FAMILY DIVERSITY IN AUSTRALIAN PICTURE BOOKS

The importance and benefits of exploring diverse family models

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of
the requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

College of Arts & Education
Victoria University

Sarah Jayne Mokrzycki
2021

Publication statement

The following articles were written during candidature and published in the peer-reviewed journals *TEXT* and *Gender Forum*. Segments from these publications are used in Chapters 1 and 2 of this thesis:

Mokrzycki, S 2019, 'Out of sight: the censoring of family diversity in picture books', *TEXT special issue 57: Peripheral Visions,* October 2019.

Mokrzycki, S 2020, 'What makes a family? The radical portrayal of diverse families in Australian picture books', *Gender Forum,* no. 75, pp. 37-52.

Contents

Abstract

Diversity in children's picture books is a topic that has received tremendous momentum in recent years. Movements like We Need Diverse Books show a rising social consciousness regarding the importance of diversity in children's literature. However, the discussion of family diversity – both academically and creatively – remains an area that is often not considered. Picture books play a significant role in the lives of children, and the benefits of representation cannot be overstated (Mokrzycki 2019). Yet, overwhelmingly, picture book families remain 'intact' – the official term used by the Australian government for the two-parent family model. Thus, children from all other family types, like step and blended families, foster families, single parent and grandparent-led families, remain largely unrepresented. Furthermore, families diverse in culture, sexuality, identity, body and mind diversity are equally limited. This PhD by Creative Project responds to this problem by means of a creative work and accompanying exegesis. My creative work takes the form of an original illustrated picture book titled *The rainbow cake*, which centres on a diverse Polish-Australian family. The exegesis challenges preconceived notions of what makes a family 'intact', and examines the benefits family-diverse representation provides. It includes the analysis of 300 picture books (180 Australian and 120 International) to examine trends, patterns and gaps in family representation.

Doctor of Philosophy Declaration

“I, Sarah Mokrzycki, declare that the PhD thesis entitled ‘Family Diversity in Australian Picture Books: The importance and benefits of exploring diverse family models’ is no more than 30,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work”.

Signature: Date:

Dedication

For my family: my three beautiful non-bio babies, my incredible husband and our plethora of rescue animals – proof that biology doesn't make a family 'intact'. I love you all so much x

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my supervisors Dr Tom Clark and Dr Megan Campbell for their invaluable knowledge, insight and guidance. I would also like to thank my first supervisor Dr Jennifer Lee, who believed in this project from the start. This project faced many obstacles – from COVID-19 to foster and permanent care complications – and I would especially like to thank all my supervisors for their unwavering support.

I would like to thank my Confirmation of Candidature, Mid-Candidature and Towards Submission panellists, Associate Professor Dianne Hall, Dr Sue Dodd, Associate Professor Mark Vicars, Sheryl Clark, Associate Professor Mary-Rose McLaren and Dr Natalie Kon-yu for their advice and feedback.

I would like to thank Dr Lesley Birch, Professor Anne-Marie Hede, Nicole Barnes and Megan Garratt from Graduate Research for their help, advice and encouragement, particularly with 3MT. I would especially like to thank Lesley and Megan for their visits to the PhD shared office.

I would also like to thank Dr Rose Lucas, whose mentorship during the Performing the Word Writing Retreat was invaluable, Ann Marie Angebrandt, whose media support made it possible for me to share my research nationally, and Dr Erin Farrow, whose thesis greatly helped me format my own. I also gratefully acknowledge the APA scholarship I received and my research funding from Victoria University.

My warmest thanks to children's authors Claire Saxby and Sue Whiting, who generously shared their time and knowledge, and to Dr Belle Alderman, Ruth Nitschke and the dedicated team at NCACL, whose expertise and support were instrumental to my analytical research.

Thank you to all my family and friends who encouraged and supported me throughout this journey. Extra special thanks to fellow PhD candidates Sean Ryan and Emily Keohane, whose support and friendship helped me more than they can know.

I would like to thank my kids, who inspired this project and who remind me every day how special and extraordinary life is. And finally, I would like to thank my husband, Rob. Words cannot describe how grateful I am for him and everything he has done over the past four years to help me achieve this goal. Rob, I love you so much – thank you x

Preface

A letter to my (foster) son.

Dear Harry,*

This entire project came about because of you. When you were three years old, you fought so hard against your feelings of self-loathing. I longed to help you; to ease some of the heavy weight a lifetime of foster homes had left on your tiny shoulders. I thought a picture book might provide a therapeutic approach; show you that there were other children like you – that you were not alone. I thought seeing yourself in a story, connecting with and relating to a character and their journey, would help give you a sense of belonging. And so the hunt for a relatable picture book began. I scoured libraries, bookshops, publishers' lists; the days turned into weeks and I quickly realised that I had taken for granted that such a book would exist.

I found some books on American and UK-based specialty sites, but they were issue-driven rather than story-driven – explanations rather than narratives. Eventually, I found a picture book that examined childhood anxiety. This was not what I originally sought to find, but it would be useful none the less; as a child with early childhood trauma, anxiety was something you continually struggled with. The story was simple, impactful, the illustrations bold, engaging.

But the little boy in the story lived with his mum and dad. It was not ambiguous; like most picture books they were labelled as such. Mum and Dad. It was final, absolute, a glaring reminder of what you didn't have. A caring mum and dad, who tucked the protagonist in and kissed him goodnight. Why couldn't their identities be left to the reader to decide? Two adults could very well be mum and dad, but unlabelled, they could also be an auntie and uncle, or carers, cousins, older siblings – anything. Now this book, rather than ease your anxiety, would add to it. So I did something I never thought I would do: I took a pair of scissors and altered – *censored* – the book, removing the labelled page.

This act of vandalism served as the catalyst that sparked this research. I started questioning the representation of families in picture books, started noticing the lack of diversity. I still do not feel right about taking scissors to that book; nor will I ever, I suspect. An unforgivable act. And I do not believe that the removing, or censoring, of conventional family types is the answer to the lack of diverse family representation, but rather an acknowledgment and

understanding of family diversity is. Perhaps then we will see more adults in books without labels, or, conversely, labelled as something other than mum and dad.

As unforgivable as this moment was it opened my eyes to one of the issues that comes with the lack of family diversity – it makes all other families, and all children from those families, invisible. It tells them they don't matter; it implies something wrong, lacking, missing, with their family; it relegates them to obscurity. Children like you deserve a voice, and deserve to see themselves in their stories, as all children have the right to do.

Ultimately, the picture book I found was comforting and helped ease your anxiety, as I hoped it would. But how I wished there was more for you, more stories you could connect with, more characters you could relate to. This led me down the winding path of PhD work, of arguing the importance of family diversity.

You have given me so much, and I hope this work gives back to you.

Love always,

Sarah (Mum)

**Name changed for privacy*

Introduction

The official label used by the Australian government to define what we might call the 'traditional' family model (a two-parent family with biological or adopted children only) is *intact* (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2015). While this label does not specify the sexuality of parents, it does specify that families with stepchildren, half siblings, single parents or anything else that diverges from a fully biological or official adoptive family, are not considered 'intact'. Importantly, for all but the 'intact' family model, the labels assigned to family types describe or single out a defining structural trait. The label of 'step' family signifies the inclusion of stepchildren or stepparents, for example, and differentiates it from the similar 'blended' family, which includes at least one biological or adopted child and at least one stepchild (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2015).

However, the 'intact' label does not refer to a defining structural trait, but rather a specific societal value; a conventional and somewhat antiquated idea of what constitutes an ideal family. Such labelling places the so-called 'intact' family type as superior to all others. This word choice becomes all the more problematic when examining its dictionary definition: *Not damaged or impaired in any way. Complete. Whole. Unbroken* (Oxford University Press 2019). What does this imply about all the Australian families that don't fit the 'intact' label? The 44,900 children in foster families (like mine), the 142,000 step and blended families, the 909,000 single parent families – and that's just to name a few (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2020; Australian Bureau of Statistics 2015).

Children from diverse families are rarely acknowledged in picture books, and even within 'intact' representations, deviation from white, heterosexual and non-disabled characters is rare. This is an issue with far-reaching consequences. The ability to relate to book characters is a vital tool that engages young children with literature. It connects them to the world, validates their personal experiences and helps forge a lifelong love of reading (Perez 1984; Mankiw and Strasser 2013; Bland and Gann 2013; Hollander 2004, cited in Mokrzycki 2019). It is these elements that this project unpacks and examines. In doing so, it answers my central research question, which asks: What are the importance and benefits of representing family diversity in Australian picture books?

This can be broken down into three components or topics, which I have framed as thematic questions:

1. What phrasing and vocabulary is used regarding families?
2. How are families presented visually?
3. Why is it important that Australian children's literature has diverse family representation?

Every picture book analysis completed for this project considers these questions, and as the metaphorical linchpin of my research, their themes run throughout the exegesis. I hold all chapters accountable to these questions for consistency, and to ensure each chapter answers to the same standards of argumentation. The themes of these questions encourage a deep analysis of the balance between illustration and text, their individual and combined roles in picture books, and diverse family representation in an Australian context. They encapsulate several areas of children's literary theory that my research and creative project both expand upon: the vital role picture books play in the lives and development of children, and the noted advantages of inclusive literature and the need for readers to identify with characters.

This thesis examines picture books for young children, which naturally fall under the umbrella of 'children's literature'. This umbrella term, and even the phrase, 'for young children', need to be addressed. At the start of every Children's Literature unit, I ask my students, 'What is children's literature?' We discuss points such as the use of child protagonists, language and vocabulary and the author's intended audience. However, the question is purposely ambiguous, as there is consensus amongst academics that children's literature cannot be neatly defined: as Sale writes, 'everyone knows what children's literature is until asked to define it' (Sale, cited in Gubar 2011, p. 209). Should we, for example, define a book as children's literature based on patterns of creative characteristics, or on its placement in a bookshop? (Gannon 1984, p. 205). Some go so far as to say children's literature shouldn't be defined at all. As Bator writes, 'Critics often shun definition entirely … it is unfashionable to hold any definition of children's literature' (Bator, cited in Nodelman 2008, p. 139).

Just how children's literature could, or should, be defined is an ongoing topic of academic debate. However, as Nodelman explains, despite the ambiguity and contention surrounding the term, 'we have a working definition of what a children's book is' (Nodelman 2008, p. 137). While this working definition may vary, there is a general agreement that children's literature can be defined as work marketed towards children. (The contention, for the most part, stems from ambiguity over who is allowed – or should be allowed – to make this

decision.) Thus, for ease and clarity, this thesis classifies children's literature as works advertised and marketed to children by publishers, libraries and booksellers.

As well as being the first introduction to the world of literature that children have – and, by extension, the greater world around them – picture books offer a valuable tool for children to see themselves reflected back at them. As Swartz writes:

> The picture book can be a well from which personal stories are drawn; can inspire talk, writing, visual expression. Moreover, picture books can serve young people in their own reading development, helping them to come to understand the joy of words, the power of story, and the wonder of illustration. (Swartz 2009, p. 6)

Furthermore, through my research I have discovered an undeniable link between the educational and emotional development of children and their ability to relate to book characters. This ongoing lack of 'reflected' family types in picture books presents not only a gap in available literature, but also highlights a greater societal concern of exclusion. It is important to note that while children's picture books are created for children, they are, for the most part, bought and created by adults. Thus, adults are gatekeepers to children's picture books – controlling what stories are told and what children have access to. Through the censoring, conscious or unconscious, of family diversity, we are silencing the voices and experiences of children from diverse families (Mokrzycki 2019). As Newman (1997) writes: 'What messages are you giving to all children, when you pretend there is only one type of family, and render the rest invisible?' This project addresses these concerns by challenging the exclusion of diverse families and, importantly, advancing theoretical and creative research in the field of children's literature.

Family diversity is a contentious issue in Australian picture books; although interestingly, Kimberly Reynolds notes that the nuclear family is 'tested for obsolescence' in modern children's fiction (Reynolds 2010, p. 193). Indeed, children's fiction has a history of challenging family conventions, as this thesis will explore in Chapter 1. However, divergence from the two-parent, heteronormative family model remains uncommon in Australian picture books. Despite recent Australian picture book publications like *I'm Australian too* (Fox 2017) and *Love makes a family* (Beer 2018), which showcase a variety of family types, diverse families continue to struggle for mainstream representation (Mokrzycki 2019). The (white, heteronormative) nuclear family is far from obsolete in Australian picture books, and continues to be the standard or 'default' representation of the Australian family.

Picture books play a significant role in the lives of children, and the benefits of representation in literature cannot be overstated. Despite this, family-diverse picture books are largely relegated to what is known in the publishing industry as 'issue books' – books that are issue-driven rather than story-driven; explanations rather than narratives. Such books serve an important purpose, but are limited to specialist audiences. As such, there is a real need for story-driven picture books for children from diverse families. As the World of Difference Institute (cited in Mankiw & Strasser 2013, p. 85) explains: 'Books are mirrors in which children can see themselves. When they are represented in the literature we read, they can see themselves as valuable and worthy of notice'. It is my sincere hope that this project helps all children to feel this way – because all families, whatever shape they take, are intact.

The rainbow cake

For the creative component of this project, I consider how text and illustration can work together to showcase family diversity organically in a picture book narrative. 'Organic' representation showcases families in a way that feels natural and genuine; not forced or contrived in any way. In order to do this, I have created a fully illustrated picture book* that explores and celebrates family diversity. The picture book, entitled *The rainbow cake*, showcases a variety of family types within one family unit, and is largely inspired by my own family. The child protagonist, Suzie, along with grown-up Sally and younger sibling Sage, bake a rainbow cake to share with visiting family. Uncle Trev makes pierogi (Polish dumplings) in the kitchen, Aunt Roxie and Aunt Flora play with their baby on the living room rug, Aunt Kirra and cousins Lockie and Lizzy draw in the sunroom, and Sally and Sage play cards in the bedroom. Suzie joins them all in turn, after which they discover that the rainbow cake is missing. Who took it? And what will Suzie do?

The purpose of my picture book is twofold: to highlight and celebrate the diversity of modern Australian family life, and to create an engaging story-driven text that can be read and enjoyed by all families, weaving the topic or 'issue' of family diversity organically into the narrative. The picture book consists of 14 double-page spreads, plus illustrated end pages, to fit the standard 32-page format commonly used in Australian picture book publishing. The artwork consists of a mix of full- and half-page digital illustrations and hand-written text. I ultimately chose to work digitally after years of trialling different pen and watercolour styles. I was able to achieve a similar effect and streamline the process; something I discuss in

*An online version of *The rainbow cake* is available on ISSUU: https://issuu.com/spoborswife/docs/the_rainbow_cake_-_s_mokrzycki

Chapter Three. This thesis also includes samples from my illustration portfolio (Appendix 3a-c), which highlight elements of the creative process.

Exegesis

For the exegetical component, I answer my central research question by delving into both the importance and benefits of diverse family representation, while simultaneously examining the disadvantages and limitations when representation is denied. This is done in three primary ways:

- Critical examination (close reading) of children's literary theory: exploring academic knowledge and research to investigate the broader topic of children's literature as well as the defined area of diversity in picture books.
- Autoethnography: drawing on my personal experiences as a 'non-bio mum' and foster carer, and teaching children's literature at Victoria University.
- Analysis of 'family' in picture books: drawing on my thematic questions to analyse how families are explored in text and illustration, and any patterns in representation.

Finally, the exegesis chronicles my creative journey and the choices I made (and why). It explores the works of picture book authors and illustrators that have inspired my creative work, and the methods they use in their storytelling.

A symbiotic relationship between the creative and the academic developed over the course of this project. My picture book responds creatively to the problem the research addresses, and acts as a visual means of examining (and showcasing) family diversity, while offering a creative critique of 'intact' family representations. In doing so, it promotes critical thinking and conversations about family. The exegesis provides an academic examination of families in picture books, and supports the creative work by providing a theoretical framework to situate the story. The exegesis also encapsulates an area of study that my research is the first to investigate: the lack of diverse family types in Australian-published picture books and the need for greater representation.

Methodology

This project uses practice-led qualitative research. In practice-led methodology, the creative component (or practice) 'drives the research' (Swinburne University of Technology 2014). In the case of my project, my research is driven by my picture book story and the areas of diversity I aim for it to represent. While the gap in the market was first brought to my

attention when I initially tried (and failed) to source foster-themed titles, it was my ambition to write my own family-diverse picture book that drove and directed this research.

Qualitative research, in its most generalised form, examines 'human interactions, motivations, emotions, and actions' (Adams, Holman Jones & Ellis 2015, p. 21). Such a broad definition is open to interpretation and thus qualitative research means different things to different researchers (Denzin & Lincoln 2005, p. 3). It can take a variety of forms, such as autoethnography, close reading and literary analysis (literature as data). For the purposes of my project, all three of these forms are used. Autoethnography is a qualitative method that involves the use of personal experiences and self-reflection to interpret and critique societal experiences and practices (Adams, Holman Jones & Ellis 2015, p. 1-2). Due to the personal connection I have with this project, autoethnographic stories form an integral component of the overall work, informing both my creative project and exegesis. I reflect on challenges my children have faced due to the lack of family-diverse picture books, as well as my experience teaching family-diverse picture books at university.

My picture book analysis provides the framework for this research, and uses postcolonial, queer, gender and feminist theory in the close reading of texts. It includes an examination of 300 picture books, 251 of which are included in book lists (Appendix 4a – c). Through this analysis, the methods of picture book authors and illustrators are studied. Text and illustration play equally important roles in picture books; hence my analysis involves in-depth examination of both components, as well as the relationship between them.

As someone living in a colonised country, it is integral to examine books through a postcolonial lens. This ensures that the issues of colonisation are considered in the reading and analysis of texts. These include the political and economic impacts of European colonial rule and its historical and ongoing social outcomes (particularly the unconscious pervasiveness of social bias, bigotry and racism). The oppression of colonisation is at the heart of this theory, and while the prefix 'post' may imply a belief that such oppression has ended, it is important to note that postcolonialism 'is concerned with the lingering forms of colonial authority' (Elam 2019) and how these influence and inform texts. Thus, as a white Australian researcher focusing on Australian-published picture books, this theory underscores the reading and analysis of all texts.

I also use queer theory to examine picture books away from the heteronormative lens that dominates society (and therefore also children's literature). Queer theory originated in the 1990s as a means to deconstruct sexuality and gender, and question the distribution of power among different identities (Watson 2005, p. 69). Queer theory builds and expands upon concepts originated by feminist and LGBTQI+ studies, and is thus 'grounded in the social and political movements that founded these fields' (Kander 2011, p. 2). Like feminist and LGBTQI+ studies, queer theory aims to disrupt societal expectations, constructs and norms, critiquing society's sense of 'expected normality' – specifically, heteronormativity.

> The concept of heteronormativity is rooted in the idea that heterosexuality is the only 'normal' sexual orientation. Queer theory disrupts this concept and rejects the status quo, critically examining and deconstructing the issues of power, identity and marginalisation: Within queer theory, an original focus [is] on unsettling the taken-for-granted assumption about the relationship between gender and sexuality … Queer theory sets out to demonstrate how heteronormativity is endemic in all forms of knowledge and how, through the act of close, critical reading, we can make visible alternative interpretations that do not marginalize queer lives. (Johnson 2014, n.p.)

The 'endemic' nature of heteronormativity means it dictates societal norms and expectations, and 'others' the lives and experiences of LGBTQI+ people. It is therefore vital that queer theory is utilised in this research, as sexuality and identity are core components of diverse family representation.

By utilising queer theory in the analysis of family representation in picture books, this research rejects expectations and conservative criticisms of LGBTQI+ families as 'unnatural' or 'other'. Furthermore, reading children's picture books through a queer lens is a valuable way to ensure inclusivity in analysis:

> Children's literature can help combat heteronormative discourse by instilling at a young age the inherent value of all people. Inclusive children's literature can help combat socialized aspects of heteronormativity and other forms of oppression. (Lester 2014, n.p.)

The inclusivity of children's literature is therefore a vital tool that can help reduce prejudice. More than this, by applying queer theory to the reading of children's literature, the disruption or 'combatting' of heteronormative discourse makes visible the impact of heteronormativity;

that is, the normalisation (and idealisation) of heteronormative relationships, and the marginalisation and 'othering' of LGBTQI+ family representation.

As my analysis also critiques gender expectations and norms (highlighted by the gender roles commonly used in picture books, as examined in Chapter 2), this research also employs gender theory. Gender refers to feminine and masculine 'social expectations, roles and behaviours' (Jule 2014, n.p.), and gender theory critiques these assumptions, just as queer theory does with heteronormativity. There are clear similarities between these theories, but it is important to note that while they employ a similar form of critical analysis, queer and gender theory examine fundamentally different things. Gender theory, unlike queer theory, critiques and questions the roles of the feminine and the masculine, focusing on the definition (and societal constructs) of gender. By reading children's literature through a gender lens, it ensures that the assumptions and expectations (and therefore also the limitations) of gender representation is critically examined and, importantly, questioned.

Lastly, I also employ feminist literary theory in the reading of texts. This theory, like gender theory, shares many similarities with queer theory; in fact, as Weed writes, 'When feminism meets queer theory, no introduction seems necessary' (Weed 2010, p. 216). However, as with gender theory, while feminist literary theory may share similar forms of critical analysis to queer theory (and thus also gender theory), it is a separate form of literary criticism. Feminist literary theory is based on the goals and concerns of feminism. These certainly encapsulate many of the aims of queer and gender theory, as all three theories share the aim of disrupting and deconstructing social norms and expectations. However, feminist literary theory focuses specifically on the issue of gender inequality:

> Feminism can be said to refer to a constellation of social and political ideas, chief among them the recognition that gender inequality continues to be a pressing concern in contemporary society … It implies an intellectual commitment to achieving gender, class, and racial equality … Feminist literary theory, then, engages with the political and social goals of feminism, and it concentrates on literary culture and theory as a possible site of struggle and as a means of eventual change. (Wallace 2009, p. vii)

Thus, by using feminist literary theory in the reading of picture books, the social and political goals (and disruptions) of feminism are examined and unpacked. In short, feminist literary theory provides a critical means of investigating gender imbalances in picture books, which is a pivotal part of this research.

Project background and aims

The importance of family-diverse picture books was first brought to my attention when I became a foster carer in 2014. The majority of children that enter out-of-home care (foster care or kinship care with other relatives) every year in Australia are under the age of five (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2017, p. 48). Perhaps not surprisingly, all but two of the children I have cared for fell into this age range. Caring for young children presented me with the unique challenge of finding picture book stories – and characters – that they could relate to. This proved to be no easy task. What started as a search for foster-friendly books soon turned into a much broader examination of families in picture books. I realised that not only are foster families invisible in picture books, but most other family types are, too (Mokrzycki 2019). Further to this, family dynamics, as well as family structures, are equally underrepresented. Where are the step and blended families? The single and same sex parent families? Where are the families of colour?

I conducted preliminary research to examine the availability of diverse families in children's literature: I spoke to children's publishers and authors; I scoured publishers' booklists and websites; I worked with librarians to perform extensive category searches on their databases. This initial research confirmed a lack of family-diverse books and helped me uncover this gap in Australian children's literature. There is a small (but growing) range of family-diverse picture books published in Australia. However, Australian booksellers rely heavily on international (that is, non-Australian English-language) publishers, most commonly those in the UK and America. In fact, the so-called 'big four' (Schaub 2020) of English-language publishing – Hachette Book Group, HarperCollins, Penguin Random House and MacMillan – are all based in New York. While international titles greatly add to the amount of diverse texts available in Australia, it is also important that Australian families are able to access Australian stories.

This thesis is the first to examine the importance of family diversity (in all its forms) in Australian picture books. Thus, the findings of an American study on family diversity and the 'gentle bias' of picture books (Skrlac Lo 2019) form a core component of this research, as does the American masters thesis, 'Impact of children's literature on family structures and children's perceptions of family' (White 2015). Similarly, American studies examining representation and cultural diversity in children's literature (Sims Bishop 1990, Tschida, C et al 2014) help contextualise this research. This is furthered by Australian studies that overlap

with my own – such as studies on same sex parented families (Cloughessy & Waniganayake 2017, Deakin University 2020), Aboriginal representation (Xu 2016, Adam et al. 2020) and cultural diversity in Australian picture books (Saggers & Sims 2005, Flanagan 2013). *Understanding children's literature* (Hunt 2005) and *The Cambridge companion to children's literature* (ed. Grenby 2010), (specifically Reynolds' chapter on changing families and Trumpener's chapter on picture book worlds), provide a broader understanding of the values and influence of children's books. Likewise, Nodelman's works, primarily *The hidden adult: defining children's literature* (2008), but also *The pleasures of children's literature* (Nodelman & Reimer 2003), provide background and further context. Moreover, research on picture book writing and illustration, such as *Looking at pictures in picture books* (Doonan 1993), 'Learning the language of picture books' (Gill 2015) and Australian children's author Libby Gleeson's *Making picture books* (2003) provide knowledge for my creative project.

The issue of diverse family representation (or lack thereof) in picture books is not endemic to Australia. In the UK, for example, a ground-breaking study (the first of its kind) from 2018 showed that 32.1 per cent of UK school children were BAME (Black, Asian, minority ethnic), yet only 4 per cent of the 9,115 children's books published in 2017 featured BAME characters – and only 1 per cent had a BAME protagonist. Furthermore, a quarter of the books 'only featured diversity in their background casts' (Flood 2018). Since this initial report, there has been a 'small improvement' (Flood 2020), with the latest report from 2020 showing that 10 per cent of books featured BAME characters, and 5 per cent had a BAME protagonist (Centre for Literacy in Primary Education 2020).

This speaks to a 'systemic problem' of a lack of diversity in the Western 'literary and publishing world' (Govinnage 2015). The children's publishing industry – as well as the industry in general – consistently dismisses the market for diverse books. For example, publishing companies 'blame market demands' (Govinnage 2015) for the lack of cultural diversity in books, insisting there isn't a high enough demand for books about and by people of colour. This, however, could not be further from the truth. In 2018, British independent publishers Aimée Felone and David Stevens opened a pop-up 'Kids bookshop' in Bristol that only sold books featuring BAME characters. They sold out of their entire stock in two days. The pop-up was such a success that they opened several others across the UK, and expanded their range to include body and mind diversity (for example, books featuring wheelchair users and the neurodiverse). However, in expanding their range to other types of diversity, Felone

and Stevens noted it was ‘hard to find a wide range of titles to stock’ (Flood 2018). This highlights why books like *The rainbow cake* are so needed: the demand for diverse stories does not match the market that currently exists for them.

While the original pop-up shop and the UK report on BAME character representation centre on the topic of cultural diversity in UK children’s literature, they are intrinsically linked to the study of family diversity, as families of colour (whether presented as ‘intact’ or not) remain underrepresented in Western, English-language picture books. Indeed, all studies on diversity in children’s literature can be linked to this research, such as disability studies, like those by Hollander (2004) and Matthew & Chow (2007); sexuality and gender identity studies, like those by Epstein (2012) and DePalma (2014); and of course, cultural diversity studies, like those by Mosely (1997) and the Cooperative Children’s Book Centre (2018). These forms of diversity, and every other form of diversity besides, form parts of family diversity research.

This is because while the ‘intact’ label doesn’t specify the gender or sexuality of parents, and allows for adopted children, the most common ‘intact’ representation in Western, English-language picture books is very specific: white, middle-class, heteronormative, with both biological parents and characters conforming to traditional gender roles. For the purposes of this project, it is this type of representation I am referring to when I use the term ‘intact’. Any and all families that differ from this representation can be considered (at least to some degree) diverse. This includes other family structures, like foster, step, single parent and blended families, but also diversity within families. As Skrlac Lo writes:

> Representations of families must be considered in any diversity analysis to ensure all children are capable of seeing families as they appear in communities. This extends beyond heterosexual two-parent families to include single parent families, extended families, blended families, and other non-nuclear families. It includes analyzing families’ race and ethnicity; their linguistic, socioeconomic, and cultural backgrounds; and the ways family members’ abilities are portrayed. (Skrlac Lo 2019, p. 16)

As the breadth of family diversity is so extensive, I use four broad topic heads (Mokrzycki 2019) in my book lists to examine them concisely: Structure, Culture, Identity and Body. Structure refers to family formation (e.g. single parent or step family); culture refers to the ethnicity and heritage of the family as a whole and/or specific family members, and may

include customs, traditions and language (e.g. multiracial or bilingual family); identity refers to how family members personally identify in terms of gender and sexuality (e.g. lesbian parents or trans child); body is considered holistically (and thus includes the mind), and refers to physical, mental, educational and developmental differences of family members (e.g. hearing impaired parent or autistic child). These topics don't specifically include the equally important subject of lifestyle, as diversity in this area was rare and not always obvious in the picture books examined. Thus, this is not the right data set to explore it. However, notes regarding changes to lifestyle are listed at the bottom of Appendix 4a.

Despite the wealth of diversity that exists in families, until June 2021, the Oxford Dictionary (used by Google), defined 'family' as 'a group of two parents and their children living together as a unit' (Oxford University Press 2019). This definition has now been (slightly) refined: 'a group of one or more parents and their children living together as a unit' (Oxford University Press 2021). This remains a very narrow definition of what constitutes a family, and excludes many types of family groups and circumstances. There were, for example, 41,747 divorces involving children in 2013 (Australian Institute of Family Studies 2021), and as of 2015, at least 1.1 million children had a biological parent living elsewhere (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2015). Thus, over a million Australian children live in single parent or blended family homes, or in a 'shared care' situation (where children spend time between two households). Furthermore, there are currently approximately 22,500 families in which grandparents are raising grandchildren (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2005).

For the purposes of this project, the term 'family' is defined as a unit in which a child or children is cared for by an adult guardian or guardians in one or more homes, or with no fixed address. This definition thus extends to family groups that do not have a fixed or stable dwelling, such as the unhoused, travellers, displaced persons, refugees and asylum seekers. A 'child' is defined as a minor under 18 years of age. The Australian Bureau of Statistics, where I gather the bulk of my statistics, uses the term 'dependants' in place of children, and this refers to children under 15 years of age. This project uses the most up-to-date statistics available on families with children, but as my research defines children as minors under 18, and the Bureau defines them as dependants under 15, all statistics are an educated estimate based on the available information.

The overall aim of this project is to promote diversity and inclusion by challenging the preconceived notions of 'family' and addressing its representation in Australian children's

picture books. The families and protagonists that younger children are exposed to in picture books are overwhelmingly traditional in both formation and culture, showcasing white, two parent heteronormative families as being representative of 'normal' family life:

> This silencing or ignoring of [diverse] family models—and the widespread use of heteronormative family models in children's literature—reflects the social power of those who define what counts as an idealized family. This power is negotiated among individuals but maintained through capitalist, social, and institutionalized systems. It is reinforced through cultural products, which are produced within the system that privileges some and neglects others. Picture books are a cultural by-product of these systems, one that holds a high status. (Bruhm & Hurley, 2004; Kidd, 2009; Nel, 2017 in Skrlac Lo 2019, p. 18)

This project emphasises that all family types are equally valid (and normal), and should be celebrated rather than dismissed or merely tolerated. Similar arguments regarding the fallacy of normalcy are occurring in other fields; Dr Caroline De Costa, for example, recently wrote for The Conversation on the socially constructed concept of 'normal' birth and the dangers that ideal presents (De Costa 2021). It is my goal that this research empowers families, challenges inequality and contributes significant new work to literary research and the creative arts. Ultimately, I aim to give a voice to the Australian families who are often forgotten or misrepresented in Australian children's literature, and give young children from diverse backgrounds the opportunity to better identify with characters – and see themselves – in their storybooks.

Chapter summary

In the following chapters I link my research to my three thematic questions, examining language (phrasing and vocabulary), illustration (visual representations) and the importance of diverse family narratives in Australian children's publishing:

Chapter One examines the written and visual representation of families in picture books, the stereotypes and limitations inherent in family representation and the use of intact families to promote specific ideals. It also looks at the misinformation and misconceptions surrounding family diversity that affect its representation in picture books, both consciously and unconsciously. It considers diverse families in other forms of children's literature, and common issues in diverse family portrayals. It also considers the importance of family both

in and outside of picture books, as well as changes to Australian family structures and how (or if) these changes are reflected in picture books.

Chapter Two considers other family paradigms and the ways these can be explored in picture books. It examines picture books that celebrate family diversity and the methods used (in both text and illustration) to convey diverse families and stories. It also examines the need for children to see themselves and others in their literature. This is commonly referred to as mirrors (seeing yourself), windows (seeing others) and sliding glass doors (which provide access between the two), terms first coined by Dr Rudine Sims Bishop in 1990. It looks at the changes and progression that have already taken place, the success of diverse books and the challenges facing diverse publication. This chapter further examines diverse family narratives from an Australian perspective, using the diverse texts discussed and the studies surrounding their value to argue the importance of diversity in Australian children's literature.

Finally, Chapter Three examines my creative process and expands on the methodology and literature used to complete my picture book and exegesis. It looks at practice-led methodology and how autoethnography, literary theory and analysis were used to complete the project. It also chronicles my creative journey, examining the writing and illustrating process, and the developments, changes and challenges that presented themselves. It draws on the work of the authors and illustrators who informed and inspired my creative work, and how different picture books influenced my own story.

The conclusion reflects on family diversity in picture books and what this project has taught me. It considers what the thematic questions have uncovered and how they have shaped my analysis and creative journey. Finally, the conclusion sums up my experience with my PhD and examines both the creative and academic significance of this research, and the role it plays in developing children's literary theory.

Chapter One

And baby makes three: the intact family in picture books

Family diversity has long been censored, silenced, and ignored in Australian picture books. Despite its long running representation in books for older readers, family diversity at picture book level is rarely explored. Of the little available, much comes in the form of issue-driven books and from specialist presses overseas, presenting a distinct gap in Australian children's literature. The contentious history of diversity in children's books creates added issues in the struggle for representation, and diverse stories (and diverse authors) face ongoing challenges (Mokrzycki 2019). Families in children's literature are overwhelmingly presented as heterosexual, nuclear and gender normative (Riggs & Hanson-Easey 2014). The concept of family is thus 'narrowly idealized' (Skrlac 2019, p. 17), and the dominant family model represented in picture books is indicative of the 'idealized family – that is, the heteronormative nuclear family' (Skrlac 2019, p. 24). This chapter argues that there are opportunities to authentically represent modern family life in Australian picture books. It examines what it means to be a family, the issues surrounding family diversity in picture books, and why such books deserve to be championed.

The impossible and the extraordinary are explored across the glossy, brightly coloured pages of picture books. Yet in a medium that spans the breadth of human imagination, picture book families remain largely the same. Importantly, both diverse family structures and the diversity of family members go largely unacknowledged. This is highlighted in the final double-page spread of the UK-published *The covers of my book are too far apart* (French 2017). The full-colour illustration shows different characters standing outside their front doors. The first, a young person of colour, says, 'There are hardly any people in books who look like me!' This sentiment is then echoed by a girl in a hijab, then a boy in a wheelchair. It is then conversely (and humorously) countered by a robot that proclaims, 'There are quite a lot that look like me.' A boy with two dads then says, 'Families in books don't look like my family' and, finally, a vision-impaired child with a guide dog simultaneously closes the narrative and sums up the issue: 'We need to speak to the people who make books' (French 2017, n.p.). This spread shines a spotlight on an ongoing issue in children's literature: that it is more common

to see non-human characters (like robots) than it is to see diverse human characters and families in picture books (Mokrzycki 2019).

While family diversity remains underrepresented in picture books, diverse family representations exist throughout children's literature. Evidence of family diversity (at least in terms of structure) can even be found in 16th century fairy tales. Many fairy tales share similar archetypal characteristics: there was the inevitable passive and weak-willed father, the virtuous child and, of course, the wicked stepmother. All of these elements are explored in the story of *Cinderella*, which traces its origins back to at least 7 BC Greece in *Geographica,* or *The geography of Strabo* (Strabo 1889). This version of the story (a purportedly true tale of a woman whose sandal is stolen by an eagle and dropped in the lap of a king) bears little resemblance to the story known today. The earliest modern adaptations were written in the 16th century, first by Giambattista Basile in 1634, then by Charles Perrault in 1697. The Brothers Grimm then adapted the story in 1812.

These early adaptations include something that 20th century versions do not – a living biological father. In later reimaginings of the story (most notably the 1950 Disney film *Cinderella* and the 1998 film *Ever after*), Cinderella's father dies, leaving the wicked stepmother and 'ugly' stepsisters (who were beautiful in earlier versions) to be as wicked and cruel as they please. In the original adaptations, the father was 'governed entirely' (Perrault 1697) by the stepmother, and is aware (and ignores) Cinderella's abuse. Interestingly, as this chapter will later explore, the representation of fathers as passive parents is common throughout picture books today (Mokrzycki 2019). Likewise, the 'wicked stepmother' remains an active trope, so much so that Australian author Kim Kane humorously pokes fun at it in her picture book *Family forest* (2015). When her protagonist explains that he has a stepmother, two illustrations are shown to represent what the reader might understand a stepmother to be. The first illustration is a literal representation of the term, in which the stepmother is shown as a set of steps. The second illustration shows the stepmother as a fairy tale witch, humorously referencing the stereotype of the 'wicked stepmother' that stems from their representation in fairy tales.

During the 19th and early 20th centuries, children's stories started exploring family diversity in a different way – through the common use of orphaned protagonists. Some of the most well-known children's literary heroes are orphans: *The adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn* (1876; 1884), *A little princess* (1905), *Anne of Green Gables* (1908) and

The secret garden (1911) all revolve around orphaned protagonists. Such representation can be seen as a product of the time. Globally, the high mortality rate of mothers, coupled with the normalisation of child abandonment to quell 'poverty, illegitimacy, or family crises', created high rates of homeless and orphaned children in the 19th and early 20th centuries (Wollons 2009). A penchant for orphaned protagonists, then, is unsurprising. Orphaned protagonists also provided a pragmatic means with which to dispose of parental figures (who might otherwise get in the way of the child's adventure), and the 'classic orphan story' paved the way for modern children's book heroines and heroes (Mokrzycki 2019).

More recently, there has been a shift from the conventional 'home-journey-home' plot originally found in children's literature (Nodelman & Reimer 2003) to a common 'home-journey-new home' meta-plot that consists of three parts: 'the failed home, the journey, and the construction of a new home' (Wilson 2009, p.120). This type of story structure lends itself to more diverse storytelling and family representations, while shattering long held perceptions of the superiority of 'intact' families. This meta-plot can be found in many iconic children's books, such as Roald Dahl's *Matilda* (1988). In *Matilda*, the titular character lives in a two-parent, heteronormative family, and is emotionally abused and neglected by her parents (part 1: failed home). Matilda develops a newfound power of telekinesis, which she uses to get justice for herself and others (part 2: journey). At the end of the novel, she is taken in by her kindly and supportive teacher, Miss Honey (part 3: new home) (Mokrzycki 2019).

The history of family diversity in children's literature (both negative and positive) shows that the concept of non-intact families is nothing new. However, picture book families remain overwhelmingly 'intact'. This begs the question: why the reluctance for family diversity in picture books? This is not simply a matter of family diversity being too difficult or complicated a topic to explain in picture book form. Family diversity has been explored and very successfully so in this format (Mokrzycki 2019). The Australian-published *Love Makes a Family* (Beer 2018), for example, showcases a variety of families, but there are no mums, no dads – no labelling of any kind. Instead, the story focusses on what truly makes a family – love – and the family dynamics are played out entirely in the illustrations.

Despite the success of *Love Makes a Family,* there remains a myriad of issues in publishing family-diverse picture books (both locally and internationally). Primary among these is the dependency on issue books to showcase family diversity. While issue books can inform and enlighten readers about diverse families, their issue-driven nature means they have a limited

audience. *Kids need to be safe: a book for children in foster care* (2005) is a prime example of this. The book was published by American press Free Spirit Publishing, which specialises in issue and self-help books for children. In it, an illustration shows a family in squalid conditions. A parent sits at a table, head in hand, a can of beer in front on them. A teenage girl sits on a windowsill, head bowed, next to an overflowing rubbish bin. A crying toddler stands in the middle of the dirty room in nothing but a nappy, looking towards the parent (who is turned away from them) with their mouth open in a scream. It is a haunting image. In the accompanying text, it explains that sometimes parents are unable to take care of their children (Mokrzycki 2019). I do not mean to disparage this book in any way – it is a useful tool for foster care agencies and carers. However, it is not intended for a general audience.

For the purpose of this thesis, the term 'general audience' is used to distinguish between texts written for a non-specific (any) audience and those written for a specific or specialist group. *Kids need to be safe* is aimed specifically at foster children: as the title explains, it is 'a book for children in foster care'. Furthermore, due to the book's content (in particular, the confronting nature of the illustrations), the book is not appropriate for general readership. This example highlights the constraints of issue books, and the importance of story-driven, trade published family-diverse picture books.

Another concern is the stereotyping of characters and families, which can lead to diverse representations being counterproductive or unintentionally insensitive. Research has found, for example, that both the family structure and family dynamics of multiracial families in picture books largely perpetuate negative stereotypes. Multiracial families are consistently depicted as living in poor urban areas, with mixed-race protagonists in either single parent families or with no biological parents (Chaudhri and Teale, cited in White 2015). This research highlights the pervasive nature of racial stereotypes in contemporary picture books. Take, for example, 'The happy slave', an unusual and distressing addition to modern American-published picture books. Books like *A fine dessert* (Jenkins 2015) and the now recalled *A birthday cake for George Washington* (Ganeshram 2016) depict slave families happily making food for their white masters. *A birthday cake* was published by conglomerate children's publisher Scholastic, but ultimately pulled due to criticism for its depiction of slavery:

> The historical book tells the story of Hercules, a slave used by the president as his chef. It shows Hercules and his daughter Delia happy and taking pride in making

> Washington a birthday cake … an essay in Kirkus noted that the book contained images of smiling slaves in almost every page. (Peralta 2016)

Author Ramin Ganeshram wrote in defence of the book, saying that it is not her opinion, but historical record, that shows 'enslaved people who received status positions were proud of these positions', and that this in turn informed the illustrator's decision 'to depict those in *A birthday cake* as happy and prideful people' (Ramin, cited in Peralta 2016). Editor Demetria Lucas D'Oyley dismissed this, saying, 'Slaving, literally, over a hot 18th century stove to bake a cake for a man who has you *and your child* in bondage ain't happiness or pride. It's duty. It's survival' (D'Oyley, cited in Peralta 2016). In a statement, Scholastic conceded that without proper context on the 'evils of slavery', the book may leave readers with 'a false impression of the reality of the lives of slaves' (Scholastic, cited in Peralta 2016).

In *A fine dessert*, one spread shows a slave mother and daughter happily 'hiding', as the text puts it, together in a closet, sneaking some of the dessert they served at dinner: 'Later, the girl and her mother hid in the closet and licked the bowl clean together. Mmmmm. Mmmmm. Mmmmm. What a fine dessert!' (Jenkins 2015, n.p.). This is accompanied by a smiling illustration of the mother and daughter in the closet, making the reference to hiding seem playful, or like a game. Much like *A birthday cake*, the lack of proper context gives a false impression of slavery. In both texts, the brutality of slavery is not just downplayed, but completely ignored. The cultural politics of representing slavery (i.e., the influence of the postcolonial perspective on picture books) must always be critically considered (Thomas, Reese & Horning 2016). This ensures depictions are not two-dimensional, oversimplified or offensive, as they are in these examples.

Ironically, both *A birthday cake* and *A fine dessert* are examples of family diversity in picture books, as they diverge in structure, culture and class from the common 'intact' family representation. However, their misrepresentation also serves to censor diverse families. *A birthday cake* and *A fine dessert* highlight the pervasive influence of colonialisation, and the ongoing marginalisation and oppression it causes (Elam 2019). Furthermore, the recent publication of these books (2015 and 2016), accompanied by contemporary research on the prevalence of racist stereotypes in picture books (Chaudhri and Teale, cited in White 2015) raises massive concerns about whitewashing in the modern children's publishing industry. The issues inherent in these books are unconscious; however, there are also very deliberate acts of censorship in family-diverse books.

The American-published *Julián is a mermaid* (Love 2018) by Jessica Love presents a family diverse in culture (Latinx), sexuality (trans protagonist) and structure (single grandparent household). The original American text includes two Spanish words, *Abuela* and *Mijo*. In the context of the story and with accompanying full-page illustrations, the reader can easily interpret the meaning of these words (and if not, can easily look them up, presenting an excellent opportunity for learning). However, in Australian and UK-published versions of the book, the two Spanish words are removed and replaced with 'Nanna' and 'Honey' (Mokrzycki 2020, p. 40). This not only robs the reader of experiencing a different language, but also censors the extent to which another culture is shown. Books are a means in which readers can expand their minds as well as their imaginations. The censorship of language achieves the opposite (Mokrzycki 2019).

Interestingly, the characters' ethnicity and family structure, while diverse, perpetuate aforementioned stereotypes about people of colour in picture books. However, unlike *A birthday cake* and *A fine dessert*, the subject matter in *Julián* is handled sensitively and doesn't at all come across as negative or derogatory. Rather, the text and illustrations (vibrantly coloured gouache on brown paper) work seamlessly together to tell Julián's story very tenderly. The book is, however, not without controversy. Love is a white, cisgender woman, and concerns over her authority to tell Julián's story have been raised. These concerns are valid, as issues of appropriation and misrepresentation are ongoing in children's literature, as the previous picture book examples show. However, consensus amongst picture book experts (Flood 2019) is that Love is successful in presenting Julián's story in a respectful and sensitive way. As Bumgarner writes:

> Love's representation of the spaces queer children occupy focuses on the potential these places have to encourage queer kids in an attempt to convey a new narrative. In a time when LGBTQ+ children lack meaningful representations in literature, books like *Julián is a mermaid* are vital to helping queer kids feel visible and normalized. While *Julián is a mermaid* is not without flaws, its role as a valuable piece of LGBTQ+ children's literature is undeniable. (Bumgarner 2019, p. 7)

Likewise, slavery – while misrepresented in *A birthday cake* and *A fine dessert* – is handled with the care and skill the topic deserves in the American-published *Sojourner Truth's step-stomp stride* (Pinkney 2009). This tells the true-life story of Sojourner Truth, who escaped slavery to become a noted abolitionist and women's rights activist. The picture book covers her life in slavery as well as her achievements post-freedom, and does not gloss over the

realities of her life (though the text is still presented in age appropriate language). Topics like those covered in *Julián* and *Sojourner Truth* – sexuality, identity and slavery – are frequently considered too 'difficult' to publish at picture book level; or, at least, as story-driven narratives opposed to issue-driven texts. However, *Julián* and *Sojourner Truth* (both commercially successful and well-loved books) highlight that the discussion of such topics is entirely possible for a general audience.

Conversely, *Julián* and *Sojourner Truth* are aimed at a 'general' audience, meaning they are not targeted towards a particular specialised group. As well as ongoing issues of cultural representation, the default picture book family disregards other diverse characteristics. For example, disability and body diversity – whether physical, mental, educational or developmental – are rarely explored (Mokrzycki 2019). According to a 2018 study, teachers and academics alike have found that body diversity is largely absent from picture books and examples remain difficult to find (Pennell, Wollak & Koppenhaver 2018). Another largely ignored demographic is LGBTQI+ families. Diversity in sexuality and gender, such as LGBTQI+ and gender nonconforming characters, remain uncommon in picture books.

According to a recent survey conducted at Deakin University, there are significant gaps in what they call 'rainbow family' representation in picture books:

> '30 per cent of respondents couldn't find a family "like theirs" in a picture book, even though 100 per cent said doing so was important to them,' Dr Young said. 'While children's picture books representing queer parents have been around since the late 1970s … they haven't evolved much over this period to represent families from a variety of cultures or backgrounds.' (Deakin University 2020, n.p.)

The survey also raised issues of availability. Australian-published books with rainbow families are rare, and prior knowledge is often needed to source titles:

> 'It's hard to find books featuring LGBTQI+ families online unless you already know the titles, and the ones that do exist mostly come from North America … there's a very narrow range of representations of the diversity of rainbow families, and the books that do exist are often not easily located because there's no consistency in how they are categorised … or referred to online.' (Deakin University 2020, n.p.)

Just as I once altered a picture book to make it foster-appropriate, rainbow families are adopting 'tactics' to make stories, as Dr Young says, 'more LGBTQI+ friendly':

> ‘Families are often forced to adopt different tactics when they read – from changing pronouns to searching for books that represent many kinds of diverse and extended families, to avoiding books that represent families altogether.’ (Deakin University 2020, n.p.)

This experience is echoed by those in the foster community. In my discussions with fellow carers, I found that many either made their own books, altered existing ones or avoided picture books with families in them entirely.

The 2015 book *Mummy and Mumma get married* by Roz Hopkins and Natalie Winter was Australia’s first picture book to show a same sex marriage, and is one of only a handful to show same sex parents at all. This gap in the Australian market is, as Hopkins says, ‘a reflection of how behind the eight ball on the topic we are in Australia’ (Hopkins, cited in Maios 2016 n.p.). The inclusion of LGBTQI+ families in picture books is often due to the involvement of those directly impacted by their absence. This was the case for *Mummy and Mumma*, which was written – and published – by a married lesbian couple. It was also the case for the American-published *Heather has two mommies* by Leslea Newman (1989), one of the first picture books ever to present a lesbian couple with a child (Peel 2015).

The idea for *Heather* arose from an encounter Newman had with another lesbian mother regarding the mother’s inability to find children’s books that reflected her family (Newman 1997). *Heather* was thus created to address the absence of same sex parents in children’s books. The route to publication was not an easy one, as Newman explains:

> I sent *Heather* [to] over fifty publishers. Children’s book presses told me to try lesbian publishers. Lesbian publishers told me to try children’s book presses. When a whole year had gone by with no luck, a friend and I decided to publish the book ourselves. (Newman 1997, n.p.)

Since its original publication in 1989, the book has been met with a constant stream of criticism and censorship, including protests, book burnings, and no less than 42 attempts to have the book removed from schools and libraries (Hetter 2015). Despite this, *Heather* remains one of the most famous LGBTQI+ picture books, and an updated version was released in 2015 (Mokrzycki 2019).

The longevity and success of *Heather* demonstrates the importance and demand for diversity in children’s literature. Simultaneously, the book’s self-published beginnings demonstrate the

challenges diverse books face in an overwhelmingly conventional picture book market; and, despite thirty years since *Heather*'s original publication, these challenges are still prevalent today (Mokrzycki 2019). The American-published *And Tango Makes Three* (Richardson & Parnell 2005), a more recent addition to same sex parenting in picture books, tells the true story of two male penguins who raise a chick together at Central Park Zoo. The book has featured on the American Library Association's 'Top ten most challenged book list' eight times from 2006 – 2017 for depicting same sex parents, and is 'one of the most challenged books of all time' (Dawson 2018).

When LGBTQI+ characters and themes are represented, their presence is often met with hostility. After the publication of *Mummy and Mumma*, there was much discussion over the book's 'appropriateness' for school libraries. The resulting controversy over the book demonstrates the Australian education system's failure to properly acknowledge, and be inclusive of, diverse family types (Mokrzycki 2020, p. 46). As researcher Megan Beren says:

> Including families is an important theme in the early childhood classroom … Teachers, however, report feeling unprepared when a child's family is composed of same sex parents, while gay and lesbian families, in turn, feel invisible, silenced and excluded. (Beren, cited in Maios 2016, n.p.)

A community survey about the inclusion of *Mummy and Mumma* in school libraries (Maios 2016) highlighted ongoing issues of bigotry towards same sex couple families in Australia:

> 'I don't believe we should ever allow a book like this to be in school libraries … [We shouldn't] introduce concepts in children's little heads that they have not even thought of at such a young age ... I don't feel that it is necessary to be aware of this concept at such a young age. It's not natural. Our religion doesn't recognise it. Marriage should be between a man and a woman' Eleni, 72, grandmother; 5 grandchildren.
>
> 'It is up to the parent as to when their child is ready to learn about same sex relationships' Pat, 25, single.
>
> 'I would not encourage the reading of the book or [it] being made available in lower school libraries as young children should not have to be exposed to concepts and lifestyle choices that would be better handled in their teen years and adulthood' Chris, 56, father; 2 children.

Not all responses from the survey were negative, although many followed the same objections as the examples shown here. A reoccurring theme in the responses was the idea that children needed to be 'taught' about same sex parented families at a specific, appropriate age. This speaks to the idea of same-sex relationships as being unnatural or strange, and therefore something that requires explanation and consent to discuss. Conversely, heteronormative relationships are never considered something that need to be taught, or left for discussion until the child is 'old enough to understand', as these relationships are seen as natural and appropriate, and therefore something children are exposed to from birth without explanation (Mokrzycki 2020, p. 47).

This status quo does serious damage to children with same-sex parents, as well as those without. It questions and dismisses the legitimacy of same-sex parented families, greatly limiting the extent children with same-sex parents can see their families represented (in picture books as well as other media). This sends a clear message to children with same-sex parents that their families aren't 'normal'. This, in turn, sends an equally clear message to their peers regarding the validity of same-sex couples as parents. As Skrlac Lo writes: 'Heterosexism sometimes prevent[s] children with heterosexual parents from acknowledging their peers' same sex parents as their "real" parents' (Skrlac Lo 2016a, 2016b). Thus, the predisposition of 'heterosexism' can greatly hinder a child's understanding of family. Furthermore, in an afterschool workshop with children, Skrlac Lo noted that when discussing same-sex parented families, the children of these families were (unconsciously) made to feel 'different' by their peers:

> This led the children [of heterosexual parents] to focus the discussion only on the child's different family model, something that the child did not welcome. Even if the purpose of any ensuing conversation is intended to be positive, the bearer of the "difference" may feel objectified or under scrutiny (Skrlac Lo 2019). By including … representation of same sex parents as possible family models, all children may learn about a greater range of family models, thus ensuring that children with same sex parents find a space in their communities (e.g., a classroom) and helping all children gain a broader understanding of what makes a family. (Ryan & Hermann-Wilmarth, cited in Skrlac 2019, p. 20)

This observation reminded me of a Mother's Day a few years back. Our foster son, who we co-parent with his biological father, lives with us on weekends and school holidays. As such, he isn't with me, his 'non-bio mum' (as he calls me), through the week. When Mother's Day

was drawing near, he asked us for craft supplies: wood, cardboard, glue. When we asked him what he was making, he replied simply, 'a mum.' After a bit of discussion we found out that children in his class – where the past few days had been spent making Mother's Day gifts and reading Mother's Day books – had started asking him incessantly about his biological mother. *Where is she? Why doesn't she live with you?* As with Skrlac Lo's observation regarding children with same sex parents, our foster son also felt objectified and under scrutiny; so much so that he desperately tried to make himself a mother to live with him through the week. I phoned the school and told them what had happened, and urged them to include a diverse range of families in their classroom reading. As noted by Skrlac Lo, representation of diverse family models in the classroom can help children from diverse families feel accepted, but also help all children understand that there are many different – and equally valid – ways to make a family.

As well as an ongoing reluctance to explore diverse characters in picture books, gender stereotypes are a common issue plaguing family representation. A 2005 study of 200 picture books showed that mothers were overwhelmingly presented in caring parenting roles, whereas not a single father in the sample was shown kissing or feeding a baby (Anderson & Hamilton 2005, cited in Mokrzycki 2019). Another study from 1998 found that *beautiful* was the most common adjective used to describe female characters. The list also included *frightened*, *worthy*, *sweet*, *dear*, *kind*, *scared*, and *weak*. Conversely, the male list included *fat* (the most common adjective), *horrible*, *fierce*, *terrible*, *furious*, *proud*, *great*, and *brave* (Narahara 1998, p.8). Moreover, this study also found that female protagonists are far more likely to be nurturers in children's books, while male protagonists have lives 'filled with adventure' (Narahara 1998, p.10). Despite this study being over 20 years old, recent research shows there has been very little progress made in gender representation – in fact, a study of Australian picture books published in 2017 found that gender imbalances were more prevalent in recently published books than in older ones (Tilley 2018).

This presents readers with the problem of gendered books. In April 2019, I examined the 100 bestselling picture books at Australian book retailer Dymocks (Appendix 4b). The collection was an almost 50/50 mix of modern and classic stories published since the 1960s. For the purposes of this research, the term 'classic' refers to a text that 'remains relevant to children and adults alike across the generations'(Mangan 2011). The majority of the classics were published in the heyday of Australian picture books (the 1980s and 1990s), and the majority

of the top 100 were published in the past five years. Patterns of representation soon became apparent, but none more so than the gendering of parental figures (most commonly a biological mother and father) and of protagonists (Mokrzycki 2020, p. 43). In the vast majority of books, father figures fit a version of their fairy tale archetype. While fathers were much more likely to be presented as playful, they were rarely shown as nurturing. In the majority of books, fathers were 'passive parents', rarely engaged in parenting duties. For example, in Sheena Knowles' 1996 Australian classic *Edwina the emu*, number 39 on the Dymocks bestseller list, part of the humour is meant to come from the male emu Edward's hopelessness as a parent. He is first seen as reluctant, screaming and 'choking' at the idea of raising the ten eggs Edwina has laid ('You must be joking!' Knowles 1996, n.p.) and then struggling with the role of primary carer (Mokrzycki 2020, p. 43).

Of course, it is not just fathers who are subjected to traditional gender roles and parental stereotypes. Mothers in picture books are still conveyed predominantly as primary carers and/or stay-at-home mothers. Importantly, their connection to parenting is in complete contrast to that of fathers. Mothers are never shown as reluctant parents, and rarely seen struggling with parenting duties. Rather, they are shown as almost superhuman and self-sacrificing, performing most (if not all) of the parenting and domestic duties with ease and grace, and seemingly uninterested in life outside of motherhood. In *Edwina the emu*, Edwina decides to get a job after laying her eggs, telling Edward, 'Don't get depressed, I'll look for a job, you stay on the nest'. Edward, as described, is a reluctant parent and struggles with this new role. Meanwhile, Edwina goes out to find 'the right job'. She tries a variety of work with no luck. Finally, she has an epiphany and realises what the 'right job' is for her. She returns to the nest, where Edward is sitting on the eggs, exhausted. She tells him, 'From now on we share. I'll sit on the nest, you pull up a chair!' After trying multiple jobs, Edwina comes to the realisation that motherhood is the 'right job' for her (Mokrzycki 2020, p. 43).

While the text states she and Edward will share parental duties, Edwina's epiphany that motherhood is the 'right job' for her, coupled with Edward's negative attitude towards parenting (compared to Edwina's relaxed, competent one), suggests this role will not be equally divided between them. Furthermore, Edward's exhaustion at the end of the day is presumably meant to highlight how difficult and draining being a primary carer or stay-at-home parent is. However, because it is the father who finds this challenging (while Edwina is pleasant, happy and calm throughout all interactions to do with parenting), it also indicates

that parenting is something women are meant to be naturally good at, while conversely being something men are not naturally skilled in (Mokrzycki 2020, p. 43-44).

A more recent example of the vastly differing roles mothers and fathers are shown to have in raising their children can be seen in *My Aussie Mum* (Morrison 2009) and *My Aussie Dad* (Morrison 2016). The descriptions of the mother and father in their synopses highlight the differences in how their roles are perceived, and what is socially expected of both parents (Mokrzycki 2020, p. 44). The synopses read as follows:

> An Aussie mum doing her best every day and in every way. If she's not playing netball or cheering on her kids at cricket, she is looking after her sick children and being a chauffeur and more, all without breaking a sweat...well, sort of. (Morrison 2009)

> My Aussie Dad likes thinking that his barbie skills are tops... Even if the snags have burst, or if he's burnt the chops! A playful and humorous story of the jovial, the kind, the slightly embarrassing and the wholly lovable Aussie Dad. (Morrison 2016)

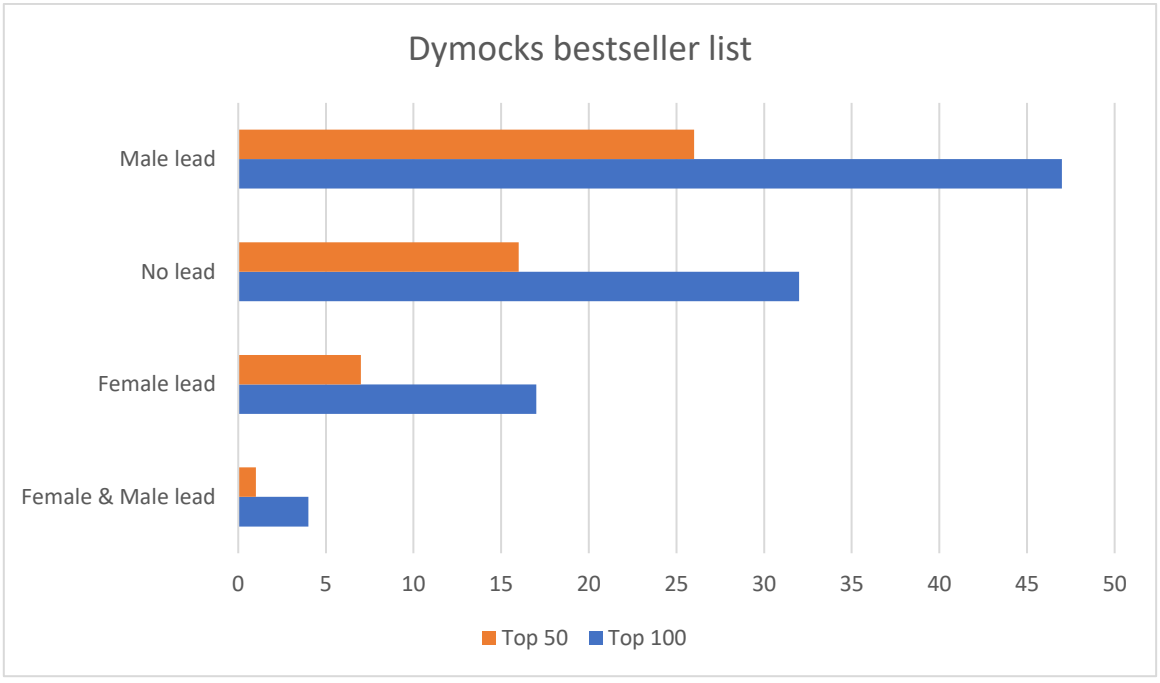
The differences in these descriptions are deeply indicative of gender expectations. Importantly, the synopsis downplays parenting duties in the father's description, while they are the focus point of the mother's. The mother is 'doing her best every day and in every way', cheering on her kids, driving them around and caring for them when they are sick. In contrast, the father is positioned purely as a figure of comedy, focussing on his delusions of grandeur at his barbecuing skills (Mokrzycki 2020, p. 44).

Like *Edwina the emu*, this highlights the stark differences in how mothers and fathers are positioned in picture books. The father's description focusses on his personal interests (showing him as a parent whose life is not defined by parenthood), while the mother's description focusses almost exclusively on her role as carer. The description of the mother's various parenting duties, as well as the reference to her doing them all (almost) 'without breaking a sweat' also firmly positions the picture book mother as a self-sacrificing 'super mum' character. This presents a larger concern, as the way parents are portrayed in children's books is strongly connected to how children understand the roles of parents and their expectations of them (Anderson & Hamilton 2005, p. 148).

This gendering of characters extends to child protagonists. In the Dymocks bestseller list, almost every female-led book, regardless of publication date, was conventionally gendered. Female-led books were dominated by pink and purple colour schemes and traditional

feminine roles or interests (princesses, dancing, fashion, etc.). I hasten to add that there is nothing wrong with showcasing and celebrating traditional femininity. However, when there is such little variety in female-led stories the lack of diversity becomes a problem, particularly when female protagonists are only shown as ambitious within the confines of traditional feminine interests. I argue that a lack of diverse protagonists for girls, and an overabundance of traditionally gendered stories, presents problems for all genders. It perpetuates the idea of 'girls' books' and 'boys' books' and enforces specific expectations of female and male behaviour (Mokrzycki 2019; Mokrzycki 2020, p. 45).

The Dymocks bestseller list showed an unsurprising overrepresentation of male-dominated books, and while the list included a limited number of female-led books with protagonists breaking traditional gender boundaries, such as *Ada Twist, Scientist* (Beaty 2016), this was the exception rather than the rule (Mokrzycki 2019). In fact, female protagonists were largely excluded from the bestseller list:



There were only seven books with a female lead in the top 50, and 17 featured overall. Conversely, there were 26 books with a male lead in the top 50, and 46 featured overall. Only 5 books featured both a female and male lead, and the remaining books – 32 – had no lead character. This confirms research by the ABC in 2018, which found that in the top 100 picture books published in Australia in 2017, it was more common for a book to have no lead character than a female lead character (Tilley 2018; Mokrzycki 2020, p. 46).

The ABC study also found that characters with speaking parts were much more likely to be male, and male characters were more likely to feature overall. These findings were echoed in the Dymocks bestseller list, in which 19 books had all male characters compared to 8 books with all female characters. These findings are not particularly surprising when you consider that male protagonists (and in particular, male pronouns) have long been the default in picture books. Consider favourite protagonists like Max from *Where the Wild Things Are*, Spot the Dog, Peter Rabbit, Hairy MacLary, Blinky Bill, Pig the Pug; in *Wombat Stew* all but one of the animals are male – and even the Very Hungry Caterpillar is a 'he' (Mokrzycki 2019; Mokrzycki 2020, p. 46). Much like white, intact families, 'he' is the default, even when characters have no discernible gender or are non-human.

What children are exposed to in literature informs their understanding of 'family', and thus when children and their families are excluded in literature, it creates real-world problems. Like Skrlac Lo (2019), White argues the importance of acknowledging diverse home lives in classroom literature. Inclusion is vital not only to a child's feelings of self-worth, but also their education:

> When children's lives are being ignored in the classroom it sends a message that their situation is less than and is not important. If young children are feeling out of place in their classrooms it affects their learning of educational topics. (Ferfolja & Robinson 2004; Pohan & Bailey 1998, cited in White 2015, p. 3)

She argues that while other types of diversity, such as 'racial, ethnic, religious and language backgrounds' are now being more consciously considered by teachers wishing to create inclusive 'classroom communities', the diversity of students' home lives remains 'overlooked' (White 2015, p. 3). When children's home lives are accepted (and understood) by peers, it creates positive feelings of self-worth (Cloughessy & Waniganayake 2013, cited in White 2015, p.3). Conversely, 'having negative perceptions about others' or their own home dynamic can hinder [a child's] learning' and their ability to form friendships with peers (White 2015, p. 3).

There was an incident in early 2019 at a primary school in the western suburbs of Melbourne. A guest speaker came to teach the Grade 6 class. During the course of the talk she singled out a twelve-year-old girl and asked her what her mother's favourite possession was. The girl replied that she didn't know. The speaker pressed her for an answer; again the girl said she didn't know. The speaker pressed further, and further. Now the girl stayed silent. The speaker

grew angry, and admonished the girl in front of the class for purposely disrupting the lesson and refusing to answer. In return the girl swore at the speaker. She was removed from the lesson and received detention, where she was forced to write the speaker an apology letter.

Let me now add some context to this story. The girl in question is my respite foster daughter, who lives in permanent care with a grandparent. Her father is in jail, and she was removed from her mother's care at the age of four. She was being truthful when she told the speaker she didn't know what her mother's favourite possession was. She was embarrassed by the question, and didn't elaborate on her answer because she was uncomfortable explaining her family situation to a stranger in front of her peers. Thus, the 'intact' definition of family dominates not only our picture books, but all areas of society – including our classrooms. However, approximately 20 per cent of Australian families diverge from the two-parent family structure (Churchill 2018). This percentage, however, does not consider families that diverge from the white, middle-class and heteronormative standard. Therefore, our understanding of family does not reflect contemporary Australia. As Churchill explains:

> The image of the typical family - mum, dad, and two kids - still permeates how we define and understand the family in contemporary Australia. This ideal saturates our screens and newsfeeds and was the centre of the marriage equality debate, underscoring the pervasiveness of the nuclear family as the dominant family form in our consciousness. However, this conceptualisation masks the true nature of Australian families, which has changed significantly in recent decades. As sociologists and demographers have long known, the Australian family is as diverse and different as the country's terrain. (Churchill 2018, n.p.)

The modern Australian family constitutes a multitude of diversity, and it is vital that this diversity is represented in picture books. As the first books bought for and read to children, picture books have the power to both introduce diversity and normalise it.

A multitude of issues – from the continued use of gender stereotypes to the prevailing white representation of families – show the ongoing need to address this gap in Australian children's literature (Mokrzycki 2019). Thankfully, there has been a noticeable societal shift in recent years regarding diversity in Australian children's picture books. I frequented children's libraries and bookshops over the course of this research. In doing so, I learned from librarians and children's booksellers that the past few years have seen a substantial shift towards acknowledging and promoting more diversity in children's picture books. In fact, a

librarian from Williamstown Library explained that there have been active discussions throughout the library sector about sourcing and stocking more diverse picture books (2019, personal communication, 12 May). Independent children's bookstores like The Younger Sun in Victoria and Rabble Books and Games in Western Australia are leading this charge, and with the publication of more family-diverse picture books in recent years (and the promise of more to come), there is hope on the horizon for diverse family representation in Australian picture books.

Chapter Two

Children of the revolution: picture books celebrating family diversity

Historically, children's stories in the Western world were created for white, moneyed families, and as such, these were the families that were conveyed in books (Grenby 2014). In fact, it is only in recent years that the lack of diversity in children's literature has started to be addressed by children's publishers and booksellers (Flood, A 2018). For the first time, diverse families are finding their way into picture books and onto school and library bookshelves. In Australia, there has been a small but vital introduction of picture books pushing the boundaries of convention and celebrating family in all its forms. In this chapter I examine the importance of picture books and the new stories that are helping children better see themselves and others. I also continue to explore the challenges facing family-diverse stories and the ways different family paradigms can be explored through illustration and text.

Picture books play a pivotal role in the educational and emotional development of children. They introduce children to language, storytelling and art, and they are our first introduction to the world of literature and the joys and potential of the written word. It stands to reason that as a child's first introduction to written language, picture books act as a valuable resource for teaching reading and spelling. If this was all picture books accomplished, this would still prove them to be a vital educational tool – but picture books offer so much more than this. Picture books help children develop critical thinking skills (Roche 2015) and an understanding of language and storytelling. There have also been 'many empirical studies' that connect the development of literacy skills to a child's ability to engage and identify with stories (Abadiano 2010, p. 2).

Picture books need to act as windows, showing children worlds outside of their own understanding. Just as importantly, they must also act as mirrors, reflecting children's own lived experiences. Dr Rudine Sims Bishop introduced the world to this concept in her 1990 article, 'Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors.' This metaphor transformed the scholarship of children's literature, and since its conception in 1990, it has been used by academics to further the discussion on the importance of representation in children's books. Scholarly works examining the immigrant experience in picture books (Sotirovska & Kelley 2020), latinx representation in picture books (Braden & Rodriguez 2016), Canadian

Aboriginal children's literature (Wiltse 2015) and children's books featuring 'Arabs, Arab Americans and people of Islamic faith' (Möller 2014) have all been directly inspired by Sims Bishop's original work.

Sims Bishop's original article was written in reference to the continuing lack of representation of people of colour in children's books. However, its message resonates throughout all areas of diversity in children's literature:

> Books are sometimes windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange. These windows are also sliding glass doors, and readers have only to walk through in imagination to become part of whatever world has been created … When lighting conditions are just right, however, a window can also be a mirror. Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back at us, and in that reflection we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience. (Bishop 1990, n.d.)

Importantly, Bishop discusses how such reflected experiences provide a means of self-affirmation, and suggests that readers will 'seek out' mirrors in books. It is still rare for picture books to feature non-white or multiracial families (whether presented as 'intact' or not). Thus, Bishop's work, while thirty years old, is still pertinent today. What happens, however, when children are only ever exposed to windows and not mirrors?

When I was eight years old the school librarian read *Bamboozled* (1994), an Australian-published picture book written and illustrated by David Legge. I sat cross-legged with my classmates as with each turn of the page we were introduced to a new realm of fabulous absurdity. There were so many things to like about the book, but the thing I enjoyed most was the story's protagonist, the granddaughter. I saw myself reflected in her complexion, comfy jumper and long brown hair worn in a ponytail. Picture books I'd been exposed to at the time largely relegated female characters to the role of damsel or mother, or excluded them entirely – something that has not changed much in 25 years (Mokrzycki 2019). Yet here was a book with a female lead (one that wasn't a blonde princess) that I could physically identify with. The simple yet extraordinary act of 'seeing myself' in a book gave me a sudden and previously undiscovered sense of self. Would I have felt so strongly had I not personally (and physically) identified with this character? I don't think it would have detracted from my enjoyment of the book, but research by Dr Rudine Sims Bishop (1990) and the UK Centre for

Literacy in Primary Education (2018) shows that not being able to identify with characters negatively impacts children in important ways (Mokrzycki 2020, p. 41).

Take, for example, a very different early reading experience; that of Nigerian-born author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Unlike me, who at an early age found a picture book character I personally and physically identified with – from skin and hair colour right down to the character's fondness for ponytails, Adichie had 'skin the colour of chocolate, whose kinky hair could not form ponytails' (Adichie 2009). Instead, she grew up on British and American children's books where characters like her did not exist. Because of this, her er understanding was that people who looked and lived like her had no place in stories (Mokrzycki 2020, p. 41). This speaks to Trumpener's research in *The Cambridge companion to children's literature*, which examines the central role picture books play in children's understanding of the world, and how the 'picture worlds' they create can 'permanently shape readers' worldview' (Trumpener 2010, p. 55).Eventual exposure to African books brought about a significant 'mental shift' in Adichie's worldview, and her perception of storytelling: 'I realised that people like me could also exist in literature' (Adichie 2009). Adichie credits her discovery of African writers as saving her 'from having a single story of what books are' (Adichie 2009). In the case of literature, the single story presented is that of the white middle-class (White 2015).

This 'single story' resonates throughout picture book family representations. Picture books are intrinsically linked to early childhood development, shaping children's understanding, compassion, world view and sense of self. They play such an integral role because children largely take their cues about life (and how it works) from early literature (Mokrzycki 2020, p. 42):

> As children enter school, many still have very little life experiences and lack of knowledge about the world they live in. Through literature, children can learn about this world and can work toward becoming accepting and well-rounded individuals. (White 2015, p. 5)

However, what children can learn is limited by what books are willing to show: when they show a single story – the white, middle-class narrative – children learn to view divergence from this norm with scepticism or even prejudice.

Adichie's experiences highlight the importance of literature acting as both windows and mirrors However, the white, middle-class single story continues to dominate Western culture and, even as of writing this in 2021, many children are still not exposed to stories outside of this narrative. Books are powerful, but there is also power held by those who tell them:

> How [stories] are told, who tells them, when they are told, how many stories are told, are really dependent on power. Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person … The single story creates stereotypes … [and] the consequence of the single story is this: it robs people of dignity ... Stories matter. Many stories matter. (Adichie 2009)

Adichie notes that power gives the ability to tell another's story, and to relegate such stories to single story narratives. Additionally, I argue that those who hold the power to tell stories of others also have the power to disregard them.

It is just as important for children to see themselves in books as it is to see others. Much of the research examining this focusses on cultural diversity and the ongoing lack of people of colour in children's literature (such as Adichie's experiences above). However, findings from these studies are relevant to all forms of diversity and representation – or lack thereof. Bishop's work, for example, while exposing the lack of people of colour in children's books, specifies issues that are felt by all those who remain underrepresented or ignored in literature:

> When children cannot find themselves reflected in the books they read, or when the images they see are distorted, negative or laughable, they learn a powerful lesson about how they are devalued in the society of which they are a part. (Bishop 1990)

The single story of families in picture books is that of the 'intact' family unit: white and middle-class (as per the single story norm), but also confined to traditional standards and expectations of Western society, particularly in regards to gender and sexuality (Mokrzycki 2020, p. 42). Stories that introduce children to families like and unlike their own ensure that they don't have a single story of family, but instead a wealth of experiences and lifestyles to explore and engage with:

> The limited single story of what "family" is becomes readily apparent when disrupted by using the tools of windows and mirrors and then expanded through the addition of multiple perspectives … By first noticing the ways the more common single story of family circulates, by questioning who is represented in those texts and who is left out, and by adding layers of family structures represented in more diverse children's

> books, the single story of "family" is disrupted and expanded. (Tschida, C et al. 2014, p. 36)

The above quote is taken from 'Building on windows and mirrors' (2014), an article that examines the intrinsic connection between Adichie's concept of the 'single story' (2009) and Bishop's study on windows and mirrors (1990). Importantly, this article highlights not just the value, but the importance and necessity, of representation in books:

> When readers are able to find themselves in a text, they are therefore validated; their experiences are not so unique or strange as to never be spoken or experienced by others. This inclusion, in turn, connects readers even more strongly to the larger world of books. The reality for many readers, however, is that they do not see reflections of themselves in children's literature … This disparity of mirrors in books also impacts readers who do see themselves; for if all children see are "reflections of themselves, they will grow up with an exaggerated sense of their own importance and value in the world—a dangerous ethnocentrism." (Bishop 1990, n.d., cited in Tschida, C et al. 2014, p. 29)

For Australian children, the issue of the single story – and the overabundance of mirrors to windows – is most prevalent in attitudes towards First Nations peoples. Echoing the original findings by Bishop, recent research shows that racial bias is entrenched in early childhood:

> Children develop their sense of identity and perceptions of others from an early age … Because of this, young children are particularly vulnerable to the messages they see and hear in the media and in books. (Adam et al. 2020)

This research reiterates the power books can have to empower and inspire young people – and, conversely, the power they can have to exclude and oppress them:

> First Nations groups are commonly absent from children's books … A world of children's books dominated by white authors, white images and white male heroes, creates a sense of white superiority. This is harmful to the worldviews and identities of all children. (Adam et al. 2020)

The absence of First Nations peoples in children's books is compounded, ironically, by their inclusion. Research has found that when 'Aboriginal themes or motifs' are included in non-Indigenous children's books, they are often subject to misrepresentation or colonial ideology (Xu 2016, p. 36).

Independent Indigenous press Magabala Books is leading the way in publishing First Nations stories and history. Furthermore, the State Library of Western Australia recently started a state-wide program creating books with First Nations families that explore their language and culture (Barrat-Pugh & Haig 2020). However, the single story of the white hero (and the white family) continues to dominate Australian children's literature:

> The status of whiteness as a privileged racial category is often overlooked in Australian children's narratives that thematize race relations. As Clare Bradford argues, 'most children's texts still treat as normative the experience of white, middle-class children.' (Bradford n.d., cited in Flanagan 2013, p. 13)

Young children experience and understand society 'through the lens of our early family experiences' (Saggers & Sims 2005, p. 66). Our initial understanding (or presumption) is that everyone's family is the same. This understanding is then established as correct when children only see their family type represented (or mirrored) in picture books. However, the 'intact' family unit perpetuated across media 'abuts sometimes harshly against the realities' of contemporary Australian life:

> Add to this the diversity of ethnic and cultural backgrounds that Indigenous Australians and postwar migrating families contribute, and all Australians will eventually encounter family types quite different from their own. (Saggers & Sims 2005, p. 66)

It seems impossible that a child living in Australia today won't encounter families different to their own at some point in their day-to-day lives – so how is it they could potentially go their entire early childhood without seeing this diversity in their picture books? There are various techniques picture book creators can use to ensure and highlight diversity. I have broadly divided these techniques into three methods: Issue, Combination and Illustration. I came to this decision after breaking down how picture books convey stories. I realised that while text and illustration often play equal parts, text can be divided into two primary groups: fact (information) and fiction (narratives). Texts that are fact-based tend to discuss diversity in an educational, explanatory way. Texts that are fiction-based discuss diversity through story, usually with the aim of doing so in a way that feels 'organic' or natural. Through this, I formed the idea of examining picture books through three core methods. The Issue method places the issue or topic of discussion as the driving force of the text, with storytelling as a

secondary component – or not even utilised at all. As such, this method is often seen in nonfiction texts.

As discussed in Chapter One, issue-driven texts are known as 'issue books', and they serve to inform rather than tell a story. Two such books are the American-published *Families* (2016) by Shelley Rotner and *The family book* (2010) by Todd Parr (both currently sold in Australia by Dymocks). Both books have similar writing styles and content, and introduce children to family diversity through simple language that explains different family types. *Families* takes the form of a traditional nonfiction book, using photographs rather than illustrations, while *The family book* employs a creative visual style, using brightly coloured pages and bold, child-like illustrations and font. The visual differences between the books changes their audience: *Families* is very much presented as an educational tool, while *The family book* has the potential to be read in both educational and recreational contexts.

Although the visual style of the books varies considerably, the language is almost identical. Take, for example, the first sentences of both books. *Families* opens with: 'There are all kinds of families. Some families are big … Some are small', while *The Family book* opens with: 'Some families are big. Some families are small.' Both books use short, easy-to-read sentences and repetition:

> Some families have children born to them. Some adopt. Some children have one parent. Some have two - a mom and a dad, or two moms or two dads. (Rotner 2016)

> Some families have a stepmom or stepdad and stepsisters or stepbrothers. Some families adopt children. Some families have two moms or two dads. Some families have one parent instead of two. (Parr 2010)

Interestingly, Parr uses a combination of human and animal illustrations to showcase different family types in *The family book*. In the examples from the quote above, the stepfamily is human with a stepmother. The mother is shown to be the stepparent through Parr's use of colour: the father and children have orange skin and neat black hair, the mother has a tall red hairdo and yellow skin. The adoptive family is animal with a duck parent, two ducklings and an adopted penguin. The same sex parent families are human, showing two mothers and two fathers (with a mix of skin colours: orange, yellow and blue). Lastly, the one parent family is animal, presented as a blue bird with two chicks in a nest.

Combination books are story-driven, and so-called because they use a combination of text and illustration to convey family diversity. Sometimes Combination books will include techniques commonly used in Issue books. For example, it is common for Issue books to list and/or explain different family dynamics (as both *Families* and *The family book* do). This technique is also used in *Family forest* (Kane 2015), which I have classified as a Combination book due to its creative, story-driven approach to family dynamics. The story is told from the perspective of a young male protagonist who tells the reader about his family, and uses conversational language and farcical illustrations. For example: 'Eliza is my half-sister.' This text is accompanied by an illustration of Eliza where only half of her is visible. The character continues: 'No! She has a right leg! And a right arm too!' The illustration of Eliza changes to a complete one and the protagonist says: 'Yes, that's Eliza.' This technique is used throughout the book. For example, when Harriet, the protagonist's 'whole sister' is introduced, she is shown at first as being riddled with holes, before the protagonist again corrects the error and explains what being a 'whole sister' means.

Some books straddle the line between the Issue and Combination methods. One such book is the American-published *My family, your family* (2015) by Lisa Bullard. It tells the story of Makayla, a biracial girl with a black father and white mother (and baby brother on the way). Because her family is changing, Makayla's parents encourage her to visit the neighbourhood families and find 'one great thing' about each family. It uses both text and illustration to showcase family diversity and tells a story, but it also borrows from the Issue method. Every other double-page spread includes a box of nonfiction text to educate readers about families. For example: 'Sometimes after a divorce, a child's parent marries someone else. This person is called a stepparent.' The text interworks facts and explanations throughout the overarching fictional story.

Illustration books are story-driven, like Combination books, but showcase diversity entirely within their illustrations. This leaves the specifications of the diversity presented for the reader to decide and interpret. This is seen in the American-published *Over the River and Through the Wood* (Ashman 2015). The story, while about spending time with family, does not specify family dynamics within the text. Instead, this is shown exclusively through the illustrations: there is an 'intact' family, a multiracial heteronormative family, a multiracial same sex parented family, and a foster or adoptive family (made clear through the physical

differences between the parents – white with red and blonde hair – and their twin daughters – Asian with black hair) (Mokrzycki 2019).

This is also seen in the Australian-published *Christmas at Grandma's beach house* (Saxby 2015). The story is a modern Australian retelling of 'The twelve days of Christmas', where the main family unit has other relatives join them in each new spread. It should be noted that the main family is an 'intact' one, and family diversity is presented in the extended family members that join them at the beach house. For example, on the second day of Christmas, two Uncle Bobs join the family, while on the fifth day five mums and dads arrive. The illustrations show family members (and friends) from different cultural backgrounds, as well as multiracial couples and mixed-race children. The two Uncle Bobs are always pictured together, though it is never specified whether they are a couple. For same sex parented families, however, this presents the opportunity to link the story to their personal lived experience. Likewise, it is never specified who the five mums and dads are coupled with (or if they are coupled with anyone at all). By illustrating an odd number of parents, the story presents the opportunity for single parent families to see themselves represented in the book. Likewise, the cultural diversity shown throughout creates the same opportunities of representation for foster and adoptive families.

Christmas at Grandma's beach house and *Over the river and through the wood* share many similarities. Both books take well-known verses ('The twelve days of Christmas' and 'Over the river and through the wood' respectively) and rewrite them for modern families. Both books are centred around the theme of family holiday gatherings (Christmas and Thanksgiving). With one book set in Australia and the other in America, the cultural and seasonal differences are glaring: whilst Saxby's family enjoy a casual swim at the beach, with characters in thongs and sun hats, Ashman's family travel via the busy subway and through snow, with characters in scarves and coats.

I presented both books in an undergraduate unit in Children's Literature at Victoria University in early 2019. Both books were well received, but when asked which they enjoyed more, most of the class preferred *Christmas at Grandma's beach house*. When I asked students to explain their reasoning, they all said the same: they could identify with the Australian book more. Some of the students had never heard of Thanksgiving before and, of course, none of them had celebrated it. They also mentioned that the beach setting was much more identifiable than the winter one, and the experiences of the Australian family – slopping

on sunscreen, setting up a picnic, swimming in the ocean – mirrored their own experiences with their families. This class discussion reinforced the power of relatability and the importance of Australian stories for an Australian audience. While there are some family-diverse picture books published in Australia, the vast majority come from specialist and independent presses in America and the UK. This reliance on international publishers presents problems for diverse Australian families. Cultural and social differences between countries – however nuanced – mean that Australian families can never access true mirrors of their experiences (Mokrzycki 2019).

When children are unable to access windows and mirrors in their literature, it has 'powerful consequences for how children feel about themselves and how they operate in the world around them' (Tschida et al. 2014, p. 33). The studies highlighted in this chapter show the importance of family-diverse books for *all* children, as this ensures children are not taught a 'single story' of family. Through mirrors, children can create a positive and healthy sense of self. Through windows, children can expand their understanding of those around them and the world beyond: 'Through books, readers alter the way they view their world. This is perhaps the ultimate power of literature, to open new worlds and provoke readers to think in new ways' (Abadiano 2010, p. 5). With over a million Australian children living in diverse families, the need for greater representation – the need for both windows and mirrors – has never been greater.

Chapter Three

From concept to creation: my creative journey

Method development

This project took the form of practice led research, developing from my initial concept of creating a family-diverse picture book. After formulation of the creative idea (in the case of this project, my picture book stories – both the original and final), research of 'other cultural products in the field' (Swinburne University of Technology 2014) often follows, as it did with my project. Research into available diverse books, what they covered (and what they didn't), and who was writing and publishing them, followed my idea to create a family-diverse picture book. I needed to examine the market and the extent that representation was being explored. This kind of research serves both creative and academic purposes. It establishes a gap that can be addressed, and helps formulate the basis of a central research question. From a creative standpoint, it offers examples of others' writing and artistic styles that can act as creative inspiration.

The mix of creative and theoretical research can appear to be a juxtaposition: two disparate elements brought together but not connected. Indeed, a particular issue for this kind of project lies in the contradictory relationship between these elements, which results in challenges like 'reductive and explanatory' writing and having to analyse 'the non-traditional from a traditional position' (Arnold 2012, p. 10). However, practice-led research also has a noted 'backflow effect' (Swinburne University of Technology 2014), where the academic research spurred by the creative project also informs and develops the creative project as well. This process was particularly pertinent for this project, as it enabled a sort of 'ongoing discussion' between my creative work and my exegesis. Moreover, it provided a holistic methodology that encouraged wider critical and creative thinking:

> The opportunities presented by the creativity and research nexus are potentially transformative as they provide us with the ability to look at the world in new ways, to look through different prisms and lenses and through other people's eyes, so as to develop new aesthetics. (Arnold 2012, p. 10)

One very personal component of my research was the use of autoethnography. There are different ways to approach autoethnography, but for the purposes of the project, the

traditional form of ‘evocative autoethnography’ (Pace 2012) was used. This involves specific traits: the use of first-person narrative, autobiographic writing, the inclusion of personal details for specific storytelling purposes and reflection. Autoethnography is closely linked to similar forms of nonfiction writing; however, it is important to note that ‘although memoir, autobiography and creative non-fiction may share some of these characteristics, autoethnography is consciously planned, developed and described as research’ (Pace 2012). The use of autoethnographic writing is a form of research in and of itself, but it also adds deeper meaning and contemplation to other research methods. For example, anecdotal stories about the difficulties of finding family-diverse stories and the effects this has on children highlight the importance of studies on inclusive literature, and enables readers to situate such studies within a real-world context. For this reason, autoethnography, combined with the close reading of picture books and theoretical works, formed an integral part of my research.

Children’s publishing in Australia did not exist as an entity in its own right until after the Second World War (Sheahan-Bright 2004, p. 156), and the picture book market didn’t follow suit until nearly forty years after that. The industry saw a substantial boom in the 1980s with the rise of independent presses and the unprecedented popularity of ‘Australiana’ picture books (Sheahan-Bright 2004, p. 227-228). While it has been many decades since the 1980s heyday of Australiana, Australian-published picture books with this theme remain popular and highly marketable in children’s publishing. The continued love for Australiana is something that greatly informed my creative project, as has academic and professional works on picture book writing and processes, like those by Gill (2015) and Gleeson (2003). Gill examines the art in balancing text and illustration and the roles both play in picture book storytelling, while Gleeson, one of Australia’s most successful children’s authors, explains the picture book making process from inception to publication. Such examinations were integral to forming a complete understanding of the picture book writing and illustrating process. Moreover, Gleeson’s work includes publication guidelines: a working knowledge of picture book publishing (such as preferred word length and formatting specifics) assisted greatly with the logistics of my creative project and ensured it was completed to a publishable standard.

The study of picture book illustration, as examined by Doonan (1993), Nodelman (1988), Schwarcz (1982) and Hamilton (1993), instructed and guided the visual component of my creative project. Doonan, Nodelman and Schwarcz explore the storytelling qualities of

illustration and how they can express abstract and complicated themes. Hamilton's work takes a different approach, examining a comprehensive list of Australian illustrators and their preferred techniques and styles. As outlined throughout my research, the relationship between text and illustration is integral in picture books. There are, of course, exceptions to this rule, such as wordless picture books. However, in picture books for young children that incorporate both words and pictures, successful storytelling and worldbuilding is dependent on text and illustration working together to create and drive the narrative.

As a general rule, picture books for young children are intended to be read aloud, as this is a vital tool in developing early literacy skills (Massaro 2017). Moreover, reading aloud to children has been shown to have a variety of emotional and educational benefits. It develops a child's a love of books, helps them form emotional attachments to caregivers, evolves their understanding of the world outside of their own experiences, and develops vocabulary, listening, reading and writing comprehension (Sipe 2000, p. 252). As such, picture book text must flow well when spoken aloud – regardless of what narrative conventions are used, the text must have a lyrical quality and a rich vocabulary (Massaro 2017, p.63). The illustrations must be able to show the story the text tells, as well as add to it – showing what the text *doesn't* tell. Illustrations can also tell a separate story to the text, or make the reader privy to things the protagonist is not aware of. This can be seen in picture books like *I want my hat back* (2011) and *This is not my hat* (2012) by Jon Klassen. In both texts, the reader knows more than the protagonist through Klassen's use of illustrations. Likewise, in *The rainbow cake*, the reader is privy to the goings-on of the family dogs, something the family is unaware of.

The works and creative processes of picture book authors and illustrators formed a large component of my methodology and informed the development of my creative work. Australian author/illustrator Alison Lester and British author/illustrators Janet and Allen Ahlberg and Paul Adshead utilise writing and illustrating techniques that inspired my creative work. Lester, for example, often shows family and cultural diversity in her books through illustrations. Her book *Magic beach* (2010) showcases different families at different beach locations. The skin tones of characters are varied and family groups range in size and style (e.g. an adult male with a child or an adult male and female with several children). The roles of the adults are left up to the reader to decide, as labelling terms like 'mum' or 'dad' are not used in the text.

Lester's illustrations are similar in style to *Starting School* (1988) by Janet and Allen Ahlberg. This book, like Lester's, showcases a variety of family types, including multiracial and single parent families. Although unlike Lester's, it does use the terms 'mum' and 'dad' in reference to the adults illustrated in the book. Adshead's work, on the other hand, doesn't often focus on family dynamics. His book *The red herring mystery* (1996), for example, is a whodunit for young children, complete with Cast of Characters. Like many of his books, it contains hidden images in the illustrations, and the illustrations themselves are exceptionally detailed – often full page, full-colour, with highly intricate line work. Adshead's work inspired me to create a 'hidden' element in my own story – hiding the characters of the family dogs in illustrations.

The use of illustration to showcase family diversity in the works of Lester and the Ahlbergs, and the unique artistic choices of Adshead, underpin my portfolio work and illustration choices. The Ahlbergs, in particular, were a huge source of inspiration; so much so that my analysis of their illustrative work formed an integral part of my artistic learning (see Appendix 3a). Likewise, the storytelling techniques in *Magic beach* (Lester 2010), *Starting school* (Ahlberg J & A 1988) and *The red herring mystery* (Adshead 1996) served as inspiration for my creative writing. Janine Dawson and Kim Smith, illustrators of *Christmas at Grandma's beach house* and *Over the river and through the wood* respectively, like Lester and the Ahlbergs, also showcase family diversity through illustrations. Both picture book families are multiracial, and Smith even manages to successfully illustrate an adoptive family without any reference to family types in the text. The use – and power – of illustrations to show issues and topics not explored specifically through text is a major component of picture book creation, and highlights the significant role illustrations play in telling picture book stories.

The rainbow cake

When I originally started this project, some years ago now, I had a very specific idea in mind: to write about Christmas in Australia from the point of view of multiple diverse families. As the project developed, this original idea became tighter and more in-depth. As well as celebrating families of different structures and dynamics, it also explored the very different ways Christmas is celebrated (or not celebrated). For example, a father and son travel by V Line to visit family in the country; a grandmother and her grandchildren fly to Tonga to visit family; a two-parent family pack the car for a road trip (see Appendix 3b for the original

illustration ideas for these families). Most of the families were well established, and I was highly engaged with the story. However, as time went on the story stalled. Visually, I couldn't arrange the family illustrations and text in a way that felt right. Story-wise, I found the text kept diverting from story-driven to issue-driven because of the content. Eventually, I decided a new story was needed for the purposes of this project (although I hope to continue *Christmas in Australia* later in my own time).

After this experience, and after examining 300 picture books over the course of this project, I knew what I wanted was an Illustration book (with minor elements of the Combination method) to showcase family diversity visually, rather than relying on the text. I also liked this idea because it meant that family diversity could be largely interpreted by the reader, and therefore offer more options for representation. One day, while visiting the Blue Mountains, I had a sudden inspiration for the story that I would develop for this project: *The rainbow cake.* I wrote the entire first draft on the train ride into the mountains. This new story, rather than showcasing multiple families, focussed on one family unit and the diversity within it. The story's focus on rainbows was very purposeful. As this project shows, LBGTQI+ representation remains limited (and highly contested) in picture books, so I wanted to literally create a 'rainbow family'. LGBTQI+ representation was also very important to me personally as a fervent supporter of gender equality and civil rights. As such, as well as including Suzie's lesbian aunts, a rainbow theme dominates the book in both text and illustration.

The use of diverse characters as 'background' or secondary characters is prevalent throughout diverse representations in children's literature. Thus, intact families are still positioned ultimately as the 'norm', with stories centred around them. As such, I knew I didn't want an intact family at the centre of this story. Additionally, as families are most commonly shown in middle-class suburban settings, I decided to set my story in a rural country town (this is shown in the illustrations of the orchard, small house and chickens). Initially, I envisioned a single parent family unit at the centre of the story, and also decided to make the overall family unit Polish to reflect my own family experience.

What I struggled with was which parent to use in my central family unit. Statistically, it is far more likely for mothers to be represented in single parent families (Tilley 2018). Moreover, if fathers aren't absent, they are predominantly portrayed as less involved than mothers, who are always shown as caring, nurturing figures. This swayed me more towards a single father. However, my research also highlighted the overall lack of female characters and female

agency throughout picture books. Male characters are much more likely to be central figures, to have a variety of personalities and experiences, to have a voice. This led me to choose a single mother, rather than father, for the central family unit, despite the prevalence of single mothers over fathers in picture books. This research also formed my decision to have an almost entirely female cast of characters: Mother and two daughters as the central family unit; two aunts and their baby; aunt, uncle and two children.

Over the development of the project, I decided to change the central adult figure from a mother to an unspecified adult – she is known only by her first name, Sally. In this way, Sally may be a biological parent, adopted parent, foster carer, or perhaps something else. I also decided to change the 'mother and two daughters' narrative by removing any gendered text regarding Sage, Suzie's sibling. Sage has short hair and wears a sparkly tutu. They could be a girl with short hair, a boy who likes tutus or perhaps gender questioning. This decision was made in order to create a mirror for gender nonconforming children, and visually critique the conventional gender roles often perpetuated in picture books.

Elements of *The rainbow cake* were largely inspired by my picture book analysis. This began with the analysis of family-diverse picture books from the National Centre for Australian Children's Literature (NCACL; Appendix 4a). Librarian Ruth Nitschke put together a list of 100 family-diverse titles for me to examine. However, for the purposes of my project (exploring human family representation only), 51 books out of the 100 were used as part of my research. In order to analyse and sort the texts, I referred to my designated diversity categories (Structure, Culture, Identity and Body) and methods (Issue, Combination, Illustration). I also included publisher names, year of publication and publisher type (Conglomerate, Specialist, Self-published, Independent, University and Vanity). Vanity publishers (those that require authors to pay for their book to be published) are sometimes referred to as 'partnership publishers', but will often only market themselves as the latter. As the NSW Writers' Centre explains:

> Vanity publishers do not call themselves this. In fact, they deny they are vanity publishers. They call themselves "partnership" or "subsidy" publishers and tout themselves as alternative means for aspiring authors to gain public attention. (NSW Writers' Centre, n.d.)

While vanity publishers go by several names, I have referred to them as vanity (V) in all book list appendices. Lastly, to complete the NCACL book list, I included Protagonist (Female, Male, No lead) and market (General or Specialist).

By examining each of these elements I was able to easily uncover patterns in publishing. For example, independent and conglomerate publishers dominated the list, at 23 books and 18 books respectively. 36 books showed structural diversity and 33 showed cultural diversity, with body (8 books) and identity (6 books) falling far behind. While I had always intended to show body and identity diversity in my picture book, this particular finding made me adamant about including them as equal elements of the story. Another interesting finding was that 26 books had male leads and 20 had female leads (7 had no lead character). This showed that the books were still more likely to be male-lead, but the closeness in figures also highlighted that books about diversity were more likely to be inclusive of female leads. 36 books were suitable for a general audience, while 5 were suitable for a specialist audience (i.e., not appropriate for general recreational reading). Lastly, my analysis showed that the Combination method was by far the most commonly used at 35 books (compared to 6 Issue books and 10 Illustration books). This too influenced my creative choices for *The rainbow cake*. I originally had the story straddling the Issue-Combination line, but was inspired by the Illustration books in the list to tackle that method instead.

NCACL book list summary table

Publisher	Diversity	Technique	Lead	Market
Independent – 23 books	Structure – 36 books	Combination – 35 books	Male – 26 books	General – 46 books
Conglomerate – 18 books	Culture – 33 books	Illustration – 10 books	Female – 20 books	Specialist – 5 books
Specialist – 5 books	Body – 8 books	Issue – 6 books	No lead – 7 books	
Self-published – 3 books	Identity – 6 books			
Vanity – 2 books				
University – 1 book				

Note: Some books had both female and male leads (these are specified in Appendix 4a); thus the 'Lead' column amounts to more than 51

Findings from the Dymocks bestseller list (Appendix 4b), as discussed in Chapter 1, influenced by choices regarding gender. For consistency and ease of analysis, it was modelled on the NCACL book list. It includes several differences, however, as this list was created to examine gender representation in popular books as well as family types. Country, Topics/Themes, Gendering Represented and Family type were added to the analysis, as was character type (Human, Animal, Other). Elements not relevant to this study were removed. For example, all books were suited to a general audience, so Market was removed, as were many of the publisher types, as only conglomerate and independent presses were represented in the results.

I was able to build on knowledge gained from the NCACL and Dymocks lists to create a personal list of family-diverse picture books (Appendix 4c). This list serves two purposes: to provide a comprehensive list of high-quality family-diverse picture books, and to extend my knowledge of children's publishers and how (and where) to best source family-diverse texts. It follows the format of the NCACL book list, though Market has been removed as, like the Dymocks bestseller list, all books are suited to a general audience. It features a personal selection of Australian and international titles not previously covered in the other book lists. As noted by Deakin University (2020), it is difficult sourcing LGBTQI+ picture books without prior knowledge of the titles, and there is no consistency to how books are categorised. This led to complications in identifying same-sex parented families.

In some cases, same-sex parented families were identified in the title and/or blurb. This meant they were categorised as LGBTQI+ by publishers or libraries. However, when not identified via title/blurb, I referred to content to confirm the presence of same-sex couples. In some books, same-sex couples were discussed in-text, like in *Just the way we are* (2015). This meant, depending on the overall themes of the book, that they may be categorised as LGBTQI+ by publishers and libraries, although this was not guaranteed. In other books, same-sex couples were shown in illustrations, like in *Love makes a family* (2018), which shows two men waking up in bed together. In many of these cases, identification was not consistent amongst category searches. Thus, I relied on a combination of title, text and illustration to identify same-sex couples across all book lists.

I found this issue of consistency in categorisation to be true of all family-diverse books, and thus my personal list required extensive research to complete. Unable to rely on texts being listed as family-diverse, I had to research entire publishers' lists to find titles. Even then,

reference to family in book synopses was often ambiguous, so all texts that had the potential to showcase human families had to be read to confirm any presence or reference to family. I familiarised myself with over 50 publishers' book lists. Some separated books into age and theme, which assisted my search. However, themes were often broad, particularly in the case of larger independent and conglomerate publishers. Smaller specialist presses tended to be far easier to navigate. As they cater to specific areas, their list of themes was usually far more comprehensive. For example, Lee & Low Books, a multicultural 'family-run, minority-owned, independent' press in America (About us 2021) has over 100 themes, including African/African American interest, Bilingual, Breaking gender barriers, Civil rights movement, Disability and Families. As such, the navigating of lists – both those with intensive themes and those without – took considerable time, and I developed my personal list over the course of a year.

Using the NCACL book list, I created in-depth analyses of Australian-published family-diverse picture books. Appendix 2 covers ten of the titles featured in the book list. Each analysis follows the same format to ensure patterns and trends are easily identified, and encompasses the following:

- Description/synopsis/blurb
- Type/s of diversity represented
- Notes on text
- Notes on illustration
- Notes on audience

The titles chosen for the appendix – *Christmas at Grandma's beach house* (Saxby 2015), *Family forest* (Kane 2015), *Hello little babies* (Lester 2016), *Love makes a family* (Beer 2018), *My place* (Wheatley 1988), *Our Granny* (Wild 1993), *Reena's rainbow* (White 2017), *The lost girl* (Kwaymullina 2014), *Tom Tom* (Sullivan 2008) and *Who's got a normal family?* (Nowell 2018) – offer specific insights into picture book writing and illustrating, and as such, they have all assisted my creative work in some way.

The playful visuals of the text in *Christmas at Grandma's Beach House* influenced my decision to hand-write my story:

> The font is quite unique, presented in curved, swirly lines and changing size and emphasis. In this way the text itself becomes part of the visual aesthetics of the book,

> and matches the carefree style of the illustrations as well as the setting (the beach), with the curved lines mimicking that of a coastal breeze or ocean waves. (Appendix 2, p. 73)

While the text in this book is not hand-written, I loved the idea of using text as part of the visual aesthetic. Matching the text to the illustrations was something I found particularly effective. In *The rainbow cake*, I use different fonts that match or fit together with the adjectives describing the cake. For example, 'beautiful' is written in italicised serif font.

The writing style of *Family forest* helped me understand how text and illustration can work together to discuss diversity in a fun and child-friendly way:

> The text is narrative driven, but includes specific family terms, for example 'Eliza is my half-sister' and 'Dad is married to Babs. She's my step-mum.' The use of such terms can easily lead to explanatory or issue-driven texts, but Kane employs humour and farcical illustrations to explore family dynamics in an entertaining way. (Appendix 2, p. 75)

Kane uses misunderstandings based on literal translations and homophones (e.g. a 'half' sister shown with only one half of her body visible, then a 'whole' sister shown riddled with holes). By explaining family dynamics this way, the book avoids the common pitfalls of issue-heavy texts. While I did not employ Kane's style myself in *The rainbow cake*, her text greatly informed my understanding of how to successfully showcase family diversity in picture books.

Family forest uses a colour scheme for its illustrations; similarly, *Love makes a family* relies on a limited colour palette. While the colours in *Family forest* aren't necessary limited, they certainly follow a theme:

> The colour palette is strongly composed of yellows, greens and browns throughout. The use of [these colours] to carry the palette gives the illustrations an overall 'earthy' quality, and links each character/spread to the next. (Appendix 2, p. 76)

Beer only uses 12 solid colours (including black and white) in *Love makes a family*, with nine of those colours carrying the bulk of the illustrations (Appendix 2, p. 84-85). *Family forest*'s use of theme and *Love makes a family*'s limited (yet striking) palette, guided my own use of colour in *The rainbow cake.*

Others in the appendix contributed to my understanding of picture book creation. Alison Lester's *Hello little babies* highlighted the power of minimal text, and its ability to tell so much while saying so little. First Nations texts *The lost girl* and *Tom Tom* informed text phrasing and terminology, and inspired the character of Aunt Kirra. The use of maps in *My place* ('hand-drawn' by the child protagonists) inspired Suzie's hand-drawn map of her house and yard for the end pages of *The rainbow cake*. *Our Granny* influenced my use of different sized illustrations, and *Reena's Rainbow* and *Who's got a normal family?* helped me better understand some of the issues surrounding diverse family representation in picture books.

Both *Reena's rainbow* and *Who's got a normal family?* are successful in their own right, and valid inclusions on the NCACL book list. However, they were not as highly polished as the others analysed in the appendix. The resolution in *Reena's Rainbow* didn't feel authentic or clear enough. However, the use of sign language in the illustrations was beautifully done, and added greatly to the overall story. In *Who's got a normal family?* the language feels overly aggressive, and to me this meant the positive message it tried to impart about family diversity was lost. It does, however, use very clear, age-appropriate language and includes a striking visual element of stylised font for every child character's name. As I write in my analysis:

> Appropriate for any audience, although like Reena's rainbow, I feel it would be limited in appeal … The book does, however, offer a lot of family diversity, and provided children understand the underlying message, it could be a way to discuss the idea (or, perhaps more accurately, the false idea) of normalcy. (Appendix 2, p. 107)

The rainbow cake has thus been informed by many different picture books – some more than others. I was greatly inspired by the use of foreign vocabulary in *Julián is a mermaid*, and this motivated me to include some Polish terms in my book. As *The rainbow cake* uses the illustration method, I refrained, however, from explaining or providing phonetic pronunciations of Polish terms in the narrative. I considered simply leaving them as is, much like Love does with the two Spanish terms used in *Julián.* Ultimately, however, I decided to include a glossary at the end of the book. This covers not just Polish terms, but also the words 'bravo' and 'delectable' – two words young children may be unfamiliar with. *The rainbow cake* offers knowledge building in several areas: critical thinking (figuring out the mystery; finding the dogs in the illustrations), literacy (vocabulary; language patterns and repetition), cultural understanding (Polish customs and vocabulary) and practical life skills (cooking). I therefore chose to include these words in the glossary as a form of vocabulary expansion. My

goal of knowledge building is also why I chose to include general information about pierogi in the glossary. I positioned the glossary with a recipe for rainbow cake, so they could form a double-page spread (illustrated sprinkles connect the pages).

I was inspired to include a recipe for the rainbow cake by Judith Rossell's *Ruby and Leonard and the great big surprise* (2009). The story focusses on its protagonists, mice Ruby and Leonard, going through the steps of making cupcakes. The cupcake recipe is included at the end of the story. *Can we lick the spoon now?* (2011) by Carol Goess has many similarities to *Ruby and Leonard*, as well as to my own story. In Goess's story, a father bakes a cake with his two daughters, which is then eaten by their 'bad dog' (Goess 2011). Like *Ruby and Leonard,* the story focusses on the steps of cake baking, and includes a cake recipe at the end. Both picture books focus much of their text on the elements of cake-baking – e.g. adding eggs, whisking, measuring flour, etc. As I decided to make my story about a large family (therefore requiring the text to cover more characters and their activities), I instead reference the baking process primarily in the illustrations.

I was, of course, greatly influenced by my own family in the overall creation of *The rainbow cake.* As two of my foster children are Tongan, I initially planned on having the story centred on a Tongan family. My foster daughter was my inspiration for Suzie, and the character's physical appearance and style is very much a homage to her (see Appendix 3b for Suzie's original design; her hair was later changed to match my daughter's preference for plaited hair). However, after analysing so many picture books and exploring the different cultural diversity represented, it suddenly occurred to me that my own Polish background would be perfect for the story. It was something I could write about with knowledge and confidence, something I felt I was lacking in tackling a story centred around a family from a culture I didn't personally identify with. Once I decided to centre the story on a Polish family, I found the story started to flow much more naturally.

Inspired by *My place,* which discusses disconnection from culture and assimilation in the German-born characters of the Műllers (who change their name to Miller), I decided to include some Polish cultural traditions. My grandparents and father came to Australia as displaced persons after the war. My father spent the first two years of his life in a German refugee camp, while my grandparents lived there for a decade as 'forced labourers' in a war factory. In 1950s Australia, assimilation was key to fitting in and thriving. As such, like the

Műllers, my dad's name quickly changed from Aleksander to Alex, and a lot of the family traditions and customs were either lost or compromised so as to be more 'Australian'.

It was because of this that I was inspired to embrace my Polishness, and make it a focal point of the story. I included my favourite Polish dish (pierogi), a Polish saying (Na zdrowie) and traditional Polish folk art patterns for the plates in the lunch illustration (the tablecloth is even covered in poppies, Poland's national flower and a personal favourite of my Babcia [my grandmother]). I also realised that in the 300 family-diverse picture books I examined, not one had a Polish family. Australia has a large Polish population. As of the 2016 census there were 45,368 Poland-born people in Australia (not including all their Australian-born families), and Victoria has the highest Polish-born population of over 14,000 (Department of Home Affairs 2018).

I thus decided to examine Polish representation in Australian picture books – and couldn't find any. There are some Polish-themed titles available, such as the UK-published *First Polish Words* (Melling 2009) and the self-published bilingual *Am I Small? Czy Jestem Mala?* (Winterberg 2014). Poland, or Polish people, however, are shown most in stories about the Second World War. There are several books about Polish war hero Irena Sendlerowa, who smuggled thousands of Jewish children out of the Warsaw Ghetto. Such books include *Irena's jar of secrets* (Vaughan 2011) by American multicultural publisher Lee & Low Books, *Jars of hope: how one woman helped save 2,500 children during the Holocaust* (Roy 2015) by American independent publisher Capstone, and Irena also has a spread in the (originally) crowd-funded *Goodnight stories for rebel girls* (Favilli & Cavallo 2016).

There are also some Polish folk stories and classic poetry available in picture book form, as well as more general English-language picture book stories by the Krakow-based Polish Book Institute, but nothing by Australian publishers – with one exception. *The crooked trees* (Crock 2016), published by Trade Winds, a self-described 'grass roots, Melbourne based group' (About 2016), tells the story of Poland's famed Crooked Forest. There is also *The treasure box* (Wild 2013), which is set during a war, but at an unspecified time and location. I have seen it listed in books about both WWI and WWII, so it is uncertain whether this book is actually set in Poland or not. However, author of *The treasure box* Margaret Wild also wrote *Let the celebrations begin!* (1991), a story centred on the Holocaust (set in Germany's Belson concentration camp). It is one of my favourite picture books. It is beautifully written and skilfully examines a horrific historical time in picture book format (aided by Julie

Vivas's iconic watercolour illustrations). As *Let the celebrations begin!* is set in WWII, it seems likely that *The treasure box* is as well, although it could be set in several countries. However, Polish families (as well as any family that has fled war) will be able to connect with this story very deeply.

In all my research, I never found a picture book about a Polish (or, as in the case of my picture book, a Polish-Australian) family. This in itself is a gap in children's literature, as other European families (notably Greek and Italian) were represented – although minimally – in the books analysed. As Australia has such a large European population, and thus many European languages, customs, foods and traditions, this seems like a missed opportunity – particularly for first generation Australians like myself – to see themselves and their families in books. Through this discovery I realised the importance of embracing my family's culture in *The rainbow cake.* Through *The rainbow cake*, I hope to give all children windows to view, and sliding glass doors to enter, a diverse Polish-Australian household; and, just as importantly, I hope to give Polish and Polish-Australian children mirrors into their lived experiences that they previously never had.

Conclusion

This research considers the benefits of representing greater family diversity in Australian picture books, arguing the importance of child-centred narratives that relate to a child's personal experiences. This research, in both its creative and theoretical forms, is about shining a spotlight on the invisible and making it seen. It fills a noticeable gap in Australian children's literature and adds an Australian narrative to the international dialogue of family diversity. I say 'international dialogue', as family diversity is discussed and showcased much more readily by international publishers. In my personal book list (Appendix 4c), 28 titles were Australian-published, while the rest (72 titles) were published internationally.

This is not to say there aren't more Australian-published family-diverse picture books available, but that titles are much easier to find through international publishers. What this project highlights is, at best, an unconscious oversight by Australian publishers to promote diverse stories – whether these stories are family-focussed or not. Many of the books I analysed were not family-focussed. Many either mentioned family dynamics in passing, or didn't refer to them at all, instead showing diversity in illustrations. However, regardless of theme or focus, each of the books analysed showcased family diversity in some way. Whether a big or small gesture, the representation – and inclusion – of diverse families is something that can't be taken for granted.

My family doesn't look like your family (Stoltenkamp 2019) is a personal favourite at our house. As discussed, my youngest foster son lives in two homes: with his biological father during the week, and with my husband and me on weekends and school holidays. When choosing stories for reading at bedtime, he will often ask for 'the book that has our family in it.' Each spread counts backwards from ten ('There are ten, nine, eight in my family…' and so on). Each family is different, and in the 'There are eight in my family' spread it reads:

> There are eight in my family. We have two homes.
> More rooms to stay and spaces to play to spend time with one another.
> How many homes does your family live in?

This one spread means so much to our son. The simple acknowledgment that some families live in two homes, only a few lines long, makes him feel seen – and this is so important for a child.

As my research shows, it is not simply a matter of the benefits diverse representation provides, but a matter of their necessity. As examined by White (2015), acknowledging diverse family lives in books is vital to a child's sense of belonging and self-worth, but also to their education. Not being 'seen' in literature restricts a child's ability to learn educational topics (Ferfolja & Robinson 2004; Pohan & Bailey 1998, cited in White 2015, p. 3). This is because, as reiterated throughout this research, the negative ramifications of invisibility reverberate throughout all areas of a child's life. If a child is made to feel less than, different or strange because they don't fit the 'intact' families dominating picture books, their sense of self-worth, their ability to form strong social connections, and their reading and educational development, are all obstructed. Conversely, the dominance of white, two-parent, heteronormative families can create a 'sense of white superiority' (Adam et al 2020, n.p.) in children whose families do fit these norms. As Skrlac Lo writes:

> While some titles may challenge norms in picture books, the idealized family—that is, the heteronormative nuclear family—remains much like the one Nancy Larrick identified in 1965. The young White reader living with two heterosexual parents will see 'his' family as the 'kingfish.' (Skrlac Lo 2019, p. 24-25)

This is why family diversity cannot be taken for granted. This is especially true in a modern, multicultural Australia where family diversity is so commonplace. A bit like early Australian children's publishing, which didn't come into its own until after the Second World War, diverse Australian picture books are still finding their way. And much like early Australian children's publishing, this seems to be a product of 'hanging on' to tradition. The Second World War halted the importing of books from Britain (Sheahan-Bright 2004, p. 156), and this led to the creation of an Australian children's publishing industry independent of its British forebearers. However, because books up until this time had either been published in Britain or were British in content, style and language, it was nearly 40 years before 'Australiana' picture books and Australian stories became the norm. Perhaps this is why diverse families are still fighting for representation. The 'intact' family has been such a staple of picture books for so long that, like creating Australian stories, it has taken decades for the publishing industry to break from tradition.

Of course, there are issues inherent in diverse family representation that have impacted its success over the years. As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, a lack of sensitivity and understanding of topics can lead to diverse families being misrepresented. Misrepresentation

is just as destructive as invisibility, if not more so: misrepresentation encourages stereotypes, which can greatly damage the self-esteem of those 'reflected', and encourage bias in others (Sims Bishop 1990; Tschida & Ticknor 2014). Thus, misrepresentation can be likened to a funhouse mirror. It is still a mirror, but the image is distorted. This distortion changes the way the mirror is able to act as a window, limiting the view and distorting the world it presents.

As mentioned throughout, picture books are a child's first introduction to language and the world outside of their own. It is through picture books that children begin to formulate their understanding of the world around them. Of course, a child's understanding of the world includes an understanding of family – of what constitutes 'normal', expected, accepted and, conversely, what is perceived as different or unusual. As this research shows, families that fall under any category other than 'intact' are considered 'other'. There is absolutely nothing wrong with the portrayal of 'intact' families across picture books, but by situating all other family types as not 'intact', it sets a precedent to (consciously or unconsciously) judge, minimise and even shame those that sit outside the perceived norm.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics defines an 'intact' family as one in which the child or children 'are the natural or adopted children of both parents, and there are no step-children' (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2015). This definition doesn't explicitly exclude same-sex parents, but does limit the means in which a same-sex parented family can be considered intact. For example, if a same-sex couple adopts a child, their family is considered intact. However, if a child is conceived via either donor egg or sperm, making only one of the couple a biological parent, their family is not considered intact. This example highlights how narrow the criteria is to be considered an 'intact' family.

As of writing this, there are approximately 1.1 million Australian children living with only one biological parent (Churchill 2018). This could be because parents have divorced, are single, have remarried – there are many possibilities. The fact remains that romanticising two-parent, heteronormative families and situating them as the default (and therefore the perceived 'correct' family type) dismisses the lived experiences of many Australian children and their families. Not only are so-called 'intact' families the default, but as this research shows, diversity of culture, identity and body remain uncommon regardless of the family type presented.

This research sought to answer: what are the importance and benefits of representing family diversity in Australian picture books? To answer this, I referred to three thematic questions:

1. What phrasing and vocabulary is used regarding families?
2. How are families presented visually?
3. Why is it important that Australian children's literature has diverse family representation?

The phrasing and vocabulary varied wildly between titles depending on book method (Issue, Combination or Illustration), and this research highlighted issues regarding the use – and disuse – of language. For example, the Spanish words removed from *Julián is a mermaid* (2018) and the lack of discussion about slavery in *A fine dessert* (2015) and *A birthday cake for George Washington* (2016) underscore the larger issue of censorship that exists throughout picture book publication. Secondly, families were quite diverse in culture in illustrations, but said culture was often unspecified. This meant that families of multiple cultures could potentially identify with much of the visual representation, but also meant they weren't offered a complete mirror into their lived experiences. However, such unspecified representation is highly important: Australia is a multicultural society, and picture books showcasing people of different colours acknowledges our modern reality.

My final thematic question asks *why* it is important for Australian picture books to have diverse family representation. I believe this research has successfully argued not just the importance – but the need – for family-diverse titles. As explained by Churchill in *The Conversation*, 'the Australian family is as diverse and different as the country's terrain' (Churchill 2018, n.p.). Moreover, the lack of family diversity in books read at school impedes children's learning, self-worth and social interactions with peers (White 2015). When you combine these observations, it becomes obvious why Australian children need more family-diverse books. As reiterated throughout this research, children need windows and mirrors in their literature. Furthermore, as outlined in Chapter 2, we must be wary of presenting a 'single story' of family to young children, as their perceptions of what constitutes a family are greatly influenced by what they are shown in books.

The power of relatability – of a child seeing themselves reflected back at them in books – is the cornerstone of this research. All children have the right to be seen, and this visibility enables children to understand themselves. As Abadiano (2010, p. iii) writes:

> When children and young adolescent readers make connections between their own experiences and prior knowledge and those they come to experience and learn in stories, novels, or nonfiction—these allow them to not only relate meaningfully to the text, but more importantly, help them to understand and to make sense of their own lives. Such is the power of literature!

Furthermore, children seeing themselves – and their families – in books is integral to their relationship with literature:

> The more children and their families see themselves and their situations in the books they read, the more they can see the relevance and importance of literature in their lives. (Wooten, D A & Cullinan, B E , cited in Abadiano 2010, p. 78)

This is not to say that children need to (or should) have their own lived experiences reflected back at them constantly in books. In fact, this creates the issue of superiority amongst certain groups and the marginalisation of others. However, when children are consistently ignored or misrepresented, it discourages children from engaging with and enjoying literature. The more children's lives are visible in literature, the more value literature has to their lives (Abadiano 2010, p. 78). This reiterates the importance of relatable children's literature; although, of course, this is not always (or necessarily) the purpose of a book. Indeed, children's literature academics hold 'contradictory views' on what the values of children's literature are (Keenan 1985, p. 194) – in other words, there is little consensus on what children's literature 'does' and what its purpose is. However, academics agree that children's books are socially, culturally and historically significant:

> To many readers, children's books are a matter of private delight, which means, perhaps, that they are real literature – if 'literature' consists of texts which engage, change, and provoke intense responses in readers. But if private delight seems a somewhat indefensible justification for a study, then we can reflect on the direct or indirect influence that children's books have, and have had, socially, culturally, and historically. They are overtly important educationally and commercially – with consequences across the culture, from language to politics: most adults, and almost certainly the vast majority of those in positions of power and influence, read children's books as children, and it is inconceivable that the ideologies permeating those books had no influence on their development. (Hunt 2005, p. 1)

Thus, while there may never be a definitive answer regarding the purpose of children's literature, there is a plethora of research on what it does or provides: children's literature grows the imagination (Wissman 2019; Swartz 2009) and develops literacy and critical thinking skills (Massaro 2017; Roche 2015); it promotes empathy and understanding (White 2015; Hollander 2004; Matthew & Chow 2007; Skrlac Lo 2019); and it shapes children's view of the world (Trumpener 2010), and of themselves and others (Sims Bishop 1990; Tschida & Ticknor 2014).

Upon reflection of the four years it took developing this project, I feel like one of my personal heroines from children's literature: Roald Dahl's Matilda. Though we had very different adventures, we shared the same storybook journey. My story began at home: the tiny apartment my husband and I started foster care in. This led me on my (PhD) journey; researching, writing and illustrating. Now that journey has ended, I find myself in my 'new home', both literally and figuratively: a new house and new knowledge. Matilda's journey may have included telekinesis, while mine saw me creating a picture book, but at the crux of both our journeys is the quest for knowledge. Matilda yearned to read and learn, and so she devoured one book after another; immersing herself, and revelling in, the world of words. By her journey's end she had accumulated a vast knowledge, and a new and broader understanding of the world.

This is also how my journey has ended. I have delighted in the words of both picture book authors and children's literature scholars. They have nurtured in me a new understanding of picture book worlds and the potential they have to shape, guide and inspire. This is, perhaps, the greatest knowledge this journey has brought me: the immense power a picture book has to change a child's life. At the start of this journey, the emotional and educational benefits of representation were an intriguing, but undeveloped, concept. Over the course of my research, this grew to become the guiding force of every presentation I gave and every class I taught. Moreover, it has had such an influence on Australian educators that I have been asked to share my research with teacher librarians across Australia. I like to think that this would have made Matilda proud.

By creating *The rainbow cake* I have made a start in addressing the gap in Australian children's literature examined in this research. My rainbow cake family are diverse in structure, culture, identity and body, but these are not the focus of the story. Instead, like Beer (2018), my book focusses on family love. It shows a special Saturday in the life of this

family, and how they work together to solve a problem in a positive way. While family is the central theme of the book, explaining its diversity is not. Rather than explain who Sally is, for example, or why there is no father-figure in the primary household, the family is simply presented complete (or intact) as is. Thus, through *The rainbow cake,* I am challenging the default 'single story' of family.

Picture books have a 'transformative power' to create discussions about the world, and 'connect us to the beautiful, the possible, and the hopeful, and inspire agency and activism within ourselves and the young people with whom we share texts' (Wissman, K 2019, p. 15). This research provides a means for families from diverse backgrounds to access relatable stories, and contributes both new academic knowledge to the discipline of children's literature and new creative work that is representative of modern family life. Overall, this research encourages the creation of more inclusive Australian literature for young children and further academic research into the area of family-diverse books. It embraces the diversity of modern Australian life and promotes a more positive and inclusive societal view of family diversity. Lastly, and most importantly, this research argues that a so-called 'intact' family is in fact no more intact than any other. What makes families special is that they are all different – and all families, and especially all children, deserve to see themselves, and be seen by others, in picture books.

Appendix 1: The rainbow cake text

Cover:

Suzie in foreground holding cake, family members either side (smaller, in background).

'Rainbow' font is large and each letter is a rainbow colour.

End page: *Map of house and yard by Suzie*

Title page:

Title (as seen on cover), large illustration of the rainbow cake (no background).

Spread 1

Page 1:

It is a very special day.

Suzie's aunts, uncle and cousins are all coming over to visit.

So Suzie (the one on the right)

Sally (the one in the middle)

and Sage (the one on the left)

are baking a rainbow cake to celebrate.

'Rainbow' in bold, coloured text using rainbow colours.

Page 2:

Full page illustration: Suzie, Sage and Sally making cake in kitchen with window to backyard behind. Outside the dogs (May and Frankie) are shown. Frankie is asleep; one of May's eyes is open.

Spread 2

Page 3:

It takes a long, long, long time,

but after lots of hard work …

Three separate illustrations cascading left to right, showing the baking progress:

- *Sally mixing batter*

- *Suzie and Sage watching the oven*
- *Sage spreading jam on cake*

Page 4:

They had a scrummy-yummy, sticky-licky beautiful rainbow cake!

Different fun font for each adjective; 'rainbow' in large rainbow colours.

Half-page illustration of completed cake.

Spread 3

Page 5:

Ding-dong!

Everybody has arrived.

'Ding-dong' in larger, unique font.

¾ sized illustration (left side, spilling over) of family greeted at open door.

Page 6:

There's Aunt Roxie and Aunt Flora and Baby JJ,

Aunt Kirra and Uncle Trev and Lockie and Lizzie.

Six small illustrations of characters as they are named, interacting with main characters.

Trev has a bag of ingredients for pierogi.

Spread 4

Page 7:

Suzie shows everybody the scrummy-yummy, sticky-licky beautiful rainbow cake.

Different fun font for each adjective; 'rainbow' in large rainbow colours.

'Amazing!' says Aunt Roxie.

'Bravo!' says Aunt Flora.

'Gurgle-squeak!' says Baby JJ.

'Delicious!' says Aunt Kirra.

'Delectable!' says Uncle Trev.

'Awesome!' says Lockie.

'Yummm!' says Lizzie.

Small illustration of rainbow cake (right)

Page 8:

Full page illustration: Suzie holding the cake plate, showing the family. Suzie and all visiting family members are in the living room and dog ears are visible through window.

Spread 5

Page 9:

Sage wants to eat the cake now.

‘Not until after lunch,’ says Sally.

Illustration of Sage and Sally, no background.

Page 10:

‘I’m on it!’ says Uncle Trev.

He has brought potatoes, onions and quark cheese to make Suzie’s favourite Polish dish – pierogi!

Illustration of Trev holding up bag, no background.

Spread 6

Page 11:

Half-page illustration (panoramic) of Trev setting up in the kitchen. Cake plate is on the counter, May’s face visible from bushes through window.

So Uncle Trev gets to work in the kitchen.

Half-page illustration (panoramic) of Aunts and JJ spread out on the rug, Frankie’s tail visible through window.

Aunt Roxie and Aunt Flora and Baby JJ play on the living room rug.

Page 12:

Half-page illustration (panoramic) of Kirra and kids drawing at the dining table in the sunroom, Frankie’s nose and ears visible in bush outside window.

Aunt Kirra and Lockie and Lizzie draw in the sunroom.

Half-page illustration (panoramic) of Sally and Sage on the floor in the kids’ bedroom, playing cards, May’s nose and paw visible under bed.

And Sally and Sage play cards in the bedroom.

Spread 7

Page 13:

And Suzie spends time with everybody.

She helps Uncle Trev cut and fill the pierogi dough …

Two half-page illustrations, bird's eye view:

- *Trev and Suzie working together, rolling out and cutting dough, May's paw visible in laundry basket.*
- *Trev and Suzie filling and sealing pierogi.*

Page 14:

She sings songs to Baby JJ …

Full-page illustration (ground level perspective): Suzie upside-down on the rug holding JJ in the air; Aunt Flora watches and Aunt Roxie rummages through bag in background. Frankie's nose visible under couch.

Spread 8

Page 15:

She draws with Aunt Kirra and Lockie and Lizzie ...

Two half-page illustrations:

- *Suzie's POV, drawing at table, May and Frankie's tails disappearing into kitchen.*
- *Bird's eye view of all the drawings.*

Page 16:

And she helps Sage win at cards.

Full-page illustration (Sage's POV): Suzie behind Sally, motioning to Sage to tell her what cards she has.

Spread 9

Page 17:

At lunch, everybody has second and third helpings of pierogi.

Uncle Trev always fries his pierogi in butter, which makes them extra tasty.

Afterwards, it's time for the scrummy-yummy, sticky-licky beautiful rainbow cake.

'Na zdrowie!'

Different fun font for each cake adjective; 'rainbow' in large rainbow colours. Sprinkles scattered top right and bottom left of page.

Page 18:

Full-page illustration: Whole family at dining room table in sunroom. The room is cluttered, but cosy; Polish folk-art themed tablecloth and crockery used at table. No dogs visible. Kitchen visible in background, empty cake plate and crumbs partially visible on counter.

Spread 10

Page 19:

But it's gone!

'Keep calm!' says Aunt Roxie.

'Don't panic!' says Aunt Flora.

'Waaah!' says Baby JJ.

'Oh no!' says Aunt Kirra.

'Dear me!' says Uncle Trev.

'It's been eaten!' says Lockie.

'But by who?' says Lizzy.

¼ page illustrationt: tabletop covered with used cutlery, crockery and cups, stacked.

Page 20:

Full-page illustration: Sally, centre, holds the cake plate, empty but for a few crumbs and sprinkles. Everyone is gathered around, looking shocked (JJ cries).

Spread 11

Page 21:

Everybody looks at everybody else.

'It wasn't me!' says Uncle Trev. 'I was making pierogi.'

'It wasn't us!' says Aunt Roxie. 'We were playing on the rug.'

Boxed illustrations of Trev, then Aunts and JJ, protesting.

Page 22:

‘It wasn’t us!’ says Aunt Kirra. ‘We were drawing pictures.’

‘It wasn’t us!’ says Sally. ‘We were playing cards.’

‘And it wasn’t me!’ says Suzie. ‘I was with all of you.’

… So who was it?

Boxed illustrations of Aunt Kirra and kids, Sally and Sage, then Suzie, protesting.

Spread 12

Page 23:

Just then, Suzie notices some colourful footprints on the floor.

Single illustration, boxed (no outline) of Suzie in kitchen, examining footprints.

Page 24:

She follows them out of the kitchen...

through the sunroom...

and into the backyard ...

Three small illustrations of Suzie, no background: putting on gumboots, walking out door, walking down ramp.

Spread 13

Page 25:

And there she finds the culprits, looking very sorry for themselves.

‘Cheeky dogs!’ says Sally.

‘What do we do now?’ asks Sage.

Suzie thinks.

‘I have an idea,’ she says ...

Small illustration, bottom right, of grass with cake crumbs scattered.

Page 26:

Full-page illustration: Dogs in kennel, whole family looking at them, smiling (Suzie in front). Dogs have rainbow sprinkles and crumbs all around them.

Spread 14

Pages 27-28:

Double-page illustration: the whole family working together in the kitchen, making a new rainbow cake. Aunt Roxie and Lizzie do dishes; Uncle Trev holds JJ; Aunt Flora, Aunt Kirra, Sally and Suzie work on the cake; Lockie and Sage look after the dogs.

Blank page

The end..?

Small circular illustration of Baby JJ looking at the new cake.

Glossary:

Bravo

Congratulations, well done

Delectable

Delicious, yummy

Na Zdrowie (Nah-strov-ee-ah)

Cheers, to health

Quark

A type of cheese, soft and white, similar to cottage cheese

Pierogi (Par-og-ee)

A type of boiled dumpling, sometimes fried. They are found in Poland, as well as other central and Eastern European countries. Pierogi recipes vary from country to country and region to region. Common fillings include potato and cheese, and cabbage and mushroom. You can also make sweet pierogi!

Rainbow cake recipe:

250g unsalted butter, softened

1 cup white sugar

3 free-range eggs

1 tsp vanilla essence

2 cups self-raising flour

½ cup milk

Rainbow sprinkles

Buttercream icing:

2 cups icing sugar

2 Tbsp unsalted butter, softened

I tsp vanilla essence

1-2 Tbsp milk

Note: Double the recipe and separate into 2 cake pans to make a larger (higher) cake.

Grease a 20cm round cake pan and line with baking paper. Set the oven to 175.

In a large bowl, stir butter and sugar together until light and creamy. Add eggs, one at a time, then vanilla essence, stirring well.

Alternately fold in the self-raising flour and milk until just combined, then stir in some rainbow sprinkles.

Pour into prepared pan and bake for 35-45 minutes, or until the cake springs back when lightly touched. Leave to cool, then prepare the buttercream icing.

Put the butter and vanilla in a medium-sized bowl and sift in icing sugar, a little at a time.

Add 1-2 tablespoons of milk, as needed (the buttercream should be thick enough to stick to the spoon).

Slice the cake in half lengthways, and spread jam and ⅓ of the buttercream on the bottom half.

Sandwich the halves together and top the cake with remaining buttercream, then add more rainbow sprinkles to decorate. Enjoy!

Blank page

End page: *Map of house and yard by Suzie*

Back cover:

It is a very special day. Suzie's family are coming to visit. So Suzie, Sally and Sage bake a rainbow cake to celebrate. But what happens when the cake goes missing? Who took it, and what will Suzie do?

Small illustration of the rainbow cake, centred.

Appendix 2: Picture book analysis

a) Christmas at Grandma's beach house

Claire Saxby & Janine Dawson 2015, The Five Mile Press

Blurb

'The sun is shining, the waves are calling and everyone is ready for some fun in the sun. It's Christmas time at Grandma's Beach House – the very best time of the year. An Australian Christmas tale.'

Diversity represented

All diversity is inferred:

- Structure: Single parent, step/blended, potentially adoption/foster
- Culture: BAME characters, multiracial families, mixed race children
- Identity: (potential) gay couple

Notes on text

The story takes the well-known Christmas song 'The twelve days of Christmas' and gives it a modern Australian spin, focussing on family. One family is represented, but each new spread/page (and each new part of the song) introduces new family members (and sometimes friends). In this way the text is able to focus on one family but continue to extend it, showing the breadth of extended family and the diversity within Australian families. The text introduces the following characters/family members. Notes regarding cultural diversity are my personal understandings based on the illustrations:

Two Uncle Bobs
Three best friends (one Indigenous)
Four beaming aunts
Five mums and dads (one Asian, one Pacific Islander)
Six sandy babies (two Indigenous)
Seven goggled cousins (one Indigenous, two mixed race)
Eight castle-builders (one Asian, one Pacific Islander, two mixed race)
Nine channel-diggers (one Asian, two Indigenous, one mixed race)
Ten bat-and-ballers (three Indigenous)
Eleven black-suit surfers (two Indigenous)

Each new spread/page concludes with ‘And my Grandma, my family and me.’ The main family unit (referenced in this line) is a two-parent, heteronormative one with a female lead.

The diversity inferred throughout the book is explored in the family members (and friends) outside of the main family unit: e.g. the six sandy babies and the seven goggled cousins). The text also doesn’t specify everyone as family (e.g. Eight castle-builders), but the use of family labels in several spreads (four beaming aunts, five mums and dads, seven goggled cousins) sets the story up as one about a large extended family. This is felt particularly as the first spread (and start of the song/list) involves the adding of two Uncle Bobs to the festivities.

The text is simple and repetitive, and can be read or sung. The font is quite unique, presented in curved, swirly lines and changing size and emphasis. In this way the text itself becomes part of the visual aesthetics of the book, and matches the carefree style of the illustrations as well as the setting (the beach), with the curved lines mimicking that of a coastal breeze or ocean waves.

Notes on illustration

Full-colour illustrations, a mix of double-page, single page and small images in watercolour and pen. Cartoonish in nature with imprecise details (e.g. curved fingers, black curls to indicate knees). Bold linework done in such a way as to create a ‘breeziness’ and flow to the illustrations, such as the softness of hair falling across a forehead and the movement of water. The natural landscape, in particular, is painted and outlined in a loose manner; with linework in a casual, sketch-like style and watercolours blending and bleeding. The overall effect is very effective, as characters and landscapes are well defined, but there is no rigidity or stiffness to the images.

The illustrations are bright and light, in reference to the Australian summer. The pages are dominated in yellow sand and a mix of blues and greens for water, and white for seafoam and sky. The backgrounds (e.g. beach and ocean) are not solidly coloured throughout, and instead use the whiteness of the paper to add brightness and tonal differences to the overall picture. The sky is largely white throughout, with small hints of blue painted across, indicating a cloudy sky. Text is often displayed on the sky and the white is easier to see; it is also very bright, and is reminiscent of the brightness of hot Australian summer days, where the sunshine casts things in a white glow.

The illustrations perfectly suit the story and add tremendous and often humorous detail. It is through the illustrations that cultural diversity is explored, as well as the relationship between the two Bob's (always together). They are also very full of life, and busy in a way that doesn't feel crowded or forced. In the 'Seventh day' illustration, for example, each child is shown in a different position: one spitting out water, one dressed in seaweed, standing on a rock, one diving down into the water with a seagull perched on his backside, etc. The illustration is a double-page spread full of colour and movement, providing a real sense of place and, importantly, the sense of joy felt by the child characters.

There is also pattern work throughout, reminiscent of Beer's work but presented in a very different style and medium. In the example given above, four of the seven children wear patterned clothes: two with polka dots (one green, one red), one with blue stars and one with red stripes. Importantly, all the children are very visually different; not just in skin tone and hair colour/style, but in clothing. Long rashies, one-piece bathing suits, board shorts, swimming caps, etc. The diversity in clothing, as well as in physical appearance, adds further detail to the illustration and makes it more enjoyable and interesting to look at.

Notes on audience

Appropriate for any audience. It is ambiguous in family diversity but that doesn't detract from the diversity presented. The book straddles the line between Combination and Illustration: the illustrations certainly carry the diversity, but the text adds to this with 'Two Uncle Bob's' and 'Five mums and Dads'; so while the text doesn't discuss or specify diversity, it does infer it in these places – or at least opens up the opportunity for diverse families to connect with the story personally. The book normalises diversity by including it organically in the text and, largely, in the illustrations.

With so many characters, children have many opportunities to identify with people in the story, and the detail assists this: for example, a child might identify that Character A has their hair, or Character B has the same coloured bathing suit as them, etc. The detail is particularly effective for asking questions with children while reading, such as: How many seagulls can you see in this picture? Which one of the goggled cousins do you think is most like you? The focus on one family is also effective, as it shows how big and how diverse Australian families can be.

b) Family forest

Kim Kane & Lucia Masciullo 2010, Hardie Grant Egmont

Blurb

‘Families come in all shapes and sizes. Half-sisters, big brothers, step-parents … While some kids have a family tree, others have a family forest!’

Diversity represented

Structure: Step and half siblings, stepparents, family living elsewhere

Notes on text

The text is narrative driven, but includes specific family terms, for example ‘Eliza is my half-sister’ and ‘Dad is married to Babs. She’s my step-mum.’ The use of such terms can easily lead to explanatory or issue-driven texts, but Kane employs humour and farcical illustrations to explore family dynamics in an entertaining way.

The story is told from a young boy’s perspective, who is explaining his family. Each new family member is introduced in the fashion of explaining who they are, e.g. half-sister, whole sister, then uses illustration to show an inaccurate interpretation for the term, followed by text that directly responds to the illustration. For example: ‘Eliza is my half-sister.’ This text is then accompanied by an illustration of Eliza where only half of her is visible. The character continues: ‘No! She has a right leg! And a right arm too!’ The illustration of Eliza changes to a complete one and the protagonist says: ‘Yes, that’s Eliza’.

In this way, the text ‘talks’ to the illustrations as well as talking to the reader. This technique is used throughout the book. For example, when Harriet, the protagonist’s ‘whole sister’ is introduced, she is shown at first as being riddled with holes, before the protagonist again corrects the error and explains what being a ‘whole sister’ means: ‘Yes, that’s Harriet. We just say whole because we’re not halves. We have the same mum and the same dad.’

There is no plot as such. Instead, the story focusses on showing each of the protagonist’s family members in turn, as he explains his family to the reader. The text discusses family dynamics directly rather than relying on the illustrations. This is because the family dynamics explored are specific, and require text to showcase this. For example, we learn through the book that the protagonist lives with his dad, stepmother and two sisters, but he also has his biological mother, her partner, and her partner’s older son that live together. Their relationship to each other and how they interact as a family is portrayed in illustration, but

also requires text for clarification. For example: ‘This is my mum. I call her Jane. She says that’s just the sort of family we are … Jane and Rod aren’t married but they live together … Rod has a son called Charlie.’

The language is casual and written in the protagonist’s voice, using words and syntax a child might use. For example: ‘Sometimes (Eliza’s) my arch-enemy. But most of the time she’s all right.’ The voice, along with the text’s interaction with the illustrations, adds a childlike element to the story that helps keep the book story-driven, despite its use of explanations. In particular, the text’s ‘responses’ to the illustrations add a lot of humour and interaction for the reader.

Notes on illustration

The book includes a mix of full-page illustrations and smaller illustrations in watercolour and soft pencil/charcoal. All the family members are white, but there are a few background characters with darker skin tones. The pencil is used to give a fine outline to the images and add gentle shading for shadow. The shading/shadows are used mainly to highlight where characters/objects are sitting, i.e. a teddy bear on the floor with gentle shading around the outline. The outline also offers some extra detail to the illustrations, e.g. stitches on soft toys.

Although detailed, the illustrations are cartoonish in nature: characters out of proportion (e.g. oversized heads) and black dots for eyes. At the same time they are expressive and detailed in content. The expressions of characters is also used to highlight the humour (and absurdity) of the illustrations. This is seen in the way that characters react to their inaccurate portrayals. For example, when Eliza is first shown (in a smaller image on a stand-alone page) she has her mouth open in shock, as if reacting to only having half a body. Her next illustration (on the same stand-alone page) shows her missing an arm, and she has her hand on her hip and a frown on her face, indicating she’s getting fed up or impatient with the errors. Likewise, when Harriet is shown riddled with holes, her stance shows her leaning back, as if examining her body; her face is tilted down (looking at the holes) and her mouth is in a small ‘o’, to show surprise/confusion.

The colour palette is strongly composed of yellows, greens and browns throughout, but includes other colour schemes on certain pages as well. While yellows, greens and browns carry the palette, the illustrations are not confined to these colours:

Spread 1: Yellow shades for background, children all with shades of yellow and brown hair, plus two children with brown skin

Spread 2: Shades of deep blue for background (table) covers majority of image, but yellows and browns still visible in hair, skin

Spread 3: Shades of yellow and light brown for walls, floor and hair. This spread also includes a pink colour scheme with shades of pink appearing throughout: books, bedspread, rug, doll, etc.

Spread 4: Shades of yellow and light brown around characters, yellow and brown hair, army green shorts and socks

Spread 5: This spread dominated by shades of yellow; also introduces a slight blue scheme, with blue leans and shades of light blue for the background (right image) that blends into green on the far right

Spread 6: Smaller images dominated by yellows and browns, with green as the third main colour: e.g. yellow clothing, background, brown and green clothing

Spread 7: Dominated by yellows and browns with green: shades of yellow for background/floor, yellow and brown hair/clothing plus green leaves on branches

Spread 8: A new colour scheme (purple) but remnants of the original: Shades of purple are used for background and the bulk of the images, but the character has yellow hair, a brown cardigan and belt and a green dress

Spread 9: Green dominates this spread with yellow as the secondary colour: a large football field painted green with small splodges of yellow. There is also yellow hair and parts of clothing, plus some brown hair and clothing

Spread 10: Two colour schemes – red and black on left, yellow and green on right. The left has a dark grey background (with characters in red and black), the right has a yellow background with characters in yellow and green

Spread 11: This spread is set outside (picnic at the park), so once again green carries the image with yellow and brown as secondary colours

Spread 12: Unlike the other spreads, this one is less specific in colour, and uses dark blues, greys and reds to carry the image

Spread 13: Orange dominates left page (only orange and shades of brown used), while right page is largely green and yellow

Spread 14: Shades of yellow dominate double-page spread

Spread 15: Family forest, and therefore dominated by greens, although shades of yellow and brown are also prominent

The use of yellows, greens and browns to carry the palette gives the illustrations an overall 'earthy' quality, and links each character/spread to the next.

The illustrations largely employ humour throughout. For example, when the protagonist introduces Babs, his stepmother, there are two illustrations. First, she is shown as a staircase with head, arms and legs ('No! Not like that!') and secondly as a fairy tale witch ('Or that!') This is a fun nod to the common trope of stepmothers as wicked or evil, stemming from their representation in the fairy tales.

The illustrations help show the family in part and as a whole, highlighting the characters' relationships. In the double-page spread set at the football field, the foreground shows characters cheering. Among them are both the protagonist's stepmother (on the left page) and biological mother (on the right page), indicating that they are both apart of each other's lives as well as the protagonist's. After the protagonist's biological mother is introduced, the interconnectedness of the family members (regardless of where they live) is then further established: a double-page spread shows a picnic setting, with the biological mother and her partner Rod manning a barbeque on the left page, and other family members (both sisters, stepmother, father and protagonist) happily sat at the picnic table on the right page.

The illustrations in the book help to establish elements of the family (like their relationships, pastimes, activities) that aren't explained in the narrative. They also help establish the humour of the book and provide reader interaction with the text. This is vital for this book, as the use of the illustrations helps normalise the family dynamics presented, and provides a means to make the introduction and explanation of family terms more age appropriate and narrative-driven.

Notes on audience

Appropriate for any audience. Although the book is centred on one family, the family includes a multitude of different family dynamics. Any children in step and blended families will easily relate to the protagonist's 'family forest', while children from other family types are exposed to new dynamics (a great opportunity for questions and discussion). The use of humour in both the text and illustration to explain different family terms also means the book is very accessible, and avoids any didactic overtones.

c) Hello little babies

Alison Lester 2016, ABC Books

Blurb

‘From the precious early days of a baby's life to those first tentative steps, so much changes over a year ... A warm and tender picture book for families everywhere.’

Diversity represented

Structure: (Implied) babies shown with single parents, plus grandmother and sister
Culture: Different skin tones for babies and parents/adults, also two foreign names: Mika and Vikram. Mika appears Asian, Vikram Indian, Ruby Indigenous. Zane has tanned skin, Alice and Tom have pale skin

Notes on text

Very simple text intended for a younger audience (0-5 according to publisher *HarperCollins*). It introduces us to six babies: three girls, three boys. The text is far more loosely linked to my research than the other texts examined, as it is not specifically showcasing family diversity (i.e. it is not about or focussed on a family, but rather about six different babies growing through their first year). The text references family (or family terms) only in passing (e.g. ‘Alice has her father’s hair’), and instead focusses on the babies and different parts of their development. The book is separated into four sections: Sleeping, Eating, Moving and Exploring, which are bookended by the introduction (‘Hello little babies’) and ending (‘Good night little babies’). Each section has a cover page with the title set in a hand-drawn circle surrounded by relevant items. For example, Sleeping is set in a blue circle with items like a blanket, mobile and night light around it, while Eating is set in a green circle with items like fruit, a bib and a bowl around it.

Family references are made casually throughout the sections – only Eating doesn’t reference family at all in either text or illustration. The following references are made:

> Sleeping:
> ‘Mika’s father jiggles her cradle’
> ‘Zane’s mother rubs his back’
> ‘Tom drifts off to his nana’s song’

Playing:
‘Zane and his sister laugh’
Moving:
‘Ruby holds on to her mother’
Exploring:
No reference in-text, but babies shown together with one parent/adult each

The story is told in rhyme, and goes through what each child does in regards to the different headings. For example, in the Playing section of the book, the text reads:

Mika squeals at peekaboo
Tom chews his giraffe
Alice reads her favourite book
Zane and his sister laugh

The story goes through common, easily recognisable moments (such as babies chewing on toys or having story time) that would be relatable to many families. The short sentences and use of rhyme also make the story an effective one for early readers.

Notes on illustration

The book is illustrated in Alison Lester’s classic style: childlike, bright and colourful illustrations in watercolour and pencil. Lester has a specific and highly effective technique, which she discusses in a State Library Victoria video (2015): pencil drawings (quite dark, thick graphite in places) are completed first, then photocopied onto watercolour paper for painting. In the case of this book, the illustrations are mostly smaller images on white backgrounds, so as to show multiple babies (and by implication, multiple households) across double-page spreads.

The use of sections with cover pages is unique and adds an extra element to the story. The covers themselves are very detailed, in that they showcase lots of different items around the heading, but like most of the book this is displayed as singular/smaller images on a white background rather than full page illustration. The use of smaller images on white gives the book an overall brightness and crispness; even the front cover is not a full-page illustration, but rather the six babies in their different beddings as separate images set against a white background.

The final section, Exploring, uses a different technique. Instead of white text set in a coloured circle for the heading, it is deep blue text set in a white circle, with the page background the same solid deep blue as the font. Like all the other sections, items surround the heading (e.g. an owl, torches and a scarf), but this cover is distinctive from the rest as it is the only one to have a coloured background (meant to indicate the night sky). The single page next to the cover continues this new theme, with the smaller images encased in a circular background of night sky (the same deep blue) and grass.

Finally, the last double-page spread takes this even further, abandoning the white background altogether and bringing the babies together in the same location. It is also through the illustrations that cultural differences are shown (as this is not specified in the text). Different skin tones are used throughout, and also within family units: for example, in the Moving section, Ruby is shown holding on to her mother for support (the adult character is specified as Ruby's mother in the text). Ruby has dark brown skin while her mother's skin tone is lighter. This indicates a multiracial family. The varying skin colours throughout, presented in realistic tones, is also indicative of Australia's multiculturalism.

Notes on audience

Appropriate for any audience. By using everyday events the book has a wide appeal. The babies and families (what is shown) also vary culturally throughout, and parents are always shown solo (providing representation and mirrors for single parent families). The level of diversity, or discussion of it, would be dependent on the reader. You could simply read the book as is, and not add any discussion points to it. You could also pause on each page to note the similarities and differences between the lives and families of the babies, and connect them to similarities and differences in the child reader's life.

From the start, things specific to each baby are shown and highlighted (e.g. Alice has her father's hair, Ruby sleeps with a grin). Each baby in the first page is also shown in a distinctive bed unique to them (cot, bassinet, cushion, etc.) This shows how each baby is different, but also connects them, as does each of the sections: the babies may do things differently, but they all sleep, play, eat, move and explore. The book celebrates different ways of learning and growing and connects it all through common ground and everyday moments.

d) Love makes a family

Sophie Beer 2018, Little Hare (Hardie Grant)

Blurb

‘Whether you have two mums, two dads, one parent, or one of each, there's one thing that makes a family a family ... and that's LOVE.’

Diversity represented

Structure: Two parent, grandparent led, single parent, adopted/IVF
Culture: Multiracial, BAME, Muslim, Mixed race
Identity: Gay & lesbian parents

Notes on text

Very simple language (much of the story told in picture detail), repetition: each spread opens with ‘Love is ...’ then gives an example, e.g.: ‘Love is ... waking up BRIGHT and EARLY,’ ‘Love is ... baking a special cake.’ There is no narrative as such, and no plot, but rather examples of the kinds of things families do together (i.e. examples of love). Family itself is not discussed in the text, and instead shown exclusively through the illustrations, with each family acting out the example of love shown in the text.

The examples given on each spread highlight the sort of day-to-day experiences of families. For example, dads being woken up early by their children (‘Love is ... waking up BRIGHT and EARLY,’) and a mum finding their child's missing shoe before school (‘Love is ... knowing where EVERYTHING is.’)

It also gives examples of family activities and playing. For example, walking the dog together after the rain (‘Love is ... finding the BIGGEST puddles,’) parents watching their children put on a show in the living room (‘Love is ... watching from the front row,’) and a dad having a tea party with his daughter in the treehouse (‘Love is ... playing on the weekend.’)

It also gives examples of the sorts of things parents and carers do for their children. For example, a mum rescuing her son's teddy after a sibling has dropped it in the fish tank (‘Love is ... lending a helping hand,’) and a dad giving his daughter his ice cream after she's lost hers (‘Love is ... making things better again.’) There is also one example of a grandparent-led family sharing a special occasion; a birthday party (‘Love is ... baking a special cake.’)

The text and illustration obviously complement each other, but the non-specific nature of the text allows for families to consider and talk about their own experiences in relation to the text. For example, the ‘Love is ... playing on the weekend’ spread has a very specific accompanying illustration (as each spread does). However, as the text is vague, families can open this up for discussion: ‘What sort of things do we like to do on the weekend?’ ‘Do you think we could have a tea party like this family?’ ‘What's your favourite game to play on the weekend?’ etc. What the text style does is allow for personal reflection, and for families reading the text to add their personal experiences to the story.

The breadth of experiences shown allow for both windows and mirrors. Children may not be able to personally identify with every example, but there will be pages they can relate to, while the ones they can't offer up possibilities for new experiences to try as a family or discussion about other families and ways of life.

Notes on illustration

Colourful, bold, flat illustrations created digitally. Full page illustrations, double-page spread only. Very simple in terms of detail, e.g. block shapes, simple line work for facial detail. Character skin tone changes throughout (beige, pink and brown). The focus on bright, bold colours and minimal line work make the illustrations particularly vibrant and childlike. It's very effective.

While there is minimal line work and detail in regard to illustration style (e.g. defining characters and objects, and the use of solid colour for backgrounds), there is an abundance of detail in regards to pattern. For example, in the ‘Love is ... watching from the front row’ spread, there are different sized and coloured dashes, stripes, spots, zigzags and pointed ovals throughout: large pink dashes on the green rug, small purple dashes through black hair, red zigzags on a yellow shirt, blue and green stripes on the cardboard cut-out trees, etc.

The detail of the illustration style is in the use of patterns throughout, while the detail of the story lies in the illustration content. For example, in the ‘Love is ... baking a special cake’ spread, the audience knows the cake in question has been made for a child's birthday. A grandfather is bringing a large, three-tiered cake with candles to a table, where the rest of the family sit (from left to right: girl, grandmother, boy). The illustration also makes clear whose birthday it is: the boy sits on his grandmother's lap, turned towards the cake, arms up in

excitement, and both grandparents are smiling at him – it's clearly his birthday. Meanwhile, the girl, a small grin on her face, looks about to steal a brownie from the table.

The table itself is covered with different foods: brownies, cupcakes, cheesecake, pizza, sponge cake and chocolate chip cookies – all displayed differently (e.g. different coloured/styled plates, cake stands). There are also three brightly coloured and patterned presents on the table, all different sizes: red with thick blue dashes, tied in black; yellow with rough red spots, tied in brown; aqua blue with yellow lines, tied in green with a pom-pom style bow.

Everyone wears a different coloured and patterned birthday hat, including the family dog, who has its front paws on the table, looking at the presents. There is red with thick yellow dashes and a black pom-pom, green with beige curvy lines (in sets of two) and orange tassels, aqua blue with beige square squiggles and green tassels, dark blue with separate yellow curvy lines and an orange pom-pom, and red with medium aqua dashes and dark blue tassels.

The detail in the illustrations opens up opportunities for discussion. For example: ‘What is your favourite food on the table?’ ‘Which is your favourite party hat?’ ‘What do you think the dog is doing?’ It is also a way to further examine the windows and mirrors provided. For example, some children may relate very closely to the style of birthday party presented in the book (such as the party hats and types of food) and others may not. This can be discussed by families: ‘They have cupcakes just like at your birthday party’ or ‘What kind of food do you think that is? Do you think you would like to try it?’ Families can discuss the similarities and differences between the book party and their own party experiences.

Lastly, all illustrations use repetition in regards to pattern and colour. The same sorts of patterns are repeated throughout (e.g. dashes in different colours and thickness) and bold, solid colours are repeated in spreads. There are ten colours used in the book in total (not including white and black), with the exception of the second last spread, which introduces a dark grey for a colander; importantly, the use of grey is limited throughout, meaning that there are nine colours that complete the bulk of the illustrations. In the birthday cake spread, the colours are used for the following:

> **Deep yellow:** Background, pizza bases, dashes on party hat, curved lines on party hat, earrings, strawberry seeds, cookies, sponge cake, present wrapping, lines on present, dog's spots, dashes on birthday cake, candle flame, cupcake sprinkles

Red: String, bunting, mouths and cheeks (all), candle flame outline, birthday cake filling, shirt, two party hats, cupcake cherries, dashes on pizza topping, strawberry, sponge cake filling, cheesecake filling, present, shirt stripes

Aqua blue: Bunting, glasses, earrings, party hat, cupcake patty pans, present, star pattern on rim of pizza plate

Dark blue: Bunting, nose (grandmother), shirt, shoes, blueberries on cheesecake, party hat tassel, party hat, glasses, jeans, candles, shirt stripes, dashes on present

Deep green: Bunting, party hat, tassel, rim of pizza plate, present string/bow, shirt

Beige: Skin colour (grandparents), curvy lines on party hat, curvy lines/streamers in background, square squiggles on party hat, plate, top of cheesecake, shoelaces/soles

Pink: Skin colour (both children), lips (grandmother), party hat tassel, party hat pom-pom, birthday cake filling, pizza topping, brownie topping, cheesecake

Brown: Hair (both children), birthday cake, dog, brownies, present string/bow

Light brown: Table, circle line on cookie plate

Grey: Dashes for grandfather's hair

Black: Curly hair (grandmother), hair lines (both children), eyes and eyebrows (all), noses (both children), hand outline (girl), knuckles (grandfather), dashes on pants for pockets, lines on shirt, lines on cupcake patty pans, present string/bow, dog detail (nose, eye, ear outline), party hat pom-pom, crosses on blueberries

White: Bunting, arm outline (grandfather), birthday cake plate, shirt, inside of pizza plate, cookie plate, cupcake topping, brownie and cheesecake cake stands

The majority of the illustration is completed using a small amount of colours, repeated for different items and objects. E.g. Pink for birthday cake filling, pizza topping, cheesecake and skin colour. The overall effect, coupled with the use of large, solid colours and patterns, gives the illustrations a vibrant, striking look.

Notes on audience

Appropriate for any audience. The book is highly inclusive. Although it doesn't showcase every form of family diversity (one book would be hard-pressed to do this), it changes between family types (e.g. two dads, then grandparent, then single mum) on every spread, normalising diversity while also highlighting it. By focussing the story on love, rather than explaining the different family types presented, the book is also not moralistic or didactic in any way.

e) My place

Nadia Wheatley & Donna Rawlins 2008, Walker Books (orig: 1988, Collins Dove)

Blurb

'Everyone is part of History, and every place has a story as old as the earth'

Diversity represented

Structure: Kinship and extended family groups (living in same and separate houses), single parent families, stepparents

Culture/background: First nations, Greek, Irish, English, German, American

Body: Amputee

Notes on text

A time-travelling story; each double-page spread is a new character talking about their 'place' – the same terraced house, ten years apart. Each place/family story is told in first-person by the child storyteller. The story goes backwards in time, with the most recent inhabitants first (an Indigenous family), going backwards ten years at a time until the place (the terraced house) changes into its previous incarnations (wooden/brick houses, farmland) until finally, in 1788, the place is an Aboriginal 'creek camp', showing its earliest incarnation and coming full circle, bookending the story with Indigenous leads.

The story both starts and ends with a poignant nod to this, and Aboriginal connection to Country. In the first spread, it reads: 'Our house is the one with the (Aboriginal) flag on the window. Tony says it shows we're on Aboriginal land, but I think it means the colour of the earth, back home' (Laura's family originally come from outback Bourke). Laura also references a big fig tree, saying, 'Whenever I climb up and sit in it, I always feel really good.' Unbeknownst to her, the original inhibitor (and last storyteller) of this place did the very same thing: 'Sometimes, at the end of the day, I climb to the top of the big tree and play that I'm the only person in the world.' The story then concludes with: 'My grandmother says, "We've always belonged to this place." "But how long?" I ask. "And how far?" My grandmother says, "For ever and ever."

The publisher's synopsis of the book provides good insight:

> *My Place*, the classic Australian picture book, is a 'time machine' which takes the reader back into the past. It depicts the history of one particular piece of land in Sydney

> from 1788 to 1988 through the stories of the various children who have lived there. It aims to teach the reader about the history of Australia, about families, settlers, multiculturalism, and the traditional owners of the land. Each child's story covers a decade in time, showing their particular dress, customs and family life. The book also features maps that the successive generations of children have 'drawn' which demonstrate the things that have changed – as well as the things that have remained constant. (Reading Australia, n.d.)

This synopsis, and the full circle/bookending outlined above, also highlights an important factor of the story telling: how each new spread showcases differences (environmental, industrial, population, etc.) but also links each spread (each family and story) through the use of permanent objects: each storyteller has a pet or animal, and references the big fig tree and the creek/canal. Readers can also examine what is new/different or the same through the use of the 'hand drawn' maps each storyteller provides of their neighbourhood. As time goes on (or backwards), the maps change more and more.

The map labels and descriptions, as well as descriptions given in the narrative e.g. Gully the dog chasing cars, and Laura not being allowed to walk her on the main road because it's 'really busy', then Mike discussing jets going past and his mother wanting to move because of 'all the noise', but he likes 'aeroplanes and trucks and stuff', also offers a commentary of human kind's impact on the natural world, as well as industrial changes and population growth.

The changes each decade brings (regarding changing populations, technology and human impact on nature) are shown through the storytelling and connects each spread/storyteller to each other. For example, aircraft: While Mike likes the aircraft and planes regularly fly overhead, in earlier years other storytellers discuss how the 'occasional' plane flies over. Another example is the backwards progression of the canal/creek from dirty canal in 1988 (and for many of the other decades), to dirty creek due to industrialisation and poor work practices (e.g. 'We use creek water for the garden, but you can't drink it. There's a woolwashery up near the swamp and they drain all their yuk into our creek!'… 'Granny Sarah says the river's got really dirty since they built the dam'), to fresh creek regularly used by First Nations people in 1788.

The text also highlights racism and assimilation. There is a Chinese character, Wong, who spans several generations in the 1800s (if not in story then in map references). Racist

behaviour towards this character is shown in a few different stories. For example, in 1868, when Minna is the storyteller: 'This is me and my kitten Gretchen. Leck gave her to me. Some of the other kids chase after Leck and pull his pigtail, but he's my friend.' After Leck is introduced as an adult on this spread, the following (1858) shows him as a boy, friends with the storyteller (Benjamin Franklin), and links to the previous spread through the use of pets. Tripod, the cat Benjamin and Leck share is the mother of Gretchen, Minna's kitten, in 1868.

The Millers are referenced through most of the stories, and their name change from Miller in later years to the original Műller shows the assimilation of foreign names. This is also seen in Heinrich's story (1878 – Minna's nephew), when he introduces himself as Henry, explaining that his real name is Heinrich but only his grandparents call him that. This is very real to life, not just in the common changing of European names, but in older relatives' continued use of traditional/cultural names: E.g. My grandparents refer to my brother as Adaś (pronounced 'Adash') instead of Adam.

The Miller/Műller family go from being neighbours of the storyteller(s) to storytellers themselves, and their connection to the overall story and place is strengthened in 1888's spread, with Victoria as the storyteller: 'My father is a builder and he built our house, and (we) are the first people ever to live here!... Father also built next door's house for The Műller's.' Victoria's phrase 'We are the first people ever to live here!' is echoed later on when Sam, the child convict and storyteller of 1798 mentions the swimming hole he found (and his daughter references him finding it in her spread as well). These moments are then corrected in the final spread (1788) with Barangaroo, our First Nations storyteller, living in the 'place' (now a camp) before British invasion. In this spread he doesn't say 'This is my place', as all previous storytellers have, but rather 'I belong to this place', and also mentions the swimming hole that he and his community swim in. The entire story builds up to this and makes for a powerful statement about colonisation.

Finally, I read with fascination the (backwards) progression of the Műller family over the years and generations; particularly that of Miss Miller/Műller, with her fast becoming a favourite story book heroine. In 1888, when Victoria references being the first people to live in this place, it's followed with: 'Miss Műller says that the country is really as old as Time, and that other people were living her, long before us. Father says that's the kind of idea that you'd expect from a woman who goes to work in the city … Miss Műller even catches the morning train, with all the men.' Later, in her 1868 spread, Minna (earlier Miss Miller) says:

‘Mutti says … if I don’t practise the piano I will turn into a heathen savage like Wong Ga Leck. I’d quite like to be a savage.’ She also mentions that Leck is her friend (and this is seen in the illustration as well). This shows Minna’s rebellion against the status quo at an early age, setting her up to become the kind of progressive young woman who ‘works in the city’ and takes the train with men.

There is much more to discuss in terms of text, as the story is so intensive and interwoven. It is also incredibly engaging and interesting – and, fittingly, has an excellent sense of place. The house, the roads, the shops; the whole neighbourhood becomes so real through the time-travelling narrative and use of maps. The story is also extensive in terms of diversity. Several characters have parents or siblings that have died (due to common issues of the time – e.g. ‘the gastro’). There are several single parent families and extended families living together, as well as a stepfamily. It also covers several backgrounds (First Nations, Greek, Irish, German, American and English). Lastly, it also includes body diversity in one spread. In 1918 (Bertie), his older brother Eddie is an amputee, having lost his leg in the war.

The book has a particularly high word count for a picture book, as it is much more intensive story-wise. However, it remains easy for younger children to access because of the repetition across spreads (i.e. animals in each story) as well as child storytellers ‘speaking’ in a child’s voice and language. The use of maps and narrative links across decades also offers opportunities for questions and discussion.

Notes on illustration

The illustrations are very distinctive. They are in coloured pencil, and semi-realistic in style. Everything is realistic in terms of colouring and proportion (as well as perspective in the case of buildings), but the illustrations (particularly people and animals) are stylistic: two dimensional, very softly outlined (and only in certain places, so devoid of the ‘crispness’ of hard outlined illustrations), and with enough detail to identify people and objects but only providing the essence of the image; so for example, identifiable hands and facial expressions but with few defining features. By far the most detailed part of the illustrations is the ‘place’ (terraced house through most of the book). The illustration includes defined moulding on the balcony and trimming.

The maps on each spread are presented in the same style and with the same ‘hand-drawn’ font, and done in such a way as to appear created by the child story tellers. This includes the

labelling and descriptions on the map, with each showing a bit of the personality of the storyteller, and contributing to the ongoing story across generations. For example, in 1968 Sophia labels where her older brother Michaelis' girlfriend lives (top left of the map). In the decade after, 1958, Michaelis tells us the 'stupid girl that kissed me lives here' (indicating houses in the top left of the map).

Although the illustrations themselves are not defined or particularly detailed, the spreads appear very full. This is because multiple images are used across spreads. The place is always shown in a large illustration on the left, usually along with a separate illustration of the storyteller, set apart from the 'background' image in some way (e.g. in Laura's illustration, she sits within an egg-shape (defined by a soft black outline) in front of the larger illustration. The map is usually shown on the right, along with an illustration that compliments that spread's story. For example, Laura says: 'For my birthday, Mum said we could have McDonald's! We sat outside, under the tree, and it felt just like home.' The accompanying illustration shows her family eating together under the tree. (The reference to McDonald's also references the modern changes of the place, with McDonald's only being present in Laura's spread – 1988).

The illustrations all share similarities – all identify the storyteller in some way, all show the place and map, and all include multiple images across the spreads. However, the way illustrations are presented varies from story to story (some spreads more than others). For example, Sophia's spread (1968) uses the same techniques as Laura's: Large left image of the place, defined image of the story teller (set apart from other illustration(s), map on the right with image complimenting story. However, the illustrations are presented differently. While Laura is set in a smaller (defined and outlined) illustration in front of her place, Sophia takes up the entire bottom half of the page in a full illustration, which uses rough lines/sketching at the top to finish the image, and smooth edges around the remaining three sides. The placements on the right page are also reversed, with illustration top and map bottom.

All spreads contain the same vital components (storyteller, place, map), but how this is displayed – and where – varies from spread to spread. Many take similar formats to Laura and Sophia, but there are a few cases where this mould is broken. For example, Evelyn's spread (1908) shows a rare occurrence where the storyteller is shown as part of the larger background image (usually reserved for place), instead of in a separate image of her own.

The illustrations are quite dark (especially when compared to *Christmas at Grandma's Beach House*, which utilises the white of the page to create light and brightness). This is largely due to the page colour, which is peach rather than white. This creates a warm hue across the illustrations. There is also a lot of black pencil used throughout, particularly in street illustrations for shaded/dark windows of buildings.

Notes on audience

Appropriate for any audience. Best suited to slightly older children (perhaps five years plus), but would make for lively bedtime reading for any age. The text and illustration work together in a way that makes the book engaging and visually stimulating: there's always something going on; always something to see, find or compare (particularly with the inclusion of maps). The book showcases a wealth of diversity, particularly in family structure and background, and so would be an excellent way to explore windows and mirrors with children in both a home and classroom setting.

The book presents an interesting way to engage children with Australian history. It also critically examines human impact on nature, consequences of colonisation, and Aboriginal connection to Country. All of this mean the book offers multiple themes and discussion points. Important note: *My place* was originally published by specialist press Collins Dove, before being picked up by a mainstream trade publisher (Walker Books).

f) Our Granny

Margaret Wild & Julie Vivas 1994, Omnibus Books (Scholastic)

Description

‘Some grannies have thin legs, fat knees, friendly smiles or big soft laps. Our granny has a wobbly bottom ... and there are grannies who play tennis, who give you big sloppy kisses, or who go to university; grannies who drive trucks or work in offices or play in bands. Every one of them is different, and every one is special – particularly yours. This delightful book is a must for everyone with a granny in the family.’

Diversity represented

Structure: Granny living with family, potentially single parent (only mother is shown)
Culture: Diversity shown in some background characters

Notes on text

The story is presented as a comparison made by the child protagonists (a girl and her younger brother; gender unspecified for both, although the girl is shown with pigtails and a one-piece bathing suit). It uses repetitive text in order to do this: ‘Some grannies … Our granny …’ For example, the first spread reads: ‘Some grannies live in … apartments, big old houses, old people’s homes [more examples given]. Our granny lives with us in our house.’ Some of the other comparisons given (on each new spread) are:

> Some grannies have … thin legs, fat knees, bristly chins (etc.)
> Our granny has a wobbly bottom.
> Some grannies wear … jeans and sneakers, pantsuits, silky dresses, big bras (etc.)
> Our granny wears a funny bathing suit.
> Some grannies … baby-sit, drive trucks, fix the plumbing, go to college (etc.)
> Our granny marches in demonstrations.
> Some grannies play … cards, tennis, golf or badminton. Some grannies … hike, jog, dance (etc.)
> Our granny does special exercises to make her bottom smaller.
> Some grannies have … husbands, best friends, cats (etc.) Some grannies have had three husbands. Some grannies have had six husbands!
> Our grandpa is dead, but our granny often thinks about him.

The comparisons cover different aspects of a granny’s life: housing, physical appearance, clothing/fashion, occupation and passions, exercise and recreation, personal relationships and

displays of affection. It makes a note to cover wide differences in each comparison. For example, in the housing comparison it notes that some grannies live in ‘big old houses’ and also ‘or nowhere at all’. It is rare for children’s books (at any reading level) to discuss homelessness, so this is an interesting and very poignant addition to the list. Another good example of this is in the affection comparison. It notes that some grannies ‘give big sloppy kisses’ and some ‘don’t kiss much at all.’

Each new spread provides opportunities for windows and mirrors due to the breadth of the lists. In this way each spread also opens up opportunities for discussion about each of the different categories. For example, children can talk about where their granny lives (or lived) and how that is similar or different to accommodation types listed. Likewise, they can discuss what their granny does (or did) in terms of occupation and/or passions. With each page a new conversation presents itself. The text is heteronormative. It lists multiple possible personal relationships a granny could have: husbands, best friends, pets, then goes further by adding that some grannies have had multiple husbands. Having a female partner or wife is not included. This is most likely a product of the book’s age.

The text is also both progressive and traditionalist in two specific parts. In the occupations/passions comparison, it notes that the protagonists’ granny ‘marches in demonstrations.’ This shows a strong social conscience and moral compass. However, in the following comparison (exercise and recreation) in notes that ‘Our granny does special exercises to make her bottom smaller.’ This was no doubt written to be humorous (and again, reflects the time of publication). However, the wording is problematic for a modern audience, particularly when there is now a greater acknowledgement of body positivity and a drive towards using ‘weight neutral’ language around children. The reason for this is to help promote healthy attitudes to food rather than obsessions with weight and dieting.

The Academy of Eating Disorders posted a list titled ‘Keeping language weight-neutral around kids.’ The general idea given is that instead of using phrases like, ‘We need to go for a walk because I’m getting fat’ or ‘I can’t have dessert because I’m on a diet’, alternative phrases like, ‘Let’s go for a walk and get some fresh air’ or ‘I don’t feel like having dessert today’ are healthier responses for children so they don’t associate size with self-worth or start fixating on their weight. With this in mind, a slight change of language to the text would make this section appropriate for a modern audience. Something like ‘Granny does special exercises to keep fit’ or ‘Granny likes going to the gym because it gives her lots of energy’

present exercise as healthy but eliminates the idea of needing to be thin or a certain body type. As it is, the text here provides opportunities to reflect on this concept. Adults reading to children can ask something along the lines of, 'Do you think there's anything wrong with the granny's wobbly bottom?' and help facilitate a discussion about body image.

The text briefly examines the death of a grandparent, and doesn't skirt around the subject. The protagonists state quite plainly, 'Our grandpa is dead.' The text then continues to say that their granny still thinks about him, and often wears an old favourite jumper of his. The accompanying illustration shows the young girl and granny (who is wearing grandpa's jumper) putting on grandpa's ties and looking at old photos of him. This spread provides clear language about death and shows, through both text and illustration, ways of coping with grief and the loss of a loved one.

Notes on illustration

Julie Vivas's illustrations are iconic and easily recognisable in Australian picture books. Her style in very unique, but similar in medium to Alison Lester. In an interview for blog 'A little birdy told me' (2013), Vivas explains her preferred medium:

> I like graphite pencil and watercolour. Watercolour is transparent. The paint moves unexpectedly on wet paper letting the paint spread in the wet on its own or feed/bleed with more pigment into it while it's alive (as in wet, and reactive). Graphite pencil lines can be delicate and they also have an energy and expression in the changing weight of the line. I have more control over a pencil with small detail than working with a brush (Vivas 2013, A little birdy told me).

The use of watercolour and graphite is a staple throughout Vivas's work. In *Our Granny* the use of graphite is very subdued. This is likely due to the human characters. In *Possum magic*, for example, the graphite is much more noticeable in the outlining of animals as it is used to create a fur effect. As well as being known for illustrating in watercolour, Vivas's illustrations are also known for their unique style of characterisation. Human characters have a very distinct look: they often have short hair, large bodies, rounded edges and limited detail in terms of features.

The illustrations in *Our Granny* are large, and often take up much of the page space, but are not full-page illustrations. Illustrations fill the page but do not cover all of the page space; instead resting on the white background of the page. This is seen throughout, with

illustrations seemingly set on top of the white page or ‘breaking out’ of their background to spill over into the white. The use of a smaller watercolour background, usually in a solid shape (like a rectangle used for the gym class) is used throughout the illustrations. For example, in the illustration of the granny swimming with the protagonists, the water is drawn as a long rectangle that the characters ‘spill out’ of into the white background.

While things like facial features are fairly muted in the illustrations, there is much detail provided in clothing and, when applicable, backgrounds, e.g. patterned shirts, striped socks and a busy kitchen table. The characters all have distinctive ‘looks’ thanks to clothing and hair style, and the colours used for clothing make the illustrations bright and visually interesting.

Notes on audience

Appropriate for any audience. The book may be difficult for children who have lost a granny, but it could also provide a means of therapy and coping with grief – there is an opportunity for children to talk about what their own granny wore and did, for example, or adults reading to them can tell them stories of their granny in relation to the subjects/lists that are covered. Because the lists are very broad, there are multiple options for children from many different backgrounds to see their own granny represented. However, the book is heteronormative and only shows cultural diversity in a few background characters, so there are some limits to representation as well.

g) Reena's rainbow

Dee white & Tracie Grimwood 2017, EK Books

Blurb

'Reena is deaf and Dog is homeless. Sometimes neither of them feels as if they quite fit in. But when Reena and Dog form a unique bond, it's not long before everyone finds out just how special they are. A heartwarming story of friendship, diversity and acceptance.'

Diversity represented

Structure: Single parent (unstated; only mother included)

Body: Deaf lead

Notes on text

A simple story and language, which introduces readers to Reena being deaf without using the word. Instead, the opening line tells us: 'In Reena's world, sounds scattered and scrambled and made no sense.' Having not read the blub prior to the book, I actually misinterpreted this passage and wondered if Reena might have ASD. However, this was cleared up on the following pages, where there is repetition to the language: 'She saw' (or other terms, i.e. noticed, spied) and 'She couldn't hear'. For example: 'She saw the scruffy brown dog' and 'She couldn't hear the wind whistling through the trees.'

The plot of the story follows Reena at the park, interacting with other children and the dog. The children play hide-and-seek, but no one can find Reena, and she can't hear them calling for her. The children conclude that she must have gone home and leave. Reena's mother finds her on a park bench, upset. Reena asks, 'Why am I different?' and her mother explains that everyone is different, like colours of a rainbow (hence the title). At the end of the story, Reena has adopted the dog and he helps her play hide-and-seek with the children. It's a sweet story, but not as highly polished as those published by mainstream presses. The connection with the dog and the resolution didn't feel quite authentic; the journey to the end destination could have been clearer and more concise. It is, however, a unique and valuable story in that it showcases a deaf female protagonist.

Notes on illustration

The illustrations are a mix of full-page and stand-alone images, using what look to be acrylics in a pastel palatte. All of the characters are white bar one of the children. The pastel palette is

dominated by greens due to the park setting, but uses a range of green shades and other colours for things like clothing and flowers. There are no hard or dark outlines used: only character skin is outlined (in a darker shade of skin tone). Rather than line work outlining objects, different colours are used to line the inside of objects. For example, bushes and plants with interior linework to define or add detail to leaves. There is also no black used in the illustrations, and instead any/all linework is down in shades of brown (for skin detail) or other colours. This style gives the images a very soft, almost delicate feel.

The illustration doesn't quite match the story in one place: there are two references to Reena's 'clear blue eyes,' but Reena's eyes appear brown at first glance, as they are dominated by dark brown pupils and outlined in a light brown.

The illustrations do, however, explore something the text doesn't: sign language. While there is an inference to sign language in the text ('Her mother's fingers danced back,') it is not discussed outright. Instead, this is shown in the illustration of Reena and her mother's conversation, and on the last page, where it appears Reena is showing the other children in the park the sign for 'love.'

Notes on audience

This book would be appropriate for any audience, although I feel it would be somewhat limited in appeal as it is not as highly polished as a mainstream trade published book (it was published by specialist children's press EK Books). However, the story offers opportunities for questions, discussions and learning, particularly as it references deafness and sign language. It would also be a good resource (and mirror) for children with hearing impairments, as it is so rare to have a deaf protagonist, as well as a good window for children to learn and understand more about peers with hearing impairments.

h) The lost girl

Ambelin Kwaymullina & Leanne Tobin 2014, Walker Books

Blurb

'The girl had lost her way. She had wandered away from the Mothers, the Aunties and the Grandmothers, from the Fathers and the Uncles and the Grandfathers. Who will show her the way home?'

Diversity represented

Structure: Aboriginal kinship

Culture: Aboriginal/First Nations

Notes on text

This book is quite unique in that it is a non-Indigenous published book (Walker Books) about a young Aboriginal girl in a traditional Aboriginal kinship group. My research shows that First Nations characters/stories are largely absent from non-Indigenous presses, and that when they aren't, there are often issues RE misrepresentation (see Chapter 2). *The lost girl* has no such issues, as it is written and illustrated by two First Nations people, and is a much-needed example of a non-Indigenous press publishing a First Nations story. As the blurb (taken from the first spread) says, the girl – who is never named in the story – has wondered away from Mothers, Aunties, Grandmothers, Fathers, Uncles and Grandfathers. All of the terms are plural, indicating multiple of each type, and distinguishes the story (and the family) from Anglo-Celtic texts.

In particular, the use of plural terms for Mother and Father provides a discussion point for children and their families. Children from non-Indigenous families will no doubt pick up on the terms and question them, and this invites discussion about cultural and family differences. Adults can initiate discussion as well: 'Why do you think it says Mothers and Fathers instead of Mum and Dad?' Conversely, for First Nations children the book provides a means for them to personally identify with the story and the family in a way they are not often able to in picture books. In this way the story is effective as both a window and mirror into Aboriginal culture and kinship.

The first page text immediately establishes the family type as kinship as well as outlining what that means. There is no official explanation of the term, but the language used ('She had

wandered away from the Mothers, the Aunties and the Grandmothers, from the Fathers and the Uncles and the Grandfathers') helps non-Indigenous readers identify the family type, and how it is structured.

Aboriginal family structure differs to the default shown throughout Australian picture books, so the establishing of this story's family as kinship provides a way to highlight and examine a family type often overlooked or not considered. Without the identifying text (the use of plurals for family member terms), it would not be clear that this is a traditional kinship family. For First Nations readers, they will be able to quickly link the family to their own experiences with Skin Names:

> Each nation has its own Skin Name and each name has a prefix or suffix to indicate gender. There are 16-32 sets of names in each cycle. For example, in a matrilineal nation, if a woman with the first name in the cycle (One) has a baby, the child's Skin Name will be the second name in the cycle (Two). All other 'Twos' in that community are now considered the sibling of that child, and all 'Ones' are considered their parents. When that child grows up and has children of their own, those children will be Threes. This sequential naming continues until the end of the number cycle is reached, then it begins again at One. (Australians together: Indigenous kinship, 2020)

The story is also unique in that is has a female Aboriginal protagonist, established in the first line: 'The girl had lost her way.' Female protagonists are rare, and female protagonists of colour are more so. The use of 'girl,' rather than a given name, somehow gives the story a timeless feel to it: did the events of the book happen last week or 100 years ago? Because of this, it also makes the story read as almost parable-like; that we the audience are learning about Country and Mother Nature through the conflict (being lost and 'hiding'), journey (wandering: drinking at the waterhole, picking bush food to eat, then seeing the crow 'flying in the sky, flapping from tree to tree and calling Caw! Caw! Caw!'and following the crow home), and home/resolution (back at her people's camp). The use of the crow as a guide, symbolic of Mother Nature 'showing the way' also cements the story as a timeless and reminiscent of traditional storytelling.

Notes on illustration

Vibrantly painted with acrylics. Full page illustrations with a mix of double-page spreads and stand-alone pages. The painting style provides a firm but 'soft' outline of characters and

objects, however no further defining for outlines is included (bar one exception – the finer outlining of a plant on one page).

The colours are bold and bright, and very traditionally Australian: lots of yellow and orange floor covering, pink skies, white gum trees. There is a fluidity to the colours as well: yellow and cream blending into the deep blue of a darkening sky; the red-brown shadows of rocks blending into the dark yellow dirt. There is detail provided in the form of light and shadow: lengthening shadows of trees; the yellow glow of the campfire on people's skin.

The illustration style is almost impressionistic and uses a realistic colour palatte. The palatte in particular adds an authenticity to the Australian bush (which is the focal point of the illustrations), particularly as Tobin takes special consideration to show off Australia's unique flora. The illustrations also highlight Australia's unique fauna, with every new scene showing at least one creature: e.g. snake, butterfly, possum, lizard, insect.

There is no limitations on the colour palatte, but it focusses on earthy, realistic tones: reds, browns, yellows for the earth; yellows, creams, greens and blues for early morning sky; pinks, purples, blues for evening sky; whites, greys, greens and browns for fauna. The colours are bold, but not flat, with brushstrokes visible throughout. The overall effect is vibrant, and the style adds an element of realism.

Notes on audience

Appropriate for any audience. Although the book showcases one specific family type, it offers children from other families and cultures a window into Aboriginal kinship groups and connection to Country. It also presents kinship in an age-appropriate way that offers opportunities for discussion with families or classrooms. Its use of kinship and how it is introduced immediately, and as an established concept rather than an explanation, means the book is able to highlight Aboriginal kinship in an organic and non-didactic way.

i) Tom Tom

Rosemary Sullivan & Dee Huxley 2008, Working Title Press

Synopsis

‘Tom Tom is an engaging contemporary story that traces a day in the life of a small boy living in a typical Aboriginal community in the Top End of the Northern Territory. It follows the adventures of Tom Tom as he goes to preschool, eats lunch with Granny Annie in the bottom camp, swims in the Lemonade Springs in the afternoon and spends the night with Granny May and grandfather Jo in the top camp. Rosemary Sullivan's simple text and Dee Huxley's vivid illustrations captures the warmth and security of Tom Tom's world as he moves freely within his community from relative to another. As a pre-school teacher working in remote Aboriginal communities for more than 17 years, Rosemary Sullivan says: ‘Tom Tom was inspired by the lives of many indigenous children in the Top End and the importance of family and interconnectedness in Aboriginal life’ (Dymocks 2021).

Diversity represented

Structure: Aboriginal kinship; living in different/multiple homes
Culture: Aboriginal/First Nations

Notes on text

The narrative covers a few days in the life of protagonist Tom Tom, a young Aboriginal boy living in the Northern Territory. It is written in third person and references both specific Australian fauna and Aboriginal language. Family is a theme that runs throughout, starting from the very first page when we are introduced to Tom Tom’s mother:

> Tom Tom lives in Lemonade Springs. Sometimes his mother calls him Tom, and sometimes she calls him Tommy.

The next double-page spread expands on this, also using Tom Tom’s name (and its variations) as a way to introduce family. It is also on this second page that the family structure (Aboriginal kinship) is established:

> But his two sisters and three brothers call him Tom Tom. His four brother-cousins and six sister-cousins, both his grandmothers and grandfathers, his other two mothers and four fathers, his three aunts and five uncles, his twenty-two cousins and all his other relatives call him Tom Tom too.

The use of family terms like sister-cousins and ‘his other two mothers’ indicates the use of Skin Names, and establishes the family unit as a traditional Aboriginal kinship group.

The story explains what Tom Tom does on a typical day. It starts by explaining that everyday Tom Tom swims in Lemonade Springs with his sisters, brothers, sister-cousins and brother-cousins, and that the children swing off a rope tied to a branch of a paperbark tree. (The setting is already established, but including specific flora, like a paperbark tree, adds an extra Australian connection.) He then walks up from the springs to Granny Annie’s house for lunch. At night, his Uncle Harry drives him to Granny May’s house for dinner and to stay the night, where Tom Tom sleeps in his grandparents’ bed with them: ‘He snuggles up with Granny May and Grandfather Joe.’

In the morning, Tom Tom ‘washes in the big laundry tub’ and grabs clean clothes off the fence for pre-school. His teacher Miss Jess picks him up in a ‘little white bus’ from the top camp (where Granny May lives) to the bottom camp (where the school is). At preschool Tom Tom paints a red-tailed black cockatoo (the Aboriginal word *Ku tek* accompanies this text), while two real cockatoos watch him from a stringybark tree; he plays with dough and pretends that it’s damper; and finally plays in the Aboriginal cubby house and makes a pretend fire to imagine living ‘in the old days.’ At the end of school Tom Tom asks his teacher to drop him at Granny Annie’s camp. Afterwards Tom Tom and ‘all the kids’ go to Lemonade Springs, ending the story where it began.

The story references Australian flora throughout (e.g. ‘past the stripeys swimming among the pandarus roots’) as well as specifics to the landscape. At the end of the story, the narrative details the children’s journey to the springs: through long grass, over big rocks, down the sand bank and into the water. The constant references to nature, coupled with the daily experiences documented, create an innocent, carefree story strongly connected to the natural world and traditional Aboriginal family groups. On top of this, the story is unique in that it shows the child protagonist living in multiple houses and with different relatives, a concept that might be unknown to non-Indigenous readers.

Notes on illustration

From Teacher Notes, written by Janet McLean:

‘Dee Huxley used pastel, gesso and coloured pencils for the illustrations in Tom Tom. Each double-page spread bleeds to the edge of the page. This technique, and the use of warm earth

tones of sienna, ochre and orange, and sparkling blue, turquoise and green of the springs underlines the significance of land and water in the lives of Tom Tom and his family. Dee Huxley draws the characters with loose, fluid lines - often as faint, distant images. Her images beautifully and simply capture the strong bonds of kinship within this small community. For example, the picture of Tom Tom and Granny Annie waving to each other as he and his dog approach her house; the picture of Tom Tom snuggled up between Granny May and Grandfather Joe; and the pictures of the children heading for, and playing in the Lemonade Springs. Dee Huxley uses different perspectives in her illustrations to capture the intimacy of Tom Tom's life against the sweeping breadth of the land and sky. Several pictures provide expansive landscape views, while others focus closely on Tom Tom. The endpapers provide an aerial view of the setting' (McLean, n.d.).

To add to this, Tom Tom's dog is present in almost every double-page spread, and always shown as closely bonded to Tom Tom: e.g. curled up at the end of the bed, walking alongside Tom Tom or simply sitting or lying beside him while he goes about his daily activities (for instance, washing and painting). The dog character becomes a visual staple and something to look out for or point out while reading.

Notes on audience

Appropriate for any audience. This book is a wonderful resource for children living remotely and/or in traditional Aboriginal communities like Tom Tom, as such protagonists and lifestyles are rarely represented in books. As well as being a mirror for these children, it opens up a window to Tom Tom's world for the children in Australia who are unfamiliar with the 'Top End', remote communities and kinship groups. The language is telling (explanatory in places) but never feels didactic or issue-driven, but rather an authentic and engaging account of Tom Tom's daily life.

j) Who's got a normal family?

Belinda Nowell & Misa Alexander 2016, Little Steps Publishing

Blurb

'Are we normal?' he asked. Mum gave Alex her brightest smile. 'Absolutely NOT … but why don't we find out who is?' A celebration of unique, thriving and fun families.

Diversity represented

Structure: Single parent (Mum) with foster child (lead) and foster sister. Other families: grandparent-led, extended family living together, single parent (Dad), stepfamily, adoptive family, single parent (Mum), two parent (Dads)
Culture: Arabic and Hispanic (inferred through names)
Identity: Gay dads

Notes on text

The story falls into a common issue in the representation of Australian foster families. Alex, the young male protagonist, is a foster child, but refers to his carer exclusively as 'Mum'. This could be confusing or triggering for foster children, as the vast majority will not refer to their carers by such terms. This is because most foster children remain in some form of contact with birth parents, and carers are deterred from using parental terms as part of training (as foster care is meant to be temporary and many children will continue to refer to birth parents as Mum/Dad). Of course, carers being called by such terms does happen – particularly with younger children, and carers are (usually) happy for children to call them whatever they are most comfortable with, including parental terms – however for many children in care this simply isn't the case.

It does, however, introduce foster care in a clear, age-appropriate way: 'Alex explained Baby Emma hadn't come from his mummy's tummy. Baby Emma was almost one and had arrived last night, while Alex was eating macaroni and meatballs. Baby Emma was his brand new foster sister.' This is neat, straight to the point, and easy to follow. That being said, I wonder if a different approach would be more effective for a general audience, and create a more narrative-driven story. For example, rather than telling the story after the fact, telling the story of Emma's arrival at the time, e.g.: 'Alex was eating his absolute favourite dinner: Macaroni and meatballs. He'd invented it all by himself. He was just about to scoop more pasta from the bowl when – Ding Dong! – someone was at the front door. 'I think I know

who this is!' said Amy excitedly, rushing to answer the door. Alex sighed. He was feeling pretty good about getting a new baby sister – but did she have to come on macaroni and meatball night?'

The book showcases a lot of diversity, highlighting the differences that can occur between families (mostly in relation to family structure). It does this by focussing on the idea of normality: that there is a specific 'normal' family (presumably a biological mum-and-dad family, although this is never specified outright), and that all other families 'aren't normal'. The end message is that all families are different, and therefore no one is 'normal', but the message is overshadowed by the theme of normalcy and none of the families being able to live up to it.

In order to show that 'no family is normal' or 'there's no such thing as normal' (after Alex is bullied: 'You don't have a normal family') every class member of Alex has their family examined, with each examination ending with the proclamation that they aren't normal:

> Katie lives with her grandmother. That's not normal.
> Amir lives with his grandma, aunty, two uncles AND his cousins too. That's not normal.
> Eva's daddy is so funny. But she doesn't have a mummy. That's not normal.
> He can stay underwater for a very long time. That can't be normal. And he's adopted, so that's a double un-normal.
> Henry has two daddies and no mummy. That's not normal.
> Samantha was normal. But then Samantha's mum married Nathan's dad and now she has five new brothers.
> (Then the final classmate, the bully): She ('Alex's mummy') wondered if Jimmy was sad because his daddy didn't live with him anymore.

Of course, the mummy character explains 'All families are different, and that's the most normal thing of all'. This is a great sentiment, but should have been the focus of the story. By adding it at the end the reader has already been bombarded by the repeated 'That's not normal', and the way the story is written, even though it explains this message at the end, reading the passages is quite uncomfortable, and would be potentially triggering for children. An adopted child reading, 'And he's adopted, so that's double un-normal' – or a child in a single dad household reading, 'She doesn't have a mummy. That's not normal' can cause a lot of shame and embarrassment. Even though the positive message is given at the end, it

isn't clear throughout, and there is great potential for misunderstanding, especially for very young children.

Rather than 'that's not normal', which is overly aggressive in language, changes to make the point of the text (emphasising difference, rather than normality) clear throughout would be more appropriate and readable. For example, changing this text, which opens the investigation into Alex's classmates:

> 'Are we normal?' he asked.
> Mum gave Alex her brightest smile.
> 'Absolutely NOT … but why don't we find out who is?'

To this:

> 'Are we normal?' he asked.
> Mum gave Alex her brightest smile.
> 'Of course we are! Because all families are different – and that's the most normal thing of all.'

Furthermore, by focussing on 'normal' and failing to find a 'normal family', there is the implication that while all the families showcased are different (and that's acceptable), they're still not 'normal'. Another problem with this is that the point is unfortunately lost because the examples are not realistic: none of Alex's classmates have a two-parent, heteronormative family unit. The idea is to highlight diversity, but it feels forceful in the way it shows every single classmate as having a very different family to each other.

Notes on illustration

I very much enjoyed how each child (a new classmate on each double-page spread) had their own stylised font for their name. This added a lot of personality to the characters and was visually very pleasing. The use of hand-drawn stylised font (with added objects and/or detail was very effective. For example, Henry's font is bold, in all capitals and with strong lines. This matches what we can see of the personality of Henry (who is shown holding football boots: 'Henry had extra-fast sports shoes').

Mixed media (paints and fabric, scanned images) seems to be how the illustrations were created. There was some obvious cutting/pasting and scanning in parts. There was also some inconsistency to the illustration style: two pages used scanned cloth for patterned background (to give a wallpaper effect for the house); however the scanned image is blurred and fabric

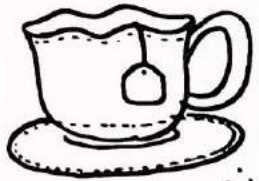
isn’t used for background in any other pages. In this way the use of fabric seemed a bit out of place, and a hand-drawn wallpaper might have been more effective and consistent with the overall style of the book.

Notes on audience

Appropriate for any audience, although like *Reena’s rainbow*, I feel it would be limited in appeal as it is not as highly polished as a mainstream/trade published book (it was published by vanity press Little Steps). The book does, however, offer a lot of family diversity, and provided children understand the underlying message, it could be a way to discuss the idea (or, perhaps more accurately, the false idea) of normalcy.

Appendix 3: Portfolio samples

- 1986 'The Jolly Postman' won the Emil/Kurt award
- 1986 'The Jolly Postman' won Greenaway Medal
- 'The Jolly Postman' has sold 6 million copies



- Lots of tea drinking in Ahlberg books. In the 2 postman books, Postman drinks (or is offered) tea at each house
- Intertextuality – envelopes throughout with cards, letters, books, games, pamphlets etc. that can be removed and read/played. They are all texts themselves and full of references to well known fairy tales / nursery rhymes.

The postman books are incredibly detailed and immaculately designed. They use well known characters from children's verse (eg. Cinderella, the three bears, the giant from Jack and the Beanstalk) as letter recipients. Each envelope has a different hand (font style) and stamp/s and have letters and other items children can remove from them. Illustrations are watercolour with thin (pen?) outline that ranges in boldness.

Above image from:

Ahlberg, A 1986, The Jolly postman, Heinemann, Portsmouth

More doors/windows. Often illustrations extend through the use of open doors, windows. We see more of the world/lives presented and adds to the 'spying'/spotting/ movement of images - very Edward Hopper for children.

Janet & Allan Ahlberg

ILLUSTRATION NOTES:

- Background patterns: tiled floors, wallpaper etc. common.
- Windows/curtains in backgrounds.
- Wall decor - never plain. Clocks, photos, paintings etc.
- Font - real writing used for details (jam label, newspaper)

- Foreground and background: characters larger in foreground (often at a table), with room/ house detail for background.
- Outlining changes - in some images, boldness and/or depth of line colour is muted in background details (3 bears image)

- Lots of colours and patterns - armchairs, tablecloths, clothing etc. Different patterns, shapes used throughout and multiple in same image, eg.: witch image: floral armchair, diamond cloth, striped socks etc.
- Neutral gender roles - no 'mum' and 'dad' jobs - father in 3 Bear image.

★ Notes only - images not included for copyright reasons

DETAILS

Illustration on right shows all the children on the way to school. It purposely highlights different ways children come to school (car, bike, walking) and different family units: multiracial couple with mixed race child, big sister escourting younger sister and three solo parents - two mums and one dad.

This illustration (enlarged) shows the kind of detail that is added. The book corner includes a portable book shelf, box of books, a rug and two cushions. The cushions are even patterned (one striped, one spotted). The books themselves are different sizes and colours, and include cover detail so they look like real books. There is also much detail (and added realism) to the portable bookshelf. Adults will be able to recognise (and teachers will be very familiar with) the style of "closable" book shelf shown. One wheel is visable and you can even see the hinges and clasps that fold the bookshelf closed. In this illustration you can also see how multiple images are used on one page in response to text listing different items. The book uses lists to show children different parts of school life. This list shows the different parts of the classroom, with illustrations of each.

This image is roughly correct published size. The font is large, sans serif, and the illustrations forces breaks in the font in places. Multiple small illustrations on one page (white background). Characters indicate set in era book was published (late 80s) rather than oft used 50s style setting. Teacher's hair, earrings and outfit indicate 80s.

Clear signs of English setting in both text and illustration: "dinner money" and accompanying English currency. Also clear signs of convention in text with use of "parents" over more neutral term like "families".

ELEMENTS

★ Realism - everyday life

★ Small details throughout

★ Open doors + windows to see beyond room/space conveyed

General notes:

- Very much drew from what they knew; i.e. parenthood and babies, the time and place they grew up in. E.g. 'The baby's Catalogue' based on their daughter's interest in Mother Care catalogues as a baby; 'Peepo!' inspired by Allan's childhood.
- They insert themselves in their stories. Daughter Jessica inspired baby characters; domestic life shows through in laundry, ironing etc. Personal experiences of childhood reflected throughout.
- Warmth and cosiness to all their stories. This comes from using things that are familiar and and abundance of home-based stories. E.g. using well-known fairy tale and nursery rhyme characters; using lots of living room and kitchen spaces
- The writing is often minimal while stories are richly detailed. There is always lots happening in the illustrations to create talking points or add to the text. E.g. 'starting school' which uses lists and small, detailed pictures.
- Often a sing-song quality to the text; gentle rhythm. Easy for younger ch[illegible] to read. Font is often [illegible] to appeal to new readers.
- A childlike quality to all stories. They capture a child's perspective, understanding and imagination. A great knack for showing realism and relatability in any setting.
- Their books are very British but show surprising diversity in different areas - mainly culture and gender.

MOVEMENT

Movement

Above images - the eye moves around the page because of the composition:

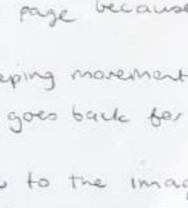
sweeping movement, then eye goes back for details.

Flow to the images created by positioning of characters + items (table + pond).

Flow of movement as above BUT also gives a zig zag motion; sweeping in curve created by composition then back along background for detail.

Examing multiple images from Ahlberg books to analyse movement in the composition

Movement here:



In image above, eye travels from largest figure (foreground) to smallest, in a zig zag pattern; from character to character

Natural way eyes travel around their images

Suzie

6 years old

Design development for Suzie - lots of bright colour, multiple patterns. No particular colour scheme, but "rainbow" colours, bold throughout clothing. Hair out, natural. Looking to create a playful, vibrant, active personality through character design.

Train ride to the country - Vline logo visible to indicate lengthy travel

Acrylic paints - bright but not bright. Solid

Hair pages


SUN
SCREEN

Beautiful Frankie ♡
Inspiration for pet in story

From photo:
Frankie as model for Dorothy in book
'Frankie' (change to Frankie?)

Simplifying sketch for illustrations; style preferred for picture book

FRANKIE

Triangular/ pointed ears - simplified

Traditional (graphite on paper) to digital

Darker brown for ears

Appendix 4: Book lists

a) NCACL book list

Conglomerate, **S**pecialist, **S**elf **P**ublished, **I**ndependent, **U**niversity, **V**anity	
Structure, **C**ulture, **I**dentity, **B**ody	**Iss.** = Issue **C** = Combination **I** = Illustration
Female lead, **M**ale lead, **N**o lead	**G**eneral audience, **S**pecialist audience

**Publishing details correct at time of publication*

	NCACL booklist; alphabetical by title					Publisher						Diversity				Technique			Lead			Market	
	Book title	**Author**	**Illustrator**	**Year**	**Publisher**	**C**	**S**	**SP**	**I**	**U**	**V**	**S**	**C**	**I**	**B**	**Iss.**	**C**	**I**	**F**	**M**	**NL**	**G**	**S**
1	A bigger digger	Brett Avison	Craig Smith	2011	Five Mile Press	X						X					X			X		X	
2	Bidge's mob	Gaye Dell	Gaye Dell	2009	Interrelate Family Centres		X					X	X			X				X			X
3	Boy	Phil Cummings	Shane Devries	2017	Scholastic Australia	X									X		X			X		X	
4	Brat cat	Elizabeth Hutchins	Margaret Power	1994	Omnibus Books (Scholastic)	X						X	X				X		X			X	
5	Christmas at grandma's beach house	Claire Saxby	Janine Dawson	2015	The Five Mile Press (Bonnier)	X						X	X					X	X			X	
6	Crabbing with Dad	Paul Seden	Paul Seden	2016	Magabala Books				X			X	X				X			X		X	
7	*Crusher is coming	Bob Graham	Bob Graham	1987	Lothian	X						X						X		X		X	
8	Family forest	Kim Kane	Lucia Masciullo	2010	Hardie Grant Egmont				X			X					X			X		X	
9	Enid and her two mums	Jessica Skogstad	Tara Reynolds	2016	Aly's Books						X			X			X		X				X
10	Every family is different	Maureen Eppen	Veronica Rooke	2018	Serenity Press				X			X	X			X					X		X
11	Fang Fang's Chinese New Year	Sally Rippin	Sally Rippin	2007	Omnibus Books (Scholastic)	X							X				X		X			X	
12	Grandma forgets	Paul Russell	Nicky Johnston	2017	EK Books		X								X		X		X			X	
13	Grandma's treasured shoes	Coral Vass	Christina Huynh	2019	NLA Publishing				X				X				X		X			X	
14	Grandpa and Ah Gong	Morag Loh	Xiangyi Mo	1995	Hyland House				X				X				X		X			X	
15	Happy pants	Heather Gallagher	Liz McGrath	2014	Wombat Books				X						X	X				X			X
16	Hello little babies	Alison Lester	Alison Lester	2018	ABC Books (HarperCollins)	X						X	X					X			X	X	
17	Home in the rain	Bob Graham	Bob Graham	2016	Walker Books				X				X					X	X			X	
18	How to build the perfect cubby house	Heath McKenzie	Heath McKenzie	2019	Scholastic Australia	X							X					X		X		X	
19	I'm Australian too	Mem Fox	Ronojoy Ghosh	2017	Scholastic	X						X	X				X				X	X	
20	Just the two of us	Sarah Cathie	J. Jordanovic-Lewis	2019	Little Steps Publishing						X	X				X				X		X	
21	*Just the way we are	Jessica Shirvington	Claire Robertson	2015	ABC Books (HarperCollins)	X						X	X	X			X				X	X	
22	Love makes a family	Sophie Beer	Sophie Beer	2018	Little Hare (Hardie Grant)				X			X	X	X				X			X	X	
23	Me and my dad	Sally Morgan	Ezekiel Kwaymullina	2010	Little Hare (Hardie Grant)				X			X	X				X			X		X	
24	Mirror	Jeannie Baker	Jeannie Baker	2010	Walker Books				X			X	X				X			X		X	
25	My family doesn't look like your family	Tenielle Stoltenkamp	Go Suga	2019	There There co. (author's co.)			X				X	X		X		X				X	X	
26	*Mummy and Mumma get married	R Hopkins & N Winter	Cara King	2016	Captain Honey (author's co.)			X						X		X			X			X	
27	My place	Nadia Wheatley	Donna Rawlins	2008	Walker Books		X		X			X	X		X		X		X	X		X	
28	My two blankets	Irena Kobald	Freya Blackwood	2014	Little Hare (Hardie Grant)				X			X	X				X		X			X	
29	*My 2 mums and me	Eleni Prineas	Kath Deighton	2015	Lex & Lucy Publications	-	-	-	-	-	-			X			X		-	-	-	X	

30	One day in our world	Sara Mithen	Natalie Stone	2013	Brolga Publishing				X			X	X				X		X	X		X	
31	One photo	Ross Watkins	Liz Anelli	2016	Penguin Random House (Au)	X						X			X		X			X		X	
32	One tree	Christopher Cheng	Bruce Whatley	2019	Penguin Random House (Au)	X						X	X				X			X		X	
33	*Oscar's half birthday	Bob Graham	Bob Graham	2015	Walker Books				X				X					X	X			X	
34	Our Granny	Margaret Wild	Julie Vivas	1994	Omnibus Books (Scholastic)	X						X					X		X			X	
35	Ozzie goes to school	Jocelyn Crabb	Danny Snell	2019	Working Title Press				X			X	X				X			X		X	
36	*Pearl's place	Bob Graham	Bob Graham	1983	Lothian	X						X						X		X		X	
37	Quetta	Gary Crew	Bruce Whatley	2002	Lothian	X						X	X				X			X		X	
38	Reena's rainbow	Dee White	Tracie Grimwood	2017	EK Books		X					X			X		X		X			X	
39	Silver buttons	Bob Graham	Bob Graham	2013	Walker Books				X			X	X					X		X		X	
40	Stuck in the muck	Brett Avison	Craig Smith	2011	Five Mile Press	X						X					X			X		X	
41	*The dress-up box	Patrick Guest	Nathaniel Eckstrom	2018	Hardie Grant Egmont				X				X				X				X	X	
42	The chalk rainbow	Deborah Kelly	Gwynneth Jones	2017	Exisle Publishing				X						X		X		X	X		X	
43	The important things	Peter Carnavas	Peter Carnavas	2010	New Frontier Publishing				X			X					X			X		X	
44	The lost girl	Ambelin Kwaymullina	Leanne Tobin	2014	Walker Books				X			X	X				X		X			X	
45	The patchwork bike	Maxine Beneba Clarke	Van T Rudd	2016	Lothian	X						X	X				X		X			X	
46	The perfect thing	Sally Morgan	A. Kwaymullina	2017	Omnibus Books (Scholastic)	X						X	X					X	X			X	
47	The place where the planes take off	Steven Herrick	Annmarie Scott	1995	UQ Press					X		X					X			X		X	
48	*The shack that Dad built	Elaine Russell	Elaine Russell	2004	Little Hare (Hardie Grant)				X				X				X		X			X	
49	Tom Tom	Rosemary Sullivan	Dee Huxley	2008	Working Title Press				X			X	X				X			X		X	
50	Visiting you	Rebecka S Shelberg	Andrea Edmonds	2018	EK Books		X					X	X				X			X		X	
51	Who's got a normal family?	Belinda Nowell	Misa Alexander	2016	Little Steps Publishing						X	X	X	X		X				X			X
						18	**5**	**2**	**23**	**1**	**3**	**36**	**33**	**6**	**8**	**6**	**35**	**10**	**20**	**26**	**7**	**46**	**5**

7	**Crusher is coming*	*Subverts gender roles*	**Structure:** mostly single parent	**Identity:** same sex parents (mostly women)
20	**Just the way we are*	*Inaccurate portrayal of foster care*	**Culture:**	**Body:**
25	**Mummy and Mumma get married*	*Crowdfunded*	- 10 Aboriginal	- Amputee (background character)
28	**My 2 mums and me*	*Protagonist gender unspecified; no info RE publisher*	- 7 Asian	- Co-protagonist with ASD
32	**Oscar's half birthday*	*Subverts gender roles, working class*	- 1 North African	- Deaf protagonist x 2
35	**Pearl's place*	*Shows different lifestyles*	- 15 unspecified	- Dementia x 2 (major characters, but not protagonist)
40	**The dress-up box*	*Shows different lifestyles - rural, city*		- Postnatal depression
47	**The shack that Dad built*	*Shows different lifestyle - tin shack/one room home*		- Wheelchair user (background)

b) Dymocks bestseller list

Conglomerate, **I**ndependent	Human, **A**nimal, **O**ther	**F** lead, **M** lead, **N**o lead
MP = male pronouns, **FP** = female pronouns, **CG** = conventionally gendered		
ND = non diverse, e.g. white, heteronormative, non-disabled **D** = diverse		

**Publishing details correct at time of publication*

	Dymocks bestseller list, 24/4/2019						Topics/	Gendering	Family type	Pub.		Characters			Lead		
	Book title	**Author**	**Illustrator**	**Year**	**Publisher**	**Country**	**Themes**	**represented**	**(Humans bold)**	**C**	**I**	**H**	**A**	**O**	**F**	**M**	**NL**
1	Possum magic	Mem Fox	Julie Vivas	2018 (1983)	Omnibus (Sch.)	Australia	Australiana, magic, journey	FP	G.mother & g. daughter	X			X		X		
2	Rainbow fish	Marcus Pfister	Marcus Pfister	2012 (1992)	NorthSouth	Switzerland	Sharing	MP	-		X		X			X	
3	Oh, the places you'll go!	Dr Seuss	Dr Seuss	2016 (1990)	Random House	America	Human/child potential	'guy'	-	X		X				X	
4	Wonky donkey	Craig Smith	Katz Cowley	2009	Scholastic	NZ	Comical, song/lyrical, rhyming	MP	-	X			X			X	
5	Terry's dumb dot story	Andy Griffiths	Terry Denton	2018	Pan Macmillan	Australia	Comic style, silly	-	-	X		X				X	
6	All the ways to be smart	Davina Bell	Allison Colpoys	2018	Scribe	Australia	Human/child potential	Equal	-		X	X					X
7	Dear zoo	Rod Campbell	Rod Campbell	2010 (1982)	Pan Macmillan	UK	Lift the flap	MP	-	X			X				X
8	The very hungry caterpillar	Eric Carle	Eric Carle	2003 (1969)	Penguin	UK	Eating/life cycle	MP	-	X			X			X	
9	Here we are: notes for living...	Oliver Jeffers	Oliver Jeffers	2017	HarperCollins	America	Life, the Earth, people	Equal	-	X		X					X
10	Guess how much I love you	Sam Mcbratney	Anita Jeram	2015 (1994)	Walker Books	UK	Love between parent & child	MP	Father & son		X		X			X	
11	Koala Lou	Mem Fox	Pamela Lofts	1991 (1988)	Penguin	Australia	Family change, love, attention	FP	Mother & daughter	X			X		X		
12	The day the crayons came home	Drew Daywalt	Oliver Jeffers	2015	HarperCollins	America	Comical, colours	MP & names; 'lads'	-	X				X		X	
13	Giraffes can't dance	Giles Andreae	Guy Parker-Ree	2000 (1999)	Hachette	Australia	Dancing, difference	MP	-	X			X			X	
14	Pig the grub	Aaron Blabey	Aaron Blabey	2018	Scholastic	Australia	Comical, smelly/gross dog	MP	-	X			X			X	
15	Where the wild things are	Maurice Sendak	Maurice Sendak	2000 (1963)	Random House	America	Mischief, freedom, imagination	MP	**Mother & son, ND**	X		X				X	

16	The book with no pictures	B.J. Novak	N/A	2016 (2014)	Penguin	UK	Comical, subverting genre	-	-	X		-	-	-			X
17	Wombat stew	Macia Vaughan	Pamela Lofts	2017 (1984)	Scholastic	Australia	Australiana, bush, tricks	4M & 1F ch.	-	X			X			X	
18	Where's Spot?	Eric Hill	Eric Hill	2009 (1980)	Penguin	UK	Lift the flap	-	Mother & son	X			X			X	
19	Claris, the chicest mouse in Paris	Megan Hess	Megan Hess	2018	Hardie Grant Eg.	Australia	Fashion	CG*	-		X	X	X		X		
20	Hairy Maclary from D. Dairy	Lynley Dodd	Lynley Dodd	2013 (1983)	Penguin	UK	Journey, walking, rhyming	All male ch's.	-	X			X			X	
21	We're going on a bear hunt	Michael Rosen	Helen Oxenbury	2019 (1989)	Walker Books	UK	Journey, adventure, family	-	**Dad & 4 kids, ND**		X	X					X
22	Diary of a wombat	Jackie French	Bruce Whatley	2013 (2002)	HarperCollins	Australia	Animal diary, comical	FP	**Trad. family, ND**	X		X	X		X		
23	Green eggs and ham	Dr Seuss	Dr Seuss	2016 (1960)	HarperCollins	Australia	Rhyming, tongue twister	All male ch's.	-	X				X		X	
24	The Gruffalo	Julia Donaldson	Axel Scheffler	2016 (1999)	Pan Macmillan	UK	Fairy tale style	All male ch's.	-	X			X			X	
25	Room on the broom	Julia Donaldson	Axel Scheffler	2016 (2001)	Pan Macmillan	UK	Losing and finding items	All animals M but 1	-	X		X	X		X		
26	The koala who could	Rachel Bright	Jim Field	2017 (2016)	Hachette	Australia	Safety, change, taking chances	-	-	X			X			X	
27	That's not my puppy	Fiona Watt	Rachel Wells	2019 (1999)	Usborne	UK	Tactile	-	-		X		X				X
28	Are we there yet?	Alison Lester	Alison Lester	2004	Penguin	Australia	Australiana, family travel	Dad more brave	**Trad. family, D (race)**	X		X			X		
29	Aussie legends alphabet	Beck Feiner	Beck Feiner	2017	HarperCollins	Australia	A-Z famous Australians	9 F, 16 M	-	X		X					X
30	The day the crayons quit	Drew Daywalt	Oliver Jeffers	2014 (2013)	HarperCollins	America	Comical, colours	CG*	-	X				X		X	
31	Kissed by the moon	Alison Lester	Alison Lester	2013	Penguin	Australia	Parent's wishes for baby	Both F?	**Mother & baby, ND**	X		X			-	-	-
32	Piranhas don't eat bananas	Aaron Blabey	Aaron Blabey	2016 (2015)	Scholastic	Australia	Comical, rhyming	MP, 'guys'	-	X			X			X	
33	Rod Campbell's Aussie animals	Rod Campbell	Rod Campbell	1994	Hachette	Australia	Lift the flap	Equal: 3F 3M	-	X			X				X
34	Who sank the boat?	Pamela Allen	Pamela Allen	1988 (1982)	Penguin	Australia	Question, tale, thinking	More F	-	X			X				X

35	A stack of alpacas	Matt Cosgrove	Matt Cosgrove	2019	Koala (Sch.)	Australia	Comical, rhyming	Uncle with 2F 1M	Uncle, neices, nephew	X			X			X		
36	Spot's first Easter	Eric Hill	Eric Hill	2009 (1983)	Penguin	UK	Lift the flap, Easter	-	Mother & son	X			X			X		
37	Alpacas with maracas	Matt Cosgrove	Matt Cosgrove	2018	Koala (Sch.)	Australia	Comical, rhyming	MP, 'this/that guy'	-	X			X			X		
38	The Gruffalo's child	Julia Donaldson	Axel Scheffler	2016 (1999)	Pan Macmillan	UK	Sequel, fairy tale style	-	Father & daughter	X			X		X	X		
39	Edward the Emu	Sheena Knowles	Rod Clement	1990 (1988)	HarperCollins	Australia	Being yourself	All M but 1, MP	-	X			X			X		
40	Monkey puzzle	Julia Donaldson	Axel Scheffler	2016 (2000)	Pan Macmillan	UK	Lost mum, jungle, search	MP (in description)	Trad. family	X			X			X		
41	Grug and his first Easter	Ted Prior	Ted Prior	2019 (2016)	Simon & Schuster	Australia	Conventional Easter story	-	-	X				X		X		
42	No one likes a fart	Zoe Foster Blake	Adam Nickel	2017	Penguin	Australia	Comical, silly	CG*	**Trad. family, ND**	X		X				X		
43	Time for bed	Mem Fox	Jane Dyer	2015 (1993)	Omnibus (Sch.)	Australia	Animals with babies, bedtime	-	Parents & babies	X		X	X					X
44	Harry the dirty dog	Gene Zion	M. Bloy Graham	1992 (1956)	Random House	UK	Dog unrecognised, needs bath	-	**Trad. family, ND**	X			X			X		
45	Oi frog!	Kes Gray	Jim Field	2014	Hachette	Australia	Comical, rhyming	-	-	X			X		-	-	-	
46	Animalia	Graeme Base	Graeme Base	1990 (1986)	Penguin	Australia	Alliteration	-	-	X			X					X
47	Sticker dolly dressing: ballerinas	Fiona Watt	Vici Leyhane	2015	Usborne	UK	Sticker/dress up book	CG - pink, tutus	-		X	X						X
48	Magic beach	Alison Lester	Alison Lester	2004 (1990)	Allen & Unwin	Australia	Enjoying the beach	-	**Varied, unspecified**		X	X						X
49	Imagine	Alison Lester	Alison Lester	2017 (1989)	Allen & Unwin	Australia	Imagining, finding animals	-	-		X	X			X	X		
50	My zoo	Rod Campbell	Rod Campbell	2013 (1983)	Pan Macmillan	UK	Board book, animals	MP*	-	X			X					X
51	Give me a home among...	Bob Brown	Ben Wood	2019 (2011)	Omnibus (Sch.)	Australia	Aussie song	-	-	X			X					X
52	Hop little bunnies	Martha Mumford	Laura Hughes	2019	Bloomsbury	UK	Lift the flap	-	-	X			X					X
53	The tale of Peter Rabbit	Beatrix Potter	Beatrix Potter	2007 (1902)	Penguin	UK	Classic, cautionary	CG - 'naughty' boy	Mother & children	X			X			X		

54	Thelma the unicorn	Aaron Blabey	Aaron Blabey	2015	Scholastic	Australia	Learning to be yourself	-	-	X			X		X			
55	The wonderful things you will be	Emily Martin	Emily Martin	2015	Random House	America	Potential	-	**Varied, unspecified**	X		X						X
56	That's not my dinosaur	Fiona Watt	Rachel Wells	2002	Usborne	UK	Tactile	-	-		X		X					X
57	I'm Australian too	Mem Fox	Ronojoy Ghosh	2017	Omnibus (Sch.)	Australia	Identity, belonging	-	**Culturally diverse***	X		X						X
58	That's not my unicorn	Fiona Watt	Rachel Wells	2017	Usborne	UK	Tactile	-	-		X		X					X
59	Quite a clever Quokka	Merv Lamington	Allison Langton	2018	Affirm Press	Australia	Following dreams	Quokkas called kings	-		X		X			X		
60	There's a hippopotamus...	Hazel Edwards	Deborah Niland	1980	Penguin	Australia	Silly, make believe	CG*	**Trad. family, ND**	X		X	X		X			
61	The snail and the whale	Julia Donaldson	Axel Scheffler	2003	Pan Macmillan	UK	Friendship, working together	-	-	X			X		X	X		
62	Stick Man	Julia Donaldson	Axel Scheffler	2008	Scholastic	UK	Seasons, fairy tale style	-	Trad. family	X				X		X		
63	The rainbow serpent	Dick Roughsey	Dick Roughsey	1976	HarperCollins	Australia	Dreamtime	-	-	X			X			X		
64	Seriously, do not open this book	Andy Lee	Heath McKenzie	2018	Lake Press	Australia	Comical, talking to reader	CG*	-		X			X		X		
65	I just couldn't wait to meet you	Kate Ritchie	H. Sommerville	2015	Random House	Australia	Newborn	Mum more engaged	**Trad. family, ND**	X		X			X			
66	Oh dear!	Rod Campbell	Rod Campbell	1984	Little Simon (S&S)	UK	Lift the flap	-	-	X		X				X		
67	Edwina the emu	Sheena Knowles	Rod Clement	1997	HarperCollins	Australia	Babies, work	CG*	Trad. family	X			X		X			
68	I'm a big sister	Joanna Cole	R. Kightney	1997	HarperCollins	America	New baby, siblings	CG*	**Trad. family, ND**	X		X			X			
69	Oi dog!	Kes & Claire Gray	Jim Field	2016	Hachette	Australia	Comical, rhyming	-	-	X			X		-	-	-	
70	Zog and the flying doctors	Julia Donaldson	Axel Scheffler	2016	Scholastic	UK	Fairy tale style	CG*	-	X		X		X	X	X		
71	The jolly postman	Allan Ahlberg	Janet Ahlberg	1986	Penguin	UK	Fairy tale/nursery rhyme ch's	-	-	X		X	X	X		X		
72	Monster chef	Nick Bland	Nick Bland	2014	Scholastic	Australia	Cooking	Gruesome food	-	X				X		X		
73	On the first day of school	P. Crumble	Dean Rankine	2019	Scholastic	Australia	12 days of Christmas tune	-	-	X			X					X
74	Hairy MacLary and friends	Lynley Dodd	Lynley Dodd	2007	Penguin	NZ	Dogs, rhyming	All male ch's.	-	X			X			X		
75	The tiger who came to tea	Judith Kerr	Judith Kerr	1968	HarperCollins	UK	Classic, tea party	-	**Mum & daughter, ND**	X		X	X		X			

76	Rosie Revere, engineer	Andrea Beaty	David Roberts	2013	ABRAMS	America	Girls in STEM, inventing	Progressive	**Aunt & niece**	X		X			X		
77	Stephen Hawking	I. Sanchez Vegara	Matt Hunt	2018	Quarto	UK	Biography	-	-	X		X				X	
78	We're going on an egg hunt	Martha Mumford	Laura Hughes	2016	Bloomsbury	UK	Lift the flap	-	-	X			X				X
79	Pig the star	Aaron Blabey	Aaron Blabey	2017	Scholastic	Australia	Attention, sharing	-	-	X			X			X	
80	Somewhere in Australia	M. Pennacchio	Danny Snell	2013	Scholastic	Australia	Counting book	Only mums shown	Mothers & children	X			X				X
81	Sticker dolly dressing: princesses	Fiona Watt	Vici Leyhane	2015	Usborne	UK	Sticker/dress up book	Fashion, pink	-		X	X					X
82	Where the forest meets the sea	Jeannie Baker	Jeannie Baker	1987	Walker Books	Australia	Environment, human impact	-	**Father & son**		X	X				X	
83	That's not my teddy	Fiona Watt	Rachel Wells	1999	Usborne	UK	Tactile	-	-		X		X				X
84	Lazy Daisy	Carolyn Goodwin	Ashley King	2019	Hardie Grant Eg.	Australia	Comical, mistaken identity	-	-		X					X	
85	Sticker dolly dressing: fairies	Fiona Watt	Vici Leyhane	2015	Usborne	UK	Sticker/dress up book	Fashion, pink	-		X			X			X
86	Zog	Julia Donaldson	Axel Scheffler	2010	Scholastic	UK	School, working hard	-	-	X			X			X	
87	Josephine wants to dance	Jackie French	Bruce Whatley	2006	HarperCollins	Australia	Following dreams	CG - pink, tutus	-	X			X		X		
88	Oscar the hungry unicorn	Lou Carter	Nikki Dyson	2018	Hachette	Australia	Comical, overeating, new home	M & F in pink	-	X			X			X	
89	The rabbits	John Marsden	Shaun Tan	1998	Hachette	Australia	Metaphor of Aus. invasion	-	-	X			X				X
90	Ruby red shoes	Kate Knapp	Kate Knapp	2012	HarperCollins	Australia	Fairy tale style	CG - pink, g. roles	G.mother & g. daughter	X			X		X		
91	The cat in the hat	Dr Seuss	Dr Seuss	1957	HarperCollins	America	Rhyming, tongue twister	-	**Mother at end of book**	X			X		X	X	
92	Tabby McTat	Julia Donaldson	Axel Scheffler	2009	Scholastic	UK	Belonging, making a family	-	-	X			X			X	
93	Kung-fu kangaroo	Merv Lamington	Allison Langton	2018	Affirm Press	Australia	Working hard, being yourself	F in trad. M interest	-		X		X		X		
94	Sugarlump and the unicorn	Julia Donaldson	Lydia Monks	2013	Pan Macmillan	UK	Being yourself	-	-	X			X			X	
95	Oi cat!	Kes Gray	Jim Field	2017	Hachette	Australia	Comical, rhyming	-	-	X			X				X
96	The lion inside	Rachel Bright	Jim Field	2015	Hachette	Australia	Learning to be brave	-	-	X			X			X	
97	Cicada	Shaun Tan	Shaun Tan	2018	Hachette	Australia	Commentary on routine	-	-	X			X			X	

98	Bonnie and Ben rhyme again	Mem Fox	Judy Horacek	2018	Omnibus (Sch.)	Australia	Rhyming	-	-	X		X			X	X		
99	The Lorax	Dr Seuss	Dr Seuss	1971	HarperCollins	America	Environment, human impact	-	-	X				X		X		
100	One fish, two fish, red fish...	Dr Seuss	Dr Seuss	1960	HarperCollins	America	Rhyming, tongue twister	-	-	X			X					X
Total: 100 titles		**58 authors**				**52 Australian published**		**54 gender reps**	**31 families**	**81**	**19**	**31**	**66**	**12**	**22**	**51**	**29**	

19	Claris, the chicest mouse ...	*Pink tutu on cover, 'dreamed about clothes', 'read about handbags', other mice (male) are slovenly, unkempt; Claris has a figure and 'shapely legs'; human girl is 'neither proper nor prim!'
30	The day the crayons quit	*'Him' for crayons/male names (e.g. Mr Brown Crayon); pink crayon complains it's never used: 'It's because you think I am a GIRLS' color, isn't it? ... Tell your little sister I said thank you for using me to color in her "Little Princess" coloring book'; Duncan does however use the pink for a dinosaur (as the crayon suggested) in end page
42	No one likes a fart	*Fart is male: 'he'/; starts with family unit: 2 women (mum and teen daughter) and Dad; it is Dad who farts; Dad is holding remote, Mum has a cup (tea?) and pile of books beside her (also wears glasses), Daughter has feet on couch and looking at phone; mum & daughter complain: 'Do you have to?' 'That smells gross!' while Dad laughs; fart travels and female & male characters take note, but it is almost all female characters that complain; all female characters are elegantly dressed/presented except for one, the only fat woman and a garbage worker at end of book, who burps; burp is a she, blushes
50	My zoo	*15 animals shown, only 2 have pronouns - both male (he/his)
57	I'm Australian too	*Diverse in culture: Aboriginal family; Irish, Italian, Greek, English, Vietnamese, Chinese immigrant families; Lebonese, Afghanisatan, Syrian & Somalian refugee families; young girl refugee in camp
60	There's a hippopotamus...	*Worrying gender portrayal - 'Mummy is on a diet. She eats lettuce, tomato and cheese.'
64	Seriously, do not open...	*Mentions Nessie the monster as the most fierce and scary thing, then admits she's actually the sweetest monster in the world; male lead has a crush/wants to date her; Nessie wears a pink dress; main asks if she'd like to be his friend, she says yes; final page is the sound 'SMOOCH!' and her kissing his cheek, one foot in the air
67	Edwina the emu	*Edwina in pink tutu and ballet slippers on cover; when she announces she's laid eggs Edward shouts: 'YEEK!... he seemed to be choking, 10 little eggs, you must be joking! I'm not, said Edwina, but don't be depressed, I'll look for a job, you stay on the nest.' She tries different jobs: ballerina, chimney sweep, wait staff, then says 'take me home, make it fast, I know what the right job for me is at last'; Edward is miserable on the nest: 'You're late, I need a rest! You're right, said Edwina, from now on we share, I'll sit on the nest, you pull up a chair.'
68	I'm a big sister	*Conventionally coloured: purple cover, purple title, pink checked shirt and pink bows for main character; lots of pinks and purples throughout pages (rugs, flowers, plates etc.)
70	Zog and the flying doctors	*Opens with: 'Meet the flying doctors - a dragon, knight and girl, their names are Gadabout the Great, and Zog, and Princess Pearl.' She is a doctor but referred to as girl and princess first

Gender	**Family (human)**
19 books with all male characters or all male pronouns/terms	31 families total:
8 books with all female characters or female pronouns/terms	0 body and identity diversity
5 books with more male than female characters	2 culturally diverse books
3 books with more female than male characters	2 varied (multiple families), unspecified
3 with equal female/male representation	2 father with child/children/baby
18 conventially gendered in some way - e.g. conventional gender roles, colours, jobs, etc.	4 mother with child/children/baby
28 female authors, 29 male authors	7 traditionally structured (mum and dad)

16 female led books, 45 male lead books, 6 combined	1 other (aunt and niece)	
13 books use CG/stereotyped female characters	**Character type (inc. minor/b.ground ch's)**	
10 books use CG/stereotyped male characters	Female:	Male:
6 female roles/ambitions:	6 Aussie animals	4 Aussie animals
Fashion, ballerina x 3, princess x 3 (including princess doctor), chimney sweep, engineering, martial arts	5 domestic/small	15 domestic/small
9 male roles/ambitions:	0 large animals	10 large/wild animals
Dancing, artist, knight and doctor, postman, chef, physicist, celebrity, singer, office worker, farmer	4 fantastical	3 fantastical
19 books with mother/maternal roles	2 monsters	5 monsters
11 books with father/paternal roles	1 other	2 other
	17 humans	22 humans

c) Personal list

Conglomerate, Specialist, Self Published, Independent, University, Vanity	
Structure, Culture, Identity, Body	Iss. = Issue C = Combination I = Illustration
Female lead, Male lead, No lead	General audience, Specialist audience

**Publishing details correct at time of publication*

**All for general audience*

Family diverse picture books - Australian & international titles (personal selection)							Publisher						Diversity				Technique			Protagonist		
	Book title	Author	Illustrator	Year	Publisher	Country	C	S	SP	I	U	V	S	C	I	B	Iss.	C	I	F	M	NL
1	A bear hug at bedtime	Jana Novotny-Hunter	Kay Widdowson	2017	Child's Play	UK				X			X	X					X	X		
2	A chair for my mother	Vera B Williams	Vera B Williams	1983	Scholastic	America	X						X						X	X		
3	A family is a family is a family	Sara O'Leary	Qin Leng	2016	Groundwood Books	America				X			X	X	X	X	X					X
4	A visit to grandad: an African ABC	Sade Fadipe	Shedrach Ayalomeh	2019	Cassava Republic Press	Nigeria		X					X	X					X	X		
5	All about families	Felicity Brooks	Mar Ferrero	2018	Usborne	UK				X			X	X	X	X	X					X
6	All families are special	Norma Simon	Teresa Flavin	2003	Albert Whitman Company	America				X			X	X	X		X					X
7	Anna Hibiscus (series)	Atinuke	Lauren Tobia	2011-	Walker Books	UK				X			X	X				X		X		
8	Audrey's Dad	J. Muthukumaraswamy	J. Muthukumaraswamy	2020	Self published	Australia			X				X	X			X			X		
9	Aunty's wedding	M. Tapsell & J. Tyler	Samantha Fry	2020	Allen & Unwin	Australia				X			X	X				X		X		
10	Baby business	Jasmine Seymour	Jasmine Seymour	2019	Magabala Books	Australia				X			X	X				X		X		
11	Baking with Dad	Aurora Cacciapuoti	Aurora Cacciapuoti	2016	Child's Play	UK				X			X						X	X		
12	Bee-Bim Bop!	Linda Sue Park	Ho Baek Lee	2008	Clarion Books (Harcourt)	America	X							X				X		X		
13	Blue skies for Lupe	Linda Kurtz Kingsley	Linda Kurtz Kingsley	2015	Woodbine House	America		X					X	X		X		X		X		
14	Bringing in the New Year	Grace Lin	Grace Lin	2014	Alfred A Knopf (Random House)	America	X							X				X		X		
15	Dad and me in the morning	Patricia Lakin	Robert Gantt Steele	1994	Albert Whitman Company	America				X						X		X			X	
16	Daddy, Papa and me	Leslea Newman	Carol Thompson	2009	Random House US	America	X								X			X			X	
17	Dan and Diesel	Charlotte Hudson	Lindsey Gardiner	2006	Red Fox (Random House UK)	UK	X									X		X			X	
18	Dim Sum for everyone!	Grace Lin	Grace Lin	2003	Penguin Random House	America	X							X				X		X		
19	Donovan's big day	Leslea Newman	Mike Dutton	2011	Tricycle Press (Penguin RH)	America	X								X			X			X	
20	Ellie's dragon	Bob Graham	Bob Graham	2020	Walker Books	UK				X			X	X	X			X		X		
21	Emmanuel's dream	Laurie Ann Thompson	Sean Qualls	2015	Schwartz & Wade (Random House)	Canada	X						X	X		X	X				X	

22	Eureka!	Mark Wilson	Mark Wilson	2020	Lothian (Hachette)	Australia	X						X	X				X		X		
23	Everybody cooks rice	Norah Dooley	Peter J Thornton	1991	Carolrhoda Books (Lerner)	America				X			X	X				X		X		
24	Fair skin black fella	Renee Fogorty	Renee Fogorty	2010	Magabala Books	Australia				X				X				X		X		
25	Family	F. Stewart-Muir & S. Lawson	Jasmine Seymour	2020	Magabala Books	Australia				X			X	X				X				X
26	Family is	-	Katya Longhi	2020	Clever Publishing	America	X						X	X	X	X			X			X
27	First laugh, welcome baby!	R. A. Tahe & N. B. Flood	Jonathan Nelson	2018	Charlesbridge	America	X							X				X		-	-	-
28	Grace & Katie	Susanne Merritt	Liz Anelli	2017	EK Books	Australia		X					X						X	X		
29	Hands & hearts	Donna Jo Napoli	Amy June Bates	2014	Abrams	America	X						X			X		X		X		
30	Happy in our skin	Fran Manushkin	Lauren Tobia	2015	Candlewick Press	America				X			X	X	X			X				X
31	Hello! A counting book of kindness	Hollis Kurman	Stephane Barroux	2020	Otter-Barry Books Ltd	UK		X		X			X	X			X					X
32	Hello goodbye dog	Maria Gianferrari	Patrice Barton	2017	Roaring Brook (Macmillan)	America	X							X		X			X	X		
33	Hello, hello	Spinifex writing camp	Spinifex writing camp	2020	Indigenous Literacy Foundation	Australia		X					X	X					X			X
34	Hush! A Thai lullaby	Minfong Ho	Holly Meade	2000	Scholastic	America	X						X	X					X	X		
35	I remember	Joanne Crawford	Kerry Anne Jordinson	2018	Magabala Books	Australia				X				X					X	X		
36	I will dance	Nancy Bo Flood	Julianna Swaney	2020	Simon & Schuster	America	X						X	X	X	X		X		X		
37	If all the world were...	Joseph Coelho	Allison Colpoys	2019	Frances Lincoln Children's books	UK	X						X	X					X	X		
38	Intersection Allies: We make room for all	C. Johnson, L. Council, C .Choi	Ashley Seil Smith	2019	Dottir Press	Canada		X					X	X	X	X	X			X		
39	Isla's family tree	Katrina McKelvey	Prue Pittock	2020	EK Books	Australia		X							X				X	X		
40	Joy	Corinne Averiss	Isabelle Follath	2018	Words & Pictures (Quarto)	UK	X									X		X		X		
41	Julian at the wedding	Jessica Love	Jessica Love	2020	Walker Books	America				X			X	X	X			X			X	
42	Julian is a mermaid	Jessica Love	Jessica Love	2018	Candlewick Press	America				X			X	X	X				X		X	
43	King for a day	Rukhsana Khan	Christiane Kromer	2013	Lee & Low Books	America		X						X		X		X			X	
44	Look at me	-	Rachel Fuller	2009	Child's Play	UK				X			X	X					X	-	-	-
45	Love is powerful	Heather Dean Brewer	LeUyen Pham	2020	Walker Books	America				X			X	X			X			X		
46	Lucy's picture	Nicola Moon	Alex Ayliffe	1994	Puffin (Penguin)	UK	X						X			X		X		X		
47	Lulu/Lola (series)	Anna McQuinn	Rosalind Beardshaw	2009-	Alanna Books	UK				X				X					X	X		
48	Luna loves library day	Joseph Coelho	Fiona Lumbers	2017	Andersen Press	UK				X			X	X				X		X		
49	Mommy, Mama and me	Leslea Newman	Carol Thompson	2009	Random House US	America	X								X			X		X		

50	Mommy Sayang	Rosana Sullivan	Rosana Sullivan	2019	Disney Books	America	X						X	X		X		X		X		
51	My two grandads	Floella Benjamin	Margaret Chamberlain	2019	Frances Lincoln Children's books	UK	X							X				X			X	
52	My two grannies	Floella Benjamin	Margaret Chamberlain	2009	Frances Lincoln Children's books	UK	X							X				X		X		
53	Monday is one day	Arthur A Levine	Julian Hector	2011	Scholastic	America	X						X	X	X				X			X
54	Mum's elephant	M J Nampijinpa O'Keefe	Christina Booth	2020	Magabala Books	Australia				X			X	X				X		X		
55	My name is not Refugee	Kate Milner	Kate Milner	2017	Barrington Stoke	UK		X					X	X			X				X	
56	Nana Akua goes to school	Tricia Elam Walker	April Harrison	2020	Penguin Random House	America	X						X	X				X		X		
57	Ngaawily Nop	K Scott, J Cockles, R Winmar	R Winmar & A Winmar	2017	UWA Publishing	Australia					X		X	X			X				X	
58	On the way to nana's	F & L Haji-Ali	David Hardy	2017	Magabala Books	Australia				X				X					X	X		
59	One family	George Shannon	Blanca Gomez	2015	FSG (Macmillan)	America	X						X	X				X				X
60	Our little inventor	Sher Rill Ng	Sher Rill Ng	2019	Allen & Unwin	Australia				X				X					X	X		
61	Over the river and through the wood	Linda Ashman	Kim Smith	2015	Sterling Publishing	America	X						X	X	X				X			X
62	Picnic in the park	J Griffiths & T Pilgrim	Lucy Pearce	2007	CoramBAAF	UK		X					X	X	X	X		X			X	
63	Plenty of hugs	Fran Manushkin	Kate Alizadeh	2020	Penguin	America	X							X	X			X		X	X	
64	Respect	F Stewart-Muir & S Lawson	Lisa Kennedy	2020	Magabala Books	Australia				X			X	X				X		X		
65	Seal surfer	Michael Foreman	Michael Foreman	1996	Andersen Press	UK				X			X			X		X			X	
66	See the ocean	Estelle Condra	L Crockett-Blassingame	1994	Indeals Children's Books	America		X								X		X		X		
67	Sorry Day	Coral Vass	Dub Leffler	2019	National Library of Australia	Australia					X		X	X			X			X		
68	Speak Chinese, Fang Fang!	Sally Rippin	Sally Rippin	2017	Scholastic	Australia	X							X				X		X		
69	Starting school	Allan Ahlberg	Janet Ahlberg	1988	Penguin	UK	X						X	X					X	-	-	-
70	Stolen girl	Trina Saffioti	Norma MacDonald	2011	Magabala Books	Australia				X			X	X			X			X		
71	Super duper you	Sophy Henn	Sophy Henn	2019	Puffin (Penguin)	UK	X							X	X				X	-	-	-
72	Tea and sugar Christmas	Jane Jolly	Robert Ingpen	2014	National Library of Australia	Australia				X			X	X				X		X		
73	Tell me again about the night I was born	Jamie Lee Curtis	Laura Cornell	1996	Harper Collins	America	X						X					X		X		
74	The colour catchers	Johanna Bell	Laura Stitzel	2020	Scholastic	Australia	X						X	X				X		X		
75	The colour of home	Mary Hoffman	Karin Littlewood	2003	Frances Lincoln Children's books	UK	X							X			X				X	
76	The family book	Todd Parr	Todd Parr	2003	Little, Brown and Company	America	X						X				X			X		
77	The fix it man	Dimity Powell	Nicky Johnston	2017	EK Books	Australia		X					X			X		X		X		

78	The girl who thought in pictures	Julia Finley Mosca	Daniel Rieley	2017	The Innovation Press	America				X			X			X		X		X			
79	The girls	Lauren Ace	Jenny Lovlie	2018	Little Tiger Press Group	UK				X				X	X				X		X			
80	The great big book of families	Mary Hoffman	Ros Asquith	2010	Frances Lincoln Children's books	UK	X						X	X	X		X						X	
81	The little refugee	Anh & Suzanne Do	Bruce Whatley	2011	Allen & Unwin	Australia				X			X	X			X					X		
82	The little stowaway	Vicki Bennett	Tull Suwannakit	2018	Scholastic	Australia	X						X					X				X		
83	This love	Isabel Otter	Harriet Lynas	2019	Tiger Tales	UK				X			X	X	X				X				X	
84	The name jar	Yangsook Choi	Yangsook Choi	2003	Alfred A Knopf (Random House)	America	X							X			X				X			
85	The sound of all things	Myron Uhlberg	Ted Papoulas	2016	Peachtree	America				X						X	X					X		
86	The voyage	Robert Vescio	Andrea Edmonds	2019	EK Books	Australia		X						X			X							X
87	This small blue dot	Zeno Sworder	Zeno Sworder	2020	Thames & Hudson Australia	Australia				X				X					X		X			
88	Two mums and a menagerie	Carolyn Robertson	Patricia de Villiers	2015	Sparklypoo Publications	UK		X						X	X			X			X	X		
89	Up and down mum	-	Summer Macon	2019	Child's Play	UK				X			X	X		X		X			X			
90	Waiting for baby	-	Rachel Fuller	2009	Child's Play	UK				X				X					X		-	-	-	
91	We are family	Patricia Hegarty	Ryan Wheatcroft	2017	Caterpillar (Little Tiger)	UK				X			X	X	X			X						X
92	We'll paint the octopus red	Stephanie Stuve-Bodeen	Pam VeVito	1998	Woodbine House	America		X								X		X			X			
93	What we'll build	Oliver Jeffers	Oliver Jeffers	2020	Harper Element (Harper Collins)	America	X						X						X		X	X		
94	When Aidan became a brother	Kyle Lukoff	Kaylani Juanita	2019	Lee & Low Books	America		X						X	X		X					X		
95	Where is Poppy's panda?	David Pitcher	Rachel Fuller	2009	CoramBAAF	UK		X					X					X			X			
96	Whoever you are	Mem Fox	Leslie Staub	1998	HMH Books for Young Readers	Australia	X							X			X							X
97	Who's your real mum?	Bernadette Green	Anna Zobel	2020	Scribe Publications	Australia				X					X		X				X	X		
98	Windows	Patrick Guest	Jonathan Bentley	2020	Little Hare Books	Australia				X				X				X						X
99	You and me	-	Rachel Fuller	2009	Child's Play	UK				X			X						X		-	-	-	
100	Zeki (series)	Anna McQuinn	Rosalind Beardshaw	2014-	Alanna Books	UK				X				X					X			X		
Books per decade: 1980-1990: 2, 1990-2000: 8, 2000-2010: 17, 2010-2015: 13, 2015-2020: 60				Australia: 28, Canada: 2, Nigeria: 1, UK: 31, USA: 38			39	17	1	42	2	0	62	75	26	23	22	50	28	58	23	17		