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# LGBTQIA+ in ECEC: An Exploratory Study of Diversity in Australia, England, Mainland China and Hong Kong

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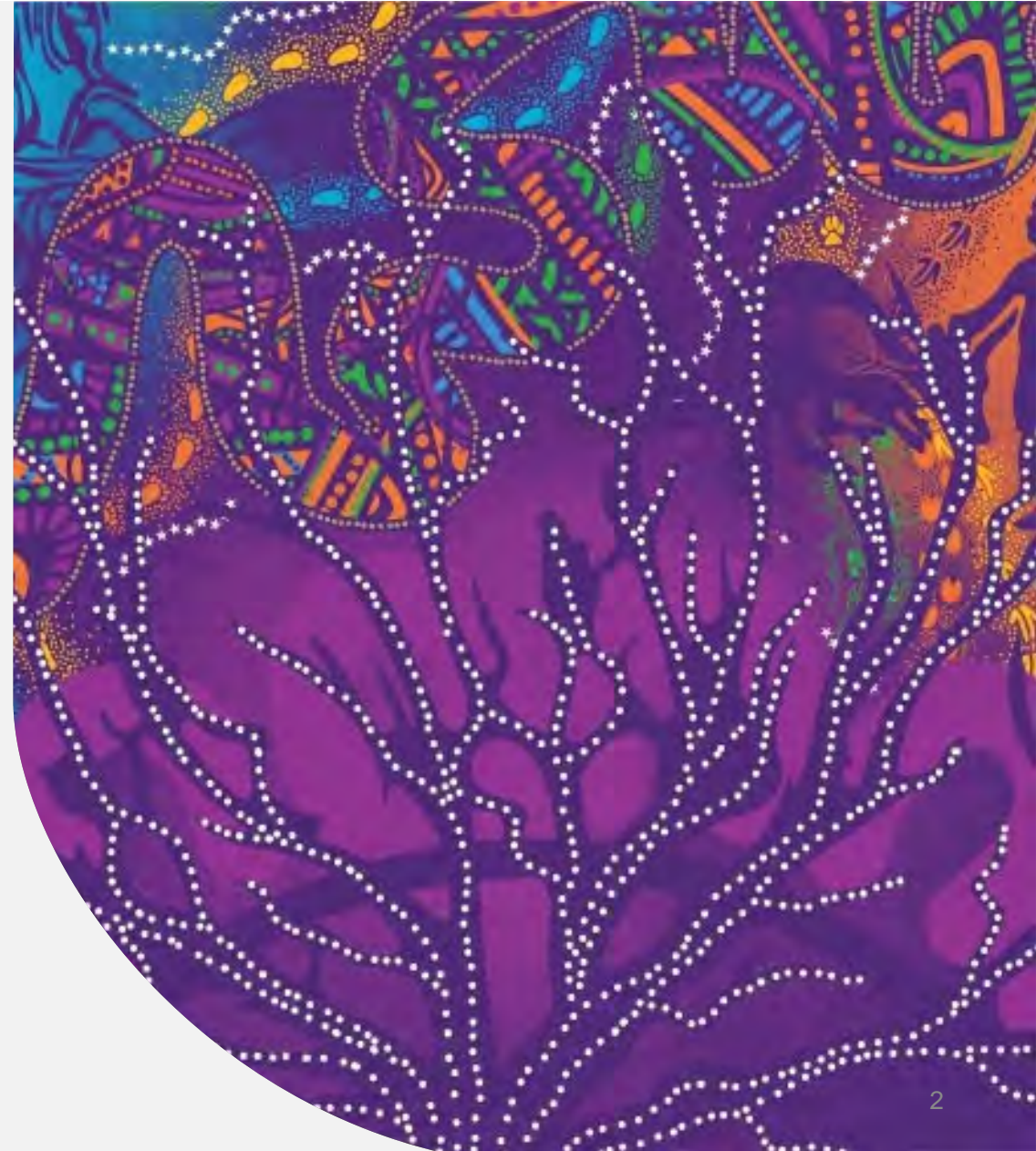
# Acknowledgment of Country

The University of Queensland (UQ) acknowledges the Traditional Owners and their custodianship of the lands on which we meet.

We pay our respects to their Ancestors and their descendants, who continue cultural and spiritual connections to Country.

This land has always been a space for teaching, learning, research and collaboration tens of thousands of years before it was established as a university campus, and continues today.

We recognise their valuable contributions to Australian and global society.





## Research gaps

- Research on LGBT teachers/educators is limited albeit growing, and predominantly has focused on how they experience workplace cultures and everyday lives in schools, as situated in wider social, political and cultural contexts (Neary, 2020).
- Few studies have been conducted in ECEC settings, particularly comparing between Western and Asian countries.
- Whilst the gender identities of LGBT educators are discussed in relation to student experiences (Ferfolja & Hopkins, 2019), few have explored how those educators perceive the influences on their practices.



# Research significance

- The significance of LGBT inclusion and challenging heteronormative practices in ECEC are increasingly recognized (Warin & Price, 2020)
- ECEC educators' gender-diverse subjectivities influence their gendered practices (Xu, 2020)





# Postcolonialist and Queer Theories (Belizario, 2016)

- ❑ Knowledge as produced from individuals' embodied experiences in their specific contexts;
- ❑ LGBT identities as multiple, fluid, situational, and intersectional.





# Contextualisation:

**Australia:** same-sex marriage legalized in 2017; multiculturalism; diversity in ECE curriculum

**England:** same-sex marriage legalized from 2014; Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

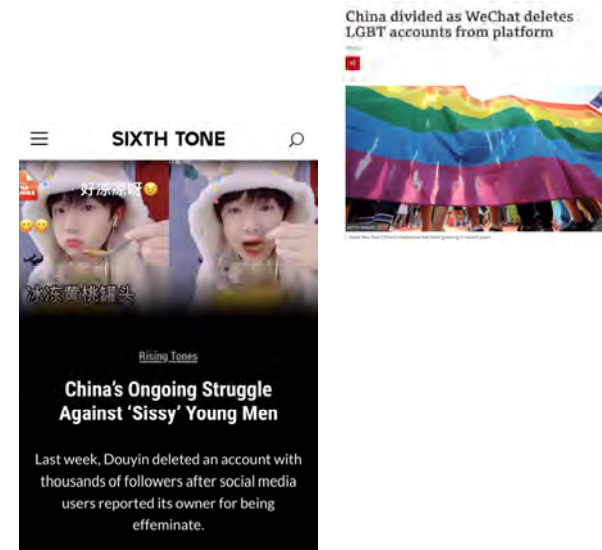
**China:** erasure of gender non-conformity at political levels; Confucian values; 'crisis' of masculinity; etc.

**Hong Kong, SAR:** emphasizing racial diversity in ECE curriculum

**No explicit mention of gender or challenging gender binary in ECE curriculum frameworks in these countries/regions. (Xu et al., 2020)**

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## Research questions and methods

- ❖ **To what extent do LGBT ECE educators' life experiences relate to their diversity-related practices?**
- ❖ **How do practices of those educators compare in the four contexts?**
  - Semi-structured interviews conducted in 2021
  - 8 LGBT educators working in ECE settings in Australia, England, Mainland China and Hong Kong



# Findings

## Participants' demographic information

Code	Location	Gender identity	Sexuality	Age	Ethnicity	Qualification	ECE	Status	Occupation	Full-time	Length
AUSF1	Australia	Female	Lesbian	35	Afro-Latina	Diploma	Y	Couple without children	Lead Educator	Y, permanent	6 years
AUSF2	Australia	Female	Queer	49	Caucasian	Postgrad	Y	Share house	Lead Educator	Permanent, part-time	10+ years
CHNM1	Mainland China	Male	Gay	31	Han Chinese	Master	Y	Single without children	Assistant Head	Y, permanent	6 years
CHNM4	Mainland China	Male	Gay	29	Han Chinese	Bachelor	N	Couple without children	Lead Teacher	Y, with tenure	5 years
HKF1	Hong Kong	Female	Bisexual	39	Chinese	PGCE	Y	N/A	Teacher	N/A	9 years
HKF2	Hong Kong	Female	Lesbian or Gay	38	White	MEd	Y	Couple without children	Teacher	Permanent part-time	11 years
ENGM1	England	Male	Gay	25-30	White	Level 4	Y	Living with parents	Nursery Practitioner	Y	3 years
ENGF2	England	Cisgendered	Lesbian	45+	White British	Masters	N/A	N/A	Reception Teacher & SENCO	N/A	N/A





## Experiences of and sensitivity to diversity: because I am part of it

- *“But just you know realising and seeing those little things like that, just nobody really thinks about if they're not a part of it” (AUSF1)*
- *“Because if I’m happy then I can do my job. There's no point in doing that job that is teaching children to be happy and to enjoy life if I’m not enjoying it myself.” (ENGM1)*
- Relating a different fish to gender minority in his mind (CHNM1)



## Negotiating otherness: speak out, avoidance, and hiding

- *“All I can do is be loud and proud”; “Our job is to raise and support and empower these children, and we can't even be ourselves when that's what we're telling them to be. It makes no sense.” (AUSF1)*
- *“I know that times have changed but I can't change the experiences that I've had, and they make me quite cautious and quite, quite guarded. ... it just doesn't feel that relevant really to talk about too, too much in the workplace.” (ENGF1)*
- *“For ECEC I am a teacher and it has been confined by societal values and norms, and expectations of teachers. Based on these I dare not to express more openly my interpretations.” (CHNM1)*



## Diversity in interpretations of DIVERSITY

- Diversity of cultures, languages, lifestyles, outlooks, personalities, etc.
- (Visible and expressive) differences;
- Being 'normal';
- Agreement vs acceptance;
- Diversity of sexuality
- Hegemonic diversity

*“Talking about diversity is still in that box is not you can't open the box, it is whatever in the box, you can talk about, you cannot talk about it anything else.” (HKF1)*







## Practising gender-related diversity in ECE (I)



- Explicit, open, and honest discussions (AUSF1, AUSF2, ENGM1)
- Advocates and role models (AUSF1, ENGM1)
- Passive (HKF1)

- Avoidance (ENGF2, HKF2, CHNM1)

*“I tend not to go about anything to do with sexuality. In the same way I know I should [with race]. I know I should, but I tend to leave it to other people. I feel sometimes anxious that I don't want parents to think that I'm speaking inappropriately or that I'm raising it with children, it's just something I really try and avoid. I do worry about what parents. What parents think. I lack, I lack confidence around LGBTQ+ identities because of who I am.” (ENGF2)*



## Practising gender-related diversity in ECE (II)

- Indirect (HKF1; CHNM2) - *Equal opportunity to explore different things*

- Working with parents

*“Said that it should be his choice. We are 2021 parenting. Nobody said guys have to pee standing up.” (HKF1)*

- ❖ LGBT parents in all societies

- Existence of particular materials



# Discussion

- ❖ **The discursive constructions and embodiment of LGBT identities**
- ❖ **Reimagining social constructions of diversity**
- ❖ **Disrupting heteronormativity in ECE through culturally-sensitive and culturally-reflexive practices.**





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Thank you!

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**Any comments or  
questions?**