"Don't Say Gay": Implications for Outness and Desire to Move Among LGBTQ + Parents in Florida

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Abstract

Introduction Curricular laws that ban schools from discussing sexual orientation and gender identity/expression, such as Florida's Parental Rights in Education ("Don't Say Gay") law, reinforce structural stigma for LGBTQ + people, resulting in compromised well-being. Structural stigma likely affects LGBTQ + individuals' identity disclosure/concealment processes, and desire to stay in or move out of states that enact these policies.

Methods This mixed-method study includes a sample of 107 LGBTQ + parents in Florida, who were recruited via Prolific in April–May 2023, immediately following the expansion of Florida's "Don't Say Gay" law from K-3 to include all grades. Participants (*M*age = 41.49; 82.2% White; 66.4% cisgender women) completed an online survey with closed- and open-ended questions. Logistic regression models examined predictors of self-reported decreases in outness and desire and probability of moving out of Florida. Thematic analyses of open-ended responses provided nuance to participants' experiences.

Results Parents who reported higher levels of bias, identified as trans/nonbinary, and reported that signifiers of LGBTQ + inclusion were removed from school were more likely to report decreased outness, and those with higher socio-economic status and those who reported removal of LGBTQ + books from school were less likely to report decreased outness. Worries about the law were associated with both desire and perceived likelihood of moving, and White parents were more likely to report a desire to move. Qualitative analysis further revealed the importance of understanding multiple marginalized positions in identity disclosure and desire to move.

Conclusions and Policy Implications Anti-LGBTQ + laws have implications for LGBTQ + parent-families, affecting their ability to live authentically and maintain residence in their communities.

Keywords Anti-LGBTQ + legislation · Don't Say Gay · Florida · Identity · Parental Rights in Education Act · Parenting

Florida, along with several other states in the US, has seen a significant erosion in lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ +) rights (Kline et al., 2022; Movement Advancement Project, 2023). According to both advocacy groups and scientific researchers, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, alongside extremist members of the Florida legislature, have waged an attack on LGBTQ + people, advancing a slate of anti-LGBTQ + bills and state-level policies. Bills introduced and/or passed in 2023 alone include those that prohibit gender-inclusive restrooms, ban gender affirming care, allow health care providers to discriminate on the basis of religious or moral beliefs, and prevent teachers from talking about sexual orientation and gender identity (Choi, 2023; Movement Advancement Project, 2023).

One piece of legislation that was signed into law that has received considerable media attention is the Parental Rights in Education Act ("Don't Say Gay"). The original bill asserts that curricular instruction by school personnel that deals with sexual orientation or gender identity/expression (SOGIE) cannot (a) occur in K-3 or (b) occur in a manner that is not age-appropriate or developmentally appropriate in accordance with state standards. In March 2022, the Act was passed by the Senate and signed by Governor DeSantis. In July 2022, the Act went into effect. In April 2023, the Florida Board of Education approved an expansion of the

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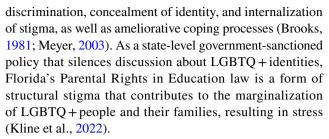3   Counseling Psychology, University of Florida, Florida, USA

Act to ban classroom instruction about SOGIE in all grades (except health/reproductive courses) (Izaguirre, 2023).

Supporters of this type of legislation assert that it allows parents to determine if, when, and how to introduce LGBTQ+topics to their children. Opponents assert that it will send the message that LGBTQ+identities are invalid or inferior, which will harm LGBTQ+youth and teachers, and LGBTQ+parent families (Goldstein, 2022; Strauss, 2022). Indeed, scholars and activists have argued that these policies have implications for educators, youth, and families (American Psychological Association, 2022; Kline et al., 2022), contributing to hostility towards LGBTQ+teachers and youth who are out about their identities, and create a chilling effect whereby LGBTQ+adults and youth are afraid to come out in school (Block, 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). Notably, research has established that the presence of LGBTQ+inclusive curricula is associated with better school-based outcomes for LGBTQ+students as well as their cisgender and heterosexual peers (Snapp et al., 2015; Toomey et al., 2012).

The current mixed-method study sampled 107 LGBTQ+parents in Florida, who were surveyed April–May 2023, approximately 6 months into the school year, and immediately after the expansion was signed into law. LGBTQ+parents were surveyed about their concerns and experiences in the context of the Parental Rights in Education Act. We quantitatively examined predictors of (a) self-reported decreases in participants' level of outness and (b) participants' desire to move and perceived likelihood of moving. Thus, we focus on how the Parental Rights in Education Act is impacting both comfort in being visible as an LGBTQ+person in an increasingly hostile sociopolitical climate, as well as LGBTQ+parents' desire, and perceived ability, to leave a state that has become increasingly hostile to their identities. Our qualitative analysis seeks to nuance and enhance understanding of our quantitative findings by examining parents' narratives regarding the impact of this law on their own and their families' well-being.

Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by a stigma framework, which encompasses (a) structural stigma as a construct that includes "societal-level conditions, cultural norms, and institutional policies that constrain the opportunities, resources, and well-being of the stigmatized" (Hatzenbuehler & Link, 2014, p. 2) and (b) a minority stress model, which explains stress processes: that is, the mechanisms by which stigmatized people respond to and cope with their environment, including their experiences of prejudice, expectations of

discrimination, concealment of identity, and internalization of stigma, as well as ameliorative coping processes (Brooks, 1981; Meyer, 2003). As a state-level government-sanctioned policy that silences discussion about LGBTQ+identities, Florida's Parental Rights in Education law is a form of structural stigma that contributes to the marginalization of LGBTQ+people and their families, resulting in stress (Kline et al., 2022).

In the current study, structural stigma encompasses both the Parental Rights in Education Act and the sociopolitical discourse surrounding it, in that the law can be seen as reflecting, codifying, and perpetuating anti-LGBTQ+attitudes (Hatzenbuehler, 2016). The Parental Rights in Education Act may permeate the norms and attitudes of communities and schools, generating a sense of disharmony and alienation between targeted individuals and their social context, resulting in stress (Kline et al., 2022; Meyer et al., 2011). In this way, structural factors are theorized to initiate or intensify stigma processes (e.g., concealment of identity, struggles with self-acceptance) at the individual level (Meyer, 2003), thus exerting direct and synergistic effects on such processes to impact well-being (Hatzenbuehler, 2016).

Scholars have pointed out that experiences and impacts of structural stigma may not be felt the same for all members of a minoritized group (Rao et al., 2020). Various dimensions of power and marginalization intersect with sexual and gender minority status, such that LGBTQ+people may be differentially exposed to and uniquely impacted by structural stigma, including anti-LGBTQ+legislation and associated political discourse (Flores et al., 2018; Meyer et al., 2011; Price et al., 2021; Schlehofer et al., 2023). Individuals within the LGBTQ+community also vary in terms of their vulnerability to anti-LGBTQ+discrimination and stigma, in part based on their visibility and outness as sexual and gender minorities (Abreu et al., 2021; Rao et al., 2020). LGBTQ+people who are people of color and/or immigrants may experience greater visibility and vulnerability in the context of intersecting stigmas (Abreu et al., 2021; Cerezo et al., 2014; Stanton et al., 2019). Finally, LGBTQ+people's experiences vary according to educational and financial privilege, such that LGBTQ+parents who have the resources to reside in more progressive communities or send their children to more progressive schools, where attitudes are more accepting than state laws or policies (Goldberg et al., 2018), may be less impacted by state-level structural stigma (Goldberg & Smith, 2011).

According to minority stress theory (Brooks, 1981; Meyer, 2003), one way that LGBTQ+people may respond to heterosexist discrimination is through concealment of their identities; and, in this way, identity disclosure/outness may be considered a proximal minority stressor. Indeed, although outness has been associated with a variety of positive psychosocial outcomes among LGBTQ+people

(Chang et al., 2021; Feldman & Wright, 2013; Leleux-Labarge et al., 2015), it is also positively correlated with anti-LGBTQ + discrimination (Feinstein et al., 2021; Zhao et al., 2022), indicating that outness may carry both benefits and risks or costs (Caba et al., 2022; Pachankis et al., 2020). Concealment may in fact serve a protective function, minimizing vulnerable people's exposure to stigma, discrimination, and even violence (Rood et al., 2016).

Ultimately, LGBTQ + parents' experiences of minority stress—and resilience—must be considered against the backdrop of structural stigma and unique social locations, and in the context of larger systems of power and marginalization. In turn, the current study considers how LGBTQ + parents in Florida are responding to and coping with the Parental Rights in Education Act—a piece of legislation that is situated within a particular geographic and historic context that may amplify and nuance the stressful conditions that may result for both parents and children.

Anti-LGBTQ + Legislation and Outness/ Concealment: Navigating (In)Visibility

One consequence of structural stigma, such as via anti-LGBTQ + legislation or climate, is to decrease LGBTQ + people's sense of safety, and, by extension, affect considerations and behaviors related to how visible they are as LGBTQ + people. Veldhuis et al. (2018) found that, after the 2016 election of Donald Trump to the presidency in the US, queer women and trans people often reported greater awareness of the risks of being out and visible as sexual and gender minorities related to their sense of safety. Some, too, described efforts to address safety risks by decreasing how visible they were ("try not to look gay in order not to be hate crimed"; p. 18), and limiting their exposure to settings they perceived as hostile (e.g., public places). Some, though, were resistant to concealment, noting the dangers associated with a community going into the closet and not fighting against hateful discourse and pressure to silence themselves.

In a recent study of 113 LGBTQ + parents in Florida, who were surveyed immediately after the Parental Rights in Education Act was passed (but before the start of the school year, when it officially went into effect), 88% were very or somewhat worried about the effects of the bill on their families—e.g., in terms of restricting children from speaking freely about their families, impacting their sense of legitimacy, and encouraging a hostile school climate (Goldberg & Abreu, 2024). Further, one-quarter of participants feared harassment by neighbors because of their SOGIE, highlighting how their worries went beyond the specific bill and reflected broader concerns regarding an increasing hostile sociopolitical climate. Notably, 21% had been less out in their neighborhood, workplace, or community, in part because of their

growing concerns about anti-LGBTQ + sentiment. Thus, safety concerns had led some participants to change their behavior to reduce visibility and potential scrutiny of their identities, relationships, and families.

Anti-LGBTQ + Legislation and Desire to Relocate: Strategizing Escape

Enduring structural stigma, in the form of discriminatory legislation and/or climate, may be associated with a variety of coping strategies, including relocation. Researchers have explored trends in and reasons for migration or relocation among LGBTQ + people across the globe. While this work has mostly explored the experiences of LGBTQ + people seeking asylum in other countries to escape violence because of their SOGIE, a recurring theme in this literature is the length to which LGBTQ + people are willing to migrate to gain freedom from hostile political climates as a means of survival (Nematy et al., 2023; Winton, 2023). Recently, media outlets and nonprofit organizations have begun to report a similar trend in LGBTQ + people expressing the desire to leave Florida (and other US states) due to increasing political hostility toward them and their families (e.g., see Blow, 2023; Ferrannini, 2023; Rosza, 2023). Yet moving is not always possible, even for those most desperate to escape. Residential mobility is conditional on a variety of factors, including economic resources, job opportunities and mobility, and caregiving responsibilities (Bennett et al., 2022; Blow, 2023; Goldberg & Abreu, 2024; Goldberg et al., 2024). Further, residential mobility is associated with subsequent challenges to well-being and social support (Bennett et al., 2022), likely given the stress that moving entails and lack of established relationships and resources in a new residential area.

Some work has begun to explore relocation desires and actions among LGBTQ + individuals in the US amidst discriminatory legislation and an increasingly negative sociopolitical climate. In a study of trans and gender diverse adults after the 2016 election of President Trump, Price et al. (2021) found that participants experienced fear and worry regarding legal and policy changes targeting the trans community (e.g., rollback of bathroom rights, regulations inhibiting access to gender affirming care), which amplified feelings of powerlessness and oppression. Some participants vocalized concerns about needing to move for safety reasons, such that they were considering leaving states that were less supportive of trans rights in favor of states that had greater protections. Contemplation of the possibility of moving was associated with feelings of grief, isolation, and anger, highlighting how the decision to move not easy, and is may be fraught with ambivalence and tension. In the study of LGBTQ + parents in Florida cited earlier, which was conducted soon after the passing of the Parental Rights

in Education Act, participants coped with stress related to the legislation in a variety of ways, including activism, seeking support, avoiding the news, and planning for the future (e.g., moving) (Goldberg et al., 2024). Over half (56%) of parents said that they had considered moving out of Florida and 16.5% had taken steps to do so, with some saying that they were saving money, looking for jobs, and exploring housing markets outside of Florida.

The Current Study

Framed by stigma and minority stress frameworks, this study examined the experiences of LGBTQ + parents in Florida soon after the expansion of the Parental Rights in Education Act was signed into law. Specifically, we explored how experiences of stigma (parent and child), and intersecting social locations associated with greater marginalization, predict participants' self-reported decreases in outness following the law, as well as participants' desire to move and perceived likelihood of moving. Perceptions and experiences of bias, both within children's schools and the broader community, as well as worries about threat, are likely to impact both visibility and desire to move. Indeed, bias experiences and expectations act as stigma-based minority stressors which create discomfort and mental and physical health challenges. Further, aspects of privilege vs. marginalization (e.g., social class, gender identity) likely intersect, such that more privileged people (e.g., those with more social advantages; those with greater power) are less likely to alter their visibility or want to move. For example, people of higher social class have more options for schooling (e.g., private school) and for where to live within Florida. Likewise, trans/nonbinary folks may feel a heightened sense of threat due to the particularly oppressive climate for trans folks in Florida, and this may impact their decision-making related to visibility or their desire to move.

Regarding outness, we hypothesized that both aspects of stigma—concerns about the Act, observations of changes in children's school (removal of books, removal of signifiers of LGBTQ + inclusiveness), experienced threat to self and family's well-being (e.g., encountered bias among parents and their child/ren)—and components of privilege and vulnerability (social class, trans/nonbinary vs. cisgender identity, plurisexual vs. monosexual identity, BIPOC vs. White identity—would be related to decreases in outness. Regarding desire and ability to move, we hypothesized that, again, aspects of stigma (concerns about the Act, observations of changes in children's school, experienced threat to self and family's well-being) and components of privilege and vulnerability would be associated with greater desire to move and perceived likelihood of moving. We also included length of time living in Florida as a predictor given our assumption that individuals who had resided in Florida for longer would

perceive more costs to leaving (i.e., they would be more rooted to the area). Our qualitative analyses aimed to gather in-depth and nuanced details related to LGBTQ + parents' experiences in Florida. That is, through the use of open-ended questions, participants could elaborate on how the law had impacted them and their families, as well as to share their reasons for wanting to move (or not).

Method

Procedure

Participants were recruited via Prolific, an online recruitment platform that uses specialized targeting techniques to share surveys to pre-registered respondents. Respondents were invited to participate in this study in April–May 2023 via Prolific based on the following selection criteria: (a) they were an LGBTQ + parent of at least one child under 18 and (b) currently lived in Florida. All respondents are rigorously prescreened by Prolific to ensure that they are valid participants (i.e., they must undergo an identity check). Comparison of online recruitment platforms has established that Prolific produces among the best-quality data, and is widely regarded as a reliable source of recruitment (Peer et al., 2022). The survey itself, which included a variety of closed- and open-ended questions, was hosted on the online platform Qualtrics. Development of the survey was informed by prior research (Goldberg et al., 2013) and correspondence with key stakeholders (e.g., attorneys in Florida, senior staff at LGBTQ + nonprofit organizations, leaders of employee resource groups) and LGBTQ + parents in Florida, as well as our key research questions. The 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 took about an average of 41.5 min to complete ($Mdn = 14.7$ min). The survey was approved by Clark University's institutional review board. All respondents were compensated for their participation.

Sample

See Table 1 for a detailed description of demographic data. Participants ranged in age from 20 to 65 years ($M = 41.5$, $SD = 10.6$), and had been living in Florida for an average of 24.9 years ($SD = 15.5$). Most were cisgender women (66.4%) and identified as bisexual (37.4%) or lesbian (22.4%). The majority of parents were White (82.2%) and affiliated as Democrats (66.4%). Participants most commonly described their social class as "working class" (26.2%), "middle class" (37.4%), or "upper middle class" (23.4%). Families on average had two children; nearly 50%

Table 1 Frequencies and descriptive information of the sample characteristics

Variable	n (%) or Mean (SD)
Parent age	41.5(10.6)
Parent years lived in Florida	24.9 (15.5)
Parent gender	
Cisgender man	28 (26.2%)
Cisgender woman	71 (66.4%)
Trans	7 (6.5%)
Parent sexual orientation	
Lesbian	24 (22.4%)
Gay	19 (17.8%)
Bisexual	40 (37.4%)
Queer	5 (4.7%)
Pansexual	7 (6.5%)
Heterosexual	8 (7.5%)
Something else	4 (3.7%)
Parent race/ethnicity[a]	
White	88 (82.2%)
Hispanic or Latinx	26 (24.3%)
Black or African American	8 (7.5%)
Asian	2 (1.9%)
American Indian or Alaskan Native	2 (1.9%)
Parent political affiliation	
Democrat	71 (66.4%)
Green Party	1 (0.9%)
Independent	21 (19.6%)
Republican	6 (5.6%)
Something else	6 (5.6%)
Parent social class	4.01 (1.01)
Lower class	6 (5.6%)
Working class	28 (26.2%)
Middle class	40 (37.4%)
Upper middle class	25 (23.4%)
Upper class	8 (7.5%)
Parent worries about law	83 (77.6%)
Number of children	2.13 (1.28)
Child age[a]	
Any under 6 years	53 (49.5%)
Any between 6 and 17 years	58 (54.2%)
Any older than 18 years	28 (26.2%)
Child gender[a]	
Any boy	79 (73.8%)
Any girl	72 (67.3%)
Any trans	12 (11.2%)
Child race/ethnicity[a]	
Any White	85 (79.4%)
Any Hispanic or Latinx	35 (32.7%)
Any Black or African American	16 (15.0%)
Any Asian	6 (5.6%)
Any American Indian or Alaskan Native	3 (2.8%)
Any Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1 (0.9%)
Any Something else	3 (2.8%)
Child school setting[a]	

Table 1 (continued)

Variable	n (%) or Mean (SD)
Any public	56 (52.3%)
Any private	16 (15.0%)
Any homeschool	9 (8.4%)
County registered voter affiliation	
County % Republican	34.54 (31.8)
County % Democrat	36.19 (36.5)
Respondent was less out in the past 3–6 months	25 (23.4%)
Desire to move from Florida	65 (68.4%)
Likelihood of moving from Florida	32 (29.9%)
Books removed from school library, classrooms	32 (29.9%)
Signifiers of LGBTQ inclusion were removed from school	24 (22.4%)

$N = 107$

[a]Sum of percentages is above 100% given that participants were able to select all that apply

had children under the age of 6 years, and nearly 55% had children between the ages of 6 and 17 years. A total of 11.2% had a child who identified as trans. The majority of parents had at least one White child (79.4%). Most (52.3%) families had at least one child who attended public school, 15.0% had a child in private school, 8.4% had a child who was home schooled, and 21.5% had children who were not yet school aged (e.g., they attended daycare).

Measures

The items included in the survey were developed for the current study. They are informed by our knowledge of existing research, the study goals, and our research questions.

Outcomes

Decrease in outness was examined by one item, wherein participants were asked to indicate whether this was true for them, during the last 3–6 months: "I was less 'out' in my neighborhood, workplace, or community (e.g., I am less quick to share details of my personal life; I don't hold my partner's hand in public; I took off rainbow bumper stickers on my car)." Response options included 0 = no and 1 = yes. *Desire to move* was examined by one item: "If you could, how much would you like to move out of Florida?" Response items ranged from 1 = very much so to 5 = not at all. Given the lack of variability in ordinal options, responses were dichotomized for analysis (0 = not at all through neutral/ mixed; 1 = somewhat or very much so). *Perceived likelihood of moving* was examined by one item: "How likely is it that you will move out of Florida in the next 2 years?" Response items ranged from 1 = not at all likely to 5 = very likely. Given the lack of variability in ordinal options, responses were dichotomized for analysis (0 = not at all likely to neutral/unsure; 1 = somewhat likely and very likely).

Predictors

Worry about the Parental Rights in Education Act was assessed by one item: "How worried are you about the effects of the Don't Say Gay law on your children and family?" Response options ranged from 1 = not at all to 5 = very. Given the lack of variability in ordinal options, responses were dichotomized for analysis (0 = not at all likely to neutral/ unsure; 1 = somewhat and very). *Bias encountered by parents' children at school* was assessed by 10 items. Specifically, participants were given the following prompt: "Which of the following things have happened to your children in the past 3–6 months? Check all that apply." Items included "My child(ren) was bullied, teased, or harassed at school for having LGBTQ + parents" and "My child(ren) was punished at school related to what they shared about their family/having LGBTQ + parents." Response options were 0 = no and 1 = yes, and were summed to create a total scale for each participant, with higher values indicating more child-encountered bias. *Bias encountered by parents at work or in the community* was assessed by 4 items, where they were presented with the prompt, "Which of the following things have happened in the past 3–6 months? Check all that apply." Items included "I was harassed or bothered by neighbors because of my sexual orientation or gender identity or expression" and "I was harassed or bothered by coworkers or supervisors because of my sexual orientation or gender identity or expression." Response options were 0 = no and 1 = yes, and were summed to create a total scale for each participant, with higher values indicating more parent encountered bias. *Structural bias* was assessed by two items, where, again, participants were asked which things had occurred over the past 3–6 months. These items were "Books (e.g., on LGBTQ + topics) were removed from the school library, classrooms" and "Signifiers of LGBTQ + inclusion were removed from the school (e.g., rainbow flags)." Response options were 0 = no and 1 = yes.

Parent Demographic Characteristics

Parents were asked several questions about their demographic characteristics. *Gender* was asked by a closed response question ("What is your gender?") that allowed for one choice, but also allowed for write-in responses. Response options included cisgender man, cisgender woman, trans man, trans woman, nonbinary/genderqueer, and something else (explain). *Sexual orientation* was assessed by a closed response question ("What is your sexual orientation?") that allowed for one choice but also for write-in responses. Response options included lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, pansexual, heterosexual, and something else (explain). *Race and ethnicity* were assessed by a single item ("What is your race/ethnicity?") that allowed for participants to select multiple options and the ability for participants to write-in responses. Options included White, Hispanic, Latino/a/x/, Black/African American, Asian, American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, or something else (explain). *Perceived social class* was assessed by one closed-ended response question ("How would you describe your social class?"). Options included lower class, working class, middle class, upper middle class, upper class, or something else (explain). Participants were also asked about their *location* within Florida ("Which of the following Florida counties do you live in?") and *length of time lived in Florida* ("How long have you lived in Florida, in years?"). Finally, they were asked about their *political affiliation* ("What is your political affiliation?"). Options included Democrat, Republican, Independent, Green Party, or something else (explain).

Child Demographic Characteristics

Parents were asked to report on characteristics and experiences of each of their children. Parents reported on each child's *age* (< 6 years, 6–17 years, or 18 + years), *gender* (girl, boy, or trans/nonbinary), *race/ethnicity* (White, Hispanic, Latino/a/x/, Black/African American, Asian, American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, or something else), and *school type* (private, public, not applicable—too young, home school, or something else). For analyses, we created dichotomous variables that indicated whether *any* child of a particular parent was trans, White, under six, or attended a public school.

Voter Affiliation by County

All participants reported the county that they lived in. Using voter registration information provided by the Florida Department of State (2023), we obtained data on number and percentage of voters registered as Republican, and as Democrat, for each participant based on their county of residence. These percentages served as proxies for the relative Republican vs. Democrat presence in their county or community.

Open-Ended Questions

A series of open-ended questions were included on the survey, including the following: (a) What are your concerns about your children? If you have few concerns, please explain; (b) How has your children's educational and social experience shifted since The Parental Rights in Education Act ("Don't Say Gay") was passed? If there have been few changes, do you attribute this to type of school (e.g., progressive, private), community climate, individual teachers, or other factors?; (c) If you have found yourself being less "out" or thinking more about whether and how much to share about your family: Can you say more about these choices, how they feel for you, and what you have done, specifically, and in what situations?; and (d) How has your child/ren's own gender identity, sexual orientation, and/or race affected your concerns related to Don't Say Gay, Stop WOKE, and other legislation?

Author Reflexivity and Positionality

The first author (AG) is a White, Jewish, cisgender woman who was raised by a queer parent. I (AG) have over 20 years of experience researching LGBTQ + parent families, including interviewing both LGBTQ + parents and youth with LGBTQ + parents. My personal and research experiences have sensitized me to the ways that systemic discrimination can result in the marginalization, silencing, and invisibility of families that do not fit the heteronormative, cisgender, and biogenetically related "norm." My personal and scholarly biography impacted my desire to investigate LGBTQ + parents' perspectives on the Parental Rights in Education Act, and my specific research questions. I take seriously my role and privilege as a scholar who seeks to give voice to often-silenced perspectives of a marginalized group (Bridges, 2001). However, I am aware that my insider status frames my approach to this topic, such that I carry certain knowledge and values about the ways in which the rights of LGBTQ + families are under attack, which can impact survey construction and data analysis. This, combined with various vectors associated with geographic and social locations that render me an outsider (e.g., I am not a resident of Florida), led me to seek (a) input from stakeholders and LGBTQ + parents in Florida during the survey development phase and (b) a partnership with the second and third authors, whose personal, geographic, and scholarly positionalities complement my own.

The second author (RT) is a White, pansexual, transmasculine, non-disabled professor in Human Development and Family Science. This author is also the parent of two

elementary school-aged children in a state outside of Florida. This author's scholarship focuses on risk and protective factors related to mental health among sexual and gender diverse and Latinx adolescents and young adults. This author has substantial experience conducting quantitative research to understand the consequences of local and state policies related to sexuality, gender, race, and ethnicity for historically marginalized youth populations.

The third author (RA) is a Latinx, first-generation, cisgender, gay, queer presenting man. This author is an assistant professor in psychology whose research addresses the intersection of Latinx LGBTQ + youth and their families and communities, as well as transgender and gender diverse youth and their families and communities. This author has extensive advanced qualitative research expertise. At a personal level, this researcher is parenting a 9-year-old child, with their same-gender partner, in Florida. Therefore, this law affects their family in multiple ways. The combination of the professional and personal provided this author a unique lens that was crucial during the data analysis and manuscript writing.

Together, the authorship team was well positioned to provide an in-depth, rigorous, and nuanced account of participants' narratives.

Data Analyses

We pursued a mixed-method design in the current study, thus combining inductive and deductive approaches. In so doing, we draw on the unique insights gained by both approaches, facilitating a more comprehensive portrait of the phenomena at hand (Suitor & Gilligan, 2022).

Quantitative Analysis

Given that our outcomes were binary, we used logistic regression in our quantitative analyses (Menard, 2002). Specifically, we examined how demographic characteristics and perceived and experienced stigma-related stressors were related to changes in outness, desire to move out of Florida, and likelihood of moving via a series of three logistic regression models using SPSS version 28. Odds ratios, in addition to unstandardized beta estimates, are provided to assist in understanding effect sizes of significant predictors. Missing data were handled through multiple imputation with five replications in SPSS (Graham et al., 2007; Little et al., 2014); missing data was limited to two of the outcomes (eight participants [7%] were missing data on items assessing desire to move and likelihood of moving). Pooled estimates were calculated by SPSS using Rubin's Rules (Rubin, 1987). Of note is that statistical power was limited given the sample size ($N = 107$) and even smaller sizes of subgroups accounted for by the independent variables. A post hoc power analysis using G*Power 3.1.9.7 (Faul et al., 2009)

revealed that we had approximately 60% power to detect an odds ratio of 1.3 (a small effect) and 95% power to detect an odds ratio of 2.5 (a moderate effect) (Rosenthal, 1996).

Qualitative Analysis

Responses to the open-ended survey portions ranged from one sentence to over one page of text, with most respondents providing responses of three to five sentences. Between 44% and 70% of respondents provided answers to each open-ended question. The first and third author used a reflexive thematic analytic method combining both inductive and deductive approaches to examine responses from the open-ended portions of the survey (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012, 2013, 2019). Specifically, our coding scheme reflects both data-driven codes based on participants' narratives and experiences and analyst-driven codes that reflect our theoretical frameworks, knowledge of relevant constructs, and the existing literature (Braun & Clarke, 2023). Our approach reflects our desire to make meaning of participants' experiences within the current anti-LGBTQ + context in Florida while placing their narratives in context of what is already known about anti-LGBTQ oppression, sociopolitical climate, well-being, and outness (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). Our qualitative data, in turn, were triangulated with the quantitative data, to generate a fuller, more complex understanding of participants' experiences (Proudfoot, 2023).

The authors' analysis focused on parents' descriptions of their observations of changes in their children's social and educational environment, experiences of bias and discrimination, concerns and actions related to visibility and concealment, and desire for and barriers to relocation. The first author initially read all open-ended responses to gain familiarity with the data, including overarching themes in responses. She made note of, and bracketed, her own experiences and preconceptions in an effort to facilitate a curious and open stance in relation to the data, and the ability to approach the data with a fresh perspective. Then, responses were annotated: that is, via line-by-line coding, she labeled phrases relevant to the primary domains of interest (e.g., children's fears; changes in outness). These codes were abstracted under larger categories and subcategories, which were positioned in relation to each other, such that connective links were established (e.g., the relationship between participant gender identity and outness/concealment) in an effort to meaningfully describe parents' experiences living in Florida in 2023. A tentative scheme was produced and reapplied to the data, such that all data were then recoded according to the revised scheme. The third author served as an auditor and provided critical input at various stages of the coding process, as detailed below.

Trustworthiness. To enhance trustworthiness in the study preparation and data collection phases, we pursued

a data collection strategy (i.e., an online survey) that we believed would result in high-quality and contextually valid data (Elo et al., 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). We also pretested the survey instrument with key stakeholders (Elo et al., 2014). Finally, we posed both open- and closed-ended questions to participants in an effort to obtain multiple forms of data that would lend themselves to a deeper and richer understanding of the phenomena of interest (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Morrow, 2005).

To enhance trustworthiness in the data analysis process, we as a research team sought to maintain reflexivity through open discussion of our assumptions and positionality throughout the process of examining, organizing, and interpreting the data (Morrow, 2005). To further enhance credibility of the analysis, the third author reviewed several versions of the coding scheme, providing input on each iteration and collaboratively examining the fit between the data and the emerging themes (Goldberg & Allen, 2015). Upon review of the final coding scheme, the second author made several suggestions for reorganization and changes were integrated accordingly into the final thematic structure. After reaching the final thematic structure, the coders noted the absence of any new concepts, codes, or themes, indicating that data saturation had been reached (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Finally, the authors selected meaningful and appropriate quotes from participants to include in the paper to illustrate key concepts (Morrow, 2005).

Findings

Quantitative Findings

We first present descriptive quantitative data on our key variables of interest (see Table 1), and then, we present the findings of our logistic regressions. At the time of the survey, 23.4% of LGBTQ + parents in Florida indicated that they had become "less out" in their communities in the past 3–6 months. More than two-thirds (68.4%) reported that they somewhat or very much wanted to move to another state, while only one-third (29.9%) indicated that they were somewhat or very likely to move in the next 2 years, highlighting a gap between desire and perceived likelihood.

In terms of bias experiences, participants reported that their child had an average of one to two encounters at school ($M = 1.2$, SD $= 1.9$; range $= 0$ to 10) and that they personally had encountered an average of zero to one encounter in their communities or places of employment ($M = 0.4$, SD $= 0.7$; range $= 0$ to 3). In terms of structural bias, 29.9% of participants reported that books on LGBTQ + topics were removed from the school library or classrooms in the past 3–6 months, and 22.4% reported that signifiers of LGBTQ + inclusion

were removed from the school (e.g., rainbow flags, stickers) in the past 3–6 months.

Table 2 reports the results from a series of three logistic regression predicting a decrease in participant outness (i.e., greater concealment), desire to move from Florida, and likelihood of moving from Florida. Participants who encountered higher levels of bias, identified as trans or nonbinary, and reported that signifiers of LGBTQ + inclusion were removed from their child's school, were more likely to be less out (i.e., reported greater concealment). Notably, those who reported higher socioeconomic status, and those who reported that LGBTQ + books were removed from their child's school, were less likely to report a decrease in outness. Parents' worries about the effects of the Act were not associated with likelihood of being less out.

Results of the logistic regression (Table 2) revealed that parental worries about the Parental Rights in Education Act was a consistent predictor of desiring and being likely to move from Florida, such that parents who reported more worries were more likely to want to move and to perceive themselves as likely to move in the future. In addition, White parents, and parents who reported having books removed from the classroom, were also more likely to report a desire to move. Further, duration of living in Florida was a predictor of likelihood of moving, such that parents who lived in Florida longer were less likely to report a likelihood of moving.

Qualitative Findings

Our qualitative findings nuance and extend our quantitative analysis. Our qualitative findings reveal connections between experiences of bias and associated fear and hypervigilance, and decreased outness and visibility (i.e., greater concealment), as well as tensions related to leaving Florida as a strategy to cope with discriminatory legislation and hostile sociopolitical climate. Our findings highlight how experiences of stress, outness, and desire to move are experienced differently by different people, highlighting the significance of an intersectional perspective in understanding experiences of and reactions to oppression. Parents' and children's race, ethnicity, gender identity/expression, sexual orientation, and school and community factors (e.g., private vs. public school; community climate) impacted parent and child experiences of oppression, fears surrounding safety, and associated concealment of personal and family identity.

Changes at School, Children's Experiences, and Parents' Stress and Worry

In describing their concerns related to the Act, consistent with our quantitative finding that observed changes in school were at times related to changes in outness and desire to

Table 2 Estimates from logistic regression

	Decrease in outness		Desire to move		Likelihood of moving	
	B (SE)	OR	*B* (SE)	OR	*B* (SE)	OR
Worry about law	1.01 (1.15)	2.76	**3.37 (0.99)***	**29.08**	**1.74 (1.03)**	**5.72**
Parent bias experiences	**1.38 (0.70)***	**3.99**	1.19 (0.75)	3.28	.04 (0.45)	1.04
Years lived in Florida	0.05 (0.03)	1.05	0.02 (0.02)	1.02	**-0.05 (0.02)***	**0.96**
Plurisexual parent	0.59 (0.87)	1.81	0.73 (0.74)	2.06	0.28 (0.57)	1.33
Woman parent	0.32 (1.02)	1.38	-0.32 (0.75)	0.73	0.79 (0.68)	2.20
Trans parent	**7.76 (2.86)****	**2350.55**	-1.02 (1.46)	0.36	0.78 (1.12)	2.19
White parent	0.33 (1.11)	1.39	**1.76 (0.89)***	**5.83**	0.26 (0.84)	1.30
Democrat parent	0.75 (0.89)	2.12	-0.90 (0.91)	0.41	0.75 (0.69)	2.11
Social class	**-1.26 (0.43)****	**0.28**	-0.26 (0.33)	0.77	-0.15 (0.29)	0.86
Child bias experiences	0.13 (0.20)	1.13	0.23 (0.23)	1.26	.06 (0.16)	1.06
Any trans child	-1.76 (1.57)	0.17	0.21 (1.29)	1.23	-0.82 (0.97)	0.44
Any White child	-0.38 (1.20)	0.68	-0.95 (0.88)	0.39	-0.76 (0.79)	0.47
Any child < 6	-0.19 (0.83)	0.83	-0.28 (0.72)	0.76	-0.38 (0.63)	0.69
Any child in public	-1.24 (0.78)	0.29	-1.13 (0.73)	0.32	-0.89 (0.59)	0.41
Books removed	**-3.84 (2.06)**	**0.02**	**3.18 (1.30)***	**24.10**	-1.17 (0.99)	0.31
Inclusion removed	**3.89 (2.17)**	**48.95**	-1.84 (1.34)	0.16	1.66 (1.08)	5.27
% Repub County	0.01 (0.07)	1.01	-0.01 (0.06)	0.99	-0.03 (0.06)	0.97
% Democ County	0.02 (0.08)	1.02	-0.03 (0.07)	0.97	-0.03 (0.06)	0.97
Cox and Snell R^2	35.7%		36%		25.6%	

Bolded numbers indicate statistically significant findings

OR odds ratios, *B* beta, *SD* standard deviation

[+]$p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .005$; ***$p < .10$

move (i.e., removal of signifiers of LGBTQ + inclusion were related to decreased outness; removal of books was related to desire to move), participants' open-ended comments revealed connections between perceived changes and worry and distress. Some parents that they had perceived few changes in their children's social or educational experience, and thus were not particularly concerned about the implications of the Act for their children or families. Those who articulated few observed changes since the Act was passed often cited their children's private school and/or supportive teachers, or living in a progressive area. Darla, a multiracial bisexual woman, shared,

> I haven't really perceived a shift. [I] suppose my children go to school in the type of community that is going to fully disregard any anti-gay propaganda in general. Perhaps the individual teachers also have something to do with it, as they all range from fairly progressive to dumpster-diving anarchists.

These participants' lack of concern also stemmed from their children's lack of concern: to their knowledge, their children had not faced bias or challenges. Gwen, a White cis lesbian mother, said, "They are aware of 'Don't Say Gay' but have not shared with us that they are concerned or have faced any adverse actions." Eric, a Black cis gay father, said, "Our daughter has not expressed any concerns. I believe it is due to her young age and the fact that no one is discussing

sexuality/orientation with that age group...and the diversity of her school."

Participants who voiced greater distress and worry often described curricular or climate-related changes at school, and/or children's reports of negative experiences at school ("they are in high school and being bullied for who they are"). Some had observed teacher anxieties regarding how and what to teach ("teachers are afraid to deal with any topic that may affect minority groups, even teaching about slavery and racism"), and removal of books, safe space stickers, and other materials from their children's school ("student-created bulletin boards educating peers about privilege, different gender identities, different sexualities, have been protested by parents and taken down"). Elliot, a White bisexual trans man, said, "The school library has been cleared out of any and all 'woke' content—any book containing queer or other minority characters and real life people, leaving almost nothing for my child to check out but books about U.S. history." Jules, a Latinx nonbinary pansexual parent, said:

> Books for silly parent/caregiver "Mystery Reader" events now have to be preapproved. This has discouraged a lot of working parents from signing up since parents are busy and sometimes pulling a book from a shelf at the last minute. Teachers had to either stop providing access to class libraries or catalogue and get approval for books last minute before the beginning of the school year. Many just boxed them up.

Regarding children's experiences at school, some parents described ways in which their LGBTQ+-family status or their children's own identities had been silenced ("My kindergartener was asked not to draw family pictures at school"; "They're not allowed to talk about us; they're scared"; "For the first time, our 9 year old son has become self-conscious about belonging to a family with gay parents"). Bill, a White cis gay father, detailed:

> My daughter wants to leave Florida. She does not feel that this is a safe or respectful climate in Florida. She worries that the Republicans are going to make life miserable for LGBTQ+ people and other minority groups. She is receiving more and more discriminatory and harassing communications through social media within the last year or so. She is also concerned about physical attacks against people, including the shooting at Pulse a few years ago and attacks on trans people in recent weeks.

Indeed, some parents spoke to their children's sense of psychological well-being and sense of safety as increasingly compromised in the current climate ("they feel more outcasted and stress has been a huge factor"), which in some cases fueled their desire or intention to move out of Florida. For Kim, a White cis lesbian mother, the impact of the legislation on her child's "social, psychological, and physical [safety]" led her and her wife to plan to "leave the state of Florida this summer," a decision that left the whole family "heartbroken; we love our community, school, and the physical beauty of the state. But...our family is not safe here."

Changes in (in)Visibility and Outness

Participants narrated their experiences and tensions surrounding (in)visibility and outness amidst the Parental Rights in Education Act and associated changes in sociopolitical climate. Those who said that they were less out cited fears surrounding safety—as well as indignation and anger at being forced (back) into the closet. These parents talked about being more careful and selective with what and how they shared personal information (e.g., about being a two mom family) with teachers, school administrators, colleagues, and in their community in general (e.g., when shopping or attending community events). They described removing stickers or other signage on their vehicles or home that signaled a queer identity, and dressing differently (e.g., more gender conforming). And, they described a general sense of anxiety and hypervigilance. A number of participants highlighted how they no longer expressed affection towards their partner in public, for fear of others' reactions. Lexi, a White cis lesbian, said, "I feel like I'm looking over my shoulder. I'm cautious. I don't hold my wife's hand in public." Nora, a White cis bisexual woman, shared, "We

feel like we have to 'tone it down' in public or meeting new people. It's a horrible feeling to question if you're safe just holding hands or saying 'I love you.'" Further, when meeting new people, participants had to engage in an internal dialogue about "whether or not to reveal my family situation" as they considered whether doing so would "put [their] kids or partner in danger."

Some parents highlighted the tensions they experienced related to their reduced visibility. They resented feeling forced back into the closet, noting the negative impact on their sense of authenticity as an LGBTQ+ person. Monique, a White cis pansexual woman, shared:

> I am afraid to be more out. I feel like a fake and that I am being forced back into the closet due to these new laws. I hate that I have to hide who I am because people are becoming more hateful and intolerant. I don't want my kids being put in situations where they are bullied because of who I am.

Jules, a Latinx pansexual nonbinary parent, said:

> I am being more careful about sharing information with coworkers and people at the kids' school. I have not removed stickers or stopped openly identifying as queer. . .I spent a lot of my life not feeling like I could be who I am authentically in public. This feels like going back to that in some ways. I feel safe in queer spaces, just not in mixed spaces.

Some participants shared that their decreased visibility and outness was in part to protect their children. Aware that there was a "target on their back", they were "paying attention to what's happening at school but also keeping my life personal" out of concern for how their visibility might affect their family and children. Greta, a White cis bisexual woman, shared:

> I have been more reserved about putting any kind of signage on my car about being an ally to the LGBTQ+ community due to concerns about property damage. This also applies to wearing Pride or Rainbow type clothing. Florida has both very accepting and very vicious people. I worry for my safety and my children's safety if they're with me while I'm wearing it or if they're in my car with the signage.

Parents' sense of vulnerability and associated efforts to conceal their identity or modify their behavior to decrease visibility depended on their gender identity and expression and their relational context (i.e., in an obviously queer relationship vs. in what outsiders would likely see as a different-gender heterosexual relationship). Indeed, trans and gender nonconforming parents in particular highlighted their enhanced sense of vigilance surrounding their gender presentation. Elliot, a White bisexual trans man,

shared, "I put less effort to pass as male now and don't bother correcting anyone who calls me a woman." Allie, a White asexual trans woman, said, "I have stayed in 'boy mode' and delayed my transition goals due to these social changes that have bled into the workplace. I feel scared and nervous about how I will be treated."

Those who were queer or bisexual and in different-gender relationship recognized that their sexuality was typically invisible unless they purposefully asserted or clarified their sexual orientation to outsiders. Shari, a White cis bisexual woman, said, "Being that I'm currently in a heterosexual relationship, I haven't really been less 'out'; however, I do have concerns if in the future I were to start dating a female again." Some pointed out that they were less likely to reveal their sexual orientation and more likely to take advantage of assumptions of heterosexuality. Trevor, a White cis bisexual man, said:

> I just now take more effort to conceal my sexual identity and not correct others if they think I'm straight. I usually just tell new people that I meet that I'm straight out of fear of confrontation or other aggression. I also spend less time outside in my neighborhood as my neighbors aren't LGBT friendly and have harassed me in the past for it.

Several participants said their children were also engaging in closeting behaviors, of their family structure or their own identities/presentation. Said Lydia, a White cis bisexual woman: "My oldest has tried to become more gender specific with his dressing and hair care and even the way he speaks. It's very sad as he was a very sensitive kid and now is afraid to show that outside of the home in case someone thinks he's gay."

A minority of participants shared that they were not less out. Several participants simply said that they were "just as out as [they had] always been," without providing further elaboration A few said that they had never been very out or visible before, and hence there was no change ("I have always only been out in a need to know basis, pretty much").

Moving as an Strategy for Escape

As the quantitative data indicate, many—more than two-thirds—of participants wanted to move, although less than half that number felt confident that they would move in the next several years. The qualitative data reveal the tensions and conflicts that participants experienced surrounding the potential of moving. Some spoke to tensions surrounding their desire to move alongside anger that they were in a position where they felt they had to move, and some voiced frustration surrounding the multiple barriers to moving. Others acknowledged fear and worry surrounding

the climate in Florida but emphasized their "refusal" to move ("I won't be forced out"). A minority described a lack of desire to move, insomuch as the costs of moving outweighed the benefits, and/or they described fewer concerns and/or less severe impacts of the law and associated sociopolitical climate as of yet.

Some parents voiced a strong desire to move and also felt confident that they would be able to move in the future. These parents, then, had desire, intention, and ability to move. Kate, a White cis pansexual woman, said bluntly, "Florida wants us dead. So we're leaving as soon as possible." As their sense of urgency grew, some parents were more committed to moving, even as they anticipated challenges to doing so. Greg, a White cis gay man, felt that "this state has grown more hostile to our family in recent years...I feel more compelled each day to remove my children from a state that legislates the 'less than' position of our family." As they imagined the future, these parents felt a sense of dread, "becoming more horrified and despondent as time goes on; I feel like this is only the beginning and more terrible laws are coming." In turn, although some anticipated challenges to moving, they did not want to "stick around too long" and thus sought to "escape, before things get worse." Fran, a White cis lesbian, shared:

> There are several barriers to moving, but that doesn't change the likelihood that we will still move. As a parent with a trans child, it is literally no longer safe to live in this state. At least three other families with trans kids in our social circle are planning the same.

Echoing the quantitative data, participants often emphasized their desire to move but also emphasized the many things that kept them in Florida, including family, friends, employment, and caregiving responsibilities. They disliked the sociopolitical climate but felt the pull of the factors that made Florida home ("If it were not for my extended family, we'd already be gone"). Nikki, a Black cis bisexual woman, said, "Florida has been my home all my life. My family, friends, and occupation is situated here, hence this makes it tough to make a relocation decision." Thus, these parents wished to leave but also described various constraints, creating tension.

Some parents wanted to move, but they experienced numerous and/or significant barriers to leaving Florida, the most notable being money and resources ("we are close to living paycheck to paycheck, and couldn't fathom the cost of moving somewhere"; "I would absolutely love to move out of this state, but I can't afford it"). Lara, a White cis bisexual woman, said: "I desperately want to move to Washington State, but it is very expensive and our jobs are here in Florida. The second we have a way out of this state, however, we intend to take it." Said Trevor, a White cis bisexual man, "I would love to leave Florida. But my current education

and salary aren't good enough for me to afford to move my family out of Florida."

For others, a desire to move was mitigated by a desire to remain in the state and fight for change. A few participants voiced distress over the current sociopolitical and educational landscape of Florida but declared that they would not relocate, but rather "stay and fight" and "participate in positive change." Carly, a Black cis bisexual woman, asserted:

My family broke multiple of color barriers during Jim Crow, educated the community after reconstruction, and actively participated during the civil rights era. I feel if I were to leave because of discrimination I would be failing myself and my family.

Finally, some participants did not voice a desire or intention to move. Some of them noted their dislike for the political climate, but acknowledged that they lived in a community that was fairly progressive and thus they felt relatively safe and protected. Sarah, a White cis lesbian, said, "We live on the edge of Wilton Manors, the most gay city in the state. As long as we are protected, we are one of the lucky families." Denise, a White cis lesbian, said, "We have a great community of friends and own a house. I love the weather and location we live in. I just hate what is happening politically." Edgar, a Hispanic cis gay father, shared how his local community had proved to be an essential source of support and resilience:

We have developed a Gay Dads group in Miami and surrounding area. We find our community and togetherness there. . .This is what keeps us going. We fight back against these vile laws by creating community, and awareness through our everyday activities. We support each other, talk to each other, and along the way maybe teach hetero parents that our families are just as valuable and important as theirs. . .Our experience thus far has been great as gay dads in Miami but our kids are still young. We worry about their future world and what school and other social aspects of life will bring.

A few simply stated that they loved Florida and did not intend to move. "We are a huge theme park family," said Tori, a White cis bisexual woman.

Discussion

The passage of laws that stigmatize groups, as well as discussion of the enforcement of such laws once adopted, can be a unique stressor to group members. Research has established direct and indirect ways that structural stigma impacts LGBTQ+people (Flores et al., 2018; Price et al., 2021), also showing how the impact of and responses to stressors are not uniform for all members of stigmatized groups (Abreu et al.,

2021; Rao et al., 2020). Such heterogeneity in part reflects the multiple layers of oppression that multiply marginalized LGBTQ+people experience (Goldberg et al., 2018; Veldhuis et al., 2018). This study, which builds on existing literature, set out to investigate how LGBTQ+parents in Florida were responding to the Parental Rights in Education Act, which, amidst an increasingly hostile sociopolitical climate, threatened to marginalize their families. Responding to calls for research on how vulnerable Floridians are responding to the Act (Kline et al., 2022), our study provides a snapshot of LGBTQ+parents' experiences in several distinct areas. Specifically, we explored LGBTQ+parents' identity concealment, and desire to and perceived likelihood of moving out of Florida. Both represent responses to an oppressive climate (Meyer, 2003) but vary insomuch as one involves modification of one's behavior to decrease the likelihood of stigma, and the other involves a change in environment to decrease the likelihood of stigma.

Almost a quarter of parents said that they had become "less out" in their communities in the past 3–6 months. Parents who reported higher levels of bias, identified as trans/nonbinary, and reported that signifiers of LGBTQ+inclusion were removed from school, were more likely to report decreased outness. Those with higher socioeconomic status (SES) and those who reported removal of LGBTQ+books from school were less likely to report decreased outness. Thus, consistent with our expectation that individuals with multiple marginalized identities might feel compelled to protect themselves via greater concealment, individuals with trans/gender nonconforming identities—a group that is currently being subjected to high levels of vitriol (Abreu et al., 2021)—and individuals with fewer financial resources, may have felt particularly vulnerable in the current climate. The latter finding is consistent with prior work showing that SES interacts with identity disclosure and concealment, such that there may be benefits of being out for LGBTQ+adult with high SES and risks for those with lower SES, including greater risk of anti-LGBTQ+discrimination (McGarrity & Huebner, 2014). Our qualitative data suggest that parents were concerned about how their own visibility might impact their children, prompting modifications in their behavior (e.g., gender conformity), and they also suggest that parents with fewer resources felt like they had fewer options to protect their children (they could not easily relocate or put children in private school). In the context of multiple marginalized statuses and structural stigma, concealment may confer protection and benefits for LGBTQ+parents by minimizing exposure to potential threats, including violence (Rood et al., 2016).

That removal of signifiers of inclusion in schools (e.g., pride flags) following the enactment of the Act was associated with decreased outness is significant; perhaps these parents felt that this was a particularly alarming sign of a potential climate change at their children's schools or their

larger communities. This finding is consistent with prior studies that link structural stigma with lower sense of safety and greater concealment of sexual and gender identity (e.g., Velduis et al., 2018). Also, it may be that the actual removal of pride flags from school buildings or classrooms made the enactment of the law more concrete to LGBTQ+parents, whereas prior to their removal, the law was still an abstract threat. That the removal of books had the opposite effect is interesting. It is possible that parents who were aware of LGBTQ+inclusive books being removed from libraries felt pressure to fill the void to ensure that LGBTQ+lives were still present and visible for students at their child's school. That is, given that their children and their peers could no longer read about and see LGBTQ+lives being represented in books available at the school, they felt the need to be more out to ensure that students could see and believe that LGBTQ+people do exist. Although future research is needed to confirm this hypothesized explanation, it is likely that these parents had greater privilege to risk this outness or engage in higher levels of activism and critical consciousness. Indeed, prior research has found that outness is associated with engagement in activism among LGBTQ+adults (Montagno et al., 2021).

More than two-thirds of our sample somewhat or very much wanted to move to another state, but only one-third indicated that they were somewhat or very likely to move in the next two years. Notably, while worries about the Act and its impact were not associated with change in outness, such worries were associated with both desire and perceived likelihood of moving, highlighting how distress and worry manifested as powerful motivators to relocate (Blow, 2023). This was also evident in our qualitative data, whereby some parents relayed powerful and heightened concerns about the ways in which their children's schools, their communities, and the state as a whole were changing rapidly in ways that were deeply disturbing and potentially harmful to their children and families. Likewise, parents who reported books being removed from the school were also more likely to report a desire to move from Florida. It is possible that parents who were alert to books being removed had children who were sharing other distressing changes at school, motivating their amplified concern and spurring them to consider action; indeed, some parents may have been relatively "in the dark" about changes at children's schools.

Additionally, White parents were more likely to report a desire to move, a finding that is nuanced by some of our qualitative findings, whereby some parents of color emphasized both a commitment to their legacy and/or connection to larger communities of color, which functioned as enormous barriers to uprooting. Likewise, White parents may have enjoyed more residential mobility amidst greater relative privilege, including lack of constraints and greater resources such as job opportunities (e.g., Bennett et al.,

2022). Also, and not surprisingly, duration of living in Florida was a predictor of likelihood of moving, such that parents who lived in Florida longer were less likely to report a likelihood of leaving. This dovetails with our qualitative findings, which reveal the tension for LGBTQ+parents who struggle to reconcile the roots that they have in Florida with the increasingly hostile political climate. Such parents do not wish to leave their homes and communities—but also wonder whether Florida is still safe for them and their families, creating stress and ambivalence (Goldberg et al., 2024; Meyer, 2003; Price et al., 2021). These findings also align with research documenting the tolls of moving on well-being and social support (Bennett et al., 2022), further highlighting the devastating decisions that LGBTQ+people are forced to contemplate in the contexts of acute structural stigma.

Limitations and Implications for Research and Practice

One limitation of our study is that it is cross-sectional. Although our participants reflected on how different versions of the Parental Rights in Education Act have affected them and their families over time, a longitudinal design might help to better capture the impact of the Act among LGBTQ+parents in Florida. It would be beneficial to follow parents who wanted to move to see if they do move and how such moves affect family well-being. Second, although our participants shared narratives consistent with symptoms of anxiety, depression, and hypervigilance, using validated measures that capture these mental health outcomes might enhance understanding of how the Act is affecting LGBTQ+parents' mental health. A related limitation is that we relied on many one-item measures in the quantitative survey questions. Future work can build on our efforts to develop and validate multi-item measures of similar domains. Another limitation is that we did not assess participants' responses to the expansion of the Act through twelfth grade. Future work should address how LGBTQ+parents are responding to these broader restrictions related to SOGIE (e.g., are parents of older children more or similarly concerned compared to parents of younger children?). Additionally, the current study focused on a single, state-level Act. Given that anti-LGBTQ+legislation is also introduced and enacted at the federal level, future work could investigate whether federal legislation impacts the social, economic, mental health, and physical health of LGBTQ+parents and their children.

We also had limited racial diversity within the sample, limiting our ability to address how intersectional identities and diverse social locations impact experiences and options vis a vis anti-LGBTQ+legislation. Relatedly, although we assessed children's gender, we did not assess their sexual orientation, in part because of the varying age range and the likelihood that this dimension of children's identity would

be unknown for many participants. Future work focusing on LGBTQ + parents of older children in the context of anti-LGBTQ + legislation can examine how this additional dimension may interface with parents' concerns. Finally, we did not systematically explore how child age impacted the outcomes of interest. Future work, with larger samples, can further disentangle how children's developmental status may further impact LGBTQ + parents' experiences and perspectives amidst state-level stigma.

The current study not only demonstrates the powerful impact of anti-LGBTQ + legislation on LGBTQ + parents and their children, but also highlights the reality that such policies have an unequal impact. Those who are multiply marginalized will ultimately have fewer choices and "degrees of freedom" when responding to and coping with the reality of such legislation. Scholar-advocates, policymakers, and activists must work collaboratively to illuminate the costs—social, economic, mental health, physical health—of this type of legislation, for individuals and communities, in Florida and beyond. In particular, professionals who live in states that have introduced and/or passed legislation that seeks to restrict the discussion of SOGIE and LGBTQ + identities must engage with diverse allies to actively resist and challenge such laws.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest The authors declare no competing interests.

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