Supportive schools: An investigation of rainbow-affirmative inclusivity in schools and its effects on rainbow and non-rainbow young people

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Abstract

Rainbow young people experience higher rates of mental health problems relative to their non-rainbow peers, a phenomenon theorised to be linked to Rainbow people's experiences of identity-related marginalisation. School is an important setting for young people, and one in which policies and curriculum content choices may have a large impact on young people. This project sought to understand the impact of Rainbow-affirming school policies and curriculum content on both Rainbow and non-Rainbow students alike. This two-study research project sought to determine how having an inclusive curriculum impacts rainbow and non-rainbow students. Study one focused on the impact of rainbow inclusive content and policies in schools on non-rainbow students' allyship behaviours. Study two extended this investigation to rainbow students, examining whether rainbow inclusive content and policy increases perceived support, safety, and pride at school for rainbow students. Participants ($N = 5241$; $n_{non\text{-}rainbow} = 434$; $n_{rainbow} = 4807$) completed questions about inclusive policies, curricula, allyship behaviours, perceived support, safety and pride as part of the broader Identify Study (Fenaughty et al., 2022). I ran descriptive statistics for each domain and the sum of each domain, and regression models were run to predict each study's findings. Contrary to our hypotheses, results for study one found that exposure to rainbow inclusive content and policy did not predict allyship attitudes or behaviours. Similarly, study two results found that exposure to rainbow inclusive content and policy did not predict perceived support, safety, or pride for rainbow students. Future research is needed to establish the impact of inclusive curricula and content on other aspects of rainbow and non-rainbow students' educational, behavioural, and emotional outcomes.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Allyship is becoming an increasingly important behaviour in cisgender heterosexual peers as rainbow people push back at societal norms and ensure their presence is noted (Forbes & Ueno, 2020). Allyship is a term that explains standing up against discrimination towards marginalized group members as visible advocates who can provide interpersonal support, in this case toward rainbow people (Warren et al., 2022). Years of being silenced, hidden and ridiculed (Meyer, 2015) has left the rainbow community (including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and non-binary people, and other people who fall outside the cisgender heterosexual hegemony) wondering why societal practices (e.g. the silencing of rainbow history as recent history instead) have not changed (Collins, 2021). Such a movement requires support from the cisgender, heterosexual population in order to increase the visibility of rainbow people in society amplify their concerns (Forbes & Ueno, 2020). Increasing allyship behaviour in a school setting (especially high schools) is critical, because this is the setting where much self-exploration and self-identification occurs among rainbow young people (Armitage, 2021; Cardinal, 2021).

However, educational lessons in New Zealand schools are typically taught from a heteronormative and cissexist stance (i.e., assuming all students are heterosexual and cisgender (Sterling, 2023), limiting opportunities for rainbow people and rainbow perspectives. As a result, students who do not have rainbow family members or friends may either never gain exposure or be exposed very late to diverse rainbow representation (Johnson & Lollar, 2002), which can lead to a lack of diversified values, views and understanding of rainbow identities among non-rainbow students (Mitchell, 2010).

A lack of understanding of rainbow identities in schools can impact rainbow identity development — students may only come out as rainbow once they have been exposed to minority identities and are able to begin exploring their own identity (Dunlap, 2016). There is

evidence that, as society becomes more accepting of rainbow people, that rainbow youth are coming out at a younger age (Russell & Fish, 2016). These generational changes (across five generations starting from before 1951) have been continuous, showing that the age of coming out has significantly decreased, likely due to increasing acceptance and accurate information becoming available (Dunlap, 2016). A rainbow student expressing themselves through a change in style, uniform, pronouns or name in a non-rainbow environment can be met with negativity and potentially put this student in danger of bullying and violence (Berry, 2018).

Bullying related to a rainbow identity has been described as a negative consequence of a curriculm that is not inclusive (Goodboy & Martin, 2018). Bullying within a school context is defined as unwanted, repeated aggressive behaviour that involves an observed power imbalance (Luca, 2018; Orue & Calvete, 2018). Bullying is strongly related to negative educational and mental health outcomes (Birkett et al., 2009) with numerous studies explaining long-term and life-threatening impact on victims (for example Rivers, 2018). Specifically, rainbow students have been found to suffer significantly higher rates of victimisation (e.g. bullying, discrimination, name calling) than their heterosexual peers worldwide (Gill & McQuillan, 2022). As a result, rainbow students who are bullied or victimised have significantly higher rates of depression, social anxiety and psychopathological symptoms than their heterosexual, cisgender peers (Garaigordobil & Larrain, 2020; Gill & McQuillan, 2022; I. H. Meyer, 2003).

A review of the literature reveals several suggestions about how to decrease bullying rates for rainbow students and promote inclusivity of rainbow students in schools. Having supportive adults at school to provide a positive influence and a safe support system is one strategy that was found to reduce hostility, improve rainbow student self-esteem, and therefore improve educational outcomes for rainbow students (Kosciw et al., 2013). Secondly, having a Gay Straight Alliance (GSA; also referred to as a Queer Straight Alliance;

QSA) resulted in improved safety and lowered victimisation among rainbow high school students (Mikulec & Chamness Miller, 2017). Lastly, a rainbow inclusive curriculum is an area slowly gaining attention in literature for increasing rainbow students' inclusivity. The presence of rainbow topics increased academic engagement of rainbow students which benefitted their academic achievement. Collectively, the literature suggests that an inclusive curriculum creates positive changes at a wider school level which may outweigh any negative drawbacks experienced by any one individual (Snapp et al., 2015).

One way to potentially minimize the risk of bullying in schools is to educate students with an rainbow inclusive curriculum and increase exposure to non-heteronormative and cissexist experiences (e.g. same-gender relationships, transgender people in history) (Snapp et al., 2015). One landmark study, constructed similarly to the present study, examined the association between rainbow-inclusive curricula (specifically in social studies, English, health and PE) and bullying and safety perceptions among 1,232 high school students from 154 schools in California, USA (Snapp et al., 2015). The results found that students (rainbow and non-rainbow alike) from schools that taught an inclusive curricula reported a greater sense of safety, heard fewer homophobic slurs and experienced less victimization in their school environments (Snapp et al., 2015). The study also highlighted GSAs as a space for heterosexual students to have the opportunity to understand experiences different to their own, which suggested a reduction in prejudicial attitudes toward rainbow people (Kosciw et al., 2020; Russell et al., 2016; Snapp et al., 2015). Overall, inclusive policies such as GSAs, supportive teachers, anti-homophobic and bullying policies alongside inclusive curricula were associated with a more supportive overall school climate for all students.

The existing literature is limited in scope and based on international samples, making it unclear what findings and strategies may apply in the unique cultural context of New Zealand. As a result, the present study explored whether increased rainbow-inclusive

education (including both curriculum content and school policies) predicted allyship behavior among non-rainbow students is associated with increased perceived support, safety and pride among rainbow students in New Zealand. While previous research focused on allyship behavior being important to the establishment of safety in schools (Forbes & Ueno, 2020), the present investigation sought to understand if allyship behaviour was more likely among non-rainbow students exposed to a rainbow-inclusive curriculum.

The example set by teachers regarding the treatment of rainbow students, could be effective in increasing allyship behaviours. But, if allyship is a critical step in the improvement of a school climate and safety of rainbow students, then understanding what increases this type of behavior is essential. A teacher who encounters a rainbow student in their classroom may not feel adequately equipped to cater to the needs to requirements of this student, perhaps due to a lack of competency training (Haltinner & Pilgeram, 2016; Robinson, 2020). This may be especially true if the students is nonbinary or transgender (Robinson, 2020) due to pronoun, bathroom, and uniform considerations which are individual to each student and which require not only individual teachers to be on board, but also school administrators. Having strategies that can assist in the comfortable integration of a gender diverse student into the classroom setting may give teachers more confidence. This role-modeling of allyship behaviours to students may in turn increase the likelihood of students engaging in these behaviours as well (Haltinner & Pilgeram, 2016; Mikulec & Miller, 2017). As allyship levels increase and victimization levels lower, students report feeling more supported and safer (Snapp et al., 2015). Prior research shows that having sound policies for inclusion of rainbow topics may result in a collective rise in allyship traits and therefore, increased belonging, participation and increased academic performance for rainbow students (Russell et al., 2021).

This thesis is comprised of two studies. Study 1 aimed to examine whether having inclusive curricula (such as positive rainbow topics being taught and availability of rainbow resources) and inclusive school policies (such as displaying rainbow support symbols and having a GSA/QSA) is associated with an increase in the frequency of rainbow affirming behaviours (e.g., stepping in when hearing negative talk about rainbow people) and attitudes (e.g., feeling inspired by rainbow people) among non-rainbow students. I predicted that there would be higher frequency of rainbow allyship attitudes and behaviours in non-rainbow participants whose schools' have rainbow inclusive content and policy, in line with similar findings described above by Snapp et al. (2015).

Study 2 aimed to examine whether having rainbow inclusive school policies and content is associated with increased the perceived support, safety, and pride experienced by rainbow students. I predicted that rainbow students would feel more supported, safe, and proud to explore their identities, and feel more pride, in a school environment where they were represented in the policies and curriculum (based on the 2021 GLSEN survey (Kosciw et al., 2022)). I hope the findings of this study will inform broader efforts to improve the school environment for rainbow and non-rainbow students alike.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Rainbow Student Health

Rainbow people experience worse health outcomes than cisgender heterosexual people, particularly in regard to mental and physical health (Frost et al., 2015; I. H. Meyer, 2003). An American study, using a sample of school psychologists, counsellors and social workers, found that 84.4% of rainbow students experienced somewhat or very serious behavioural, emotional and/or mental health problems both in and out of school (Kull et al., 2019).

Bullying increases an adolescent's risk of internalising problems including diagnoses of mental health problems in young adulthood (Wolke & Lereya, 2015). Bullying victims are at increased risk of displaying psychotic experiences and having suicidal behaviours (Wolke & Lereya, 2015). However, bullying increases when looking just at the rainbow student demographic and partially explains the higher risk for their mental health difficulties (Berry, 2018). Rainbow students report significantly higher rates of depression, social anxiety and psychopathological symptoms on all scales than their non-rainbow peers (Garaigordobil & Larrain, 2020). The age in which mental health disparities, such as anxiety and depression, arise in rainbow students is between 9 and 12 years old (Clark et al., 2020; Seager van Dyk, 2020).

Minority Stress Theory

Minority stress theory attempts to explain higher mental health concerns for rainbow people relative to non-rainbow people (Brooks, 1981; Meyer, 2003). Brooks (1981) originally proposed minority stress theory, which was then popularised by Meyer in 2003, as an explanation for why sexual minorities (e.g., gay, lesbian, bisexual people) experienced higher rates of psychiatric problems than the heterosexual population. Stressors are defined in psychological literature as events and conditions that cause a change in an individual's life,

requiring them to adapt to the new situation or circumstance (Salleh, 2008). Social stress (e.g., relationship strain, isolation, exclusion) has a strong impact on the lives of people that belong to stigmatised social categories such as low socioeconomic status, minoritised race/ethnicity, and minority genders and sexualities (Allison, 1998; Barnett et al., 1987; Meyer, 2003). Additionally, Frost et al. (2015) found that experiencing prejudice predicts onset of physical health problems for lesbian, gay men and bisexuals, which incorporates a variety of conditions and illnesses.

Minority stress, then, is a name for the additional stress that an individual from a stigmatised group is exposed to as a result of prejudice and discrimination (at the individual, interpersonal, and institutional/structural levels) related to that stigmatized identity (Frost et al., 2015). Minority stress occurs alongside the general everyday stressors that are experienced by all people and therefore, requires coping resources above what is required of people who are not stigmatised (I. H. Meyer, 2003). Due to strong heteronormative and cissexist tendencies of dominant culture (van der Toorn et al., 2020), rainbow people may experience minority stress as their identity conflicts with norms and social structures of dominant discourse.

Minority stress theory outlines two main types of stressors: distal and proximal. Distal stressors are events and conditions that occur outside of the person who holds the stigmatized identity; for example, anti-rainbow laws (e.g. only recent same-sex marriage legalisation in 2013) or events like the 2022 arson at RainbowYOUTH drop-in centre in Tauranga (Conchie, 2022). The other end of the continuum is proximal processes, defined as internal stressors which is caused by concealment of identity, internalised stigma, or rejection sensitivity.

There is a building body of evidence in support of minority stress theory to explain health occurrences within the sexual minority community (e.g. depression, anxiety, physical sickness). For instance, Lehavot and Simoni (2011) used minority stress theory to explain

their findings on rainbow mental health outcomes. They found that lesbian and bisexual women experience large and serious health disparities more than heterosexual or other sexual orientations. Specifically, significantly high levels of depression and anxiety were found to be the most occurring health disparities and at least a partial result of prejudice and discrimination (Lehavot & Simoni, 2011). In terms of physical health outcomes, Frost et al. (2015) found that stress resulting from prejudice events was associated with physical health problems, including cancer, influenza, and hypertension (Frost et al., 2015). This study also found that externally created incidents, such as experiencing prejudice, predicted onset of physical health problems whereas self-appraised experiences of minority stress did not predict physical health outcomes as they tended to be more minor and internalised (Frost et al., 2015).

Minority stress theory has also been adapted for transgender and gender diverse populations (Hendricks & Testa, 2012), with evidence gaining in support of its use (Pellicane & Ciesla, 2022). Additional to typical general stressors, the most easily observed stressors for the transgender population are external events that occur within the individuals' environment (Burgess, 2009). This is topped by alarmingly high rates of violence, rejection and discrimination based on their gender identity or expression which correlates higher prevalence of mental health problems (Hendricks & Testa, 2012).

School Experience for Rainbow Students

One area where minority stress may occur for most young rainbow people is at school. Experiences at school for rainbow students are shaped through their ability to feel safe, supported and proud of their rainbow identity (Kosciw et al., 2020). These factors are often influenced by interpersonal experiences and school content and policies, where there is frequent experiences of hostility and negativity (Russell et al., 2021). Having a supportive

friend or an adult, such as a teacher who can create engagement with students, can create positive influence and increase the self-esteem of rainbow students (Leonard, 2020).

School bullying, victimisation and hostility are shared interpersonal experiences that Berry (2018) believes no youth is exempt from. Bullying within a school context is defined as unwanted, repeated, and aggressive behaviour that involves an observed power imbalance (Orue & Calvete, 2018). The aggressive behaviour can be verbal (i.e., name-calling), physical (i.e., hitting), relational (i.e., social exclusion) or a combination of these (Nansel et al., 2003). In a rainbow context, verbal harassment can incorporate stigmatised language (Kosciw et al., 2020). Exposure to homophobic slang such as "that's so gay" and casual homophobia or cissexism such as comments made with slurs, can be extremely harmful to the comfort and self-acceptance of a rainbow person, who has or has not yet come out. Furthermore, anti-rainbow and cissexist language has been found to be the most common form of rainbow victimisation experienced by rainbow youth (Kosciw et al., 2008). Not only is it harmful, but negative attitudes toward rainbow individuals has been found to predict the perpetration of homophobic bullying (Orue & Calvete, 2018).

The transgender and gender diverse population is small and under-considered (Meier & Labuski, 2013), but are significant victims of targeted bullying in the school setting (Garaigordobil & Larrain, 2020). More than 25% of transgender students are aware of their gender identity from a young age and half of transgender students in a New Zealand based study wondered about being transgender after the age of 12 (Clark et al., 2013). Clearly, adolescence is a crucial time for young people making sense of their gender identity (Steensma et al., 2013), therefore they must be appropriately supported through this time. Adolescence is largely spent at school and thus experiences in the school setting become one of the biggest contributors to the development of the self (Eccles et al., 1997). Transgender

students often experience harassment and bullying in school, at heightened levels compared to their cisgender peers (Pampati et al., 2020).

There are a number of ways in which bullying can occur and research shows that bullying is not an isolated incident. Additionally, the use of social media and technology has created complex ways to experience bullying through cyberbullying (Orue & Calvete, 2018). This is a significant contribution to bullying experiences in current times, being on a public platform and easily anonymous which makes it increasingly difficult for the victim to stand up and defend themselves (Berry, 2018). Another significant component of bullying is its often repetitive nature. A qualitative interview based study by Smith and Caron (2022) explained how all participants described their experiences of bullying as ongoing, lasting over the course of many years. The participants were all older people recalling their experiences of bullying during school. This suggests that being a victim of bullying is not an isolated incident and students who admit to being bullied are likely to have had this happening for many days, months or years and impact victims for life. Furthermore, Smith and Caron (2022) found that none of their participants reported their bullying experiences to a teacher or school administrator. Having to suffer silently or deal with bullies alone could be extremely isolating for students and leaves teachers unable to provide any disciplinary action.

Bullying is strongly related to negative educational and mental health outcomes with long-term and life-threatening impacts on victims (for example Rivers, 2018). Victims of bullying show increased rates of anxious and depressive symptoms, low self-esteem, poor social skills, isolation and eating disorders (Arseneault et al., 2010; Giovazolias & Malikiosi-Loizos, 2018; Luca, 2018; Rivers, 2018) which had negative effect on their schooling experience (Smith & Caron, 2022).

The National School Climate Survey (Kosciw et al., 2020) showed that rainbow students experience higher levels of victimization and hostility than their cisgender

heterosexual peers, with transgender students experiencing the most hostile school climate of all. The hostility that is experienced has been linked to bullying and a perceived lack of safety within the school environment (Lleras, 2008). While bullying is a significant contributor to danger for rainbow students within the school setting, discrimination is a related but distinctly different type of hostility (Mhuru & Ministry of Education, 2021).

One strategy that has been implemented to increase support at school is educating staff and increasing their outward support to the rainbow student cohort. Kosciw et al. (2012) undertook a quantitative study of nearly 6,000 students attending secondary school in the United States, which is a similar sample size and study type to the current study. Four types of rainbow related in-school supports were examined for their contributions to minimising victimisation rates in schools. Firstly, having a greater number of educators and staff at a school who are supportive of rainbow students was the strongest positive influence found to support rainbow students. Having supportive adults at school predicted a less hostile school climate and greater reported self-esteem. Unsurprisingly, the presence of supportive staff and educators was also associated with positive educational outcomes such as a higher GPA and less truancy (Kosciw et al., 2012).

With a sample from seven Florida high schools, Pampati et al. (2020) found that the majority of transgender students perceived minimal safety and connectedness levels at school and did not believe that staff cared for them or treated them fairly. Moreover, less than 30% of transgender youth in the sample agreed that they felt happy at school (Pampati et al., 2020). The findings of these studies show that personal connection with supportive staff may provide a reason to keep students in school and may buffer severe victimisation. Supportive staff were likely to directly affirm rainbow students and intervene when homophobic remarks were made and anti-rainbow victimisation occurred (Kosciw et al., 2012). Ultimately, teacher support likely promotes a decline in homophobic behaviour and contributes to safety for

rainbow students.

Leonard (2020) found that one of the most significant positive actions that could be undertaken by a school was to use appropriate language and correct pronouns at all times. The presence of a trusted adult who a student can talk to about gender and sexuality was found to increase self-esteem for all rainbow students. However, school staff often felt ill-equipped to have these conversations (Leonard, 2020), which was consistent with Pampati et al.'s (2020) finding that students did not have supportive staff to confide in.

As well as adults, the presence of supportive friends improved the school experience for rainbow students. Ladd (1990) found that children with a larger number of friends in the classroom developed more favourable perceptions of school as they progressed through the years and in turn showed more enjoyment of their schooling experience. Data from Rivers (2011) found that the majority of participants recalled having at least two or three good friends when they were being bullied and only 18% recalled they had no good friends while being bullied.

Rainbow Inclusive Curricula

The increasingly researched suggestion for decreasing victimisation is increasing representation of rainbow topics in school curricula (Proulx et al., 2019; Russell et al., 2021; Snapp et al., 2015). Kosciw et al. (2012) found that inclusive curricula likely enhanced rainbow students' engagement in their schoolwork and therefore benefitted their academic achievement (Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2010). Moreover, findings show that inclusive curricula might moderate the relationship between victimisation and self-esteem (as found by regression models), which further benefitted highly victimised students in schools with an unsupportive climate (Kosciw et al., 2012). In 2016, Russell and Fish identified that a rainbow inclusive curricula led to increased psychological adjustment and an increased sense of safety and feelings of acceptance within the rainbow student population.

Students of schools that include rainbow content in their sexuality and health education programs report more safety and less bullying experiences (Snapp et al., 2015), affirming the need for inclusivity of rainbow issues in school curricula. However, Snapp et al. (2015) found that inclusive and supportive curricula were not linked to reductions in individual bullying experiences. Snapp et al. (2015) describe unique differences between individual and whole school outcomes of rainbow-inclusive curricula which has not been found within any other literature. At the individual student-level, they found that presence of inclusive curricula raised awareness of rainbow related bullying and safety. which could show reports of increased bullying and lowered perceived safety. Regardless, at the school community level inclusivity can reduce reports of bullying and show positive implications for safety and pride. It has also been found to accurately intervene (i.e. target the required issues directly) in a hostile school climate and improve the climate overall once it reaches a critical mass within the school (i.e. school-wide inclusivity rather than for just one year group or class) (Snapp et al., 2015).

Seeking to explore the ways in which an inclusive curriculum addresses anti-rainbow stigma and improves experiences of hostility in a school environment may be beneficial to all students (Snapp et al., 2015). As representation and exposure increase in society, all students deserve to be able to learn and explore their gender and sexual identities in a safe and controlled environment such as the classroom, where this can be facilitated constructively by a supportive teacher (Dessel et al., 2017). Proulx et al. (2019) found that a rainbow inclusive sex education curricula can predict lower reports of adverse mental health for rainbow students and cisgender heterosexual students alike.

Interestingly, a New Zealand based study by Henrickson (2007) found that rainbow people achieve at high levels relative to the general population. They suggest that this may be an outcome of compensatory achievement in which rainbow people use their academic ability

and high achievement to mask their sexual identity. This is consistent with the "Best Little Boy in the World" hypothesis, in which gay young males are found to be higher achievers to deflect from stigmatisation regarding their sexuality (Pachankis & Hatzenbuehler, 2013). Henrickson (2007) also found that stigma was directly correlated to deciding to come out during or after high school or during their education in general. Therefore, when considering any studies, New Zealand based or international, it is possible that students may not yet identify as rainbow as a result of stigma and lack of emersion through a non-inclusive curriculum.

Access to Rainbow Inclusive Resources

Interestingly, in 2012 California made it compulsory for rainbow inclusive education to be taught in all grades under the Senate Bill 48 to protect students under the FAIR Education Act (Jones, 2022). This inclusivity requires all public schools in any California district to teach about sexual orientation and what it means to be rainbow. Teachers are required to teach about rainbow topics in multiple different classes, citing that it was important because rainbow students who learnt about rainbow issues were much less likely to attempt suicide (Jones, 2022).

How an inclusive curriculum is taught is left to each school to decide, as per the School Success and Opportunity Act (*Laws and Policies Protecting LGBTQ Youth from Discrimination*, n.d.). There are specific topics that are compulsory and the curriculum must include gender identity, gender expression and also the harm that negative gender stereotypes can cause. Teachers are also required to respect their student's gender identities, including pronouns and their name (Jones, 2022). The bill gives recommendations on creating a safe and inviting environment for rainbow students which is encouraging to see that state wide, where there are about triple the number of public schools as there are in New Zealand, there has been successful integration of inclusive curriculum for over a decade.

At a national level, there is limited academic research available that is specific to New Zealand regarding inclusive curricula. Early literature offers one common suggestion, that an inclusive classroom curriculum could create a safer environment for all students to learn in (Peter et al., 2021).

Rainbow Inclusive Policies

In addition to increasing the representation of rainbow issues in school curricula, some schools have implemented policies that aim to support rainbow students (Kull et al., 2016). These include policies for teacher-student confidentiality, anti-bullying, discrimination and harassment, bathrooms, uniform, extra-curricular and group-specific policies (A Guide For Schools: Information on Supporting Trans, Gender Diverse or Non-Binary Students to Affirm Their Gender, 2020). While there is limited research specific to New Zealand schools, InsideOut (2021), a New Zealand based rainbow charity, makes some suggestions for policy recommendations. They closely follow recommendations of international research, with the addition of professional learning development and ideas for responding to community concerns about school's rainbow inclusion.

Teacher-student confidentiality is essential so that rainbow-identity disclosure information remains private and students can be trusting of their disclosures (Ettinghoff, 2014; Painter, 2009). Unless the teacher gains explicit permission from the student to share this information, then disclosing the information to anyone else, including other sta ff, can be potentially dangerous for the student. Parent-teacher interviews are just one place that a rainbow student may expect their teacher to be especially cautious because of perceived threats to their safety from their family (Roe, 2017). Snapp et al. (2016) offer recommendation that to descale stressors caused by disclosure, giving students the right to choose when and to whom they disclose their identity `is best practice. One benefit to

providing this option is that students who feel secure in their disclosure could be more likely to access support services like a counsellor (Roe, 2013).

Schools have also implemented bullying, discrimination and harassment policies with specific information regarding rainbow people (Cardinal, 2021; Russell et al., 2021). These include allowing students to bring a partner of their choice to the school ball, which challenges heteronormative behaviour, and wearing the uniform of their choice. Other policies that have helped foster inclusivity include a zero tolerance for discrimination based on gender, sexuality or sex; privacy for students' personal information; adding rainbow-focused bullying to the bullying prevention policy and discussing this with students; providing professional development for staff (Russell et al., 2021). Also, allowing students to amend their name and gender marker on their enrolment is a very supportive and affirmative policy (Restar et al., 2020), however could be subject to parental push-back (DeWitt, 2018).

Adding gender-inclusive bathroom options to schools has a beneficial impact on gender diverse students (Russell et al., 2021). Bathrooms and changing facilities should be able to be used by rainbow students as they feel best aligns with their gender (Philips, 2017). InsideOut (2021) found that some New Zealand rainbow students may need a supportive peer to accompany them, or they may choose to seek out a private setting instead, whereas in California, there are already policies like this in place. For instance the Californian Senate Bill 48 has allowed students to use bathrooms and locker rooms and play on sports teams that align with their gender identity (Jones, 2022; *Laws and Policies Protecting LGBTQ Youth from Discrimination*, n.d.).

In terms of uniform, allowing students to wear whatever uniform they perceive is correct for them could be the simplest way to include rainbow positivity (Jones, 2022). However, this policy can be particularly popular among all students who may feel that one uniform is more comfortable for them than another (Cumming-Potvin, 2023). For example, a

non-rainbow student may not wish to wear a skirt as it is not the most allowing of clothing when it comes to physical activities (Cohen-Woods & Laattoe, 2019; Jones, 2022).

Policies around sport and extra curriculars can also include specific plans for supporting rainbow students (Jones, 2022). For instance, ensuring transgender students are welcomed in sports is essential to their healthy development (Love, 2014). Staff and coaches of sports teams should be able to look to their school for resources on supporting their rainbow athletes if they require it (Leonard & Matthew, 2019). It is important that students are encouraged to take part in extra curriculars, including sport and in New Zealand kapa haka, to promote health, socialisation and cultural understanding (Buckley & Lee, 2021; Mazer, 2011).

Another policy that has been implemented successfully overseas is QSA groups which allow students a place that they can gather to have discussions, be educated, feel safe and make friends. Such a space is essential for the mental health of rainbow students and their belonging (Russell et al., 2021). Also, a QSA is one a great places to build allyship behaviours (Mikulec & Miller, 2017) and creates a space for students to discuss inclusivity practices in the school and suggest changes. Mikulec and Miller (2017) found that having access to a QSA provided students a personal connection to members of the rainbow community which increased the likelihood that they would intervene when witnessing homophobic behaviour. Put simply, having a QSA available even without students attending was found to result in greater safety and less victimisation for rainbow students (Mikulec & Miller, 2017).

Outcomes of Inclusive Policies

Inclusive policies could significantly improve bullying rates and create a safer environment for all students to learn in (Kaczkowski et al., 2022). Supportive policies are associated with outcomes such as lowered experiences of threats, suicidal behaviour and drug

use among rainbow students (Kaczkowski et al., 2022). There is also a direct association between less truancy, more positive school experiences and improved perception of school. Interestingly, these outcomes occur more for lesbian, bisexual and gay students and lesser for transgender students (Day et al., 2019). Students indicate, through a survey, their desire to learn in a context that is safe for all students and free of harassment, showing that if one group is misrepresented there is consequence for all students to feel they may experience the same outcomes (Snapp et al., 2015).

How do rainbow inclusive curricula and policies impact non-rainbow students?

There was an apparent lack of literature that could explain in any depth what the outcome of rainbow inclusive curricula and policy was on non-rainbow students. Most literature describes how inclusivity positively impacts rainbow people (Cardinal, 2021; Day et al., 2019; Gowen & Winges-Yanez, 2014; Leonard, 2020; Proulx et al., 2019; Russell et al., 2021), but does not look at the effects of this on cisgender heterosexual peers. In theory, an inclusive curriculum and policies would increase the breadth of education for all students and increase the awareness of heteronormativity and discrimination against rainbow people.

An inclusive curriculum has potential to decrease bullying rates and prejudice from non-rainbow students toward their rainbow peers (Snapp et al., 2015). As representation and exposure increase in society, all students deserve to be able to learn and explore their gender and sexual identities in a safe and controlled environment such as the classroom, where discussion can be facilitated constructively by a teacher instead of having to outsource information from potentially dangerous sources (e.g., sourcing information about gay sex from pornography).

Allyship behaviours

Non-rainbow students who develop rainbow-positive attitudes through friendships often engage in allyship behaviours (Lapointe, 2015; Vera et al., 2019). These allyship

behaviours include stepping in and standing up for the rainbow community and being involved with events in the rainbow community (Sumerau et al., 2021). For example, a peer who engages in allyship behaviour may attend QSA meetings at school, wear rainbow support items and regularly attend rainbow events. Allyship behaviour has a number of benefits such as strengthening friendships with rainbow peers, further developing allyship skills and providing support for the rainbow community (Kosciw et al., 2013).

Limitations of prior research on inclusive education

Given these wide ranging negative effects of minority stress on the health and wellbeing of rainbow people, it is clear that anti-rainbow discrimination and prejudice in New Zealand must be urgently addressed. However, existing research on rainbow content and policies in schools lacks the depth that other areas of psychological research hold, and to date has been limited to small sample sizes which were geographically isolated to the USA. Therefore more work is needed to ascertain whether their findings generalise to larger samples, and to New Zealand. This will make the findings more accurate for anyone considering making changes or seeking recommendations within a New Zealand school setting.

There is also a paucity of research which explores the needs of transgender people within a school context. There are many reasons why these youth may have specific needs, including bathroom usage and sports team participation. While getting an accurate account of transgender students may be difficult, because of confidentiality concerns, it is essential that the needs of this population are considered as they are likely to be different to their sexual minority peers.

Current study aims

While prior research has begun to discover how inclusive education enhances outcomes for rainbow students (Bittker, 2022; Snapp et al., 2015; Sterling, 2023), it has failed to

explore the impacts of this on non-rainbow students. While literature is growing around rainbow youth and their experiences (Fraser et al., 2022), so is the rhetoric that inclusive education will negatively impact non-rainbow students (Kissen, 2002). The present study aims to find out how inclusive education affects both rainbow and non-rainbow students. The current investigation is comprised of two separate studies with unique aims.

In study one, I examined whether affirmative and non-affirmative content (helpful or unhelpful teaching about rainbow history, access to rainbow inclusive resources and various rainbow inclusive topics) and policies (available support, posters, symbols, existence of a queer-straight alliance [QSA] group and staff or students using correct names and pronouns) are associated with increased allyship attitudes and behaviour among non-rainbow students. Allyship attitudes included feeling positive towards rainbow people, being comfortable around rainbow people and being interested in rainbow peoples' point of view. Allyship behaviour included intervening when anti-rainbow actions occur, attending events and displaying items to support the rainbow community. I predicted that having affirmative content and policy in schools would be associated with increased allyship attitudes and behaviours in non-rainbow students.

In study two, I examined whether affirmative and non-affirmative content and policies are associated with perceived sense of support, safety and pride among rainbow students. Perceived support was expressed by feeling a part of their school, that their teachers expect them to do well and care about them, that the students tries hard at school and that the school has clear rules among other options. Perceived safety was examined through places at school that rainbow students have ever felt unsafe, such as a classroom, bathrooms, a function or a QSA. Perceived pride in a rainbow students rainbow identity was found through feeling proud of their rainbow identity, feeling connected to other rainbow people, participating in rainbow events, being politically active and having a rainbow role model. I

predicted that rainbow students would experience increased perceptions of support, safety and pride if their school had higher rates of inclusive content and policy.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Design

This is a quantitative research project using a pre-existing dataset that was gathered in 2021 by the Identify Survey team.[1] The data was collected via an online Qualtrics survey between March and August 2021. The survey covered a range of topics about the experiences of rainbow young people and non-rainbow allies, in order to find what makes young rainbow people in Aotearoa thrive and succeed.

The current project is comprised of two separate studies. Study 1 focussed on non-rainbow young people. It examined the relationship between rainbow inclusive content and policy and allyship behaviour and attitudes. Study 2 examined the impact of rainbow inclusive educational content and policies on the wellbeing of both rainbow and non-rainbow young people. For rainbow participants, I examined the association between content and policy on perceived support, safety and pride for rainbow participants. For non-rainbow participants I examined the association between content and policy on allyship behaviours.

Ethics

The Identify Survey was granted ethics approval through the New Zealand Health and Disability Ethics Committee (HDEC), reference 20/NTB/276. All ethical considerations were handled, addressed and approved by the Identify research team before the current project team gained access to the data. Furthermore, the current project was reviewed and approved through the Massey Human Ethics Committee (Application #: Application ID 400026167) as low risk on June 15, 2022.

The main ethical concern for this study surrounds maintaining participants' anonymity. Rainbow youth who may have not disclosed their identity to anyone else, or who

[1] The Identify Survey team is comprised of Dr. John Fenaughty, Dr. Elizabeth Kerekere, Pooja Subramanian, Tabby Besley, Dr. Jaimie Veale, Dr. Patrick Thomsen, Dr. Mohamed Alansari, Alex Ker, and Dr. Peter Saxton. Additional details about this survey and team are available at: https://www.identifysurvey.nz/

are questioning their sexuality or gender privately, may feel nervous to truthfully complete the survey for fear of anonymity. To mitigate this concern, the Identify Survey only asked for the age and country that each participant lived in to ensure eligibility, and allowed participants to skip any questions required without requiring a reason for doing so. No names collected or any other identifying information were collected, so the data is completely anonymous to both the Identify team and the current research student and supervisor. Furthermore, the survey was taken online so participants did not need to participate in-person and potentially risk a breach of anonymity.

Given widespread anti-rainbow stigma in society and the negative impact of this on rainbow people, especially rainbow youth (Fenaughty et al., 2021), it is possible that some rainbow participants may have experienced emotional discomfort when asked to report on their challenging experiences. To prevent causing undue distress, the Identify team took care to consult with numerous community organisations to ensure that questions were asked in a sensitive manner. Participants were informed of the content process and were able to skip any question at any stage without explanation. In addition, many times throughout the survey following sensitive questions and at the end of the survey, participants were provided with contact information for a number of relevant support service (e.g., LIFELINE, OUTline NZ and InsideOUT) that they could contact if they needed support.

Considering the vulnerability of an intersectional identity such as Māori or Pasifika and rainbow, the Identify survey team provided specific community organisations that could give support to many different identities specifically. This included takatāpui and Pasifika support systems and an intersex specific organisation as well. Additionally, the Identify team included a takatāpui scholar (Māori wahine Dr. Elizabeth Kerekere) and sought consultation from Māori organisation Tiwhanawhan, providing their details as a support for Māori young people.

Recruitment

The participants were recruited by the Identify team using various recruitment strategies. The Identify team recruited participants in-person at community events, such as Pride festivals in main cities, at existing nightclub events and at community meetings. Furthermore, posters were placed in prominent community venues, schools, tertiary institutions, and libraries. Online recruitment was also conducted through social media platforms and word of mouth also advertised the survey.

Participants

All participants deemed eligible by the Identify team were included in the present research. The Identify Survey teams' inclusion criteria included: (i) age between 14 and 26 years old; (ii) able to give informed consent; (iii) live in Aotearoa; and (iv) either identify as rainbow or be an ally to rainbow young people. By keeping the eligibility criteria very broad, the data is more likely to be representative of the whole rainbow community and supporters.

The final analytic sample was comprised of 5,241 New Zealand youth (n_{Rainbow} = 4,807; $n_{\text{non-Rainbow}}$ = 434) with a mean age of 18.97 (SD = 3.65). The sample was geographically diverse, with 31.9% residing in Auckland, 21.3% residing in Wellington, and 16% residing in Canterbury, with most other regions of the country represented in the remaining 30.8% of participants. See Table 1 for complete participants demographics.

Measures

The larger Identify Survey was comprised of number of questions that explored topics of education, employment and community for rainbow people in New Zealand (Fenaughty et al., 2022). For the purposes of the current project, I focussed on questions related to topics of education including safety, policy and content which are described in greater detail below.

Rainbow Content in Lessons

Non-rainbow participants were asked whether four possible domains of rainbow content were present in lessons at their school, including (a) positive rainbow education (e.g., positive or helpful things about rainbow people, history, events or topics in any subject), (b) negative rainbow education (e.g., negative or unhelpful things about rainbow people, history, events or topics in any subject), (c) inclusion of intersex topics, and (d) the availability of helpful rainbow resources. Participants indicated whether they had personally experienced each type of rainbow content during the course of their education (yes = 1, no = 2, doesn't apply = 3). Affirmative answers to these questions (i.e., yes = 1) were combined into a sum score (possible range = 0-4, with higher scores indicating more rainbow educational content).

Rainbow participants were asked the same questions about rainbow content in lessons as non-rainbow participants, with the exception of (c) inclusion of intersex topics, which was omitted. The sum score of affirmative answers (i.e., yes = 1) to these questions therefore ranged from 0-3.

In addition to indicating the presence of rainbow content at their schools, rainbow participants also described in one question how well eight rainbow topic domains were taught. This included trans and non-binary identities, diverse sexualities, variation in sex characteristics and healthy relationships. These were scored on a six-point scale from 1 = very well to 6 = I wasn't taught about this. These answers were combined into an average score to find the mean and standard deviation.

Rainbow Affirmative Policies in Schools

This section of questions covered rainbow affirmative school policies and experiences. Non-rainbow participants were asked whether they believed their school is supportive of rainbow students. This was scored on a five-point scale from 1 = very supportive to 5 = not at all supportive (participants could also indicate 6 = don't know). Participants were then asked if they had seen rainbow support symbols or posters around

their school supporting rainbow people (1 = yes, 2 = no, 3 = don't know). Lastly, they were asked if their school has a QSA or diversity group (1 = yes, 2 = no, 3= don't know). Affirmative answers (i.e., yes = 1) to these three questions were combined into a sum score (0-3 = possible range, with higher scores indicating more rainbow affirmative policies).

Rainbow participants were asked whether they perceived their school as supportive of rainbow students on a six-point scale from 1 = very supportive and 6 = not at all supportive. Further, rainbow students were asked what affirmative policy options their school offered. This included seven items including gender-neutral bathrooms, name or gender changing on school records, bringing a partner of any gender to the school ball and leadership roles without gendered titles (1 = yes, 2 = no, 3 = don't know, 4 = doesn't apply). Affirmative answers (i.e., yes = 1) to the policy options available were combined into a sum score (0-7 = possible range, with higher scores indicating more rainbow affirmative policies).

Rainbow Non-Affirmative Policy in Schools

Rainbow participants were asked whether five possible domains of non-affirmative rainbow policy were present in their school. These were students being disciplined for wearing rainbow support items and displaying rainbow public affection that is not disciplined for non-rainbow students. Furthermore, students were prevented from doing projects on rainbow topics, using a bathroom that matched their gender identity and staying on overnight trips with students that aligned with their gender identity. Answers were recoded where 'neither' was coded as missing and positive endorsement was calculated. An average of the positively endorsed responses was created to determine the mean and standard deviation of non-affirmative rainbow policy.

Rainbow students were also asked if they had been treated unfairly by a teacher because of their rainbow identity (answers were recoded into 1 = yes, 2 = no, 3 = don't know)

or if a teacher or staff member had ever disclosed their rainbow identity without permission that they knew of (1 = yes, 2 = no, 3 = don't know, 4 = doesn't apply).

When considering experiences resulting from non-affirmative policy or a lack of supportive policy, rainbow students were asked if they had ever experienced any of the seven listed domains. These included: hearing 'that's so gay' to describe something or someone in a bad way; someone did something that assumed the participant was cisgender or heterosexual; lost a friend after coming out; was asked to educate someone on rainbow issues involuntarily; heard someone say rainbow identities are a phase; someone did something that assumed the participant was not intersex; someone made them feel like they were in the wrong bathroom or changing area because of their gender. Participants were able to select all that apply and the affirmative answers were calculated into a sum.

Allyship Attitudes and Behaviours

Non-rainbow participants completed questions about allyship attitudes and behaviours. Allyship attitudes were assessed by asking participants how much they agreed or disagreed with seven allyship-related prompts including: having a generally positive attitude towards rainbow people; feeling comfortable hanging out with rainbow people; wanting to be more like rainbow people; being interested in understanding rainbow people's point of view; wanting to have more rainbow friends; being interested in hearing about rainbow people's experiences; feeling inspired by rainbow people. These items were scored on a five-point scale from 1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree. In order to mirror the dichotomised nature of the other data, I recoded participants' responses such that participants were assigned 1 if they selected "strongly agree" or "agree" in response to each question, and 0 if they selected any other option.

Secondly, non-rainbow participants were asked how often they engage in five different allyship behaviours to show support for the rainbow community, including: stepping

in when hearing negative things being said about rainbow people by classmates, co-workers or family members; standing up for rainbow people when people talk badly about their identity behind their backs; being involved in their local QSA or rainbow diversity group; regularly attending rainbow protests or events; wearing visible signals of rainbow support items like badges or t-shirts. These domains were also scored on a five-point scale, from 1 = never to 5 = always (participants could also indicate 6 = doesn't apply). The affirmative answers to these questions, 4 = often and 5 = always, were recoded as 1 with all other options recoded as 0, to create a positive endorsement score. In addition to the frequency of engaging in these behaviours, participants were asked how important they thought these allyship behaviours were. Items were scored on a five-point scale from 1 = very important to 5 = not important at all. The affirmative answers to these questions, 1= very important and 2 = important, were recoded as 1 with all other options recoded as 0, to create a positive endorsement score.

Perceived Support

Rainbow participants responded to seven questions about perceived support in the school setting, including: feeling a part of their school; their teachers expecting them to do well; feeling that their teachers care about them; being treated with as much respect as other students; trying hard to do their best work at school; students having a say in school decisions; being clear of what the school rules are for students. These domains were scored on a five-point scale from 1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree. Affirmative answers to these questions, 1 = strongly agree and 2 = agree, were recoded to 1 to find the positive endorsement score, with other answers recoded to be 0. In addition, rainbow participants responded to a question: "In general, how supportive would you say your school is of rainbow students?". Participants answered this question on a scale from 1 = very supportive

to 5 = not supportive at all. To find the total affirmative endorsement to this question 1 = very supportive and 2 = supportive were recoded to 1, with other answers recoded to be 0.

Sense of Safety

Rainbow participants rated their sense of safety at their latest or current§ school as a rainbow person from 1 = very safe to 6 = very unsafe. To find the total affirmative endorsement for this question, 1 = very safe and 2 = safe were recoded to 1, with other answers recoded to be 0. In addition, rainbow participants were asked how many days they had not gone to school in the past four weeks because they were afraid of bullying and harassment. The options were between 1 = zero days and 5 = six or more days.

A further question asked participants what spaces they felt unsafe in when they were feeling unsafe as a rainbow person at school. Participants could select any of the 13 listed options and these included classrooms, bathrooms or changing areas, getting to and from school and school health services, among others. Alternatively, participants could indicate 'I have not felt safe in any spaces at school.' I created a sum of scores for the endorsement of unsafe spaces at school, in total 0-13 (with higher scores indicating more unsafe spaces at school).

Sense of Pride

Rainbow participants were asked how much they agreed with the five aspects of rainbow-related pride. Prompts included: "I am proud of my rainbow identity," "I feel a connection to other rainbow people," "participating in rainbow events is a positive thing for me," "it's important for me to be politically active in the rainbow community," and "there is someone in the rainbow community who I think of as a role model or mentor." Participants rated their agreement with each statement on a five-point scale from 1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree. I recoded the answers to combine 1 = strongly agree and 2 = agree as an

affirmative 1, with all other answers as 0, before creating an affirmative sum of scores for the endorsement of rainbow participants' sense of pride in their rainbow identity.

Procedure

The Identify Survey team administered all study procedures online via Qualtrics. Potential participants were first directed to read the study's information sheet and provide informed consent. Participants could not participate in the survey without providing informed consent, indicated by selecting "I give consent to take the survey" at the end of the information sheet. Once consent was provided, participants proceeded to answer survey questions for approximately 30 to 40 minutes. At the end of the survey, all participants were offered a small koha (stickers) for sharing their experiences if they wished to receive it as outlined in the information sheet for participants.

Data Analysis

The Identify Survey team provided raw survey data for the questions that I required from the survey which had already been collected and cleaned, but not scored. SPSS version 29.0.0.0 was used to run all analyses.

In study 1, I ran descriptive statistics to examine the variables of interest from non-rainbow respondents for each domain: rainbow content in lessons, rainbow affirmative policies in schools, rainbow non-affirmative policy in schools, allyship attitudes and behaviours, perceived support, sense of safety, sense of pride. Descriptives and frequencies were run for each domain and the sum of each domain (e.g., all the measures under rainbow non-affirmative policy were added to find the overall average for that domain). In order to test hypothesis 1 (that inclusive content and policy will predict allyship behaviours and attitudes among non-rainbow students), regression models were run to predict allyship behaviour and attitudes from non-rainbow endorsed content and policy.

In study 2, I ran descriptive statistics to examine the variables of interest for each domain: perceived support, sense of safety, places rainbow students and sense of pride. Descriptive and frequencies were run for each domain and the sum of each domain. In order to test hypothesis 2 (that inclusive content and policy will predict perceived support, safety and pride among rainbow students), regression models were run to predict perceived support, perceived safety and sense of pride from rainbow endorsed content and policy.

Chapter 4: Results

Study 1

In Study 1, I evaluated the relationship between rainbow school policy and allyship attitudes and behaviours, and the relationship between rainbow school content and allyship attitudes and behaviours.

Descriptive Statistics

Overall, non-rainbow participants reported low exposure to rainbow content during their school lessons. Higher numbers of non-rainbow participants had been taught about positive rainbow topics (13.13%) than negative rainbow topics (2.99%). Only 6.91% of non-rainbow participants reported being taught anything about intersex topics and 9.68% of non-rainbow participants reported availability of rainbow resources in their school.

Rainbow affirmative school policies were also reported infrequently by non-rainbow participants. Of the non-rainbow participants, 26.04% identified school as a supportive place for rainbow people, endorsing at an average of 3.09 (SD = 0.95). Additionally, 28.57% of participants said their school displays rainbow support symbols and 25.12% of participants schools have a Queer Straight Alliance (QSA) or diversity group for rainbow and non-rainbow students to attend. Further analysis showed that 81.65% of non-rainbow participants who endorsed having a QSA, believed their school QSA or diversity group made their school a better place for rainbow students.

Overall, non-rainbow participants reported low rates of their school disciplining rainbow affirmative behaviour, with participants endorsing an average of 1.28 of a possible 3 topics (SD = 0.53). This included 4.61% of non-rainbow participants witnessing rainbow students being disciplined for wearing rainbow clothing items or supporting rainbow issues. Additionally, 3.46% of participants had witnessed rainbow public displays of affection being disciplined, despite the same displays not being disciplined between non-rainbow people.

Being disciplined for identifying as a rainbow person was endorsed by 0.46% of non-rainbow students. Regarding the prevention of rainbow affirmative activities, non-rainbow student participants endorsed an average of 1.26 of a possible 3 topics (SD = 0.54). For example, the prevention of writing about or doing projects on rainbow issues in class was endorsed by 1.61% of non-rainbow student participants. A higher rate of 2.99% was endorsed for witnessing rainbow students being prevented from using a bathroom that matches their identity, compared to 2.07% who endorsed a student being prevented from sleeping in the same place as students of the same gender identity on overnight trips.

Self-reported allyship attitudes were reasonably high, with non-rainbow participants endorsing 4.20 out of 7 possible topics regarding rainbow positive attitude (*SD* = 1.93). For example, 84.79% of non-rainbow respondents selected “strongly agree” or “agree” in response to a question about having a positive attitude toward rainbow people. Similarly, 84.33% of non-rainbow respondents selected “strongly agree” or “agree” in response to a question about their comfort when hanging out with rainbow people. Only 33.41% of non-rainbow participants selected “strongly agree” or “agree” when considering if they want to be more like rainbow people, compared to 65.89% who selected “strongly agree” or “agree” in response to being inspired by rainbow people. A total 79.49% of non-rainbow participants selected “strongly agree” or “agree” in response to a question indicating that they are interested in understanding rainbow peoples’ point of view, similar to 77.42% who are interested in hearing the experiences of rainbow people. Additionally, 50.92% of non-rainbow participants “strongly agree” or “agree” that they would like to have more rainbow friends.

Allyship behaviours were endorsed less frequently than allyship attitudes. Non-rainbow participants reported undertaking allyship behaviours across an average of 1.60 out of a possible five domains (*SD* = 1.23). Most (55.76%) non-rainbow participants selected

"often" or "always" for both stepping in when they heard negative talk about rainbow people (72.12% described this as an important allyship behaviour), and for standing up for rainbow classmates if hearing negative talk about their gender or sexuality behind their backs (of which 72.58% described as an important allyship behaviour). Only 9.21% of non-rainbow participants were involved in their local QSA (however, 29.95% considered this an important allyship behaviour) and similarly 8.99% regularly attend rainbow events, such as Big Gay Out and Pride March (whereas 44.24% considered this an important allyship behaviour). Only 13.36% of non-rainbow participants reported wearing rainbow support items such as t-shirts and bracelets and 25.36% of these participants considered this important allyship behaviour.

Predicting allyship attitudes from rainbow inclusive school content

To assess my first hypothesis that rainbow inclusive content would predict allyship attitudes among non-rainbow participants, I ran a regression in SPSS, entering rainbow inclusive content sum (inclusive of the 4 items regarding content) as the predictor and allyship attitudes sum (inclusive of the 7 items regarding positive rainbow attitudes) as the outcome variable. Rainbow inclusive content did not significantly predict allyship attitudes, $R^2 = .001$, $F(1, 423) = .24$, $p = .63$.

Predicting allyship attitudes from rainbow inclusive school policies

I ran the next regression entering inclusive policy sum (inclusive of the 3 items regarding supportive school policies) as the predictor and allyship attitudes sum as the outcome variable. Rainbow inclusive policy did not significantly predict allyship attitudes, $R^2 = .003$, $F(1, 423) = 1.08$, $p = .29$.

Predicting allyship behaviours from rainbow inclusive school content

On assessment of my second hypothesis that rainbow inclusive content would predict allyship behaviour, a similar relationship was found to the first hypothesis. I ran the next

regression entering inclusive content sum as the predictor and allyship behaviours sum (inclusive of 5 items regarding rainbow inclusive behaviours) as the outcome variable. Rainbow inclusive content did not significantly predict allyship behaviours, $R^2 = .00$, $F(1, 386) = .04$, $p = .85$.

Predicting allyship behaviours from rainbow inclusive school policies

Further examination of regression analysis shows another weak relationship. I ran the next regression entering inclusive policy sum as the predictor and allyship behvaiours sum as the outcome variable. Rainbow inclusive policy did not significantly predict allyship behaviours, $R^2 = .001$, $F(1, 386) = .39$, $p = .53$.

Study 2

In study 2, I evaluated both the relationships between rainbow inclusive content and policy with outcomes for rainbow students, including perceived support at school, perceived safety at school, and pride in their rainbow identity.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 4 shows the endorsement of rainbow content and policy, both affirmative and non-affirmative, by rainbow students.

Firstly, rainbow content in lessons was endorsed in low levels by rainbow students overall. Positive rainbow topics were endorsed by 10.86% of participants and negative rainbow topics were endorsed by 5.58%. The availability of rainbow resources, such as books in the library, was endorsed by 11.82% of rainbow students. In overview, rainbow students endorsed 0.28 out of a possible three topics (SD = 0.61).

Rainbow students endorsed an average of 3.22 (SD = 1.57) out of a possible 7 affirmative school policies. Specifically, 22.40% reported that their school allowed them to bring a same sex partner to the ball, 19.95% reported that their school allowed for the changing of gender markers or names on school records, 15.46% endorsed that students can

wear either the boys' or girls' uniform as they wished, 14.48% reported that their school has a gender neutral dress code, 14.29% of rainbow students reported that their school has gender neutral bathrooms, 12.32% endorsed that students were able to participate in cultural activities, such as kapa haka, in their chosen gender and 7.93% reported leadership roles without gendered titles (e.g., alternatives to Head Boy and Head Girl).

There was low overall endorsement for non-affirmative rainbow school policy. Respondents endorsed 1.71 out of a possible 6 topics (SD = 1.09). In terms of what students may be disciplined for, wearing rainbow support items was endorsed by 7.66% of respondents and public affection of rainbow students (which is not disciplined for non-rainbow students) was endorsed by 6.91% of respondents. Regarding what rainbow students had been prevented from doing, 4.85% endorsed being prevented from doing classroom projects on rainbow topics. Similarly, 4.54% endorsed being prevented from using a bathroom that matches their gender identity whereas 3.18% were prevented from staying on overnight trips with students of their same gender identity.

Overall, rainbow students reported a reasonable sense of support at school with participants endorsing on average 4.08 out of 7 possible topics (SD = 1.79) (see table 3). However, 21.78% of rainbow students thought their school was either supportive or very supportive of rainbow students. For example, 34.20% of students thought their teacher expected them to do well, 20.76% thought their teachers cared about them and 27.40% of students tried hard at school. Also, 17.74% of rainbow students felt a part of their school and 14.15% believed students had a say in school decisions. Only 26.00% thought school had clear rules for students and 22.84% of students thought that they were treated with equal respect to others within the school environment.

The perceived safety of students was endorsed in a low rate with only 9.67% of rainbow students describing feeling safe or very safe.

There were a number of places where rainbow students described feeling unsafe. Of a total 12 possible places, rainbow students categorised on average 4.84 (SD = 2.61) of these places as unsafe (see table 3). Some of the higher rated locations where students reported feeling unsafe were a classroom at 4.89%, a bathroom at 4.39% and in a corridor at 3.18%. Compared to some lower rated locations, such as in a school QSA at 0.96%, when accessing health services at 1.08% and in a cultural group at 0.96%. Just 0.08% of rainbow students reported not feeling unsafe in any space.

Overall rainbow student participants reported reasonable levels of outness, of which students have personally come out to someone. For example, 33.58% of participants were out to their close friends and 18.39% of participants were out to other classmates. There were lower rates of disclosure to adults in the school environment, such as 14.85% of rainbow students who were out to a teacher compared to 6.01% who were out to a Principal or Dean.

There were a number of participants who believed people knew about their rainbow identity due to the disclosure of this information through someone else and not from the student themselves,. For example, 36.55% of rainbow participants believed their close friends knew about their rainbow identity compared to 26.02% believing their classmates knew. There were once again lower rates for adults at the school, with 20.69% believing a teacher knew and 9.76% believing the Principal or Dean knew. Furthermore, 0.29% of participants had not told anyone and 1.87% of participants believed no one at their school knew.

Interestingly, rates of staff knowing students' pronouns was very low. Only 2.54% of gender diverse rainbow participants endorsed all staff knowing their pronouns and 3.66% endorsed that most staff know their pronouns.

There was overall average of 3.48 (SD = 1.27) out of a possible 5 topics endorsed by participants for rainbow students' sense of pride. For example, 71.15% of rainbow students were proud of their identity and 64.66% felt a connection to other rainbow people. Only

58.35% thought that participating in rainbow events was a positive experience for them. Even lower rates were recorded for rainbow participants with 51.40% thinking it's important to be politically active in the rainbow community and only 42.13% having someone in the rainbow community as a role model to them.

Predicting perceived support from rainbow inclusive school content

To assess my first hypothesis for study two, that inclusive rainbow content would predict higher support perceived by rainbow students, I ran a regression in SPSS, entering rainbow content sum (inclusive of 3 items regarding content) as the predictor and perceived support sum (inclusive of 7 items regarding perceived support) as the outcome variable. Rainbow inclusive content did not significantly predict perceived support, $R^2 = .013$, $F(1, 1920) = 24.83$, $p = <.001$.

Predicting perceived safety from rainbow inclusive school content

I ran the next regression entering inclusive content sum as the predictor and perceived safety sum (inclusive of the 13 items regarding safety) as the outcome variable for rainbow students. Rainbow inclusive content did not significantly predict perceived safety, $R^2 = .000$, $F(1, 1190) = .03$, $p = .86$.

Predicting perceived pride from rainbow inclusive school content

The next regression I ran was by entering inclusive content sum as the predictor and perceived pride sum (inclusive of 5 items regarding sense of pride) as the outcome variable for rainbow students. Rainbow inclusive content did not significantly predict perceived pride, $R^2 = .007$, $F(1, 3969) = 29.13$, $p = <.001$.

Predicting perceived support from rainbow inclusive school policy

To asses my second hypothesis for study two, that inclusive rainbow policy would predict higher support perceived by rainbow students, I ran a regression entering inclusive policy sum (inclusive of 8 items regrading school policy) as the predictor and perceived

support sum as the outcome variable for rainbow students. Rainbow inclusive content did not significantly predict perceived support, $R^2 = .005$, $F(1, 1702) = 9.12$, $p = .003$.

Predicting perceived safety from rainbow inclusive school policy

Next, I ran a regression entering inclusive policy sum as the predictor and perceived safety sum as the outcome variable for rainbow students. Rainbow inclusive policy did not significantly predict perceived safety, $R^2 = .001$, $F(1, 1105) = 1.09$, $p = .29$.

Predicting perceived pride from rainbow inclusive school policy

I ran the next regression entering inclusive policy sum as the predictor and perceived pride sum as the outcome variable for rainbow students. Rainbow inclusive policy did not significantly predict perceived pride, $R^2 = .005$, $F(1, 1556) = 7.43$, $p = .006$.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This thesis sought to explore the impact of rainbow inclusive curricula and school policies on both non-rainbow and rainbow students using the national Identify Survey 2022 dataset. The research consisted of two studies. Study one examined the relationship between rainbow-inclusive content and policies, and allyship behaviours and attitudes. It was predicted that the presence of inclusive content and policy would increase the frequency of allyship behaviours and attitudes among non-rainbow students. Study two examined the relationship between perceived support, safety and pride for rainbow students with both inclusive content and policy. It was predicted that the presence of inclusive content and policy would increase the frequency of perceived support, safety and pride among rainbow students.

The Impact of Inclusive Education on Non-Rainbow Students (Study 1)

Inclusive Content

Overall, results demonstrated low rates of inclusive educational content offered in New Zealand classrooms. This was true regardless of whether the content was positive or negative. There were higher rates of positive topics (13.1%) compared to negative topics (3.0%), which is encouraging. Similarly, there was limited availability to rainbow resources specifically in the school library. These were specified to resources that contain helpful information about rainbow people, history, events or topics. While not many students selected yes, it is highly likely that non-rainbow students will be unsure of the availability of these resources.

Perceived Support

In Study 1, only 26.04% of non-rainbow students from this New Zealand based sample agree that their school was supportive of rainbow students. As a way to show this support, 28.57% of student respondents reported that their schools displayed posters or

symbols that supported rainbow people. Displaying these signs would be a vocal and public way for a school to express consideration for the rainbow community and create a rainbow-friendly space (Fraser et al., 2022).

A school that shows support to rainbow students through policy and content, functions as an example to non-rainbow students of how they are expected to act toward rainbow students (Green et al., 2018). A school can do so at a physical symbolic level but also a systematic and structural level too through their leadership teams' behaviour. If staff and students are behaving or speaking inappropriately about rainbow students then the values of the school will be displayed as anti-rainbow stigma. The result of having an unsupportive school environment to non-rainbow, is the likelihood for them to minimize their allyship behaviour and attitudes (Kosciw et al., 2013). Someone who is supportive of the rainbow community but sees others being unsupportive, is less likely to display allyship behaviour or attitudes as doing this against a staunch system is a risk taking behaviour (Cooper et al., 2014).

Inclusive Policy

Though the international literature suggests that a QSA is one of the best places to increase allyship behaviours and safety (Griffin et al., 2004), 25.12% of non-rainbow participants reported having a QSA at their school. The low prevalence of QSAs within this New Zealand sample is perhaps unsurprising given to this samples' perceived overall low support for the rainbow community in schools. However, 81.65% of non-rainbow students who did report having a QSA indicated that the QSA was helpful in making the school a better place for rainbow students. This is encouraging because there is, at present, a lack of literature specific to New Zealand to suggest that implementation of QSAs would be helpful for students. Although, from international literature such as Russell et al. (2021) there are strong correlations to understanding the outcomes of a QSA which align with the present

study findings. Further studies are recommended with a New Zealand sample, to determine how much implementing a QSA can increase allyship attitidues and behaviours, and the environment for rainbow students.

Just over 9% of non-rainbow participants were involved in their school's QSA, less than half of the participants who reported having access to a QSA. This shows that, again, about half of participants are displaying allyship behaviour. What would be interesting for future studies would be understand why more non-rainbow students aren't involved in their school QSA if there is already access to one, which could provide recommendations on how to increase attendance.

Allyship Attitudes

The majority (84.79%) of participants claim to have positive attitudes towards rainbow people, which is encouraging when considering the importance of non-rainbow students' attitudes on a rainbow students school experience. The present study also found that most (79.49%) non-rainbow participants were interested in understanding rainbow peoples' point of view and wanted to hear about their experiences, indicating that non-rainbow participants had a vested interest in the lives of rainbow people and wanted to ensure that they understand what they are experiencing. Non-rainbow students generally (84.79%) held positive attitudes towards rainbow people and felt comfortable when spending time with them (84.33%). The allyship attitudes of non-rainbow participants in our study show high rates of rainbow-inclusivity. Openness to diversity, such as displaying allyship tendencies, helps students to understand and respect diverse viewpoints, values, customs and languages (*Cultural Diversity Principle*, 2020).

With regard to allyship attitudes, the majority (84.33%) of non-rainbow students described themselves as comfortable spending time with rainbow people. There is potential that the remaining participants selected that they felt neutral or uncomfortable because of

unconscious bias that is created from birth in a heteronormative society. However, it shows that non-rainbow students are comfortable spending time with rainbow people and combined with a positive attitude towards these rainbow people, the non-rainbow students are already displaying allyship behaviours. These are positive findings that are encouraging when considering that schools are not yet actively assisting in the adoption of allyship behaviours through policy and content, and suggests that some of the null findings of the study could be associated with already high levels of allyship regardless of school support.

Surprisingly, only half of non-rainbow participants wanted to have more rainbow friends. Being friends with a rainbow person may diversify a non-rainbow persons' experiences and increase their empathy and understanding for diverse groups generally. However, it is possible, that this sample, which were likely recruited through rainbow friends or connections, already have a considerable group of rainbow friends and may not necessarily believe that new friends must be rainbow in the future. It is also possible that these non-rainbow people may not want to sound tokenistic when considering friendships with rainbow people, so instead felt neutral or disagreed. Other possibilities is that they were considering their own rainbow identity and felt unsure of how to answer the question.

The results of our study showed that just over half (65.89%) of non-rainbow participants agreed that they feel inspired by rainbow people. Rainbow people are often found inspirational because they are able to live as their true selves often despite living in a society that has laws barring rainbow people from marrying (Ball, 2010). It is thought that non-rainbow people are likely to feel inspired by the rainbow community to be themselves and care less about restrictions of social and societal norms (Riggle & Rostosky, 2012).

Allyship Behaviours

What may lack within New Zealand wide rainbow allyship is putting this mentality into action when required. In this sample, allyship behaviours were endorsed at a lower rate

when compared to the endorsement of allyship attitudes. Both stepping in and standing up for the rainbow community when hearing negative talk were endorsed by about half of non-rainbow participants (55.76% for both items). There was a considerably small amount of endorsements for being involved in a QSA (9.21%), regularly attending rainbow events (8.99%) and wearing rainbow support items (13.36%). What this means is that there are more people considering allyship internally, through attitudes, than those who are taking action as allies, through their behaviours. This may be because of stigma or expectation of the environments in which this person wants to be an ally (i.e. school grounds), which could make a non-rainbow person feel unsafe. It is possible that participants struggled to answer due to the available options of never, rarely, sometimes, often, always and doesn't apply. There may not be many circumstances in which the participants found themselves in these situations, so may have also considered this in their answer. Although it can be daunting especially for young people, part of allyship is correcting behaviour that discriminates against the rainbow community. Non-rainbow people who are able to regularly and bravely step in when they hear negative talk about rainbow people and negativity towards the rainbow community show high levels of allyship behaviour (Collier-Spruel & Ryan, 2022). A non-rainbow person doing this is putting themselves on a platform for judgement. Examples of when a non-rainbow person might step in is when they overhear someone talking badly about someone because of their rainbow identity, or about the rainbow community in general. Often times the people saying these things are ignorant to the effect of their words and so a disruption to this behaviour is likely to be impactful (Prayson & Rowe, 2019). It can be difficult to do this however, especially if someone does not have the tools to do this in a safe and effective manner.

Providing support directly for allyship behaviour would be a simple way to increase the number of non-rainbow people who are willing and able to step in when they hear

negative talk about rainbow people behind their backs. It is possible, but unlikely given the low perceived rainbow support in schools, that students may have not heard a lot of negative talk about rainbow people behind their backs. Perhaps the non-rainbow participant did not realise that the topic of conversation was negative or that there were no rainbow people present to defend themselves. Furthermore, negative talk towards the rainbow community as witnessed by non-rainbow people can discourage them from engaging in allyship behaviour and going strongly against the grain in general, especially if the comments are coming from faculty. To address this in a future study, adjusting the experimental design to narrow down on the frequency of such experiences first could allow for a more detailed understanding of gaps in allyship behaviours versus the frequency of discrimination experiences. This would allow the issues to be addressed accurately.

The bystander effect (Hudson & Bruckman, 2004) provides explanation for an occurrence such as a non-rainbow person not standing up against rainbow discrimination. What is likely to happen instead is that other students may mimic anti-rainbow behaviour, adding to the tension, making it difficult for one person to interfere. Also, if rainbow students witness the discrimination and realise that their school does not support them, they may experience negative outcomes. Instead, if a student is taught how to notice and diffuse a situation then they could have the confidence to engage in allyship behaviours. It is possible that a lack of inclusive education and policy could be a cause of this, because if students are not expected to respect rainbow people, let alone how to diffuse and shift situations such as this, then they will lack the tools and also the confidence to do so. There is limited research that shows strong evidence to support anti-bullying education in schools. However, a review of literature found that bullying prevention integrated into the curriculum was an effective way to reduce bullying (Silva et al., 2017). This curriculum included exposing content, collective discussion, role-playing and videos that resulted in significant improvement of

bullying rates among children. Although not specific to rainbow students, this is encouraging that curricula based interventions can be successful. Specific to rainbow education, Mikulec & Miller (2017) suggest teaching acceptance of rainbow people if specific content inclusion cannot be afforded and also teaching pride and self-acceptance for rainbow students. They go on to argue that rainbow support and openness are not a part of the typical learning atmosphere for children, which is key to overcome if there is to be any societal diversity taught in schools. Future considerations for inclusive curricula should include both anti-bullying and acceptance education, to ensure that there is suitable education for both rainbow and non-rainbow students.

The majority of students (72.12%) thought that stepping in when they heard negative talk about rainbow people was an important thing to do, which is much higher than the just over half (55.76%) who report actually doing this. Similarly, it was widely supported that it was important to stand up for the rainbow community (72.58%) but in practice only about half (55.76%) of non-rainbow students have done this. The margin of difference between what was deemed important versus what was actually done, was even bigger for attending rainbow events and protests (44.24% of non-rainbow participants perceived this important and 8.99% did this in practice). It is possible that students were unaware of any rainbow events happening in their local community or perhaps they were not able to attend due to age or transportation issues. Therefore, it would appear likely that accessibility may be a barrier to attending rainbow supportive events in practice, especially for young people who rely on others or public transportation. Future studies should seek to understand the reasons behind lack of attendance at these events, covering lack of interest, inaccessibility, imposing on a culture, being unaware of events, age restrictions etc. This could allow for a more detailed understanding of limited attendance and what may be necessary to address for improvement.

My study also showed that being involved in QSA meetings was deemed important by (29.95%) three times as many non-rainbow students as were actually involved in their school QSA (9.21%). While there is it is possibility that students are unaware of what a QSA could provide for them and their rainbow peers, it is also likely that given few schools (25.12%) have QSAs as reported by the participants, students perhaps do not have the access to attend them in the first place. Overall, the pattern is consistent with other reported allyship behaviours, and shows that more people think it is important to be involved than are involved in actuality. Once again, accessibility may be a barrier to attending this rainbow supportive group. Lastly, wearing rainbow support items such as t-shirts, pins and badges also follows the pattern of being deemed important (25.36%) by more people than currently do it (13.36%).

There are many ways to be an ally, but the degree to which people think that allyship behaviours are important may imply intentions of allyship behaviour. If someone doesn't think that allyship behaviours are important, then they may experience significant barriers to allyship. These barriers to allyship can include personality, social identity, and disingenuous intentions which can be influenced, however sometimes are deeply ingrained (Warren et al., 2022). It is likely that the inability to increase allyship behaviour is due to the nature of exclusion and minimal support in New Zealand schools for rainbow students, as shown by our study. Students may think that allyship behaviours are important but can fail to implement them for a number of reasons, including a lack of inclusive curricula, which shows there is change required. Providing greater access to resources that can increase positive allyship behaviours and encourage other students to adopt allyship behaviour making school a safer place for all students to be. If the frequency of standing up for rainbow students increased, then schools might be perceived as safer and more supportive of rainbow students.

Overall, according to the non-rainbow students in Study 1, New Zealand teachers taught the curriculum with limited inclusion of rainbow topics. Non-rainbow students in New Zealand reported that they were rarely taught anything positive about rainbow topics (13.13% had been taught positive topics). This incorporates any classroom subject taught during school including history, social studies, science and mathematics as suggested in the American GLSEN report (Kosciw et al., 2020) where New Zealand specific information is limited. Comparatively, the number of students being taught negative rainbow topics is very low, however cannot be discounted. Understanding that mental health outcomes can be fragile for rainbow students (Hafeez et al., 2017; Proulx et al., 2019)shows that even one negative experience could lead to short and long-term negative outcomes. Therefore, positive topics are not taught in many classrooms throughout New Zealand, according to the non-rainbow students sampled, and negative topics are taught in even less classrooms (2.99% had been taught negative topics). While this is encouraging, we are able to conclude that the inclusion of any rainbow topic in classrooms is very low whether that be positive or negative. The implications of low rainbow inclusion is the alienation of these identities and topics, which delays the introduction and understanding of non-normative identities. Much like dual language understanding, where introduction at a young age leads to stronger social skills and higher receptiveness (Belhap, 2021), early exposure to diverse gender and sexuality might lead to the same, although there is no research available on this at present.

The Impact of Inclusive Education on Rainbow and Non-Rainbow students (Study 2)

Rainbow Student Specific Findings

Inclusive Policy

Once again, exposure to inclusive policy in New Zealand schools is minimal, this time specifically endorsed by rainbow students (i.e. 19.95% endorsing being able to change their name and gender on school records). Policies of current options offered to students

(including but not limited to: gender neutral bathroom availability, being able to change name, take a same sex partner to the ball) are things that a rainbow student may take more notice of than a non-rainbow student. Each of these options currently offered for students were endorsed at low rates by rainbow students. Leadership roles without gendered titles such as Head Girl and Boy were endorsed by 7.93% of rainbow students compared to being able to bring a same-gender partner to the ball being endorsed by 22.4% of rainbow students. These were the lowest and highest endorsed current options available, whereas gender neutral bathrooms and dress code were both endorsed by just over 14% of rainbow participants. The endorsement for each of these options is low, which shows that there were not many rainbow inclusive policies available to students, at least that they are aware of. Previous research (i.e. Russell & Fish, 2016) has found that a lack of supportive policy has detrimental effect on rainbow peoples' adjustment and overall mental health, therefore the low policy support found here suggests detriment may be the resulting outcome for New Zealand students as well.

There are a number of different policies which are likely to affect rainbow students' adjustment and mental health. For example, a student who is unable to wear a gender neutral uniform, or either the boys or girls option, or change their gender marker on school records is unlikely to feel supported as a rainbow student within the school environment. These are all policies that a school can use to promote their acceptance and appreciation of the rainbow community. These options were all endorsed by under 22.40% of rainbow participants. What this shows is that the current options of policy that are available to rainbow students, which provide them with agency over their choices when at school, are fairly limited. This could be because of a lack of policy knowledge, being wary of potential repercussions or fear of being outed. Specifically, these options are likely to affect a transgender or non-binary student because of the nature of these choices. Varied uniform options offer greater self-

determination for all students, as they are able to choose what suits their gender expression and comfort (Evans & Rawlings, 2021). Uniform options also empower cisgender students to challenge gender norms and prioritise their dress preferences (Cohen-Woods & Laattoe, 2019).

Perceived Support

Unsurprisingly due to the present findings, rainbow students in this sample reported feeling poorly supported at school. Their perceived sense of support may be a contributing factor to only 17.74% of rainbow students feeling that they are a part of the school community. It is possible that those who did not endorse this item are likely left feeling like an outsider and alienated from their cohort of fellow students. A similarly low number of rainbow students in New Zealand (14.15%) feel like they have a say in school decisions,. Being able to suggest change or make decisions as a school student allows for autonomy, providing students with an opportunity to express their needs and feel supported in their desires to facilitate their own learning. Additionally, only 20.80% of rainbow students thought that their teachers cared about them even though 34.20% of rainbow students thought their teachers expected them to do well. This describes a potential conflict where it appears as though rainbow students know that their teachers want them to succeed in their education but are less interested in knowing them as a person. There are many factors that may contribute to these findings, including big class sizes in larger schools and teacher-student relationships being more exclusive (Muller, 2001). This exclusion is likely to be discouraging for some students and shows that rainbow students may be lacking personal connection to their teachers, which would be non-beneficial to their connection and involvement in the school. Interestingly, the 20.80% of rainbow students who thought that their teachers cared about them is very similar to the 22.76% of rainbow students who felt that they were treated with equal respect to other students. When considering this together, is it possible to think that

students believe teachers care more about their peers, potentially non-rainbow students, and therefore treat those students with more respect. This is worrying because we know that students who feel supported and connected to their teachers and learning achieve higher and go on to succeed generally after school (Cowie & Myers, 2018) but these rainbow students likely do not feel this way. It is possible that rainbow students who feel insecure in their identity could take any small instances, such as the teacher not picking them to answer a question, as a reflection of their rainbow identity and therefore consider themselves as treated with less respect.

Additionally, students who are supported at school are likely to apply themselves more to their studies (Cardinal, 2021). Students are likely to try harder at school if they feel like they are important to and are respected by their teachers, but only a low number of rainbow students in our study, 27.38%, agree that they try hard at school. The implications of not trying hard go beyond the school level and begin to impact the students' academic future. These findings are contrary to the findings of 'The Best Little Boy in the World' hypothesis, which seeks to explain why boys who are not 'out' with their sexual identity achieve highly compared to their heterosexual peers (Pachankis & Hatzenbuehler, 2013). Rainbow students also believe that the rules at their school are not clear which makes it difficult to navigate the school space comfortably and confidently. Again, with such low perceptions of support for rainbow students it is assumed that they will be experiencing a low sense of worth at school.

Overall, this study found that there is a low sense of support that rainbow students feel at school. As a result they are likely to experience low self-efficacy and motivation to succeed at school (Cardinal, 2021). As previously mentioned, low mental health outcomes make an impact beyond the time spent at school and can impact their future both academically and personally. Rainbow students who do go on to succeed higher than the average person in tertiary studies, which is common in New Zealand (Henrickson, 2007), will

end up taking home a lower income than what is expected (Fenaughty, 2021). On a personal level, poor mental health outcomes due to feeling disconnected at school can be debilitating even into adulthood (Cowie & Myers, 2018).

Perceived Safety

In terms of rainbow students' perceived sense of safety, overall they felt unsafe. The number of students who would consider themselves to feel safe at school is very low at 9.67%.

A result of feeling unsafe at school is that students will begin to skip classes and even miss whole days of school. Thankfully, only 1.25% of students in this New Zealand sample were missing four or more days of school within that past month. While they may be feeling unsafe and experiencing exclusion and discrimination within the school environment, rainbow people in New Zealand are often experienced in overcoming adversity. Though a small country, rainbow people are highly vulnerable to bullying and discrimination in New Zealand which causes rainbow young people to worry frequently (Fraser et al., 2022). The daily social challenges of being rainbow are immense, but these young people still often choose to publicly identify regardless of what challenges will arise. Being self-identified as rainbow at school is something that few rainbow students experience, with 33.58% of participants in the present study feeling comfortable enough to disclose their rainbow identity to their close friends.

When looking at where rainbow students feel specifically unsafe, there is not one location that is considerably less safe than the others. In fact, all the responses are fairly low when considering how many students do not feel safe at school. However, the two main locations for lack of safety were in a classroom and in a bathroom, endorsed at 4.89% and 4.39% each. In other words, these settings are where a teacher usually is and in a private setting where teachers usually are not present. It is interesting to note the lack of pattern here

regarding presence of teachers. One explanation could be that a lack of content and policy regarding respect for rainbow identities, tells non-rainbow students that a blind eye will be turned toward rainbow discrimination. A teacher who is allowing anti-rainbow bullying to occur in their classroom may become a catalyst for the normality of anti-rainbow behaviour. However, a teacher who interrupts discriminatory language but does not address it as annti-rainbow, is not working to break down heterosexism in their classroom. The teachers may be apprehensive to further discipline students on anti-rainbow behaviour in case they experience any repercussions. Exclusion in this way is troubling on a broader level than just for rainbow students alone, as the general bullying is left unaddressed and as a result may increase in frequency.

On the other hand, a student who is made to feel unsafe in the bathroom brings on further health concerns. If a student is being targeted by other students in the bathrooms, then they are likely to try and minimize the chances of needing to use these facilities. As previously mentioned, students who try and not use the bathroom at school are at serious risk of dehydration and urinary tract infections and other physical problems (Jones, 2022). Unfortunately for these students, the bathrooms are often a place that is completely unpatrolled by school staff members. This results in a feeling that the bathroom contains no rules and students are able to get away with bullying and violence. Once again, this highlights the requirement for gender inclusive bathrooms to be made available in all schools as they are typically individual, allowing all students to access a private and safe space.

It makes sense that when a student does not feel included or represented within the curriculum and are also experiencing anti-rainbow discrimination in the school environment, that they are likely to feel unsafe. However, my prediction was incorrect as there is no considerable relationship between policy and content with perceived safety. There is almost no inclusive and affirmative policy or content in New Zealand schools which may lead to

rainbow students feeling unsupported and unsafe in that environment. So, if there is no inclusivity in the curriculum or school policies then rainbow students at that school are likely to feel unsafe and unsupported, carrying with it many significant issues as a result.

Perceived Pride

Overall, rainbow students in this New Zealand sample had a reasonable sense of self-pride for their rainbow identity. The majority (71.15%) of rainbow students feel proud of their rainbow identity and 64.66% feel connected to other rainbow people. It would be interesting to find out where this connection comes from, as I imagine that online connection may be quite a significant contributor to this statistic. Given the rise of connection through online platforms, such as Instagram and TikTok, I assume that this is where these people are likely to connect to other rainbow people (DeHaan et al., 2013; Han et al., 2019).

Finding connections within the rainbow community can also materialise through rainbow events and help rainbow people to locate role models. A total of 58.35% of rainbow people endorsed that participating in rainbow events is a positive experience for them, which may seem like a fairly low number. However, we already know that most rainbow events happen in the bigger cities of New Zealand and are potentially inaccessible for young people, especially those under 18 if the events are in age restricted locations. Therefore, it is possible that many of the participants are yet to have access to attend a rainbow event and determine whether this is a positive experience for them. Also, 42.13% of respondents endorsed that they have a role model in the rainbow community. While many access issues may be similar to those that could be restricting event attendance, having role models can also be accessed through online platforms. However, those rainbow people with an inaccessible role model are highly likely to experience distress in comparison to those with an accessible role model (Bird et al., 2012). This previous study also noted that the majority of their participants with a role model report them being inaccessible, which is highly likely the case in the present study

as well. No matter where rainbow people are finding their role models, they are important people to have access to in order to access support, mentorship and positive leadership (Bird et al., 2012).

Overall, levels of pride within rainbow students in New Zealand is quite high (71.15%). Pride is likely influenced by self-efficacy and self-worth, which can be influenced by a number of things such as interpersonal relationships, which in school is likely to be with their friends and staff members (Muller, 2001). A school that fosters a supportive environment for rainbow people, through policy and content, may have increased pride felt within their rainbow students. In the present study policy and content was not well endorsed by rainbow participants, although their pride was reasonably high. This was inconsistent with my prediction, however, may show the significance of online or after-school engagement with rainbow affirming environments. While most participants endorsed being proud of their identity, a hostile school environment could explain those who did not endorse this item. Rainbow students are likely to pick up on subtle anti-rainbow incidents through the school and as a result feel unsafe to be proud of their rainbow identity when at school.

Inclusive Content Comparison

To provide a more detailed understanding of the outcomes of inclusive education in New Zealand, Study 2 compared the experiences of non-rainbow participants to the experiences of rainbow participants. When analysing positive and negative rainbow inclusion at school the differences are slight for both groups' low totals. Although, rainbow students reported slightly higher rates of negative topics (5.57%) than non-rainbow students (2.99%). It is likely that this difference is due to the nature of rainbow students being more conscious of inclusion and critical of how it is presented compared to non-rainbow students. When a rainbow student hears anything remotely inclusive of diverse gender and sexual identities they are likely to notice and remember. Therefore, it is likely that rainbow students would

report more negative topics compared to non-rainbow students who may be less likely to remember when asked. Positive topic inclusion was more frequently reported by non-rainbow than rainbow students which may be due to similar reasoning. This could be because of rainbow students being critical to how rainbow inclusive teaching is presented and may not consider something specifically 'rainbow related' when a non-rainbow student does. This would explain why there is similar but slightly higher endorsing of positive rainbow topics for rainbow students (10.86%) compared to non-rainbow students (13.13%).

In terms of rainbow resources being available in the library, there was low availability endorsed by both non-rainbow (9.68%) and rainbow students (11.82%). The question, which was asked to both groups, suggested that rainbow library resources are books which contain helpful information about rainbow people, history, events or topics. Having access to rainbow resources was endorsed by a very low number of students from either population, which is concerning for students nationwide. It is possible that this resources are not grouped together (i.e. in a Pride section) so students would have to know where to go to access them. Perhaps the nationwide lockdowns, occurring from 2020 to 2022, had a direct impact on the accessibility of the library. Not having access to positive inclusive resources can add to the risks that rainbow adolescents face (Simpson, 2006). It is essential that inclusive resources are engaging and generally enjoyable for the age that they are targeting to increase engagement. Furthermore, rainbow students desire inclusive resources (Wexelbaum, 2018) because seeing positive representation is essential for healthy development of identity and results in decreased absenteeism and lower experiences of victimisation (Greytak et al., 2013). For non-rainbow students and rainbow students alike, having inclusive books sends messages of normality for diverse identities and family types (i.e., not nuclear families) for students who may have rainbow family, friends or neighbours (Simpson, 2006). Simpson (2006) explains that beyond having representable rainbow resources, it is essential that

librarians are approachable when asked to locate these books. If a student cannot easily access these resources, then they become ineffective and pointless. Furthermore, students are potentially outing themselves by approaching librarians to find these books which is a huge risk for young rainbow people (Simpson, 2006). Ensuring that positive inclusive resources are available and easy to find, with librarians who are equipped to help students and keep their anonymity is essential in schools.

Inclusive Policy Comparison

Thankfully, the results of the current study show that there was more inclusiveness when it comes to school policies than school content according to the participants. It is likely that rainbow students are more tuned in to the inclusive policies and curriculum in their school.

There was a number of further findings that showed differences in perception of an inclusive school when comparing non-rainbow to rainbow students. For instance, a gender-neutral dress code and options for students to wear either gender of uniform was endorsed higher by rainbow (14.48%) than non-rainbow students (4.15%), likely because rainbow students were more aware of the availability. However, the number of rainbow students who knew they could wear whatever uniform they wished was still low at 15.46%. It is possible that a number of rainbow students were not aware of dress code options because they did not feel safe to find out the answer as this question could put them at risk of being outed. Rainbow students could also be too afraid to wear different uniform in case they experience backlash. Unsurprisingly, dress is a reasonably important part of a queer person's gender expression especially for trans or non-binary students (Strübel & Goswami, 2022). This is because dress is a significant part of the image that they put out to the world and can influence how people perceive them. Knowing this, it is surprising that the number of students who can change their uniform within this New Zealand sample is so low. For

example, a student who begins school identifying as a woman and then comes out as non-binary may want to move away from a feminine presenting uniform such as a skirt and blouse. Instead they may seek to wear shorts and a different style of top. Having these options available for students is an affirmative policy that may also benefit non-rainbow students. A non-rainbow student may wish to support their rainbow friend in changing their uniform, or equally want to change theirs to increase their comfort levels when at school. In sum, a uniform policy that is fluid in its allowances may be beneficial to all students.

Similarly, students bringing same gender partners to the ball was endorsed significantly higher by rainbow students (22.40%) than non-rainbow students (5.76%), again likely because the rainbow students would be ones to seek this as an option and find out whether this was already a school policy (although the number of rainbow students who endorsed this was still relatively low). Allowing a student to bring a same-gender student to the school ball or formal is one policy that is hugely representative of how supportive a school is of their rainbow students (Smith, 2014). If a student is unable to bring a same-gender partner to the ball, then the school is sending messages of heteronormativity to the school cohort and supporting narrative of queer exclusion (Smith, 2014). The ball is a very public and significant school function which is highly anticipated by both students and families of senior students and it provides the school with a very public platform to display allyship, or lack thereof, within the wider community (Painter, 2009). It is a concern that only 22.40% of rainbow students reported being able to bring a same-gender ball partner as prior research shows that ignoring the existence of rainbow students not only harms their mental health but sends a message of unacceptance and homophobia at a systematic level (Scott et al., 2004). For new students who may not have discovered or announced their queerness yet, entering a school with discriminatory policies like this sends a message of shame and wrong-doing from the start. With suicide risk already a significant problem for queer adolescents

(Safren & Heimberg, 1999), it is concerning that schools are still not welcoming and accommodating to the mere existence of students with same-gender attraction. There is a possibility that the student respondents were not yet old enough to be attending a ball, therefore may be unaware of their options.

Some spaces in schools which are necessary to every student, can be difficult to navigate for rainbow students. For example, non-rainbow students noted that there was almost no (0.92%) gender-neutral bathrooms in their schools compared to rainbow students who were slightly higher (14.29%) but still endorsed low. It is likely that rainbow students, which includes transgender and non-binary students, are going to be the students who will seek out the location or availability of gender neutral bathrooms (McGuire et al., 2022). Therefore, it is possible that non-rainbow students will be unaware of gender neutral bathrooms, unless their rainbow friends have pointed these out. The exclusion of gender neutral bathrooms in a school adds risk to rainbow students who desire these facilities as it is known that bathrooms can be a dangerous place, espeically for gender diverse students, because of heteronormative and homophobic societal beliefs (Crissman et al., 2020).

Implications and Future Directions

Ideally, future rainbow research will provide suggestions that faculty engagement will enable students to feel safe, supported and proud at school. It should be the number one priority for the Ministry of Education and classroom teachers alike that every single student is able to go to school and feel like they belong there. At present, rainbow students do not feel like this and non-rainbow students are missing key gaps in diversity education as a result.

Content changes can be easily put in place by schools and may lead to positive changes for rainbow students and non-rainbow students, which would be found if the present study were to be repeated in the future. Simple content changes could include teachers addressing rainbow history and law reform in New Zealand and discussing rainbow topics in

classrooms as they arise. If a topic such as cultural differences, sexual health, reproduction, or historical events in New Zealand is already discussed in the classroom setting, then adding in rainbow inclusivity would be simple and affirming. Similarly, the legalisation of same-gender marriage is an event that put pressure on much of the Western world to follow suit and encouraged allyship behaviour nationwide (Nguyen, 2015). It is important that students in New Zealand understand an extensive history of where they live and what has created the unique culture. In other classes such as geography, social studies and science for instance, inclusive topics could be implemented as casually as discussing other topics such as international cultural differences.

In health classes where sex and sexual health is discussed, inclusive education provides rainbow students with potentially life-changing education. Students who are not provided with education about how to have sex safely with their partner of choice miss out on learning how this can look for them and what protection they need to be safe. For example, a rainbow student who does not learn about risk of HIV may unnecessarily expose themselves and be unaware of safety measures such as PreP and using contraception which could save their lives. Learning to have sex safely is a part of the Ministry's guidelines for health classes however, is possibly not being included in practice as shown by the current studies' low endorsed inclusive content. Schools are able to decide on what sort of education they provide in these classes even though it is known that not including sex education of any sort increases risk taking behaviours and results in dangerous behaviour occurring. By including positive rainbow topics in the classroom, teachers could invite open and expansive discussion for students which promotes diversity in their classroom as well as the school community.

When considering rainbow inclusive policy, there is a number of ways in which schools are able to make simple changes. To begin, schools could meet their obligations to protect the privacy of their rainbow students as outlined by the Ministry of Education. The

data showed a small number of rainbow participants endorsing that all staff knew their pronouns and similarly, a small number of rainbow participants endorsed that a teacher knew about their rainbow identity. These numbers are still significant, even if they are small, because it shows that not many students trust their rainbow identity with their teacher. It is not necessary for a teacher to know a students' rainbow identity, but instead offer all students comfort in understanding by asking a student their preferred name and pronouns. It may be unsafe for a student to use these at home, however teachers can provide a safe place for their students to be themselves.

Furthermore, schools could begin to implement bullying, discrimination and harassment policies with specific information regarding rainbow people. Ensuring that policies outline a zero tolerance for discrimination based on gender, sexuality and sex could protect rainbow students from future harm. This also includes allowing students to bring a partner of their choice to the school ball. Additionally, policies may include specific direction for staff. These can incorporate privacy for students' personal information to minimize outing them, rainbow-focused bullying prevention policies and provide professional development (Kissen, 2002).

Also, allowing students to amend their name and gender marker on their enrolment files and adding gender inclusive uniforms and bathrooms at school are very supportive and affirmative policies. Bathrooms and changing facilities should be able to be used by rainbow students as they feel best aligns with their gender (Sanders & Stryker, 2016). When needed, a supporting peer may need to accompany the rainbow student, or they may choose to seek out a private setting instead. Essentially, teachers need to support students to be safe and comfortable in the bathroom and changing area that they wish to use. In terms of uniform, allowing students to wear whatever uniform they perceive is correct for them could promote rainbow inclusivity. Moreover, this policy can be particularly popular with all students, who

may feel that one uniform is more comfortable for them than another (Cohen-Woods & Laattoe, 2019). For example, a non-rainbow student may not wish to wear a skirt as it is not the most allowing of clothing when it comes to physical activities.

Policies around sport and extra curriculars could also begin to include specific plans for supporting rainbow students. For instance, ensuring transgender students are welcomed in sports is essential to their healthy development (Love, 2014). Staff and coaches of sports teams could look to their school for resources on supporting their rainbow athletes if required. It is vital that New Zealand students are encouraged to take part in extra curriculars, including sport and kapa haka, to promote health, socialisation and cultural understanding (Mazer, 2011).

Another successful policy that should be made available to all schools in New Zealand is a QSA or diversity group. Allowing all students, rainbow or non-rainbow, a place that they can gather to have discussions, be educated, feel safe and make friends is essential for the mental health of rainbow students and their belonging (Kull et al., 2019). Also, a school does not necessarily need to do anything to help run a QSA, provided a staff member and students are sufficient to support it.

There is a large number of other policies that could be included, such as when students are staying on overnight trips and library resources. It would be impossible to highlight them all here. However, InsideOut (2021) provides an extensive and detailed resource that can be used by school boards, staff, counsellors and wider communities to support rainbow students. The resource document is only one of many that InsideOut provides on their website. They are also able to provide in school visits to educate staff and students alike and to support schools in implementing inclusive practices.

While the present study was unable to conclude whether inclusive content and policy had an impact on non-rainbow students and rainbow students, previous research supports that

rainbow inclusivity will at least improve outcomes for rainbow students (Garaigordobil & Larrain, 2020; Proulx et al., 2019; Russell & Fish, 2016). Which when considering their presence, is enough of a reason to implement policy and content changes.

When a school should consider implementing inclusive policy and content is up to the individual school. However, the Ministry of Education should enforce the inclusion of inclusivity education for all year levels. This could be as simple as using same-gender couples when talking to children about relationships or asking all students their pronouns. Inclusive curriculum practices do not have to be ground breaking but they could be essential for the normalization of diverse gender and sexual identities.

The implementation of inclusive content and could influence the general behaviour of school students. Although, we were unable to conclude that allyship behaviour will likely increase when inclusivity is incorporated in schools due to the current low rates of inclusivity. This means that it is likely for bullying to be intercepted by allies as it occurs and students will gain more empathetic understandings for diversity. Behaviour that students in New Zealand currently find homophobic and discouraging may include losing friends after coming out, being treated unfairly and hearing non-affirming language. Schools that support students in minimizing this behaviour are promoting inclusivity and a safe space for all students to learn. In the long term, promoting allyship behaviour in schools may equip students to be effective and positive members of society once they leave school too. Which may in future increase into allyship attitudes and behaviours toward all cultures.

There is significant requirement and scope for future research in the area of rainbow inclusivity in schools in New Zealand. At present, there are many gaps, partly due to the low implementation of rainbow inclusivity. Continuing research of how inclusivity effects non-rainbow students is vital to breakdown the narrative that educating inclusively will harm

these students. We know it will not, instead finding it should help to be better citizens in a diversifying world.

There is a lack of quasi-experimental research design within the rainbow scope which minimises the reliability of any conclusion. While the present study does not aim to complete quasi-experimental research given the time frame and available data, future research in the effects of rainbow inclusive education on students would benefit from the use of this design type. It is an important type of research in which an outcome is tested on a group comparative to a control group (Thyer, 2012). In the example of rainbow-inclusive education, one class would receive rainbow-inclusive education and one would not and the measures of allyship, support, safety and pride would be compared to see if exposure to rainbow-inclusive education had a causal effect on allyship behaviours.

Strengths of the Current Investigation

There are many strengths to this project. For example, this project had a sample size of 5241 people. This is a massive sample size for a project of this size that I would not have had the ability to access on my own without the help of the Identify Survey team. This dataset has provided me with a large sample from New Zealand. Participants were of all adolescent ages and identified with a large variety of sexuality and genders. Also, participants were from all parts of New Zealand in both rural and urban settings which allowed for a diverse understanding of different school experiences. Although skewed heavily towards students attending public schools, some students were also from private, Māori, and other schools which again provided a broad understanding of experiences.

In the study there was also a large number of questions about school, friends, teachers, content and policy from both non-rainbow and rainbow samples. From this data I was able to gain the information necessary to complete this study. Although I did not use all of the questions in the survey, what I was able to access was likely more than I could have

collected on my own within the scope of a Masters project. The use of the Identify survey left me with a sample that is extremely diverse, extensive and representative of New Zealand students' experiences.

Limitations of the Current Investigation

There were some limitations in this study. Firstly, the sample size of non-rainbow people is small at only 434 participants. The data is therefore unable to represent non-rainbow people in New Zealand overall. This makes it hard to know if the sample provides enough data to consider topics such as the inclusion of rainbow education in the classroom. The current sample shows that hardly anyone is being taught anything rainbow inclusive, positive or negative. It is likely that a bigger sample size could improve the validity of the results and accuracy of results in New Zealand.

Due to the age range of the sample size, I am unable to make recommendations for primary school aged children. However, it is hard to get access to this sample size both ethically and practically. Gender identity is known to be established first before sexual identity, which is usually explored after primary school and solidified in adolescence (Tasker & Wren, 2002). There are very few people who are out in primary school (Floyd & Bakeman, 2006), although data considering inclusivity would be interesting to collect. It would be useful to know if inclusivity is currently occurring in primary schools before assuming that it is not. Additionally, this survey was collected online and while some primary age students do have their own devices, they are often parent controlled or monitored. This could be a threat to young children who have potentially not yet come out to their parents to be caught accessing this type of survey.

It is unclear whether the online part of this survey barred some adolescents from participating. As I mentioned, doing a survey online leaves a young person with a risk of being outed. Although the survey was also for non-rainbow people, some parents or

caregivers may not be supportive of their child taking part in this type of survey. Many young rainbow people are closeted – scared of disclosing their rainbow identity – because of anti-rainbow discrimination or expected reactions from those that they love. If an adolescent thought that completing the Identify Survey may out them then they are unlikely to participate.

Some non-rainbow participants responses to the gender and sexuality question left me wondering if they had put themselves in the wrong category. There were some responses from non-rainbow participants that put them into the category of a rainbow person when considering their gender and sexualities. For instance, some non-rainbow students said that they were transgender while others said that they identified as gay. This would put them in the rainbow category. However, because they were able to self-identify, they put themselves in the non-rainbow category. It is possible that these people are not out yet or are not comfortable yet in their rainbow identity. Non-rainbow participants were also asked if intersex topics were included in their curriculum when rainbow students were not, which does not allow a comparison between groups when considering the inclusion of this.

Despite these limitations, a lot was learnt during this study. There were many new findings within a New Zealand context that allow for more to be understood about what is and is not included in the New Zealand curriculum. The study provided a platform to explore if allyship was promoted and improved through an inclusive education, a first of its kind. By providing these conclusions it is hoped that the New Zealand Ministry of Education will implement inclusivity measures that can ensure that inclusive education becomes compulsory in all schools. As New Zealand is a small country it is hoped that this could be adopted sooner rather than later, to alleviate prominent stressors that are put on all students resulting from a lack of diverse inclusion.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This thesis used a two-study framework to determine what effects inclusive education would have on rainbow and non-rainbow students in New Zealand schools. For rainbow students, the effects of low rates of curriculum and policy inclusivity were no significant links to perceived support, safety and pride. For non-rainbow students, the effects of low rates of curriculum and policy inclusivity were no significant links to increased allyship behaviours and attitudes. This is the first study in New Zealand that aimed to determine if inclusivity promotes allyship.

There are many recommendations made that would likely aid in increasing the inclusivity of rainbow people in New Zealand classrooms. For example, adding compulsory inclusivity in history, social studies and health classes and ensuring that teachers receive adequate education on the implementation of inclusive education and mitigate the spreading of misinformation. Also, ensuring that students are able to access bathroom and changing facilities that align with their gender identity in a way that is safe and supportive for each individual and increasing support for rainbow students in the school.

Though there were a few limitations to this study, the conclusions are still able to be made confidently to show scope for further research. We are not presently able to conclude whether adopting an inclusive curriculum in New Zealand schools will increase allyship behaviours or attitudes in non-rainbow students or if support, safety and pride will increase for rainbow students. This is because the rates in which inclusivity is currently implemented in New Zealand schools is so low, it is difficult to find any significant relationships. It is possible the lack of significant relationship future studies are needed to show how this would work in the real world.

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Tables

Table 1.

Demographic characteristics of rainbow and non-rainbow participants

	Non-rainbow	Rainbow	Combined
n	434	4807	5241
Age, M	18.79	18.98	18.97
Ethnicity			
Māori	18.10%	15.70%	12.00%
Pākehā	70.10%	81.80%	64.00%
Samoan	5.60%	2.50%	2.00%
Cook Island Māori	1.40%	1.20%	1.00%
Tongan	3.00%	0.70%	0.60%
Niuean	0.20%	0.20%	0.20%
Chinese	6.00%	4.20%	4.00%
Indian	3.90%	2.80%	2.00%
Others	0.00%	17.70%	14.20%
Sex			
Male	30.20%	23.00%	23.08%
Female	67.70%	75.20%	50.33%
Prefer not to say	0.50%	1.50%	1.65%
Intersex	0.50%	0.90%	0.95%
Sexual Orientation			
Gay	1.20%	23.10%	21.30%
Lesbian	0.00%	18.60%	17.10%
Bisexual	5.80%	42.90%	39.90%
Pansexual	1.80%	23.30%	21.50%
Heterosexual	68.90%	0.80%	6.40%
Mostly straight	32.00%	3.00%	5.40%
Takatāpui	0.90%	6.20%	5.70%
Asexual	1.80%	13.40%	12.40%
Queer	0.90%	44.20%	40.60%
Fluid	2.80%	14.70%	13.80%
I'm not sure	2.80%	14.70%	7.10%
Demisexual	2.10%	9.00%	8.40%
Fa'afafine	0.20%	0.10%	0.10%
Something else	2.50%	6.60%	6.30%
Fakaleiti	0.20%	0.00%	0.01%
Aromantic	0.50%	3.90%	3.60%
Location			
Northland	1.60%	1.20%	1.30%

Auckland	35.50%	31.60%	31.90%
Waikato	6.00%	5.50%	5.60%
Bay of Plenty	3.50%	2.40%	2.50%
Gisborne	1.20%	0.40%	0.50%
Hawkes Bay	1.60%	1.60%	1.60%
Taranaki	0.50%	1.50%	1.40%
Manawatu	2.30%	3.60%	3.50%
Wellington	15.40%	21.80%	21.30%
Tasman	0.00%	0.40%	0.30%
Nelson	2.30%	1.00%	1.10%
Marlborough	0.50%	1.00%	0.90%
West Coast	0.20%	0.40%	0.40%
Canterbury	17.10%	15.90%	16.00%
Otago	6.20%	7.10%	7.10%
Southland	0.50%	1.20%	1.20%
Aotearoa	5.80%	3.40%	3.60%

Note. For the simplicity of this table, gender has been kept minimal and will be expanded in another table in the appendices.

Table 2.

Frequencies of rainbow content, school policies and allyship behaviours endorsed by non-rainbow students

	n	*%*	*M (SD)*
Rainbow content in lessons			
Rainbow content taught/offered in classrooms			
Positive topics	57	13.13%	
Negative topics	13	2.99%	
Intersex topics	30	6.91%	
Rainbow resources are available	42	9.68%	
Average number of content domains endorsed*			1.61 (0.73)
Rainbow policies			
Rainbow supportive/affirmative school policy			
School is perceived as supportive	113	26.04%	
Displays rainbow support symbols	124	28.57%	
Has a QSA or diversity group	109	25.12%	
Average number of policy domains endorsed**			3.09 (0.95)
Found the QSA helpful+	89	81.65%	
Rainbow behaviours disciplined			
Wearing rainbow support items	20	4.61%	
Public rainbow affection	15	3.46%	
Identifying as rainbow	2	0.46%	
Average number of discipline domains endorsed**			1.28 (0.53)
Students prevented from doing			
Rainbow projects	7	1.61%	
Using a bathroom that matches their identity	13	2.99%	
Sleeping on overnight trips with same gender identity	9	2.07%	
Average number of prevention domains endorsed**			1.26 (0.54)
Average number of all policy domains endorsed**			1.65 (0.95)
Allyship attitudes			
I have positive attitudes towards rainbow people	368	84.79%	
I feel comfortable when hanging out with rainbow people	366	84.33%	
I want to be more like rainbow people	145	33.41%	
I'm interested in understanding rainbow peoples' point of view	345	79.49%	
I would like to have more rainbow friends	221	50.92%	
I am interested in hearing experiences of rainbow people	336	77.42%	
I feel inspired by rainbow people	286	65.89%	
Average number of attitude domains endorsed****			4.20 (1.93)

Allyship behaviours			
Rainbow positive behaviour type			
I step in when I hear negative talk about rainbow people	242	55.76%	
I stand up for the rainbow community when I hear negativity	242	55.76%	
I am involved in my local QSA	40	9.21%	
I regularly attend rainbow events	39	8.99%	
I wear rainbow support items	58	13.36%	
Average number of behaviour domains endorsed ***			1.60 (1.23)
Perceived importance of rainbow positive behaviour			
Stepping in when I hear negative talk about rainbow people	313	72.12%	
Standing up for the rainbow community when I hear negativity	315	72.58%	
Being involved in my local QSA	130	29.95%	
Regularly attending rainbow events or protests	192	44.24%	
Wearing rainbow support items to show support	110	25.36%	
Average number of importance of behaviour domains endorsed ***			2.91 (1.53)

Note. % = percentage of non-rainbow participants (n = 434).
*out of 4 ** out of 3 *** out of 5 **** out of 7 +of participants who endorsed having a QSA
All of these domains were only answered by non-rainbow participants.

Table 3.

Frequencies of perceived support, safety, outness and pride at school endorsed by rainbow students

	n	*%*	*M (SD)*
Sense of support			
Rainbow student perceived sense of support			
I feel part of my school	853	17.74%	
My teachers expect me to do well	1644	34.20%	
My teachers care about me	998	20.76%	
I am treated with equal respect to others	1098	22.84%	
I try hard at school	1316	27.40%	
Students have a say in school decisions	680	14.15%	
School has clear rules for students	1250	26.00%	
Average number of support domains endorsed*			4.08 (1.79)
School is supportive of rainbow students	1042	21.78%	
Sense of safety			
Rainbow student perceived sense of safety			
Perception of safety at current school			0.39 (0.49)
I agree that I feel safe at my current school	465	9.67%	
4 or more missed days of school in past 4 weeks	60	1.25%	
Places rainbow students have felt unsafe			
In a classroom	235	4.89%	
In a bathroom	211	4.39%	
In a common room	104	2.16%	
In a corridor	153	3.18%	
On the sports fields	122	2.54%	
Getting to and from school	131	2.73%	
At a school function	141	2.93%	
In the counsellors office	63	1.31%	
Accessing health services	52	1.08%	
In the school QSA	42	0.87%	
In a cultural group	46	0.96%	
In another space	103	2.14%	
Average number of unsafe places endorsed**			4.84 (2.61)
Student has not felt unsafe in any spaces	4	0.08%	
Student reported outness			
Who participants have told about their rainbow identity			
Close friends	1614	33.58%	
Other classmates	884	18.39%	
A teacher	714	14.85%	
The guidance counsellor	529	11.00%	

Principal or Dean	289	6.01%	
Another adult at school	227	4.72%	
Who participants think know about their rainbow identity			
My close friends	1757	36.55%	
Other classmates	1251	26.02%	
A teacher	995	20.69%	
The guidance counsellor	634	13.19%	
Principal or Dean	469	9.76%	
Another adult at my school	391	8.13%	
I haven't told anyone	14	0.29%	
Nobody at school knows	90	1.87%	
Number of students who confirm staff know their pronouns			
All staff know pronouns	122	2.54%	
Most staff know pronouns	176	3.66%	
Sense of pride			
Rainbow students' sense of pride			
Proud of their rainbow identity	3420	71.15%	
Feel connection to other rainbow people	3108	64.66%	
Participating in rainbow events is a positive experience	2805	58.35%	
Think it's important to be politically active in rainbow community	2471	51.40%	
There is someone in the rainbow community is a role model	2025	42.13%	
Sum of scores			3.48 (1.27)

Note. * out of 7 ** out of 12

Table 4.

Frequencies of affirmative and non-affirmative content and policy in school endorsed by rainbow students

	n	*%*	*M (SD)*
Rainbow content in lessons			
Positive rainbow topics	522	10.86%	
Negative rainbow topics	268	5.58%	
Availability of rainbow resources	568	11.82%	
Sum of scores			0.28 (0.61)
Rainbow policies			
Rainbow affirmative school policies			
Perceived support from school	186	3.87%	
Current options offered for students			
Gender neutral bathrooms	687	14.29%	
Gender neutral dress code	696	14.48%	
Students can wear boys' or girls' uniforms	743	15.46%	
Students can change name or gender on school records	959	19.95%	
Students can bring a same sex ball partner to the ball	1077	22.40%	
Students can participate in cultural activities in their chosen gender	592	12.32%	
There are leadership roles without gendered titles	381	7.93%	
Average number of available policy domains endorsed*			3.22 (1.57)
Rainbow non-affirmative school policy			
Students disciplined			
Wearing rainbow support items	368	7.66%	
Rainbow public affection that is not disciplined for non-rainbow students	332	6.91%	
Students prevented			
Students are prevented from doing projects on rainbow topics	233	4.85%	
Students have been prevented from using a bathroom matching their gender identity	218	4.54%	
Students are prevented from staying on overnight trips with their gender identity	153	3.18%	
Average number of student prevention domains endorsed**			1.71 (1.09)

Note. * out of 7 ** out of 3

Table 5.

Frequency of self-described genders for all participants (N = 5241)

Gender Label	*n*
Female	2075
Mostly female	16
AFAB	4
Agender woman	4
Female nonbinary	133
Female questioning	43
Feminine/femme	8
Trans female/femme	104
Trans female nb/ fluid	30
Apathetic woman	1
Diverse female	2
Questioning woman	19
Womxn	4
Demigirl	46
Demigirl nb	6
Demigirl nb trans	4
Demigirl trans	2
Demi gender	5
Demiboy	18
Trans demiboy	16
Demiboy nb	14
Demiboy trans nb	5
Neo boy	1
Male	795
Mostly male	5
Male AFAB	1
AFAB demiboy	1
AFAB trans masc	1
Agender trans masc	7
Male nonbinary	21
Femboy	2
Feminine male	4
Feminine trans male	1
Trans male	232
Trans male nb	23
Gender fluid or trans man	2
Apathetic male	1
Diverse male	1
Man queen	4
Queen	2
Questioning male	4
NB trans masc	44
Trans masc	40

Non binary	466
Intersex nb	4
NB transfem	4
Masc NB	13
Trans NB	57
NB questioning	11
Genderfluid trans femme	2
Genderfluid/ no labels	179
Genderfluid trans NB	18
Genderfluid	47
Pangender	2
Genderflux	3
Gender stolen	1
Gender void	1
Gender neutral	2
Genderqueer	31
Genderfae transfemme	5
AFAB	5
AFAB agender	4
AFAB nb trans	2
AFAB nonbinary	7
AFAB questioning	3
Agender trans	3
Agender NB trans	11
Agenderflux	2
Agender NB	24
Akavaine - Cook Isl trans	1
Fa'afafine	2
Fa'atama	1
Fakaleiti - tongan AFAB	1
Takatapui	74
Taerarua	1
Autigender	1
Bigender	10
Bigender NB	4
Bigenderflux	1
Gender non-conforming	13
All genders/ a spectrum/ diverse	15
No gender	19
Questioning or confused	40
No labels	8
Unsure	30
Disconnected	3
Other	41

Note. NB stands for non-binary.
AFAB stands for assigned female at birth.
AMAB stands for assigned male at birth.

Table 6.

Frequencies of inclusive policy and content, and the experiences of rainbow students, and how non-rainbow students perceive rainbow sport inclusion

Variable	*n*	*%*
Rainbow non-affirmative school policy	4807	
Treated unfairly by teacher because of rainbow identity	238	4.95%
Disclosed rainbow identity without permission	170	3.54%
Rainbow non-affirmative experiences		
Heard 'that's so gay'	155	3.22%
Someone thought I was cisgender/ heterosexual	365	7.59%
A friends stopped hanging out after I came out	418	8.69%
I was asked to educate on rainbow topics when I did not offer	298	6.19%
I heard that a rainbow identity is 'just a phase'	195	4.06%
Someone thought I was not intersex	75	1.56%
I was made to feel like I was in the wrong bathroom	1	0.02%
I was allowed to play on sports teams that aligned with my gender	164	3.41%
How well were these topics taught*		
Transgender and non-binary identities	133	2.77%
Diverse sexualities	200	4.16%
Intersex	150	3.12%
Gender/sexuality specific to Māori culture	49	1.02%
Gender/sexuality specific to Pasifika culture	918	19.09%
Transphobic and homophobic bullying	68	1.41%
Healthy relationships	233	4.85%
Sexual protection	1032	21.47%
Sum of scores		1.70 (1.59SD)
Extra non-rainbow questions	434	
Transgender students can play sport in their gender identity	10	2.30%
Transgender students can play sport with no hormone treatment	5	1.15%

Note. 'Transgender students' also incorporates non-binary students.
*Participants endorsed 'well' or 'very well'