

Marissa R. Straw. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Related (LGBTQ+) Young Adult Fiction Anti-Bias Selection Tool and Core Collection. A Master's Project for the M.S. in L.S degree. May, 2020. 66 pages. Advisor: Brian Sturm

This project includes an anti-bias selection tool and core collection of 67 lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and related (LGBTQ+) young adult (YA) fiction print books, which are based on anti-bias selection aids, as well as starred reviews and vetted recommendation lists from reputable sources, respectively.

This paper provides (1) a literature review on the background of the topics involved in the project, including LGBTQ+ youth, LGBTQ+ centers, YA fiction books, anti-bias book selection, and core collections; (2) methods on developing the project, including book selection for the core collection, building a selection tool, and creating a website as a platform for the project; and (3) an evaluation of the core collection by 10 LGBTQ+ community center library staff members across the United States and one teen services public librarian, which provided the basis for updates to the core collection.

The project supplements research on anti-bias book selection and LGBTQ+ YA books, as well as aids in bridging the gap in LGBTQ+ selection of materials for libraries.

Headings:

Annotated bibliography

Book selection

Collection development

LGBTQ libraries

Special collections

Young adult literature

LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, QUEER, AND RELATED (LGBTQ+)
YOUNG ADULT FICTION ANTI-BIAS SELECTION TOOL AND CORE COLLECTION

by

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Introduction

The main objective of this project was to develop an anti-bias selection tool and a core collection for LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and related [questioning, intersex, asexual, and more]) young adult (YA) fiction novels. The main stakeholders are libraries, librarians, and their users; these more specifically LGBTQ+ centers and their libraries; LGBTQ+ center users; and LGBTQ+ young adult readers.

The purpose behind anti-bias selection tools and the movements that are aiding the expansion of diverse literature is powered by the idea that when people, especially children, “cannot find themselves 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 purpose is not that everyone will find an exact copy of themselves in a book, or that books should only be a reflection of those who read them, but that published books have not so far reflected our society and that they should reflect more than just a fraction of our society.

The aim of this project was to develop an anti-bias selection tool that will aid book selectors to do the following:

- further anti-bias book movements that help promote underrepresented identities;
- discern character and author identities pertaining to (a) disability and neurodivergence; (b) gender identity, gender expression, and biological

sex; (c) race and ethnicity; (d) religion and spirituality; and
(e) romantic attraction, romantic orientation, sexual attraction, and sexual orientation; and

- identify bias in books via professional and reader reviews.

Additionally, this project aimed to create a YA fiction core collection, using the anti-bias selection tool.

The LGBTQ+ Anti-Bias Selection Tool (“Selection Tool”) and the LGBTQ+ YA Core Collection (“Collection”) are meant to be resources for stakeholders to utilize for their own best purposes. For example, the Collection may only be partially used or the Selection Tool slightly modified for a lesbian-themed library collection. Selection tools are meant to be updated, and the books that are selected using them (i.e., the Collection) are therefore liable to change as well. For that reason, the project platform is a website, at <https://lgbtqcollection.wordpress.com>.

Literature Review

When the nonprofit organization We Need Diverse Books (2018) held a panel discussion at the 2018 American Library Association (ALA) Midwinter Conference, a question was asked about how to promote books on less visible diversities. Sorya Silverman, a panelist and librarian, responded: “If you’re not knowledgeable about what’s out there, then you can’t recommend it; you can’t make active effort to bring those [less visible] communities to light.” This literature review provides a roadmap for those wishing to navigate a fairly new territory.

Defining LGBTQ+

Terminology for how to define groups of people oscillates and revises over the years; the importance in using terms is to be able to utilize them to talk about a bigger picture.

Short History of Queer Terminology and Initialisms

The terms used for LGBTQ+ people have changed over the years, and the LGBTQ+ initialism reflects that change:

(L)esbian and (G)ay. Before the 1950s, *homosexual* was a deprecatory descriptor used to describe people who were not straight; then in the 1940s and 1950s, *gay* began to be used synonymously (Gottlieb, 2019, p. 56). In the 1950s and 1960s, the term *homophile* was used for a short time, replacing *homosexual* (Gottlieb, 2019, p. 56). In the

1970s and 1980s, *lesbian* and *gay* diverged from homophile and became the more popular terms to use within the community (Gottlieb, 2019, p. 56).

(B)isexual. The term *bisexual* was also used before the 1950s, but it was not accepted as part of the LGBTQ+ acronym until the 1980s and 1990s (Gottlieb, 2019, p. 56).

(T)ransgender. In the late 1940s, *transsexual* was introduced and then was followed by *transgender* in the 1960s; but the term transgender did not become a part of the LGBTQ+ acronym until the 1980s and 1990s (Bevan, 2014, p. 42; Gottlieb, 2019, p. 56).

(Q)ueer and (+). In the 1990s, LGBT became the common acronym until 1996 when “Q” was added for *queer* or *questioning* (Gottlieb, 2019, p. 56). Asterisks, pluses, and additional initials have been added since then to be more inclusive to the LGBTQ+ community, but queer became a term strongly embraced by some people in younger generations as an umbrella term for all LGBTQ+ people in the 2000s and 2010s (although not everyone accepts queer as an umbrella term) (Gottlieb, 2019, p. 56).

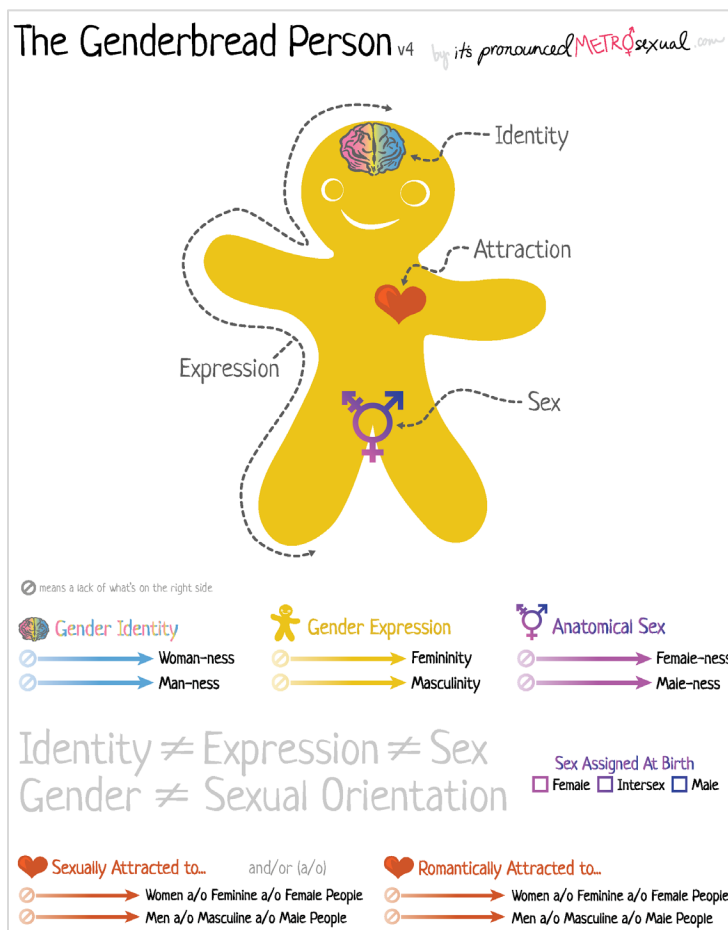
The term queer (2020) was not and is still not a wholly accepted term to use for all LGBTQ+ people, as there are still those who do not separate the term from its derogatory past. Additionally, the initialism of LGBTQ+ is fondly, and jokingly, referred to as an alphabet soup (in addition to being a mouthful to say); but “the LGBTQ initialism is not just a random collection of letters that represent identities; rather, *these letters are history embodied*” (Lovannone, 2018).

The Genderbread Person

A useful tool in particular categories of identities related to LGBTQ+ identities is the Genderbread Person. These identities go beyond the original lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender identities. The Genderbread Person (see Figure 1) helps visualize the following identities: gender identity, gender expression, biological sex, sex assigned at birth, sexual orientation and attraction, and romantic attraction and orientation.

Figure 1

The Genderbread Person Version 4 by Sam Killerman



Note. From “The Genderbread Person v. 4.0,” by S. Killerman, 2017,

<https://www.genderbread.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Genderbread-Person-v4.pdf>.

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LGBTQ+ People and Libraries

U.S. Diversity Population Statistics

Approximately 4.5% of the U.S. adult population aged 18 or older identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender according to Gallup's 2017 survey; their survey question does not include intersex, asexual, or other identities (Newport, 2018). Pew Research Center (2013) estimated that 3.5% to 5% of the U.S. adult population identifies as LGBTQ+, but stated that "all such estimates depend to some degree on the willingness of LGBT individuals to disclose their sexual orientation and gender identity, and research suggests that not everyone in this population is ready or willing to do so."

LGBTQ+ Youth

In 2017, Kann et al. (2018) with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) conducted their National Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) and included question results on sexual orientation and sex of sexual partners for the first time in their 2018 *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) Surveillance Summary*. The CDC first began widely utilizing questions on sexual orientation and sex of sexual partners in the 2015 survey cycle, and on a smaller scale in earlier surveys, but did not include the results in their reports until 2017 (Kann et al., 2018, p. 3). The high school survey report includes data on high school students, ages approximately 13 through 17 years old, across the United States.

CDC's 2018 *MMWR Surveillance Summary* found that of the total U.S. high school population they surveyed, 85.4% identified as heterosexual (i.e., "straight"), 8.0% identified as bisexual, 2.4% identified as gay or lesbian, and 4.2% were not sure of their sexual orientation (Kann et al., 2018). These CDC statistics indicate that at least 10.4% of

U.S. high school students do not identify as straight. The 2017 CDC YRBS survey did not include gender identities, gender expressions, sexual attraction, and romantic orientation or attraction; the survey also did not include students of the same ages who were not in high school. These statistics indicate a higher percentage of LGBTQ+ people than the Gallup and Pew statistics mentioned earlier, which could mean that there is higher percentage of LGBTQ+ youth, LGBTQ+ youth are more open about their identities, or something else entirely.

The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) (2018) with a partnership of researchers at the University of Connecticut conducted a comprehensive LGBTQ+ youth survey in 2017 as a follow-up to their 2012 youth survey. Overall, the HRC (2012) survey report found that LGBTQ+ teens (a) do not feel accepted in their own communities, (b) are twice as likely to be physically assaulted, (c) are only “out” to their close friends, and (d) often hear negative messages about LGBTQ+ identities from family members and others. HRC’s (2018) survey report further outlined issues that LGBTQ+ people face, specifically topics surrounding sexual assault, lack of accessibility to proper mental health counselors that handle LGBTQ+ issues, additional issues that people of color face as LGBTQ+ individuals, importance of family acceptance, importance of LGBTQ+ education in schools, and more.

For these reasons, it is imperative to have positive LGBTQ+ representation in books and other media. Furthermore, the majority of positive messages that LGBTQ+ youth hear are through media (HRC, 2012).

LGBTQ+ in Libraries

Libraries are considered a primary source of information for LGBTQ+ youth, but books on LGBTQ+ people are still underrepresented in many libraries (Alexander &

Miselis, 2007, p. 43). LGBTQ+ books represent the majority of challenged materials. In 2019, LGBTQ+ books made up 8 of the 10 most challenged books tracked by ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom, as noted in *The State of America's Libraries* report (ALA, 2020, pp. 15–18). LGBTQ+ challenged materials were highlighted as an ongoing trend, but that “libraries across the country continued to be welcoming community institutions that foster intellectual freedom and inclusivity by developing and defending collections, resources, and services that reflect and celebrate the diversity of their communities” (ALA, 2020, p. 15).

Most book challenges occur at public libraries (66%), but school libraries come in second (19%), and schools come in third (12%) (ALA, 2020, p. 17). Due to the lack of LGBTQ+ books overall, youth access to LGBTQ+ materials is also lacking at public and school libraries. Professor Sandra Hughes-Hassell (2013) found that high school libraries have “under-collected” LGBTQ+ YA books (p. 10).

LGBTQ+ community center libraries can aid in supplementing this deficiency, along with providing a safe haven for those looking for materials.

LGBTQ+ Centers

History of LGBTQ+ Centers

The first two LGBTQ+ community centers (“centers”) opened in 1971 in Los Angeles, California, and Albany, New York; many LGBTQ+ centers followed suit and provided support groups, health clinics, meeting spaces, and more to promote “progressive social change” (CenterLink, n.d.-b). During the 1980s, LGBTQ+ centers were leading in providing human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) care, prevention, education, and advocacy, even when LGBTQ+ people were no longer at the forefront of

the HIV epidemic. Some of these LGBTQ+ centers are still “major urban provider[s] of AIDS-related services and prevention efforts” (CenterLink, n.d.-b).

In 1987, several LGBTQ+ center leaders came together at the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Community Center with the National Gay and Lesbian Health Association with the purpose of developing a support network (CenterLink, n.d.-a). More LGBTQ+ centers began to open in small towns and cities in the 1990s, and by 2000, almost 50 of the 100 LGBTQ+ centers represented the only staffed nonprofit LGBTQ+ organization in each community’s area (CenterLink, n.d.-b).

In 1994, CenterLink, formerly the National Association of LGBT Community Centers, was officially conceived as a member-based coalition to support LGBTQ+ centers (CenterLink, n.d.-a). CenterLink is listed on several organizations’ lists of resources, and there does not seem to be any other current list or directory of Centers that is as comprehensive as CenterLink. As of April 2020, CenterLink identifies 253 CenterLink member locations throughout the United States, which includes 28 virtual and 225 physical locations (CenterLink, n.d.-c).

LGBTQ+ Centers as Safe Havens

The history of LGBTQ+ centers illustrates the need for LGBTQ+ individuals to have a place where they can come together to bring about social change. Furthermore, LGBTQ+ centers are known as safe places. LGBTQ+ young people may feel that finding a LGBTQ+-friendly place is crucial to their LGBTQ+ identity because they can “finally let go of trying to make themselves fit into a heteronormative culture and instead find a place of belonging that was not only fun but something to be proud of” (Robertson, 2014,

p. 398). Additionally, LGBTQ+ centers provide a safe place for young people outside of school where they can find community and information resources.

Currently, there is not a comprehensive list of LGBTQ+ centers with libraries. Indeed, the ability for LGBTQ+ centers to provide libraries may prove difficult due to budgetary reasons. The Movement Advancement Project and CenterLink (2018) found that most LGBTQ+ centers have a budget of \$150,000 or less and half of LGBTQ+ centers are “thinly staffed” with 25% of centers having no paid staff and 32% of centers having between one and five paid staff (pp. 1, 8, 14).

Young Adult Literature and LGBTQ+ Youth Representation

Young Adult Literature

Just as the definition of young adult has changed over time, so has the definition of YA literature. The broad definition of young adult literature is that it is literature written for those aged 12 to 18. However, YA books are read by people not aged 12 to 18. Bowker (2012) discovered that 55% of YA books were purchased by adults, with 78% of them stating that they were purchasing the books to read themselves.

Michael Cart (2008) posited that the value of YA literature is “found in how it addresses the needs of its readers.” He stated that these values include the (a) ability for the reader to be reflected in the pages of a book, along with feeling reassured by that reflection by realizing they are a “part of a larger community of beings who share a common humanity”; (b) “capacity for fostering understanding, empathy, and compassion by offering vividly realized portraits of the lives – exterior and interior – of individuals who are unlike the reader”; and (c) ability to prepare “readers for dealing with the

realities of impending adulthood and for assuming the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.”

LGBTQ+ Youth Representation

Statistics on the total percentage of LGBTQ+ YA books out of all YA books, and LGBTQ+ books in general, has proven difficult, but there is some statistical information available. The Cooperative Children’s Book Center (CCBC) found that approximately 3.68% of the children’s books in 2017 included LGBTQ+ characters, but only 46.32% of those books featured a LGBTQ+ person as a main character—meaning that 1.7% of the total number of children’s books published in 2017 featured LGBTQ+ main characters (Tyner, 2018a).

Author Malinda Lo has also conducted some research on LGBTQ+ YA statistics over the years. Lo found that 108 LGBTQ+ YA books with LGBTQ+ main characters were published in 2018 by mainstream publishers in the United States, which was an increase from the 27 LGBTQ+ YA books published in 2009 (Lo, 2019).

The statistics of the publishing industry may provide some answers to overall low, but slowly improving, diversity in published books. Lee & Low Books’ (2020) Diversity Baseline Survey (DBS) was first conducted in 2015 and again in 2019. The DBS gathered diversity statistics on publishing houses and review journals, including information on interns, literary agents, book reviewers, marketing and publicity, sales, editorial, and executive-level staffing. The 2019 DBS shows that the majority of the overall industry is made up of white (76%), straight, (81%), cisgender women (74%) who are not disabled (including mental illness) (89%). The difference between the 2019 and the 2015 DBS was actually a change in the sexual orientation category with about a 7%

drop. Lee & Low Books (2020) noted that none of the other categories changed more than 4% and that the interns are remarkably more diverse than the industry as a whole.

Core Collections and Book Selection

Core Collections

Core collections are defined by Carol Alabaster (2010), author and librarian, as an essential collection of titles that “reflect the community’s uniqueness” and are “of current interest to library users” (p. 25). Alabaster (2010) further stated that selection of core titles involves two basic elements: “one is the value or importance of the title, and the other is whether this title has an audience and will prove to be of use and interest to your community” (p. 57).

Book Selection Criteria

General selection criteria utilize the same basic elements mentioned by Alabaster include considerations of the (a) materials and (b) audience. In regard to materials, the following is considered: accessibility, excellence, authenticity, content, and more; in regard to audience, the following is considered: demographics, general interest, social and emotional development, and more (ALA, 2017). When more specifically evaluating fiction books, there are additional considerations for plot, setting, characterization, theme, and style (Parrott, 2015).

Various selection aids can be used in order to evaluate books based on their intrinsic merits and to select books based on the needs of a collection or audience (Katz, 1980, p. 89). Some basic selection aids include book award lists, starred reviews, and

recommended reading lists; although further evaluation and selection is needed beyond the aids themselves.

Malinda Lo (2019), author, examined two LGBTQ+ book awards (Stonewall Book Award and Lambda Book Award) and found several issues, such as the predominate honoring of YA books in the children's book award category, an overwhelming majority of book award winning main characters being cisgender males, an overwhelming majority of book award winning books in the contemporary fiction category, and multiple books in the awards list not having LGBTQ+ main characters. Moreover, Alabaster (2010) stated that "there is always the danger of choosing core and classic titles that have received extraordinary reviews and are of breathtaking quality but that the general library user does not care to read." Thus, it is important to conduct a further examination with selection tools and to not only rely on book award lists, starred reviews, and recommend reading lists.

Anti-Bias Book Selection and Selection Tools

In the United States, a societal shift toward *diverse* titles began in the 1940s. Currently, the definition of diverse titles is broad and comprehensive, but the general idea is to provide more book titles that are inclusive of people and experiences from various backgrounds, cultures, religions, and other identities (Scholastic, 2019, p. 7).

In 1941, Charlemae Rollins, along with the National Council of Teachers of English, published a trailblazing pamphlet, "We Build Together: A Reader's Guide to Negro Life and Literature for Elementary and High School Use," on representations of black people in children's books. Then, in 1943, Rollins published an article, "Children's Books on the Negro: To Help Build a Better World," that further addressed the need for

minority representation, and included an annotated bibliography and evaluation criteria. The evaluation criteria Rollins (1943) covered were fairly broad but were important for the times in which many depictions of nonwhite people were biased. The evaluation included the question: “Does the story give a broader understanding of the democratic way of life? Or is it patronizing and condescending in stressing differences of class, race or religion?” This question has been reiterated throughout almost all anti-bias selection tools that have followed (Rollins, 1943, p. 222).

In 1965, the Council on Interracial Books for Children (CIBC) was formed with the goal “to encourage writing, production, and effective distribution of books to fill the needs of non-white and urban poor children[, and] through such books ... all American children will gain a fuller awareness and a keener understanding of one another” (Dodson et al., 1966).

In 1974, the “10 Quick Ways to Analyze Books for Racism and Sexism” was published by CIBC in their *Interracial Books for Children* publication. CIBC’s (1974) article divides up evaluating factors, or guidelines, into two parts: (1) for “story books” (or fiction books) and (2) “school books”:

Part I:

1. “Check the illustrations” for stereotypes and tokenism, as well as to “look at the lifestyles” and see if “minority characters and their setting [are] depicted in such a way that they contrast unfavorably with an unstated norm of white middle class suburbia.”
2. “Check the story line” to see if there is bias by looking at (a) relationships to see who has power; (b) standard for success to see what it takes “for a

character to succeed”; (c) viewpoint to see how problems are presented and addressed, if “minority people themselves are considered to be ‘the problem,’” and if solutions depend on a white person; and (d) sexism to see if “the achievements of girls and women [are] based on their own initiative and intelligence, or if their success [is] due to their good looks or to their relationships with boys.”

3. “Consider the effects of the book on the child’s self-image and self-esteem.”
4. “Consider the author’s or illustrator’s qualifications.” This includes language about special considerations if a book is written about a minority group or person to which the author does not belong, while also acknowledging that authors who do not belong to a particular minority group may be able to authentically write about that minority experience.
5. “Look at the copyright date,” keeping racism and sexism in mind.

Part II:

6. “Determine the author’s perspective” because “there is no such thing as a truly objective account of history.”
7. “Note the copyright date” for outdated information.
8. “Examine the illustrations” for inclusion of minority people.
9. “Watch for loaded words.”
10. “Note the heroes and heroines.”

Louise Derman-Sparks (2013) based the “Guide for Selecting Anti-Bias Children’s Books” on the “10 Quick Ways to Analyze Books for Racism and Sexism.”

LGBTQ+ people are included in one small part of Derman-Sparks' (2013) adaptation of CIBC's original guide; the Derman-Sparks' guide states to check for common harmful and undermining stereotypes, such as checking to see if "[LGBTQ+] people are invisible or sexual predators." Historically, the scope of anti-bias evaluation and selection tools has focused on minorities (based on race and ethnicity, disability, sex, and age), but has not included LGBTQ+ people until more recently.

In 2013, GLAAD (2019), formerly the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, created a film test, called the Vito Russo Test, which analyzes basic criteria on how LGBTQ+ characters are portrayed in films. The test was inspired by the Bechdel Test, which is a measurement of how women are represented in films. The Vito Russo Test criteria are noted by GLAAD to be a minimum standard for what is to be expected in films; these criteria are as follows:

1. The film contains a character that is identifiably lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer.
2. That character must not be solely or predominantly defined by their sexual orientation or gender identity. i.e. They are comprised of the same sort of unique character traits commonly used to differentiate straight/non-transgender characters from one another.
3. That character must be tied into the plot in such a way that their removal would have a significant effect. i.e. They are not there to simply provide colorful commentary, paint urban authenticity, or (perhaps most commonly) set up a punchline. The character must matter. (GLAAD, 2019, p. 8)

Although for a different media than print books, these minimum standard test criteria provide a start for LGBTQ+ book collection selection criteria.

In 2014, We Need Diverse Books, a nonprofit organization, formed with the same goals as CIBC, the goal being to put more books with diverse characters into production so that all children have access. The aptly named movement, We Need Diverse Books, began on Twitter with the hashtag #WeNeedDiverseBooks (Neary, 2015).

A similar movement also began with a hashtag on Twitter. In 2015, the hashtag *own voices* (#ownvoices) was created by Corinne Duyvis (n.d.), a YA fantasy author. Own voices books are books with underrepresented or minority characters with authors who are from the same minority group. The movement of own voices aligns itself well with the movement toward more diverse books and more diverse people in publishing.

David Huyck and Sarah Park Dahlen (2016, 2019) provided CCBC statistics on race and ethnicity in children's books, revealing that in 2015 children's books featured 73.3% white characters and in 2018 children's books featured 50% white characters. On the adding of cracks to the mirrors in the 2018 infographic, which were not included in the 2016 infographic, Dahlen (2019) stated that "children's literature continues to misrepresent underrepresented communities, and we wanted this infographic to show not just the low quantity of existing literature, but also the inaccuracy and uneven quality of some of those books."

Movements aid in promoting diversity in literature. Modern movements like #WeNeedDiverseBooks and #ownvoices have inspired enough people to want to change the book publishing industry. Although there are some incremental improvements to the diversity in children's literature, there is definitely room for more change.

Methods

The project methodology involved (1) developing selection criteria and a selection tool based on research gathered in the literature review, (2) building a test core collection to send out for evaluation, and (3) creating a project deliverable.

Book Selection and Core Collection Selection

Developing the Selection Criteria and Selection Tool

Basic book selection criteria often include information on the author, publisher, publication date, audience, content, and popularity or currency. The Selection Tool, found in Appendix A, includes these factors in addition to LGBTQ+ representation, notes of bias, and relevancy to the overall Collection.

When evaluating books for inclusion in the Collection, it was most useful to first develop criteria for major evaluating factors, such as LGBTQ+ characters being the main characters in a book. If at least one main character did not self-identity as LGBTQ+, then the book was not included in the Collection.

These guidelines were developed, reimagined, and consulted from multiple sources, with most of them inspired by the 1974 CIBC publication “10 Quick Ways to Analyze Books for Racism and Sexism,” which include the following:

- “Hear Us Out! LGBTQ Young Adult Literature Wishes Are Answered!” by Judith A. Hayn and Lisa A. Hazlett (2011);

- “How Far Have We Come? A Critical Look at LGBTQ Identity in Young Adult Literature” by Cady Lewis (2015);
- “10 Quick Ways to Analyze Children’s Books for Ableism” by Chloë Myers and Hank Bersani, Jr. (2008/2009);
- “Reading LGBT-Themed Literature with Young People: What’s Possible?” by Caroline Clark and Mollie Blackburn (2009);
- “Guide for Selecting Anti-Bias Children’s Books” by Louise Derman-Sparks (2013);
- “A Cover is Worth 1000 Words: Visibility and Racial Diversity in Young Adult Cover Design” by Jenny Kimura (2019); and
- “Go Ahead: Judge a Book by Its Cover” by Darcy Lohmiller (2008).

Selection Criteria. For a book to be included in the Collection, the book must be a novel with a young adult audience that includes a LGBTQ+ main character.

Furthermore, books in the Collection must be own voices books or otherwise be authentic to LGBTQ+ lives. Motivated by the research gathered in the literature review on the low percentage of diverse authors and own voices books, in combination with the low percentage of total diverse titles, it was important to highlight own voices books for this collection (Tyner, 2018a; Tyner 2018b).

Own voices books are not an exclusive criterion due to the fact that authors would have to be *out* for them to have own voices books. Coming out (whether about one’s gender identity, gender expression, biological sex, sexual orientation or attraction, or romantic attraction or orientation) is a personal self-disclosure decision and should not be a requirement for the sharing of great LGBTQ+ books.

The Collection selection criteria, which includes guidelines for evaluating books, are as follows:

- The material is a young adult fiction book that can be read as a stand-alone or is a first-in-series book.
- Main characters identify as LGBTQ+ people.
- Books are own voices or are otherwise authentic. Authenticity may be based on author background (matching story setting or character identities); authors' academic studies may match topics covered in the story; or author activism and other published works align with a story's message, character identities, or other topics.
- Characters in the stories are multifaceted and not oversimplified generalizations (or stereotypes); LGBTQ+ characters are also diverse and represent various other identities pertaining to race or ethnicity, disability or neurodivergence, religion, and more (Hayn & Hazlett, 2011).
- The focus of a character's whole identity should not solely be about their LGBTQ+ identity or should illustrate a character who is secure of their identity in the LGBTQ+ community (Lewis, 2015). Characters in excellent LGBTQ+ books do not need their LGBTQ+ identities to be the central issue or a problem to overcome (Hayn & Hazlett, 2011).
- Being a LGBTQ+ person or coming out as one should not be seen as a traumatic experience or a negative aspect to have (Lewis, 2015).

- Characters who are LGBTQ+, disabled, or neurodivergent are not portrayed as victims needing rescuing or alternatively are able to rescue themselves (Myers & Bersani, 2008/2009).
- Characters have a supportive community (Lewis, 2015). Supportive communities include LGBTQ+ allies and confidants. These books should “show the diversity of [LGBTQ+] characters and dispel the myth that being [a LGBTQ+ person] means being alone” (Clark & Blackburn, 2009, p. 29).
- There are stories where religion is a positive force for characters; additionally, hate is not interchangeable with a particular religion or spirituality (Hayn & Hazlett, 2011).
- Cover images and book illustrations are authentic and do not include harmful or undermining stereotype or tokenism (Derman-Sparks, 2013). Jenny Kimura (2019) brought up a great point in her research paper that “book covers are a key place to visualize diversity in YA publishing...shouldn’t we be talking about the quality and quantity of that visual representation?” (p. 4). Additionally, cover images should be appealing to readers. Darcy Lohmiller (2008) stated that cover appeal is similar to book appeal: “It accurately represents its genre, it has wide appeal, and it stands the test of time. It never alienates the reader with dated cultural references, nor underestimates the reader’s intelligence by hammering home the book’s theme. It should be as artistic a

representation of the author’s creative vision as the book itself”

(pp. 14–15).

- Books should vary in genre type, including genres outside of the popular realistic fiction genre and include fantasy, historical, romance, mystery, science fiction, and more (Hayn & Hazlett, 2011).
- LGBTQ+ characters in the stories not only are representative of the library’s community, but are representative of those outside the community, with a wide range of identities (Hayn & Hazlett, 2011).
- Loaded words and portrayals about characters who are LGBTQ+, neurodivergent, disabled, etc., do not impart negative messages about people who hold those identities (Myers & Bersani, 2008/2009).
- Books “provide a cathartic reading experience for teens who are struggling with or are just beginning to grasp their sexualities” or other identities (Lewis, 2015). Selectors may judge this based on if the book provides “positive, complex representations of [LGBTQ+] characters and themes” (Lewis, 2015). Additionally, books that address possibly difficult topics, such as use of harmful words, bullying, prejudice, and more are addressed complexly. Books also aid in promoting children’s self and social identities.

Selection Tool Fields

After developing selection criteria to utilize, the Selection Tool was more straightforward. The Selection Tool fields allow for evaluation and selection of materials to be included in the Collection.

There are 14 selection fields total: (1) “cover”; (2) “summary”; (3) author(s); (4) “publication date”; (5) “title”; (6) “publisher”; (7) “ISBN-13”; (8) “recommended reading age minimum”; (9) “main genre”; (10) “themes”; (11) “main character(s) identities”; (12) “author(s) identities”; (13) “awards, starred reviews, and lists”; and (14) “reader reviews and additional notes.”

Most of the selection fields are common to selection criteria and mostly effortless in obtaining. Fields 3 through 6 (“author(s),” “publication date,” “title,” and “publisher”) are basic elements of any book citation. In combination with fields 3 through 6, fields 2 and 7 through 9 (“summary” or short description, International Standard Book Number [ISBN], “recommended reading age minimum,” and “main genre”) are standard elements for most recommended reading lists, reviews, or awards lists. Field 1 (book “cover” image) is often included on websites when showcasing a particular recommended read, book review, or book award winner or nominee. Field 13 (“book awards, starred reviews, and recommended book lists”) are often highlighted on book publishers’ websites, along with book selling websites.

The remaining fields, 10 through 12 and 14, may involve deeper investigation. Fields 10 and 11 (“themes” and “main character(s) identities”) can be found within starred reviews and recommended reading lists, but are not always illustrated in such short descriptions. Fields 10 and 11, along with 12 and 14 (“author(s) identities” and “reader reviews and additional notes”) are most often found by exploring social media and book recommendation websites, such as Goodreads, LibraryThing, Twitter, Novelist, LGBTQ Reads (www.lgbtqreads.com), and more. These selection fields (10 through 12 and 14) that required further inquiry are the ones that expedited decisions into which

titles would be selected for inclusion for an anti-bias collection of LGBTQ+ YA fiction print books.

Guidelines and Reasoning for Selection Tool Fields

Each selection field has one or two sections for selectors to input information. One section is designated for inputting book citation or description information for organization purposes. The other section is meant for taking notes about the information discovered while evaluating the book and how it aligns or misaligns with selection criteria.

Cover. Inputting the cover image from Amazon, Goodreads, Novelist, publisher, or another reliable source allows for evaluation of reader cover appeal of the material, along with visibility of diversity representation of characters.

Summary. Inputting a shortened description or summary used by Goodreads, Novelist, or from another reliable source allows for a quick synopsis of each book when evaluating materials for selection criteria.

Author(s), Publication Date, Title, Publisher, and ISBN-13. Inputting the author name or names, publication date, title, and publisher allows for simple sorting and organization of books when evaluating. Additionally, the publication date input allows for currency evaluation.

Recommended Reading Age Minimum. Inputting the recommended minimum reading age listed by Amazon, Novelist, publisher, School Library Journal, or another reliable source enables selectors to decide whether a book belongs in the collection based on a collection's audience. Recommended reading age minimum is merely another field to aid users or library workers when searching for books. The recommendation should

not limit those who are younger, or greater in age, from reading a particular book, as per the Library Bill of Rights, which is why the minimum age was included and not the maximum age (ALA, 2006).

Main Genre. Inputting the main genre for the book listed by Goodreads, Novelist, School Library Journal, or another reliable source acts as an organizational aid when users or library workers are searching for books. Goodreads utilizes tags created by their users to create Goodreads genres; a book's top tags are listed on a book's page on the Goodreads website and are a great alternative resource to use when choosing a main genre for the Collection for selectors who may not have access to Novelist or other websites (Sandy, 2014).

The Collection's main genres are *categories* in the final version of the Collection; categories use a controlled vocabulary. Because the scope of the Collection in its current iteration includes YA fiction books, the main genres and their definitions for the Collection are the following:

Fantasy Fiction. A book where “magic frames the story” and is set in a place that may be like or unlike this one (Saricks, 2009, p. 245).

Historical Fiction. A book set in the past, before the author's experiences, that includes rich historical details and has real or fictional characters that suit the times (Saricks, 2009, pp. 267–268).

Horror Fiction. A book that is meant to produce fear in the reader through psychological details, graphic content, or supernatural elements (Saricks, 2009, p. 107).

Mystery Fiction. A book in which the plot is driven by solving a crime or wrongdoing of some kind (Saricks, 2009, p. 184).

Realistic Fiction. A book that is set in real times, occurring during the author's life, that involves events that could or have happened (Brannen, 2013).

Romance Fiction. A book “in which the central focus is on the development and satisfactory resolution of the love relationship between the two [or more] main characters, written in such a way as to provide the reader with some degree of vicarious emotional participation in the courtship process” (Ramsdell, 2012, p. 6).

Science Fiction. A book that “posits worlds and technologies which could exist” and where “science, rather than magic, drives [the story], and the science must be accurate and true to key axioms of Newtonian (classical) and relativistic physics” (Saricks, 2009, p. 225).

Themes. Inputting additional themes from Goodreads, Novelist, or other reliable reading recommendation websites allows for selectors to note any issues that may be indicated in the selection criteria. This field is not meant to include “being a LGBTQ+ person” as a theme; a main character being a LGBTQ+ person is intrinsic to the Collection. The Collection's genres and themes are used as *tags* for the final version of the Collection; tags are keywords or terms assigned to the book. Themes can be secondary genres, but even when terminology of a main genre is used, it is still used as a tag and not a category in the final deliverable.

EBSCO's online database for reading recommendations, Novelist, uses “story elements” that include “appeal terms,” “themes,” and “genres.” Themes for the Collection may include terminology from Novelist, but are not limited to Novelist's terminology. Some examples of Novelist (2019) terms include “issue-oriented,”

“witchcraft and the occult,” “crime fiction,” “dealing with bullies,” “coming out experiences,” “life in small towns,” “surviving sexual violence,” and “royal reads.”

Terms to use when evaluating a book for the Collection may be borrowed from Novelist, but if a selector does not have access through their library or a public library, then there is also the Novelist (2019) guide, *The Secret Language of Books: A Guide to Story Elements*. A selector may also choose to use their own tags as long as the tags aid in evaluation.

Main Character(s) Identities. Inputting main character’s or characters’ identities allows for selectors to note whether main characters are LGBTQ+, along with other identities, to see if the book fits into a collection based on selection criteria. Character identities are sometimes revealed by the publisher, but also may be found on Amazon, Goodreads, Novelist, and other reliable sites. These identities may include sexual, gender, and expression identities, along with race, nationality, religion, and more. Main character identities are *self-identified* by the person (character) via the author, meaning that the identities should match how the character defines themselves. Character identities may be found through various Goodreads, Novelist, or other reliable reading recommendation websites.

Character identities, found in Appendix B, are tags in the Collection. Tags for character identities were additionally consulted using style guides and websites:

- National Center on Disability and Journalism’s *Disability Language Style Guide* (<http://ncdj.org/style-guide>);
- GLAAD’s *Media Reference Guide* (www.glaad.org/reference);

- “Gender Nation” (www.refinery29.com/en-us/lgbtq-definitions-gender-sexuality-terms), the crowd-sourced LGBTQ+ glossary, which was a partnership between Refinery29 and GLAAD;
- American Psychological Association’s bias-free language style “Racial and Ethnic Identity” (<https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language/racial-ethnic-minorities>);
- The Diversity Style Guide’s “Religion Glossary” (www.diversitystyleguide.com/topic-glossaries/religion-glossary); and
- LGBTQ Reads (www.lgbtqreads.com).

Author(s) Identities. Inputting author identities allows for evaluating books that are own voices or that have authenticity of character and story. Utilizing self-identifying identity terms may be found on author websites or Goodreads. Self-identification or self-determination is a human right, which is why author self-identification is applied to the Selection Tool and Collection (Miller, 2015; *The Yogyakarta Principles*, 2007). These identities may include sexual, gender, and expression identities, along with race, nationality, religion, and more. Author or authors identities, like themes, are tags in the Collection.

Awards, Starred Reviews, and Lists. Inputting a list of awards (winner and nominees), starred reviews, and book lists to which a book belongs allows for evaluation of popularity, quality, and other selection criteria factors. Goodreads often lists awards; Amazon lists awards and starred reviews; and Novelist lists awards, starred reviews, and their own book lists. Many books in the Collection were found using LGBTQ+-related book awards, starred reviews, and lists. When a selector comes across a book, whether by

recommendation or donation, it may prove useful to read the critique of reviewers and see any nominations or lists to which the book belongs.

The following awards, starred reviews, and lists are included in the Collection, but are not limited by them:

Book Awards.

- Lambda Literary Award,
- Michael L. Printz Award,
- National Book Award,
- Stonewall Book Award,
- Walter Award, and
- William C. Morris Award.

Book Lists.

- Amelia Bloomer Book List,
- Best Fiction for Young Adults (Young Adult Library Services Association),
- Bestsellers,
- Novelist Recommended Reads, and
- Rainbow Book List (American Library Association).

Starred Book Reviews.

- Booklist,
- Kirkus Reviews,
- Publishers Weekly, and
- School Library Journal.

These awards, starred reviews, and lists are set as categories in the project deliverable.

In addition to awards, starred reviews, and lists, books may be found via other reliable sources, especially when there is a gap in a collection. Reliable sources may include book recommendation websites and other collection development resources.

Reader Reviews and Additional Notes. Inputting any other relevant notes about the book, with selection criteria in mind, completes the Selection Tool assessment. Looking at reader comments and reviews helps reveal information that may not be available elsewhere. Furthermore, reader book reviews are fundamental when a selector is unable to read the full book. Incorporating opposing views—positive, negative, and neutral reviews—into the evaluation will illustrate a fuller picture of the book.

LGBTQ+ YA Fiction Core Collection

Scope of the Core Collection. H. W. Wilson Core Collections is a well-known database designed for library acquisitions. Although each of the H. W. Wilson's core collection publications contains 2,500 or more titles, the scope of this project contains fewer than 100 titles. This core collection is meant to contain a wide variety of the LGBTQ+ identities. Stakeholders may utilize the Collection as a basic collection to supplement or develop a particular library collection, or they may wish to filter through the core titles based on their own selection criteria. Each book in the Collection has been assessed via the Selection Tool.

The Collection is meant to be tailor-made for users and librarians to find anti-bias LGBTQ+ materials. Alabaster (2010, p. 27) asserted that core collections must be

up-to-date, and thus are mutable; for the premise of this project, core collections are meant to change.

Selecting Core Titles. The selection of core titles for the project first began with vetting book lists; many book award title winners and nominees are found on reputable book lists, and book lists contain more titles that may have been overlooked by awards.

The Rainbow Book List, created by the Rainbow Book List Committee of the Rainbow Round Table of the ALA, presents a LGBTQ+ book list annually. However, it also does not always contain LGBTQ+ protagonists. The Rainbow Book List was chosen as the first step in developing a core collection due to its dedication, history, and prestige for highlighting LGBTQ+ books. For the project, the Rainbow Book List was vetted using selection criteria going back to 2016. Although not included explicitly in the selection criteria (but included as a factor to note in the Selection Tool), publishing date was accounted for when vetting books for inclusion. After choosing titles based on selection criteria, books were evaluated using the Selection Tool. Next, LGBTQ+ book awards, such as the Lambda Literary and Stonewall Book Award, went through the same process.

After noting some genres (such as historical fiction) and LGBTQ+ character identities (such as ace spectrum and intersex) were lacking, other book lists, starred reviews, and book recommending websites were assessed using selection criteria and the Selection Tool. These websites were searched using LGBTQ+ terminology to aid in book discoverability.

Obviously, not all LGBTQ+ books with LGBTQ+ protagonists were included in the final version of the Collection. Some were almost included, and then not once they

reached sections of the Selection Tool. One example of this happening was with the book *Not Otherwise Specified* by Hannah Moskowitz. The book is written by a LGBTQ+ author and its protagonist is a black bisexual teenager who is having trouble with fitting into LGBTQ+ groups; the entire premise is about having trouble fitting in as a bisexual girl but also includes lesbophobic language and ideology, which does not align with the selection criteria about providing more positive representations (Fat Amy Santiago, 2018; Isa, 2017). Although the issues surrounding societal views on bisexuality are complex, there are non-lesbophobic books that deal with those issues, such as *Queens of Geek* by Jen Wilde and *Like Water* by Rebecca Podos.

A book that was almost not included in the Collection, but ultimately was included, is *Pantomime* by Laura Lam. While searching for more books featuring intersex protagonists, *Pantomime* was found listed on an intersex Goodreads book list. The synopsis provided by the publisher almost prevented it from being added to the Collection due to the misuse of gender pronouns for the protagonist:

In a land of lost wonders, the past is stirring once more . . .
Gene's life resembles a debutante's dream. Yet she hides a secret that would see her shunned by the nobility. Gene is both male and female. Then she displays unwanted magical abilities - last seen in mysterious beings from an almost-forgotten age. Matters escalate further when her parents plan a devastating betrayal, so she flees home, dressed as a boy.
The city beyond contains glowing glass relics from a lost civilization. They call to her, but she wants freedom not mysteries. So, reinvented as 'Micah Grey', Gene joins the circus. As an aerialist, she discovers the joy of flight - but the circus has a dark side. She's also plagued by visions foretelling danger. A storm is howling in from the past, but will she heed its roar? (Pan Macmillan, n.d.)

The book's description contains misleading information about the character, in addition to insensitively referring to the character with the pronoun "she" even after the character goes by a new name. In actuality, the book is about a person who was raised as a girl who

becomes Gene (also known as Micah Grey), a genderfluid person who uses he/him/his pronouns. A Goodreads commenter, who also provided a co-review via *The Book Smugglers*, included a replacement synopsis:

An intersex teen, Iphigenia Laurus, or Gene, raised as the daughter of a noble family, is uncomfortable in corsets and crinoline, and prefers climbing trees to debutante balls. Gene's parents wish to force a decision on which gender Gene will spend the rest of Gene's life as, so Gene runs away from home, assumes the identity of Micah Grey, a runaway living on the streets, joins the circus as an aerialist's apprentice and soon becomes the circus's rising star. (James & Grilo, 2013)

A list of all titles included in the Collection is provided in Appendix C.

Project Deliverable

Platform

WordPress was chosen as the platform for this project, instead of other content management systems or blogging platforms, for several reasons: (a) my personal previous use of WordPress; (b) its cost (free); (c) expansive use of categories and tags; (d) easy customization; and (e) built-in search engine optimization (WordPress, n. d.).

Naming the website address lgbtqcollection.wordpress.com (LGBTQ Collection) was a serpentine process due to the history of the initialisms used to name the LGBTQ+ movement itself and due to the intended purpose to expand the project to genres and material types outside of young adult fiction and print books. Consequently, I utilized the current widely accepted acronym "LGBTQ+" and simplified the project name to exclude "fiction" or "young adult" so that the project may expand beyond the current scope and extend into younger children's books and adult books, as well as into nonfiction, graphic novels, and other genres.

Project Deliverable Organization

The project website includes main menu access to the Collection, Selection Tool, selection criteria, collection evaluation, background information on the project, main genres, character identities, and a “suggest a book” email form.

The homepage is currently set to display recent post “featured images,” which are set to each core titles’ cover image. Each post includes a completed selection tool in addition to categories and tags designated to that particular book.

WordPress allows for hierarchal categories and uncategorized tags for posts. A Categories dropdown menu is displayed beneath the main menu; main categories include (a) book award winners and nominees, (b) book lists, (c) starred reviews, and (d) young adult fiction (i.e., main genres). Tags include a majority of the other project selection tool information, such as themes, main character identities, and author identities. Because the tags are uncategorized, character identities are named with “character” in the tag and author identities with “author” in the name.

One main character and one type of tag are highlighted on the website’s primary menu for easy access. The main genres categories are nested in the primary menu under “YA by Genre.” The tags for character identities are nested under “Character Identities” and are organized by (a) disability and neurodivergence; (b) gender identity, gender expression, and biological sex; (c) race and ethnicity; (d) religion and spirituality; and (e) romantic attraction, romantic orientation, sexual attraction, and sexual orientation.

Evaluation

The original collection list of 58 books was evaluated by 15 LGBTQ+ center staff members and one public librarian. The evaluation occurred during a 2-week period in March 2020.

Evaluators

Because the main stakeholders for this project are LGBTQ+ centers and their users, the Collection was sent to centers for evaluation. CenterLink was chosen as the directory to choose center locations from because it is the most expansive LGBTQ+ center directory; no directory was found for center libraries specifically.

Emails were sent to all 225 U.S. physical locations listed on the CenterLink (n.d.-c) directory at one time. The emails included background on the project along with two links: (1) Google Sheets of the collection list with basic selection tool information for each book and (2) an anonymous questionnaire, Appendix D, about the collection list. The email specified only centers with libraries to fill out the questionnaire, which may have excluded a majority of the centers; however, centers were assured to feel free to utilize the Collection even if they did not have libraries at their centers.

Of the emails sent out, approximately 19 emails bounced back and 10 employees responded that they did not have libraries at their centers. That left 196 centers (that may or may not have libraries) to respond to the questionnaire.

There were 16 questionnaire respondents within 2 weeks, 12 were LGBTQ+ center employees and 1 was a teen services public librarian, who received the survey due to a center employee passing along the survey with permission. This means there was at least a 7.65% response rate; additionally, Survey Monkey indicated that everyone who started the questionnaire also completed it.

Collection List

In order for the project evaluators to provide input on Collection, a transitional project collection platform was created using Google Sheets, which was used due to accessibility to evaluators, along with familiarity. The original Collection list contained 58 titles.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was sent out anonymously using a Survey Monkey link in the emails. Survey Monkey is a free online survey tool that allowed for anonymous responses and easy usability. The questionnaire included 10 mostly open-ended questions about the Collection, with the last one asking for “any additional comments.” Open-ended questions allowed responders opportunities to explain if they do not understand a question, as well as the ability to include any additional information pertaining to a question.

Feedback and Modifications

Feedback from respondents was fairly favorable. The majority (13 out of 16), when asked, “Which books from the LGBTQ+ Young Adult Fiction Core Collection would you *not* use in your library?” said they would not turn away any book; two said

they were unsure due to unfamiliarity with the books, and one mentioned they would not include older titles like *Rainbow Boys* and *Boy Meets Boy*. Additionally, when asked to use a Likert scale for the following statement: “The LGBTQ+ Young Adult Fiction Core Collection Represents My Library's User Community,” two selected “strongly agree,” nine selected “agree,” five selected “neither agree nor disagree,” and none selected “disagree” or “strongly disagree.” Of the five who selected “neither agree nor disagree,” one evaluator commented that their centers are not used by many young adults, which may be the case for some other respondents.

Overall, there was praise and interest in a collection that represents the LGBTQ+ communities in which the respondents live and books that include own voices, black and other people of color characters, nonbinary characters, transgender characters, characters with disabilities and neurodivergence, intersex characters, religious minorities, and more.

Based on the feedback, nine more books were added to the Collection. Of those books, five include transgender main characters, eight include people of color main characters, two include main characters with a disability or neurodivergence, and seven include main genres that are not realistic fiction. Titles like *Rainbow Boys* and *Boy Meets Boy* remained in the Collection even though they may be older books with subjectively outdated covers; based on reader feedback from Goodreads and other sites, these books are still relevant today and fit in as anti-bias book selections utilizing the Selection Tool. When the Selection Tool is evaluated by more people, including librarians, that decision will be reassessed.

Conclusion

There has been a rich history of anti-bias book evaluation with a general focus on race, ethnicity, and disability. The objectives of this project were to create an anti-bias selection tool and core collection that will aid LGBTQ+ people to find themselves in the stories they read, and thus find value in themselves by seeing themselves a part of society, along with allowing all readers to pick up a book and see a world that is representative of the one in which we all belong. These objectives were assisted by the guidelines and selection criteria that focused on LGBTQ+ characters as main characters, various book genres, diverse LGBTQ+ characters, own voices books, and more.

Limitations

The total timeline for this project, including the project proposal, was 8 months. This timeline included background on the project (literature review), creating a collection and selection tool (methodology), creating a deliverable (<https://lgbtqcollection.wordpress.com>), and an evaluation of the Collection (questionnaire), along with additions to the Collection based on feedback. Because of the limited time to complete the project, the evaluation included only one round of questionnaires to a small group (from an unknown number of LGBTQ+ centers that had libraries). The size of the current Collection is also limited due to the one-person vetting process utilizing the developed Selection Tool.

Impact

Some center employees who did not have center libraries expressed interest in building libraries for their center and that this project would provide a good starting point to building a library collection. Additionally, some centers forwarded and shared the Collection and project concept among their friends and colleagues.

Overall, the project may aid those in choosing titles for their libraries that would have the most impact for them based on their libraries' selection criteria. The project's addition to the research on anti-bias selection tools and LGBTQ+ collections furthers the expansion of diversity in the library and publishing realm. Also, highlighting LGBTQ+ centers and their participation in this topic provides further access to LGBTQ+ users and showcases the importance of partnerships with LGBTQ+ centers. Finally, this project also acknowledges the essential importance of reader reviews and sites like Goodreads in helping users and librarians alike to find and select books.

Next Steps and Further Study

Next steps include a plan to send out the Selection Tool and the Collection to other librarians for evaluation. Along with additional evaluation, the Collection and website will expand to include LGBTQ+ young children's, middle grade, adult, nonfiction, and graphic novels; LGBTQ+ middle grade books have been especially lacking (Tyner, 2018b).

Utilizing Goodreads and other social media sites became essential in selecting books for this project. Researchers may expand on the research about utilizing social reading recommendation sites, along with other social media sites, for book selection. Sites like Goodreads, Tumblr, and Twitter remain prime sources for information on

LGBTQ+ readers and books. Researchers may be interested in studying reading habits and information-seeking habits of LGBTQ+ youth, in addition to specifically the reading habits of LGBTQ+ center members; research in this area may delve into youth interest in reading free online materials.

Further studies on anti-bias book selection and LGBTQ+ collections may extend to various underrepresented groups. This process has been ongoing since before the 1940s and will continue to expand.

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Appendix A. Selection Tool

The Selection Tool, Table A1, was designed to be used for this project, but selection categories, tags, or notes may differ for other projects or collections. The tool is meant to be utilized based on selector needs.

Table A1

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Related (LGBTQ+) Selection Tool

| Field name and guidelines | Selection input |
|---|-----------------|
| Cover | |
| Input the cover image from Amazon, Goodreads, Novelist, or another reliable source. | |
| Note if the book cover will appeal to readers and are authentic or if they have undermining stereotypes or tokenism. | |
| Summary | |
| Input, with quotes, the shortened description or summary used by Goodreads, Novelist, or from another reliable source. | |
| Note if the summary provides information on selection criteria, such as if the story (a) has LGBTQ+ characters as main characters, (b) may aid in promoting self and identity, and (c) has multifaceted characters. | |
| Author(s) | |
| Input the author name or names with their last name first: "Last, First Middle"; e.g., "Blake, Ashley Herring". If there are two or more authors, first list the author that the publisher lists first and separate their names with a semicolon; e.g., "Albertalli, Becky; Silvera, Adam". | |

| Field name and guidelines | Selection input |
|--|-----------------|
| Publication date | |
| Input the original publisher year; if the book is a reprint, input the reprint date next separated by a slash. | |
| Title | |
| Input the title using title case. | |
| Publisher | |
| Input the publisher. If it is an imprint, list the main publisher then the imprint with a slash between the two; e.g., “HarperCollins / HarperTeen”. | |
| ISBN-13 | |
| Input the International Standard Book Number (ISBN) without dashes. Make sure the cover image and ISBN match. | |
| Recommended reading age minimum | |
| <p>Input the recommended minimum reading age listed by Amazon, Novelist, publisher, School Library Journal, or another reliable source. If using multiple sources, list the lowest minimum age for reading.</p> <p>If a grade level is listed, use the age equivalent for that grade. If the book is not specifically labeled as a young adult book but is on a list of adult books for young adult readers then use best judgement for minimum age.</p> | |
| Note if the audience for this book does not include young adult readers. | |
| Main genre | |
| <p>Input the main genre for the book listed by the Goodreads, Novelist, School Library Journal, or another reliable source.</p> <p>Main genre categories may include fantasy fiction, historical fiction, horror fiction, mystery fiction, realistic fiction, romance fiction, and science fiction.</p> | |
| Note if the genre may not be relevant or needed in the collection based on selection criteria. | |

| Field name and guidelines | Selection input |
|--|-----------------|
| Themes | |
| <p>Input additional themes from Goodreads, Novelist, or other reliable reading recommendation websites. Themes can be secondary genres. This field is not meant to include “being a LGBTQ+ person” as a theme—a main character being a LGBTQ+ person is intrinsic to this selection tool.</p> <p>Some theme examples from Novelist's (2019) guide, <i>The Secret Language of Books: A Guide to Story Elements</i> include: “issue-oriented,” “crime fiction,” “dealing with bullies,” “coming out experiences,” “surviving sexual violence,” and more.</p> | |
| <p>Note any issues in themes, indicated in the selection criteria; e.g., note if the themes indicate a focus on the book being a problem novel that focuses on being LGBTQ+ as a negative aspect to have.</p> | |
| Main character(s) identities | |
| <p>Input main character identities. Character identities are sometimes revealed by the publisher, but also may be found on Amazon, Goodreads, Novelist, and other reliable sites. These identities may include sexual, gender, and expression identities, along with race, nationality, religion, and more. Main character identities can be found in Appendix B.</p> | |
| <p>Note whether the character portrayal is representative of the selection criteria; e.g., characters who are LGBTQ+, who have a disability, and who are neurodivergent are not always portrayed as needing rescuing; characters overall in the collection represent not only the immediate community, but those outside the community; and religious and other identities are varied and are portrayed without stereotype.</p> | |

| Field name and guidelines | Selection input |
|--|-----------------|
| Author(s) identities | |
| <p>Input author identities with how the author or authors self-identity; these self-identifying terms may be found on their author websites or Goodreads.</p> <p>Utilize exact terms that the author uses; e.g., one author may utilize “nonbinary,” whereas another author may utilize “genderqueer.” These identities may include sexual, gender, and expression identities; along with race or ethnicity, religion, and more.</p> | |
| <p>Note if the author or authors are (a) writing own voices books and (b) writing an authentic story and characters.</p> <p>Own voices books are books about marginalized or minority groups written by authors of that same group.</p> | |
| Awards, starred reviews, and lists | |
| <p>Input a list of awards, starred reviews, and book lists to which a book belongs, including nominations.</p> <p>Goodreads often lists awards; Amazon lists awards and starred reviews; and Novelist lists awards, starred reviews, and their own lists.</p> <p>There is no need to input full reviews into this field value, but one could if it aids in selection.</p> | |
| Reader reviews and additional notes | |
| <p>Input any other relevant notes about the book, keeping the Selection Criteria in mind. Reading reader comments and reviews helps reveal information that may not be available elsewhere.</p> <p>Sometimes the information gathered from reader reviews may fit into other fields.</p> | |

Appendix B. Character Identities

Character identities, Table B1, were gathered through various reliable reading recommendation websites, such as Goodreads, Novelist, and consulted using style guides and websites, such as National Center on Disability and Journalism’s *Disability Language Style Guide* (<http://ncdj.org/style-guide>); GLAAD’s *Media Reference Guide* (www.glaad.org/reference); “Gender Nation” (www.refinery29.com/en-us/lgbtq-definitions-gender-sexuality-terms), the crowd-sourced LGBTQ+ glossary, which was a partnership between Refinery29 and GLAAD; American Psychological Association’s bias-free language style “Racial and Ethnic Identity” (<https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language/racial-ethnic-minorities>); The Diversity Style Guide’s “Religion Glossary” (www.diversitystyleguide.com/topic-glossaries/religion-glossary); and LGBTQ Reads (www.lgbtqreads.com).

Character identities, which are used as tags on the website, are meant to be expanded once more books are added to the Collection and are fluid based on the changes made by appropriate style guides.

Table B1*Character Identities*

| Disability, neurodivergence |
|--|
| Addiction |
| ADD, ADHD (Attention-Deficit Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) |
| Aphasia |
| Anxiety |
| Panic Disorder |
| Autism spectrum |
| Bipolar disorder |
| Cerebral palsy |
| Chronic pain |
| Depression |
| Dyslexia |
| Epilepsy |
| Limb difference |
| PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) |
| Selectively nonverbal |
| Gender identity, gender expression, biological sex |
| Cisgender |
| Cisgender female |
| Cisgender male |
| Gender fluid, two-spirit, bigender |
| Intersex |
| Intersex female |
| Intersex male |
| Intersex nonbinary, intersex gender fluid |
| Nonbinary, genderqueer, agender, gender nonconforming |
| Transgender |
| Transgender female |
| Transgender male |
| Transgender nonbinary, transgender gender fluid |
| Race/ethnicity |
| Asian (East) |
| Asian (South) |
| Asian (Southeast) |
| Asian (West) |
| Near Eastern (Middle East), North African |
| Black, African American |
| Latinx, Latin American, Hispanic |
| Indigenous, Native, First Nations |
| Pacific Islander |
| Unspecified POC (Person of Color) |
| White, European |

Religion/spirituality

Atheism, Agnosticism

Buddhism

Christianity

Hinduism

Islam

Judaism

Paganism, Wicca

Sikhism

Taoism

Romantic attraction, romantic orientation, sexual attraction, sexual orientation

Ace, asexual, aromantic, a-spec(trum), demisexual, demiromantic

Bisexual, biromantic, pansexual, panromantic

Gay

Lesbian

Polysexual, polyromantic

Queer

Questioning

Straight

Appendix C. Core Collection Titles

- Albertalli, B., & Silvera, A. (2018). *What if it's us*. HarperCollins/HarperTeen (9780062795250). Ages 12+.
- Atta, D. (2020). *The Black Flamingo*. HarperCollins/Balzer + Bray (9780062990297). (Original work published 2019). Ages 12+.
- Blake, A. H. (2017). *How to make a wish*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Books/HMH Books for Young Readers (9780544815193). Ages 13+.
- Blake, A. H. (2018). *Girl made of stars*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Books/HMH Books for Young Readers (9781328778239). Ages 12+.
- Bowan, A. D. (2018). *Summer bird blue*. Simon & Schuster/Simon Pulse (9781481487757). Ages 11+.
- Callender, K. (2020). *Felix ever after*. HarperCollins (9780062820273). Age 14+.
- Capetta, A. R., & McCarthy, C. (2019). *Once & future*. Little, Brown and Company/Jimmy Patterson (9780316449274). Age 12+.
- Danforth, E. M. (2013). *The miseducation of Cameron Post*. HarperCollins/Balzer + Bray (9780062020574). (Original work published 2012). Ages 15+.
- Daniels, A. (2017). *Dreadnought*. Diversion Publishing (9781682300688). Ages 13+.
- Deaver, M. (2019). *I wish you all the best*. Scholastic/Push (9781338306125). Ages 12+.
- Emezi, A. (2019). *Pet*. Random House Children's Books/Make Me A World (9780525647072). Ages 12+.
- Evans, A. (2019). *Highway bodies*. Echo Publishing (9781760685027). Ages 16+.

- Garden, N. (2007). *Annie on my mind*. Macmillan Publishers/Farrar, Straus and Giroux (9780374404147). (Original work published 1982). Ages 11+
- Garrett, C. (2019). *Full disclosure*. Penguin Random House/Knopf Books for Young Readers (9781984829955). Ages 13+.
- Gilbert, K. L. (2018). *Picture us in the light*. Little, Brown and Company/Little, Brown Books for Young Readers (9781484726020). Ages 13+.
- Gold, R. (2017). *Nico & Tucker*. Bella Books (9781594935381) Ages 13+.
- Grant, M. (2019). *Alien: Echo*. Macmillan Publishers/Imprint (9781250306302). Ages 14+.
- Gratton, T. (2018). *Strange grace*. Simon & Schuster/Margaret K. McElderry Books (9781534402089). Ages 13+.
- Hawkins, R. (2019). *Her royal highness*. Penguin Random House/G.P. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers (9781524738266). Ages 12+.
- Herman, A. (2019). *Everything grows*. Three Rooms Press (9781941110683). Ages 12+.
- Hutchinson, S. D. (2019). *The past and other things that should stay buried*. Simon & Schuster/Simon Pulse (9781481498579). Ages 12+.
- Jarrar, R. (2008). *A map of home*. Other Press (9781590512722). Ages 15+.
- Johnston, E. K. *The afterward*. Penguin Random House/Dutton Books for Young Readers (9780735231894). Ages 13+.
- Jones, A. G. (2018). *Fire song*. Annick Press (9781554519781). Ages 13+.
- Khan, S. (2019). *The love & lies of Rukhsana Ali*. Scholastic (9781338227017). Ages 13+.

- Khorrām, A. (2018). *Darius the great is not okay*. Penguin Random House/Dial Books for Young Readers (9780525552963). Ages 11+.
- Konigsberg, B. (2019). *The music of what happens*. Scholastic/Arthur A. Levine Books (9781338215502). Ages 14+.
- LaCour, N. (2017). *We are okay*. Penguin Random House/Dutton Books for Young Readers (9780525425892). Ages 13+.
- Lam, L. (2016). *Pantomime*. Macmillan Publishers/Tor (9781509807772). (Original work published 2013). Ages 15+.
- Lee, M. (2017). *The gentleman's guide to vice and virtue*. HarperCollins/Katherine Tegen Books (9780062382801). Ages 13+.
- Legrand, C. (2018). *Sawkill girls*. HarperCollins/Katherine Tegen Books (9780062696601). Ages 13+.
- Levithan, D. (2003). *Boy meets boy*. Penguin Random House/Knopf Books for Young Readers (9780375824005). Ages 13+.
- Lo, M. (2012). *Adaptation*. Little, Brown and Company/Little, Brown Books for Young Readers (9780316197960). Ages 13+.
- London, A. (2014). *Proxy*. Penguin Random House/Speak (9780147511331). (Original work published 2013). Ages 12+.
- Marshall, K. A. (2019). *Rules for vanishing*. Penguin Random House/Viking Book for Young Readers (9781984837011). Ages 11+.
- McLemore, A. (2018). *When the moon was ours*. Macmillan Publishers/Wednesday Books (9781250160102). (Original work published 2016).

- Montgomery, C. (2019). *By any means necessary*. Macmillan Publishers/Page Street Publishing (9781624147999). Ages 15+.
- Nazemian, A. (2019). *Like a love story*. HarperCollins/Balzer + Bray (9780062839367). Ages 11+.
- Ness, P. (2017). *Release*. Walker Books (9781406377279). Ages 13+.
- Ngan, N. (2018). *Girls of paper and fire*. Little, Brown and Company/Jimmy Patterson (9780316561358). Ages 16+.
- Oshiro, M. (2018). *Anger is a gift*. Macmillan Publishers/Tor Teen (9781250167026). Ages 14+.
- Petrus, J. (2019). *The stars and the blackness between them*. Penguin Random House/Dutton Books for Young Readers (9780525555483). Ages 12+.
- Podos, R. (2017). *Like water*. HarperCollins/Balzer + Bray (9780062373373). Ages 13+.
- Podos, R. (2019). *The wise and the wicked*. HarperCollins/Balzer + Bray (9780062699022). Ages 13+.
- Power, R. (2019). *Wilder girls*. Penguin Random House/Delacorte Press (9780525645580). Ages 13+.
- Quindlen, K. (2014). *Her name in the sky*. CreateSpace (9781495335297). Ages 14+.
- Ramos, N. (2019). *The truth is*. Lerner Books/Carolrhoda Lab (9781541528772). Ages 12+.
- Rivera, G. (2019). *Juliet takes a breath*. Penguin Random House/Dial Books for Young Readers (9780593108178). (Original work published 2016). Ages 14+.
- Roehrig, C. (2019). *Death prefers blondes*. Macmillan Publishers/Feiwel & Friends (9781250155825). Ages 14+.

- Rosen, L. A. C. (2018). *Jack of hearts (and other parts)*. Little, Brown and Company/Little, Brown Books for Young Readers (9780316480536). Ages 14+.
- Ryan, T. (2019). *Keep this to yourself*. Albert Whitman & Company/AW Teen (9780807541517). Ages 13+.
- Sáenz, B. A. (2012). *Aristotle and Dante discover the secrets of the universe*. Simon & Schuster/Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers (9781442408920). Ages 13+.
- Sánchez, A. (2003). *Rainbow boys*. Simon & Schuster/Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers (9780689857706). Ages 13+.
- Schriever, H. (2019). *Out of Salem*. Seven Stories/Triangle Stories (9781609809010). Ages 12+.
- Sharpe, T. (2014). *Far from you*. Little, Brown and Company/Little, Brown Books for Young Readers (9781423184621). Ages 13+.
- Sheppard, H. (2019). *Invisible boys*. Fremantle Press (9781925815566). Ages 13+.
- Silvera, A. (2015). *More happy than not*. Soho Press/Soho Teen (9781616955601). Ages 13+.
- Skrutskie, E. (2016). *The abyss surrounds us*. North Star Editions/Flux (9780738746913). Ages 13+.
- Sterling, I. (2019). *These witches don't burn*. Penguin Random House/Razorbill (9780451480323). Ages 12+.
- Tarttlin, A. (2013). *Golden boy*. Simon & Schuster/Atria Books (9781476705804). Ages 16+.

- Thomas, L. (2019). *Wild and crooked*. Bloomsbury/Bloomsbury YA
(9781547600021). Ages 13+.
- Tilahun, N. G. (2016). *The root*. Skyhorse Publishing / Night Shade Books
(9781597808637). Ages 15+.
- Varela, N. (2019). *Crier's war*. HarperCollins/Quill Tree Books (9780062823946). Ages
14+.
- Watts, J. (2018). *Quiver*. Three Rooms Press (9781941110669). Ages 11+.
- Wells, R. K. (2019). *Shatter the sky*. Simon & Schuster/Simon & Schuster Books for
Young Readers (9781534437906). Ages 12+.
- Wilde, J. (2017). *Queens of geek*. Macmillan Publishers/Swoon Reads (9781250111395).
Ages 13+.
- Winters, J. (2019). *How to be Remy Cameron*. Interlude Press (9781945053801). Ages
11+.

Appendix D. Questionnaire

1. What is your position at the Center (e.g., "I am a volunteer who works in the library", "I am the Library Coordinator", etc.)?
2. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
 - a. Did not attend school
 - b. 1st – 5th grade
 - c. 6th – 11th grade
 - d. Graduated from high school
 - e. 1 year of college
 - f. 2 years of college
 - g. 3 years of college
 - h. Graduated from college
 - i. Some graduate school
 - j. Completed graduate school
 - k. Other (please specify)
3. Do you hold a Library Science or Information Science master's degree?
 - a. No
 - b. Yes
 - c. I am currently obtaining a Library Science or Information Science master's degree
 - d. Other (please specify)

4. How does the library acquire books (e.g., donations of physical books that people bring in, Amazon wish lists, free e-books, etc.)?
5. Which books from the LGBTQ+ Young Adult Fiction Core Collection would you *not* use in your library? Why?
6. Which books from the LGBTQ+ Young Adult Fiction Core Collection would you be interested to use in your library? Why?
7. From strongly agree to strongly disagree, please respond to the following comment: The LGBTQ+ Young Adult Fiction Core Collection represents my library's user community.
 - a. Strong agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neither agree nor disagree
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
8. How does the LGBTQ+ Young Adult Fiction Core Collection represent or not represent your library's user community?
9. What books would you add to the LGBTQ+ Young Adult Fiction Core Collection? Why?
10. Please add any additional comments here. Thank you!