

Spring 2017

# Reading the Rainbow: Availability and Content of Young Adult Queer Literature in Georgia Secondary Schools

Sawyer Henderson

University of North Georgia, sawyer.cash.henderson@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalcommons.northgeorgia.edu/honors\\_theses](http://digitalcommons.northgeorgia.edu/honors_theses)

 Part of the [Children's and Young Adult Literature Commons](#), and the [Literature in English, North America Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Henderson, Sawyer, "Reading the Rainbow: Availability and Content of Young Adult Queer Literature in Georgia Secondary Schools" (2017). *Honors Theses*. 6.

[http://digitalcommons.northgeorgia.edu/honors\\_theses/6](http://digitalcommons.northgeorgia.edu/honors_theses/6)

This Honors Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Honors Program at Nighthawks Open Institutional Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of Nighthawks Open Institutional Repository.

Reading the Rainbow: Availability of Young Adult Queer Literature in Select Georgia  
Secondary Schools

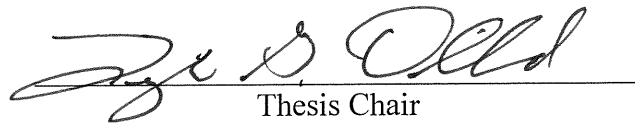
A Thesis Submitted to  
the Faculty of the University of North Georgia  
In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degrees  
Bachelor of Arts in English w/Teaching Certificate and  
Bachelor of Science in Psychology  
With Honors

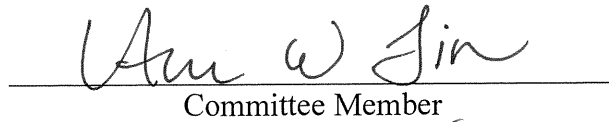
Sawyer Henderson

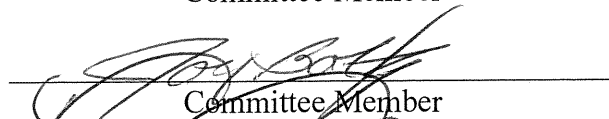
Spring 2017

Accepted by the Honors Faculty  
of the University of North Georgia  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the title of  
Honors Program Graduate

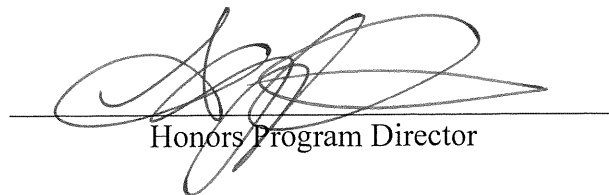
Thesis Committee:

  
Thesis Chair

  
Committee Member

  
Committee Member

  
Committee Member

  
Honors Program Director

## Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Prior Research	3
Study Overview	6
Methods	7
Results	11
Discussion	15
Limitations	16
Next Steps	17
References	19
Appendix A	22
Appendix B	24
Appendix C	27

## **Introduction**

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, and other sexual minority, or LGBTQ+, youth are at high risk for suicide. In fact, youth identifying as lesbian, gay, or bisexual are four times more likely to attempt suicide compared to their heterosexual peers; the rates are higher for transgender/transsexual youth. Various factors contributing to these rates include bullying, lack of acceptance, and lack of academic material available to support LGBTQ+ youth (“Facts About Suicide”). Because of the severe need for LGBTQ+ resources, high school libraries should offer more literature with queer\* characters and teachers should practice bibliotherapy with these books in their classrooms. Researchers Vare and Norton define bibliotherapy as “healing through literature... and guiding someone’s reading to foster an understanding of self or to help solve therapeutic needs” (2004, p. 190). In this same research, the authors articulate that the foundation to using bibliotherapy, especially for LGBTQ+ youth, is having educators make known that queer literature exists and is available for these students. However, while bibliotherapy is ideal in a group classroom setting, the likelihood of a queer book being taught in the classroom is still small. Thus, it is vital that these texts are still available in high school libraries so students have the ability to find a book with a character representing their own struggles in its bindings. This pilot study seeks to first ascertain the number of queer books available in select Georgia high schools while offering a sample lesson for teachers wanting to use bibliotherapy in the classroom with queer literature; next steps are included for future studies.

---

\* Note: The term “queer” is now an accepted, encompassing term to include all sexual minority individuals. While controversial in the past, the term is used in academic settings while also being accepted by LGBT organizations.

Researchers suggest that 5-6% of students in grades 7-12 identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or other (Rossi, 2010); they further argue there are, on average, 2.5 million teenagers that are a part of the LGBTQ+ community in the United States alone (Rauch, 2010; Mehra & Braquet, 2011). These statistics imply that, regardless of location, there is a need for secondary school libraries to house literature relating to queer issues as students within these high school populations can benefit from being able to find themselves within this literary genre, especially as the content relates to coming out processes, acceptance, and suicide prevention.

Researchers Russell and Perrin (as cited by Mehra & Braquet, 2006, p. 2) report the following statistics in relation to LGBTQ+ youth and suicide: “Sexual minority youth are among the most likely to report suicidality; what leads ‘queer’ youth to a suicidal path is not their sexuality but the stigma and discrimination they encounter in a heterosexual world.” These findings are important for several reasons in relation to this study. 1) They suggest that teens likely face stigma and discrimination against their orientation from their heterosexual peers, and 2) teens can often feel isolated from their peers, teachers, and communities through the coming out process, leading to these suicidal thoughts and ideations. Because of these findings, several scholars suggest that media centers, as advocates for the good of their patron base should leverage LGBTQ+ resources to counter the negative stereotypes prevalent in secondary schools against this population (Vaillancourt, 2013). Mehra and Braquet (2006, p.3) further argue this point, writing:

Libraries have to advocate the next step forward that applies meaningful knowledge and translates progressive information into concrete actions to develop

profound community wisdom. Such community wisdom will allow individuals, groups, and institutions to recognize and rejoice in their diversity, inclusive and accepting of “queer” individuals.

Based on their research, if high school libraries house queer material, then teens can engage in bibliotherapeutic techniques to avoid the propensity toward suicide. In other words, if a teen can find a book that relates a similar experience to what they are going through in their own life, they should be able to utilize the information in the book towards their own issues in reality. Furthermore, non-LGBTQ+ students can benefit from the housing of these materials as it allows them to become more understanding of their queer classmates. Rauch (2011, p. 14) supports this stance, writing, “Access to stories with characters who may be like his/her classmates or friends can help a teen reader be more empathetic and understanding as s/he experiences vicariously the struggles and confusion many LGBTQ teens go through.” As such, this study seeks to investigate the number of LGBTQ+ themed books housed in select high school media centers across the state of Georgia based on American Library Association guidelines and past recommendations for LGBTQ+ content in other academic studies.

### **Prior Research**

According to Clyde and Lobban (2001), little data exist to explain how high school libraries acquire LGBTQ+ material. In general, public high school media centers operate within a budget specified by the individual school for curriculum development processes. According to surveys conducted by the American Library Association, high schools, on average, have ~13,636 titles available at any given time. Additionally, in a

survey conducted in 2012, collections grew an estimated 200 titles per year, though budget spending has decreased overall (“School Libraries”). While there is no survey conducted by the ALA that specifies the average number of LGBTQ+ books housed by secondary schools, there have been studies undertaken in order to identify differences in numbers of books relating to queer literature held by libraries across the United States in addition to other countries’ library collections.

Before expanding upon previous research studies undertaken in the field, it is important to note the appeals to include LGBTQ+ materials in libraries and the potential reasons for librarians to avoid them. As Williams and Deyoe (2015, p. 63) outline in their discussions on LGBTQ+ literature in libraries, as early as 1993, a “Massachusetts task force recommended including information in school libraries for gay and lesbian adolescents and providing education of families through information in public libraries.” In addition, they note, in 2007, the National Council for Teachers of English “adopted a resolution urging teacher preparation programs to include LGBTQ issues and urging... members to address the needs of students who identify as LGBTQ” (Williams & Deyoe, 2015, p. 63). However, even though declarations have been made to encourage the inclusion of these materials in secondary settings, queer books are still being left out of collections. Reference librarian Jennifer Downey lists the following responses from librarians and their decisions for leaving this material out of their collections: “It’s hard to find LGBT-themed books; They don’t circulate; What will it say about me?; There aren’t any (or many) LGBT people in my community; I don’t have the money in my budget” (2013, p. 105-106). While many of these are self-assumed assumptions, excepting the



budget and potentially circulation aspects, they still offer explanations for the limited findings and minimal parallels across studies showcased below.

In looking at public libraries, Martin and Murdock (2007) found that 70% of teens could locate LGBTQ+ materials in their public libraries, regardless of area. Another study looked at the differences between public libraries in five southeastern states, basing her study on the impact a fairness ordinance might have in public library holdings, which ended up being no statistical difference. Interestingly, however, the researcher did find a difference between diverse counties and non-diverse counties, with diverse counties being far more likely to hold an LGBTQ+ book (Stringer-Stanback, 2011). Another researcher, Ritchie (2001), found that 97.6% of medium-sized public libraries in Illinois held at least some form of an LGBTQ+ themed book, with ~12.7 books being held by each library. A single, in-depth analysis of one large, urban public library's collection by a researcher found ~80% of desired LGBTQ+ themed-books to be held in its catalog (Moss, 2008). While these studies seem to lean toward a more accepting rate of LGBTQ+ materials in public libraries, they offer mixed results with little comparative data across studies.

Making the bridge from public to the realm of academia, a study conducted in 2003 investigated the differences in library collections, both public and academic, in Oregon. Oberg and Klein (2003) found statistical differences between holdings based on library size, type, and location. Additionally, an extensive study in 2013 found that public high school media centers in one southern state only held ~0.4% of "suggested" LGBTQ+ reading materials (Hughes-Hassel et al., 2013). However, a study conducted by Oltmann (2015) sought to investigate the differences between high school media

collections in a northeastern and southern state, looking at differences in book holdings based off of locale, political affiliation, and demographic diversity. Ultimately, she found no statistical difference in book holdings across the categories between states.

Furthermore, Oltmann found that, in the northeastern state, urban schools held ~20 books, while suburban and rural schools held ~22 and ~23 books, respectively. In the southern state, however, urban schools held ~32 books on average, suburban held ~25 books, and rural schools held ~20 books. For the purpose of this pilot study, similar research methodologies to Oltmann are used, but minimizes the research variables to locale only, as expanded upon in the Study Overview and Methods sections below.

### **Study Overview**

As mentioned above, this study seeks to expand upon the work of Oltmann (2015) and others by looking closely at select secondary schools in the state of Georgia across the different locales of urban, suburban, and rural. Based on the preliminary literature review discussed, no study to date has performed an analysis of Georgia secondary schools by county, and few have looked at singular states' high school libraries based on county demographic, choosing instead to look at enrollment figures and diversity, often leading to high schools being analyzed in the same county or, as Oltmann demonstrated, by comparing states' demographics by region. Overall, this study seeks to look closer at collection numbers county-by-county as opposed to broader, nonspecific comparisons in an effort to offer guidance for improvement on a state/county-specific level based on locational differences.

The prior research review leads to the following hypotheses. 1) On average, urban schools will hold more books of LGBTQ+ content, followed by suburban schools, and

rural schools will hold the least. 2) Because librarians add an estimated 200 books/year according to the information above, it is expected that LGBTQ+ books should make up an estimated 5-6% of these total additions. Therefore, it is also expected for each high school media center collection analyzed, regardless of locale, to have, on average, 10 books (5% of 200) off of the master list.<sup>†</sup>

## **Methods**

In order to narrow the research group, Georgia counties were prepared on a grid in alphabetical order, Appling County to Worth County, and assigned numbers 1 to 159. The classification of urban, suburban, and rural were operationally defined in close conjunction to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2016 categorizations with the exception of suburban, as, to date, no procedural definition has been given by the Bureau to categorize a suburban area. As a result, the categories used in this study are defined as follows: < 20,000 People = Rural; 20,000-60,000 People = Suburban; 60,000 > = Urban. In other words, if County A has a population of 45,000, its high school would be placed in the Suburban category. Twenty-seven counties or, approximately 1/6 of all counties in the state of Georgia, were analyzed. Populations of each individual county were based off of census data conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2016. Counties were selected using a random number generator from 1 to 159; however, in an effort to heighten statistical accuracy, equal numbers across each category were maintained (e.g. Nine Counties each were needed). Once a category was filled, if a number came up that reflected a county

---

<sup>†</sup> Consult the Limitations section for further explanation on why collection development was chosen. See Table 2 for the Master List.

already in a full category, the county was discarded and a new number was randomly selected until all categories were filled. The final list of counties and their categorizations can be seen in Table 1 below. A color coded map of the counties selected can be seen in

<u>County</u>	<u>Locale Categorization (R=Rural; S=Suburban; U= Urban)</u>
Banks	R
Bleckley	R
Butts	S
Charlton	R
Clayton	U
Columbia	U
Dawson	S
Douglas	U
Fannin	S
Fulton	U
Irwin	R
Jefferson	R
Jackson	U
Jones	S
Lowndes	U
McIntosh	R
Monroe	S
Oconee	S
Pike	R
Schley	R
Spalding	U
Walton	U
Ware	S
Union	S
Wayne	S
Wilcox	R
Whitfield	U

Table 1

Appendix C.

In looking at ways to assess the availability of LGBTQ+ literature, analytics were based highly on the studies conducted by Moss (2008) and Oltmann (2015) by utilizing a list-checking measure. In other words, a list of LGBTQ+ titles were selected, and high school databases were analyzed to determine the number of total books found on the list. The title selections were based on Oltmann’s (2015) “Top Ten Books Held By State” list in addition to the American Library Association’s 2015 “Rainbow Reading List” which was distributed to all librarians subscribing to the Association newsletter, which offers general collection development guidance when selecting reading materials. Oltmann’s (2015) reading list was constructed based on previous

winner winners in the Lambda Literary Foundation Awards, Stonewall Book Awards, and the Rainbow Awards in addition to titles pulled from the book, *Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Teen Literature: A Guide to Reading*

*Interests* by Webber (2010). The list-checking measure was chosen due to the inconsistent subject labeling of queer books, with some libraries choosing the label under the category LGBT or queer, while others may label under same-sex, homosexuality, or gay. In addition, the book titles on the Rainbow List are fairly newer titles, having been published in 2013-2014. This list was chosen because it adds a clearer picture of a library's collection development efforts to obtain up-to-date LGBTQ+ literature; however, Oltmann's list from her 2015 study was chosen because it represents the general LGBTQ+ books that are housed in high school libraries. The compilation of lists yielded a total of 34 books to be investigated, all under the following genre categories: Young Adult Fiction, Young Adult Non-Fiction, and Graphic Novel Non-Fiction. A full list of the titles can be seen in Table 2.

<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>List Pulled From</b>
<i>Afterworlds</i>	Scott Westerfeld	Rainbow
<i>Am I Blue? Coming Out of the Silence</i>	Marion Dane Bauer	Oltmann
<i>Annie on My Mind</i>	Nancy Garden	Oltmann
<i>Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe</i>	Benjamin Alire Sáenz	Oltmann
<i>Ask the Passengers</i>	A.S. King	Oltmann
<i>Beauty Queens</i>	Libba Bray	Oltmann
<i>Beyond Magenta: Transgender Teens Speak Out</i>	Susan Kuklin	Rainbow
<i>The Book of David</i>	Anonymous	Rainbow
<i>Cinnamon Toast and the End of the World</i>	Janet Cameron	Rainbow
<i>Every Day</i>	David Levithan	Oltmann
<i>Everything Leads to You</i>	Nina LaCour	Rainbow
<i>Far from You</i>	Tess Sharpe	Rainbow
<i>The Gender Book</i>	Mel Reiff Hill; Jay Mays	Rainbow
<i>Grasshopper Jungle</i>	Andrew Smith	Rainbow
<i>Hard Love</i>	Ellen Wittlinger	Oltmann
<i>I'll Give You the Sun</i>	Jandy Nelson	Rainbow
<i>Last Exit to Normal</i>	Michael Harmon	Oltmann

<i>My Heartbeat</i>	Garret Weyr	Oltmann
<i>Not Your Mother's Meatloaf</i>	Saia Miller; Liza Bley	Rainbow
<i>October Mourning: A Song for Matthew Shepard</i>	Lesléa Newman	Oltmann
<i>One Man Guy</i>	Michael Barakiva	Rainbow
<i>The Perks of Being a Wallflower</i>	Stephen Chomsky	Oltmann
<i>Rethinking Normal: A Memoir in Transition</i>	Katie Rain Hill	Rainbow
<i>Screaming Divas</i>	Suzanne Kamata	Rainbow
<i>Secret City</i>	Julia Watts	Rainbow
<i>Shine</i>	Lauren Myracle	Oltmann
<i>Skim</i>	Jillian Tamaki; Mariko Tamaki	Oltmann
<i>Some Assembly Required: The Not-So-Secret Life of a Transgender Teen</i>	Arin Andrews	Rainbow
<i>Someday this Pain Will Be Useful to You</i>	Peter Cameron	Oltmann
<i>Sweet Tooth</i>	Tim Anderson	Rainbow
<i>Tell Me Again How a Crush Should Feel</i>	Sara Farizan	Rainbow
<i>Tomboy: A Graphic Memoir</i>	Liz Prince	Rainbow
<i>We are the Youth: Sharing the Stories of LGBT Youth in the United States</i>	Laurel Golio; Diana Scholl	Rainbow
<i>Will Grayson, Will Grayson</i>	David Levithan	Oltmann

Table 2

In searching for books within high school library databases, the following measures were utilized: 1) If a county contained more than one high school, the first high school in alphabetical order was chosen for analysis; 2) If a database could not be accessed or located for a particular high school, the county was discarded and a new number was chosen for that category based on the random number generator; 3) Once a database was accessed, a control title was searched to ensure database accuracy; the control title used in this study was *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins; 4) If the

control title was accessed successfully, the title of a book on the master list was searched; if any results came back, the title was selected to ensure accuracy of title and author. In total, an initial forty-nine databases were attempted for access, but twenty-two counties had to be re-selected due to the inability to access their catalogs. However, twenty-seven databases were still able to be analyzed. As opposed to keeping the books segregated by genre, books were summarized into one category for analytical purposes. All books remained of YA content as deemed appropriate for high school readers. A One-Way Analysis of Variance test was conducted to determine if any statistical difference existed between the means of total books held based on locale.

## **Results**

The study found that the majority of high school media center databases sampled held at least one LGBTQ+ themed book. Only one high school, located in Oconee County, held zero books relating to queer literature. A high school located in Jefferson County, on the other hand, held the most LGBTQ+ books on the list, holding 16 books in its collection. The first hypothesis of urban schools having the most books, followed by suburban, and ending in rural, failed to be supported. On average, high schools in urban areas held ~10.11 books, high schools in suburban areas held ~5.44 books and high schools in rural areas held ~7.44 books; however, there was no statistical difference found between the means. Collectively, Georgia high schools, regardless of locale, held an estimated 7.67 books on the list, or 22.56% of the total list, failing to support the second hypothesis that schools would hold at least 10 books off of the master list. However, the overall means percentage correlates well with the study conducted by

Oltmann (2015) as she found the high schools analyzed in her chosen “southern state” held 20.5% of the books on her list, which indicates a similarity between the findings.

Consult Table 3, Table 4, and Figure 1 below for collection data, a list of the means, and a graph of the means, respectively.

<u>County</u>	<u>Locale Categorization</u> ( <b>R=Rural;</b> <b>S=Suburban;</b> <b>U= Urban</b> )	<u># of Books in Collection</u>
Banks	R	3
Bleckley	R	7
Butts	S	4
Charlton	R	5
Clayton	U	13
Columbia	U	15
Dawson	S	11
Douglas	U	12
Fannin	S	11
Fulton	U	13
Irwin	R	13
Jefferson	R	16
Jackson	U	9
Jones	S	8
Lowndes	U	8
McIntosh	R	8
Monroe	S	5
Oconee	S	0
Pike	R	7
Schley	R	2
Spalding	U	9
Walton	U	10
Ware	S	2
Union	S	5
Wayne	S	3
Wilcox	R	6
Whitfield	U	2

*Table 3*

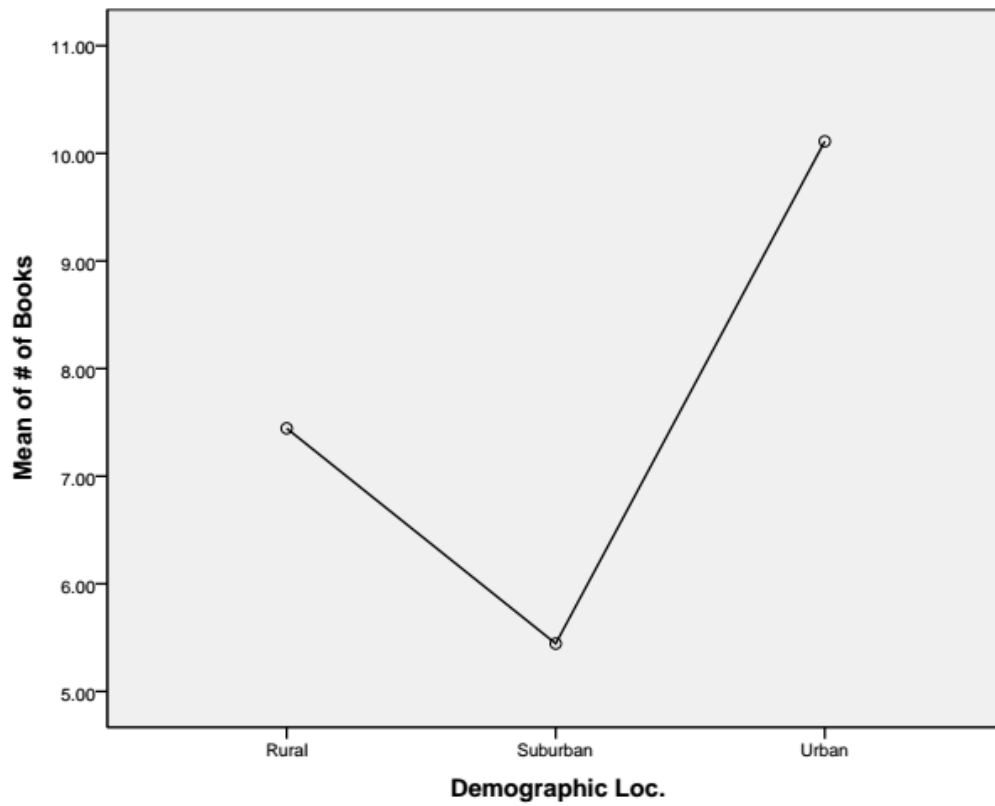


**Descriptives**

# of Books	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
					Rural	9		
Suburban	9	5.4444	3.84419	1.28140	2.4895	8.3993	.00	11.00
Urban	9	10.1111	3.82245	1.27415	7.1729	13.0493	2.00	15.00
Total	27	7.6667	4.36771	.84057	5.9389	9.3945	.00	16.00

*Table 4*

**Means Plots**



*Figure 1*

An ANOVA test conducted on the variable of locale (Rural, Suburban, and Urban) is listed below in Table 5. The independent variable tested across the analysis was locale with the dependent variable being number of books present in database. The F-value was 2.98 with a significance value of 0.07, indicating that the mean number of LGBTQ+ books was not significantly different across the category of locale, based on a  $p= 0.05$  level. A Post Hoc Tukey HSD test was undertaken to further investigate the findings of the ANOVA test, as seen in Table 6. However, no significant difference was found in the follow-up Post Hoc either, although the difference in means between Urban and Suburban high schools were the closest to reaching the significance level, 0.057 when  $p=0.05$ .

**ANOVA**

# of Books

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	98.667	2	49.333	2.980	.070
Within Groups	397.333	24	16.556		
Total	496.000	26			

Table 5

**Post Hoc Tests**

**Multiple Comparisons**

Dependent Variable: # of Books  
Tukey HSD

(I) Demographic Loc.	(J) Demographic Loc.	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Rural	Suburban	2.00000	1.91808	.558	-2.7900	6.7900
	Urban	-2.66667	1.91808	.362	-7.4567	2.1233
Suburban	Rural	-2.00000	1.91808	.558	-6.7900	2.7900
	Urban	-4.66667	1.91808	.057	-9.4567	.1233
Urban	Rural	2.66667	1.91808	.362	-2.1233	7.4567
	Suburban	4.66667	1.91808	.057	-.1233	9.4567

Table 6

## **Discussion**

The results correlated well with past studies, especially the Oltmann (2015) study, but it poses further questions for analysis of LGBTQ-themed literature. Because there was no statistical difference between the average numbers of books found on the master list based on locale, it would beg questioning whether locale is an important consideration when analyzing the availability of queer literature. Furthermore, the list itself should be questioned—Are these titles truly representative of content appropriate for LGBTQ+ youth? The titles Oltmann chose for her 2015 study seem to hold as representative based on the high likelihood of a library owning the title, noting that the works on her list are generally older than the titles on the Rainbow List. Oltmann’s titles selected for this study are as follows: *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*; *Will Grayson*, *Will Grayson*; *My Heartbeat*; *Ask the Passengers*; *Hard Love*; *Every Day*; *Am I Blue?*; *Someday this Pain will be Useful to You*; *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe*; *Annie on My Mind*; *Skim*; *October Mourning: A Song for Matthew Shepard*; *Beauty Queens*; *Last Exit to Normal*; *Shine*. A detailed description of how her titles were selected can be found in the Methods section above. The Rainbow List, on the other hand, is selected by reference librarians associated with the ALA who “evaluated over 140 books from small, independent, and large publishers, and selected 24 books from 15 publishers for the 2015 Rainbow Book List” (“Rainbow Book List”). The full list is included in Appendix A with attached summaries of each title selection, and based on the novel summaries and the fact that librarians chose the books for the list, their contextual relevancy for queer youth appears accurate. It should be noted that the list fails to

categorize each authors' sexuality, which may be another variable to consider when discussing content accuracy for young readers.

Alongside the question of content accuracy/relevancy, several other questions for methodology persist. For instance, would results have been more statistically striking had the databases been searched by subject-specific phrases (e.g. Homosexuality, Queer, LGBT, etc.) as opposed to titles? In addition, even though there was no difference between schools based on locale, the overall means of each high school still appeared low in comparison to a school's total library collection. Better diagnostic criteria might be needed in order to determine the true proportions of a schools' collection of non-LGBTQ+ vs. LGBTQ+ material based on school population data. On that note, school demographic data also fails to report the amount of students who identify on the LGBTQ+ spectrum or of students who are questioning their sexuality; while the usefulness of such a survey is morally questionable, it would help determine the true proportional-accuracy of a media centers' collection.

### **Limitations**

Because this is a pilot study, several limiting factors should be noted. Being an undergraduate level thesis project, time and resources were heavily constricted, leading to the creation of a pilot study as opposed to a full-scale research project. This resulted in select counties being randomly selected for analysis while being limited to school districts who opted to make their library catalogs available to the general public. A limited book list was utilized instead of a more encompassing list, which could also have impacted the results. Furthermore, only the category of books were searched while other

mediums such as film could have been evaluated for availability across the different catalogs. Other limitations included the lack of school-specific data listing budgets for collection development efforts and the lack of data showing the total number of books in each school's catalog. These were perhaps the major limitations as it resulted in the hypotheses leaning towards collection development averages on the national scale as opposed to individual school's averages. In other words, it would have been viable to say a high school library may hold 5% of LGBTQ+ books in their entire catalog, but it is impossible to make this claim without the total collection numbers for the school. This fact, combined with the problematic subject classifications already discussed, led to the current methodologies being used. Although, even with the limitations listed, this study still retains value as a pilot and provides insight into future directions for more in-depth research.

### **Next Steps/Practical Application for Pedagogy**

As a pilot, this study is highly preliminary in nature and further steps should be discussed. In looking at expanding this research, a high school media centers' budget would likely be ascertained in addition to the true average number of books acquired year over year. This would allow a second variable to be added to the ANOVA and a difference of means would be expected. Additional independent variables to be considered for future studies include: The presence of a Gay-Straight Alliance or similar organization, a county's self-adoption of an HR anti-discrimination policy for sexual orientation, the presence of a PFLAG chapter in the county, or the number of religious institutions in the county. Recalling Downey's (2013) article in the literature review,

media centers often only have one full-time media specialist making all of the collection development decisions, so it would be useful to interview each media specialist at each high school selected in order to obtain their view towards LGBTQ+ works, as their decisions on purchasing content are largely their own educated preferences.

In looking ahead to practical uses, LGBTQ+ texts could presumptively be used in the classroom setting for bibliotherapeutic uses, as mentioned in the Introduction. Suggestions for integration of a text on the master list (*The Perks of Being a Wallflower*) into the classroom context while using bibliotherapy can be seen in Appendix B. It is important to note that the novel's protagonist identifies as straight/questioning, but has a best friend who identifies as gay. This allows the novel to be integrated more easily into the curriculum with less chance of a "challenge" raised by other educators or administrators. Regardless of the number of these books presently available to students on the library shelf, it is up to individual educators and media specialists to encourage further collection development efforts of queer literature and their applicability in the classroom.

## References

- Clyde, L.A., & Lobban, M. (2001). A door half open: Young people's access to fiction related to homosexuality. *School Libraries Worldwide*, 7 (2), 17-30.
- Downey, J. (2013). Self-censorship in selection of LGBT-themed materials. *Reference and User Services Quarterly*, 53 (2), 104-107.
- (2017). Facts about suicide. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.thetrevorproject.org/pages/facts-about-suicide>
- Hughes-Hassel, S., Overberg, E., & Boesen, M.J. (2013). Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ)-themed literature for teens: Are school librarians providing adequate collections? *School Library Research*, 16 (1), 1-18.
- Martin, H.J., & Murdock, J.R. (2007). *Serving lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning teens: A how-to-do-it manual for librarians*. New York, NY: Neal-Schuman Publishers.
- Mehra, B., & Braquet, D. (2006). A 'queer' manifesto of interventions for libraries to 'come out' of the closet! A study of 'queer' youth experiences during the coming out process. *Libres: Library and Information Science Research Electronic Journal*, 16 (1), 1-29.
- Mehra, B., & Braquet, D. (2011). Progressive LGBTQ reference: Coming out in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. *Reference Services Review*, 39 (3), 404-422.
- Moss, E. (2008). An inductive evaluation of a public library GLBT collection. *Collection Building*, 27 (4), 149-156.
- Oberg, L.R., & Klein, G.M. (2003). Gay-themed books in Oregon public and academic

libraries: A brief historical overview. *Oregon Library Association Quarterly*, 9 (2), 8-12.

Oltmann, S. M. (2015). Variables related to school media center LGBT collections.

*LIBRI*, 65 (1), 25-33.

(2015). Rainbow book list. Retrieved from

<http://glbtrt.ala.org/rainbowbooks/archives/1161>

Rauch, E.W. (2011). GLBTQ collections are for every library serving teens. *Teacher Librarian* 39 (1), 13-16.

Rauch, J. (2010). Red families, blue families, gay families, and the search for a new normal. *Law and Inequality: A Journal of Theory and Practice*, 23 (2), 333-344.

Ritchie, C.J. (2001). Collection development of gay/lesbian/bisexual-related adult non-fiction in medium-sized Illinois public libraries. *Illinois Libraries*, 83 (2), 39-70.

Rossi, N.E. (2010). Coming out stories of gay and lesbian youth adults. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 57 (9), 1174-1191.

(2014). School libraries: Books per student. Retrieved from

[http://wikis.ala.org/professionaltips/index.php?title=Collection\\_Development#Books\\_Per\\_Student](http://wikis.ala.org/professionaltips/index.php?title=Collection_Development#Books_Per_Student)

Stringer-Stanback, K. (2011). Young adult lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) non-fiction collections and countywide anti-discrimination policies. *Urban Library Journal*, 17 (1), no page numbers available.

(2016). Urban and rural. Retrieved from

<https://www.census.gov/geo/reference/urban-rural.html>

Vaillancourt, S. (2013). Libraries as safe spaces. *American Libraries*, 44 (1-2), no page



numbers available.

Vare, J.W., & Norton, T.L. (2004). Bibliotherapy for gay and lesbian youth: Overcoming the structure of silence. *Clearing House*, 77 (5), 190-194.

Webber, C.K. (2010). *Gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning teen literature: A guide to reading interests*. Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited.

Williams, V. & Deyoe, N. (2015). LGBTQ titles in academic library youth collections. *Library Resources & Technical Services*, 59 (2), 62-71.

## Appendix A

**RAINBOW BOOK LIST 2015****Juvenile Fiction**

Federle, Tim. [Five, Six, Seven, Nate!](#) January 2014. 304p. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, \$16.99. (9781442446939). Ages 10-14.

In the sequel to *Better Nate Than Ever*, Nate Foster's Broadway dreams are finally coming true.

**YA Fiction**

Anonymous. [The Book of David](#). June 3, 2014. Simon Pulse, \$9.99. (1442489855). Ages 14-17.

Through journal entries, a small-town high school quarterback recounts his experiences of falling for the new kid and the fear of being outed by his best friend.

Barakiva, Michael. [One Man Guy](#). May 2014. 261p. FSG, \$17.99. (978-0-374-35645-3). Grades 7-10.

Freshman Alek's idea of a great summer is not summer school, but his strict and academically driven Armenian parents have different plans. Enter Ethan, the totally suave, older, skater dude. School never looked so good.

\*Cameron, Janet E. [Cinnamon Toast and the End of the World](#). February 2014. 373p. Hachette Books Ireland, \$22.99. (978-1444743975).

Stephen Shulevitz has three months to go before his high school graduation, when he's faced with the end of the world—realizing he's in love with very straight and very homophobic best friend. With only a few months left to go in his small town, Stephen tries to figure out who he is and who he wants to be.

\*Farizan, Sara. [Tell Me Again How a Crush Should Feel](#). October 2014. 304p. Algonquin Young Readers, \$16.95. (9781616202842). Ages 12-18.

High-school junior Leila Azadi suddenly and unexpectedly falls hard for Saskia, the beautiful and sophisticated new girl at school. Leila finds herself taking risks she never would have before.

Kamata, Suzanne. [Screaming Divas](#). May 2014. 205p. Merit Press, \$17.99. (978-1440572791). Ages 14-17.

High school misfits Trudy, Cassie, Harumi and Esther seem an unlikely group to be in the up-and-coming punk band Screaming Divas. Will their rocky friendship survive love, addiction and imminent tragedy?

LaCour, Nina. [Everything Leads To You](#). May 2014. 307p. Dutton Juvenile, \$17.99. (978-0525425885). Grades 9-12.

Emi and her best friend Charlotte are invited to stay at Emi's brother's apartment in LA for the summer after graduation, with one condition: they must do something "epic" while he's gone. When they discover a cryptic letter from a world-famous celebrity, Emi thinks that this mystery might be what they're looking for.

\*Nelson, Jandy. [I'll Give You the Sun](#). 2014. 384p. Dial books for young readers (Penguin Young Readers division), \$13.74. (0803734964). Ages 14+

Artistic twins Jude and Noah each have only half the story of why they broke apart. Their art becomes a force of its own as they negotiate love, loss, lies and the possibility of reuniting their lives.

\*Sharpe, Tess. [Far from You](#). April 2014. 344p. Hyperion, \$17.99. (978-1-4231-8462-1). Grades 9-12.

Sophie lives with chronic pain from a car accident that also left her hooked on Oxy. Sophie is clean now—but she's reeling from the loss of her love Mina, who died in a mysterious shooting that the police think was a botched drug deal. Will Sophie be able to solve the murder, or will she be the next victim?

\*Smith, Andrew. [Grasshopper Jungle](#). February 2014. 388p. Dutton Books. \$18.99. (978-0-525-42603-5). Ages 14+

As if living in a world overrun by six-foot-tall hungry and horny mutant praying mantises isn't bad enough, Austin realizes he is in love with both his best friend Robbie and his girlfriend Shann. #donteatthecorn

\*Watts, Julia. [Secret City](#). July 2013. 266p. Bella Books, \$11.95. (9781594933905). Grades 8-12.

When sixteen-year-old Ruby Pickett moves with her family to Oak Ridge, Tennessee in 1944, she is told not to talk about why this new city was created. When Ruby starts working for Iris, a young mother whose husband works in one of the top-secret government buildings, their friendship blossoms into something more and Ruby begins to believe in a wider world for herself.

Westerfeld, Scott. [Afterworlds](#). September 23, 2014. 608p. Simon Pulse, \$19.99. (978-1481422345). Ages 14+

With a contract in hand for her YA novel, eighteen-year-old Darcy Patel arrives in New York City. Over the course of a year, Darcy finishes her book, faces critique, and falls in love with the enigmatic Imogene. Woven into Darcy's personal story is her novel, *Afterworlds*, a suspenseful thriller about a teen who slips into the "Afterworld" to survive a terrorist attack.

**YA Non-fiction**

\*Anderson, Tim. [Sweet Tooth](#). March 2014. 334p. Lake Union Publishing, \$14.95. (978-1477818077). Ages 17+

What's a sweets-loving boy growing up gay in North Carolina in the eighties supposed to think when he's diagnosed with type 1 diabetes? That God is punishing him, naturally. *Sweet Tooth* is Tim Anderson's uproarious memoir of life after his hormones and blood sugar both went berserk at the age of fifteen.

Andrews, Arin. [Some Assembly Required: The Not-So-Secret Life of a Transgender Teen](#). September 2014. 256p. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers. \$17.99. (9781481416757). Ages 14+  
Seventeen-year-old Arin Andrews describes the struggles he faced being perceived as a girl growing up, and how things changed for him that he experienced once he began his transition in this humorous and sometimes heartbreaking memoir.

\*Golio, Laurel and Diana Scholl. [We Are the Youth: Sharing the Stories of LGBT Youth in the United States](#). June 2014. 95p. Space-Made. \$19.99. (978-1-63173-223-2). Ages 10+  
Based on an ongoing photojournalism project of the same name, We Are the Youth was inspired by the idea that reading about others' life experiences can create understanding, empathy and empowerment. In this book, LGBT youth tell their stories in their own words.

Hill, Katie Rain. [Rethinking Normal: A Memoir in Transition](#). September 2014. 272p. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, \$17.99. (978-1481418232). Grades 8+  
In an honest and unique voice, Katie Rain Hill opens up about growing up, struggling with depression, family, love, and undergoing gender reassignment.

Hill, Mel Reiff and Jay Mays. [The Gender Book](#). January 2013. 90p. Marshall House Press, \$31.00. (0991338006). Grades 7-10

An illustrated guide to the nuances of gender and gender identity for all ages.

Kuklin, Susan. [Beyond Magenta: Transgender Teens Speak Out](#). 2014. 192p. Candlewick, \$22.99. (0763656119). Grades 7-12.

Six trans and gender-neutral teens are interviewed in this necessary resource for teens and adult alike. While the trans experience varies from teen to teen, the participants Beyond Magenta are candid and unflinchingly honest.

#### **Graphic Novel Non-fiction**

Ed. Saiya Miller and Liza Bley. [Not Your Mother's Meatloaf](#). July 2013. 272p. Soft Skull Press, \$15.95. (1593765177). Ages 16+

In this comics anthology, a variety of authors explore their experiences, perceptions of sexuality, gender, power, consent, and their own bodies as they relate experiences from their teenage years.

Prince, Liz. [Tomboy: A graphic memoir](#). September 2014. 256p. Zest Books, \$15.99. (978-1936976553). Grades 8+

For as long as she can remember, Liz has been happiest in jeans and sneakers, never in dresses and heels. Is there a place for a tomboy in girl culture?

#### **Picture books**

Baldacchino, Christine. [Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress](#). May 2014. 32p. Groundwood Books, \$16.95. (978-1554983476). Age range: 4-8.

Morris wears a beautiful orange dress that reminds him of his mother's hair and tigers, but his classmates say that dresses are for girls. One night, Morris has a dream that changes everything.

\*Bone, Jeffrey and Lisa Bone. [Not Every Princess](#). 32p. Magination Press; \$14.95. (978-1433816475). Grades Pre-K-3.

Anyone can be a princess, a pirate, a mermaid, or a superhero. Demonstrated through rhyming text and whimsical illustrations, whatever you can imagine, you can become.

Herthel, Jessica + Jazz Jennings. [I am Jazz](#). September, 2014. 32p. Dial, \$17.99. (0803741073). Ages 4-8.

Jazz says she "has a girl brain in a boy body." Based on the life of Jazz Jennings, this picture book talks about her experiences growing up as a transkid.

\*Pitman, Gayle E., Litten, Kristyna (illustrator). [This Day in June](#). May 2014. 32p. American Psychological Association Magination Press, \$14.95. (978-1-4338-1658-1). Age range: 4-8.

This Day In June welcomes young readers to experience a pride celebration and share in a day when we are all united.

## Appendix B

**Lesson Plan Suggestions****Name:** Sawyer Henderson    **Content Area:** English Literature and Composition**Grade Level:** 9-12                      **Lesson Topic/Title:** *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (Unit Sample)**Central Focus**

**The overall goal of this sample unit is to provide ideas as to how an educator might approach Bibliotherapy in the classroom with an LGBTQ+-inclusive text.**

**Instruction Strategies and Learning Tasks (Procedures & Timelines)**

The following is a list of materials and resources available when teaching the following text. Please note that this does not offer a full comprehensive teaching plan nor does it dictate the assignment of reading passages or summative assessments. This merely serves as a brainstorm of ideas as to how the novel could be used in the classroom context for the purpose of bibliotherapy. As the research is expanded, the list of brainstorm ideas could be expanded and used as experimental starting points for pedagogical uses.

\*Note: Many of these activities are highly narrative focused, so would likely take place in a class where these types of standards are the main focus, such as 9<sup>th</sup> Grade, in the State of Georgia.

**Prior to Reading:**

When opening the Unit, the instructor might begin by having students complete an anticipatory set to place themselves not only in the perspective of the novel, but also get them in the mindset of self-reflection. Students would be presented with a list of statements and they would need to circle whether they Agree or Disagree with the statement being made. The exercise would be repeated at the novel's closure to see if, after reading, students' opinions changed. The following questions are examples of what could be asked:

1. Often, adults cannot truly remember what it was like being a teenager.
2. It is possible for a kiss between friends to mean nothing.
3. Teenagers are far more likely to tell their friends their problems as opposed to adults.
4. The music we listen to often reflects our own values or beliefs.
5. Books are able to help teenagers through problems.
6. Experiencing situations yourself helps build empathy with others.
7. People can block out traumatic events in their life.
8. All students face bullying to some extent.

\*Note: These questions should refrain from asking questions about personal beliefs regarding LGBTQ+ students, especially in the opening of the unit. The goal of an educator is not to campaign against changing students' beliefs, but to help them be accepting of others who may be different. With that being said, the educator should be transparent with students and parents in regards to the themes and characters the book possesses (e.g. LGBTQ+ characters, sexual activity among all sexualities, drug use, rape, mental illness, etc.).

### **During Reading:**

The novel utilizes a letter-writing approach wherein the main character, Charlie, writes letters to an unknown reader. While reading, students should write letters back to Charlie after reading 1-2 chapters, reflecting on the events of the chapter. Students should address their own concerns about Charlie's actions and the actions of his friends. The instructor should provide specific prompts for each unit, but also allow students creative freedom in some aspects of the novel. Sample prompts might include:

- A) Reactions to Charlie's "gay, best friend" and his closeted relationship
- B) Responding to the definition of "healthy relationships" (is any relationship in the novel a "healthy relationship?")
- C) Can you trust Charlie as a narrator? Would you trust him as a friend?
- D) How is mental illness represented in the novel?

Students may also be required to write their own "life story" thus far in their lives, as Charlie has. The instructor should indicate that any forms of abuse or questionable behavior will have to be legally reported. However, in these two exercises, students are taking part in the main components of bibliotherapy as they are actively engaged with the text, responding to the characters' thoughts, motivations, choices, and relationships and then having to write their own story. By doing these activities in this order, students internalize their feelings of Charlie's choices into their own self-analyses of their lives/past choices.

Students should be encouraged to read/share their journal letters in small, diverse groups selected by the instructor to engage one another in class discourse. The groups should have similar prompts as the journals as well, in that they should all work together to help Charlie or another character overcome some sort of situation he/she is struggling with (e.g. Drugs, child abuse, suicide, coming out, relationships, rape, etc.). By disguising these discussions in relation to the characters, the students do not feel as though they are "counseling" their peers, but, in reality, this is exactly what is happening.

### **After Reading:**

As the novel relies heavily on reading lists as well as “mixtapes,” students should create a mixtape or reading list that describes their own life (based on the story of themselves submitted during reading) and also create a mixtape or a reading list for a fellow classmate. This helps demonstrate empathetic ties between students as well as provides self-reflective techniques that can be useful for students dealing with mental illness as well as coming out issues, two themes the novel addresses. The students should also respond once more to the anticipatory set statements given prior to reading the novel to see if any change has occurred.

Disclaimer: The instructor should take careful attention to be involved heavily in the group discussions as well as to stress the importance of non-judgment to fellow peers/classmates beliefs. The point of bibliotherapy is to build empathy with their classmates as well as to build better self-reflection with one’s self when reading. While this process is no easy task, the rewards for students, either queer or non-queer, are immeasurable.

**\*These ideas were inspired by Ryan Nelson and some parts of the list are modified from his original unit plan, specifically the Anticipatory Set and Letters to Charlie. While Nelson’s ideas do not all correlate with bibliotherapy, he does offer a general overview of teaching the novel in class. See the following link for more of his ideas:**  
<http://www.teachwithmovies.org/guides/perks-of-being-a-wallflower-files/RyanNelsonUnitPlan.pdf>



Appendix C

