability to get an equal education. Some also worried about the potential of teachers to act as agents of structural exclusion, silencing their children, ignoring them, or marginalizing them directly through harmful words and actions. Prior work has established that the presence of LGBTQ-inclusive curricula positively impacts both LGBTQ and heterosexual students' sense of safety and belonging (Goldberg & Byard, 2020; Snapp et al., 2015), as do antibullying policies that are inclusive of sexual orientation and gender identity (Kull et al., 2016). By extension, curricular marginalization of LGBTQ identities has the potential to harm all students, but especially students who are LGBTQ or have LGBTQ parents.

For one fifth of parents in the sample, concerns went beyond issues of educational exclusion to consider the impact of being surrounded by messaging that LGBTQ identities are bad, shameful, and perverse. More than one quarter of parents worried that a negative school climate, in combination with broader community attitudes (including messaging passed down from parents to children) could contribute to peer exclusion and bullying. Such concerns speak to the complex ways in which state, community, and school climates may be interconnected (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Schools are embedded in communities that are in turn shaped by state laws and practices, such that, in the context of discriminatory legislation, people—including parents—may be emboldened to express anti-LGBTQ attitudes, thus contributing to a more oppressive environment for LGBTQ parent families (Meyer et al., 2011). Prior work has found that LGBTQ students in districts with more votes for Donald Trump experienced higher levels of bullying, which was linked to higher distress (Hobaica et al., 2021), highlighting implications of the embeddedness of national, state, community, and school attitudes and climate.

Indeed, some participants also spoke to the consequences of school exclusion, a chilly climate, and peer mistreatment on their children, emphasizing their fears related to internalized shame, mental health struggles, and suicidality. Such concerns are not unrealistic, as prior work has linked perceptions of heterosexist stigma (Bos & van Balen, 2008; Vyncke et al., 2014) and reports of victimization (Farr et al., 2016; Goldberg & Garcia, 2020) to poor psychological adjustment in children of LGBTQ parents specifically. The parents in our sample often grounded these worries in their own experiences as LGBTQ people because they had personally experienced the mental health sequelae of societal intolerance and systemic oppression—which now, somewhat to their disbelief, had the potential to threaten their children's sense of self amid a resurgence of anti-LGBTQ sentiment. Intimately familiar with the nature and impacts of minority stress (Meyer, 1995), they worried about the mental health of their children and LGBTQ youth.

A few parents were concerned about their own ability to be engaged at their child's school, as well as how they might be treated by members of the school community. That so few parents reported such concerns may reflect the newness of the legislation (e.g., it had not yet "sunk in" how it might affect their involvement or the school's reception to them). Given that LGBTQ parents are often very involved in their children's schools (Goldberg et al., 2017) and may use school involvement as a mechanism to surveil, influence, and advocate for their children (Goldberg & Byard, 2020), it will be important to continue to explore parent concerns and experiences related to the "Don't Say Gay" law in the future. In so much as feelings of exclusion may lead to less school involvement by LGBTQ parents (Goldberg & Smith, 2014b) and reduced parental school involvement is associated with poorer psychological adjustment in children of LGBTQ parents (Goldberg & Smith, 2017), of concern is that the "Don't Say Gay" law may have significant negative impacts on parents and children in these families.

One third of parents spoke to concerns related to how "Don't Say Gay" fit into and reflected the broader sociopolitical climate in Florida, noting the many legislative efforts directed not only at LGBTQ people but other vulnerable populations. They recognized how the general climate and specific legislative efforts might impact children's sense of self and safety by marginalizing their families and marking them as "other. Almost one fifth noted the "Stop W.O.K.E. Act" (i.e., the anti-CRT bill) as concerning to them. Like the "Don't Say Gay" bill, "Stop W.O.K.E." may not only restrict teaching and expression of various identities but may fuel hostile attitudes within schools. These parents, then, saw the bill as part of a larger trend in legislation that had the potential to multiply alienate their families (Solocheck, 2022).

Those who voiced less intense or mitigated concerns (e.g., they were "not super worried") typically framed this in terms of their children's age or school type. Parents of very young children explained that the "Don't Say Gay" law did not yet directly apply to or impact them, at least not yet; they had time to possibly move or consider private school. Parents of older children felt that their children were less vulnerable to the direct (i.e., curricular) and indirect (e.g., cultivating shame) impacts of the "Don't Say Gay" bill. Those with children in private schools felt that their children were somewhat buffered from the impacts of the bill because such schools were not beholden to the same regulations as public schools, and their often-progressive values and philosophy deviated more sharply from the broader sociopolitical climate of Florida. Such beliefs echo prior research suggesting that some LGBTQ parents choose progressive private schools as a purposeful maneuver to shield children from broader (e.g., community, national) stigma (Goldberg et al., 2018). A few parents voiced no concerns, amid their agreement that, as one parent said, "sexuality should be taught at home." These parents' view that sexuality education should occur at home does not necessarily imply that they think that young children should receive *no* education about sexuality, gender, or diverse family constellations: Indeed, some may feel that they can offer more appropriate education and guidance than schools would provide. Future work can investigate more fully *how* parents who hold this view believe sexuality should be taught at home.

Parent–child communication in the context of the Parental Rights in Education Act

Consistent with prior work (Goldberg & Smith, 2016; Ollen & Goldberg, 2015), parents who engaged openly and directly with their children about the "Don't Say Gay" bill were typically parents of older children. This somewhat mirrors prior work showing that parents engage in more direct socialization about discrimination with older children (Goldberg & Smith, 2016). These parents also described ways that they and their children were engaging in collective resistance, such as through activism, and some noted that their children were likely to resist the implementation of "Don't Say Gay" in their schools, which parents supported. Further, parents urged their children to tell them about any negative treatment that they encountered. Activism and resistance can be a powerful and adaptive means of countering systemic oppression and enhancing resilience and positive well-being in the face of discrimination (Meyer et al., 2011; Scheadler et al., 2022).

Parents of younger children tended to share that they had not talked about the bill directly but had discussed family diversity in ways they hoped would foster a sense of pride, ideally offsetting the negative effects of the legislation that they might encounter at school. These parents, then, largely focused on positive socialization messages (Gartrell et al., 2000). Some, though, coupled these messages with preparatory socialization, balancing an emphasis on family diversity and pride with preparation for stigma (Goldberg et al., 2016). Many said that they had not discussed the "Don't Say Gay" bill or related topics, typically explaining that their children were too young to understand such conversations. A few that indicated they avoided such

discussions because they had the potential to cause their young children distress. Thus, developmental considerations framed many parents' decision-making about whether and how to talk about the bill (Ollen & Goldberg, 2015), and such considerations are reasonable given evidence that young children are less developmentally capable of interpreting and internalizing stigma, whereas older children possess greater awareness of social-political climates and peer attitudes and have the cognitive skills to process the implications of these for themselves (Prendergast & McPhee, 2017).

Implications for policy, practice, and research

This study has implications for family practitioners and policy advocates. A recent lawsuit (*Equality Florida v. DeSantis*) brought on behalf of students, parents, teachers, and LGBTQ rights groups sought to challenge the constitutionality of the Parental Rights in Education Act. However, in a ruling that affirmed the anti-LGBTQ sentiment fueling "Don't Say Gay," a federal judge dismissed the lawsuit on the grounds that the plaintiffs lacked legal standing to challenge the harms inflicted on students and families. The judge also chastised school districts in Florida for applying the Parental Rights in Education Act far beyond the law's logical bounds (Equality Florida, 2022). Family, youth, and education advocates across the United States must continue to draw attention to Florida's censorship of LGBTQ issues and draw on research that shows how Florida's law may harm children and families, including LGBTQ families. Such actions are especially important as legislative bodies across the United States intensify efforts to pass anti-LGBTQ and especially anti-trans legislation (Abreu et al., 2022a, 2022b), rendering many youth and families additionally vulnerable.

Family practitioners should be aware of the complex fears and concerns that LGBTQ parents may hold regarding their children's well-being and education in the context of "Don't Say Gay" and other oppressive legislation. Supporting parents in their efforts to advocate safely and skillfully for their children and families, while also acknowledging the injustice that requires them to do so in the first place, is necessary. It is essential to validate parents' feelings of anger, frustration, and helplessness while also helping them to continue to move forward—such as by connecting with other families, educators, and organizations that are engaged in collective resistance; helping them to evaluate their options (e.g., in terms of where they live and where their children attend school); and connecting them with therapeutic resources.

Future research must continue to evaluate the impact of the Parental Rights in Education Act for LGBTQ parent families as well as other vulnerable groups, including children who are LGBTQ themselves and/or possess other marginalized statuses (Kline et al., 2022). A child who is Black, adopted, and has queer parents, for example, may be experiencing the harms associated with the Parental Rights in Education Act as well as the additional and intersecting weight of other punitive legislative efforts, such as the "Stop W.O.K.E." Act. A child who is trans and has queer parents is necessarily navigating the implications of the bill for their personal and family identities, as well as the consequences of significant anti-trans legislative efforts in Florida and beyond.

Limitations and conclusions

A strength of our study is that, although exploratory, our study provides an initial or "baseline" snapshot of how LGBTQ parents in Florida are coping with pivotal legislation that has the potential to become increasingly stressful for residents in the months and years to come. Future work is necessary to examine LGBTQ parents', and children's, experiences across the school year and beyond. Another strength of our study is that, unlike previous recent surveys about

the impact of anti-LGBTQ laws and policies on members of the LGBTQ community (e.g., Abreu et al., 2022b), our sample had a good number of people of color. Perhaps this is the case because Florida has a large portion of Latinx individuals. On the other hand, our study did not explicitly inquire about intersectional experiences, although some parents did invoke concerns about legislation that restricts teaching about race/ethnicity (e.g., "Stop W.O.K.E."). It is plausible that the LGBTQ people of color are experiencing greater stress related to how various oppressive laws and policies affect their different intersecting identities; future work should explore this.

Another limitation of our study is our recruitment strategy. By sharing our study with specific organizations and networks, it is plausible that we only reached a narrow group of LGBTQ individuals who live in Florida. Although this was done intentionally to avoid fraudulent responses, we might have not captured other reactions and forms of coping to this bill. Also, the framing of our study—and our explicit intention of understanding the experiences and feelings of LGBTQ parents vis-à-vis the Parental Rights in Education bill—may have encouraged participation by individuals with more critical (as opposed to positive or neutral) views of the bill. Our study was not intended to be representative of LGBTQ parents in Florida but rather aimed to understand the types of concerns and experiences that some LGBTQ parents were having in a highly polarized political context. Yet at the same time, it is important to emphasize that many LGBTQ parents in Florida may have different views of the bill than those captured in our study.

Despite these limitations, our study makes an important contribution in its exploration of the school-related experiences and concerns of LGBTQ parent families amid a growing trend in anti-LGBTQ legislation. LGBTQ parent families are often invisible in larger discussions about anti-LGBTQ legislative efforts, and yet, as our study highlights, they are significantly impacted by the marginalization and erasure that such legislation may engender. Future work should continue to examine how LGBTQ parents and their children are experiencing and resisting legislative practices that silence their families, as well as their efforts to draw on community, family, and personal resources and resilience as a means of empowerment.

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