

**TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF CREATING
SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS
FOR CHILDREN FROM SAME-SEX
PARENTED FAMILIES**

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Teachers' perceptions of creating supportive school environments for children from same-sex parented families

by

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DECLARATION

I, Vanessa Tosi, hereby declare that this dissertation, "*Teachers' perceptions of creating supportive school environments for children from same-sex parented families*", submitted in accordance with the requirements for the Magister Educationis degree at the University of Pretoria, is my own original work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution. All sources cited or quoted in this research paper are indicated and acknowledged with a comprehensive list of references.

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I, Vanessa Tosi, author of “*Teachers’ perceptions of creating supportive school environments for children from same-sex parented families*”, have obtained the applicable research ethics approval for the research described in this work. I declare that I have observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University of Pretoria’s *Code Of Ethics For Research* and the *Guidelines For Responsible Research*.

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*For LJ, Julia and Ross,
with all my love...*

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore foundation phase teachers' perceptions of the way in which supportive school environments are being created for children from same-sex parented families. It focused specifically on how foundation phase teachers perceive their role in accommodating, including, and positively representing the same-sex parented family in their classroom practice. Current literature highlights the negative experiences of homophobia and heteronormativity in schools, together with the need to create more supportive school environments for children from same-sex parented families. The increasing prevalence of same-sex parented families in South Africa has created the need for extended research in this regard, and yet there is a gap in national literature on the school experiences of children from this non-traditional minority family form. Foundation phase teachers play a central role in teaching their young learners to accept and celebrate diversity. However, no research has been done in South Africa to explore foundation phase teachers' perspectives on their role in interrupting heteronormativity in their schools and classrooms. This study was approached from an interpretive paradigm and qualitative methods were employed to collect and analyse the data. Individual interviews were conducted with four foundation phase teachers, and interpretive thematic data analysis techniques were used to analyse the data. Culturally responsive pedagogy was used as a framework to explore barriers to inclusion, and to recommend ways in which foundation phase teachers in South African schools can be supported in creating safe, positive and counter-heteronormative school environments for children from same-sex parented families.

Key Terms:

- culturally responsive pedagogy
- foundation phase teachers
- heteronormativity
- same-sex parented families
- supportive school environments

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CHAPTER 1: CONTEXTUALISING THE STUDY

The question 'why diversity' is one diverse authors tend to answer rather than ask. We already understand the need for it because we already know what it is to grow up with the loneliness and self doubt that springs from never seeing your own reflection in literature. We bear the cost of our absence and the distortion of our cultures and identities by others. But there is a cost to everyone else too. Because we are all living in a diverse reality that is only becoming more so – which means that if you can't hear our voices, you can't hear the world.

Ambelin Kwaymullina, author of *The Lost Girl*.

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

This study explores foundation phase teachers' perceptions of the way in which supportive school environments are being created for children from same-sex parented families. It focuses specifically on how foundation phase teachers perceive their role, as counter-heteronormative agents, in teaching and modelling an acceptance and celebration of the same-sex parented family, and representing this non-traditional family in their classroom practice.

The research done on same-sex parenting has consistently shown that children raised in same-sex parented families are as psychologically healthy and well adjusted as children raised by heterosexual parents (Patterson, 2006; Herek, 2006; Gartrell, Rodas, Deck, Peyser, & Banks, 2005; Bos, van Balen, & van den Boom, 2007; Bos, Knox, van Rijn-van Gelderen, & Gartrell, 2016). The American Psychological Association (APA, 2004) have resolved that there is no scientific research showing that the sexual orientation of parents is related to the quality of parenting (cited in Paige, 2005). Family processes, rather than family structure, contribute far more in determining children's well-being (Short, Riggs, Perlesz, Brown, & Kane, 2007). The quality of daily interaction and the strength of the relationship with parents, rather than the sexual orientation of parents, are more important in raising emotionally healthy children (Patterson, 2006).

In the past decade, the non-traditional family form has increased (Van Gelderen, Gartrell, Bos, van Rooij, & Hermanns, 2012), yet many international studies have revealed that young children and adolescents have experienced stigmatisation because they have same-sex parents (Bos, Gartrell, Peyser, & Van Balen, 2008; Bos & Gartrell, 2010; Walsh, 2012). The stigma and discrimination of these families needs to be addressed, as it can negatively affect a healthy family identity (Breshears, 2011). Lick, Patterson, and Schmidt (2013) found that while children from same-sex parented families showed positive overall adjustment, stigmatisation resulted in negative psychological consequences for these children (Lick et al., 2013).

In an international context, Robinson (2002; 2005); DePalma and Atkinson (2006; 2010); Hanlon (2009) and Janmohamed (2010), have conducted in-depth research on the negative homophobic and heteronormative experiences of lesbian and gay children in early childhood education. A great deal of international research has also been conducted on the negative school experiences of children from same-sex parented families (Bishop & Atlas, 2015; Fedewa & Clarke, 2009; Fox, 2007; Janmohamed & Campbell, 2009; Jeltova & Fish, 2005; Kosciw & Diaz, 2008; Ray & Gregory, 2001; and Ryan & Martin, 2000). The findings highlight that many children from same-sex parented families are experiencing homophobic marginalisation and stigmatisation in the school context, where they are exposed to bullying, teasing, verbal abuse and negative reactions from peers and teachers, as well as an absence of acceptance and support (Ray & Gregory, 2001; Perlesz, Brown, McNair, Lindsay, Pitts, & De Vaus, 2006). These experiences may lead to the children feeling isolated or different to their peers (Ray & Gregory, 2001). Heteronormativity, derived from assumed and implied understandings of sexuality, gender and relationships, preserves heterosexuality as dominant and normative (Gunn, 2008). In their 2006 study on the discussion of sexual orientation in schools in the United Kingdom, DePalma and Atkinson found that heteronormativity is maintained in schools, not only by what is being said and done, but also by what is *not* being said and done. They explain that a discomfort and silence persists around the discussion of same-sex relationships within the school curriculum, and that this influences perceptions of both self-identity and family norms. Representation can create a sense of comfort and belonging for homosexual individuals and families. Breaking the silence is

necessary “not only for those whose voices are not heard, but also for those who have not yet been able to listen” (DePalma & Atkinson, 2006, p. 346). Schools can create a more egalitarian society and positive social change for all LGBTQ¹ people, by ensuring that their curricula, policies, and practices are reflective and inclusive of all types of people, families and cultures (Bishop & Atlas, 2015).

Teachers play an important role in confirming, rejecting, and strengthening social relations on a daily basis at school (Donald, Lazarus, & Lolwana, 2011). Petrovic (2002) agrees that teachers hold a great influence over the opinions, actions and thoughts of their learners, particular at the primary level, as this age learners are less likely to question their teachers and often take what they say at face value. Young foundation phase children entering the school setting for the first time have to negotiate the school-family relationship. The theme of family is a prominent one in this phase and the children are asked to share information about their families. The foundation phase teacher plays an important role in validating the diverse families that foundation phase children belong to. In order to normalise the same-sex or LGBTQ parented family in schools, children need to see their family form represented in the literature (Bishop & Atlas, 2015). Teaching children about cultural, ethnic, and family diversity can increase children’s tolerance of differences and prepare them for living in a diverse world (Bishop & Atlas, 2015).

It has been found, in international research, that while teachers are educating learners on many types of family diversity, they are not including or representing LGBTQ families in their classroom practice. Bishop and Atlas (2015) found that while schools in New York were proactive in addressing many other types of personal and family diversity, LGBTQ children and families were not included in the teaching and reading material used, or in the in-service training programmes offered to teachers. As a result of these findings, Bishop and Atlas (2015) speculate that schools are more accepting of other forms of diversity and alternative family structures than what they are of LGBTQ families.

¹ **LGBTQ** is an acronym used to describe people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual and queer (Janmohamed & Campbell, 2009).

Robinson (2002) explains that teachers in early childhood education often choose to teach the children in their class about issues of diversity that they feel more comfortable with, such as differences in race and culture. Teachers may still narrowly perceive cultural diversity within the context of racial and ethnical diversity (Robinson, 2002). While in the past, the primary areas of concern that were included under multiculturalism generally related to race, ethnicity, language and religion, theorists have recently expanded the understanding of multiculturalism to include gender and sexuality diversity (Meyer, 2010). The increasing diversity of families extends beyond race and ethnicity, and all types of individual, family and cultural diversity should be recognised and celebrated in schools.

Despite the equity and non-discrimination rights and protections laid down by South African law, social discrimination and inequity remain significant challenges for same-sex parented families (Lubbe, 2007a). While the same-sex parented family is increasing in prevalence in South Africa, very little has been written by and for educators about the school experiences of children from same-sex parented families in this country (Lubbe, 2007b). The works of Butler, Alpaslan, Strümpher, and Astbury (2003), Bhana (2012, 2013, 2014), Francis and Msibi (2011), Francis (2012, 2013), and Msibi (2012) highlight the negative experiences of homophobia and heteronormativity experienced by LGBTQ youth in South African secondary schools. Their work identifies teachers as central agents in bringing about change for LGBTQ learners, and argues for specific training and education of teachers on the issues of homophobia and heteronormativity, in order to equip them with the skills to tackle these issues in schools. Bhana (2012) argues that if given the necessary institutional support, teachers have the potential to work against discrimination. However, no research can be located in South Africa that explores the school experiences of children from same-sex parented families, or teachers' perceptions on the way in which homophobia and heteronormativity are being experienced and dealt with at foundational phase level, or even in primary schools.

It is therefore useful to explore foundation phase teachers' perceptions of the classroom and school environment that is being created for children from same-sex parented families, as well as the way in which the teachers perceive their own role in fostering supportive and representative school environments for these non-traditional

minority families. In summary, this research will be valuable given that:

- a. The international literature highlights the negative social and school experiences of children from same-sex parented families.
- b. The research findings in South Africa demonstrate the negative homophobic and heteronormative experiences of LGBTQ youth in South African secondary schools.
- c. There is a dearth in South African literature on the school experiences of children from same-sex parented families.
- d. Teachers play an important role in working against homophobia and heteronormativity in schools.
- e. No research has been done in South Africa that explores teachers' perceptions of the way in which supportive school environments are being created for children from same-sex parented families.

1.2 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study is part of Doctor Diana Breshears and Professor Carien Lubbe-de Beer's larger research project on the experiences surrounding familial identity in same-sex parented families. Their project aims to explore the experiences of children with same-sex parents in the South African school context, from the perspective of children, parents and teachers, focusing on the ways in which parents and educational institutions can create an environment that fosters a positive sense of family identity for these children.

My research project focuses on exploring and understanding foundation phase teachers' perceptions on their role in creating supportive school environments for children from same-sex parented families. The study provides speculative insight into the reasons why teachers may not be accommodating, including and representing the same-sex parented family in their classroom practice. I use a culturally responsive pedagogy framework to explore the possible barriers to inclusion, and provide recommendations for the way in which teachers can be supported through educational institutions in successfully playing a much needed and functional role in creating safe, positive and counter-heteronormative school

environments for children from this minority family structure.

This research has implications for the pre-service and in-service training and support of foundation phase teachers in regards to successfully fostering safe, positive and counter-heteronormative school environments. The findings also contribute to the main study, which aims to create the changes in the South African school system that would allow children from same-sex parented families to experience a safe school environment that supports and celebrates their non-traditional family structure.

1.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study was guided by the following primary and secondary research questions:

1.3.1 Primary Research Question:

- How do foundation phase teachers perceive their role in creating supportive school environments for children from same-sex parented families?

1.3.2 Secondary Research Questions:

- How do foundation phase teachers perceive same-sex parented families?
- How do foundation phase teachers understand the school experiences of children from same-sex parented families?
- What obstacles may be preventing foundation phase teachers from creating supportive school and classroom environments for children from same-sex parented families?

1.4 WORKING ASSUMPTIONS

According to Bercaw and Stooksberry (2004), social change begins with the assumption that existing dominant societal norms need to be transformed in order to build an egalitarian society. This research is based on the assumption that just as various educational institutions have the power to perpetuate dominant beliefs, so

too do they have the power to examine and change the unjust norms in society (Bercaw & Stooksberry, 2004).

Through reviewing the literature, the following working assumptions were made in approaching this study:

- That foundation phase children from same-sex parented families may struggle to negotiate the conflicting school-family relationship due to the dominant heteronormative beliefs in the school system.
- That these challenges can be overcome if a safe, positive and counter-heteronormative school environment is created, in which children from same-sex parented families are supported by their teachers and schools.
- That all children can and should be taught from a young age to accept and celebrate all types of diversity.
- That teachers play a vital role in creating supportive school environments for children from same-sex parented families.
- That, with the support of educational institutions, teachers can successfully create supportive school and classroom environments for children from same-sex parented families.

1.5 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

In this section I provide clarification of the key concepts as they are used in this study.

1.5.1 Foundation phase teachers

According to the Information Guide on Initial Teacher Education (Department of Education, 2009), foundation phase teachers are trained to teach from Grade R (0) to Grade 3 (\pm 5 – 9 year olds). In South Africa, foundation phase teachers complete a four-year Bachelor of Education degree (B.Ed.) in Early Childhood and Foundation Phase Teaching, and upon qualifying are required to register with the South African Council for Educators (SACE). Foundation phase teachers have a great influence over their young learners' emotional, academic, and social well-being. They play a

vital role in ensuring that all learners from diverse backgrounds feel included and affirmed in their classrooms, and should monitor the way in which their own personal beliefs may influence how they respond to their learners (Department of Basic Education, 2011).

1.5.2 Same-sex parented families

Same-sex parented families are families with parents who are either both women or both men, but, just like heterosexual families, they can vary greatly in structure (Meezan & Rauch, 2005). “The children in such families may be the outcome of previous heterosexual relationships of the people involved or the result of adoption, surrogate motherhood or sperm donation” (Cohen et al., 2007, p.17). The term “same-gendered family” may also be used to describe “a family constituted by two gay parents of the same gender (two females or males), who are involved in an intimate and committed relationship” (Lubbe, 2005, p.19). These two terms are used interchangeably. For the purpose of this study I use the term same-sex parented families, which was used for the original research project.

1.5.3 LGBTQ

LGBTQ is an acronym that refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and queer people as a collective (Meyer, 2010). The Q in the acronym LGBTQ can also stand for “questioning” (Janmohamed and Campbell, 2009). In much of the research done on homophobia and heteronormativity, the terms *queer*, *LGBT*, or *LGBTQ* are used interchangeably in the literature to refer to any identity that challenges heteronormative constructions of sexuality and gender (Janmohamed & Campbell, 2009). To strive for uniformity in my discussion of the reviewed literature, I use the term LGBTQ, which recognises all expressions of gender and sexuality. However, this research project has only focused on same-sex parented families, which implies lesbian and gay parents, as this was the focus of the larger research project.

1.5.4 Homophobia

Janmohamed and Campbell define homophobia as the “fear, hatred, or intolerance of queer people ” (2009, p.8). “Homophobic acts can range from avoidance, to name calling, to denial of the right to equality, to violence targeting queer people and their families” (Janmohamed & Campbell, 2009, p 8). DePalma and Atkinson (2010)

argue that homophobia not only affects LGBTQ people but also those with LGBTQ parents, as well as anyone who does not conform to heteronormative stereotypes. While homophobic bullying is often viewed as an individual problem, DePalma and Atkinson argue that it is the result of “a systematic institutional manifestation of cultural bias” (2010, p.1670) and oppression on the basis of sex.

1.5.5 Heteronormativity

“Heteronormativity is a term that is used to describe the marginalization of non-heterosexual lifestyles and the view that heterosexuality is the normal sexual orientation” (Janmohamed and Campell, 2009, p.8). According to Gunn (2008), heteronormativity is a concept that is central to queer theory, and interrupting heterosexuality is viewed as the key goal of queer researchers. DePalma and Atkinson (2010) explain that homophobic bullying occurs in heteronormative environments, and that interventions cannot just focus on preventing homophobia. Heteronormativity must be acknowledged and interrupted in schools in order to combat homophobia. In order to interrupt heteronormativity in schools, teachers must acknowledge the daily, seemingly inconsequential ways in which heteronormative ideologies and practices are maintained in their classrooms, and work with their learners to challenge and change these ideologies and practices (Queen, Farrell, & Gupta, 2004).

1.5.6 Supportive School Environments

For the purpose of this study, I argue that supportive school environments should provide safe, positive and queer (or counter-heteronormative) moments, as described by Goldstein, Russell, and Daley (2007). This means that schools and teachers should continuously strive to promote, not just tolerance, but affirmation of diversity, and not only prevent homophobia, but also interrupt heteronormativity in their schools and classrooms. Supportive school environments for children from the same-sex parented family, are environments in which these families are accepted, accommodated, normalised, included and represented. In order for schools to achieve these fully supportive environments, systemic changes need to be implemented that address issues of curriculum, school policies, and school-community relationships (Goldstein et al., 2007).

1.5.7 Culturally responsive pedagogy

Culturally responsive pedagogy, as defined by the Capacity Building Series (2013), is a theoretical framework that explains how to remove discrimination in schools that relates to all forms of individual, family and cultural diversity, including ethnicity, race, faith, family structure, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, ability and mental health. It involves a commitment to systemic, not merely individual, empowerment, in order to prepare all learners to become critical thinkers who challenge discrimination and celebrate all forms of diversity (Capacity Building Series, 2013). The view of “culture” in this framework goes much deeper than the usual understandings of race, faith or ethnicity, and involves how people identify themselves and experience the world (Capacity Building Series, 2013). The dimensions of the culturally responsive framework are being used as the theoretical framework in this study, to explore how foundation phase teachers view their role in creating safe, positive and counter-heteronormative school environments for children from same-sex parented families, and how they can be better supported in doing so.

1.6 PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVE

In this section, I will briefly introduce the meta-theoretical paradigm and the methodological paradigm. Detailed discussions follow in Chapter 3.

1.6.1 Meta-Theoretical Paradigm

I approached this study from an interpretive paradigm in order to gain insight into the experiences and perceptions of my participants (Ferreira, 2012). I used an interpretive approach to conduct this research, because I believe that multiple realities are subjectively and socially constructed, and that human experience can only be understood from the viewpoint of people (Morgan and Sklar, 2012).

1.6.2 Methodological Paradigm

As my research is concerned with the interpretation of meaning, I used a qualitative methodological paradigm in order to interpret the meaning that participants give to their experiences. The researcher was the main research instrument, and data was analysed inductively. The focus was on gaining an in-depth understanding of a

phenomenon within its natural setting (Morgan and Sklar, 2012) and a rich descriptive account of the findings was delivered (Merriam, 2002).

1.7 BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Table 1.1 provides a summary of the research methodology used in this study. A detailed discussion follows in Chapter 3.

Table 1.1: Summary of the research methodology

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	
Research design:	Generic Qualitative Research Design
Selection of Participants:	Purposive and convenience sampling of foundation phase teachers with a minimum of two years working experience.
Data collection:	Individual interviews; reflective journal; documentary sources
Data analysis:	Qualitative interpretive data analysis
Quality Criteria:	Credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, authenticity.
Ethical considerations:	Voluntary participation, the right to privacy, informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, beneficence, non-maleficence, respect.

I used a generic qualitative research design in order to conduct this research project. Merriam (2002) defines the generic qualitative research design as a basic interpretive qualitative study. This research design has been used because, as the researcher, I was trying to explore and understand a phenomenon from the perspectives of the participants. This research was undertaken in an attempt to understand how participants make meaning of a phenomenon, and was mediated through the researcher as the primary instrument, using an inductive strategy. It

resulted in a rich, descriptive discussion of the findings in relation to the literature that framed the study process (Merriam, 2002).

The data generation strategy involved individual, one-on-one, semi-structured interviews in which I asked open-ended questions to explore and understand the views and beliefs of the foundation phase teachers in regards to their role in creating supportive school environments for children from same-sex parented families. After transcribing the data, I used qualitative interpretive data analysis to induce themes and sub-themes from the data, which were then interpreted and discussed in relation to the existing literature.

1.8 QUALITY CRITERIA

In order to ensure the trustworthiness of a study, the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, authenticity and confirmability must be evaluated (Di Fabio and Maree, 2012). Specific steps were taken throughout the research project to enhance the trustworthiness of this study, including member checking, personal reflections, and quality checks and discussions with my research supervisor throughout the research process. In Chapter 3, I discuss the quality assurance strategies used in this study.

1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Measures were taken throughout the study to ensure that the philosophical principles of respect, non-maleficence, and beneficence were applied. Strategies were put in place to ensure confidentiality, voluntary participation, right of privacy, protection from harm and trust (Ferreira, 2012). Informed consent was obtained from every participant to ensure that they understood the purpose of the research project and what their participation entailed, so that they could decide whether they wanted to participate. In chapter 3, the ethical considerations are discussed in more detail.

1.10 LAYOUT OF THE STUDY

The outline of the chapters ensures a structured and logical research report in which the research aims and questions are addressed. Table 1.2 outlines the layout of this study.

Table 1.2: Layout of the study

CHAPTER 1	INTRODUCTION: CONTEXTUALISING THE STUDY
CHAPTER 2	LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
CHAPTER 3	RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY
CHAPTER 4	RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS
CHAPTER 5	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1.11 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I conceptualised the study and provided a rationale for undertaking the research. I then discussed the purpose of the study according to the research questions. I clarified key concepts and outlined the working assumption. The research design and methodology utilised, and the ethical considerations and quality criteria that I adhered to, were introduced. In Chapter 2 I review the national and international literature on the topic, and introduce and discuss the theoretical framework for this study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, I introduced the study and presented the rationale for undertaking it. I outlined the main and secondary research questions, provided my assumptions and clarified the key concepts. I then briefly introduced the research design and the methodology that directed this study.

In chapter 2, I discuss the international and national literature on the same-sex parented family and the school experiences of children from this minority family, in order to provide the established findings and to identify gaps in the literature.

I begin by discussing the South African legislation in respect of the rights of people in regards to sexual orientation diversity and same-sex parenting. I then explore the experiences of same-sex parented families, by focusing on the most current research on this minority family, as well as on their experiences of homophobia and heteronormativity, within an international and South African context. I also discuss the current international and national literature on the school experiences of children from same-sex parented families. In order to clarify my concept of supportive schools, I will introduce a framework by Goldstein et al. (2007) for distinguishing between safe, positive and queer schools, explaining how safe, positive and queering moments can be used to create anti-homophobia and counter-heteronormative education. I discuss the available literature and most recent findings on the role of schools and teachers in creating supportive school and classroom environments for children from same-sex parented families in relation to the policies of inclusive and anti-bias education in South Africa. Finally, I outline the theoretical framework for this study, culturally responsive pedagogy, which is used to explore the role of the school and teacher in creating supportive school and classroom environments for children from same-sex parented families.

2.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.2.1 South African legislation in regards to sexual orientation diversity and same-sex parented families

With the establishment of the new democratic constitution in South Africa, an Equality Clause was developed in the new legislation that enforces equality and prohibits any form of unfair discrimination based on race, gender, sex, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language, birth, or marital status (Republic of South Africa, 1996). South Africa was the first country to include sexual orientation into its anti-discrimination laws (Butler, et al., 2003). In 1994 the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality was established in order to advance the rights of gay and lesbian people (Louw, 2005). This has resulted in legislation which has greatly advanced the rights of lesbian and gay families, including “access to donor insemination extending beyond married heterosexual women in 1997, immigration rights to same-sex couples in 2000, (and) the right to joint adoption by same-sex couples in 2002” (Breshears & Lubbe De Beer, 2016, p.2). In 2006 the Civil Union Act legalised same-sex marriages (Civil Union Act no. 17 of 2006). Despite the new democratic constitution and legislations in South Africa, negative societal attitudes towards gay and lesbian people and families are deeply ingrained in society and are slow to change (Lubbe, 2007a; 2007b).

2.2.2 Same-sex parented families

According to Lubbe, the term same-sex parented family or “same-gendered family refers to a family constituted by two gay/lesbian parents of the same gender (two males or two females) who are involved in an intimate and committed relationship” (2007b, p.45). Same-sex parented family structures are diverse, and include families formed with children conceived within previous heterosexual relationships, single parent families, and lesbian or gay couples that decide to have children via donor insemination, adoption or fostering (Perlesz et al., 2006). More and more same-sex couples are choosing to have children (Herek, 2006). The increase in the number of same-sex parents creates a need to understand the experiences of children who are raised by homosexual parents in a heteronormative society (Fedewa & Clarke,

2009). Lubbe (2007a) argues that in South Africa, scientific literature on the ways in which same-sex parented families experience a predominantly heteronormative society is limited (Lubbe, 2007a).

More than 30 years ago, the American Psychiatric Association, strongly supported in their decision by the American Psychological Association, removed homosexuality from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (Herek, 2006). Despite this, international literature up until the early 1990's argued that homosexuality was deviant and that same-sex parents were believed to negatively influence their children's development (Lubbe, 2007a). Throughout the years, scientific research has consistently failed to find reliable differences between the gender and sexual development children of lesbian and heterosexual mothers, and available data shows that the most children raised by same-sex parents grow up to be heterosexual (Herek, 2006). While most of the earlier studies that were done utilised convenience samples, they could not generalise the findings to all children of same-sex parents (Herek, 2006). However, Herek (2006) reports on a study done by Wainright, Russell, and Patterson (2004), in which a probability sample was used to provide a valid basis for generalisation to the population. In this study, the researchers confirmed that there were no significant differences in both the individual psychological well-being and in the family and relationship processes between adolescents who were parented by female couples and adolescents parented by heterosexual couples (Herek, 2006).

Kroeger (2006) summarises the findings of much of the research done on the developmental outcomes of children from same-sex parented families. These findings show that children of gay and lesbian parents grow up to be psychologically healthy, and that their emotional, behavioural, and cognitive functioning all show normal results. The findings also indicate that these children may be less gender-traditional in choosing occupations, less homophobic, and more flexible in their understanding of sexual behaviour (Kroeger, 2006). Some research suggests that lesbian and gay parents take on more equal and shared parental roles, resulting in positive well-being for the parents' relationship with one another other, as well as for the child's adjustment (Millbank, 2003).

In their studies on children conceived to lesbian mothers from donor inseminations, Perlesz & McNair (2004) found that these children have a greater tolerance for diversity, and non-judgmental attitudes to a wide range of socio-cultural and family diversity. Gartrell and Bos (2010) found that children from same-sex parented families perform better socially and academically and have less social problems and externalised maladjusted behaviour.

Patterson (2006) stresses that the quality and strength of the daily interactions and relationships with parents is more important to children than the sexual orientation of their parents. In 2004, the American Psychological Association (APA) once again confirmed that no scientific evidence exists for concluding that same-sex parents are unfit parents (Paige, 2005). The APA continue to oppose any discrimination based on sexual orientation, and encourage psychologists to actively act to prevent this form of discrimination (Paige, 2005).

2.2.3 Heteronormativity and homophobia

Janmohamed and Campbell (2009) define homophobia as the “fear, hatred, or intolerance of queer people. Homophobic acts can range from avoidance, to name calling, to denial of the right to equality, to violence targeting queer people and their families” (p. 8). The same writers define heteronormativity as “a term that is used to describe the marginalization of non-heterosexual lifestyles and the view that heterosexuality is the normal sexual orientation” (p. 8). Heteronormativity is built on the assumption that everyone is heterosexual (Meyer, 2010). According to Habarth (2008), heteronormativity, or the normalisation of heterosexuality, exists across multiple social domains and is perpetuated by social institutions, as well as through daily actions of individuals. It creates assumptions about normal sexuality, privileges those who fit in to the prescribed heterosexual mould, and marginalises and silences those who do not (Habarth, 2008).

Gunn (2008) explains that scholars and researchers of queer theory aim to disrupt heterosexuality as dominant, institutionalised and normative. According to Gunn (2008), heteronormativity includes three categories, namely, sexuality, gender, and family form. In childhood education, the heteronormative discourse shapes the perceptions of normality, and silences and excludes understandings of any forms of

sexuality, gender and family that are not heterosexual (Gunn, 2008). In regards to sexuality, the heteronormative discourse views heterosexuality as normal, while any alternatives to heterosexuality are seen as abnormal (Gunn, 2008). Gender, the second aspect of heteronormativity, “refers to psychological and social characteristics associated with, but not necessarily correlating perfectly with, biological sex categories”; while “sex refers to the biological and physical manifestations of sex-linked chromosomes” (Habarth, 2008, p. 14). Habarth (2008) explains that gender identity relates to the labels used to describe gender, such as male, female, and transgender; while gender-role orientation is the extent to which behavioural and psychological traits align to socially determined expectations of masculinity and femininity. According to Gunn (2008) gender is often traditionally viewed by society as inseparable from sexuality, as societal gender-role expectations relate to beliefs, attitudes, and values about sexuality. Heteronormative discourse questions the sexuality of males and females if they do not perform according to expected male and female binary norms (Gunn, 2008). Teachers and children tend to construct these patterned gender-role expectations in schools (Goodhand, 2014). In a heteronormative society, children learn that sex, gender and sexuality are theoretically connected, and they are taught to develop, what is considered to be “normal” behaviour for boys and girls (Goodhand, 2014). Finally, and relative to this study, Gunn (2008) explains how heteronormativity is viewed in relation to the concept of family. In the Western world the nuclear family form, which consists of heterosexual parents, is normalised and privileged (Gunn, 2008). Queer theory aims to challenge and disrupt these heteronormative views on sexuality, gender and family.

Bernstein and Reimann (2001) argue that heteronormativity is most powerfully experienced in same-sex parenting, because the negative stereotypes and invisibility of these families in societal institutions results in the marginalisation and silencing of this minority family form (cited in Lubbe, 2007a). Children growing up in same-sex parented families need to somehow reconcile and integrate their family identity with that of the wider heteronormative society (Lubbe, 2007a). While it has been proved that being raised by same-sex parents does not negatively affect children’s development, researchers have shown a significant relationship between homophobic stigmatisation and psychological adjustment. Social discrimination and

stigmatisation threatens the success of lesbian and gay family relationships (Walsh, 2012), and can have negative effects on the adjustment, well-being and self-esteem of all the family members (Van Gelderen et al, 2012). Bos, Gartrell, Peyser, and van Balen (2008) found that adolescents with lesbian mothers who experienced homophobia had lower self-esteem and increased levels of problem behaviour. They also found that societal acceptance of homosexuality and same-sex parents led to positive well-being in children growing up in same-sex families.

Contrasting research done by Patterson (1994) and Golombok, Tasker, and Murray (1997), suggests that children in same-sex parented families experience no more discrimination than children from heterosexual parent families (cited in the APA, 2005). Clarke, Kitzinger and Potter (2004) note, however, that same-sex parents may avoid reporting negative aspects such as bullying or teasing, because claims about homophobic bullying are sometimes used by researchers against same-sex parented families to undermine this family form.

Despite the laws in South Africa against sexual orientation discrimination, and the international research that proves that children from same-sex parented families are holistically well adjusted, there is still a deeply rooted stigmatisation attached to homosexuality and same-sex parented families in South Africa (Lubbe, 2007a). Bhana (2013) argues, that on the one hand, in South Africa, homosexuality is increasingly portrayed as ordinary and unthreatening, with lesbian and gay relationships and families becoming a part of everyday life, viewed in the media, and even embraced by some religious groups. Yet while Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu both publicly condemned homophobia and advocated for sexual equality; cruel and violent acts of homophobia, based on longstanding moral traditions, patriarchy, religion and culture, are still being perpetuated in this country (Bhana, 2012). While attitudes of silencing, open judgement, marginalisation, discrimination and condemnation are still deeply embedded in our society, acceptance and understanding are beginning to grow slowly and naturally (Lubbe, 2007a).

2.2.4 The school experiences of children from same-sex parented families

According to Lubbe (2007a), children sometimes experience challenges with integrating their family experiences with society, especially when the structure of the family differs from the societal norm. Children growing up in same-sex parented families belong to both homosexual and heterosexual communities (Lubbe, 2007b). Ryan (2010) agrees that children from same-sex parented families are positioned half way between straight and queer worlds. They are influenced by the queer community, and are often assumed to be straight or asexual, yet they may suffer from homophobic experiences, and frequently have to do their own “coming out” about their families (Ryan, 2010). When interacting with society, the lack of a universally accepted language to describe their non-traditional families can frequently become a problem for children from same-sex parented families (Perlesz et al., 2006). Stigma from the community or society can affect how children view their families and their personal identities, and they often tend to experience a lack of approval of their parents' relationship as a lack of approval of their individual selves (Lubbe, 2007b).

While the family is one of the most important systems in the lives of individuals, schools are especially influential in the healthy development of children's sense of positive family identities. According to Goodhand (2014), schools replicate the same social hierarchies as the larger society. A school's culture can normalise and privilege heterosexuality through the curriculum, classroom discussions, daily language, and routines. Goodhand (2014) argues that the heteronormative expectations within classrooms have a strong impact on young children and influences their perceptions of both their family norms and their self-identity. Lubbe (2007b) argues that socially constructed knowledge and values in educational settings are typically based on heterosexual norms and the traditional family form. Because same-sex parented families are not represented in the curriculum in schools, the teachers and learners are not conscious of them (Lubbe, 2007b). Gunn (2008) agrees that heteronormativity in early childhood education positions the world, and everyone in it, as straight. This negatively affects the way in which children from same-sex parented families understand themselves and their families. Fedewa and Clarke (2009) concur that many schools reinforce the traditional family structure that negates the same-sex parented family.

Fox (2007) explains that heteronormativity plays out in a number of ways in school communities, for example, in the letters that are addressed to parents, in the posters that are displayed in the hallways and classrooms, in the books that children read, and in what teachers decide to discuss and teach the children in their classrooms. Because teachers play such an important role in the socialisation of children's identities, it is problematic if they just assume that all learners come from heterosexual family structures (Mercier & Harold, 2003). The heteronormativity in schools may prevent the same-sex parented family from being involved or participating. Shema (2015) argues that children learn about who they are, who other people are, and how the world is constructed outside of their home environment by being allowed different opportunities for comparison. If children with lesbian or gay parents do not see their world represented in the school environment, they are more likely to question their own personal identity and how they fit into their own family relationships, rather than questioning the relationships that they are seeing (Shema, 2015).

In interviews with primary school children from same-sex parented families, Ray and Gregory (2001) found that children of LGBTQ parents often felt frustrated because their peers struggled to understand their family structure due to the lack of an inclusive curriculum for their children. Bishop and Atlas (2015) explain that multicultural education can decrease bias and discrimination and prepare children for living in a diverse society. Multicultural education should include LGBTQ issues together with race, cultural heritage, and socioeconomic level, (Bishop & Atlas, 2015). In addition, while most teachers are teaching about different types of families, including the single parent, blended, and step families, they are not including the same-sex or LGBTQ parent families in their curriculum (Bishop & Atlas, 2015).

Much international research reveals that it is not unusual for many children growing up in same-sex parented families to experience bullying and stigmatisation at schools because of their parent's sexual orientation. Lindsay, Perlesz, Brown, McNair, De Vaus, and Pitts (2006) argue that children experience the prejudice towards their parents' sexual orientation. In their studies of lesbian parent families, Gartrell, Rodas, Deck, Peyser, and Banks (2005) found that 43% of the children had

experienced discrimination or homophobia from teachers and peers, while Van Gelderen et al. (2012) found that at least half of the children from same-sex parented families encountered homophobic stigmatisation, mostly from peers in the school context. In *The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network* (GLSEN) report, Kosciw and Diaz (2008) indicated that children from LGBTQ parents reported relatively high levels of discrimination and stigmatisation, and more than half of LGBTQ parented families indicated feeling excluded from their school communities. Just over half of the children reported experiencing abuse or discrimination, while 15% reported that this discrimination was coming from teachers.

Bos, Gartrell, and Van Gelderen (2013) found that adolescents with same-sex parents who reported homophobic stigmatisation, scored higher on affective, anxiety, and conduct problems, and that experiences of this stigmatisation by peers negatively impacted the well-being of some adolescents. Ray and Gregory (2001) found that the high levels of homophobic harassment, led to primary school children from same-sex parented families feeling disempowered, fearful and marginalised. They found that these negative effects were increased when teachers did nothing to support the victims, or in worse cases, encouraged the homophobic behaviour.

In a South African context, while some research has been done on the school experiences of LGBTQ youth, there is a gap in the literature on the school experiences of children from same-sex parented families. Wolpe, Martinez, and Quinlan (1997) were the first to formally recognise that sexuality was not addressed in South African schools, and to note that schools enforce heterosexuality (cited in Bhana, 2013). Deacon, Morrell, and Prinsloo (1999) initialised the argument that teachers were holding onto homophobic constructions of gender and sexuality (cited in Bhana, 2013). Butler et al. (2003) provide insight into the homophobic experiences of gay and lesbian youth in secondary schools. They report that these youth experienced harassment from peers, teachers, school administrators and ineffective school counsellors, resulting in feelings of avoidance, rejection and isolation. In their research, Butler et al. (2003) found that the issues of homosexuality and heteronormativity are not included in the curriculum in high schools for LGBTQ youth.

Richardson (2004) argues that despite the South African constitution's equality clause, not much has been done to prepare teachers to challenge homophobia and heteronormativity in schools. The research done by Francis and Msibi (2011) concurs that gay and lesbian youth are still experiencing prejudice, discrimination and isolation within their schools. In his research on high school teachers' positions on the teaching of LGBTQ issues within sexuality education, Francis (2012) reported that teachers ignored or avoided issues related to sexual diversity, and that they still endorsed heterosexuality.

Bhana (2013) argues that there is currently a lack of educational literature in South Africa about how teachers experience homophobia in schools. In her research on teachers' response to homophobia in schools, Bhana (2013) found that teachers tend to silence homosexuality, deny its existence in the curriculum, or use religion to denounce homosexuality as sinful. The identification of homophobia in South African schools goes against the principles of equal rights and social transformation identified by the Department of Education (Department of Education, 2001a). Bhana (2013) argues that making gays and lesbians feel excluded and inferior at schools betrays our South African democracy, and that the work with teachers in understanding and preventing homophobia is critical. She argues, however, that teachers are open to change, and that intervention programmes need to be developed that focus on enabling teachers to recognise the damaging effects of homophobia and heteronormativity. These studies all highlight the prevalence of homophobia and heteronormativity in South African schools, and suggest the critical role that schools and teachers need to play in creating supportive schools for all learners.

According to Short et al. (2007), while there is evidence of hardships, discrimination and difficulties faced by same-sex parented families and their children; there is also evidence of the resources used and strengths developed and mobilised, particularly in terms of quality of family relationships, commitment to parenting, and rich social connections. Researchers have recently started to explore the issue of resilience and thriving, including how and why it is that children from same-sex parented families often function comparatively highly, despite significant discrimination. Van Gelderen et al. (2012), found that resilience was displayed by teenagers in lesbian-

parent families who had experienced discrimination, by using adaptive coping skills, such as being optimistic and seeking support from others. Bos and Van Balen (2008) found that children from lesbian parented families were protected from the negative influence of stigmatisation on self-esteem through contact with other children from same-sex parented families. Similarly, Bos et al. (2008) found that children from same-sex parented families who attended schools with LGBTQ curricula, and whose mothers participated in the lesbian community, were protected from the negative impact of homophobia. Bos and Gartrell (2010) found that a close positive relationship with their lesbian mothers counteracted the negative effects of stigmatisation and led to the development of resilience in adolescents. These findings are useful to teachers and schools in exploring solutions to support LGBTQ youth and children from these families in the school environment. It appears that individual, social or institutional resources can reduce the destructive effects of homophobic harassment in schools.

2.2.5 Schools as places of safety for children from same-sex parented families

Schools can either be places of discrimination and prejudice, or they can be places of openness, tolerance and acceptance (Lubbe, 2007b). Bos and Van Balen (2008) in The Netherlands, and Lubbe (2007b) in South Africa, found that children who attended schools that provided support in dealing with stigmatisation, that included diverse sexual orientation curricula, and that openly discussed non-traditional family structures, were protected against the negative influence of homophobia. These findings support the argument that tolerant school environments that accept and celebrate diversity, contribute to children being able to openly embrace their individual, family and cultural identity. In contrast, intolerant school environments, characterised by bias, marginalisation or prejudice, can lead to children feeling fearful, disempowered and isolated. Greater acceptance is associated with more openness and fewer experiences of homophobia, and thus supports the well-being of children from same-sex parented families (Lubbe, 2007b). By teaching all children to tolerate differences and celebrate diversity, the stereotyping, marginalisation and discrimination of children with same-sex parents can be reduced. By exposing children to various perspectives and helping them to develop the skills to understand and challenge heteronormativity, teachers can reduce prejudice and support children in becoming more accepting and respectful of difference (Hernandez, 2013).

2.2.6 Safe, positive and counter-heteronormative moments in schools

Goldstein et al. (2007) present a conceptual framework for developing anti-homophobia in educational institutions based on the models of safe schools, positive schools, and queer schools. According to Goldstein et al. (2007), the safe school model promotes tolerance but not acceptance, and it offers programmes such as anti-bullying campaigns. This model positions homophobia as an individual act, and does not recognise that discrimination is also the result of institutional practices (Goldstein et al., 2007). The second model, the positive school model, is grounded in an equity-based policy, which promotes acceptance and addresses heteronormativity. This model explores how inclusion and affirmation can actively challenge homophobia through individual, institutional and systemic changes, including the curriculum and teacher education (Goldstein et al., 2007). Finally, the queer school model critiques the normalising and marginalising effects that safe and positive school models have (Goldstein et al, 2007). Goldstein et al. (2007) argue that from the perspective of the queer model, equity strategies are based on the notion of sameness, but that ‘same’ does not necessarily equal ‘fair’. The argument is that if marginalised people are given the right to represent the ‘other’, they may silence the voice of the ‘other’, and then themselves become like the dominant group (Goldstein et al, 2007). The term, ‘other’ usually refers to marginalised groups that are different to the norm (Lubbe, 2007b). A queer school model would require that heteronormativity be disrupted and oppression be understood as dynamic, multiple, and interconnected (Goldstein et al, 2007). Goldstein et al. (2007) argue that a queer school model is not currently possible in the traditional mainstream educational system.

Goldstein et al. (2007) introduce the idea of safe, positive and queer “moments” as a more realistic way in which schools can create anti-homophobia education. Safe moments strive to promote tolerance, positive moments strive to promote equity, acceptance and affirmation, and queer moments strive to disrupt heteronormativity (Goldstein et al., 2007). Goldstein et al. (2007) suggest that teachers should strive to have all three of these moments in attempting to include anti-homophobia and counter-heteronormative education within their classrooms, in order to create safe, positive, counter-heteronormative school environments.

2.2.7 The role of the school and teacher in creating supportive school environments for children from same-sex parented families.

“If teachers can look at the ways and degrees to which heterosexuality is imposed on children, families and each other, then they might understand more fully how their seemingly uncomplicated every day practices connect to historically and politically situated ideas that can include and exclude” (Gunn, 2008, p. 210). Fedewa and Clarke (2009) agree that schools and teachers must create a safe, accepting and positive learning environment for children, where they can feel that they belong.

According to Fedewa and Clarke (2008) schools are responsible for making families and children feel welcome, safe and respected. Fedewa and Clarke (2008) argue that an intolerant and hostile school climate may prevent same-sex parents from disclosing their family identity, because these parents want to protect their children from being discriminated against. Children are still developing their beliefs and practices, so schools, which work with these children on a daily basis, are the perfect institutions to create positive change (Jeltova & Fish, 2005).

Bishop and Atlas argue that an “inclusive curriculum has been shown to enhance the school experiences of LGBT students by decreasing homophobic remarks, lessening victimization, creating a greater sense of belonging in the school community, and making it easier for students to talk with teachers about LGBT issues” (2015, p.768). They explain that children’s families are normalised and they feel less unusual when their family is represented in the curriculum and portrayed in the literature. Hernandez (2013) agrees that addressing heteronormativity through the curriculum is necessary in order to challenge the homophobic beliefs. Shema (2015) concurs that lesbian and gay issues need to be included in early childhood classrooms, because children want to know about their worlds, and homophobia affects all children regardless of whether they have lesbian or gay parents.

It is the teacher’s responsibility to model and teach about justice for all people (Shema, 2015). Irrespective of whether there are children from same-sex parented families in the classroom, it is the role and responsibility of the teacher to positively represent the same-sex parented family as one of the many different types of families. By doing so, the teacher provides a safe and accepting environment for

children whose parents may not have come out, teaches tolerance of diversity from a young age, and adequately prepares children for the diversity of the world in which they live.

In their book on anti-bias and multicultural education with young children and families, Derman-Sparks and Ramsey (2006) explain that that all people are affected by discrimination, so all children need to understand what discrimination is and need to be taught to accept diversity. Like racism, homophobia and heteronormativity can be viewed as a systematic institutionalised force that advantages certain people and disadvantages others (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2006). Literature shows that homophobia and heteronormativity normalise heterosexual people and marginalise and discriminate against homosexual people and families. While the problem of racism is currently being challenged in South African schools, current South African literature on the topic argues that homophobia, and to a greater extent heteronormativity, is not been addressed (Bhana, 2012, 2013, 2014; Msibi, 2012; Francis, 2012, 2013; Lubbe, 2007b).

Bishop and Atlas (2015) explain a number of reasons why schools may not be including same-sex parented family or LGBTQ families in the curriculum. Educators may believe that sexual orientation is a private matter and that by teaching young children about this type of family they may inadvertently expose children to sexual issues. Teachers may also lack information or feel uncomfortable with answering specific questions on the topic. They may have homophobic or heterosexual beliefs and may fear being viewed as advocates for homosexuality. They may be concerned about going against school policy or that there would be objections from parents. Ryan and Martin (2000) agree that some of the reasons for reluctance by teachers to address gay and lesbian needs, may include homophobic prejudice, religious beliefs, and uncertainty of how to address the issues and support these children, due to a lack of education and training on these issues. Janmohamed (2010) concurs that early childhood training does not adequately prepare educators to challenge heteronormativity in early learning environments. In order for teachers to embrace queer perspectives in the early childhood curriculum and act as agents of change, early childhood studies need to change how educators are trained to work with children and families, from uncritically embracing dominant family discourses to

critically embracing all family constellations (Janmohamed, 2010). Shema (2015) agrees that teachers need in-service and pre-service professional development in order to be able to effectively address sexuality, sexual orientation, and gender identity in their classrooms, and they need to reflect upon personal beliefs and commitments to create safe and inclusive schools for all learners and families.

In South Africa, there is a gap in the literature addressing the role of schools in supporting same-sex parented families, particularly in primary schools and at a foundational phase level. Most of the research done in this country has focused on the challenges of homophobia and heteronormativity experienced by homosexual youth in secondary schools. The findings highlight the “need for higher education institutions and schools to become proactive about homophobia and heterosexism” (Francis & Msibi, 2011, p.169). Francis and Msibi (2011) argue that school-based intervention programmes that address heteronormativity as a challenge for everyone can do much to build a respectful culture. Bhana (2013) recommends that the Department of Education needs to develop intervention programmes, which enable teachers to recognise the unsupportive and discriminatory ways in which LGBTQ youth experience schooling. Francis (2012) agrees that educational policy makers need to develop counter-heteronormative policy frameworks that integrate LGBTQ issues into the curriculum. Francis (2012) also suggests that pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes are needed that will provide teachers with the knowledge and confidence needed to teach about sexual diversity. Finally, Francis (2012) suggests that schools should collaborate with community organisations to take up lesbian, gay and bisexual issues more assertively, to provide support for themselves, as well as for the learners and their parents.

Values that were created for the new South African constitution (Republic of South Africa, 1996), such as equity, freedom from discrimination, respect and social justice, have been adopted by the South African educational system. In 2001, *The Education White Paper 6* implemented the policy of inclusive education, which, with the guiding principles of human rights, equity and social justice, promotes an acceptance and celebration of differences, equal opportunities for participation, social integration, a recognition of the needs of all, and the provision of education for all children (Department of Education, 2001a). *The Manifesto on Values, Education and*

Democracy (Department of Education, 2001b) supports the principles of respect, equality, democracy and social transformation, amongst others, in educational institutions, and outlines a number of strategies for instilling these democratic values in young South Africans learners. *The Guidelines For Responding To Learner Diversity In The Classroom Through Curriculum And Assessment Policy Statements*, advocates that teachers must ensure that all learners feel included and affirmed in the classroom, and that teachers must respond to the needs of learners with diverse ability levels, interests and backgrounds, through curriculum differentiation (Department Of Basic Education, 2011b). In 2011, *The Human Rights Watch* called on the government to reject homophobic violence and to institute public education initiatives to increase awareness of the equality principles of the constitution (Bhana, 2012).

Landsberg, Kruger, and Swart (2011) explain that these policies require that all stakeholders, including principals, teachers and the school community possess the knowledge and skills needed to change the organisation and culture of the school. According to Landsberg et al. (2011), in order to create a fully inclusive school environment, active changes needs to take place, which include establishing a shared vision amongst leaders; creating whole-school development; creating schools and classrooms where everyone belongs and feels accepted and supported; building support and collaboration from the community; and mobilising resources such as time, collaboration, administrative support and on-going training. In accordance with this, Landsberg et al. (2011) argue that South African teachers need to receive pre-service and in-service professional development in order to acquire a shared vision, and language and skills to support all diversity within their classroom. Importantly, teachers need to understand their roles and responsibilities in interrupting heteronormativity. It is the responsibility of the teachers themselves to ensure that inclusive policies are being implemented, that all the children in their classrooms are being respected and included, and that their differences are being validated and acknowledged. Bhana (2013) agrees that teachers can work against heterosexual hegemony in schools, by questioning heterosexual norms, correcting homophobic behaviour, and teaching about democracy. Teachers must educate themselves on challenging heteronormativity within their classrooms, by critically reflecting on the attitudes, values and beliefs that inform their practices (Landsberg et al. 2011).

2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK UNDERPINNING THIS STUDY

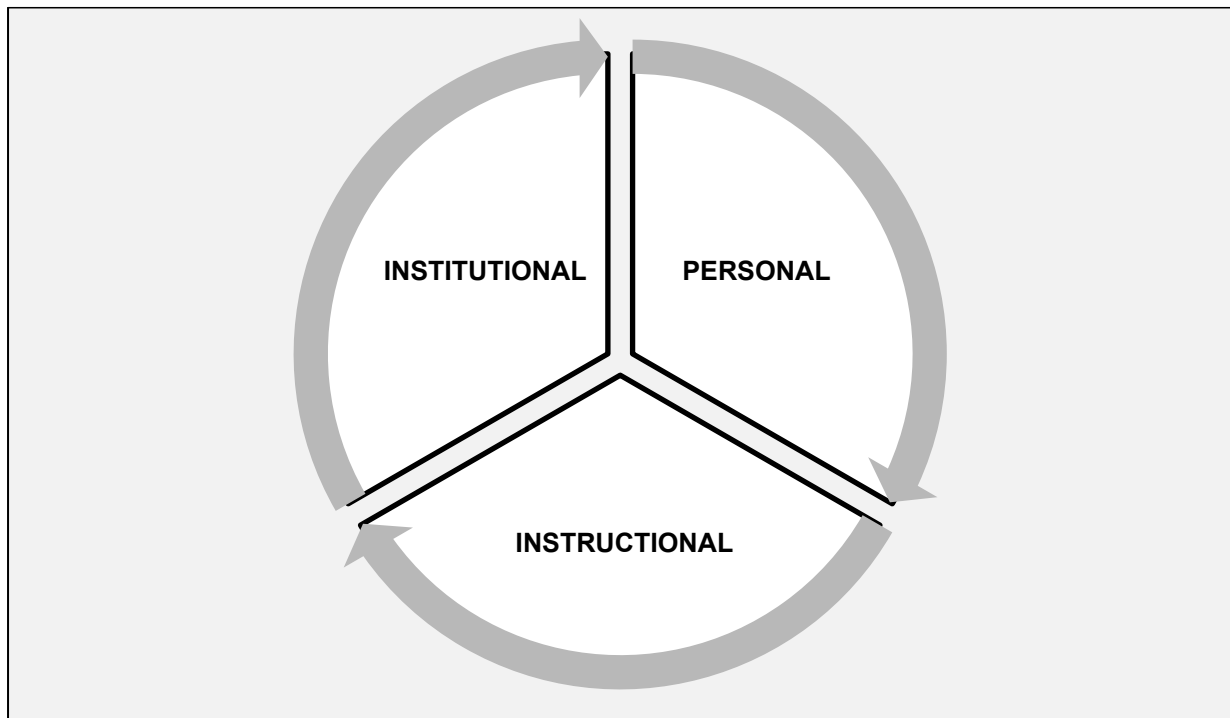
2.3.1 Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Culturally responsive pedagogy, based on multicultural theory, provides a theoretical framework to explore the role of teachers in creating safe, positive, accepting and counter-heteronormative classroom and school environments for children from the same-sex parented family culture. This theoretical framework has influenced the way in which I perceived and interpreted my findings and allowed me to link my research questions to the purpose of my study.

According to Meyer (2010), multiculturalism seeks to reform education by including all learners' cultures in to the curriculum. In the past, the primary areas that were included under multiculturalism were generally related to race, ethnicity, language and religion (Meyer, 2010). However, multicultural education theories have recently expanded this understanding of multiculturalism to include gender and sexuality diversity (Meyer, 2010). These theories challenge all forms of oppression and discrimination and advocate for the positive transformation of society through education. "They go beyond the 'heroes and holidays' approach to diversifying the curriculum and demand a much deeper and more integrated way of teaching about diversity in schools" (Meyer, 2010, p.16).

Culturally responsive pedagogy, as explained by Richards, Brown, and Forde (2007), provides a multicultural framework for exploring teachers' possible roles in creating supportive classroom and school environments for children from diverse backgrounds. The framework consists of three dimensions: the institutional dimension, the personal dimension, and the instructional dimension. Figure 1.1 is a diagrammatic representation of the three dimension of the theoretical framework.

Figure 1.1: Diagrammatic representation of culturally responsive pedagogy



Culturally responsive pedagogy theorists acknowledge, respect, understand and nurture diversity, in order to facilitate a supportive and successful school environment for all learners (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). The culturally responsive pedagogy framework identifies ways to remove bias and discrimination related to all forms of diversity that negatively affects learners' well-being and achievement, in order to ensure that all learners feel safe, welcomed and accepted (Capacity Building Series, 2013). I combine the explanations of the Capacity Building Series (2013) and Richards et al. (2007) to explain the three dimensions of the theoretical framework of culturally responsive pedagogy.

2.3.1.1 *The Institutional Dimension*

The institutional dimension refers to the administration and organisation of the school. This includes the values developed and reflected in school policies and practices, as well as the community involvement of the school. It highlights the need to critically examine how patterns of marginalisation and discrimination are perpetuated through the formal school processes, and how to change these patterns, in order to create culturally responsive schools.

2.3.1.2 *The Personal Dimension*

The personal dimension includes the attitudes, values and beliefs of culturally responsive teachers. Culturally responsive teachers should engage in a process of reflective thinking to explore the personal motivations that determine their behaviour. They must explore how their personal and family histories have shaped their values and beliefs. They should acknowledge their membership in various groups in society, and how they are advantaged or disadvantaged because of this membership, as well as how belonging to a specific group influences how they see others. To become culturally responsive, teachers should learn about the history and experience of diverse groups, develop an appreciation of diversity and view differences as the norm. Finally, in order to become culturally responsive, teachers should make an effort to participate in reforming biased policies and values within their school, and work towards creating an inclusive and positive school. As a direct link between the school and the children, teachers play a vital role in initiating and facilitating positive change in their schools.

2.3.1.3 *The Instructional Dimension*

The instructional dimension includes the classroom practices, which create a culturally responsive classroom. Culturally responsive teachers acknowledge the differences and commonalities of their learners and validate their learners' family and cultural identity in their classroom practice and instructional material. They teach learners about the diversity of the world around them by using teaching material, such as textbooks and posters, and engaging in classroom activities that represent and include all types of families and cultures. Culturally responsive teachers should provide children with learning opportunities that encourage them to appreciate diversity and normalise differences, rather than perpetuating stereotypes. Culturally responsive teachers should also model and promote equity and mutual respect for one another. Children can be taught at a young age to develop empathy and understand how others feel. Teachers should act as role models in normalising differences and demonstrating fair and equal treatment amongst learners in the classroom. They should encourage independent critical thinking skills from a young age and teach children to view situations from multiple perspectives. Culturally responsive teachers assist children in becoming socially and politically conscious by encouraging them to participate meaningfully and responsibly in society. Finally,

culturally responsive teachers should foster a positive inter-relationship between their learners, their families, and the school.

In this study, I use the framework of culturally responsive pedagogy as a lens to explore and understand the institutional, personal and instructional challenges that are experienced by foundation phase teachers in creating supportive school environments for children from same-sex parented families. In chapter 5, I explain how the three dimensions of this framework relate to my findings, and use the dimensions to make recommendations for teachers to be better supported by educational institutions, and equipped with the necessary resources, tools and information in order to effectively address and interrupt heteronormativity in their foundation phase classrooms and schools.

2.4 CONCLUSION

The current international research on the homophobic and heteronormative school experiences of children from same-sex parented families highlights the need to challenge heteronormativity in schools in order to create more supportive school environments for these children and families. Foundation phase teachers play an important role in creating these supportive classroom and school environments. While some research has been done in South Africa on the experiences of LGBTQ youth in secondary schools, local literature on the school experiences of children from same-sex parented families is very limited. By exploring foundation phase teachers' perceptions of creating supportive school environments for children from same-sex parented families, insight is gained into the way in which these teachers perceive their role in interrupting heteronormativity in their classrooms, and how they feel supported in doing so. Culturally responsive pedagogy, as the theoretical framework for this study, provides guidance on how teachers can foster supportive school environments for all children. Using this framework, I explore the barriers that prevent foundation phase teachers from fostering these environments, and make suggestions on how teachers can be better supported in becoming culturally responsive in order to successfully create safe, positive and counter-heteronormative school environments for children from same-sex parented families.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 2, I explored the existing literature that relates to the school experiences of children from same-sex parented families and discussed the need for teachers and schools to create supportive classroom and school environments for these children. I presented a theoretical framework in which the findings and recommendations for practice can be discussed.

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the research methodology and paradigmatic perspectives that were selected and used in this study. I explain the research methodology, including the research design that was implemented, and the sample selection and data collection methods that were employed. I then discuss the way in which the data was analysed and interpreted, followed by the quality criteria and ethical considerations that were adhered to in this study.

3.2 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to explore foundation phase teachers' perceptions of creating supportive school environments for children from same-sex parented families. This involved describing how foundation phase teachers perceive their role in interrupting heteronormativity in the foundation phase classroom. The aim was to understand and describe the personal, instructional and institutional challenges that these teachers may experience in accommodating, representing and including the same-sex parented family, and to make suggestions on how these challenges may be overcome, in order for supportive school environments to be created for children from same-sex parented families.

3.3 PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVES

“Paradigms are systems of interrelated ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions” which are central to research design (Terre Blanche,

Durrheim, and Painter, 2007, p.40). Paradigms help researchers to define the nature of their enquiry, so that the research questions and methods fit logically with the paradigm (Terre Blanche et al., 2007). In this section, I discuss the meta-theoretical and methodological paradigms that informed the study.

3.3.1 Meta-Theoretical Paradigm: Interpretivism

In this research project I worked from an interpretive paradigm, as I believe that experiences are subjectively understood through interpretation. Interpretive researchers seek to understand the internal reality and subjective experiences of people through interacting with them, and then utilising qualitative techniques to interpret the data (Terre Blanche et al., 2007). Table 3.1 depicts the nature of enquiry of the interpretive paradigm along three dimensions: ontology, epistemology and methodology (adapted from Terre Blanche et al., 2007).

Table 3.1: The three dimensions of the interpretive paradigm

INTERPRETIVE PARADIGM		
ONTOLOGY	EPISTEMOLOGY	METHODOLOGY
Reality is internal and based on subjective experiences.	The researcher is empathic and aware of observer subjectivity.	A qualitative, interactional, interpretive research process takes place.

Because I chose to work from an interpretive paradigm, I aimed to explore how foundation phase teachers subjectively perceive and experience their role in supporting children from same-sex parented families in the school and class environment. I tried to uncover the subjective reasons that lie behind the participants' perceptions and behaviour. The goal of my research was exploratory, in that I used an open, flexible and inductive approach, in which I tried to make sense of the qualitative data revealed in the interviews, in relation to the literature. By exploring the themes and patterns that emerged from the data, I was able to generate insights in regards to my findings.

3.3.2 Methodological Paradigm: Qualitative Research

“Qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell, 2007, p 37). Creswell (2007) explains that qualitative research is conducted when a problem needs to be holistically explored, and understood and interpreted in detail.

Qualitative research describes the life world of the participants and “seeks to contribute to a better understanding of social realities and to draw attention to processes, meaning patterns and structural features” (Flick, von Kardoff, & Steinke, 2004, p. 3). When using qualitative research, multiple sources of data are collected in a natural setting, and usually involve the use of a conceptual or theoretical lens to view the study (Creswell, 2007). Data analysis is usually inductive, and the subjective voices of the participants, and the meanings that they subscribe to the issue, are included (Creswell, 2007). Creswell (2007) argues that the researcher is the key instrument in the qualitative research process, and the researchers’ background and prior understandings are inseparable from the interpretations made.

The emphasis of this research was on listening to, understanding and interpreting the perceptions and experiences of foundation phase teachers in regards to creating supportive school environments for children from same-sex parented families. With this in mind, it made sense to employ a qualitative methodology aimed at obtaining an in-depth understanding of the participants’ viewpoints on the issue, and identifying recurring themes in their discussions. The meanings that the participants ascribed to their experiences, as well as their reasons for these meanings, were explored. By using qualitative research I was able to immerse myself in the study and gain an in-depth understanding of my participants perceptions and experiences. I used inductive logic, and my research plan and themes emerged in the data collection phase. Qualitative research was therefore well suited to the purpose of this research project.

When using qualitative research, the researcher usually draws on multiple sources of data, including interviews, observations and focus groups. My primary method of data collection was individual interviews, which I used together with the study and

discussion of documentary sources in relation to the findings, and a reflective journal written throughout the research process. I interviewed four different participants in order to gain multiple perspectives on the topic. While my research was limited in that my participants were not representative of the South African population, my interviews were in-depth and yielded rich data that allowed me to explore the topic in detail and sufficiently answer my research questions.

Because the researcher is the primary instrument in the data gathering process, I needed to be aware of my subjectivity and bias as a possible limitation. Although researcher subjectivity cannot be fully eliminated, in order to minimise this, it was necessary for me to reflect on my thought processes through a reflective diary and through regular discussions and quality checks with my research supervisor. I also engaged in member checking, by validating the main findings of my research with my participants in order to ensure the trustworthiness of my findings.

3.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this section I will describe the procedures followed to answer the research questions. In Table 3.2, I present a summary of the research methodology utilised for this study.

Table 3.2: Research methodology

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	
RESEARCH DESIGN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generic Qualitative Study
SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sampling Procedure: Purposive and Convenience Sampling • Participants: Foundation phase teachers with a minimum of 2 years teaching experience
DATA COLLECTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual Interviews • Documentary Sources • Reflective Journal

DATA DOCUMENTATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audio recording and transcriptions
DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative Interpretive Data Analysis
QUALITY CRITERIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trustworthiness: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dependability ○ Credibility ○ Confirmability ○ Transferability ○ Authenticity
ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informed Consent and Voluntary Participation • Confidentiality • Protection from harm • Beneficence and Non-Maleficence

3.4.1 Research Design

Research design can be defined as “a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between research questions and the implementation of the research” (Terre Blanche et al., 2007, p. 34). I have utilised a generic qualitative research design for this study. Merriam (2002) explains that generic qualitative research epitomises the characteristics of qualitative research in that it seeks to explore and understand the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved. Generic qualitative research “is not guided by an explicit or established set of philosophic assumptions in the form of one of the known qualitative methodologies” (Caelli, Ray, & Mills, 2003, p. 4), such as phenomenology, case study, grounded theory, and ethnography.

After thoroughly studying and exploring all the qualitative research methodologies and research designs, and deliberating on how each one can be applied and utilised in this research project, I have chosen to do a generic qualitative study, as no other research design fits appropriately with this study. Ethnography, case study, grounded theory and phenomenology, are not appropriate methodologies for this study, because the focus of this study and the kind of data to be obtained do not fit those approaches. For example, a case study involves an in-depth investigation of a “single case,” using multiple methods of data collection. By focusing on a single phenomenon or case, the approach seeks to describe the phenomenon in depth. A

single case has clearly recognisable boundaries that differentiate it from any other cases (Percy, Kostere, & Kostere, 2015). For a case study design to be used, one particular case or bounded system would be studied because it is typical or unique (Merriam, 2002). In this sense, the participants in my study cannot be defined as a case. My unit of analysis is the perceptions of teachers on a particular phenomenon, and an indefinite number of foundation phase teachers who meet the requirements, could have been selected as participants. Another research design that may seem applicable to my study, but does not fit appropriately, is phenomenology. Phenomenology investigates the “lived experience” of participants in respect of various psychological phenomena and the *essences* of those cognitive processes (Percy et al., 2015). The focus of my topic, however, is “outward”, in that it explores the opinions, *experiences* and reflections of the participants, rather than their “inner” *experiencing* processes.

As appropriate for generic qualitative research, I did an intensive literature review on the topic of homophobia and heteronormativity in schools, as well as on the school experience of children from same-sex parented families and the role of teachers in creating supportive school environments. I found that there was a gap in the South African literature on the way in which supportive school environments are being created for children from same-sex parented families, and specifically on the perspectives of teachers on this topic. My goal with this research was, therefore, to describe this phenomenon from the perspectives of foundation phase teachers. I wanted to explore and understand what the foundation phase teachers actually think and feel about creating supportive school environments for children from same-sex parented families, and how their beliefs and experiences influence their classroom practice. Generic qualitative research design is the perfect fit for this type of research, as it is used to explore “people’s reports of their subjective opinions, attitudes, beliefs, or reflections on their experiences of things in the outer world” (Percy et al., 2015, p.78).

3.4.2 Selection Of Participants

I used non-probability purposive and convenience sampling procedures to select the participants for this research project. I used purposive sampling to recruit foundation phase class teachers in the Pretoria area who had a minimum of two years teaching

experience in the foundation phase, with the intention that they would help the researcher better understand the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). I selected participants with the following respondent characteristics: a minimum of two years in teaching foundation phase learners, good communication skills, an open and undefensive attitude, and an interest in participating because they believed that their participation may be of value (Terre Blanche et al., 2007). I decided on these selection criteria, because foundation phase class teachers usually engage in close proximity with the children in their classrooms on a daily basis. They play an important role in confirming, rejecting and strengthening their learners' social relationships and family identity at school.

I began by contacting participants who met the requirements, and sent them recruitment scripts (Addendum A). I then used convenience sampling, in that I recruited the participants who responded to my recruitment script, and were thus willing, available and able to participate. A consent form (Addendum B) was given to each participant to read and sign. I then used the snowball sampling technique to recruit more teachers who met the requirements. Snowball sampling is non-probability sampling involving the process of gradually accumulating a sufficiently large sample through referrals from other participants (Terre Blanche et al., 2007). For clarity and accuracy, member checking was done, which means that the findings were confirmed with the individual participants. Because qualitative research is inductive, it is often necessary to sample to the point of saturation (Cooper & Endacott, 2007). I continued to recruit participants until no new data emerged in order to satisfactorily answer all the research questions.

As I worked with a small sample of teachers, I needed to be cautious in making generalisations and oversimplifying their experiences. Rather, I used qualitative and interpretive methods to concentrate on the richness of the data and gain a deeper understanding of the participants' perceptions and experiences. By exploring the commonalities and dissimilarities between the participants' responses, I gained insight into the foundation phase teachers' perceptions of the way in which supportive school environments are being created for children from same-sex parented families. Details of the participants are provided in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: Description of participants

PARTICIPANT	AGE	GENDER	YEARS OF FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHING EXPERIENCE	RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND
1	27	Female	4	Christian and White
2	29	Female	5	Christian and Indian
3	46	Female	15	Christian and White
4	27	Female	4	Christian and White

3.4.3 Data Collection And Documentation

Data collection in the generic qualitative approach typically uses data collection methods that elicit people’s views and perspectives about a phenomenon, and “a small, non-representative, but highly informed sample can provide rich information about the topic” (Percy et al., 2015, p. 79). In this study, I used individual interviews in order to explore foundation phase teachers’ perspectives on the phenomenon being studied from an interpretive perspective, together with documentary sources and a reflective journal.

Triangulation involves collecting data in as many different ways and in as many different forms as possible, in order to better understand a phenomenon (Terre Blanche et al., 2007). Cooper and Endacott explain that triangulation can be achieved “when evidence is deliberately sought from a wide range of different, independent sources, and often by different means” (2007, p. 818). This may include comparing interviews from a number of participants, or by using different means such as observations, focus groups and interviews, and then comparing these results.

In this dissertation of limited scope, my research was limited by the fact that my participants were not representative of the larger South African population. However, in this small exploratory study the focus was on exploring the perceptions of foundation phase teachers in order to answer the research questions. This was

achieved through comparing interviews from a small number of foundation phase teachers who had the desired respondent characteristics and were willing to participate in the interviews. The methods of data collection that were used are described below.

3.4.3.1 Individual interviews

According to Seabi (2012), the interview is the most important tool for data collection in the qualitative research process, and it allows the researcher to gain rich and descriptive data to understand the social reality of the participants. The interview is a means to an end when using the interpretive approach, in order to explore how people really perceive or experience a phenomenon (Terre Blanche et al., 2007). For this research project, data was collected through four individual, semi-structured interviews, each lasting between 40 to 60 minutes. In order to ensure an accurate, word-for-word transcription of the discussion, I audio-recorded and transcribed all the interviews. I developed a flexible interview schedule of open-ended questions to guide the interview process, and tried to create an open and trusting environment in which the interviewees felt able to express themselves authentically (Terre Blanche, 2007). (See Addendum C: Interview protocol.)

3.4.3.2 Documentary sources

Documentary sources can be useful in qualitative research (Terre Blanche et al., 2007). In the case of this research project, South African government legislations and South African educational policies created a background for the topic being studied. These documents are relevant to the way in which the same-sex parented family should be included in the school system.

The following South African documents were studied and discussed as part of the literature review and data analysis phases of the study:

- The Constitution of South Africa, Act 108, Chapter 2: Bill of Rights, 1996
- The Education White Paper 6 - Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System, Ministry of Education, July 2001
- The Manifesto On Values, Education and Democracy, 2001
- The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS): Grades R-3:

English Life Skills, Department of Basic Education, 2011

- Guidelines For Responding To Learner Diversity In The Classroom Through CAPS, Department Of Basic Education, 2011

3.4.3.3 Reflective journal

Ortlipp (2008) explains that keeping self-reflective journals facilitates reflexivity, and allows researchers to examine and clarify their personal assumptions, goals and belief systems. Reflective journals also allow the researcher to control researcher values by consciously acknowledging them (Ortlipp, 2008). Theron and Malindi (2012) explain that prior training, beliefs and biases affect the research-participant relationship, and therefore self-reflection is necessary throughout the research project. As a researcher, I kept a reflective journal throughout the study to continuously acknowledge my experiences, beliefs, thoughts, and feelings, as part of the research process (Ortlipp, 2008). An extract of my reflective journal is shown in Addendum D.

3.4.4 Data Analysis And Interpretation

Thematic data analysis is a general method used for “identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 6). Percy et al. (2015) explain that thematic data analysis is a generic approach to analysing qualitative interpretive data. Thematic data analysis for generic qualitative research can include, amongst others,” inductive analysis, theoretical analysis, and thematic analysis with constant comparison” (Percy et al., 2015, p. 80). For this research project, my data analysis process was inductive, which means that the analysis process was data driven, and I did not initially try to fit the data into any pre-existing themes (Percy et al., 2015). I tried to set aside all preconceptions and analysed the data collected from each participant interview individually (Percy et al., 2015). The repeating patterns and themes from all participants were synthesised in order to interpret the meanings and answer the research questions. I then related the findings of the data analysis to the dimensions of the theoretical framework. Patterns and themes that emerged from the data analysis were organised under the dimensions of the theoretical framework and resulted in recommendations for practice.

Data was analysed using thematic data analysis typically used for a qualitative interpretive analysis approach, which involved an in-depth description of the characteristics, processes, and contexts related to the phenomenon (Terre Blanche et al., 2007). The researcher played an active role in identifying, selecting and reporting interesting patterns and themes. The relevance of the induced themes were dependent on whether they captured something important related to the overall research questions and represented a patterned response from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Although analysis of the data collected in this research did not involve a step by step, but rather a back and forth recursive, movement, I used the steps of interpretive data analysis described by Terre Blanche et al. (2007) as a guideline. These steps included:

Step 1: Familiarisation and Immersion

This involved repeatedly reading through the data to determine the type of interpretations that were likely to be supported by the data, and building on ideas and theories in the study.

Step 2: Inducing Themes

Themes related to the research question were induced from the data and phrases and paragraphs relating to the potential emerging themes were highlighted.

Step 3: Coding

Coding involved breaking down the data by using colour to highlight sections that were relevant to one or more of the themes, and allocating codes to these themes, to allow for further analysing. The themes changed as I immersed myself in the data and developed a better understanding of how they related to one another.

Step 4: Elaboration

Elaboration involved exploring the coded themes more closely to capture more in-depth meaning, and resulted in sub-themes and categories. Coding, elaborating and re-coding continued until no further new insights appeared to emerge. In this process the data that had been broken down, was once again built up and integrated.

Step 5: Interpretation And Checking.

In chapter 4 I discussed the interpretation of the data in accordance with these themes and sub-themes. During this process, I constantly needed to check for

contradictions, over-interpretation or prejudice, and to reflect on my role as the researcher, and how it may have influenced the way in which I collected and analysed the data. (An extract of my interpreted transcriptions are shown in Addendum E.)

3.5 QUALITY CRITERIA

Qualitative validity means that the researcher ensures the accuracy of the findings, while qualitative reliability indicates the consistency of the research approach (Creswell, 2013). In a qualitative study, validity, which is trustworthiness, needs to be ensured (Fabio & Maree, 2012). Trustworthiness refers to how the data has been collected, sorted and classified, in terms of the credibility, confirmability, dependability, transferability and authenticity of the study (Di Fabio & Maree, 2012).

Credibility refers to the “truth value” of results (Di Fabio & Maree, 2012). In order to attain credibility, I needed to ensure that the participants were described accurately. Keeping a reflective journal, external verification of results by my research supervisor, triangulation and member checking (participant validation) after the preliminary analysis, ensured credibility.

“**Confirmability** refers to the objectivity of the data and the absence of research errors” (Di Fabio & Maree, 2012, p. 141). This was achieved by my research supervisor verifying the research methods, as well as providing proof of my awareness of my values and biases, as well as their impact on the process and my findings, throughout the research project. Through my personal reflections and debriefing with my research supervisor, I have been made aware of my own beliefs, values and biases and the impact that these may have had on my research project (Di Fabio & Maree, 2012).

To ensure **dependability**, or consistency of the findings over time and different contexts, I monitored the quality of my data collection methods and transcription. I kept close to my data, took into account my personal influence on the context of the study, and tried to consider alternative explanations for my findings (Terre Blanche et al., 2007). The steps of data gathering and analysis were clearly described and all

conclusions reported in detail. Data has been safely stored and is available if needed for further analysis by other researchers.

Generalisability or **transferability** refers to the extent to which results can be generalised or transferred to other contexts (Di Fabio & Maree, 2012). In this project, transferability refers to the extent to which my findings would also reflect the attitudes, experiences and suggestions of other teachers who were not in my study. This study is not transferable, due to the small sample size and non-probability selection of participants. However, in order to allow other researchers to consider the transferability of the findings to other contexts, I kept clear, detailed and accurate records of the research process (Cooper & Endacott, 2007). The audio recordings and interview transcripts done, allow other researchers to review the data for the consideration of agreement, or disagreement, of emergent findings (Cooper & Endacott, 2017). I continued to recruit participants until no new data was emerging in order to sufficiently answer the research questions.

Authenticity refers to the extent to which participants' perspectives are fairly reflected (Morrow, 2005). I tried to obtain authenticity by carefully listening to and interpreting the participants' viewpoints, and reflected on the way in which my personal values and biases may have influenced my interpretation of the participants' responses. I used member checking and a reflective diary, as well as discussions with my research supervisor, in order to ensure authenticity.

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This project is part of a larger research project exploring the support of children from same-sex parented families in schools. Ethical approval from the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee at the University of Pretoria was obtained. I adhered to the ethical principles of beneficence, non-maleficence, justice and respect for the rights and dignity of my participants, including the right to privacy, confidentiality and self-determination (Elias & Theron, 2012).

3.6.1 Autonomy And Respect For The Dignity Of The Participant

Voluntary informed consent and the protection of confidentiality were ensured for all participants. I was respectful of the participants' dignity and worth throughout the research process.

3.6.2 Informed Consent And Voluntary Participation

All participants were given a recruitment script (Addendum A) and informed consent form (Addendum B) to read and sign, which provided them with clear, detailed information on the study, its methods, its risks and benefits, together with assurances that their participation is voluntary, and that they may withdraw at any time without consequences. The aims of the study were also verbally explained to the participants, and all questions were honestly addressed. The participants were asked to give informed consent for the audio recording of the interviews, and were assured of the confidential handling of the recorded material.

3.6.3 Confidentiality

Participants shared a concern that they did not want the names of their schools that they worked at to be revealed. The participants were assured that their identities and the identities of their schools would not be revealed and that confidentiality would be ensured. Safely storing the audiotapes and transcripts separately and ensuring that pseudonyms were used for the participants ensured this confidentiality.

3.6.4 Beneficence And Non-Maleficence

In order to ensure that no harm would come to the participants, participation was voluntary and participants were informed that they were free to withdraw at any time. Their names and the names of the schools that they worked at were protected. In terms of beneficence, it is hoped that the findings and recommendations in this research will inspire more research aimed at interrupting the heteronormative discourses in schools, and result in the development of workshops and courses for pre-service and in-service teachers on these issues.

3.7 REFLECTING ON MY ROLE AS THE RESEARCHER

The primary role of the researcher in this qualitative interpretive study was that of being an interviewer and using empathic listening skills to encourage teachers to share their perspectives on creating supportive school environments for children from same-sex parented families. I needed to ensure that my listening and interpreting skills were well developed (Terre Blanche et al., 2007) and that I created a respectful and comfortable interview environment for the participants.

The roles of transcriber and interpreter were also part of the researcher's role, together with integrating and presenting the findings of the research to the reader. The researcher needed to consider the strategic, ethical and personal issues that might be encountered when taking on a qualitative, interpretive research project (Creswell, 2013) and then to reflect on how these issues would be acknowledged and negotiated without letting them affect the trustworthiness of the research. Morrow (2005) discusses how a researcher needs to "own" their perspectives, and that this should include disclosing personal, theoretical, and methodological perspectives, values, and assumptions that could affect the research.

According to Cooper and Endacott, reflexivity is an awareness of how "the researcher and the research process have shaped the collection of data, including the role of prior assumptions and experience" (2007, p.817). It is therefore important for qualitative researchers to describe their theoretical position, and how they arrived at the questions they ask and the assumptions that they make, regarding their research topic (Cooper & Endacott, 2007). Terre Blanche et al. (2007) agree that it is important for the researcher to describe their own presence in the research. Theron and Malindi (2012) concur that the researcher needs to engage in a process of self-reflection by exploring their experiences, prior training, beliefs and biases in relation to the research topic.

Throughout this research project, I therefore engaged in a constant process of reflecting on my own values, bias and personal background that shaped the interpretation of my study. I was made aware towards the end of my research project, that as a white female, I may have been unconsciously biased in my reading

of literature and selection of participants, resulting in a skewed sample of mainly white female participants, not representative of the multi-racial South African population. As my study is qualitative and exploratory and is not intended to be representative of the general population, this does not present a major problem. However, in our multicultural country, it would be valuable to conduct a larger and more representative study that includes participants of both genders, and a variety of races, cultures and religions. It would be interesting to compare how the constructs of race, ethnicity and gender, position teachers differently on this topic.

As a heterosexual, married female and mother, I had not had much personal experience with the struggle of LGBTQ people, and when taking on this study and studying the literature, I became aware for the first time of the way in which LGBTQ people and families experience discrimination, marginalisation and silencing in society. As a teacher and educational psychology student, I was an advocate for the rights of people to equality, and the rights of children to inclusive education. While I was very aware of the need to create social equality for people of diverse races, cultures, abilities and religions, I had not paid much attention to the need to overcome ignorant and prejudicial societal attitudes in order to create equality for people of diverse sexual orientations.

I believe that as a minority culture, LGBTQ people have not received the attention that they are entitled to in the fight for equality. I believe that this change needs to begin in the school system, where children are being educated about the values of non-discrimination, tolerance and acceptance of diversity in regards to race and culture. I believe that this education needs to include sexual orientation diversity, and needs to begin when children enter the school system. While it may not be appropriate to teach foundation phase children about sexual orientation, it is relevant and appropriate to teach them about family diversity. With family as an important theme in the foundation phase, children can learn about the same-sex parented family as one type of family diversity, to set the stage for the later understanding and acceptance of sexual orientation diversity and LGBTQ people. By including all types of diversity in education, and by fostering an environment in which all people can feel safe and accepted, an egalitarian society can be created.

Through educating myself on this topic, I have gained personal insight on the way in which knowledge and understanding can instil the desire and intention to fight against inequalities in society. Knowledge creates understanding. I therefore believe that it is vital for teachers to receive pre-service and in-service training on the issues of homophobia, heteronormativity and creating inclusive and supportive environments for LGBTQ children and families in schools.

3.8 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I gave a detailed overview of the research design, paradigmatic perspective and research methodology utilised for my study. I discussed the quality criteria that I strived to achieve and the ethical issues that were considered. Finally, I reflected on my role as the researcher. In Chapter 4, I present the results of the thematic analysis in relation to relevant literature and the theoretical framework.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Within this chapter, I provide a detailed discussion of the results of the thematic analysis, which was done using the qualitative interpretive analysis approach described by Terre Blanche et al. (2007). I have included the supporting evidence from the transcribed and coded one-on-one interviews. I will firstly present the tabulated results of the thematic analysis, followed by a more detailed discussion of the results in relation to current literature.

4.2 RESULTS OF THE THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Three themes emerged from the thematic analysis of the interview transcripts. The results of the thematic analysis indicating the induced themes and sub-themes are outlined in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Results of the thematic analysis

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
1. FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS' PERSONAL PERCEPTIONS OF CHILDREN FROM SAME-SEX PARENTED FAMILIES	1.1 Teachers' definitions of a functional family
	1.2 Teachers' views of the same-sex parented family
	1.3 Teachers' awareness of how foundation phase teachers influence the beliefs and values of the children in their classrooms
	1.4 Teachers' views of the school experiences of children from same-sex parented families



2. FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON THEIR ROLE IN INTERRUPTING HETERONORMATIVITY IN THEIR CLASSROOMS: CREATING SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS FOR CHILDREN FROM SAME-SEX PARENTED FAMILIES	2.1 Preventing homophobia: Teaching tolerance and acceptance of the same-sex parented family in the foundation phase classroom
	2.2 Accommodating the same-sex parented family in the school
	2.3 Normalising the same-sex parented family in the foundation phase classroom
	2.4 Representing the same-sex parented family in the foundation phase classroom
3. BARRIERS TO INTERRUPTING HETERONORMATIVITY: FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS' CONCERNS, BELIEFS AND MISCONCEPTIONS	3.1 The school environment <i>3.1.1 Concerns about the schools' ethos and policies</i> <i>3.1.2 Concerns about opposition from school leaders and other members of staff</i>
	3.2 Concerns about opposition from parents
	3.3 Concerns that the topic is not included in the curriculum
	3.4 Teachers' beliefs and attitudes <i>3.4.1 Teachers' limited knowledge on the topic</i> <i>3.4.2 Teachers' beliefs that the topic is inappropriate for foundation phase children</i>

4.3 THEME 1: FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS' PERSONAL PERCEPTIONS OF CHILDREN FROM SAME-SEX PARENTED FAMILIES

“Perception” is defined in the Merriam-Webster dictionary as “the way you think about or understand someone or something” (www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/perception). In order to understand teacher’s perceptions of creating supportive classroom and school environments for children from same-sex parented families, it is necessary to understand the way in which they view the same-sex parented family, and how they understand the school experiences of children from this minority and non-traditional family form.

Four sub-themes were induced from the analysis of the first theme:

- Sub-theme 1.1: Teachers’ definitions of a functional family
- Sub-theme 1.2: Teachers’ views of the same-sex parented family
- Sub-theme 1.3: Teachers’ awareness of how foundation phase teachers influence the beliefs and values of the children in their classrooms.
- Sub-theme 1.4: Teachers’ views of the school experiences of children from same-sex parented families.

These sub-themes create a backdrop to enable a better understanding of the way in which foundation phase teachers perceive their role in interrupting heteronormativity in their classrooms, and thus in contributing to the creation of more supportive school environments for children from same-sex parented families. All the teachers that I interviewed indicated that they view family diversity as the norm in our modern day world, that they are tolerant of same-sex relationships and of same-sex parented families, and that they believe that foundation teachers greatly influence the values, beliefs and attitudes of the children in their classrooms. The participants had very diverse views on their perceptions of the school experiences of children from same-sex parented families. These sub-themes will now be discussed.

4.3.1. Sub-theme 1.1: Teachers' definitions of a functional family

According to Cohen et al. (2007, p. 9), "family is a fundamental social institution found in all societies, as well as one of the most basic ways by which societies organize their members". They argue that because family is associated with concepts such as marriage, sexuality, and parenting, it challenges the basic moral sensitivities of people.

The traditional nuclear family is still commonly accepted to mean a legally married, two-parent, heterosexual couple (Lubbe, 2007a). Cohen et al. (2007) agree that the nuclear or traditional family is usually presented as the most desirable and normal type of family, while other types are often viewed as undesirable or problematic. However, family diversity is no longer an exception but a norm, and different types of family structures, resulting from different cultures, social class issues or lifestyle choices, has challenged the myth of the nuclear family (Cohen et al., 2007). Lubbe (2007a) agrees that "(n)o universally accepted definition of what is meant by 'family' exists" (p. 273), as "family revolves around relationships, and relationships cannot be prescribed or structured and cannot be lived within fixed guidelines" (p.273). Lubbe (2007a) explains that "(p)ost-modern interpretations of the family argue that it is no longer possible to claim that any one type of family is 'better', more 'natural', or more 'normal' than another" (p 273).

In order to contextualise and understand how participants view same-sex parented families, I firstly explored their personal views on what constitutes a functional family. Walsh (2012) defines "functional" as workable, and explains that it refers to the way in which family patterns are used to achieve family goals, such as instrumental tasks and the socio-emotional well-being of family members. Interestingly, all participants expressed the view that a traditional nuclear family, with a mother and father, was not the only type of "functional" family, and regarded the family structure as less important than the values instilled within the family.

Participant 1 was mostly of the opinion that family diversity is the norm, especially in our multi-cultural South African society, and that extended families often live together: *A lot of people only have one mom or dad, so being in the foundation phase, I've learnt not to put labels on family. Especially in the culture that we teach*

in...it's mommy and granny, or it's granny, and my mom is actually my sister. So it's very hard to say family is a mom and a dad and brothers and sister...especially also people can't all afford to live in their own house, so they live with their granny and mom and dad. And for me I've never felt that mom and dad, brother and sister are family. I feel that who ever you live with is your family (P1, I 93-101²). Extended families, which include parents and children, usually consist of three or more generations who live together as a larger family unit and provide support for one another (Cohen et al., 2007). Kinship care occurs often in South Africa, when the child's extended family or close friends of the family known to the child, care for the child (Save the Children UK, 2007). In their report on kinship care, Save the Children UK (2007) explain that sixty percent of kinship carers in South Africa are grandparents, but may also include aunts and uncles, and older siblings. Walsh (2012) argues that families and their children can thrive in a variety of kinship relationships, and kinship care by extended family members, either legally or informally, has become the preferred option when parents are unable to provide adequate care of their children.

The same participant also argued that a good or functional family is not determined by structure, but rather by the amount of love that is provided by the members: *For me it's love...love would be the main thing in a family (P1, I 92-93).* She was supported in her beliefs by the third participant, who also expressed her belief that support, communication, respect and honesty are all foundations of a good family: *Individuals who communicate with each other, who support each other, who understand there are difference and allow for those differences. Yes, give the boundaries, that there aren't a free for all in whichever discussion, that the children would understand your values - but for me it's very much a value, um, directed relationship. Everybody gets respect. There is honesty around, and if those values are laid as the functions, then you can have a normally functioning individual, be it in a family - a so-called normal family - or not (P3, I 71-79).* These participants' viewpoints are very much confirmed by Walsh' (2012) family resilience framework, which is informed by over three decades of clinical and social science research, and targets and identifies the key processes that contribute to resilience and family

² P stands for participant; I stands for lines

functioning. These key processes include having a shared, positive and meaningful belief system; a sense of coherence; effective organisational patterns and strong leadership, which allows the family members to be flexible, yet respectful and nurturing; a sense of connectedness and resourcefulness to manage crises; and the ability to communicate clearly and consistently and to solve problems collaboratively.

Participant 2, however, held the view that a functional family must include two involved and loving parents, who are in a supportive relationship, regardless of the sex of the parents: *A healthy family is basically where there are two parents, it doesn't really matter, their sexes... so long as there are two parents, loving parents, um, that's in a relationship, and in a relationship for the right reasons, they're not staying in the relationship for children or anything else, and um, ja, they're supportive of one another (P2, I 122-128)*. Participant 2 explained that in her experience with children: *A lot of the issues came out of the fact that there was maybe an absent father and the parents not being involved. So I would actually say for a healthy family, I would actually say two parents (P2, I 136-138)*. Biblarz and Stacey (2010) agree with most family researchers who suggest that a child raised by two parents in a low-conflict environment will have access to more emotional and material resources, regardless of parental biological-sex.

Walsh (2012) argues that a number of factors, including socioeconomic status, emotional well-being, and social support of the parent, all contribute to the psychological health and development of children from single-parent families. Walsh (2012) stresses that while the strain of coping with single parenthood can make single parents and their children more psychologically vulnerable, and children of single parents do tend to have more behavioural and emotional problems, it is not accurate to say that single-parent families are inherently dysfunctional. Walsh (2012) maintains that with mitigating factors, such as parental well-being; a predictable family structure providing nurturance and limits; protecting children from the negative impact of a bitter divorce; and having supportive networks, children in single-parent households may be protected from psychological vulnerability, and can thrive. This confirms the views of the first two participants, who argued that emotional and social support by family members is more important than family structure in family functioning.

4.3.2 Sub-theme 1.2: Teachers' views of the same-sex parented family

Gartrell and Bos (2010) found that although children of lesbian parents do experience stigmatisation because of their family structure, the positive aspects of family functioning mitigate the negative effects of these experiences. Patterson (2006) and Golombok et al. (2003) argue that the quality of the cooperation and the interaction between the parent and the child ensures a positive parent-child relationship, as opposed to the parents' sexual orientation. Walsh (2012) concurs that same-sex parents are as effective as heterosexual parents in providing nurturing, responsible, stable and organised homes, and children's psychological outcomes are related to processes of family interaction such as emotional support and appropriate guidance.

While many years of research have shown that children raised by same-sex parents perform on par with children raised by opposite sex parents (Manning, Fetto, & Lamidi, 2014), because same-sex families are different to the traditional family system and structure, the exact nature of what constitutes a family, a parent, or a father and a mother in this type of family, raises questions (Lubbe, 2007a). Lubbe (2007a) explains that same-sex parented families continue to challenge the dominant discourses of gender and sexuality. If teachers are not aware of their own perceptions on same-sex parented families, they may consciously or unconsciously perpetuate heteronormative attitudes towards families in their classroom practice. It is therefore important to explore and understand the personal perceptions of teachers on same-sex intimate relationships and same-sex parented families.

All participants shared that they are, at the very least, tolerant of sexual orientation diversity and same-sex parented families. When discussing same-sex intimate relationships, participant 1 explained her views as follows: *For me it's whatever... you are who you are, and however it happens, and if that's how you want to be, then so be it. If it's something that you choose and then you decide not to... some people say it's not a choice, some say it is. I'm very much like, it doesn't bother me, it's not something that I - "oh look" and I like, make it a spectacle, but I'm also not "anti". It's the same as if a boy and a girl, or a boy and a boy, or a girl and girl... (P1, 1 54–60).*

Participant 2 rationalised her perceptions in the following way: *Um, well to be honest,*

I, uh, I wouldn't say I'm a supporter, but I wouldn't say I'm against it. Um, so I'm not like, it's not either or. I'm not an advocate for it, but yet again, I'm also not saying that it's something that's wrong, or that I don't agree with or anything. So I'm basically saying that I'm quite neutral about it (P2, I 52-56). Participant 4 had a similar view: *I must say I was never, I'm never for it, because I feel if we were meant to be same-sex partners then we wouldn't have been made as man and woman. But that's how we have been raised... but as well, we were also raised that you, um, respect the differences that you see. So it's kind of like, I respect that's what you want to do, but it mustn't come anywhere close to me, that it's going to affect me personally or in any of my relationships. So I stand like that. But if that's your choice then I respect your choices completely (P4, I 70-78).*

Participant 3 described herself as accepting of same-sex intimate relationships and families, but appeared to have conflicting views: *I would probably be more on the accepting side of things... everybody is different, and I think previous years, there wasn't, you weren't allowed to be different, whereas now, it's far more acceptable to be different, and as long as they're not offensive to anybody else, I don't see the issue...because I think, a um, a man or a woman, whether they are male or female, can give as much love to - in a family situation - as to a so-called traditional family, which may have a lot of other underlying issues. So for me, as long as its not highly offensive and they're not all in your face type of thing or very outspoken, and they're accepting of others, I can be accepting back of them (P3, I 33-43).*

When discussing her views on the same-sex parented family, participant 3 said: *If they give that child what a so-called normal couple would give it's exactly the same...if all the basics are there, the love and respect for each other is there, it's going to be as strong a relationship that the child will form (P3, I 86-91).* While participant 3 described herself as accepting, these views could still be seen as somewhat conservative and heteronormative, and perhaps unintentionally judgemental, especially when she argued that: *Maybe it's not ideal, but I agree with the fact that gay people say, adopt a child if they can give it a loving home. I don't want them, I don't know that I really agree with them creating their own child and going off to a surrogate mother and all that type of thing. But if you can help a child*

who's been abandoned somewhere then, I don't see an issue with it at all (P3, I 61-67).

Breshears and Lubbe De Beer (2016) found that negative social attitudes towards homosexuality can largely be attributed to cultural and religious conservatism. In accordance with this, participant 1 felt that she is more open to sexual orientation diversity and same-sex parented families because she grew up in a more tolerant family and even experienced a lesbian “phase” at school, which, although it was difficult for her to discuss, it was accepted by her parents. She believes that her Afrikaans friends are more against sexual orientation diversity because of their more traditional and conservative cultural background: *I think that a lot of my friends are Afrikaans, so they're very like, some of them are, okay whatever, and some of them are “anti” it. I think because of their culture and how they were brought up, they have stereotyped them. So I think this is quite a thing. Also, ja, in high school, I had a phase and when I told everyone they were all, okay, and my mom and dad were also, like, okay, and I think, because of that reason it was, like, okay, and I know that it was also scary to say something...(P1, I 114-121).*

According to Robinson and Ferfolja (2002), religious, moral, and cultural values, which link heterosexuality to marriage, procreation, and family, often influence teachers' perspectives in dealing with lesbian and gay issues. In South Africa religion plays a major role in daily living, and can result in reduced prejudice, through a loving and caring philosophy, or perpetuate prejudice, through denouncing homosexuality (Bhana, 2012). Breshears and Lubbe De Beer (2016) agree that in South Africa, specifically, religion strongly influences social norms, particularly in regard to sexual orientation.

Participant 4 explained that her religious views may be different to her social beliefs on homosexuality and same-sex parenting: *If you're just looking basically at your beliefs and religious system then it would make me a lot more intolerant to it - but I think we've been raised in a society where you need to respect that there are a lot of difference so I think that has maybe made me tolerant of it (P4, I 105-109).* Participant 1 said that while she accepts gay and lesbian relationships and families, she is also conflicted about her Christian beliefs, as she believes that the bible

argues against same-sex romantic relationships. Yet, she believes that as a Christian one cannot judge others: *I think religion is a little bit more difficult...Um, being Christian, I think people are very much like, the bible says it's wrong, but for me I think it's a grey area, I really do. It's very scary to say it out loud, and whatever, but it is, it's something I feel that, like being a Christian you can't judge it, and if that's what they want to, then so be it. I'm not doing that, but you can if you want to...(P1, I 66-71).*

The other participants, however, did not view religion as a reason why they would be against same sex relationships and families, and argued that while the more "traditional" religious views state that "it" is wrong, they have, with experience, developed more liberal religious views, which are more accepting of same-sex romantic relationships. Participant 2 said: *I think that the church I'm in now is very liberal, so it is quite accepting of same-sex marriages. But I would say growing up, um, I was in a very traditional church, so when I was growing up we were basically taught that it was wrong and against, um, God's wishes and things like that. But the church I'm in now - same religion, just a different church - basically it's a bit more liberal and they just a have a different view of it... that they basically say that everyone is accepted in the eyes of God. I guess I just went along with that as I got older. I think as I got older I was also able to make choices for myself (P2, I 62-71).* Participant 3 agreed: *With Christianity it's not the right thing to be gay, but I think in having experienced a lot of the world, as it were, and being out and about and having met a number of gay people, even just, at least foreigners, different cultures, you realise that everyone's different. So I wouldn't... My religion is not an overriding factor (P3, I 51-56).*

All participants argued that if children are raised in same-sex parented families, then role models of the opposite sex are needed to play an active role in their lives. The participants held the general view that both male and female role models were important in a family: *I just feel that you need the other... if it's two moms they need a male role model, but that's also grandfather, brother, uncle, all of that. I think for the child it's very important for them to see the other sex role and for them to have a big role in their family (P1, I 103-107).* Participant 2 agreed: *I think it is important, even if it's maybe not a parent, um, maybe just a male figure, it doesn't have to be a*

father or mother figure, but just that male or female figure somewhere that's involved with the children. It can be maybe an aunt or uncle or a cousin or whatever, but I think there has to be a little exposure to the opposite sex as well (P2, I 151-156). Participant 4 expressed the following views on this topic: *So for me as long as the parents are giving their child what they need then I feel that, then it's fine. But I feel more that if it's two men raising a boy, then it could work quite well, I think you as a teacher then take on the mother side of it. But I think it could be - I think if it's two males raising a little girl - I feel that's where my...um...opinion may differ a little bit, because I feel girls need a mom (P4, I 55-56).* Participant 3 argued that she feels it is especially important in the school environment for children from same-sex parented families to have someone of the opposite sex to step in at school events when needed: *I would hope that there is a role model, as in a friend who steps in - I think - or is in the picture, um, for the sake of the child not... I don't know, we have "dads and daughters weekends", if the dad is away, is there a grandfather who can come in and be the dad? That type of thing...(P3, I 102-106).*

Biblarz and Stacey (2010) argue that current claims that children need both male and female parents are invalid and that no research supports biological sex of a parent as a detrimental variable in successful parenting and outcomes in children. Furthermore, in their research on the need for male role models in children raised by lesbian parents, Bos, Goldberg, Van Gelderen, and Gartrell (2012) found that the associations between gender role traits and psychological well-being are similar for adolescents raised with and without male role models. These findings contradict the claims of scholars, and the participants' beliefs, that role models of both sexes are critical in the development of healthy psychological well-being in children.

4.3.3 Sub-theme 1.3: Teachers' awareness of how foundation phase teachers influence the beliefs and values of the children in their classrooms.

Petrovic (2002) argues that teachers hold a great deal of influence over their pupils' thoughts and behaviours, particularly at primary school level, as children of this age are less likely to question their teachers and usually accept what the teacher says the truth.

According to the following comments from the participants, it appears that they are

aware of the vital influence that they have on the moral development of the children in their classrooms. Participant 4 said: *I think there's definitely a high influence, because we're with them more than what their parents are with them - and I think when we are given topics to teach them we do... it is difficult to kind of keep your beliefs and allow them to share. But - we also do that, obviously, I mean you adapt to them - but I think it's normal to kind of share your own beliefs - but then we give them time to process and discuss it with their friends and see if someone has a different belief (P4, I 147-154).* Participant 1 agreed: *Especially being so young, they come and tittle-tale about silly things and you have to teach them, "Is that nice? Are you trying to get them in to trouble? Are they hurt or is someone hurt? Do I need to get my friend in to trouble? It's not nice to get my friend in to trouble." ...Just as a small example (P1, I 77-82).* Participant 2 said: *I think the character we portray to the children is very important, and also the lessons that we teach them, um, can have a huge impact on them (P2, I 82-84).* She continued to say: *I would actually say it's kind of our job to step up to the plate and to be role models for the kids, um and to teach them certain, um you know, values and morals and things like that (P2, I 93-96).* Participant 3 concurred: *Teachers have a lot of influence, a lot of influence, and I don't think you can say to anybody that their beliefs are incorrect (P3, I 134-136).*

According to Hernandez (2011), while teachers need to recognise their personal beliefs and prejudice, they need to put these aside and teach what is in the best interest of the learners. Participant 2 confirmed that at the school she is currently teaching at, this is the case: *Although we do, we have to, like I said, display certain human qualities - respect, dignity things like that - we are actually not allowed to, we actually signed a document, to say that we are not allowed to, how can I say, we shouldn't actually share our personal opinions with children (P2, 88 – 92).* Lubbe (2007b) argues that although children, parents' and teachers' personal beliefs may not always be compatible with those of others, acknowledging, addressing and challenging prejudices could lead to a greater understanding and acceptance of differences. This is confirmed by participant 3: *I think if you're consistent with speaking about how we don't hurt others and we're honest with each other, and we accept each others opinions, and we're allowed our own... and you're consistent with that, it gets through to the children, they learn to think along those lines as well (P3, I 117-121).* Participant 3 said that in order to address prejudice and discrimination she

teaches the children in her class to understand that everyone has feelings and differences must be tolerated: *It's being open and allowing that person to speak and say how they feel and not being judgemental about it, and trying to put across to children that you cannot judge others, because they also have feelings (P3, I 433-436).*

It appears that all the participants believe that, as foundation phase teachers, they hold a great deal of influence over the moral development of the children in their classrooms, and that is their duty to teach and model, not only good morals and values, but also, an intolerance of discrimination and a respect for and acceptance of diversity, without projecting their own personal prejudices on to their learners.

4.3.4 Sub-theme 1.4: Teachers' views of the school experiences of children from same-sex parented families

If teachers have heteronormative perceptions regarding families, this may impact the way in which they teach the children in their classroom about family norms, and may influence the children's understandings of their own family identity. School psychologists in New York expressed their belief that same-sex families did not experience the school environment as supportive or welcoming for their families (Bishop & Atlas, 2015). Chamberlain and Kothlow (2012) argue that it is the professional responsibility of teachers to create a school experience for children where they can thrive emotionally, socially and academically. Teachers can only create a supportive school experience for children from same-sex parented families if they are aware of the different family structures in their classrooms, as well as the possible challenges that children from these different families, including the same-sex parented family, may experience.

Participants in this research project had very diverse viewpoints on the school experiences of children from same-sex parented families. Participant 1 argued that traditional families are no longer the norm, and that, particularly in our dominant South African culture, because children all come from such diverse family structures, children from same-sex parented families will not stand out or feel uncomfortable in the school context: *Because every one is different, every family is different, if they were to come up and talk about their families, not every child is saying, I have a*

mom and I have a dad. So there is like, I have a mom, I only have a dad... ok, I have two moms. I don't think it should be a problem, (P1, I 146-150). Participant 3 agreed with this viewpoint: I suppose it depends very much on your culture. When I think of, like in our country, a black family... You have how many other grannies and aunts living with the family, and the children don't easily identify who's a cousin, who's an aunt, and they see them all as aunts or sisters or brothers. So if something like that is happening, do they, I think they have a wider picture frame of their family. So it could be covered up in a way and they may not even be aware that there is something going on (P3, I 148-156).

Participant 2, who had a child from a same-sex parented family in her school, argued that she believes that children from these families do experience a number of challenges in the school environment, including being teased and feeling different, and that this affects their social relationships. She explained: *Typically what we ask the little ones to do in the foundation phase in the first week of school is to draw a picture of your family. They immediately there - because they're going to share their pictures with the rest of the class - there are going to be children who are going to question them and say why do you have two mothers. I think at that point they are too small to explain. And then if you do, and they don't think there's anything wrong with it, the other kids are going to pick it up immediately, and they might feel outcast or they might feel, you know, put on the spot. Because, maybe for them growing up it was normal, and all of a sudden now, um, you know, being at school there are children that are pointing out that their living condition is not normal (P2, I 214-228). Participant 2 speculated: As (children) get older, it does tend to affect them. Like when they're young, it's, like, not such a big deal. But I have experienced that when the children get older, then the other kids may tease them and tell them, you know, you've got two mummies, that's not normal. Eventually, even if they have accepted it, you know, it's just the fact that they are being questioned or teased by their peers. It does put them in an uncomfortable position. So I think to a certain extent it does or would affect their social relationships with other people (P2, I 176-184).*

Participant 4 agreed that children from same-sex parented families may experience a number of difficulties at school with other children who do not understand why their family structure is different: *Children are very nasty, so I think as soon as children -*

so, oh you've got two moms or two dads - then I think it depends if the parents have raised their child in a way that you don't allow people to judge you, and then I think it would be easier for them to just let the comments go. But I think a child who is sensitive to it already... I mean children can be so nasty...(P4, I 198-204). Participant 4 explained that special family days that are celebrated at the school, such as mothers day or fathers day, may be difficult for children from same-sex parented families, who do not have a mother or father: *A little girl being raised by two dads, when you do things like mothers day and fathers day, I think that affects children (P 4, I 212-214).* She adds though, that in these cases, the teacher should be aware of the situation and should step in to accommodate the child: *But I think you, as a teacher, would then know and kind of prepare for that, so the child will make something for both of their dads or moms (P4, I 217-219).*

The participants all felt that if the parents are open and honest in discussing their family identity, then the children would be better equipped to deal with challenges that may arise in the school context. According to participant 1: *It's also how their parents have experienced everything. Like, has it been a hush-hush thing, has it been like - I mean, I go to school and I say I have a mom and a dad, and it's normal for me at home and around other people - but if people have all been like hiding it and keeping it quiet, then the children know that something is wrong... But if they have never experienced it as wrong or different, then they shouldn't be shy about it (P1, I 150-157).* Participant 2 agreed with this viewpoint: *It also depends on the support at home. If the parents are willing and able to explain to the child from a very young age, um, and not keeping things a secret at all... Ja, so I suppose in a very supportive and informative household, then I don't think it should be a problem (P2, I 166-170).*

Bos and Gartell (2010) confirm that having open discussions about homophobic stigmatisation with parents may serve as protective factors for the children of same-sex parents, as it may help them develop the skills to cope with discrimination. In addition, Beren (2013) argues that children thrive when parents and teachers work together, so communication, coordination, and trust between same-sex parents and early childhood teachers is also beneficial to children from these families. Participant 4 confirms this argument: *I would like them to give me the opportunity to know that,*

because for me then, when things happen in the class with their child, then you have a bit more of an understanding of why things happen like that, but if you don't have the background, then it will be a bit difficult to handle a situation that might arise (P4, / 235-240).

It was also suggested by participant 2, that children from same-sex families might struggle at school because these families are not accommodated or represented in the administration of the school. She described a same-sex parent's experience at the school that she previously worked at, in which the school did not have any administrative policies in place to accommodate and include the parents: *So usually at a school they have details of mother and father, and there was no details of father, only of mother, and there was only, obviously for good reason, there was no detail of the other mother, because they felt they weren't a father, so they couldn't add the details on to the side, so only on the day when the parents came in did they say (P2, / 262-267).* When the parents eventually disclosed this child's family identity, it continued to be silenced by the teachers.

In their 2008 study, the Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network (GLSEN) found that children commonly reported feeling excluded or isolated because schools did not acknowledge their family identity (Kosciw & Diaz, 2008). In accordance with this research, participant 2 described how, although the teachers did not make the child feel uncomfortable, due to their own feelings of discomfort with the topic, they did not invite the child to discuss his family identity: *Well, they didn't really know, but after the meeting everyone started like, you know, they did speak about it afterwards, but obviously behind doors. But they obviously did not make the child feel uncomfortable...they did not discuss it with the child. I think they handled it quite professionally, to a certain extent. But people are people, they did maybe gossip behind doors, but never in front of the child, or never did they make the child feel uncomfortable or ask the child questions about it. Because I think they realised it was an uncomfortable situation (P2, / 271-279).* The way in which the teachers secretly discussed the parents' sexual orientation "behind doors" highlights their uneasiness and discomfort with homosexuality. This could result in the child from the same-sex parented family feeling abnormal and isolated, as his family identity was not being openly validated.

Research by Casper, Schultz, and Wickens (1992) found that children from same-sex parented families who started school realised for the first time that their family structure was not perceived as 'normal', and was either not represented or was represented as dysfunctional in their school (cited in Lubbe, 2007b). According to participant 2, the child from the same-sex parented family in their school felt different to his peers and felt uncomfortable explaining his family structure to them: *I think it was more of an embarrassment, like the child was embarrassed. At a certain point the child was fine with it, but as (he) got older, friends would tease, would ask questions, he would feel uncomfortable...eventually the defence mechanism was to avoid. And the child also had very little friends. He actually had one friend from grade 1 and then had this friend up until grade 6, grade 7, because that was the friend who knew the situation, knew what was going on. But he struggled to make new friends, um, and also didn't want, or he didn't go out of his way to make new friends because it was too much of a hassle to explain...(P2, I 241-251)*. The participant described how the child coped with his school environment by avoiding situations in which his family identity could be disclosed. Because of homophobic comments and a lack of respect for this child's family differences, the child chose to marginalise himself to avoid revealing his family identity: *Based on what I picked up from him I think there was a bit of teasing that went on, which is why he decided to withdraw...I can't say to what extent, but I think it was more grade 3, grade 4 years. Um, as he got older I think he already learnt how to hide it, how to avoid certain functions and events and things like that for people finding out (P2, I 286-293)*. Perhaps in a safer and more supportive school environment, where this child's family was better represented and where the other children were taught from a young age to be more respectful of this type of family diversity, the child may have felt less marginalised and silenced?

Chamberlain and Kothlow (2012) maintain that children's school experiences are directly impacted by the way in which heteronormativity is identified, acknowledged, questioned and actively challenged by teachers. Many teachers, however, do not often recognise heteronormative patterns, and if they are confronted with these issues they may be apprehensive or uncertain of how to challenge instances of heterosexist discrimination (Kosciw & Diaz, 2008). It is critical that early childhood educators do not assume 'that invisibility means absence, and that absence means irrelevancy' (Robinson, 2002, p. 431). For many same-sex parented families, silence

and invisibility is enforced as a result of heteronormativity and homophobia within schools and other societal contexts (Robinson, 2002). Just because teachers are not aware that they have children from the same-sex parented family in their classroom, it does not mean that this type of family should not be represented in their curriculum.

Robinson (2005) argues that while many teachers deal with diversity issues in the lives of children and their families, their choice of particular issues are often directed by what they are comfortable dealing with, and by what they deem as relevant or appropriate to children's lives. Consequently dealing with same-sex parenting or other LGBTQ topics is more often than not silenced and marginalised, or claimed to be irrelevant or developmentally and morally inappropriate for children. The issues of homophobia and heteronormativity in early childhood education need more attention, discussion and investigation (Robinson, 2002). Foundation phase teachers need to become aware of the importance of creating supportive school experiences for children from same-sex parented families, and the critical role that they play in fostering these environments.

In accordance with this, when asked how more supportive schools can be created for children from same-sex parented families, participant 2 responded: *They (schools) are including, um, race and culture and, you know, really explaining how diversity and being accepting of these different cultures and races, um, they're trying to incorporate that from a very young age. If they could do that for race and culture they could surely do that for gender as well, but I think in this point of time, it's still a really touchy sensitive topic, but surely somewhere in the curriculum, they can maybe bring it in (P2, I 631-638).*

4.4 THEME 2: FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON THEIR ROLE IN INTERRUPTING HETERONORMATIVITY IN THEIR CLASSROOMS: CREATING SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS FOR CHILDREN FROM SAME-SEX PARENTED FAMILIES

Janmohamed and Campbell (2009) explain that homophobia can include anything involving the denial of the right to equality, negative comments, avoidance, or any form of violence aimed at queer people and their families. According to Smith, Ward, and Mitchell (2011) homophobia can occur in schools in many ways, but the most common form it takes is in the use of homophobic language, which may include name-calling, teasing, nasty jokes or spreading rumours that someone is gay.

According to Hernandez (2013), although the majority of LGBTQ students from schools with anti-homophobia policies reported that they had not been physically harassed, this did not result in higher numbers of LGBTQ students feeling safe at school. This indicates that anti-homophobia policies are not sufficient, and that schools need to go beyond this and begin to integrate LGBTQ topics into the curriculum, in order for these learners to see themselves included, reflected and validated in the taught curriculum (Hernandez, 2013). I argue that this is also true for children from same-sex parented families, where young learners need to see their family identity included, reflected and validated by their teachers in their classrooms and schools.

Heteronormativity, which is the view that heterosexuality is the normal sexual orientation (Janmohamed and Campbell, 2009), is especially evident in early childhood education (Robinson, 2002). Janmohamed and Campbell (2002) explain that some of the reasons that heteronormativity persists in early childhood education, are the continued use of children's literature that does not represent LGBTQ people and families, and the lack of intervention by some teachers in preventing incidents of homophobia in their classrooms.

International and local research shows that teachers play a pivotal role in teaching

learners to question and interrupt inequalities based on individual, family and cultural diversity (Bhana, 2012). Foundation phase teachers need to consciously and continuously interrupt the heteronormative processes within their classroom practices that are actively maintaining the marginalisation and invisibility of children from non-heterosexual families. Only in this way can a tolerant, non-prejudicial and supportive classroom and school environment be created for all children.

Theme 2 was induced from my exploration of the foundation phase teachers' perceptions of their role in interrupting heteronormativity. In my interviews done with the participants, I found that their responses could be grouped into four sub-themes according to the different levels of support that participants believe that they should provide in interrupting heteronormativity in their classrooms. These sub-themes are as follows:

- Sub-theme 2.1: Preventing homophobia: Teaching tolerance and acceptance of the same-sex parented family in the foundation phase classroom
- Sub-theme 2.2: Accommodating the same-sex parented family in the school
- Sub-theme 2.3: Normalising the same-sex parented family in the foundation phase classroom
- Sub-theme 2.4: Representing the same-sex parented family in the foundation phase classroom.

4.4.1 Sub-theme 2.1: Preventing homophobia: teaching tolerance and acceptance of the same-sex parented family in the foundation phase classroom

In an Australian survey of 151 lesbian parents, Perlesz and McNair (2004) found that these parents were particularly concerned that their children may be bullied and harassed at school. Stacey and Biblarz (2001) found that children with gay and lesbian parents struggled with issues of homophobic teasing. In South Africa, Bhana argues that while the Department of Education “identifies social transformation, human rights and equality as important principles in educational transformation” (2012, p. 308), the homophobia in schools, together with teachers' compliant attitude in dealing with this challenge, results in the claims of sexual equality and social

justice not being achieved in schools (Bhana, 2012). Bhana (2012) maintains that excluding and discriminating against homosexual people, betrays the South African democracy. These challenges highlight the need to support and equip teachers to understand and address homophobia in their schools.

Of particular concern, were the findings by Kosciw and Diaz (2008), that when negative, biased or homophobic language was used in their presence of school staff, they rarely intervened. In South African research, teachers have been found to ignore daily occurrences of homophobic harassment and disregard reports of homophobia (Bhana, 2012). These findings were, however, not supported by the participants' responses in my research.

Participant 1 argued that she would not tolerate any homophobia or discrimination in her classroom and that she believes it should not be tolerated in schools, no matter what the home beliefs of the parents are: *They may go home and tell their mom, oh you know, Diana says she has two moms, and then they might then say something about it...then they may come back to school and say something like, my mom says it's... But also then as a teacher you need to intervene and just be like, what your mom says about that is fine, but at school everyone is friends, and we don't say that (P1, I 163-170)*. She continued: *And so if you're not open to it, even if they are brain washed, or whatever, in to not thinking it's wrong, at least they know in a school environment it's not tolerated for it to be wrong. Because there we are all friends, and you don't say anything ugly about it, and if you want to not like it, and all of that, you can do that at home, but at school you're not allowed to (P1, I 386-392)*.

Participant 3 agreed that as a foundation phase teacher it is her role to teach children to be tolerant and non-judgemental, because school must be a safe place for all children. She maintained that if a child was making homophobic comments, she would explain to the child's parent that all children need to be protected in the school environment. She explained: *It's being open and allowing that person to speak, and say how they feel, and not being judgemental about it... and trying to put across to children that you cannot judge others because they also have feelings- um, and it might not be - I suppose you can say to the parents, we know you might not agree with it, but it's there and your child can't stay sheltered forever. Um, but you*

can understand they don't want to, but the child at school is in a totally safe environment, so you don't want it to be happening... you know, you don't want that to be happening to another child just because he's got a different family life (P3, I 433-442). When asked about how she would deal with homophobic comments in the classroom, participant 3 replied: I would certainly try and step in and explain that we're all different, just as when they don't want to hold another friend's hand because they happen to be a different colour, that's not how we treat each other, you wouldn't like that to happen to you and keep going on that sort of vein... people, and the child, begin to realise that there's actually very little difference (P3, I 447-452).

In their study on the school experiences of children from same-sex parented families, Ray and Gregory (2001) found that children in the first years of primary school did not experience teasing about their same-sex parented families, and that the teasing or bullying usually began after Grade 2. They explained that if homophobic bullying did occur in the younger grades, the children usually sought teacher intervention. They found that 44 percent of older children, from grades 3–6, had been bullied, while those in their final years once again experienced less discrimination.

In accordance with these findings, participant 2 explained that, in working with foundation children, she had not experienced the need to prevent homophobia, as she had not witnessed any homophobia in her classroom. The gender discrimination that she had occasionally witnessed, she believed came from the children mirroring their parents attitudes, and that they didn't actually comprehend their own comments: *I don't think they understand, I think a lot of it comes from hearing what their parents say, so um - ja, like I said, for example, if a boy maybe has a bit of longer hair or like he's got a girlish name, then they say he's gay, or things like that, so they don't understand the term fully, or a hundred percent correct. I think they have a slight idea but they don't use it correctly (P2, I 325-330). Participant 1 agreed that she had not really experienced homophobic comments from the foundation phase children in her class: *I think my kids are a bit young, I don't think they have been exposed to those words yet (P1, I 216-217). Participant 3 concurred: *They've certainly never used the term "gay" type of thing... luckily mine should be young enough not to know any of those terms...I've had something about... don't, that's what boys do - and I said well, who says a boy only does that, why can't a girl do it - I***

can't remember what it was. And I know there have been times when - boys don't do ballet, and I said, yes they do, some boys do ballet, and they make beautiful ballet dancers, and they dance so well - but I always try and show the other side, that it's okay...(P3, I 162-173).

Brown (2012) explains that anti-bias education, which explicitly teaches children about the negative effects of discrimination, stereotypes, and exclusion, is the most effective way to reduce bias and prejudice in the preschool years, but is least effective in adolescence. So while foundation phase children do not appear to be homophobic, in order to prevent homophobic discrimination in later years, it would be beneficial to teach children about the negative effects of discrimination, and to be tolerant and accepting of all forms of diversity, in the foundation phase.

According to Bishop and Atlas (2015), schools with non-discrimination policies focusing on and addressing sexual orientation diversity are associated with a more positive school environment for LGBTQ children and families. Participant 4 explained that at their school, the teachers organise anti-discrimination talks and activities annually to inform their foundation phase learners about the negative effects of bullying: *Every year we have a bullying talk around bullying day and there are always activities and posters, and we stick them around (P4, I 322-324).* Participant 2 and 3 both said that their school had general policies against discrimination, and that all issues regarding discrimination or bullying would be handled appropriately. Participant 2 said: *There are policies for anti-bullying and things like that, but not gender specific or not specific to anything, just a general policy (P2, I 357-358).* Participant 3 agreed: *There's a bully policy in place, I wouldn't have said it was anything to do with whether they are gay or not, I don't think we have ever had that scenario, um, and I think that in general discussions, when things are spoken about, the teachers are generally very open, and if it came up in a discussion - I suppose just as easily as divorce might come up in a discussion - that it would be handled as appropriately as possible (P3, I 186-192).* Participant 1 explained why there are no anti-bullying policies in place at her school: *There haven't been any incidents, because we're really small, only 300 students... there hasn't been anything that needed to be addressed. I know that someone came from Johannesburg to talk*

about your rights, your rights as a child and what rights you have, and I think they have that talk every year (P1, I 259-263).

4.4.2 Sub-theme 2.2: Accommodating the same-sex parented family in the school

Accommodating the same-sex parented family involves creating a welcoming school climate, through the use of supportive, inclusive and representative administration, organisation, policies and values within the school system. Lubbe (2007b) proposes that cognisance should be taken of changing family structures in an attempt to create a welcoming environment, where diversity can be embraced. In order for same-sex parented families to feel included and accommodated, it would be beneficial for the child's teacher to create a partnership with the parents, to decide on how questions from other parents and children will be answered, and enquire how the parents would like staff to address them (Jeltova & Fish, 2005). Children thrive when there are open channels of communication between their parents and teachers, so teachers need to form partnerships with parents (Beren, 2013).

When asked how she would create a supportive school environment for same-sex parented families, participant 3 said: *Accommodating others, and therefore, yes, finding out how they feel about things, and what they would be expecting, which I'm sure would be pretty much a normal existence for their child, as much as, um...ja, for me it's a case of - I don't imagine, say two gay people having a child if they're way out and they want to shock you - I don't think they would do that. I think they would be two caring people who just want to have a child and have that experience as much as any other parenting couple. Um, so I don't, ja, I would just try, I suppose to accommodate in the best way possible (P3, I 397-405).*

In their study on LGBTQ parents' experience in schools, Kosciw and Diaz (2008) found that the majority of parents explained that they felt excluded, ignored and invisible in their schools in regards to being included in both school activities and policies. Fox (2008) agrees that heteronormativity in schools may prevent LGBTQ parented families from being involved or participating. Lindsay et al. (2006) and Fox (2007) both explain that exclusion at an administrative level is evident in the language used on enrolment or intake forms, as it is often assumed by the school

that all parents are heterosexual.

These findings were confirmed by participant 2 who explained that the administrative forms at her school did not allow space for the details of same-sex parents, so lesbian parents were not able to include both mothers names on the forms: *So usually at a school they have details of mother and father, and there was no details of father, only of mother, and there was only, obviously for good reason, there was no detail of the other mother, because they felt they weren't a father so they couldn't add the details on to the side, so only on the day when the parents came in did they say...(P2, I 262-267).*

In a later discussion when participant 2 was asked if anything was done at any of the schools that she had taught at to accommodate children with same-sex parented families during gender specific family days, like mothers day and fathers day, or any specific family events, she replied: *No, not at all (P2, I 294-306).* When asked how the school that she is at would accommodate same-sex parented families at gender-specific school events, participant 3 answered: *I think they would encourage it to be a grandfather or uncle to come in, say if it's a lesbian couple, rather than having the "dad" of the family coming in because that could be awkward for others...(P3, I 110-113).* While some same-sex parented families may want to disclose their family identity and adopt an open and proud strategy, many schools are unwilling to acknowledge their family identities (Lindsay et al., 2006).

Participant 1 explained that extended and kinship care family structures are in the majority at the school she teaches at. She said that this allows same-sex parented families to blend in unnoticed with these diverse family structures, so they do not really need any special accommodation: *I think, being of the culture where their grannies and moms - there are often two parents that come in - so I don't think anyone would be the wiser, like what's happening there, whys there two. And a lot of the times, the mothers working and there's an aunty, who is normally just the nanny, and they also come along. So I don't think that would be, I don't think the school would say anything like, why are their two mother roles at mothers day? I don't think it would actually be...(P1, I 186-193).* She further explained that in the school she is at, making special accommodations for children from same-sex parented families

may result in them feeling singled out: *We don't have to give them support, like unless it is needed, unless they have been bullied or they have been targeted. Otherwise I would keep an eye on them and I would definitely have, I feel every child needs a profile that needs to go to the next teacher, just so that you know about it, having a mom only, having a dad only, and then obviously, stating that they have same-sex parents, and then you're keeping an eye on that, and you're keeping an ear out to hear what has been said...or if there has been bullying, but other than that I wouldn't single them out, or it's something that I feel is - it's not the kid - It's not the kids' choice, so they are just like a normal child (P1, I 475-487).*

4.4.3 Sub-theme 2.3: Normalising the same-sex parented family in the foundation phase classroom

Normalising involves recognising the same-sex parented family as normal and natural. Beren (2013) states that family, as an important theme in early childhood education, determines how children understand their world and of their identity. When children from same-sex parented families enter school for the first time, they become aware that their family is different from other children's families. During these early years at school, the foundation phase teacher communicates important message about valuing and respecting differences. Ray and Gregory (2001) explain that feeling isolated or different was the biggest issue for children from same-sex parented families. It is therefore vitally important for teachers to normalise the child's same-sex parent family in the foundation phase classroom in order to validate the child's family identity.

According to Butler et al. (2003), progress has been made by South African educators towards ensuring that all cultures are included and represented in the curriculum, but the focus has been predominantly on removing racism and sexism in their classrooms. They argue that to create fully inclusive and safe schools, gay and lesbian issues must also be normalised within the classroom. Teachers do not have to believe that homosexuality is right, but they do need to acknowledge that LGBTQ people exist, and teach their learners to accept, if not celebrate, all differences.

Participant 1 agreed that the foundation phase teacher should try to normalise any form of family diversity in the classroom: *I feel you shouldn't make a big deal about it,*

because it's like, whatever, it's just who you are, it's however that family is, it's got nothing to do with you. If that's how they want to live, and then if that's brought up, it's a reality, it's not something you are teaching the children so that they can go and do - it's not like you're telling them, it's right or telling them it's wrong, you're just telling about it (P1, I 296-302). She continued: *I wouldn't necessarily bring it up, I would maybe wait and see if someone does bring it up, but maybe what I would do if someone comes up and says, well I only have a mom, then I'll see how the reaction is in the class and say, that's fine some people have two mommies, some people have two daddies, maybe just go with the flow in the lesson, but not necessarily bring it up or teach it to them (P1, I 322-328).* She felt that in order to normalise this family form, it should be discussed openly with the children, but not made in to a focus of the lesson: *So if you're are talking about it and it comes up, it shouldn't be, ok, no we don't talk about that here - I don't think you should do that, but don't make it a focus, it's just family, that's how it is, mom and mom or dad and dad, sometimes it happens like that (P1, I 313-317).* Participant 1 explained that she would simplify the explanation to make it age appropriate for foundation phase children: *You wouldn't explain to a grade 1 how a baby is made. So in the same way if there are two moms you would just say that two moms love each other and they have a baby - done. Ja, I wouldn't go into a lot of detail...(P1, I 344-347).*

Participant 3 agreed that the same-sex parented family should be normalised in the classroom: *I think you would have to just say that it is there and not hide it in any way, possibly not make a huge thing about it, that they are different, but if somebody said something, you explain that it's still somebody who loves them (P3, I 200-204).* She continued: *I think if you make it as normal as possible, as soon as possible, yes you would discuss it just the same way as if granny and grandpa are looking after a little one (P3, I 208-210).* Participant 1 argued that all types of family diversity need to be normalised, because a lot of the children in her class are no longer part of a traditional nuclear family: *If all my kids had moms and dads, then that's what I would talk about, but they don't. Some of them don't have moms or dads, and we have to discuss it. So I feel if you do have children that have same-sex parents, they also want to talk about their family, why can't they talk about their family, just because they're different, and then we will talk about their families, as well (P1, I 328-334).*

Lindsay et al. (2006) found that many teachers felt unequipped to deal with sexual diversity in their classrooms, and did not want to accept the responsibility of dealing with the topic if it was raised. In accordance with this, participant 2 seemed rather uncertain when asked to consider how she would normalise the classroom experience of a child from a same-sex parented family: *I think on the personal request of the parents, if that's what they request, then there could be some type of an arrangement that could be made, but mmm...shew, that is a bit of a tricky one, I honestly, I don't see how I would like, if I would have a child in my class with parents from same-sex marriage, how I would be able to accommodate or to incorporate that child's family setting in my classroom. I'm not gonna lie, it is going to be really, really tough, its going to be a challenge. Every little thing that you do, you're going to have to think about how that child perceives normal, and what we see as normal, and try not to exclude them or make them feel like an outcast. But to be honest it is going to be really tough, so I don't know...*(P2, I 486-497). Robinson (2005) explains that the normalisation of heterosexuality separates “us” from “them”. DePalma and Atkinson argue that “sexualities equality remains one area of inclusion still largely unaddressed in schools, often because of teachers own fears and concerns” (2006, p. 333) and that this silences the existence of the same-sex parented family in the school context.

4.4.4 Sub-theme 2.4: Representing the same-sex parented family in the foundation phase classroom

“We as teachers have a responsibility to bring the world our students will have to confront—are already confronting—into our classrooms. Anything less than that is professionally and morally irresponsible” (Hoffman, 1993, p. 55). Representing the same-sex parented family involves the use of inclusive teaching materials and practices, which are inclusive of the same-sex parented family, throughout the curriculum. The theme of family is important in the early childhood school curriculum because families are central to most children’s lives, and family features are used to organise society (Lindsay et al., 2006). However, because same-sex parented families lie outside heteronormative discourses, they are often excluded from classroom discussion. Kosciw and Diaz (2008) explain that many learners felt excluded in their classrooms because there were no representations of LGBTQ families, or because it was just assumed that all learners came from heterosexual

parented families.

Bishop and Atlas (2015) argue that children can be prepared to live in a multicultural society, by teaching them about all types of diversity. However, even though many schools include issues of race, culture, and experiences of poverty, in their curriculum, very few have included LGBTQ issues. Francis and Msibi (2011) found that, in South African schools, the teaching of issues related to homosexuality is marginalised, and heteronormativity is pervasive and made compulsory.

In contrast to these findings, participant 1 said that she has sometimes briefly included the same-sex parented family when discussing different types of families with her learners: *We've sometimes just gone over it, not made a big deal about it, not made it the focus of the lesson, but sometimes we do say, some have two mommies, and you do find a lot of the children might actually tell you when you're talking about it, but you might not bring it up (P1, I 270-274).*

On the other hand, participant 2 explained that she would only include the same-sex parented family in her lessons if she received permission from the majority of parents in her class: *I would probably email all the parents, um, to ask them their permission, I would say we are doing families and then, the life skills theme, and I would like to differentiate amongst all the different types of families that you can get ... what is their take on it, number one, and number two, would they be comfortable with me discussing the different types of families... and if the majority give me the go ahead then I would do that (P2, I 397-404).* She did, however, express a concern that by not representing same-sex parented families in her classroom, that she would be excluding the child from this type of family, but argued that perhaps she could reassure her individually that her family was “normal”: *But then again by not doing it you're also, kind of, excluding that child, um, so I don't know if maybe we could do a one on one with that specific child so they don't feel left out. Just to normalise the situation, say I do know what you have two mommies that's fine, so you can draw your two mommies or two daddies, or whatever the case is (P2, I 407-409).*

Participant 3 stated that she had never included same-sex parented families in her classroom discussions on families: *What I often say is that maybe mommy and*

daddy don't live in the same house together any more, maybe on the divorce or single parent side of things, or that because mommy works long, granny lives with them, and they have somebody like that, but I have never yet brought in same-sex parents...I wouldn't say it's necessary at this stage, I think it would need to come from the children that they have discovered it and approach it from there (P3, I 230-240).

Janmohamed (2005) argues that we do not limit ourselves to teaching children to be conscious of racial discrimination, only if everyone is of the same race, or to discussing poverty only with children who live in apparent poverty. So in the same way we should not limit ourselves to representing queer families in the school policies and curriculum, only if we are aware of the existence of these families in the school. An inclusive approach should be provided for all. Lubbe (2007b) speculates that because same-sex parented families are not included in the school curriculum; the biased assumption that all parental couples are heterosexual is perpetuated. As a result of this, many same-sex parented families remain closeted and silenced. According to Lamme and Lamme (2003), an inclusive curriculum improves the school experiences of children from same-sex parented families, because when these children see LGBTQ people or LGBTQ families portrayed in books, it normalises and validates their family identity (cited in Bishop and Atlas, 2015).

Participant 2 and participant 3 were not willing to use teaching material, such as children's books that represented same-sex parented families, in their foundational phase classroom. Participant 2 explained that she does not think that it is necessary to represent this type of family, as they are a minority family: *I can tell you now from personal experience I am going to have a whole lot of unhappy parents. The thing is you're accommodating one or two children in the class, because the ratio of having same-sex marriage is like one to... I can't even tell you, so like a lot of parents might actually be upset with that because they say you are introducing these things to our children, just to accommodate one or, I doubt even two, but let's just say one to make an exception, and I think a lot of parents would actually be offended. So I don't know, that would, I would think very hard about that one (P2, I 434-443).* Participant 3 agreed that she does not see the representation of the same-sex parented family as a necessity in her classroom: *I don't think unless it was a necessity, I don't think I*

would put it out there, unless it was something that we had to deal with in that class (P3, I 250-158).

Participant 4 explained that she is not currently representing the same-sex parented family in her classroom, because she does not have children from this family structure in her class, and because she believes that her school and many of the teachers and parents would not be happy with her introducing this topic. She does, however, believe that this non-traditional family should be included in the theme of family diversity: *I think it would be beneficial to them, it's opening that whole...that everyone is different and you have to respect them, so maybe then when they actually approach a situation like that, then they would be able to deal with it a lot differently (P4, I 368-373)*. She continued to explain: *I think they are gonna come across it in their communities as well, I mean it's not only in the school environment, they are gonna come across it at some point in their lives, so at least then they've got the techniques to handle how they feel about it as well, and if they don't agree with it, they can at least do it in a bit of a humble way (P4, I 382-287)*.

Participant 4 believed that it would be beneficial to include the same-sex parented family in the teaching material used in the classroom, such as in the books that foundation phase children are given to read: *I think it would open a discussion from the children's side - you are not just bringing it up - you will have children come and ask why in this book are there two mommies or two daddies and it opens up that gap for that discussion (P4, I 444-451)*. Participant 1 agreed that teaching about same-sex parented families at foundation phase level will expose children to this type of diversity and may reduce heteronormative prejudice as the children grow up: *Maybe if it is there and you have told them about it, when it comes up at a later stage they can make a decision how they feel about it, when they're older, grade 4, grade 5, grade 6 and much older, they can decide...Ja, I have heard about it and it's whatever, no one ever made a big deal about it. But if it has been made a big deal then they want to know more, but if you make it that it's normal and fine then they will feel ok. And I also find that if it's something brought up often, even if subtle or superficial, then the kids are okay, we know about this, we've heard about this (P1, I 351-361)*.

When the participants were asked if they would consider a gay fathers request to hang a poster in their classroom representing the various types of diverse families, including the same-sex parented family, conflicted responses were given.

Participant 1 explained that she would only hang the poster if they were doing the theme of family diversity, in order to protect herself from parents complaints: *If we were doing families as a theme then I would... then I would put it on and I would explain to the kids that Peter has two dads and they made this poster at home to show us that they can have two dads in a family, a mom and a dad in a family, and a mom and a mom in a family. But I wouldn't put it up, just "sommer". I would do it because we are doing the theme, or just being, maybe also then protecting myself... um, like if parents come back and say why are you teaching my children that, then if it's in the theme, it's something that comes up, something that's normal (P1, I 448-457).*

Participant 4 said that she would hang the poster and would explain it to the children in her class on a foundational level: *I think I would, but I first would sit with my children and go through the poster, but obviously with your same-sex and maybe your inter-racial families I just would kind of do it on a foundational level and kind of not go too in-depth, because I think especially with them, once you go too far then you get other questions and before you know it you're way into the topic, so I think it would just be on a very solid level... this is how it is and carry on (P4, I 496-503).*

Participant 2 responded that she would only represent same-sex parented families if she received permission from the school and the parents in her class: *I would obviously first have to get permission from the school, because my opinion, if I am a supporter, it is very clear in certain school policies, where they state that your personal interests and personal, political or social, whatever, should not interfere with that of the school. So I would actually first have to ask the school's permission, depending on the school policies, and based on the school's decision, if they give me the go ahead, I would also then follow up with the parents, um, of the children in my class to make sure it's okay (P2, I 571-579).*

Participant 3 agreed that she would need the schools permission to put up the poster

and also that she would enlist the support of the school psychologist to discuss the topic: *Um, I think I would have to probably go check initially that the school is happy with that and take it from that point of view, um, speak to, I think maybe bring the school psychologist in on it, and ask her to come and help, um, and explain to the children that because that child's family is different to the one you know, to the others, this is what they want you to know, they are just showing (P3, I 356-362).* She argued, however, that she would defend her decision to represent same-sex parented families and would not give in to one parents objections: *I would say that you have to understand that there are different types of families out there, and we're all different, but we want to show that children can come from any kind of a home, as long as it's loving and caring, um, ja I wouldn't, because one parent objected, take it down, I don't think that would be fair...(P3, I 370-375).*

In summary, according to the findings from this data, it appears that while the teachers explained that they are tolerant of same-sex parented families, and that they are aware that they model tolerance and acceptance of differences in their classroom, only one teacher said that she had previously mentioned same-sex parented families when discussing families and family diversity with the children in her classroom. Two of the participants said that they believed it would be beneficial to include and represent same-sex parented families in their teaching material and discussions of family, although they had never yet done so. The other two participants had never included same-sex parented families in their lessons and discussions on families, and would not feel comfortable representing the same-sex parented family in their teaching material.

In the next theme, I discuss the reasons why foundation phase teachers are not interrupting heteronormativity in their classrooms, through an exploration of their concerns and beliefs in regards to creating supportive school environments for children from same-sex parented families.

4.5 THEME 3: BARRIERS TO INTERRUPTING HETERONORMATIVITY: FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS' CONCERNS, BELIEFS AND MISCONCEPTIONS

“Children best flourish in schools when they can see themselves, their lived experiences, and their families in the curriculum” (Petrovic, 2002, p. 150). Petrovic (2002) therefore argues that teachers should not express their negative positions against same-sex sexual orientation and should positively portray homosexual learners and their families in the curriculum.

While the teachers in this study said that they would not tolerate homophobia and would teach tolerance and acceptance of diversity, they did appear to experience a number of concerns and challenges with including and representing same-sex parented families in their classrooms. Bhana’s findings confirmed that South African teachers were willing to teach about tolerance, but not homosexuality (2012). Some of the teachers in Bhana’s study argued that sexual diversity was not included in the curriculum, while others explained that the Department of Education did not support them to teach about this. Hanlon (2009) also concluded through her studies, that teachers often avoid any topics involving sexual diversity in their classrooms for a number of reasons, including that it is an uncomfortable topic for themselves or their learners, they fear losing their job, they are concerned about parental opposition, and/or that their learners may perceive them negatively.

If teachers cannot or will not create a representative or inclusive classroom environment for same-sex parented families, then heteronormativity cannot be successfully interrupted in schools. In this section, I will discuss the challenges that teachers believed that they might experience in representing same-sex parented families in their classrooms. These barriers to interrupting heteronormativity in the classroom have been divided into the following sub-themes:

Sub-theme 3.1: The school environment:

Category 3.1.1: Concerns about the schools’ ethos and policies

Category 3.1.2: Concerns about opposition from school leaders and other

members of staff

Sub-theme 3.2: Concerns about opposition from parents

Sub-theme 3.3: Concerns that the topic is not included in the curriculum

Sub-theme 3.4: Teachers' beliefs and attitudes:

Category 3.4.1: Teachers' limited knowledge on the topic

Category 3.4.2: Teachers' beliefs that the topic is inappropriate for foundation phase children

4.5.1 Subtheme 3.1: The school environment

According to Collins (2006) and Ryan and Martins (2000), many schools may not provide an accepting and supportive environment due to homophobia within the school, and because many people feel uncomfortable discussing different sexual orientations (cited in Lubbe, 2007b). Epstein, O' Flynn, and Telford argue that "heterosexual behaviour and language are integrated and imposed to such a degree within the school culture that they have come to constitute a norm that reflects what is perceived as 'natural'" (2002, p. 272). During in-depth interviews with children from same-sex parented families, Lubbe (2007b) found that they judged their school environments as positive or negative based on how their schools accommodated their families. In my study, it appeared that foundation phase teachers did not perceive their school environment to be accommodating of same-sex parented families.

4.5.1.1 Category 3.1.1: Concerns about the schools' ethos and policies

According to Fedewa and Clarke (2009), schools are responsible for creating positive learning environments through inclusive curriculum, policies and practices that allow their learners to feel welcome, safe, and respected. Unfortunately the minority same-sex parented families often become invisible and disappear in a heteronormative school environment, and children from these families may keep the sexual orientation of their parents a secret for fear of being teased or bullied (Fedewa & Clarke, 2009).

Participant 2 did not believe that her school would accommodate same-sex parented families at gender specific family events: *I think the school goes with the majority, and what is socially accepted by society, so obviously they don't want to stir the pot*

or throw something into a ... You know, how can I say, because the school is very, um... it's like a very upper class kind of school, very socially acceptable, like that. So anything out of the norm I doubt they would (P2, I 309-318). When asked if she would hang a poster depicting family diversity, including same-sex parents, in her classroom, participant 2 said that she did not think that she would be supported in doing this by her school, and argued that most schools would be against supporting this minority family structure: I wouldn't put it up just like that, because like I said, with certain school policies you can actually get in to trouble for that, because you are advertising, or you are supporting, how do I actually say it now - you know in certain policies you are not supposed to be an advocate for any political or social things – like, I can't say that I am a gay and lesbian supporter or I can't say that I, um, support things like that - you are not allowed to do in certain schools. It depends on the schools policies, but like ninety percent of the time I can tell you that schools are against it and they will tell you to look up the schools policies and will be backed up by that. So it will be highly unlikely in the first place that you will get permission to put it up, but if you do, I would say you have to ask the parents' permission as well, because unfortunately majority rules (P2, I 597-609).

Participant 3 was also not certain that her school would allow her to represent same-sex parented families in her foundation phase classroom and reasoned that the same-sex family will hopefully be understanding of her school's position: *Um, I don't know, I really am not sure how it would come about, um, I would understand them wanting to do it, but it, but I think say - for our school - they would be hopefully understanding of the schools side of things, um...(P3, I 362-365). Participant 4 did not believe that her school would be open to including or accommodating the same-sex parented family: *Just from the values and ethos that we work from, I don't know if they would want to include that and kind of open that door...(P4, I 363-365).**

Participant 2 explained that, at the previous school that she worked at, a youth who identified as gay attempted to take his own life, but that the school found it to be a once off incident and not significant enough to deserve the consideration of an anti-bias policy for homosexuality. Participant 2 explained: *At my previous school there was actually an attempted suicide at the college section...um, when one of the boys admitted he was gay, um - but it was not, he did not try to kill himself because of*

anything that happened at school or anything like that - I think it was more of a family thing, where he found that he may not be accepted at home. But I think from the school side they found that it was, you know, I wouldn't say insignificant, but it wasn't a big enough thing for them actually to put a policy in place, because they thought it was just a once off thing (P2, I 348-357). It appears from these teachers' arguments, that they perceive their schools as a place where sexual orientation diversity is silenced and not accommodated, and so they believe that they would not be supported by their schools in creating safe, positive and counter-heteronormative school environments for children from same-sex parented families.

4.5.1.2 Category 3.1.2: Concerns about opposition from school leaders and other members of staff

According to Bhana (2014), South African school managers (which include the school principal and heads of department) are important allies in social transformation. In order to create equality based on sexual orientation, school managers can and should demonstrate the potential for transformation, and disrupt meanings that create and foster inequalities (Bhana, 2014). In order for teachers to create a safe, positive, counter-heteronormative classroom environment for children from same-sex parented families, they need to feel that have their school leaders' support in doing so. Beren (2013) found that teachers wanted guidelines from the school leaders on whether to directly discuss the same-sex parented family and to use books representing this family form in the classroom. Francis and Msibi (2011) found that in some instances, South African teachers' were concerned about raising topics such as homosexuality and bisexuality in their classrooms for fear of losing their jobs. In his study on South African teachers, Francis (2012) agreed that they did not teach about sexual diversity, because they were concerned that if parents objected, then the school management would not support them.

In this study, one of the participants felt that her previous principal was sexist and conservative in his beliefs, and as a result she would not have felt supported by him in representing same-sex parented families in her classroom. She explained that her previous principal *got along with the men very well, and with the women - was kind of like - we felt it! (P1, I 239-241)*. She continued: *Even though there is no religion or whatever, the old principal was very strict, we weren't even allowed to do Valentines*

Day, because it was like - love, why do you want to love - like, you can just say I love my parents. And in that way I think no one would even dare to say now that you could have two moms or two dads...(P1, I 278-283). Participant 2 believed that the more mature teachers in her previous school were more conservative and would not support her decision to represent same-sex parented families in the school: *In my previous school I think they would have, um, because most of the teachers in that school were way older than me, um, it was a very well established school, so there was a lot of elderly teachers, and they were extremely traditional, so I think they would have told me that it wouldn't have been acceptable (P2, I 417-422).* Participant 4 agreed that there would be objections to the inclusion of the same-sex parented family *from the very religious teachers in the school, especially our very catholic teachers (P4, I 466-467).*

It is very interesting that while our South African constitution stipulates that people should not be discriminated against based on sexual orientation, and our school policy explains the rights of all children to equal and inclusive education, the participants believed that their schools may not encourage the representation of same-sex parented families, and that some school leaders and teachers would not be supportive of teachers interrupting heteronormativity in their classrooms. It appears from the teachers' perspectives that although policies have been put in to place by our government and the department of education to prevent discrimination and marginalisation, and to create equality and inclusivity, heteronormative school environments still exist.

4.5.2 Sub-theme 3.2: Concerns about opposition from parents

In her study on challenging heteronormativity in the primary grades, Hernandez (2013) found that teachers reported parents to be the biggest challenge when addressing heteronormativity in the classroom. In their study examining what elementary schools in New York are doing to recognise LGBTQ families in terms of curriculum, policies, and practices, Bishop and Atlas (2015) listed objections from parents as one of the major barriers to inclusion of LGBTQ parented families in their curriculum. In accordance with this, DePalma and Atkinson (2010) found that teachers tended to assume that parents would object to the representation of same-sex parented families in picture books.

In accordance with these findings, one of the major themes that surfaced in my interviews with all the foundation phase teachers, was the teachers' perceptions that parents would be opposed to the representation of same-sex parented families in the classroom. Participant 1 explained that some parents may question why the teacher would teach their children about this type of family: *And you worry that what if it comes up and you talk about it, and that child goes home, and it happens to be that parent that will make a big thing about it... and then, because I do feel that some people - some parents - might be like, why are you teaching my child that. In the mean while it's something that they brought up, like it's not the focus - it's not, ok, today we're going to talk about same-sex parents, it's not something like that (P1, L 290-296)*. She continued with this argument later in the interview: *We may have just been talking about families, like we do it next term - I've been doing my planning for it - and it might just come up, and then they might mention it at home, and then the mom makes a big deal about it, taking it out of context, saying that that's what we're teaching them - and if they are homophobic or they don't like it or anything like that, they could make it very challenging (P1, l 411-417)*.

Participant 2 agreed that parents may complain about their children learning about this type of family diversity: *I don't think it would be the majority, but I do feel there will be some traditional families or parents that would not want their children to be exposed to such things and would be offended and would take it up (P2, 385-388)*. When asked how she would explain a child's question about the same-sex parented family, she said that some parents will feel that the teacher is inappropriately exposing their children to this topic: *When asked, you need to be able to defend and justify why you gave those answers, and was it necessary to do it in a class setting...and like I said, there will definitely be some parents who will not be very happy with you just going ahead and exposing their children to things that they maybe feel they are not ready for or don't necessarily want them to be exposed to (P2, l 515-520)*.

Participant 4 also believed that the parents in the school she is teaching at would be opposed to the same-sex parented family being represented or included in the classroom lessons on family diversity: *We have got some very outspoken parents and I think there would be parents who would be very unhappy about it (P4, l 415-*

417). Participant 4 explained that she would rather not include the same-sex parented family in her lessons to avoid unnecessary trouble from parents: *It would concern me, especially the reaction from the parents. I wouldn't want to cause an issue where there wasn't one, so if you're gonna have those parents who make a massive fuss, then I would rather just stay away from it completely (P4, I 603-606).*

Participant 2 argued that because the same-sex parented family is a minority family, and not perceived by society as the norm, she would also rather avoid representing this type of family in her classroom, in order to avoid offending the heterosexual parents, who are in the majority: *I'm going to go with the majority, because like I said, um, it's better to maybe just offend one parent - which most likely would be the ratio - compared to like thirty other parents. Because I think they would actually, you know, (laughs) having thirty parents against me is much worse than having one parent... especially seeing that the reason for the poster being up is not very traditional or not normally seen as acceptable in society, and the reasoning behind putting the poster up would be questionable (P2, I 581-589).* She argued that she believes that teachers can get themselves in to a lot of trouble if they try to represent the same-sex parented family in their classroom: *The thing is at the end of the day we all have our own opinions, but you need to very careful not to, um, rub your opinion on to... but also not to expose children indirectly to certain things, because you can actually end up getting into trouble for things like that, because parents might take it the wrong way or they might perceive, um, your - how can I say - your differentiation in the class, in order to accommodate everyone, very offensive. So um, you will get parents quoting things from the constitution, I tell, you, no joke. So you must just be very careful if you are going to go that route, but personally I don't think I would do that (P2, I 448-457).*

Participant 3 said she believes that while heterosexual parents may project an outward appearance of acceptance, they may be privately homophobic and may not encourage their children to socialise with a child from a same-sex parented family: *I think outwardly they would say no, but I wouldn't be so sure inwardly. I don't think they would stop their children being friends with somebody, but they might not allow them to go to their house too often and that type of thing (P3, I 294-297).* Participant 3 explained that the reason parents may have a problem with same-sex parented

families at the school is purely a lack of experience with this type of family: *I think the thing is they don't understand, they don't know what to expect, so they would need to know them themselves on a social level, before they would trust them, which I suppose goes towards other parents as well (P3, I 313-317)*. She followed through on this argument later in the interview when she explained that: *People are often scared of the difference that they don't understand. So you have got to make allowances for that as well (P3, I 461-463)*.

It is clear from these findings that teachers perceive opposition from parents to be a major barrier to their role in interrupting heteronormativity, and that they are very concerned that they may offend parents in their attempt to represent or include the same-sex parented family in their classroom. It appears that because the same-sex parented family is a minority family, their voices are silenced, while the voices of the heterosexual family, who form the majority, are heard.

4.5.3 Sub-theme 3.3: Concerns that the topic is not included in the curriculum

According to Donald, Lazarus, and Lolwana (2011), the South African Department of Education's policy on inclusive education (Department of Education, 2001) states that diversity must be accommodated, differences respected, discrimination eliminated, and a supportive teaching environment must be provided for all. The curriculum relates not only to the syllabus or to the content of what is being taught, but also to the aims and purpose of the entire schooling programme (Donald et al., 2011). *The South African Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)* for the Foundation phase (Department of Basic Education, 2011a), explains that the Life Skills curriculum has been organised according to topics which teachers are encouraged to adapt so that they are suitable for their school contexts. In Grade R and Grade 1, one of the CAPS themes is "My Family". When doing this topic, teachers are instructed to ensure inclusivity, as learners come from many different types of families (Department of Basic Education, 2011a). Francis (2012) argues, however, that both the Life Orientation Curriculum Statements and Learning Programme Guidelines developed by the Department of Education, remain silent about sexual diversity. As a result of this, teachers expressed the difficulty of integrating LGBTQ issues into the curriculum without any guidance.

Internationally, it is also argued that LGBTQ-parent families are absent in the curriculum, and this absence is neither noticed by the teacher nor commented on by students (Few-Demo, Humble, Curran, & Lloyd, 2016). Jeltova and Fish (2005) agree that most curricula do not include family diversity, and that heteronormativity is perpetuated. According to Jeltova and Fish (2005) many teachers are uncertain about how to include alternative families in their curriculums, so rather avoid the topic.

In accordance with the national and international findings, one of the teachers in this study, who has taught at both government and independent schools, expressed her concern that the topic of same-sex parenting has not been included or explained in the foundation phase curriculum. Participant 2 explained: *To be honest I've never actually included that in my curriculum... you know what, it's actually very tricky because you will get some parents who might be against that - because I remember - some parents, even when it comes to culture, you want to expose the children to different types of culture, for example Christianity, there's Judaism, Buddhism, you know, um, the Moslem culture, and I get some parents might be offended, who don't want their children to be exposed to certain things. The same goes with, how would I say - same-sex marriages - because they might feel like that they don't want their children to be exposed to that... so, um in terms of the curriculum, we will stick to what is the norm and usually the text books give examples of what you should use. Going above and beyond that, I think you are skating on thin ice because you will most likely, probably, be reported to your principal by one of the parents (P2, I 366-380).* It appears that participant 2 was very concerned that it would not be seen as acceptable for her to represent same-sex parented families in her classroom practice. Her concerns were confirmed later in the interview, when asked if she would display the family diversity poster representing all types of families, including the same-sex parented family. Participant 2 responded: *They may ask what has that got to do with the curriculum, what is the aim of you putting it up. There would be various questions that I would need to answer and if I didn't have answers for that then I would actually be liable for my decision to put it up (P2, I 589-595).* She later added: *It's also maybe not part of the curriculum and unfortunately I can't use the school as a platform to expose children to these things (P2, I 616-618).*

4.5.4 Sub-theme 3.4: Teachers' beliefs and attitudes

Foundation phase teachers communicate important messages about valuing and respecting individual, family and cultural differences. Beren (2013) argues that the decision to address the topic of the same-sex parented family with young children is controversial. Some teachers report that they would benefit from training on this topic, while others explain that it is not appropriate for young children, and should be left to the family to explain (Beren, 2013).

4.5.4.1 Category 3.4.1: Teachers' limited knowledge on the topic

Beren (2013) explains that homophobia and heteronormativity are not often included in teacher training programmes, professional development workshops, or the early childhood curriculum; and that this lack of training and guidelines are the main reasons that teachers indicate discomfort with the topic. Hanlon (2009) argues that teacher's silence in the classroom on the topic of same-sex parented families is often a result of a lack of teacher education programmes and professional development. Janmohamed (2010) agrees that early childhood training does not adequately prepare teachers to challenge heteronormativity in early learning environments. Robinson (2002) found that very few of the teachers in her study had received any formal training in anti-homophobia education or in the areas of gay and lesbian equity issues, which resulted in a lack of knowledge, and feelings of discomfort and inadequacy in including this topic in their classroom practice.

In accordance with this literature, participant 2 reasoned that it is better to not include the topic of the same-sex parented family, because it may raise questions from the children in the class, and the teacher would need to be very knowledgeable on the topic in order to deal with the questions effectively. She said: *I don't think it would be mature for a teacher to go in to a topic like that and they are unable to answer questions. If you're gonna open that door for those type of questions you must be able to answer them (P2, I 673-677).*

Only one of the participants in this study, who did special needs education, recalls ever completing any courses or modules on sexual diversity, homophobia or heteronormativity during their teacher training. None of the other participants received any in-service training or professional development courses on the topic.

Participant 4 recalled that there was a *topic on same-sex parents and how to handle a child in the classroom with that (P4, I 549-551)* in the post-graduate degree that she completed on special needs education. She vaguely recalls that it *covered the dynamics on how to handle a child that comes from a family like that, and more, just activities that you can do (P4, I 555-57)*. Interestingly, participant 4, who was the only participant who recalled receiving some pre-service training on the same-sex parented family, was the most open of all the participants to representing the same-sex parented family in the foundation phase classroom, in order to interrupt heteronormativity. Participant 1 explained that in her teacher training at a foundation phase level: *They really never thought towards the gay children side... I think we have done maybe a lesson or two on it - based on fantasy play and what the boys do and what the girls do - and say here's a doll, and give it to the girls, here's a car and give it to the boy. But other than that, nothing that I can remember - ok this is how I must deal with it, or anything like that (P1, I 497-501)*.

Hernandez (2013) argues that teachers do have resources available, but are selecting not to take advantage of them. She explains that teachers should take the initiative to seek information, attend workshops and explore resources. Robinson found that teachers had “a ‘hierarchy of differences’ concerned with areas of diversity, related to the degree of comfort or discomfort individuals felt about specific issues” (2002, p. 424). Because the topic of sexual diversity made teachers feel uncomfortable, this topic was usually located at the bottom of the hierarchy, and was perceived to be of least relevance and importance (Robinson, 2002).

In accordance with this, participant 2 was of the opinion that most teachers would not be interested in learning more on the topic of supporting same-sex parented families or interrupting heteronormativity, because they are a minority family. She explained, however, that if a teacher had a child from a same-sex parented family in her class, then it might be beneficial for her to attend a workshop to learn how to better accommodate the child and his/her family, as well as to protect themselves: *It's most likely that it's just maybe one child in the whole class, so if it's up to the teachers to go on a course like that they will hesitate quite a bit. But if it is a thing amongst the children in the school, I think it would definitely be a need or necessity from the teachers side because like I said, this is kind of a very - it's still an uncomfortable*

topic for lots of people. So you also want to know your rights as a teacher, what should you say, how should you incorporate it, what boundaries shouldn't you cross and things like that. So if its a general thing within a school, to say that in every grade there's at least two and three children who have same-sex parents, then I would actually say yes, there would definitely be a need. Mmmm, but otherwise if I was given that topic on a list of courses to go to, I don't think I would, it wouldn't be the number one choice (P2, I 533-547).

Similarly, participant 1 was of the opinion that it would only be necessary to receive training on how to accommodate same-sex parented families in the classroom if she taught in a place where there were more of this type of family, and then mainly to protect herself as a teacher: *I think, okay, this is also very stereotypical, but if you lived in Cape Town, and it was something that was very... everyone knows, then I think you would definitely have to - again, to protect yourself - to know what you can and can't say... even like when to not offend the same-sex parents. I think it's both ways, it's not just the other parents - it's also the same-sex parents. You've got to watch what you say, and I think being a teacher it's very difficult to...there's a very thin line, and you go from teaching them the right thing to the parents thinking you're trying to brain wash them. I think if it was something I had experienced, or like, there were a few in my class, then I would definitely say we need some sort of training (P1, I509-520).* In accordance with participant 1 and 2's statements, Robinson (2002) argues that for the majority of teachers, their perceived relevance on the topic is primarily based on their awareness of gay and lesbian families in their setting.

In regards to their training needs on the topic, Beren (2013) found that teachers mostly want tools and strategies for including and welcoming gay and lesbian families, and recommendations on how to answer direct questions from their learners on the topic. In agreement, participant 1 explained that she would benefit from: *A lot of scenarios and case studies - and how would you do it - and this is what's happening, what would you do from here (P1, I 524-525).* Participant 1 also believed that as a teacher it would be beneficial to have a counsellor or specialist to advise her on the topic, as this would allow her to feel protected and supported: *Being able to always have someone that you can ask, so say this is what's happened, how do I deal with it - like, just like you have your HOD that you can refer*

to - have someone, like a counsellor who knows all about that, and what would be the best approach from there. Who can have your back as well... Because sometimes I also feel that parents are very much like, but you're just a teacher, so how do you know that you're doing the right thing? How do you know? So you can always say, this is where I got my training from...also you feel more confident as well (P1, I 526-541). Participant 3 agreed that a hands on workshop would be beneficial to support her in accommodating a child from a same-sex parented family: *Like a workshop that says we're open to this and this is how we would deal... these are the scenarios that could come up and this is what you would look at, or how you would look at...(P3, I 406-409)*. She also added that if necessary she would: *Maybe bring the school psychologist in on it, and ask her to come and help* (P2, I 358-359).

Participant 4 explained that she had never heard of, or been offered, a workshop on the topic of children from the same-sex parented family. She expressed her opinion that foundation phase teachers would greatly benefit from a professional development workshop on the topic of accommodating and including children from the same-sex parented family in the classroom and school environments: *It would also open some of the teachers minds to it, and allow us to accommodate, if you do have that in your classroom, I definitely thinks so. If I had a child coming now to my classroom with same-sex parents then it would be difficult for me, I would basically handle it as it comes, because you wouldn't know what to expect* (P4, I 569-574).

Participant 4 further explained the tools and strategies that she would require from such a workshop: *How to approach it first of all, I mean, from, like a teacher towards the child, towards the parents, and then towards other parents in my class as well. I definitely would like to know where to start, because you wouldn't really, like I said to you, you just gauge and go with the flow and see, so it would be nice to have ideas on how you could approach it to not offend anyone, and then the steps that should be taken thereafter* (p4, I 616-623). Participant 4 also said that she would consult the educational psychologist, as well as the head of department and school principal, on how to handle the situation in her classroom: *I would definitely speak to her about it first and get a bit of advice, and gauge where to start and where to not go, because I think it's very easy to start and completely go off track... and when you look you*

again you have kind of dug yourself a hole... and I would also speak to my principal and head of department first before (P4, I 582- 587).

It appears from these findings, that most of the participants only believe that teachers would need to attend a workshop on supporting children from the same-sex parented family, if they had children from these families in their classrooms. They see the need to deal with this issue individually, as it arises, rather than to tackle the issue of heteronormativity in schools systematically. It is the general consensus amongst the teachers, that they feel very uncertain about their knowledge on this topic and would not attempt to deal with the same-sex parented family on their own. They seem to be concerned that they are ill equipped to deal with the same-sex parented family effectively, and feel apprehensive that they may get themselves in to trouble for saying the wrong thing or offending the parents in some way. They believe that it would be beneficial to have the assistance of an educational psychologist or expert on the topic to advise them on how to deal with the situation, as and if it arises.

4.5.4.2 Category 3.4.2: Teachers' beliefs that the topic is inappropriate for foundation phase children

There are societal beliefs that “sexuality is largely considered to be a private matter that should remain within the privacy of the family, or within adults’ private lives, and not the responsibility of early childhood educators” (Robinson, 2002, p.422). However, Jeltova and Fish argue that when representing same-sex parented families in the classroom, “the focus should be on discussing different types of family constellations rather than on sexual behaviours of family members” (2005, p. 22). According to Hernandez (2013), some teachers choose not to address LGBTQ content in their classroom from the belief that it is not ‘age-appropriate’. However, Finnessy (2002) argues that if students are presented with concrete or familiar materials, very abstract ideas can become accessible. Thus, because some children come from families of same-sex parents, or have friends or relatives who identify as LGBTQ, or they themselves are identifying as LGBTQ, these discussions are, in fact, age-appropriate (Finnessy, 2002).

Lindsay et al. (2006) argue that many teachers are uncomfortable with being open

about the sexual orientation of parents. They explained that some teachers might confuse sexual orientation with sexual behaviour, and consequently believe that it is inevitable that a discussion on family arrangements will result in a discussion on sexual behaviour. The same-sex parented family, like any other family, can be included as a type of family diversity in the foundation phase classroom without having to discuss sexual behaviour. Yet, some teachers express a concern that if the same-sex parented family is included in classroom discussions on family diversity, then foundation phase children will ask inappropriate and uncomfortable questions about sexual behaviour.

Participant 1 and 4 agreed that foundation phase children should learn about all types of family diversity, including same-sex parented families, in order to prepare them for the world in which they live, as well as to teach them tolerance and acceptance of differences. Participant 2 and 3, on the other hand, were both of the opinion that foundation phase children were too young to understand the same-sex parented family, and so they would not willingly represent or include this type of family in their curriculum or classroom practice.

Participant 2 speculated that talking about “mommies and daddies” and family constellations would lead to questions from the children about sexual behaviour: *Yes, I think so, that’s why I said you’re already treading on thin ice, because if you start something like that, if you include that a family can be mommy and daddy, but a family can also be two mommies or two daddies, you’re gonna have questions from children, “But how, how can that be. I have a mommy and a daddy, so how can they have two mommies or two daddies?” So you’re basically opening up the door for tons of questions.... and you’re gonna have to be liable for your answers...(P2, I 504-510).* Participant 3 agreed with this perspective: *If they knew about that, it might open up too much. I don’t think parents would appreciate it...(P3, I 276-277).*

Participant 2 argued that representing same-sex parented families in the foundation phase classroom is not only developmentally inappropriate and not part of the school curriculum or policies, but also that it would be very offensive to some parents and frowned upon by the more conservative teachers: *The little ones don’t understand, um, certain things, but when they get to an age where they really understand, I think*

that's where society actually influences their, um, you know their understanding and perception of gender...what is socially acceptable...? What is normal for them and what is seen as socially unacceptable? At a certain age I think that kicks in, but when they are four or five they have absolutely no clue (P2, I 334-341). She explained her view, that in the foundation phase, children's self concept is not yet well enough developed for them to be able to cope with other children being aware of their family identity, and that the same-sex parented family should not be introduced at this stage: *I actually honestly would not suggest that in foundation phase, maybe from intermediate phase and older, because children are still very sensitive in foundation phase, and again children are children, they are gonna tease and do all sorts of funny things... and that's a very delicate stage for a child's self concept... and if they already know at an early age that there is something wrong with their family, or if they're not normal then it's really going to affect them later on in life. So maybe if they're a little bit older and their self concept has, you know, developed a little more and matured a little bit, then they might be in a position to handle certain things, whereas if they were younger and teased from a very early age about certain things - I don't think foundation phase is a good phase to start them in, maybe intermediate phase or, I think high school would be a little bit too late, so I think intermediate phase would be best (P2, I 464-478).*

Participant 3, who teaches grade 0 children, also believed that foundation phase children will not understand the same-sex parented family structure of two mothers and two fathers: *At that age do they fully understand it? Older children you might be able to do that with, but I don't feel comfortable exposing it or saying that it's there (P3, I 243-245).* She explained her view that it would only perhaps become appropriate at a later stage: *From grade 3, you would probably have a grade 2 telling you about it, if it came up, but I don't think it's that necessary to, kind of, change...you don't want, I think it's more than they can handle (P3, I 259-273).*

4.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I firstly explored teachers' personal perceptions on families, sexual orientation diversity, and the same-sex parented family, as well as their awareness of the way in which they, as foundation phase teachers, influence the beliefs and

values of the children in their classrooms. I explored teachers' awareness of the school experiences of children from same sex-parented families and their perspectives on their role in interrupting heteronormativity in their classrooms, in order to create safe and supportive school environments for children from these families. Finally, I explored the challenges that these teachers may experience in their attempts to interrupt heteronormativity in their classrooms and schools.

I found that while the teachers described themselves as tolerant of same-sex relationships and same-sex parented families, and while they believed that it is their role to model tolerance and acceptance of diversity and prevent any forms of discrimination, they were divided on how they could normalise and represent the same-sex parented family in their classroom. Most teachers argued that they did not feel that they would be supported by the schools, and would experience opposition from other parents, if they tried to include this type of minority family in their classroom practice. Although the teachers felt that they should accommodate the same-sex parented family, they did not believe that their schools were currently doing anything to make this type of family feel welcome or included.

Teachers' reasons for not representing the same-sex parented family in their classrooms included an unsupportive school environment, parental objections from heterosexual parents who are in the majority, and the topic not being included in the curriculum. Teachers also shared that they have received no pre-service or in-service training on the topic, and were not aware of any professional development workshops on the topic. They expressed that they would only be interested in training on this topic if it became relevant to them as teachers. As a result, teachers have very little knowledge on the issues of homophobia and heteronormativity, and the benefits of including and representing the same-sex parented family across the curriculum. Some teachers argued that it is an inappropriate topic for foundation phase children, and that they would feel uncomfortable including the same-sex parented family when doing the theme of family and family diversity.

While teachers' efforts to model tolerance of diversity and an intolerance of discrimination is admirable, is it enough? If children are taught in the foundation phase to accept and celebrate all the different types of families, including the same-

sex parented, would this not normalise this minority family form, and be a starting point to prevent future marginalisation, discrimination and intolerance of LGBTQ people? “The report by the Human Rights Watch Report (2003) reminds us that despite the principles of equality and non-discrimination in our Constitution, lesbians, bisexuals, and gay men in South Africa continue to suffer isolation, verbal abuse, prejudice, depression, self-loathing, and violence” (Richardson, 2004, p.161). Richardson (2004) argues that if teachers are to help reduce systemic homophobia and heteronormativity, then the teacher training institutions must include courses addressing LGBTQ issues (Richardson, 2004). For the foundation phase teacher, training on overcoming the problem of homophobia and heteronormativity in schools needs to be done with a specific focus on age appropriate early childhood education (Beren, 2013).

Bishop and Atlas (2015) argue that the topic of family is mostly discussed in the elementary (or foundation phase) classroom, and that these discussions influence children’s social beliefs. Teachers therefore need to educate foundation phase children on all types of family diversity at this age. Beren (2013) agrees that teachers should discuss and introduce children to diversity, including family diversity, as early as possible, as one means of stemming prejudice. Janmohamed (2010) argues that early childhood educators must be aware how their silence on homophobia and heteronormativity is as unacceptable as their silence about racism or sexism.

According to Bhana (2012), while teachers cannot completely eliminate homophobia in society, they can interrupt heteronormativity by challenging homophobia and questioning the discourses through which heterosexuality becomes the norm in the school. However, teachers need the support of their schools. Schools need to create collaboration between parents and the community to address homophobic intolerance, and to challenge the conservative parental attitudes (Bhana, 2012). Bishop and Atlas agree that for “social change to occur in schools, their curricula, policies, and practices need to reflect society at large and fully include all types of people and families” (2015, p.780).

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, I discussed the results and findings of the study by explaining the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data in relation to the current literature. Within this chapter, I will answer the secondary research questions and primary research question, and then revisit the theoretical framework in relation to the findings. As the recommendations for practice stem from an adaptation of the theoretical framework in relation to this study, I will follow my discussion on the theoretical framework with recommendations for practice, training and further research. Thereafter, the potential contributions and limitations of the study will be discussed.

5.2 OVERVIEW OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS

The purpose of this study was to explore foundation phase teachers' perspectives on creating supportive classroom and school environments for children from same-sex parented families. The study aimed to provide insight into the roles that the foundation phase teachers believe that they should play in combating homophobia and interrupting heteronormativity, by modelling and teaching acceptance, and by accommodating, normalising and representing same-sex parented families in their classrooms and schools. It is intended that this study could contribute to creating an awareness of the way in which children from same-sex parented families are currently being supported in the foundation phase level, and how foundation phase teachers can be empowered – or empower themselves - to foster more accepting and representative environments for these families.

In Chapter 1, I introduced an overall view of the study, together with the rationale for undertaking the study. I presented the primary and secondary research questions, provided my assumptions and clarified the key concepts. I concluded with a briefly introduction of the research methodology that directed my study.

In chapter 2, I introduced the South African laws on equality, as well as the South African inclusive school policies, in relation to sexual orientation diversity and same-sex parenting. I explored the international and local literature on heteronormativity and homophobia in schools, together with the way in which children from same-sex parented families experience this. I then discussed the literature on the role of the teacher and schools in creating more supportive school environments for children from same-sex parented families. I structured the chapter by discussing existing international and national literature, and situated this study within the knowledge gaps. Finally, I presented the theoretical framework in relation to my review of the literature, in order to gain insight into the potentially supportive role that foundation phase teachers can play in interrupting heteronormativity and supporting children from same-sex parented families in their classrooms.

In chapter 3, I discussed the paradigmatic perspectives and research methodology that were used in this study. I outlined the research design and discussed the data collection, analysis and interpretation methods that were implemented, and explained how quality criteria and ethical considerations were established. Finally, I reflected on my role as the researcher.

In chapter 4, I discussed the results of my findings, which I categorised according to themes and sub-themes that were induced from the data. I included direct quotations from the participants to support the emergent themes, and discussed my findings in relation to existing relevant literature.

5.3 ADDRESSING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this section, I address the research questions that guided my study. In an attempt to understand and support the primary research question, the secondary research questions will be answered first.

5.3.1 Addressing the Secondary Research Questions

The purpose of this research study was to explore foundation phase teachers' perceptions of creating supportive school environments for children from same-sex

parented families. In Chapter 1, I posed research questions to guide this inquiry. In the following sections, I answer the secondary research questions.

5.3.1.1 Secondary Question 1: How do foundation phase teachers perceive same-sex parented families?

The participants in this study were mostly in agreement that effective family functioning is not determined by family structure but rather by the quality of the parent-child relationship, although one participant was of the opinion that both parents, irrespective of the sex of the parents, needed to be involved and committed for the healthy emotional functioning of the children. All participants agreed that in South Africa, family diversity is the norm, rather than the exception.

The participants described themselves as being tolerant of same-sex parenting, which when elaborated on, meant that they viewed this family type as acceptable, although not ideal. Negative attitudes towards same-sex parenting that were expressed by participants, were mainly due to a conservative cultural upbringing and social stereotyping, while the more accepting views were due to participants having been raised by more liberal and open-minded parents. Some of their conflicted views were due to religion, but all participants expressed their view that as Christian adults they had come to believe that it was not for them to judge others, and that they should be tolerant and accepting of all. While participants believed that the sex of a parent was not important, they all felt strongly, that if same-sex parents are raising children, then a role model of the opposite sex is necessary for the healthy development of these children.

Although participants' views can be described as tolerant, it appeared in the findings that they are influenced by their own personal values and beliefs as well as by societal misconceptions. Foundation phase teachers have the have the power to teach the children in their classrooms about beliefs that include, rather than exclude, people from diverse backgrounds. It would therefore be beneficial for all foundation phase teachers to continuously and critically reflect on and explore the way in which their personal beliefs influence the role that they are willing to play in their classrooms in modelling and teaching a celebration of all types of family diversity, including the same-sex parented family.

5.3.1.2 Secondary Question 2: How do foundation phase teachers understand the school experiences of children from same-sex parented families?

While the participants in this study all believed that family diversity is the norm, rather than the exception in society, they had differing beliefs in regards to the school experiences of children from same-sex parented families. While one participant believed that children from same-sex parented families would blend in with the other children who mostly came from diverse family structures, another participant felt that a child from this type of minority family would be teased and ostracised by peers, who would not understand their same-sex parents. This participant argued that perhaps, at a foundation phase level, children are too young to deal with their family identity being exposed or discussed in the classroom, as this could result in other children, who cannot yet fully comprehend this family structure, teasing and shaming them. While participants believed that foundational phase children were too young to be homophobic, some argued that if it were revealed to the children that a child's parents were of the same sex, they would tease or marginalise the child for being different. The participants all agreed that as teachers, they would not tolerate any form of homophobic comments or teasing from the children in their classrooms, and that if it did occur they would intervene and explain the negative effects of bullying.

The participants also believed that some heterosexual parents would not encourage friendships and play dates with children from same-sex parented families, due to these parents' misconceptions and lack of understanding about this type of family. All participants were in agreement, however, that if same-sex parents are open with their children about their family identity, and effectively prepare and equip them with the language and tools to cope with questions and misconceptions, then they should be less vulnerable to the negative attitudes of others.

Most participants believed that while their school climate was one of inclusivity and tolerance of all types of diversity, they all stated that nothing had been done in their schools to create a safe and accommodating environment for same-sex parented families, where they could openly embrace and share their family identity. They were all uncertain if their schools would make special accommodations to include same-sex parents at family events.

5.3.1.3 Secondary question 3: What obstacles may be preventing foundation phase teachers from creating safe and supportive school and classroom environments for children from same-sex parented families?

In order for the school environment to be safe and supportive for children from same-sex parented families, it is not just enough for teachers to prevent homophobia in the classrooms. The foundation phase teacher also needs to interrupt heteronormativity, by including and normalising the same-sex parented family, so that the children from these families can experience their family as being normal and accepted. The participants in this study are aware that they need to create a safe environment for children from same-sex parented families by preventing homophobic discrimination, and they expressed that they are able to do so with the children in their classrooms. However, they did not feel able to combat the homophobia that may come from parents. They are also not yet able to interrupt the heteronormativity that is being maintained through the perpetual normalisation of traditional heterosexual parented families, and the lack of representation and accommodation of the same-sex parented family.

The participants in this study listed parental opposition as the main obstacle preventing them from including and representing same-sex parented families in their classroom practice. Together with this, the participants believed that their schools did not have an accommodating environment for same-sex parented families, mainly due to the traditional values and administrative policies of the school. The participants expressed the concern that school leaders and staff might not support their decision to include and represent the same-sex parented family in their classroom practice, and that they would need to get the schools approval and permission to do so.

The majority of participants also explained that they had never received any teacher training in working with LGBTQ children or parents, as well as in preventing homophobia, challenging heteronormativity, or specifically supporting children from same-sex parented families in the foundation phase. None of them had attended any in-service or professional development courses on the topic. As a result, the participants explained that they had very little knowledge or experience on the school experience of children from same-sex parented families, as well as in interrupting

heteronormativity in their foundation phase classrooms.

The participants felt that the inclusion of the same-sex parented family was not stipulated or explained in the foundation phase curriculum. While they included the theme of family and family diversity in their lessons, the majority of participants expressed that they were uncertain of how to appropriately include the same-sex parented family as one type of family diversity, without it leading to awkward and uncomfortable questions from the children regarding sexuality. Some of the participants believed that including the same-sex parented family would be developmentally inappropriate for foundation phase learners. None of the teachers had ever used teaching material that represented the same-sex parented family. Teachers discomfort with the topic of same-sex parented families, and their belief that it would be inappropriate to represent and include the same-sex parented family in their classroom practice, is yet another obstacle that prevents the fostering of a supportive school environment for children from this non-traditional family form.

5.3.2 Addressing the Primary Research Question

5.3.2.1 Primary Research Question: How do foundation phase teachers perceive their role in creating supportive classroom environments for children from same-sex parented families?

I answer the primary research question by exploring and describing the ways in which foundation phase teachers perceive their role in creating supportive classroom environments for children from same-sex parented families. The findings indicate, that while the foundation phase teachers in this study perceive it as their role to teach about all types of diversity, including family diversity, the same-sex parented family is not currently being included or represented in their classroom practice.

Participants in this study were conflicted about their role in creating supportive school and classrooms environments for children from same-sex parented families. All the teachers believed that it was their role to model and teach tolerance and acceptance of diversity and prevent bullying, discrimination or homophobia. Half of the teachers believed that they should play a role in interrupting heteronormativity, by including and normalising the same-sex parented family in their classroom

practice, through classroom discussions and the use of teaching material, such as books and posters representing the same-sex parented family. These participants believed that if they had children from same-sex parented families in their classrooms, it would be particularly important to normalise this type of family, so that these children experience their family identity as being recognised and validated by their teachers. These participants also saw the value of representing this type of family in their classroom practice, even if they were not aware that they had children from the same-sex parented families in their classrooms, in order to interrupt heteronormative beliefs and teach children at a young age to be tolerant and accepting of LGBTQ people. They believed that by doing this, they would be preparing the young children in their classrooms to live and function in a diverse world. However, even though these teachers believed that they should be playing a role in interrupting heteronormativity in their classrooms, they were not actually acting on these beliefs. Due to the challenges previously discussed, these teachers were not including or representing the same-sex parented family in their classroom practice.

The other half of the participants believed that it was developmentally inappropriate to teach children about same-sex parented families, as they were concerned that this topic might lead to questions about sexuality that they would not feel comfortable answering with foundation phase children. These teachers believed that it would be challenging to include a child from this type of family in their classroom, and that the same-sex parented family would not easily fit in with the other families in the school. They did not see it as their role to interrupt heteronormativity in their classrooms, and believed that the school and some of the other parents may be opposed to this. They believed that it would be inappropriate to represent the same-sex parented family in their lessons on family and family diversity, and to use teaching material that represented the same-sex parented family in their classroom practice.

In my literature review (Chapter 2), I introduced and explained Goldstein, Russell and Daley's (2007) framework of safe, positive and queering moments that they used as a lens to explore anti-homophobia education. Safe moments strive to promote tolerance of diversity, while positive moments strive to promote equity, acceptance and affirmation of diversity, and queer moments strive to disrupt

heteronormativity in schools. In summary, I revisit this framework in answering my primary research question in regards to the way in which foundation phase teachers perceive their role in creating supportive classroom environments for children from same-sex parented families. According to my findings, it can be argued that the foundation phase teachers in this study are striving to create safe moments by preventing homophobia and promoting tolerance in their classrooms. They are creating positive moments in regards to accepting and affirming certain types of diversity, but not the same-sex parented family. They are not creating queer moments, in that the same-sex parented family, as one type of family diversity, is not being affirmed, recognised or represented in their classroom practice.

It appears from the participants' perceptions, that their schools are based on the safe model of schools, in which safe moments are created through educational policies that tolerate homosexuality; and marginalisation and discrimination is addressed through individual, rather than systemic, action. In this safe school model it is the role of the teacher to create a safe classroom environment, in which tolerance of diversity is taught and bias and discrimination are not allowed. For foundational phase teachers to create supportive school environments for children from same-sex parented families, they must continuously ensure safe, positive and queer moments, through accommodating, normalising and representing the same-sex parented family in their classrooms and schools. In order to support teachers in fostering these supportive environments, systemic changes need to be implemented in schools that address the curriculum, school policies, and school-community relationships.

The success of creating a supportive classroom environment for the child from the same-sex parented family is dependent on the teacher's ability and motivation to effectively integrate all children's family backgrounds into the curriculum. The findings from this research clearly suggest that this success will greatly depend on the teachers' perception that it is indeed their role to create safe, positive and counter-heteronormative moments in their classroom practice, and their willingness to follow through on it.

5.4. REVISITING THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In chapter 2, I presented and explained the theoretical framework that I used to conceptualise my study. The framework of culturally responsive pedagogy, as explained by Richards, Brown, and Forde (2007) and the Capacity Building Series (2013), was designed to create a deeper understanding of teaching practices that enable the support of learners from diverse backgrounds. In this chapter I will discuss my findings in relation to this framework. I will then use the framework to generate recommendations on how foundation phase teachers, as culturally responsive teachers, can potentially counteract homophobia and interrupt heteronormativity in their classroom practice, in order to create more supportive school environments for children from same-sex parented families. I locate my findings in relation to the three dimensions of the culturally responsive pedagogy framework, namely, the institutional, personal and instructional dimensions (Richards et al., 2007; Capacity Building Series, 2013).

5.4.1 The Institutional Dimension

The institutional dimension includes, firstly, the administration and organisation of the school, secondly, the school's policies and values, and thirdly, the community involvement of the school. The school climate created by the institutional dimensions, influences the way in which teachers view their role in creating a supportive environment for children from same-sex parented families.

I explored teachers' beliefs on the way in which their schools are creating a safe and supportive environment for same-sex parented families. Teachers believed that their school environments were not very welcoming, accommodating or inclusive of same-sex parented families. The teachers expressed their concern that if parents objected to them representing same-sex parented families in their classrooms, their schools may not support them in doing so. The teachers need the support of their schools, in order to take on and play a role in interrupting heteronormativity. The findings of this research clearly suggest that the institutional dimensions needs to become more culturally responsive in regards to supporting children from same-sex parented families. I will suggest recommendations for practice in the next section.

5.4.2 The Personal Dimension

The personal dimension refers to the emotional and intellectual processes that teachers must engage in, in order to become culturally responsive (Richards et al., 2007). Self-reflection and personal exploration is necessary for teachers to understand themselves, their personal histories and experiences, and their own value system, in order to become culturally responsive in supporting the same-sex parented family.

It appeared that the participants in this research project were able to talk openly about their values and beliefs and share their viewpoints and attitudes on families, family diversity, homosexuality and same-sex parenting. When asked to reflect on their value systems and the way in which it influences their view on homosexuality and same-sex parented families, participants acknowledged and described the way in which their background and upbringing, as well as their personal experiences, have influenced their personal views and attitudes. The foundation phase teachers also agreed that their own values and beliefs are reflected in their interaction with learners, and that they are responsible for modelling a climate of tolerance and acceptance in their classrooms. However, while most teachers described themselves as tolerant, and some even accepting, of same-sex parented families, they did not all perceive it as their role to represent or normalise this type of family and interrupt heteronormativity in their foundation phase classrooms.

5.4.3 The Instructional Dimension

The instructional dimension includes the classroom practices that lead to culturally responsive pedagogy and respect for the learners' personal, family and cultural identity. By positively acknowledging the existence of same-sex parented families, it sends the message to the children in the classroom that these types of families are normal (Hernandez, 2013).

Some of the foundation phase teachers interviewed for this study, said that they had not, and would not, include the same-sex parented family when doing the theme of family, and teaching about family diversity. All of the teachers said that they had not ever considered using teaching material, such as posters and books in their classrooms, which represents the same-sex parented family, although some said

that that they would consider doing so, if their schools supported them.

The teachers shared a number of reasons as to why they would not represent the same-sex parented family in their classroom practice. They were concerned that the topic was not included or explained in the foundation phase curriculum, that it may be developmentally inappropriate for foundational phase children, and that it may lead to questions about sexual behaviour, which they did not feel comfortable or equipped to address with the children in their classrooms. They also expressed the concern that parents may object to their children being exposed to or taught about the same-sex parented family. They believed that parents and other teachers might object to the inclusion and representation of the same-sex parented family, due to their cultural and religious beliefs and values. It is interesting that teachers express this apprehension, despite the fact that equality, and thus the right to not be unfairly discriminated against, is one of the central principles of the Bill of Rights in the South African constitution (Republic of South Africa, 1996), and human rights, inclusivity and social justice are central principles in the national curriculum policy (Department of Basic Education, 2011).

Some of the teachers in this study expressed their belief that it would not be necessary for them to represent and include the same-sex parented family in their curriculum, because this is a minority family, and they may not have any children from this family form in their classroom. The concern here is that a teacher may not be aware that a child in her classroom is from a same-sex parented family. Richards et al. (2007) explain that when the tools of instruction marginalise a learner's cultural or family experience, then the child is likely to feel disconnected with the school. I further argue, that even if the teacher is not aware of any children from same-sex parented families in the classroom, it is still valuable to include and represent this minority family, together with the other types of family diversity, in the curriculum. By doing this, young children can learn to understand, respect and value all types of family diversity, including the same-sex parented family. This can lay the foundation for fostering the acceptance of LGBTQ people and families, and prepare children to comfortably interact with all people, including LGBTQ people and families. In this way a more egalitarian society can be created, in which all people are treated equally, and individual, family and cultural diversity is celebrated.

It is agreed upon by most scholars that efforts to teach unbiased attitudes to children are most effective when children are in preschool and least effective when they become adolescents (Brown, 2012). Teachers in the foundational phase have daily contact with the children in their classrooms, and can use this time and power to make a positive difference. In order to become culturally responsive, teachers can therefore teach children in the foundation phase about the diversity of the world around them and provide them with learning opportunities that teaches them to question and challenge bias and stereotypes, to tolerate differences, and to appreciate diversity.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE, TRAINING AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Based on the findings of this study and the above discussion, I make specific recommendations for practice, training and future research in the field of education.

5.5.1 Recommendations For Practice

I locate my recommendations for practice in relation to the three dimensions of the culturally responsive pedagogy framework, namely, the institutional, personal and instructional dimensions (Richards et al., 2007; Capacity Building Series, 2013). I have adapted this framework to generate recommendations on how foundation phase teachers can potentially counteract homophobia and interrupt heteronormativity in their classrooms, in order to foster more supportive school environments for children from same-sex parented families.

5.5.1.1 Institutional Dimension

Findings from this research strongly confirm that teachers need to be supported by their schools in fostering safe, positive and counter-heteronormative school and classroom environments for children from same-sex parented families. Based on Jeltova and Fish's (2005) recommendations for specific intervention strategies, I recommend the following changes in the institutional dimension of schools to create more supportive school climates for children from same-sex parented families:

- (a) Schools can acknowledge same-sex parented families and create and model a welcoming atmosphere for them by:
- Accommodating these families at gender specific family events
 - Creating open channels of verbal and written communication, through the use of inclusive language in meetings, assemblies, school registration forms and letters to parents.
- (b) Schools can represent and include same-sex parented family issues in their foundational phase curriculum, by, for example, including books about gay and lesbian families at a developmentally appropriate level. In this way they can validate the reality of the child from the same-sex parented family, as well as provide all foundational phase children with accurate ways of expressing their thoughts and questions.
- (c) Schools can play a positive and active role in preventing homophobic discrimination against same-sex parented families, children from these families, or LGBTQ learners or staff members.
- (d) Schools can implement an anti-bias programme and form straight–gay family alliances within the school in establishing an open, supportive and welcoming school environment. Discussions and workshops can be held to educate teachers, parents and learners; and material on diversity, anti-bully policies, and LGBTQ resources can be displayed to create a school climate that is aware, open, proactive, and supportive.

5.5.1.2 Personal Dimension

The findings of this research suggest that teachers have a great influence over the children in their foundation phase classrooms. In order to foster a safe, positive and counter-heteronormative classroom environment, teachers must reflect on their own beliefs and values in regards to these issues. I have adapted Richards et al.'s (2007) description of how teachers can become more culturally responsive by reflecting on their personal views and beliefs, to make recommendations for teachers to become more supportive of children from same-sex parented families:

- (a) Teachers can engage in a consistent process of exploring and questioning their own personal values and biases. It would be beneficial for teachers to honestly reflect on their attitudes and beliefs about themselves and others, in order to

confront any negative views that they may have of homosexuality and same-sex parented families.

- (b) By exploring their own family history and background, as well as the family background of the children in their classrooms, teachers can gain knowledge on these issues, leading to a greater understanding and appreciation of diversity, and enabling them to better respond to the needs of the children in their classroom. The better they know themselves and accept others, the more they will be able to create a classroom atmosphere of trust and safety for all.
- (c) In order to create a welcoming environment for same-sex parented families, teachers can encourage parent involvement and welcome parents from different families, including same-sex parented families. By representing all types of families in their classrooms, teachers not only allow the children from these families to feel safe and included, but model an acceptance and celebration of diversity.
- (d) Even if teachers do not agree with certain beliefs, values or lifestyles, they need to acknowledge those of others. Specifically, they should make an effort to educate themselves on issues of homophobia, heteronormativity, gender stereotyping, sexual orientation diversity, and family diversity; which exist in the world that children live in. Teachers can do so by learning from other teachers who have experience on these issues, as well as by attending workshops that deal with these issues.
- (e) Finally, teachers can also become culturally responsive by questioning and reforming their institutional policies and practices, if they are not inclusive of the same-sex parented families. Teachers directly link schools and learners, so they are well positioned to facilitate positive change (Richards et al., 2007) and interrupt heteronormativity in their classrooms.

5.5.1.3 Instructional Dimension

Richards et al. (2007) list specific activities for culturally responsive instruction, which I have adapted to include counter-heteronormative instruction that foundational phase children can use to include the same-sex parented family in their classroom practice:

- (a) Foundation phase teachers should acknowledge and celebrate the differences

and commonalities of their learners' diverse types of families. They can recognise and validate their learners' family identities in their classroom practices, through the use of teaching material, such as books and posters, together with discussions, that represent and support all types of families. When school assigned books and instructional materials perpetuate stereotypes, and fail to recognise all types of family diversity, teachers can supplement this with resources that are rich in diversity and that portray all family structures.

- (b) If the school curriculum does not address the same-sex parented family, teachers can bridge the gap in the curriculum by using materials and examples, engaging in practices, and modelling values that include children from all types of diverse families and backgrounds, including the same-sex parented family. Importantly, the topic should be integrated throughout the curriculum.
- (c) Teachers can encourage critical thinking skills from a young age to allow children to view situations from multiple perspectives, to learn to think for themselves, and to take responsibility for their decisions. This will help foundation phase children to challenge stereotypes.
- (d) Teachers need to foster a strong home-school relationship. Children need to negotiate the, sometimes conflicting, school and home experiences. Teachers should therefore create open channels of communication between themselves and the parents, and be transparent about their classroom practices and their anti-bias policies. Teachers can provide parents with information and resources that explain why addressing heteronormativity is important and why it is necessary to represent all types of family diversity, including the same-sex parented family.
- (e) Teachers can promote and model equity and respect, by normalising differences and establishing and promoting standards of respectful treatment of all. They can teach their foundational phase children that marginalisation and discrimination is hurtful and harmful and can create feelings of unworthiness, frustration, anger and sadness in the children being targeted.
- (f) Teachers can teach foundational phase children to become aware of inequalities and discrimination in our society. Even from a young age, they can support children in becoming socially and politically conscious, by creating opportunities for them to participate meaningfully in society, so that they can begin to consider the role that they can play in making the world a better place for all.

5.5.2 Recommendations For Training

Early childhood education does not adequately prepare foundation phase teachers to interrupt heteronormativity in their classrooms. Teachers need to be trained to not just validate the dominant family structures, but also to also confirm and embrace non-traditional family structures. The findings in this study confirm that a lack of training and limited information on the topic of the same-sex parented family, was one of the reasons that foundation phase teachers felt uncomfortable with effectively including the same-sex parented family in to their classroom practice. In order to effectively prepare foundation phase teachers to create safe and supportive classroom and school environments for children from same-sex parented families, I list the following recommendations for training:

- (a) Modules need to be included in early childhood education and foundational phase teacher education coursework, at both an undergraduate and postgraduate level, which includes:
- The effects of homophobia and heteronormativity in the classrooms, as well as the ways in which foundational phase teachers can counteract it through applying the culturally responsive teaching practices.
 - Personal development programmes, in which teaching students can reflect on and explore their own values and beliefs on sexual orientation diversity in education.
 - Tools and strategies on welcoming and accommodating same-sex parented families.
 - Tools and strategies on positively including and representing the same-sex parented family as one type of family diversity into their curriculum, by using relevant teaching material positively portraying and normalising this type of family, creating teachable moments and opportunities for children to openly share their family identities, and responding in a developmentally appropriate manner to direct questions from foundational phase children.
- (b) Since most teachers did not receive any pre-service training, professional development courses and in-service training on these topics are also beneficial for foundation phase teachers who are currently teaching.
- (c) There is a gap in the South African context in educational policy addressing the integration of LGBTQ issues into the curriculum. A policy framework, and

directions on how teachers can include the issues of LGBTQ children and their families into their curriculum from Grade R to Grade 12, needs to be developed and implemented by educational policy-makers, in order to address heteronormative discourses in schools.

5.5.3 Recommendations For Future Research

Based on the findings of this research, I recommend the following:

- (a) The field of homophobia and heteronormativity in South African schools is under-researched. This small research project focused on the perceptions of foundation phase teachers in creating supportive school and classroom environments for children from same-sex parented families. Further in-depth research in various school settings, exploring the perspective of a larger sample of teachers, as well as the school experiences of same-sex parents and their children, would establish and broaden the current knowledge on their experiences of homophobia and heteronormativity in schools, and on how safe and inclusive school climates can be created for same-sex parented families in South Africa.
- (b) The lack of demographic diversity of the foundation phase teachers in this research project limited this study to the perceptions of middle class female teachers. Further research on the perceptions of teachers can include a broader, and more representative sample of participants within the larger South African culture, or can explore the influence of racial and cultural diversity, as well as gender, socio-economic status or sexual orientation differences, on the teachers' perspectives related to this issue.
- (c) Future researchers would also benefit from utilising a variety of assessment methods to provide more thorough resources, which can be implemented for the creation of safe school environments for children from same-sex parented families. For example:
 - It would be valuable to create a professional and personal development workshop for foundation phase teacher to equip them with skills and techniques to interrupt heteronormativity in their classrooms. Pre- and post- testing, exploring teachers' perspectives on their role in creating supportive school environments for children from same-sex parented families, can be administered to determine the efficacy of the workshop.

- It would be beneficial to conduct further research in South Africa, using participatory research methods with teachers who have successfully created counter-heteronormative supportive classroom environments for children from same-sex parented families, in order to involve the teachers in generating possible solutions and actions that they can take in interrupting homophobia and heteronormativity in schools. These teachers can become involved in the development and delivery of workshops in their schools.
- (d) Foundation phase teachers in this research project said that they would request the advice of their school's educational psychologist, head of department, or school head, to assist with issues regarding the inclusion of same-sex parented families in their classroom practice. They also felt that they needed more specific guidance from curriculum policy statements on including the topic of same-sex parenting into the life skills curriculum. The stakeholders involved in disrupting heteronormativity in the school system represent a wide range of roles, including teachers from all phases of education and school settings, parents, community members, school principals, heads of department, educational psychologists, policy makers in the department of education, and the children themselves. Including the perspectives and experiences of all these role players in future research would provide a wider breadth of perspective and resources.

5.6 POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

During my extensive literature review process, I found that limited research has been conducted on the experiences of heteronormativity in South African schools, particularly in primary schools. It became evident that there was a dearth of literature concerning the school experiences of children who have LGBTQ family members in South Africa, and there is a gap in the research on how to make schools and classrooms supportive of children from same-sex parented families in South African schools.

This study was an attempt to explore the way in which foundation phase teachers perceive the culture of homophobia and heteronormativity in their schools, as well as their role in interrupting heteronormativity and in creating safe environments for

children from same-sex parented families in their classrooms. The results of this study emphasise the fact that even teachers who describe themselves as tolerant and accepting of same-sex parented families do not feel comfortable, competent or supported in including and representing this family type in their foundation phase classrooms, and as a result heteronormativity persists in these classrooms. The findings also present the reasons why these teachers have not felt comfortable in interrupting heteronormativity in their classrooms, and leads to suggestions on the ways in which teachers can be more supported in becoming culturally responsive teachers who represent and celebrate all types of diversity in their classrooms, including the same-sex parented family.

The findings illustrate the need for teachers to be trained and supported by schools, universities and educational departments in creating supportive classrooms for children from same-sex parented families, to ensure that all learners and families feel accommodated and represented in their school environment. Based on the findings of this study and further research, workshops can be created to educate teachers on homophobia and heteronormativity in schools, and on fostering more supportive class and school environments for these children and their families.

The study highlights the need for more in-depth and broader studies to be conducted in South Africa on creating supportive school environments for children from LGBTQ families and LGBTQ children.

5.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Though the current study serves as a starting point to provide much needed research on creating supportive school environments for children from same-sex parented families, there are a number of limitations in this study:

- (a) Though it is not the goal of a qualitative study to produce findings that are generalisable to the larger population, this study was restricted to a small number of teachers, and would have benefited from a larger variety of participants in terms of demographics, such as culture and socio-economic status. As a white female I may have been unconsciously biased in my selection

of majority white and female participants, and this limits the scope of my research. Ideally, if greater time and resources allowed, I would expand the sample size to be more representative of the larger South African population. However, the findings have been able to satisfactorily answer my research questions.

- (b) I was limited in this study by the fact that my respondents self-selected, by volunteering to participate. I assume that participation in this study did not appeal to teachers who lack interest in the topic or are intolerant of homosexuality and same-sex parented families. Perhaps the perspectives of foundation phase teachers who did not feel comfortable participating may have resulted in different findings.
- (c) The study would have benefited from the utilisation of a variety of assessment methods to ensure the trustworthiness of the data. It relied primarily on individual interviews with foundation phase teachers to gather data, and was limited by the truth and subjective perspectives of the participants who volunteered to be a part of the study.
- (d) I may bring some bias into this study, as I am an advocate for the rights of all people to equal non-discriminatory treatment, and the rights of all children to an inclusive and anti-bias education. I believe that it is the role of the teacher to provide a culturally responsive education. I acknowledge that I have adopted a counter-heteronormative approach and have sought in this research project to explore how educational institutions can support teachers in creating supportive school environments for children from same-sex parented families. I acknowledge the bias, but defend it on the basis that I believe that it is my responsibility, as a future educational psychologist, to explore how the rights of children from same-sex parented families can be realised in the school system.

5.8 CONCLUSION

For the purpose of this study, I explored foundation phase teachers' perceptions of creating supportive classroom and school environments for children from same-sex parented families. What emerged from the findings is that the foundation phase teachers in this study describe themselves as tolerant of homosexuality and the same-sex parented family. They believe that it is their role to prevent homophobic

bias and discrimination in their classrooms and schools, as well as to teach their learners to accept all forms of diversity. However, they are not currently including or representing the same-sex parented family, as one type of family diversity, in their classroom practice. It was found that while some of the teachers in this study believe that it would be beneficial to include the same-sex parented family in their foundation phase curriculum, the others do not feel that it is necessary or appropriate to do so. They do not feel comfortable with representing the same-sex parented family in their foundation phase classrooms, and do not feel that their schools or other parents will support them in doing so. In addition, it appears from the findings that some of the foundation phase teachers in this study believe that a welcoming and accommodating school environment is not being created for same-sex parented families through the ethos, culture and policies in their schools. As a result, instead of the same-sex parented family being supported, this type of minority family is, perhaps inadvertently, silenced and marginalised by the discourse of heteronormativity in the school environment.

The findings further suggest that because the foundation phase teachers have received no training on sexual orientation diversity, on homophobia and heteronormativity in schools, and specifically on the representation and accommodation of the same sex-parented family; they do not feel equipped with the skills or knowledge needed to be able to effectively create a welcoming or inclusive classroom environment for the same-sex parented family. These findings therefore imply the need for foundation phase teachers to receive pre-service, in-service and/or professional development training, in order to adequately prepare them to critically challenge heteronormative discourses in the foundation phase classroom, and to feel competent in effectively creating supportive school environments for children from same-sex parented families.

Schools, higher institutions for teacher education, and the department of education, all play a critical role in supporting and preparing foundation phase teachers to effectively take on a vital role in creating counter-heteronormative classroom and school environments, where all learners' families are included and represented in their classrooms and schools, and where all children are taught from a young age to celebrate individual, family and cultural diversity.

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ADDENDA

Addendum A:

Recruitment script

Addendum B:

Informed consent

Addendum C:

Interview protocol

Addendum D:

Extract from reflective journal

Addendum E:

Extract from transcript interpretation

Addendum A: Recruitment script



Faculty of Education
Department of Educational Psychology

Seeking Teachers for a Study on Children from Same-sex Parents in South African Schools

Hello, my name is Vanessa Tosi and I am a Masters Educational Psychology student at the University of Pretoria, conducting research on the perceptions of teachers in regards to their role in supporting children of same-sex parents in the school context. I am looking for foundation phase teachers to participate in interviews about how you believe that this non-traditional family is or is not supported in schools.

If you would like to participate please email me to set up an interview. Further, if you know of other foundation phase teachers at your school that might be willing to participate in the discussion, please forward this call to them. Discussions will be audio recorded. All responses in the interview will be kept confidential and at no time will your identity be revealed in the analysis and or reporting of research results.

Participation in this study will require approximately 60 minutes of your time. Your participation is completely voluntary. At any time throughout the interview you may choose not to answer any question(s), and you are free to leave at any time that you do not feel comfortable.

If you are interested, please contact me at vtosi@vodamail.co.za

Thank you.
Vanessa Tosi

Postgraduate Student
Department of Educational Psychology
University of Pretoria
vtosi@vodamail.co.za
082 3347569 (mobile)

Addendum B: Informed Consent



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education
Department of Educational Psychology

Informed Consent: Teachers' perceptions of creating supportive school environments for children from same-sex parented families.

You are invited to participate in a research project aimed at exploring your role as a teacher in fostering a supportive school environment for children from same-sex parented families.

The following information is provided in order to help you make an informed decision about whether or not to participate.

If you agree to participate you will be asked to take part in an interview, which will take approximately 40 minutes.

Your participation in this research project is voluntary and confidential. The information obtained will be kept strictly confidential. Your responses will not be associated with you individually in any way, and your name will not be tied to any of your answers. The only place your name will appear is on this consent form, and all consent forms will be stored in a separate location from your responses. In order for the researcher to accurately retain all of the responses you provide, the interview will be audio recorded. However, your name and identity will not be linked in any way to any of the information you provide in the discussion.

You should also know that at any time throughout the interview you are free to take a break, ask to turn off the audio recorder, or refuse to answer any questions. You are also free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time. You may ask any questions about the research at any time, before, during, or after the discussion session. There are no direct benefits to you as a result of participating in this study.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign this letter as a declaration of your consent. Your signature certifies that you participate in this project willingly and that you understand that you may withdraw from the research project at any time.

Should you have any questions regarding your participation in this study, please feel free to contact me:

Vanessa Tosi
Phone: 082 3347569
Email: vtosi@vodamail.co.za

Yours Sincerely,
Vanessa Tosi
Med Educational Psychology Student
University of Pretoria
082 3347569

.....

Consent

I hereby consent to participate in the above research project. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may change my mind and refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without penalty. I may refuse to answer any questions or I may stop the interview. I understand that some of the things that I say may be directly quoted in the text of the final report, and subsequent publications, but my name will not be associated with that text.

Participant's signature: Date:

In addition, I understand and agree to be audiotaped throughout the interview. I know that I am free to ask the researcher to turn off the recorder at any time during the discussion. I understand that no personally identifying information or recording concerning me will be released in any form.

Participant's signature: Date:

Addendum C: Interview Protocol

- Name (pseudonym #1)
- Age
- Grades previously taught and currently teaching
- Years of experience teaching
- Ethos of current school (private/public, religion, co-educational/all boys/all girls, dominant culture, tolerance and inclusivity, bullying policies)
- How does the schools ethos reflect your values and beliefs?
- Describe yourself on a continuum in regards to your personal view on sexual orientation diversity and LGBT rights and briefly explain your view:
- Intolerant – ignorant – tolerant – accept – support - advocate for
- How does your culture, religion and upbringing influence your beliefs on sexual orientation diversity?
- To what extent do you think a teacher's beliefs and values impact the children that he/she teaches in the classroom, particularly in foundation phase?
- How do you view families?
- What is your view on same-sex parented families?
- What challenges do you think children from these families may face at schools because of their family identity?
- Have you taught children with same-sex parents or had children from these families at your school?
 - How did you learn of their family identity?
 - How open were these families about their identities?
 - How did the school, teachers and other parents support these children and families?
 - Are you aware of challenges experienced by these children at school because of their family identity?
- Describe your experiences (if any) of homophobia or gender stereotyping in your classroom/school by:
 - Children
 - Parents
 - Teachers
 - How did you deal with these challenges?

- What is your view on teaching foundation phase children about same-sex parent families?
- A child in your classroom has two loving and supportive gay dads. They bring you a poster representing different types of families, including a mom and dad, two dads and two moms and ask you to hang it in your classroom.
 - Would you hang the poster?
 - If yes, how would you introduce and discuss it with the children in your class?
 - How would you handle it if another family objected?
 - If no, how would you explain your decision to the family?
- Do you think it is necessary to teach about family diversity and include same-sex parent families regardless of whether you have children from these families in your class or not? Explain.
- When (if) you teach about family diversity how (if at all) do you represent same-sex families? Examples: inclusive terminology and age-appropriate discussions/books/posters/family trees representing gay and lesbian parents.
- What (if any) challenges have you experienced with this?
- How do you accommodate children with same-sex parents during gender-specific family days? Examples: Mother's/Father's Day
- What is done at your school to include same-sex parent families at gender-specific family events and on administrative forms? Examples: Through the use of inclusive terminology (mom/dad vs. parent, husband/wife vs. spouse), mom and daughters tea, dad and lad braai, etc.
- Describe any safe clubs, educational programmes and/or anti-bullying policies for same-sex (or LGBT) children or families at your school.
- What else could teachers and schools do to create a safe and supportive school environment for children from same-sex parent families?
- What specific training/resources/tools would benefit you and/or other teachers to be better able to create supportive school environments for children from same-sex parent families? Examples: training or resources on coping with homophobic language or gender stereotyping, discussing gay or lesbian families and effectively responding to children's questions, welcoming same-sex parent families, etc.

Addendum D: Extract from reflective journal

20 March 2016

“Diversity may be the hardest thing for a society to live with, and perhaps the most dangerous thing for a society to be without”.

William Sloane Coffin Jr.

At this point in my research process I find myself asking the following questions...

Why does the SSPF need to be included at foundation phase level?

Why is this research valuable?

This is how I rationalise my study...

Firstly, I argue that in order to change our homophobic and heteronormative society, we need to teach people to be tolerant and accepting of LGBTQ people. I believe that this tolerance needs to be taught as early as possible. At the foundation phase level children enter the school and are exposed to all types of diversity. The family and the school are the two most important influencing factors in a young child's life. Their time is split between home and school. At this stage they are too young to be taught about sexuality and sexual orientation diversity. But they are not too young to be taught about tolerance and acceptance of diversity, about having empathy for others, and about the damaging effects of discrimination.

Most schools are teaching children to celebrate diversity of race, culture, gender and ability. Family is an important theme in foundation phase. One of the ways that children can learn about diversity is by learning about family diversity. In order to lay the foundation for the acceptance of LGBTQ people, the same-sex parent family should be included and represented in the curriculum as one type of family diversity, so that young children can understand the SSPF structure and learn to accept this type of family diversity.

Secondly, in the foundation phase, it is vitally important that all children have their family identity validated by their teacher. If there are children with same-sex parent families in a class, and the teacher does not openly discuss it as an acceptable norm, then will these children not feel like their family identity is invisible, unrecognised or unaccepted? The teacher may or may not be aware of the family structures that the children in their class come from.

Sometimes the parents are open about their family identity, and they do explain and discuss their family identity with the school and teacher. In this case is it not the responsibility of the teacher to normalise this family structure, as one acceptable form of family diversity, through discussions, family trees, and using schoolbooks representing the same-sex parent family? If the teacher refrains from including and representing this family structure in her classroom practice, how will the child from the same-sex family ever feel that their family identity is validated

and accepted, when he/she is being silenced by their teacher on a daily basis? How will other children learn to accept this type of diversity? How will our society ever become tolerant and unbiased of LGBTQ people?

On the other hand, some same-sex parents may not want to come out to schools and teachers. This may be for a number of reasons. One of which may be that the school does not have an accommodating, open and accepting climate. The school may be reinforcing heteronormative discourses in the language that they use in administrative forms and in discussions with families, as well as in special family events held at the school, such as mothers day and fathers day celebrations. The parents may be concerned that the school may discriminate against their family or their child, and choose to keep their sexual orientation and family identity private. In this case, even if the foundation phase teacher is not aware of the child from the same-sex parent in her classroom, should she still not be representing and including the same-sex parent family across the curriculum? In this way, an open, accepting, and validating classroom environment can be created, in which children from these families can feel comfortable sharing their family identity. They can feel that their family structure is viewed as acceptable and recognised.



Addendum E: Extract from transcript interpretation

Interview 2: 17 March 2016

Participant 2: 29 years old; five years teaching experience

280 Researcher: So what challenges did this little boy experience?
 281 You say he didn't have a lot of friends because they didn't want to
 282 reveal it, was there any other things that happened at school - any
 283 incidence of homophobia or of other boys teasing him or other
 284 children teasing him, or anything like that, that he experienced?
 285 Participant 2: um, well I don't know the history from foundation,
 286 from like grade 1 up until grade 7, but um, based on what I picked
 287 up from him I think there was a bit of teasing that went on which is
 288 why he decided to withdraw and ja...so...
 289 Researcher: okay, so...
 290 Participant 2: I can't say to what extent, but I think it was more
 291 grade 3 grade 4 years, um, as he got older I think he already learnt
 292 how to hide it how to avoid certain functions and events and things
 293 like that for people finding out, but ja...
 294 Researcher: and was anything done at the school, or any of the
 295 schools that you taught at or worked at to accommodate children
 296 with same-sex parent families during gender specific family days,
 297 like mothers day and fathers day and things like that...
 298 Participant 2: no, I don't think so... Laughs
 299 Researcher: so none of the school have made an effort for that...
 300 And not with this particular child either...
 301 Participant 2: no
 302 Researcher: and um, what about including same-sex parent
 303 families at gender specific family events, like if they have um, like a
 304 dads and lads braai, or a um, you know that type of thing, was
 305 there anything done there where...?
 306 Participant 2: no not at all, I think they also didn't want to ... How do
 307 I say...?
 308 Researcher: really reveal their identities..?
 309 Participant 2: not just that, but I think with the other parents, I think
 310 the school goes with the majority, and what is socially accepted by

Sspf: same-sex parented family

1.4: teacher's awareness of the experiences of children from the sspf: child from the sspf teased at school by his peers

1.4: child avoided situations where family identity revealed

2.2: Accommodating the child from the sspf: nothing done at the schools to accommodate the sspf or make them feel included or welcomed

2.2: no accommodation of the sspf in the school

2.2: sspf silenced and marginalised

3.2: teacher's view of opposition from other parents

10



Interview 2: 17 March 2016

Participant 2: 29 years old; five years teaching experience

311 society, so obviously they didn't want to stir the pot or throw
312 something into a ... You know how can I say because the school is
313 very um

314 Researcher: this is now the previous school that you were at

315 Participant 2: yes, this is now the previous school, it's like a very
316 upper class kind of school, very socially acceptable like that. So
317 anything out of the norm I doubt they would do, so I don't think they
318 would do something like that no.

319 Researcher: okay, that's interesting. So did you have any
320 experiences as a teacher - did you ever experience any
321 homophobia or gender stereotyping in your classroom by the
322 foundation phase children or parents or teachers in the schools
323 that you've taught at?

324 Participant 2: um, not that I can think of no...I don't think they
325 understand, I think a lot of it comes from hearing what their parents
326 say, so um - ja, like I said, for example, if a boy maybe has a bit of
327 longer hair or like he's got a girlish name, then they say he's gay,
328 or things like that, so they don't understand the term full or hundred
329 percent correct. I think they have a slight idea but they don't use it
330 correctly.

331 Researcher: okay, so it's just like a boy might not be - might
332 according to them, have some girlish traits, like long hair, or its also
333 maybe the things they see in the media and that as well?

334 Participant 2: yes, I agree, that's why I say the little ones don't
335 understand, um, certain things - but when they get to an age where
336 they really understand, I think that's where society actually
337 influences their, um, you know their understanding and perception
338 of gender...what is socially acceptable...? What is normal for them
339 and what is seen as socially unacceptable? At a certain age I think
340 that kicks in, but when they are four or five they have absolutely no
341 clue.

3.1.1 teacher's concerns about the ethos of the school: not inclusive of the sspf

2.1: preventing homophobia in the classroom: teacher believes that foundation phase children say what they hear from their parents – they don't understand the meaning

3.4.2: teachers' belief that the topic is not age/developmentally appropriate – they don't understand the sspf



Interview 2: 17 March 2016

Participant 2: 29 years old; five years teaching experience

342 Researcher: at the school that you were at, were there any safe
343 clubs, or educational programs or anti-bullying policies set up,
344 particularly for children from same sex families or, um, gay or
345 lesbian, bisexual or transgender children?

346 Participant 2: funny enough not, but we do have bullying policies
347 and other policies in place, but it's a general policy, nothing
348 specific...um ja, I just, I recently heard at my previous school there
349 was actually an attempted suicide at the college section...um when
350 one of the boys admitted he was gay, um, but it was not, he did not
351 try to kill himself because of anything that happened at school or
352 anything like that, I think it was more of a family thing, where he
353 found that he may not be accepted at home. But I think from the
354 school side they found that it was you know, I wouldn't say
355 insignificant, but it wasn't a big enough thing for them actually to
356 put a policy in place, because they thought it was just a once off
357 thing. There are policies for anti-bullying and things like that but not
358 gender specific or not specific to anything, just a general policy.

359 Researcher: when teaching about family diversity, when you work
360 with foundation phase children, you do discuss, I think it's in the
361 curriculum to discuss families and things like that...

362 Participant 2: yes

363 Researcher: what is your view on actually teaching the children,
364 on actually teaching the children, on same-sex parent families as
365 one of the types of families that you have?

366 Participant 2: um, to be honest I've never actually included that in
367 my curriculum, you know what, it's actually very tricky because you
368 will get some parents who might be against that, because I
369 remember, some parents, even when it comes to culture, you want
370 to expose the children to different types of culture, for example
371 Christianity, there's Judaism, Buddhism, you know, um, the
372 Moslem culture, and I get some parents might be offended who

3.1.1: school does not have policies in place to protect children from homophobia or support lgbtq children or children from sspf's

2.1: anti-bully policies but no specific prevention of homophobia

3.2: concern about opposition from other parents



THEMES	SUB-THEMES
1. FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS' PERSONAL PERCEPTIONS OF CHILDREN FROM SAME-SEX PARENTED FAMILIES	1.1 Teachers' definitions of a functional family
	1.2 Teachers' views of the same-sex parented family
	1.3 Teachers' awareness of how foundation phase teachers influence the beliefs and values of children in their classrooms
	1.4 Teachers' views of the school experiences of children from the same-sex parented family
2. FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON THEIR ROLE IN INTERRUPTING HETERONORMATIVITY IN THEIR CLASSROOMS: CREATING SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS FOR CHILDREN FROM SAME-SEX PARENTED FAMILIES	2.1 Preventing homophobia: Teaching tolerance and acceptance of the same-sex parented family in the foundation phase classroom
	2.2 Accommodating the same-sex parented family in the school
	2.3 Normalising the same-sex parented family in the foundation phase classroom
	2.4 Representing the same-sex parented family in the foundation phase classroom
3. BARRIERS TO INTERRUPTING HETERONORMATIVITY: FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS' CONCERNS, BELIEFS AND MISCONCEPTIONS	3.1 The school environment 3.1.1 <i>Concerns about the schools' ethos and policies</i> 3.1.2 <i>Concerns about opposition from school leaders and other members of staff</i>
	3.2 Concerns about opposition from parents
	3.3 Concerns that the topic is not included in the curriculum
	3.4 Teachers' beliefs and attitudes
	3.4.1 <i>Teachers' limited knowledge on the topic</i>
	3.4.2 <i>Teachers' beliefs that the topic is inappropriate for foundation phase children</i>