

LGBT+

Examining the marginalisation and stigma encountered by LGB parents and young children

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Section 1- Introduction and rationale

The aim of this report is to explore the marginalisation affected by a number of young children and their families. The term marginalisation can be described as complex and multifaceted. Chand et al (2017) define the expression marginal as being on the edge of something, which can be interpreted in the circumstance of marginalised groups as on the edge of society. In line with this notion, marginalisation can be characterised as a feeling of insignificance and isolation in society (Devarakonda, 2012). Both of these definitions highlight the separation from the community and the lack of support that marginalised group's experience. This report will focus on the marginalised group of Lesbian, Bisexual and Gay parents and their children, as well as highlighting the 'No Outsiders' campaign. It is important that this topic is explored and researched as the inequalities they face is a current social concern (Sharp & Metcalf, 2016).

This report will begin with a critical discussion of the prejudice, discrimination and inequality experienced by LGB parents and young children. The deliberation of this theme will also include the key issues children face in their community and education and the potential impact of these to a child's health and wellbeing. Secondly, this report will analyse three media stories that represent LGB parents and their young children both positively and negatively. The media stories will be examined in order to understand the role the media plays in reinforcing and generating stereotypes and prejudice. With this in mind, how the mass media symbolizes the stigma and prejudice faced by LGB parents and young children will be discussed. Finally, this report will evaluate inclusive policy and the interventions in

place to support LGB parents and children. The importance of a practitioner's role in helping reduce the stigma towards LBG parents and children will also be considered.

Section 2 – Issues affecting the marginalised group

Parents and young children who are related to or identify as Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual face significant discrimination, prejudice and inequality. Despite policies and theories aimed at reducing the harassment and victimisation of LGB parents and young children, their identities are still being disapproved of and criticised (Leland, 2019). One such theory is the 'queer' theory which challenges to break stereotypes in the hopes that discrimination and injustice will be eliminated and in turn eradicate inequality (Sanchez, 2019). The theorist Foucault declines to accept the clear definition of sexuality and instead believes in a broad outlook of sexuality (De Villiers, 2012). This notion highlights the assumption that is often held by society of a limited form of sexuality, whereas Sanchez (2019) and De Villiers (2012) promote the ethos of a diverse and all-encompassing understanding of sexuality. Within this ideology LGB parents and young children may encounter less inaccurate presumptions which in turn would diminish discrimination and injustice. According to Badgett et al (2019) the limitations and restrictions faced by members of the LGB community are significantly affecting their human rights and consequently they are suffering from social exclusion. Armstrong, Armstrong and Spandagou (2010) describe the notion of social exclusion as a separation from society that is experienced by marginalised groups, which leads to the "unfair treatment of individuals" and the refusal of equal treatment (Dovidio, Hewstone, Glick & Esses, 2010, p.8).

LGB parents and young children are facing abuse, mistreatment and hate crime within early years and educational settings, at work, on the streets and at home (Webber, 2018).

Additionally, Ball (2017) highlights the extreme harassment that is experienced by many LGB parents and young children. A government survey published in 2018 found that 19% of LGB children have experienced verbal harassment within their education setting and 6% reported being excluded from activities (Government Equalities Office, 2018).

In recent years LGB parenting has become more evident and prominent in society (Goldberg & Allen, 2014). Goldberg and Allen's (2014) notion of LGB parenting growing, visibly displays both negative and positive reflections of LGB parents and their parenting. While this may be true, many people still believe LGB parenting has become more evident due to the rising concern of the wellbeing of LGB parents and their young children (Dettlarff, Washburn, Carr & Vogel, 2018). One of the key issues facing LGB children and parents lies within education. Peter, Taylor and Edkins (2016) describe educational settings as hostile and intimidating for children of LGB parents. This outlook has become increasingly concerning as a growing number of young children within educational settings are using discriminatory language, negative attitudes and stigmatising other young children who identify as LGB or who have LGB parents. This negativity often originates from adults' views within the family (Trub, Quinlan, Starks & Rosenthal, 2017). This links to the social constructivism theory as children's opinions and assumptions are developing through the interaction with significant others and the pressure to comply with the norm of society (Burr, 2015).

Similarly, Zammitt, Pepperell and Coe (2015, p.687) describe educational environments as "hostile and unsupportive" for young children and families who represent as this minority group. This suggests the experiences that young LGB children face within education are

often prejudiced and discriminatory despite the support services on offer within many settings (Trub, Quinlan, Starks & Rosenthal, 2017; Zammit, Pepperll & Coe, 2015). The discrimination encountered within education often originates from children's early play experiences. According to Kilvington and Wood (2016) if children are not conforming to the gender norms and play behaviours that society perceives are acceptable, children are more likely to experience bullying and are at risk of becoming isolated. Devarakonda (2013) asserts that many parents insist their children conform to the traditional gender stereotypes while attending early year's settings. This is especially true for boys as many parents expect them to be playing outside in the mud rather than looking after the babies in the home corner (Devarakonda, 2013). The analysis into gender and education is extremely complex due to the binary constrictions of male and female, therefore children often experience homophobia for not following society's acceptable gender behaviours regardless if they identify as LGB or not (Browne, 2004).

The process of 'socialisation' can be referred to in regard to the behaviours that are perceived to be acceptable and unacceptable in society. This natural process occurs when young children are taught what society regards and reflects as acceptable and unacceptable behaviours (Knowles, 2018). Behaviours which are considered not to conform to the norm are at risk of being stigmatised, which is often what happens in the case of LGB parents and their families. Where children witness such negativity, they are at risk of young children are at risk of growing up holding unethical stereotypes, opinions and behaviours (Knowles, 2018).

An additional concern facing some young LGB children and parents is the impact of prejudice on their health and wellbeing. The emotional health and wellbeing of young children is a crucial part of education especially within early year's settings (Department for Education, 2017). Howarth and Andreouli (2015) believe discrimination and prejudice can harm young children's sense of self-worth and positive identity. Moreover, Sidiropoulou, Drydakis, Harvey and Paraskevopoulou (2019) label inequality, discrimination and prejudice as factors which affect young children's self-belief and can cause the feeling of frustration and powerlessness. Diverniero and Breshears (2017) believe that lower levels of health and wellbeing associated with the LGB community, particularly in relation to mental health, are caused by the negative reactions of society. These negative reactions are often introduced and reinforced into society through media stories that are being published online and in newspapers (Littlejohn, 2019; Hussain, 2019; Twocock, 2019). Through tackling the negative reactions of society to LGB families, the mental health and wellbeing of young LGB children and parents can be improved. However, Oldehinkel (2019) expresses the need for organisations and early year's practitioners to predict who is likely to suffer from mental ill health and support them before their wellbeing begins to deteriorate. Early years practitioners can help by raising awareness and tolerance of LGB families, breaking down harmful stereotypes and by helping children to develop skills to deal with conflict.

Section 3 – Media representation

<p>Article 1</p> <p>'Please don't pretend two dads is the new normal': RICHARD LITTLEJOHN says children benefit most from being raised by a man and woman. Littlejohn (15th February 2018), The Daily Mail.</p>	<p>'Inappropriate' book titled 'Daddy's Roommate'</p>  <p>Muslim parents claim school is 'brainwashing'</p>
<p>Article 2</p> <p>Outraged Muslim parents claim school is 'brainwashing' children after boy, four, is sent home with 'inappropriate' book titled 'Daddy's Roommate', which details the lives of a gay couple and their son. Hussan (13th April 2019), The Daily Mail.</p>	 <p>LET CHILDREN BE CHILDREN!</p> <p>STOP BRAINWASHING OUR CHILDREN</p>
<p>Article 3</p> <p>At last, a generation of schoolchildren will grow up knowing it's OK to be LGBT. Twocock (5th September 2019), The Guardian.</p>	 <p>EQUAL AGE OF CONSENT NOW! SCRAP SECTION 28</p> <p>Please don't pretend two dads is the new normal</p>

The three articles presented above express the hostility same sex parents and their children may face in early year's settings and in their communities. This has also been supported by Leland (2019) as an increasing amount of young children are experiencing mistreatment by their peers and devastatingly some practitioners. The newspaper [article](#) written by Littlejohn (2018) characterises the marginalised group of LGB in a negative way. The author states

that “children benefit most from being brought up by a man and a woman” (Littlejohn, 2018, para 11). Boretien and Bernadi (2019) argue this judgment by stating that children who are living with same sex parents achieve just as well as those with different sex parents. In support of this this Knight et al (2017) assert that young children with LGB parents are harmed through the discrimination they face not the parenting they receive. The assumptions made by Littlejohn (2018) show a biased view of same sex parents, with the author displaying his own beliefs, expectations and principles of the marginalised group with no theory or factual information included in the article to justify these harmful opinions.

This article demonstrates the damage the media can cause for LGB children and families.

The exemplification theory portrays the harmful effects the article written by Littlejohn (2018) may have on the marginalised group. Borah (2016) describes the exemplification theory as the process in which people assimilate information they read or hear in the media into their own opinions and judgments. This notion can partly explain why LGB children and families are experiencing inequality in society as perceptions are being adopted from the extreme opinions of others and in turn creating a vicious circle of discrimination (Zillmann, 1999).

This article may have a significant impact on young children and their families as it may cause them to be embarrassed, scared and alienated due to the one-sided argument presented (Littlejohn, 2018).

The second newspaper article written by Hussan (2019) also portrays LGB children and families in a harmful and destructive way. The language used in this article is of a negative nature as the author describes the opinions raised by parents on the teaching of LGB

families. Phrases such as “sin and corrupt” are used, which can interpret LGB as a crime, evil and a fault (Hussan, 2019, para 6). The article states that the parents are concerned due to their religious beliefs as Muslims. The confirmation or bias theory explains how some groups of people interpret information in a form that supports their beliefs or principles (Alsaad, Taamneh & Jedaiah, 2018). This idea can be seen throughout the article as the parents’ religious beliefs are impacting on their views of the education of LGB children and families. Despite this, assumptions can’t be made regarding families who are Muslims as religion, gender and sexual identities as a whole are continuously portrayed in the media as problematic and controversial (Beaman & Van Arragon, 2015). Likewise, some people who have no religious faith can also be prejudiced towards LGB families. In contrast to Hussan’s (2019) article, spokesman Ezra Stripe discusses his role as a spokesman for the charitable organisation ‘Hidayah’ which supports Muslims who identify as LGBTQ+. He believes that it is vital for all young children to recognise that two mums or two dads is normal (Hidayah, 2019).

One significant issue to consider is the effect this article may have on young children’s mental health. Early childhood is considered one of the most important stages of a child’s development and a momentous time for the development of their mental health (NHS Digital, 2018). Weiss (2015) expresses the importance the media has in promoting the positive emotional health of young children. Some of the phrases used within this article may damage young children’s mental health through causing embarrassment and humiliation. One of these phrases compared the promotion of LGB in educational settings to terrorism and gun crime (Hussan, 2019). However, the support offered by the organisation ‘Hidayah’ and

messages promoted by Ezra Stripe may give some Muslim LGB individuals and their families some hope and optimism.

The third newspaper article written by Twocock (2019) promotes LGB positively. The article focuses on new regulations that have been put in place concerning sex education and relationships. These regulations including the promotion of different family dynamics such as two mums or two dads (Department for Education, 2019). Through introducing these regulations Twocock (2019) believes young children will grow up having a clearer understanding of LGB families and how to be inclusive in society. The new regulations being introduced within education will allow positive messages and behaviours to be introduced to children and in turn allow the features of the social cognitive theory to take affect by promoting positive opinions of LGB families and young children (Department for Education, 2019).

This article does not appear to be influenced by bias or vested interest as it contains government statistics and legislation including a variety of opinions (Twocock, 2019). The article presented by Twocock (2019) may have a positive impact for LGB children and families as the prejudice and discrimination faced by many may reduce due to the increase in positive publicity and media coverage. However, Macblain, Dunn and Luke (2017) believe that the media will continue to be a platform for discrimination and prejudice which will trigger complexities for LGB families and young children despite the rise in more positive articles similar to Twocock (2019).

Section 4 – The challenges of inclusive ideology in practice

The challenges facing practitioners in order to promote inclusive behaviours has become more demanding due to increasing discrimination and prejudice faced by marginalised groups (Collett, 2017). The Department for Education (2017) discusses the need to contest discrimination and prejudice faced by LGB young children and families, through the promotion of British values. According to Revell and Bryan (2018) through encouraging British values within settings young children will learn tolerance, democracy, respect, and vitally responsibility. Knowles (2018) agrees that the discussion of family diversity within the curriculum is fundamental and can contribute significantly to an inclusive ideology in practice. However, features of the British values can vary significantly depending on differing viewpoints and people's diverse interpretations of the acceptable values of life. What may be acceptable to one religion or ethnic group may be completely unacceptable to another group. Therefore teaching 'British values' can be a challenging and demanding experience for practitioners (Knowles, 2018). Gruenberg and Miller (2011) emphasise the shared responsibility between practitioners and family members in supporting the inclusion of LGB children and their families. If adults are not communicating positive and tolerant messages with their children they cannot expect them to be inclusive in society. For this reason it is clear that inclusion is a team led process which children need supporting and guiding through (Gruenberg & Miller, 2011).

Practitioners are compelled to follow guidelines set by the government and other respected organisations such as Unicef. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child published by

Unicef (1990), states a number of Articles that should be adhered to. The second Article applies to LGB children and parents as it sets out that discrimination is not acceptable. As well as Article two Article fourteen can be associated with LGB children and their parents, as it sets out that all young children should have “freedom of thought and belief” (Unicef, 1990, p.1). This Article can be difficult for practitioners to interpret if they are working within a diverse community with children from a variety of backgrounds.

Another important intervention in place is the ‘No Outsiders’ programme which has been written to provide practitioners with a curriculum that stimulates equality (Moffat, 2015).

Although many practitioners believe the ‘No Outsiders’ programme should be delivered within the curriculum, some members of society feel it is not an appropriate curriculum for young children to be introduced to (Parveen, 2019). Some of the objections involve religious communities complaining that the curriculum does not run alongside their religious beliefs (Hayet, 2019). However, some of the religious communities objecting to the ‘No Outsiders’ programme mistakenly it only contains information regarding the marginalised group of LGB families, yet it involves all aspects of marginalisation including religion (Moffat, 2015).

Despite all the criticism received, practitioners have begun using the ‘No Outsiders’ programme as a tool to inform young children of the key themes published in the Equality Act 2010. The Act places emphasis on the victimisation of all people in society including LGB children and families (Department for Education, 2014). The ‘No outsiders’ programme allows the Equality Act 2010 to be implemented within the curriculum in a way that young

children can relate to and understand clearly. An example of this is demonstrated by using stories through the medium of print or from electronically delivered devices (Moffat, 2015).

Tackling prejudice in early year's education can be a complex and a sensitive topic to cover.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (2019) state it is important that practitioners

continue to confront prejudice within the curriculum through child friendly activities. In order

for young children to engage, creativity is key. Waller and Davis (2014) strongly believe that

young children engage and participate more effectively when creative play is used, as this

when young children's development is aided significantly. This notion suggests that activities

involving creative materials, role play such as the use of persona dolls or puppets, the

outdoor environment and music could advance young children's knowledge and

understanding of marginalised groups (Equality & Human Rights Commission, 2019; Waller

& Davis, 2014). Johnston, Nahmad-Williams, Oates and Wood (2018) express that persona

dolls are a valuable resource to support young children's moral development as well as their

social and cognitive development. Through taking part in this children are not only learning

about moral understanding but are developing other important skills and understanding about

the world around them (Department for Education, 2017).

Section 5 – Conclusion

To conclude, this report has critically discussed the prejudice, discrimination and inequality experienced by LGB parents and their young children. This discussion included the key issues young children face in the community and their education, together with how prejudice, discrimination and inequality affects their health and wellbeing. The severity of the discrimination encountered was highlighted including the hate crime, exploitation and cruelty experienced by LGB children and parents (Webber, 2018). Furthermore, this report analysed three media stories that represented LGB parents and young children, both positively and negatively. The media stories were examined in order to understand how mass media contributes to the stigma and prejudice faced by LGB parents and young children.

Through analysing the articles written by Littlejohn (2019), Hussain (2019) and Twocock (2019) the damage and harm that can be potentially caused by the media has become clear. Many articles within the media have been written from a biased viewpoint which can portray LGB children and parents negatively, tainting the opinions and impressions held by the general public regarding this marginalised group. Contrary to this, the media can play a positive role in promoting understanding about the issues faced by this group and rising tolerance. Lastly, this report has evaluated inclusive policy and interventions that are in place to support LGB parents and young children. The importance of skilled, knowledgeable and unbiased practitioners is crucial in helping to address the needs of LGB families and promote children's understanding of this diverse family structure. The most concerning challenge is

that some parents disagree with educating young children about LGB parents and families, regardless of the fact that the curriculum promotes all marginalised groups that experience inequality, prejudice and discrimination (Moffet, 2015). This report shows the lack of acceptance of LGB children and parents to be a social concern which continues to affect the education, health and life satisfaction of many LGB families. The dilemma presented is that practitioners are faced with significant conflict and diverse viewpoints by introducing LGB issues to children through programmes such as the 'No Outsiders' campaign. From September 2020, relationships education will be compulsory for all primary pupils as part of 'Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education' (DfE, 2019). Primary schools will be expected to discuss family diversity, including 'LGBT parents' (DfE, 2019, p 19), which ties into the 'No Outsiders' campaign. This reports ends by outlining the following recommendations for practice i) regular staff training on LGBT issues, ii) representing LGBT families through classroom material, activities and assemblies, iii) explaining concepts to children in a sensitive, age-appropriate manner (Price & Tayler, 2015).

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