

WHAT DO THEY SAY?

A QUEER ANALYSIS OF PARENTS' RESPONSES TO GAY- AND LESBIAN-INCLUSIVE PICTUREBOOKS AND THEIR POTENTIAL USE IN ELEMENTARY CLASSROOMS

by

STEPHEN ADAM CRAWLEY

(Under the Direction of Denise L. Dávila)

ABSTRACT

Informed by queer theory (Sullivan, 2003) and taking place in the southeastern United States, this qualitative study explores the following questions: 1) What themes, if any, emerge across parents' responses to gay/lesbian-inclusive picturebooks, specifically in regard to what they find un/acceptable? 2) What themes, if any, emerge across parents' responses to how gay/lesbian-inclusive picturebooks could be used as (potential) classroom materials? 3) How do parents who identify as straight and also supportive of gay/lesbian rights produce themselves in various settings (as allies) in relation to gay/lesbian-inclusive picturebooks as (potential) classroom materials? Participants included five parents (four straight, one bisexual) who identify as supporters of gays and lesbians and have children who attend elementary (PreK-Fifth Grades) public schools. Five stages of data collection over a five-month period included semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and online surveys. The parents read and responded to 33 gay and/or lesbian-inclusive picturebooks. Findings indicated that while parents exist who claim to support gay and lesbian people, rights, and inclusive children's literature, their support was limited to particular types of books and use. Books and practices reinforcing (homo)normativity were

largely preferred by the parents. This study has implications for elementary faculty, teacher educators, researchers, and parents. This study can inform the selection and use of children's literature in elementary schools and classrooms as well as extend considerations about gay and lesbian support and ally-ship.

INDEX WORDS: elementary education, children's literature, LGBTQ, queer theory,
qualitative research

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DEDICATION

For those who yearn for a more just society and to see reflections of themselves in classrooms, books, and beyond – especially LGBTQ youth and their teachers.

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For the number of pages in this dissertation, I could write an acknowledgements section of equal or longer length. Countless people have impacted me personally and professionally – all of whom led to this study.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In August, 2011, I was thirty-one years old and beginning my ninth year as an elementary teacher in public schools. I was also beginning courses to pursue a Master's in Education degree at the University of Georgia. It was a Thursday evening when I first entered the classroom for Dr. Joel Taxel's course entitled "Culturally Diverse Children's Literature." As students often do when entering a program, I found my seat, awaited the professor to start class, and wondered what the course would involve in regards to reading and assignments. When Dr. Taxel started class, he began with the syllabus and said we would do introductions later during the period. I scanned the weekly schedule and noticed a week late in the semester, much to my surprise, titled "Teaching 'Dangerous Discourses'" in which we would read an article about self-censorship of picturebooks with gay and lesbian families (Stewig, 1994) along with two works of children's literature: *The Misfits* (Howe, 2001) and *And Tango Makes Three* (Richardson & Parnell, 2005). Once Dr. Taxel finished reviewing the syllabus and answering related questions, we proceeded with introductions. In the order in which we were seated, I would introduce myself about two-thirds of the way through the group. After hearing others' introductions, reviewing the syllabus, and considering how cultural diversity would be central to the course, I decided to share about my sexual orientation. This first class period was a pivotal moment for me in two ways. It was the first time I learned children's literature with gay characters existed, and it was the first time where I openly shared I am gay in a setting linked to my profession. Little did I realize the

impact that evening and the subsequent weeks in that course would have on me as an educator and researcher.

Growing up in Georgia, I never saw representations of my sexual orientation in books or classrooms. For this and other reasons, I was confused, fearful, and lonely throughout my childhood and adolescence. I also experienced harassment from peers based on how they perceived my sexual orientation. I perpetuated the lack of representation in my own classroom as a teacher – and thus perhaps the harassment of my students by their peers – by never coming out to my students nor sharing gay- or lesbian-inclusive children’s literature even after learning about its existence in the 2011 graduate course. I self-censored for various reasons and largely due to fear of parents, colleagues, and administrators. However, my interest in children’s literature with gay and lesbian characters, and expanding to children’s literature inclusive of LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer) characters and themes at large, heightened. I wondered what other books exist, if and how schools and libraries serving youth use these books, and the root causes for censorship if it occurs. As I delved into these questions, I discovered that I was not alone in the marginalization I experienced as a youth. Nor was I alone in my concerns as a teacher about incorporating LGBTQ-inclusive children’s literature in my classroom. In the sections below, I share research documenting these experiences and beliefs of others.

One aspect I have learned as a gay male, educator, and researcher is that a variety of perspectives about a topic exist. Earlier in my career, I feared parents and how they might respond if I included LGBTQ-inclusive materials in my classroom or my sexual orientation was made known. I assumed they would all be against it. I did not consider there might also be parents who felt differently, who might not only accept but also embrace or support such

diversity. During a conference presentation I attended a couple of years ago, Ryan, Hermann-Wilmarth, and Bednar (2015) stated educators must remember that the loudest voice isn't the only voice, and the concerns of a few parents should not dictate the accessibility of content to other children. Diverse responses by adults – both in favor of and opposed to – LGBTQ-inclusive children's literature's accessibility to youth in public libraries (Hutchful, 2017; Schaub, 2015) and use in elementary classrooms (Hodge, 2015) have been demonstrated in media reports from across the U.S. in recent years. As I near the completion of this dissertation, the topic of adult/parental response could not be more relevant, apparent, and local. When a private school in a neighboring county removed a children's book with gay characters from its book fair due to a concern expressed by one parent, the independently-owned bookshop hosting the book fair responded by not only packing up the entire book fair and vacating the space, they also posted about the occurrence via social media, advocated for the importance of LGBTQ-inclusive children's literature, and donated a percentage of their sales during subsequent days to a local LGBTQ youth organization (Aued, 2018). Hundreds of people responded via social media to the bookshop's decision with messages of support for their response and LGBTQ people writ large. Several of these responses came from parents of children who attend the school, stating that the school's removal of the book did not align with their beliefs. The voices of parents and other supporters who speak in favor of LGBTQ-inclusive children's literature are being heard loud and clear.

I describe this particular event not only because it so closely connects to the topic of my dissertation – parents' responses to gay and lesbian inclusive children's literature – but also because I am so closely intertwined with it. The book in question was *The Best Man* (Peck, 2016), a book I advocated including on the nominee list geared for readers in fourth through

eighth grades as part of the Georgia Children's Book Awards – a program with which I have been involved for many years as a youth, educator, and graduate student. As I embark on a career in academia and will teach courses in literacy education, and children's literature specifically, I will explore and discuss with elementary pre and/or in-service teachers a variety of texts, including those with LGBTQ characters and themes. As past research demonstrates, concerns about parents will likely arise within these discussions. Rather than speculate and possibly fear the potential responses of parents, my dissertation will help inform those conversations in regards to how some parents actually respond to such texts and their use with youth.

Though I am interested in and advocate for LGBTQ-inclusive children's literature at large, I am also wary of conflating sexual orientation and gender identity. This study is solely about parents' responses to picturebooks with gay and/or lesbian (GL/LG) characters or themes. Though the introductory sections of this chapter discuss "LGBTQ" and "literature" more broadly to provide background and context, the focus will narrow to GL/LG-inclusive picturebooks as the chapter progresses.

Framing the Situation

The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) conducts quantitative and qualitative research on the experiences of students who identify as LGBTQ. Their studies consistently reveal how such students are bullied and marginalized, both by fellow students as well as educators and other school personnel. Such experiences lead to greater absenteeism, lower grades, and less likelihood to attend college by those who identify as LGBTQ (Kosciw, Greytak, Giga, Villenas, & Danischewski, 2016). Other reports illustrate how negative school experiences based on actual or perceived sexual orientation and/or gender identity can also lead

to youth committing suicide and how this is an on-going occurrence (Simon, 2009; The Trevor Project, 2017).

One way to create safer, more inclusive learning environments is through curricular-inclusion and using resources such as LGBTQ-inclusive children's and adolescent literature among other strategies (Kosciw et al., 2016). Numerous scholars have advocated for the use of GL/LG-inclusive children's literature (and LGBTQ-inclusive literature at large) and its potential for creating inclusive learning spaces for all (Bickmore, 1999; Hermann-Wilmarth & Ryan, 2013; Lester, 2014; Möller, 2014; Naidoo, 2012; Schall & Kauffmann, 2003; Van Horn, 2015). Kosciw et al. (2016) reported that 75.2% of LGBTQ students in grades 6-12 with an inclusive curriculum said their peers were accepting of LGBTQ people, compared to 39.6% of those without an inclusive curriculum. Increasingly safe and supportive learning environments created through the incorporation of LGBTQ-inclusive literature have been documented with children in elementary grades as well. For example, Ryan, Patraw, and Bednar (2013) showed in a combined third/fourth grade classroom, and Souto-Manning and Hermann-Wilmarth (2008) showed in a first grade classroom, how the use of LGBTQ-inclusive children's literature facilitated conversations about equity and created more supportive classrooms environments for their students.

However, Kosciw et al. (2016) found that only 22.4% of LGBTQ students in grades 6-12 reported being taught positive representations about LGBTQ people, history, or events, and less than half of the students reported having resources representing LGBTQ-related issues available in their school libraries, textbooks, or other school-provided literature. Though GLSEN's National School Climate Surveys are conducted with youth in middle school and older, similar findings have been reported in other research. They include K-12 teachers' self-reported, limited

inclusion of such texts (GLSEN, 2012; Taylor et. al, 2015), the actual inventories of public school and classroom libraries serving pre-kindergarten (Crisp et. al, 2016) and elementary-aged children (Hardie, 2011), and youth's reporting in third through sixth grades (GLSEN, 2012). For example, in their most recent nationwide study with grades 3-6 youth, only 18% expressed being taught in school about families with lesbian/gay parents, yet 46% reported hearing peers' biased comments related to sexual orientation (GLSEN, 2012).

Thus, although it is well documented that LGBTQ-inclusive literature has the potential to create safer, more supportive environments, such literature is still largely absent in schools and classrooms. Simultaneously, youth experience marginalization based on sexual orientation and gender identity (Kosciw et al., 2016; Simon, 2009). Such marginalization then continues into adulthood. For example, employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and/or gender identity remains legal in 32 states within the United States (National LGBTQ Task Force, 2014). Of increasing concern is that such practices are being reinforced and heightened under the current conservative leadership of this country (Gandara, Jackson, & Discont, 2017).

The reported incidence of verbal harassment has steadily declined with each National School Climate Survey GLSEN has conducted every two years since 2007. In fact, the reported incidence of verbal harassment based on sexual orientation has dropped from nearly 50% in 2007 to just over 20% in 2015 (Kosciw et al., 2016). This is great news and is likely due to a variety of factors, including but not limited to increased LGBTQ-inclusive resources and support systems within schools. However, it is also important to note that these results merely demonstrate *reported* instances by those who completed and had access to the survey. Other points to consider are that verbal harassment based on sexual orientation was consistently higher than harassment based on gender identity in each year the survey was conducted (Kosciw et al.,

2016), and the span of years encompassed a time of more liberal political leadership in the U.S. Additionally, reports of hearing “gay” used in negative ways as well as verbal and physical harassment based on sexual orientation were higher in Georgia than the national average, and reports of LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum or resources were substantially lower than the national average in Georgia as well (GLSEN, 2016). Thus, the problem of harassment and marginalization not only has significance when considering results and experiences nationwide, but within Georgia even more specifically. Also of note is that the aforementioned reports are indicative of youth’s experiences in the middle grades and higher. Unfortunately, the reporting of youth in younger grades is not available beyond the GLSEN (2012) study.

Harassment based on actual or perceived sexual orientation is equally if not more of a concern in the younger grades due to notions by many educators that LGBTQ-related issues are irrelevant or inappropriate at this level. In regards to the inclusion of LGBTQ books and topics with young learners, Sapp (2010) asserted, “This must begin in early childhood because, if educators wait until children are in the middle and upper grades, the task becomes one of unlearning prejudice instead of preventing it” (p. 33). Therefore, it is imperative that LGBTQ-inclusive books and conversations about them occur within elementary spaces in order to create more equitable, safe, and supportive learning environments that, hopefully, will be carried with youth as they enter into adolescence and adulthood.

Beyond content analysis of LGBTQ-inclusive books, various studies have been conducted regarding how such books are available and/or used with children. Studies have shown the limited availability of LGBTQ-inclusive books in public libraries (Hardie, 2011; Howard, 2005; Spence, 2000), school libraries (Hardie, 2011), and classroom libraries (Crisp et al., 2016). A number of studies explore the beliefs of pre-service (Dedeoglu, Ulusoy, & Lamme,

2012; Hermann-Wilmarth, 2010; Phillips & Larson, 2012) and in-service teachers (DePalma & Atkinson, 2009; Cumming-Potvin & Martino, 2014; GLSEN, 2012; Taylor et. al; 2015) about the use of LGBTQ-inclusive literature in classrooms. Some studies actually describe the contextualized use of LGBTQ-inclusive books with elementary-aged readers in school settings (Frantz Bentley & Souto-Manning, 2016; Kelly, 2012; Ryan, Patraw, & Bednar, 2013; Schall & Kauffman, 2003; Souto-Manning & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2008) and out of school settings more recently (Hartman, 2016; Ryan, 2010; Skrlac Lo, 2016b; Van Horn, 2015). In some instances, researchers have been required to conduct such studies in out-of-school settings because the school district would not permit the study to take place in the school building due to the topic (Hartman, 2010).

Across these aforementioned studies with children and adults, a number of concerns are voiced by the researchers as either aspects they are aware of in societal rhetoric or statements made directly by participants. Among those concerns are appropriateness, religious values, students' maturity level, and believing sexuality is extraneous to children's lives. Considering how parents, administrators, colleagues, and other stakeholders might react is also a dominant theme among researchers' and/or educators' concerns (Bouley, 2011; DePalma & Atkinson, 2009; Flores, 2014; Hermann-Wilmarth, 2010). A recent survey of 3,400 K-12 educators found that while 85% of the educators reported approving of LGBTQ-inclusive education, nearly half of them were hesitant to facilitate reading and discussions about LGBTQ topics due to fear-based reasons (Taylor et al., 2015). In Table 1.1, I list studies conducted specifically with elementary pre- and/or in-service teachers and the concerns cited when reading, responding to, and considering the use of GL/LG children's literature. I order the studies chronologically left to right and vertically by the prevalence of concern.

Table 1.1: Elementary Pre/In-Service Teachers' Concerns about Reading and Sharing GL/LG-books in Classrooms

	Hermann-Wilmarth, 2010	Bouley, 2011	Dedeoglu, Ulusoy, & Lamme, 2012	GLSEN, 2012	Phillips & Larson, 2012	Schieble, 2012	Cumming-Potvin & Martino, 2014	Martino & Cumming-Potvin, 2016	TOTAL
Students' maturity level			X						1
Religious beliefs	X		X						2
Imposing beliefs on students and being perceived as pushing a liberal agenda	X							X	2
Potential responses of children and/or questions they might ask		X					X		2
Job security or being considered unprofessional					X		X		2
Appropriateness and equating sexual orientation with sexual acts	X				X	X	X		4
Sexuality as extraneous to children's lives, desire to preserve innocence	X		X		X	X	X		5
Fear of parents' responses	X	X	X	X		X	X		6

As the table indicates, elementary pre/in-service teachers expressed concerns about parents' responses specifically and at a higher prevalence than other concerns. These concerns sometimes lead educators to not include such books in their classrooms.

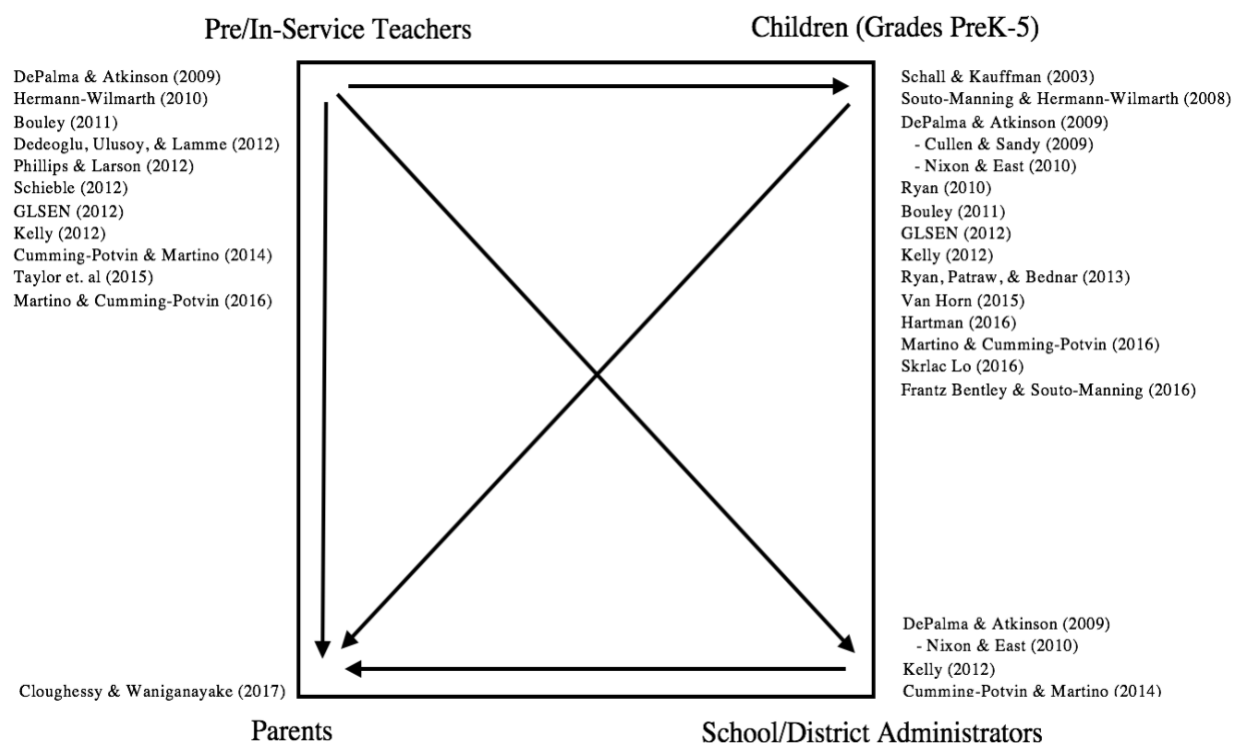
Flores (2014) wrote about ways in which teachers might gain parent and administrator support for incorporating LGBTQ-inclusive literature in the classroom and how educators could respond if objections arose, but his advice was speculative and provided as generalities based on his experiences as a teacher in Los Angeles, California and within a school district having a supportive LGBTQ curricular-inclusion policy. Although some studies do explore the actual use of LGBTQ-inclusive texts with young readers, there is only brief (if any) discussion about the steps taken by the teachers/researchers to get parental/guardian approval (Ryan, Patraw, & Bednar, 2013; Souto-Manning & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2008; Van Horn, 2015) or ancillary responses from parents, if any (Souto-Manning & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2008; Schall & Kauffmann, 2003).

However, the actual responses of parents about GL/LG-inclusive children's literature is largely absent. Skrlac Lo (2016a) conducted semi-structured pre- and post-interviews with her young participants' parents/guardians, but these conversations were to inquire into the children's reading habits and interests as well as their hopes for their children's participation in her study that would include reading and responding to children's literature with diverse family representations. Ryan (2010) spent time with lesbian-headed families in their homes to explore the literacy practices used therein compared to her youth participants' school experiences. Lee (2010) also interviewed gay/lesbian parents about their children's school experiences, and Kozik-Rosabal (2000) interviewed gay and straight parents about their gay and/or straight children's experiences in school. However, both Lee (2010) and Kozik-Rosabal (2000) focused

on school experiences at large rather than literacy, let alone GL/LG-inclusive children's literature.

One sole and recent study *does* reflect parents' voices in response to GL/LG-inclusive children's literature. Cloughessy and Waniganayake (2017) interviewed lesbian parents about picturebooks featuring same-sex parented families. Though their research topic is closely aligned with this dissertation study, there are a number of differences as well: their study 1) focused on lesbian parents' perspectives rather than those who identify as straight, 2) explored responses to books solely featuring same-sex parented families rather than other types of representation, 3) took place in Australia rather than the U.S. south, 4) asked participants to read and respond to two books assigned at random from a corpus of eight rather than the entire set, and 5) incorporated data from a survey and single follow-up telephone interview rather than five research stages including in-person individual and group sessions.

As the studies described in this section demonstrate, research involving GL/LG-inclusive literature and its possible/actual use in elementary spaces has taken place with a variety of stakeholders: pre/in-service teachers, administrators, youth, and parents. Figure 1.1 illustrates these various stakeholder groups and the studies conducted with each. The use of the square demonstrates the interconnectedness of these groups, and the arrows indicate source(s) of concern within each group.

Figure 1.1: Stakeholders Reading and Responding to GL/LG Children's Literature

As the figure demonstrates, research inquiring into parents' reading and response to GL/LG children's literature is particularly lacking. As noted earlier, the perspectives of parents who identify as straight is non-existent. Such limited research about this stakeholder group is especially problematic considering how frequently pre/in-service teachers express concerns about parents and use this as a reason to not include GL/LG children's literature in their classrooms – whether on bookshelves or more directly in instruction.

Purpose of the Study

This study is informed by research regarding LGBTQ-inclusive children's literature and its use in elementary spaces (e.g., schools, libraries, classrooms serving youth in grades pre-kindergarten through fifth). Specifically, this study contributes to the fields of children's literature and elementary education. Rather than conflate sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as all types of children's literature, I focus on GL/LG-inclusive picturebooks.

I explore parents' responses to GL/LG-inclusive picturebooks and their thoughts about these books' use in elementary spaces, and classrooms specifically. Maguire (2014) stated, "There is danger in assuming homogeneity in any gender, class, race or cultural grouping" (p. 429). Much like there is great variation in any such group, parents are not singular in their stances toward particular social issues. Thus, this study focuses on a particular sub-group of adults who self-identify as supporting gay and lesbian individuals and their rights and who are parents/guardians of elementary-aged children enrolled in public schools in Georgia. Further information about the rationale for these criteria, such as the emphasis on public schools, is provided in Chapter Three. The purpose of this study is to add to the body of research about GL/LG children's literature, its inclusion in elementary spaces, and stances which may further inform pre/in-service teachers' use of such texts with youth. In this study, I:

- A) recruited and selected eight participants who identify as supporters of GL/LG individuals and their rights and are parents of elementary-aged youth enrolled in public schools;
- B) engaged in dialogue with each of the participants to discern how they conceptualize and enact (if they do) GL/LG support;
- C) introduced the parents to text sets (Cai, 2002) of picturebooks with representations of gay and/or lesbian individuals reflecting a variety of portrayals (animal/human characters, fiction/nonfiction) and approaches to representation (e.g., adversity or anxiety about GL/LG identities, AIDS, celebrations such as weddings and Pride parades, and engaging in daily activities without confrontation);

- D) provided time for parents to read and respond to the picturebooks in a variety of contexts: individual interviews (Roulston, 2010), anonymous online surveys (Ponto, 2015) during a multi-week period, and in a focus group (Morgan, 2002); and
- E) thematically analyzed and described parents' responses across these contexts to the picturebooks themselves as well as their thoughts about the books' potential or actual use in elementary classrooms.

In considering the purpose of this study, I feel it is paramount to address why I sought the responses of parents, and straight parents particularly, for inquiry (though I provide more rationale for participant selection in Chapter Three). I do not devalue the professionalism of educators to make instructional decisions, asserting that educators need permission about what topics and materials to use in their classrooms. Nor do I, as a gay male educator and researcher, believe that appealing to straight individuals for their approval for inclusion of GL/LG books is necessary. Rather, my purpose in this study was to inquire into the perspectives of parents (both straight and with other sexual orientations) to inform and potentially add support to a cause already in motion by LGBTQ parents, teachers, and scholars. I was also interested to explore whether pre/in-service teachers' stated assumptive fear – as well as the fear I had as an elementary teacher – of parents reacting in certain ways to GL/LG books had some truth to it. These interests directly led to the development of my research questions.

Research Questions

Three questions guide this study:

1. What themes, if any, emerge across parents' responses to gay/lesbian-inclusive picturebooks, specifically in regard to what they find un/acceptable?

2. What themes, if any, emerge across parents' responses to how gay/lesbian-inclusive picturebooks could be used as (potential) classroom materials?
3. How do parents who identify as straight and also supportive of gay/lesbian rights produce themselves in various settings (as allies) in relation to gay/lesbian-inclusive picturebooks as (potential) classroom materials?

Each research question builds upon the previous one. The first two questions begin with the phrase "What themes, if any" because much like I acknowledge variation in stances exist across parents at large in regards to social and political issues, I also recognize variation occurs in sub-groups as well (Lugones, 2003). Through these various stances, I explore moments of consensus. The first research question addresses parents' responses to the books holistically whereas the second question transitions to the parents' consideration of the books within classrooms. GL/LG books as classroom materials could be conceptualized in a variety of ways, such as but not limited to: including in school or classroom libraries amongst other texts for children to access at their leisure, reading aloud by teachers to students for pleasure and/or instruction, or assigning by teachers to student book groups. For the third research question, I consider and compare the parents' responses across three contexts: 1) in individual settings with the researcher and over time, 2) when responding anonymously online physically apart from the researcher, and 3) in group settings with other parents. The notion of parents "producing themselves" as supporters or allies connects to the theoretical framework, queer theory, further described in Chapter Two. In short, one tenet of queer theory suggests the notion of performance in that individuals can intentionally or unintentionally present themselves in particular ways at particular times (Butler, 1993). Thus, I explore and compare how each participant constructed and presented themselves

as supporters or allies, if they did, across the various stages of the study, especially in connection to the use of GL/LG picturebooks in elementary classrooms.

Bounds of the Study

This project is bounded by certain factors. As I describe in Chapter Two, Britzman (1995), a scholar of gay and lesbian studies and queer pedagogies in education, has argued that the nuances or “unmarked criteria” of a study can “valorize as relevant a particular mode of thought” (p. 156). In this study, I value the lens of queer theory, which suggests that the rules and/or normative conventions of social situations can “incite subversive performances” from the people in those situation (Britzman, 1995, p. 153). Thus, I acknowledge that the study is bounded by the relational positions of the study participants to others people, groups, and tacit social narratives. The data I describe in the upcoming chapters were likely informed by the participants’ positionalities toward:

- the purposes for using children’s books in elementary schools;
- their roles as participants in a study facilitated by an out gay man who was a local elementary teacher and who is knowledgeable in GL/LG children’s literature;
- their roles as parents of elementary school children;
- their relationships with teachers, librarians, and/or administrators at their children’s schools;
- their relationships with other local parents; and
- their connections or disconnections with members of the LGBTQ community.

Each of the participants’ performances during the study merits deep, critical analysis relative to the normative conventions and mainstream social narratives of the U.S. Southeast. However, because these discussions are so complex, I am unable to fully address each participant’s performance within the confines of this dissertation. Hence, the next phase of my research

agenda will be to produce comprehensive case studies of each participant. This dissertation attends to the corpus of data that is specific to the research questions, each of which has a dedicated chapter. Nevertheless, Chapter Six, which addresses the final research question (How do parents who identify as straight and also supportive of gay/lesbian rights produce themselves in various settings [as allies] in relation to gay/lesbian-inclusive picturebooks as [potential] classroom materials?), offers an introductory foray into the participants' performances.

Significance of the Study

This study fills a gap in scholarship about GL/LG-inclusive children's literature. This dissertation study could be a powerful tool to help inform and support pre-service and in-service teachers' decision-making when reading, selecting, and considering how to incorporate GL/LG-inclusive literature in their classrooms to make increasingly safe and supportive spaces for all. Though this research involves parents of children at the elementary level and thus addresses elementary teachers' practices, I believe this study could be relevant to middle and high school educators who may share similar concerns as their elementary colleagues in regards to how parents might react to such texts if incorporated within the classroom (e.g., Fredman, Schultz, & Hoffman, 2015). Although this study focuses on picturebooks and GL/LG representation specifically, such a study could inform the selection and use of other LGBTQ-inclusive texts and resources across K-12 classrooms as well. Especially promising for readers is that this research will stem from Georgia, a state located in the U.S. South and perceived as conservative. Thus, if perspectives from this state can provide support for GL/LG-inclusive literature, perhaps educators from other contexts would feel increasingly able to consider the results in light of their settings as well.

Undoubtedly, there are myriad ways parents might respond to GL/LG-inclusive literature on a continuum of objection to support. However, inquiring into the perspectives of a particular subgroup, such as those who claim to support gay and lesbian individuals and their rights, may help educators overcome their concerns about parents more generically. Kozik-Rosabal (2000) stated: “With regard to gay families, parents can offer valuable information and even hope when changes in negative attitudes and beliefs are slow in coming” (p. 369). Though this quote is in reference to how parents can provide support within their own families to combat the heteronormativity of schools, I believe it speaks to the role parents can play in shaping institutions at large as well.

Not only could this research further inform pre/in-service teachers about *some* parents’ perspectives regarding GL/LG-inclusive literature and reinforce that *all* parents are not opposed to such books in classrooms, this research may help pre/in-service teachers feel more confident about incorporating GL/LG-inclusive literature within their classrooms as well. Perhaps an even greater implication would be the affordances for the youth these educators service. Students who identify as gay or lesbian, or who have friends and family who identify as such, would be increasingly able to see reflections of themselves in classrooms. Students who do *not* identify or know others who identify as gay or lesbian would be introduced to or further learn about other ways of being. The heteronormative institutions of schools would be disrupted, and the potential for schools to become safer and more supportive would increase. I acknowledge these are grand and far-reaching implications for a single study, but this research can add to a growing body of work with such aims.

This dissertation study could be one of the first of its kind in multiple ways. It explores not only the perspectives of *straight* parents, but also parents whose children attend public school

in a region of the country typically deemed conservative in political and social ideologies. It provides participants and elicits their responses to a corpus of 33 GL/LG picturebooks, a much larger text set than included in most qualitative studies involving books shared and discussed with participants. The larger corpus also shows greater representation of currently available children's literature that would a smaller set. Further, the corpus is divided into topical categories for participants to consider – a rare process employed in children's literature scholarship. Due to this study's incorporation of books diverse in genre, characterization, and representation/performance of sexual orientation, trends on the types of books parents find un/acceptable within the corpus has the potential to further inform educators, researchers, and book creators about stances on extrapolated types of GL/LG children's literature, thus igniting future directions for teaching, inquiry, and publishing.

Definition of Terms

Several terms used frequently within this dissertation risk various interpretations or lacking clarity. In this section, I clarify how I conceptualize and use each of the terms. The terms are sorted into two categories: describing personal identities and defining terms related to children's literature. Other, lesser used terms in the dissertation are not listed here but will be defined in context as they arise in subsequent chapters.

Describing Personal Identities

The following six terms relate to how people may identify or be described regarding sexual orientation, gender identity, LGBTQ support, and/or as a parent.

LGBTQ. I use this acronym to represent lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer identities and political or social movements. There are several important aspects of note with this acronym. First, the acronym represents both sexual orientation and gender identity, and people

can identify with one of the terms or multiple. For example, a person may identify as both bisexual and transgender. Second, over time the acronym has replaced GLBTQ in an effort to foreground women and acknowledge issues of patriarchy. Another aspect of note are the letters themselves. For example, some people consider the “Q” to represent “questioning,” as in a person who is questioning their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Other symbols have been added to the acronym over time. Among these additions are “A” for asexual, “I” for intersex, “2S” for two-spirit, and “+” for additional identities not listed in the acronym. My use of LGBTQ is not to exclude such individuals, but rather I believe using “Q” for queer encompasses the many ways of being and/or identifying in ways mainstream societies may consider non-normative. Further, it acknowledges a further queerness that may not be evident in L, G, B, and/or T individuals. For example, a gay male may identify and perform identity in ways that align with a normative mainstream population and thus may not identify as queer.

Queer. Queer can be identity, theory, or action. To aim to define queer is to try to contain and thus un-queer it (Berlant & Warner, 1995; Jagose, 1996). However, a few descriptions of queer are to be “explicitly transgressive” (Britzman, 1995, p. 157), foreground sexuality (Blackburn & Clark, 2011), resist categorization (Meyer, 2007), and interrogate and disrupt spaces and ways of thinking that perpetuate heterosexuality as the natural and preferred way of being (Case, 1991; Sullivan, 2003). I will further discuss queer, especially in regards to theory, in Chapter Two.

GL/LG. This acronym will be used frequently throughout this dissertation, especially in reference to books. “The “G” represents gay and the “L” represents lesbian. The acronyms are provided with letters in both orders to acknowledge the equivalence of both groups rather than prioritizing and privileging gay over lesbian. By “gay” I typically mean men who are physically

and/or emotionally attracted to other men. By “lesbian” I typically mean women who are physically and/or emotionally attracted to other women. However, there are women who have such attraction but do not identify as lesbian (GLAAD, 2018, third paragraph). My use of GL/LG acknowledges this identity as well. Therefore, gay and lesbian are not necessarily synonymous with man and woman, respectively. Also, queer theory (described further in Chapter Two) resists categorization and the idea of essentialist identities (Duggan, 1995; Lovaas, Elia, & Yep, 2006). People are complex, and being gay or lesbian does not entail the same existence for everyone. Additionally, the terms “gay” and “lesbian” might not accurately describe the way people identify or consider themselves. For example, a man might physically and/or emotionally be attracted to other men yet not identify as gay regardless of whether or not he actually engages via sex or intimacy beyond friendship. My use of the terms “gay” and “lesbian” is not meant to reinscribe stereotypes and essentialism but rather to provide a sense through language, as slippery and fraught as it might be, the individuals or topics being described in this dissertation.

Supporter. Riddle (1994) created a scale representing varying stances of heterosexuals to gay and lesbian individuals. Her scale consists of eight points along a continuum. Listed in order from least to most inclusive, these eight stances are: repulsion, pity, tolerance, acceptance, support, admiration, appreciation, and nurturance. Considering two of the middle points, “acceptance” and “support,” is particularly helpful in considering how “supporter” is conceptualized and used in this study. Riddle describes “acceptance” as problematic in the sense that there remains a notion that being gay or lesbian is something heterosexuals can opt to accept or not, signifying that it’s a deviation from the norm and an aspect of which to approve. “Acceptance” also emphasizes a preference for assimilation, seeing gay and lesbian individuals not only as “just like everyone” but also not wanting them to flaunt their sexuality. “Support,” on

the other hand, involves people working to “safeguard the rights of those who are different. Such people may be uncomfortable themselves, but they are aware of the climate and the irrational unfairness in our society” (Riddle, 1994, p. 33). As the scale continues, classifications beyond “support” increasingly acknowledge the challenges gay and lesbians experience, value GL/LG people’s contributions, and confront bias in themselves and others. My conceptualization of “supporter” aligns with Riddle’s notion of “support” and higher stages (admiration, appreciation, and nurturance). Though the Riddle scale is considered an outdated hierarchy and even problematic by some, such as failing to recognize physical and emotional violence against gay and lesbian individuals (Rasmussen, 2016), I find it a helpful basic framework to define “supporter” for this study. I also acknowledge that the concepts of scales and hierarchies are antithetical to queer theory which is “interested in dismantling hierarchies as much as possible” (Slagle, 2006, p. 318). My primary use of the scale is to provide context for how I’m considering the term “supporter,” specifically in conjunction with the next term – “ally.”

Ally. A term not used in Riddle’s (1994) scale, either as a descriptor or description, is “ally.” On the Human Rights Campaign’s website, Miller (2015) defined ally as “a term used to describe someone who is supportive of LGBT people. It encompasses non-LGBT allies as well as those within the LGBT community who support each other, e.g., a lesbian who is an ally to the bisexual community” (second paragraph). Though “ally” and “supporter” are closely related, the difference is in who can claim it. People are deemed an ally by others rather than claiming the marker for themselves. People can, however, claim that they support or advocate for gay and lesbian individuals and their rights. In my study, each of the participants claimed, via an initial screening survey and subsequent stages, to support gay and lesbian individuals and their rights.

However, LGBTQ individuals may – or may not – envision them as allies based on how they respond or what they do.

Parent. I use this term to refer to any guardian of youth: a biological parent, adoptive parent, stepparent, grandparent, or other adult figure with whom youth reside for their primary care. In this study, all of the participants identified as a parent of their elementary-aged child(ren). I did not ask for, nor did participants specify, if they were biological, adoptive, or stepparents. Similarly, the term “mother” is used in this paper, and it could refer to a biological, adoptive, or stepmother. More information about each of the participants and how they identified is provided in Chapter Three.

Definitions Related to Children’s Literature

The following three descriptions clarify my use of terms in reference to children’s literature. Each of these terms are not self-explanatory and are sometimes debated in the field.

Children’s literature. To conceptualize what is meant by the term “children’s literature,” Nodelman (2008) provided a range of descriptions based upon children’s literature critics’ theoretical work, college-level textbooks focused on children’s literature, and discussions by children’s authors about their own work. He further asserted that defining children’s literature is an on-going debate. Reynolds (2011) stated, “There is no single, coherent, fixed body of work that makes up children’s literature, but instead many children’s literatures produced at different times in different ways for different purposes by different kinds of people using different formats and media” (p. 6-7). This is my preferred stance because “definition allows exclusion” (Nodelman, 2008, p. 137), and “opinions and choices tend to shape what texts have power and how those texts might be read” (Nodelman, 2008, p. 134). The inclusion or exclusion of specific texts as children’s literature is particularly the case where GL/LG children’s literature is

concerned since certain topics may be considered appropriate or not for youth. Therefore, in this study, I conceptualize children's literature as any text (e.g., physical books, e-books, periodicals, etc.) seemingly intended for readers in fifth grade or below. I use the term broadly.

Picturebooks. In the field of children's literature, the terms "picture book" and "picturebook" are used. "Picturebook" refers to texts in which images and words are symbiotic and rely on one another for meaning whereas "picture books" represents books in which illustrations primarily mimic words on the page and do not provide additional meaning or opportunity for interpretation (Kiefer, 2011; Nikolajeva & Scott, 2001; Reynolds, 2011; Sipe, 1998). The term "picturebooks" is used in this study, and its use aligns with scholars' descriptions.

GL/LG picturebooks. Extending on the previous term, GL/LG picturebooks are those that not only depict gay and/or lesbian characters, but also in which the depictions do not reinforce oppression or marginalization as permissible or desirable. Though oppression or marginalization of GL/LG characters may be present in some of these books, it is to show that these experiences occur and how the GL/LG characters overcome such obstacles. The emphasis of the books is to support and uplift GL/LG individuals. The majority of these books are comparable to Sims' (1982) classifications of social conscience (raise awareness, promote acceptance and harmony) or culturally conscious (speak to and represent marginalized groups) texts. The GL/LG picturebook definition excludes books in which devaluing or delegitimizing GL/LG people is a theme, such as *Seth & Sara Ask...Does God Love Michael's Two Daddies?* (Butt, 2006). GL/LG picturebooks used in this study are listed and described in Appendix A and Chapter Three.

Chapter Overviews

The sections above reference subsequent chapters of this dissertation. In Chapter Two, I describe the theoretical framework – queer theory – and how it is embedded across the study. In Chapter Three, I describe the methodology of this research and include a description of each of the parent participants as well as the contexts in which they reside and their children attend school. Findings in response to the research questions are provided in Chapters Four, Five, and Six. I acknowledge this is atypical for most dissertations since a five-chapter format is often used, with the findings shared in Chapter Four alone. However, for clarity and the extent to which I elaborate on the findings, I felt it most beneficial to write a separate chapter to address each research question. In Chapter Four, I describe how the parents responded to GL/LG picturebooks, specifically in regard to what they found acceptable and unacceptable. In Chapter Five, I discuss how the parents responded to GL/LG picturebooks as potential classroom materials, and I explain in Chapter Six how parents produced themselves as supporters or allies in various settings relative to GL/LG picturebooks as potential classroom materials. In the final chapter, Chapter Seven, I share conclusions and implications from the study as well as directions for my future research.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical frameworks researchers use intricately link to their past experiences and how they perceive the world. Glesne (2011) asserted, “Theoretical perspectives (behaviorism, feminism, liberalism, etc.) and values often affect your choice of research topic, the questions you ask of that topic, and how you describe what you ‘find’” (p. 35). As a gay man, former elementary teacher, and current researcher inquiring into parents’ responses to GL/LG picturebooks and their potential use in elementary classrooms, I employ queer theory in this dissertation.

This chapter begins by discussing a related field, gay and lesbian studies, in order to create a distinction between it and queer theory. I then describe the connections and disconnections between the two fields, as the fields are not necessary in binary opposition. There are similarities and differences between the two fields. I conclude the chapter emphasizing the application of queer theory to various parts of this dissertation.

Gay and Lesbian Studies

The term gay and lesbian studies (hereafter written GLS), as opposed to LGBT studies, is more prevalent in the theoretical literature. GLS solely focuses on identities and topics related to same-sex orientation whereas LGBT studies also encompasses bisexuality and gender identity. However, these latter two identities are minimally represented if not absent in the field (Angelides, 2006; Gibson, Alexander, & Meem, 2014). In fact, such exclusion led to the field of transgender studies (see Stryker & Whittle, 2006; Martinez-San Miguel & Tobias, 2016).

Though the term LGBT studies is used by some scholars (Gibson, Alexander, and Meem, 2014; Lovaas, Elia, & Yep, 2006), most scholars use and refer to GLS. Focusing on GLS avoids conflating sexual orientation and gender identity and ensures neither of the two are pushed to the margins. GLS was developed in the 1950s and 1960s, influenced by feminist and racial civil rights movements (Lovaas, Elia, & Yep, 2006).

Tierney and Dilley (1998) stated the vast majority of GLS research focuses on normalcy, assimilation, and inclusion. However, the focus on normalcy is not a critique. Rather, normalcy is asserted as desired. Tierney and Dilley (1998) wrote about the field, “Gays and lesbians were (and are) studied and presented as a minority [...] and like heterosexuals except for ‘sexual preference,’ and in need of ‘the liberal’ rights of privacy and formal equality” (p. 52-53). In other words, GLS sees gays and lesbians as similar to heterosexuals in all ways other than sexual orientation, and GLS advocates for the same rights as heterosexuals. To support such stances for rights and acceptance, much work in GLS focuses on how gay and lesbian individuals have always existed (Tierney & Dilley, 1998) and contributed throughout history (Bronski, 2011; Gibson, Alexander, & Meem, 2014). Investigating such existence and contributions highlights “how sexuality has become a central component in contemporary self-understanding – individually, culturally, and politically” (p. xv) and “how queer cultures bring substantive, potentially transformative insights to bear on mainstream and dominant modes of being” (p. xv). Thus, GLS focuses on how non-normative sexualities are embedded within and impact various macro-structures.

Because of its emphasis on existence and contributions, GLS considers and advocates for visibility through gay and lesbian representation within educational contexts. For example, Friend (1993) discussed systematic exclusion versus systematic inclusion. Systematic exclusion

occurs when “positive role models, messages, and images about lesbian, gay, and bisexual people are publicly silenced in schools” (p. 215) whereas systematic inclusion entails how “negative or false information about homosexuality is introduced in schools as a pathology or deviant behavior” (p. 215). To contest systematic inclusion, educators must especially increase visibility and dialogue in “contexts where talk about gay and lesbian rights, lives, and bodies is obsessive and pervasively coded with signifiers of deviancy, disease, and contagion” (Britzman, 1993, p. 227). In fact, D’Emillio (1992) dreamed of “mainstreaming” so “the gay and lesbian experience, the varieties of same-sex intimacy, and the role of sexuality in social life are all fully integrated into the curriculum” (p. 171). Other scholars have since argued for additional strategies to increase gay-affirmative visibility (Cuomo, 2007; Tierney & Dilley, 1998) and work toward inclusion. Britzman (1993) felt GLS work, especially within educational institutions, has two major aims: 1) developing concern for quality of life in terms of knowledge, sociality, and power (especially for youth often unable to rely on institutional advocacy or legal grounds), and 2) reducing verbal/physical baiting and bullying due to perceived sexual orientation.

In regards to literacy, Britzman (1993) explained GLS “confronts educators with a political vision of literacy, a literacy that is not confined to the acquisition of skills and competencies, but rather is expanded as a signifier of civil rights and as central to the fashioning of identity” (p. 229). She challenged educators across all grades to read widely as “antihomophobic inquiry” (p. 226) and address gay and lesbian topics in ways that are “effective, ethical, and unapologetic” (p. 226) with all students regardless of their sexual orientation. Combatting homophobia and addressing the needs of sexual minority students is not only achieved by increasing visibility, but also debunking stereotypes and dispelling beliefs about gays and lesbians (Cuomo, 2007; Tierney & Dilley, 1998).

Even if inclusive curriculum increases, rights are granted, homophobia is lessened, erroneous beliefs are dispelled, and privileges to exercise sexual freedom are extended, GLS remains concerned about dignity. Cuomo (2007) defined dignity as “full respect as moral agents” (p. 78) and stressed its importance due to how gays and lesbians have frequently been debased and degraded. Britzman (1993) wrote there is value in “the dignity of speaking for oneself” (p. 225). This realization and ability to speak for oneself is echoed in GLS through emphasis on gay-affirmative education and the increase of gay and lesbian-identified scholars conducting research related to gay and lesbian individuals, topics, and experiences (Tierney & Dilley, 1998).

GLS has evolved and expanded in focus over time, including explorations of history and the social sciences, arts and humanities, popular culture and media studies, and politics and law intertwined with the cultural, political, and personal (Gibson, Alexander, & Meem, 2014). However, Warner (1991) critiqued the “booming field” concept, stating GLS created a “more historicized and local view of gay interests” rather than constructing “impressive new readings of particular cultural texts” (p. 5). It was near the same time as Warner’s statements that queer theory began to emerge – a theoretical framework expanding the thinking and approaches within GLS that had become stagnant and increasingly problematic for some scholars. However, it is important to note that some scholars purport queer theory stemmed from GLS studies (Gibson, Alexander, & Meem, 2014; Meyer, 2007; Warner, 2012) and may not have existed without it (Tierney & Dilley, 1998).

Queer Theory

Teresa de Lauretis is cited for coining the term “queer theory” (Barnett & Johnson, 2015; Halperin, 2003). The term was first used in jest; de Lauretis incorporated the term within a conference title after hearing the word ‘queer’ being used in a gay-affirmative sense by activists,

urban youth, and members of the art world in New York during the late 1980s: “[de Lauretis] had the courage, and the conviction, to pair that scurrilous term with the academic holy word, ‘theory.’ Her usage was scandalously offensive [...] But the conjunction was more than merely mischievous; it was deliberately disruptive” (Halperin, 2003, p. 339-340). Other scholars have concurred the sense of excitement and humor inherent in the phrase, especially during its earliest uses (e.g., Berlant & Warner, 1995; Warner, 2012).

Although the description of GLS is fairly consistent among scholars (as described in the above section), queer theory is less cohesive and definable. Some scholars argue this lack of definition is part of what makes the theory queer and is an important element of the theoretical perspective (Abate & Kidd, 2014; Berlant & Warner, 1995; Jagose, 1996; Smith, 2010). With these aspects in mind, and realizing any effort to summarize the theory will be “violently partial” (Berlant & Warner, 1995, p. 344) and thus not encompass all of the theory’s complexity, I conceptualize queer theory in five, overlapping areas: 1) gender and sexuality, 2) normality and intelligibility, 3) resistance of binaries, 4) disruption and subversion, and 5) possibilities for the future.

Gender and Sexuality

Plummer (2013) wrote queer theory helps to deconstruct the sex/gender divide and view gender performance as slippery and unfixed. Such concepts are largely influenced by Butler’s (1990) discussion of the heterosexual matrix (the interlocking associations between genders, sexualities, bodies, and desires through which such aspects cohere and become naturalized) and performativity (both intentional and largely unintentional actions which are the effect of historically sedimented conventions, repetitions, and resignifications).

Gender is a primary focus for some queer theorists. Blaise and Taylor (2012) argued queer theory is *only* about gender and “definitely not a theory about gay and lesbian identity” (p. 88). However, the authors do state sexual orientation and gender are related through heterosexual norms. Connections between gender and sexuality are also discussed by Jagose (1996) who stated queer theory’s most influential achievement is to specify “how gender operates as a regulatory construct that privileges heterosexuality” (p. 83). Jagose also claimed lesbian and gay subject positions are legitimated through deconstructing “normative models of gender” (p. 83). Thus, even when gender is paramount within queer theory, it remains linked to sexuality.

Other scholars view sexual orientation as central within queer theory (Berlant & Warner, 1995; Britzman, 1995; Meyer, 2007; Tierney & Dilley, 1998). For example, Foucault (1976/1978) and Tierney and Dilley (1998) focused on how sexuality, its perceptions, and effects have changed over time. Britzman (1995) thought of queer theory as “provoking terms of engagement” (p. 153) that question and transcend limiting stereotypes of gays and lesbians. Similarly, queer theory considers how conceptions of sexuality can be expanded, not just for gays and lesbians, but at large. Queer theorists note sex is “much more than reproduction” (Barnett & Johnson, 2015, p. 581) and is “related not just to family, romance, or friendship but also to the public world governing both policy and everyday life” (Berlant & Warner, 1995, p. 346-347). Such descriptions of sexuality expound upon what normative populations may comprehend about sexuality, its role, and its significance.

Normalcy and Intelligibility

Queer theory argues concepts of normalcy are fraught, viewing them as a problem of culture and thought (Britzman, 1995) and created through repetition (Blaise & Taylor, 2012; Butler, 1990; Jagose, 1996). Queer theory challenges the reproduction of sameness and

indifference (Pinar, 1998). In fact, Butler (1990) referred to normalcy as a “regulatory fiction [...] regularly assumed to be natural and necessary” (p. 187), an ideal that “disguises itself as a developmental law” policing a sexual field it both describes and creates. In other words, concepts of normal are fictive because they follow particular rules constructed to assert specific ways of being.

One way normalcy is created and reinforced is via compulsory heterosexuality – the assumption all people are born heterosexual, live heterosexual lives, and have a debt to pay to their family line by reproducing later in life (Ahmed, 2006; Butler, 1990; Pinar, 1998).

Compulsory heterosexuality is reinforced both in and out of the home. For example, school structures exhibit “hyperheterosexuality” (Meyer, 2007, p. 23) through school dances and the crowning of kings and queens. Berlant and Warner (1995) argued “much of what passes for general culture is riddled with heteronormativity” (p. 349). Equating heterosexuality with normal, and foregrounding this as problematic, is an aspect of queer theory often used within research taking place in schools and/or when considering literature shared with youth (Bouley, 2011; Hartman, 2016; Ryan, 2010; Sapp, 2010; Schieble, 2012).

However, concepts of normalcy are not limited to heterosexuality. Queer theory is a positionality against any form of normalization (Sullivan, 2003) even when affixed to gay and lesbian identities as reflected in stereotypes or expected ways of being. Barnett and Johnson (2015) argued queer theory “obfuscates essentialist identities” (p. 581), and Meyer (2007) stated queer theory “questions taken-for-granted assumptions about relationships, identity, gender, and sexual orientation” (p. 15). Thus, queer theorists understand and assert there is no one way to be a particular identity.

The concepts of normal and different are linked to what people are able to think and comprehend, sometimes termed intelligibility (Butler, 1990; Foucault, 1976/1978). Queer theory seeks to make the strange familiar and the familiar strange, to make “the ‘unthinkable’, thinkable” (Greteman, 2013, p. 258), and to “cofound the intelligibility that produces the normal as the proper subject” (Britzman, 1995, p. 157). These scholars emphasize how considering and expanding intelligibility can alter normative thinking to make way for other possibilities.

Resistance of Binaries

The term queer problematizes binaries, including the “language that supports them” (Meyer, 2007, p. 25). Such binaries challenged and transgressed include normal/deviate (Britzman, 1995; Tierney & Dilley, 1998), hetero-/homo-sexual (Barnett & Johnson, 2015; Meyer, 2007; Pinar, 1998; Tierney & Dilley, 1998), male/female (Barnett & Johnson, 2015; Butler, 1990; Meyer, 2007), masculine/feminine (Butler, 1990; Meyer, 2007), public/private, inside/outside, tolerant/tolerated, oppressor/oppressed, ordinary/disruptive (Britzman, 1995), general/particular (Berlant & Warner, 1995), or even student/teacher (Meyer, 2007). In addition to problematizing binaries, Britzman (1995) emphasized the importance of analyzing how binaries lead to subordination and subjection at “historical”, “conceptual”, “social”, and “psychic” levels (p. 164-165). Thus, binaries are deeply engrained and maintained within various strata. Queer theory considers these structures while also working to disrupt them.

One binary resistance strategy is to show how each part exists within the other: “by showing the queer in [...] normal, and the normal in the queer” (Tierney & Dilley, 1998, p. 60). Other binary resistance strategies include subversive repetition and subversive citation (Butler, 1995). Subversive repetition involves the continuous critique of what is repeatedly enacted and considered normal – “doing it” and “troubling it” simultaneously (Lather, 2007, p. 38).

Subversive citation involves an openness to multiplicity within categories typically considered static and stable. For example, Butler (1990) discussed drag as a subversive citation of gender. Such resistance is directly connected to disruption and subversion, the tenets of queer theory I next describe.

Disruption and Subversion

Numerous scholars speak of queer theory's aim to disrupt and subvert normalcy as a concept (Greteman, 2013), within discourses (Barnett & Johnson, 2015), and within institutions (Britzman, 1995; Sullivan, 2003). Disruption within institutions includes considering and questioning existing academic frameworks and extant scholarship (Barnett & Johnson, 2015) and "how knowledge gets defined, studied, and enacted" (Tierney & Dilley, 1998, p. 63). As part of such disruption, Meyer (2007) suggested the importance of standing outside normative thought and institutions to examine and dismantle them.

One way to dismantle is via subversion. Britzman (1995) stressed normative conventions and rules themselves "incite subversive performances, citations, and inconveniences" (p. 153). In other words, normative thinking, discourses, and thought invite subversion. Subversive tactics should be "bothersome and unapologetic imperative[s], explicitly transgressive, perverse, and political" (Britzman, 1995, p. 157). Of these descriptors, it is largely perversity that makes queer theory distinct from GLS.

Possibilities for the Future

The previous four areas show queer theory's interest in considering present normative structures and how they were constructed. However, queer theorists also discuss the future. Two of these considerations involve 1) the concept of futurity and 2) the future of queer theory itself.

Futurity. Muñoz (2009) defined futurity as “the no-longer-conscious and ever on the horizon, reachable but not having been reached yet” and described it as “forward-dawning” (p. 87). He claimed, “we must insist on a queer futurity because the present is so poisonous and insolvent” (p. 30). Further, Muñoz described the concept of utopia: “Utopia lets us imagine a space outside of heteronormativity [and] offers us a critique of the present, of what is, by casting a picture of what *can and perhaps will be*” (p. 35). Through his conceptualization of futurity and utopia, Muñoz emphasized the necessity of considering the present in order to desire and work toward a tangible and beyond equitable future.

Though not using the terms futurity or utopia, other queer theorists share similar concepts about the future. Sullivan (2003) imagined a space outside of heteronormativity in which “fluidity, heterogeneity, and so on, exist unrestrained” (p. 143-144). However, considering how the future can be different from the present can also lead to realizations the past and present could have occurred differently as well (Sedgwick, 2003). Such epiphanies lead queer theorists to envision expanded opportunities for the future – to rethink and reimagine what that future might be (Barnett & Johnson, 2015). On the other hand, some theorists think differently about the connection between queer theory and the future. For example, Edelman (2004) wrote about the concept of the child. He discussed how the child, assigned the responsibility of reproductive futurism, is used as a basis for political and social decisions. Queer identities and experiences, then, are viewed as antithetical to reproduction and thus lead to death and no future.

Future of Queer Theory. Queer theorists also consider the past, present, and future of the theory itself. Queer theory has provided a home for various scholars: people “continue to find their way into it, and find each other through it” (Warner, 2012, n.p.), thus keeping “alive a political imagination of sexuality” (n.p.). However, there is debate about the relevance of queer

theory. Abate and Kidd (2014) stated some critics think queer theory has passed while others “bristle at any suggestion that queer theory might be over or passé” (p. 9). Some scholars feel queer theory has become too institutionalized and normalized, such as through a wide array of conference presentations, articles, books, and scholarly credentials (Halperin, 2003; Warner, 2012). Warner (2012) argued some may want to move past queer theory due to their own discomfort with sex, but he insisted the field has much life ahead and further areas to explore such as the analysis of normativity and “the connections between sexuality and secularism that are central to so many kinds of conflict around the world” (p. 7) – areas he saw as particularly relevant and underdeveloped within queer theory.

Some scholars refer to queer theory as anticipatory (Berlant & Warner, 1995), and this is what keeps queer theory queer. Halperin (2003) stressed one way to keep queer theory alive is to “find ways of renewing its radical potential [...] reinventing its capacity to startle, to surprise, to help us think what has not been thought” (p. 343). In other words, the moment queer theory becomes normalized or stagnant, it is no longer queer. Thus, for queer theory to thrive, it is imperative to ever envision new horizons and possibilities.

Concluding Thoughts

It is important to note the five areas above, though they help to better understand queer theory, are not its only components. For example, Britzman (1995) claimed “competing Queer Theories” (p. 154) exist and that queer theory insists on three methods – the study of limits, the study of ignorance, and the study of reading practices. Duggan (1995) purported queer theorists engage in at least three areas of critique: 1) humanist narratives positing progress of gay and lesbian individuals and history, 2) empiricist methods claiming to represent “reality” and “experience” objectively, and 3) identity categories presented as stable, unitary, or “authentic.”

Of these various areas of inquiry and critique named by Britzman (1995) and Duggan (1995), my study particularly explores the study of limits, reading practices, and “authentic” identity categories. I further describe later in this chapter, Chapter Three, and subsequent chapters how queer theory connects to my study.

Halperin (2003) further distinguished between queer theory and making theory queer. Making theory queer involves challenging “the heterosexist underpinnings and assumptions of what conventionally passed for ‘theory’ in academic circles” (p. 340) whereas queer theory calls “attention to everything that is perverse about the project of theorizing sexual desire and sexual pleasure” (p. 340). Thus, queer theory may even be more radical than queering theory itself. As this section attests, a variety of nuances and distinctions exist within queer theory, a field continuing to remain in flux.

(Dis)connections

Much like the five areas describing queer theory overlap, there exist commonalities between GLS and queer theory at large. Many disconnections also exist, and these help to further consider each field. However, it important to avoid yet another binary as queer theory itself seeks to resist. Instead, the (dis)connections help in considering what each perspective does, why it is used, how it may inform the other, and how both may at times work in tandem. Table 2.1 highlights some of the connections and disconnections between the two frameworks, though it is not exhaustive of the many descriptors nor intended to essentialize the theories.

Table 2.1: (Dis)connections Between GLS and Queer Theory

Gay and Lesbian Studies	Both	Queer Theory
Assimilationist	Political aims	Increased attention to intersectionality
“Nice, friendly, open” (Blackburn, 2014)	Critiqued on too much emphasis on white, male, middle/upper class	Perverse, transgressive
Focused on GL/LG rights		Critiques, interrogates, and

Maintains heterosexual/homosexual binary Sexuality is an (but not defining) element of identity Essentialist ideas of GL/LG Combats homophobia Reinforces heteronormativity Aims for “a solution to a problem without any significant attention to the sociocultural and sociopolitical influences on the problem” (Blackburn & Clark, 2011)	Resist idea of LGBTQ people as deviant Work for social change Identity politics	disrupts hetero/homonormativity Disrupt the heterosexual/homosexual binary Foregrounds sexuality Sexuality is a central component of power and identity Sexual and gender identities are constructed, influenced, multiple, complex, and fluid Not interested in approval from straight people Social, cultural, and political dynamics are connected to sexuality and gender
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Below, I further describe the connections and disconnections between queer theory and GLS.

Connections

Few connections exist between GLS and queer theory. However, one connection involves the hesitancy of making “massive generalizations” (Britzman, 1993, p. 228) about groups of people and instead “rethink[ing] the terms of exclusion, disavowal, and identity itself” (p. 228). In regards to binaries, Britzman stated scholars within GLS “insist upon the centering and the historicizing of the category of sex and in thinking through of the historicity of the homo/hetero divide” (p. 228). This consideration and critique of binaries, the avoidance of generalizing about any identity category, and explicit focus on sexuality are also central tenets to queer theory.

Another similarity is that both fields critique considering LGBTQ individuals as deviant. Instead, both fields argue it’s not LGBTQ individuals who are the problem but rather the larger, normative society that constructs them in this way through such oppressive practices as sexism, homophobia, and heteronormativity (Barnett & Johnson, 2015; Tierney & Dilley, 1998).

The final similarity between both fields is actually their emphasis on dissimilarity: GLS and queer theory are sometimes at odds with one another in faulty or detrimental ways. For example, queer theory “had the undesirable and misleading effect of portraying all previous work in lesbian and gay studies as under-theorized, as laboring under the delusion of identity politics” (Halperin, 2003, p. 341). Rather, both fields make connections between society and theoretical perspectives with an aim to improve the life experiences of LGBTQ individuals (Tierney & Dilley, 1998), and neither field is superior to the other (Berlant and Warner, 1995). Barnett and Johnson (2015) emphasized how scholars and activists within each field “struggle alongside and against one another as they endeavor for related but quite different measures of success” (p. 583). These different but overlapping aims, determinations of “success”, and groups supported (or not) highlight the disconnections between GLS and queer theory.

Disconnections

Smith (2010) once stated queer theory is about making theory queer rather than having a theory about queers. Delving deeper into the disconnections between queer theory and GLS helped me better understand this distinction. Blackburn and Clark (2011) distinguished between LGBT-inclusive and queering discourses, which I respectively associate with GLS and queer theory. An LGBT-inclusive discourse “combats homophobia but also tends to reinforce heteronormativity” whereas a queering discourse “interrogates heteronormativity and foregrounds the sexual” (Blackburn & Clark, 2011, p. 232). Another distinction was provided by Case (1991): “the queer, unlike the rather polite categories of gay and lesbian, revels in the discourse of the loathsome, the outcast, the idiomatically-proscribed position of same-sex desire” (p. 3) rather than “petition[ing] for civil rights” (p. 3). These scholars expressed how GLS emphasizes equality and normalcy whereas queer theory is transgressive and explicitly sexual.

The reinforcement of heteronormativity and adopting assimilationist views via equal rights, tolerance, and inclusion is a description and critique of GLS (Berlant & Warner, 1995; Pinar, 1998; Warner, 1999). Britzman (1995) argued “more is required than simply a plea to add marginalized voices to an already overpopulated site” (p. 158) and furthered that such emphasis on inclusion can lead to subsequent exclusion. In fact, Tierney and Dilley (1998) critiqued such work toward inclusion and tolerance, stating that it makes two assumptions: that change is possible and desirable, and that proposing solutions to identified problems will lead to success. Thus, while GLS aims for such inclusion and problem-solving, queer theorists problematize such goals and their ramifications.

GLS emphasizes sameness in various ways - between straight and non-straight people, within the gay and lesbian “community”, and between gay and lesbian individuals and other marginalized groups. These ideas of sameness are heavily critiqued by queer theory. In regards to sameness between straight and non-straight people, Murray (1996) argued this is erroneous on multiple levels: those who state “we’re the same except for what we do in bed” (p. 4) are faulty because those who have been marginalized experience the world differently from those who easily fit into it, and furthermore he argued that what gays and lesbians do in bed is not so different from what heterosexuals do, “so both halves of the claim are wrong” (p. 4). Warner (2012) critiqued “national and even nationalist [...] ‘all-American’” (n.p.) frames which focus on access to military service and marriage because such perspectives forget or ignore both shared “estrangements” (n.p.) as well as lack of privileges accessible to other queer groups. Further, other queer groups may not share a desire for assimilation to others’ norms in the first place. The fact that GLS has been dominated by middle-class white men has been an on-going critique (Halperin, 2003; Smith, 2010). Instead, queer theory further inquires into aspects of

intersectionality such as race, ethnicity, gender, social class, religion, and other forms of identity. Whereas GLS might assume all marginalized groups experience oppression similarly, queer theorists investigate how various identities, experiences, and problems intersect and diverge (Tierney & Dilley, 1998).

Another distinction between the fields is related to differences in actuality and abstraction. GLS has “a more affirmative relation to its imagined constituencies” (Berlant & Warner, 1995, p. 347) and considers the “quotidian realities of lesbian and gay male life” (Halperin, 2003, p. 343) rather than “abstractions” (p. 343). However, these “abstractions” are more inherent in queer theory, an aspect sometimes critiqued. Queer theory is sometimes considered *too* theoretical and not attending to people’s actual, lived experiences (Halperin, 2003; Ryan, 2010). Despite these differences about emphasis on identity, experience, and abstraction, it is imperative to note yet another distinction between GLS and queer theory. Whereas gay and lesbian individuals, experiences, and/or topics are at the heart of GLS, this is not a criterion for queer theory. In their edited book, Browne and Nash (2010) showcased a variety of studies using queer theory – some of which included gays and lesbians, and others with a different focus such as exploring intersections of (hetero)sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, and place. (For example, in their edited volume, Muñoz [2010] researched Latina street vending experiences in downtown Los Angeles and Jackman [2010] explored how sexuality and desire dynamically exist within, inform, and are managed in fieldwork.) However, Whitlock (2010) found that queer theory is often equated and conflated with gay and lesbian (and gay, specifically) topics.

The distinctions between GLS and queer theory regarding purpose and deployment are evident within education. Britzman (1995) cautioned against the GLS stance for a variety of

reasons: 1) it assumes an “innocently ignorant general public” (p. 159) who (it’s assumed) would welcome diversity and whose minds would be enlightened; 2) it emphasizes tolerance and thus conveys to the dominant group their generosity for bestowing such tolerance; and 3) it requires the initial and on-going presence of a marginalized individual or group. Instead, queer theorists would rather disrupt heteronormative institutions (Sullivan, 2003) instead of focusing on “surface level issues” such as faculty appointments, inclusive curriculum, and gay-friendly environments (Tierney & Dilley, 1998, p. 65).

However, inclusive curriculum and creating environments supporting gay and lesbian students are aims often strategized for schools and envisioned as possible through the use of literature. These strategies have been depicted in research informed by queer theory (e.g., Hermann-Wilmarth & Ryan, 2015; Souto-Manning & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2008; Van Horn, 2015). On the other hand, curricular inclusion also runs the risk of reinforcing some identities and ways of being while excluding others (Blackburn & Clark, 2011; Britzman, 1995; Gilbert, 2006). Such inclusion and exclusion will be described in the findings in the latter half of this dissertation. In the next section, I detail how queer theory informs various parts of this research.

Applicability of Queer Theory

Throughout this dissertation’s design, implementation, and analysis, I reflected on both GLS and queer theory in how they informed my work. I decided to use queer theory for my research because the theoretical frame assists my inquiry into the complexity of the participants and their statements. Cognizant of how a theoretical framework should be embedded across a study, I considered how queer theory was intertwined throughout my dissertation’s rationale, methods, and analysis. Though the rationale was described in Chapter One and the methods and

analysis will be further detailed in Chapter Three, I believe connections to the theoretical perspective are paramount to consider at this point.

Queer in Rationale

This dissertation research explores parents' responses to GL/LG picturebooks and their use as potential materials in elementary classrooms. The aim of this dissertation is to further inform and possibly support teachers' decision making, selection, and use of GL/LG children's literature within their classrooms. Sexuality is ever-present in classrooms in a number of ways, including the way heterosexuality is assumed, apparent, and/or unquestioned in the texts children encounter (Sapp, 2010). The pervasiveness of heterosexuality in classrooms is what I aim to disrupt. This aim is in direct alignment with queer theory's emphasis to "make strange, to frustrate, to counteract, to delegitimize, to camp up – heteronormative knowledges and institutions, and the subjectivities and socialities that are (in)formed by them and that (in)form them" (Sullivan, 2003, p. vi). In other words, schools are both informed by and form heteronormativity via the practices used therein (Meyer, 2007), including the children's literature that is available and read to youth. Queer theory aims to call this out and work for change. In connection to this aim, I consider Blackburn and Clark's (2011) distinction between LGBTQ-inclusive discourses and queering discourses as described earlier in this chapter. According to Blackburn and Clark (2011), a queering discourse "interrogates heteronormativity and foregrounds the sexual" (p. 232). In my study, I aim to do both. I call out the heteronormativity of schools and encourage the parents to do this as well. Further, I foreground the sexual by focusing attention on characters' sexual orientation and sexuality within the picturebooks.

Queer theory also informs the rationale for this study in its effort to make the unthinkable thinkable (Greteman, 2013). For many educators and parents, incorporating GL/LG children's

literature in classrooms (let alone elementary classrooms) and facilitating conversations around them with students is a process which isn't considered, or at least not considered doable, because of its perceived emphasis on sexual actions and concerns about appropriateness. By asking (straight) parents to read and respond to GL/LG picturebooks as potential classroom materials, I aim to help educators rethink their classroom practices in regards to what books they include and how parents might feel about those books. This inquiry is in response to studies that report how pre/in-service teachers use concerns about parents as a primary reason they are reluctant to include GL/LG books in their elementary classrooms (Bouley, 2011; Cumming-Potvin & Martino, 2014; Dedeoglu, Ulusoy, & Lamme, 2012; GLSEN, 2012; Hermann-Wilmarth, 2010; Schieble, 2012). Thus, I explore the legitimacy of concerns about parents and the assumptions that accompany such rationales.

Even rethinking about the content existing within picturebooks might be revealing for some, as depictions of sexuality and non-heterosexual orientations may be particularly unthinkable if someone hasn't previously seen such representations in children's literature. Considering the content of GL/LG picturebooks, especially in how books reinforce or disrupt particular (normative) depictions, leads to the next focus – text selection and other queerness in method.

Queer in Method

When selecting the picturebooks the parents would read and consider for elementary classrooms, I aimed to be transgressive (Britzman, 1995; Browne and Nash, 2010). The books do not solely focus on same-sex parents and/or marriage, depicting gays and lesbians only in ways that adhere to heteronormative institutions. Some of the books depict Pride parades, physical intimacy, AIDS, and donor conception including sperm and eggs. Such books even more so

foreground the sexual (Blackburn & Clark, 2011), not only in sexual orientation but also sexuality. In other instances, the picturebooks do not make the same-sex relationship entirely evident. The same-sex relationship could be interpreted simply as a friendship rather than something more intimate. By including these latter books in this study, I encourage the parents to employ queer reading strategies in which they might read these texts differently and with increased attention to the sexual and queerness (Hermann-Wilmarth & Ryan, 2015; Kubowitz, 2012). The books used in this study will be further described in Chapter Three.

As mentioned previously in this chapter, another tenet of queer theory is the resistance of binaries. In research, one such binary is participant and researcher, and queer research – as well as qualitative research more broadly – sometimes aims to diminish such divisions (Browne & Nash, 2010). As I interviewed each of the parents, I aimed to disrupt this positionality by sharing more about myself as a gay man and former elementary educator. In several instances, the parents also asked me questions. Thus, there was a shift in our roles within the research process. Though I was still largely in control of the interview by asking questions and selecting topics – and some qualitative research further blurs the boundary between researcher and participant – I strived to lessen the division to build rapport and communication.

Queer in Analysis

I also employ queer theory within my analysis of the data. One way I do this is via looking for instances of dissonance in addition to consensus. Fontana (2002) suggested the use of “polyphony” for presenting “various perspectives of respondents, highlighting discrepancies and problems rather than minimizing them” (p. 164). This approach seems particularly well aligned with queer theory in which “differences and complexities” rather than “similarities and harmonies” (Plummer, 2013) are the emphasis of exploration and analysis, though I

acknowledge such explorations occur in other analytic processes within qualitative research as well.

Another queer approach to analysis is exploring and comparing how parents perform their identities across various settings – online, individual, and group. Are the parents consistent in how they respond over time and across these settings, or do they shape (intentionally or unintentionally) their responses based on the context? An analysis of this sort connects to Butler's notion of performance and performativity (1990, 1993) in which the ways participants produce themselves are intentional yet also engrained via repetition – both by themselves and macro-level influences within culture, society, and history. This type of analysis is especially the focus of Chapter Six.

In addition, I analyze the data for instances in which the parents (particularly those who identify as straight) reinforce concepts of hetero- and/or homo-normativity in regards to the picturebooks and their use in classrooms. Plummer (2013) expressed,

What seems to be at stake, then, in any queering of qualitative research is not so much a methodological style as a political and substantive concern with gender, heteronormativity, and sexualities. Its challenge is to bring stabilized gender and sexuality to the forefront of analyses in ways they are not usually advanced and that put under threat any ordered world of gender and sexuality. (p. 426)

Thus, I will explore how the parents discuss concepts such as sexuality and normalcy in relation to the GL/LG picturebooks and their potential use in elementary classrooms. I postpone further discussion of analysis to Chapter Three except to say here that my analysis is informed by my theoretical framework.

Queer in Potential

Muñoz's (2009) concepts of futurity and utopia discussed earlier in this chapter are helpful here. Though the inclusion of GL/LG children's literature is yet to be a common practice within elementary classrooms, it is beginning to occur in specific contexts. As Chapter One attested, studies and recent events have demonstrated GL/LG children's literature being used in spaces serving elementary-aged learners – in classrooms, out-of-school settings such as after school programs or summer book clubs, and school and public libraries. Such experiences do and can happen. Each instance then paves the way for further research and/or new sites of possibility and actuality. It is along this path my research continues to contribute and envisions the future. I describe more about potential implications and directions for future research in the final chapter of this dissertation.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

For this study that included five months of data collection (September, 2017 – January, 2018), I explored parents' responses to GL/LG-inclusive picturebooks and their thoughts about these books' use in elementary spaces, and classrooms specifically. This study focuses on a particular sub-group of adults who self-identify as supporting gay and lesbian individuals and their rights and who are parents/guardians of elementary-aged children enrolled in public schools in Georgia.

This chapter describes the methodology for addressing the following three questions:

1. What themes, if any, emerge across parents' responses to gay/lesbian-inclusive picturebooks, specifically in regard to what they find un/acceptable?
2. What themes, if any, emerge across parents' responses to how gay/lesbian-inclusive picturebooks could be used as (potential) classroom materials?
3. How do parents who identify as straight and also supportive of gay/lesbian rights produce themselves in various settings (as allies) in relation to gay/lesbian-inclusive picturebooks as (potential) classroom materials?

For this third question, settings refer to 1) individual settings with the researcher and over time, 2) online via both anonymous and non-anonymous responses, and 3) other-parent group sessions.

To address these questions, I conducted a qualitative study (Glesne, 2011) using a combination of methods including semi-structured individual interviews (Roulston, 2010), focus groups (Morgan, 2002), and surveys (Ponto, 2015). Because I applied queer theory, I use the

broader term “qualitative study” rather than categorizing the research within other particular methodologies. Data sources included children’s literature, artifacts created by participants (e.g., chart papers, book lists, e-mails), researcher field notes, audio- and video-recordings, transcripts, and online survey responses. In this chapter, I detail how those various methods and data sources were used and analyzed. In addition, and per APA structure, this methodology chapter includes descriptions of the participants, the settings where the participants live and their children attend school, and the children’s literature read and discussed to provide context for the analysis that follows in Chapters Four, Five, and Six. However, before embarking further on describing the methodology for this dissertation study, I share details about a pilot study I conducted that informed my main study.

Pilot Study

To prepare for and inform my dissertation research, I conducted a pilot study in Spring, 2016. The pilot study informed the main study – a project larger in scope, participants, methods, sources of data, and time spent with each participant. In that study, I explored how parents of elementary-aged children, who claimed to support gay and lesbian individuals and issues (a) responded to a set of gay male inclusive picturebooks and (b) regarded the potential/actual use of these picturebooks in elementary classrooms. As part of my pilot study data collection, I facilitated individual, semi-structured interviews (Roulston, 2010) with three parents, each of whom self-identified as straight and I have known for over a decade. They were all aware of my identification as a gay male for that time duration as well. To my knowledge, none of the participants knew one another, each lived within a different county, and their children attended schools in different districts. Two of the participants’ children attended public school, and one of the participant’s children attended a private school. Two of the participants identified as both

female and mother, and the other participant identified as both male and father. Each of the participants had two or more children in their household and of various ages, with at least one child of each participant being a biological child. Each participant had at least one child in elementary school (grades PreK-5), and two of the participants had children younger or older than the elementary grades as well.

Each parent participated in a single interview lasting approximately one hour. The interview questions I employed in the pilot study informed my development of the interview questions I used in my dissertation research project. Each of the pilot study participants read the following two picturebooks inclusive of gay, male characters: *And Tango Makes Three* (Richardson & Parnell, 2005) and *The Harvey Milk Story* (Krakow, 2002). (See Appendix A for the synopses of these and other books used for later stages of the study.)

Following the sessions, I transcribed each of the interviews and conducted a thematic analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) using an inductive approach (Greco, Masciari, & Pontieri, 2001). Preliminary findings were that all three pilot study participants stated liking the books even though they had never before heard of the books, let alone the people or events on which the books are based. The participants suggested the books were both necessary and appropriate for children, especially for children who may have family members who are gay or are gay themselves. However, each of the participants also had difficulty imagining teachers' use of the books for elementary classroom read-alouds. For instance, they were concerned about the ways other parents might react and if the books actually connected to the curriculum. One participant suggested it might be better for the books to be held in the school counselor's office and used with particular students, and some participants recommended the books could be available for check-out from the shelves of the school library. Two of the participants noted it might help to

notify parents in advance of the intended use of the book(s) for a classroom read-aloud. In response to including the picturebooks at school, one participant stated, “Certainly I’m for it. I just want to make sure that we do it right.”

The concerns expressed by these participants – parents who not only claimed to support gay and lesbian individuals and issues but also knew me personally – astounded me. I was astounded because I had assumed, erroneously, that these parents would have fully supported the inclusion of GL/LG children’s literature without reservation or suggested contingencies. However, I also knew that my long-existing relationship with each of the participants prior to the pilot study was a limitation and would likely influence how they responded to the books in my presence and my questions at large (Glesne, 2011). Therefore, I wanted to expand my explorations of the perspectives of other parents, particularly those with whom I did not have a prior relationship. That was one of the goals of this dissertation.

Through the pilot study, I was able to practice methods in which parents read and responded to specific picturebooks, receive input on my interview guides and analysis of the data from faculty, and further reflect on limitations, what worked well, and what could work differently.

Participant Criteria, Recruitment, and Selection

This study examined how adults who identify as supporters of GL/LG individuals and rights *and* who are parents of elementary-aged students a) respond to GL/LG-inclusive picturebooks and b) regard the actual/possible use of these books in elementary classrooms. Thus, criterion-based sampling was used (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). As true of any study, it was a necessity to consider criteria, recruitment, and selection of participants. Johnson (2002) emphasized the importance of sharing about such components when writing research:

The issue of ‘sampling,’ or how researchers decided which informants to include and which to exclude, is one that is rarely addressed in research reports and publications. It is important for researchers to provide accounts or explanations of how this selection was done in specific projects, so that readers may assess the researchers’ findings. (p. 111)

In the following sections, I describe in detail my process of developing participant criteria, recruiting participants, and selecting those who would participate.

Participant Criteria

As listed above, there were two overarching criteria I looked for in potential participants:

1) Participants must be a parent of at least one child currently attending public elementary school in grades PreK-5. 2) They must identify as a supporter of gay and lesbian rights and people.

However, as I quickly learned when proposing the dissertation study, each of these criteria needed further clarification.

Parents. For this study, I use the term “parents” rather broadly, as participants could be step parents or another type of guardian as well. In regards to the type of school children attend, I preferred public, especially since such schools are 1) where the majority of youth attend, and 2) legally obligated to serve all children and their families whereas other school types (private, religious, home-schooled) have more leeway in the selection of students served and the content of the curriculum whether in discriminatory or inclusive ways – neither of which may mirror a pluralistic society and the school environments of the majority of youth. If/as needed, I would have included participants whose children attended non-public schools if I was unable to secure enough participants representative of public schools. However, due to the number of respondents, I was able to select parents whose children attend public school – my initial aim.

Identify as a supporter of gay and lesbian people. I sought participants who identified as supporters of gay and lesbian people and rights, but I had to conceptualize what I meant by this to aid further participant recruitment and selection. Therefore, I sought participants who not only tolerate gay and lesbian individuals, but rather support them. By using the term support, and as described in Chapter One, I mean that parents believe such sexual orientation(s) are not wrong or deviant and claim that gay and lesbian individuals should be afforded equality in rights related to marriage, families, employment, and other non-discriminatory practices. Support is different from tolerate which infers a position of privilege and condoning, perhaps in a begrudging way.

Supporters of gay and lesbian people might also, but not necessarily, be those who express having friends or family members who are gay or lesbian whom they support/appreciate. In addition, supporters might participate in advocacy/activist opportunities such as (but not limited to) equal employment initiatives, support organizations (e.g., Human Rights Campaign, PFLAG, local AIDS support initiatives), or Pride parades and events.

While participants needed to identify as supporters of gay and lesbian people and rights, it was not necessary that the participants personally identify as gay and/or lesbian in order to take part in the study. I was especially interested in including participants who identify as straight to provide a perspective which seems lacking in research related to GL/LG children's literature and its use in schools, as described in Chapter One. However, in the event that I was unable to secure enough participants identifying as straight, I had planned to include participants who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer as well. I also hesitated to exclude voices of individuals often marginalized in society and perhaps in their children's schools as well. That aside, although the perspectives of *all* parents regarding GL/LG children's literature and its use in classrooms is lacking, no studies specifically inquire into the perspectives of straight parents. In addition,

straight parents 1) are dominant in most school communities, 2) may be less likely to be accused of supporting a “gay agenda” based on their own identity, and 3) are sometimes assumed to be resistant to GL/LG-literature and its incorporation in elementary classrooms (Bouley, 2011; Cumming-Potvin & Martino, 2014; Dedeoglu, Ulusoy, & Lamme, 2012; GLSEN, 2012; Hermann-Wilmarth, 2010; Schieble, 2012). It was my hope that by including parents who identify as gay/lesbian supporters – especially those who identify as straight – these parents may find value in and support the use of GL/LG-children’s literature in elementary classrooms as well. Later in this section, I describe the participants selected, the majority of whom identified as straight.

Additional considerations. Due to the feasibility of conducting interviews and providing books to participants to read on-site and/or take home, I focused on recruiting participants locally, though participants residing in surrounding communities or other parts of the state would be considered if/as needed. I was also interested to see if multiple people from the same household expressed interest in participating, but this did not occur. Though I would have considered selecting multiple people from the same household, I preferred participants come from different households. Such variation allowed for multiple representations from the geographic community across the group.

Finding and selecting participants who met the specific criteria described above assisted me more deeply exploring and critically analyzing a particular perspective on GL/LG-inclusive books and their potential/actual use in elementary classrooms. I tailored my recruitment plan to find such eligible participants.

Participant Recruitment

I created a recruitment flier (Appendix B) and included a link to an online pre-screening questionnaire (Appendix C) as a way for people to express interest in participating, provide contact information, and answer preliminary questions to assist with selection. Questions included the grade levels of their children, county their children attend elementary school, if and how they support gay and lesbian individuals and rights, and a potential commitment of availability for the proposed time the study would involve.

The recruitment flier was shared in a variety of ways. I contacted the moderators of listservs of local businesses and organizations (i.e, public libraries, bookstores catering to children as part of their services), community and university LGBTQ organizations, and groups on Facebook and/or other social media with a request that they forward the digital recruitment flier. I displayed a hard-copy version of the flier in local bookstores, and I asked friends and colleagues to share about the study with others who might be interested so they could contact me if interested in participating. Examples of such colleagues included faculty members at local elementary schools, fellow doctoral students who have children attending public elementary schools, and a professor who is active in a local church with an emphasis on inclusivity.

Per IRB, the pre-screening questionnaire began with a description of the study and a “yes/no” question to provide consent for answering the subsequent, optional questions on the next page of the questionnaire as well as my use of those answers for research purposes.

Participant Selection and Descriptions

The online screener was open from September 4-17, 2017. Thirty-one people responded, all of whom responded “yes” to the question “Do you support gay and lesbian individuals and their rights?” In response to sexual orientation, twenty identified as straight, one as gay female,

three as lesbian, one as queer lesbian, five bisexual, and one left this item blank. Respondents were not asked to provide their gender identity on the screener, but based on the name provided, I inferred two respondents were male and twenty-nine were female. Twenty-five of the respondents reported having children who live and/or attend school in the local district, and the other respondents represented five different school districts (two people from one district and one each from three separate districts). Of the thirty-one people who completed the screener, twenty-three qualified for the study based on having children who are currently elementary-aged attending public school.

To determine who I would invite to participate, I considered a variety of criteria in addition to those described earlier in this chapter. To begin, I excluded those who I knew personally so I would work with participants with whom I was unfamiliar. Though not an initial criterion for participation, I also excluded respondents who worked, to my knowledge based on their responses, in the field of education as K-12 teachers, media specialists, graduate students, and/or university professors. I excluded such individuals because I wanted to explore the perspectives of parents who are not employed in education who might 1) be influenced by past or current training advocating for particular types of teaching and/or literature within K-12 classrooms, and 2) express perceived or actual constraints about classroom practice based on their professional perspective. Researching educators – even if participating via a parent lens – risked duplicating extant research already conducted regarding educators' responses to GL/LG children's literature. Additionally, having parents with diverse occupations reflects the parental composition of classrooms.

With the participant pool further narrowed, I then considered the ages of the respondents' children, the school districts the respondents' children attend, and the race of the participant as

inferred by name in order to create as diverse a sample possible. (In retrospect, I would have included questions about gender, race, and ethnicity in the screening questionnaire to assist with participant selection as inferring these was a limitation of the study.) I selected eight people to participate based on the number of participants requested and approved through IRB. I also identified and ranked alternates in case the initial eight invited were unable to participate or needed to withdraw from the study early in the process.

Of the eight participants, five participated in all parts of the study and are thus the focus of this dissertation. The five participants, along with their demographic information based on information provided by them in a separate demographics questionnaire (described in the “Stage One” section later in this chapter), is provided in Table 3.1. Demographic information about their children is provided in Table 3.2. All names of people and locations are pseudonyms.

Table 3.1: Participant Demographics

	Gender	Guardian Type	Sexual Orientation	Race/ Ethnicity	Age	Occupation
Diya	Female	Mother	Straight	Asian	38	Research professional
Lindsay	Female	Mother	Straight	White	37	Work at home mother
Crystal	Female	Mother	Bisexual	Arab	39	Therapist
Kelly	Female	Mother	Straight	White	40	Senior administrative assistant
Anne	Female	Mother	Straight	White	40	Extension forester

Table 3.2: Participants' Children – Descriptive Information

	PreK	K	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	Other	District / School
Diya		G						B (1 y.o.)	Boxwood /

									Robin ES
Lindsay	G			B				G (2 y.o.)	Boxwood / Bluejay ES
Crystal		B					G	B (14 y.o.)	Boxwood / Canary ES
Kelly					G			G,G (16 y.o.)	Walnut / Hummingbird ES
Anne			B					B (3 y.o.)	Walnut / Finch PS
#G Elementary: 4 #G Total: 7 #B Elementary: 3 #B Total: 6									
Key: G – Girl B – Boy									

The five participants came from two school districts: Boxwood and Walnut. Below is a brief description of each school district along with the participants who came from each. I share this information here as opposed to the findings sections in future chapters in order to provide context about the parents who participated. Although some of the information describing the parents was shared by them in response to questions I asked, the information is peripheral rather than integral to the research questions guiding the content of the findings chapters.

Boxwood School District. Boxwood is a mid-sized urban area located within the southeastern United States. The district is racially, socio-economically, and politically diverse. In the 2016 presidential election, more than double the number of people voted Democrat than Republican (The New York Times, 2017). According to 2010 U.S. census data, on average there are 4.65 same-sex couples per 1,000 households in Boxwood County though some parts of the county have a higher population (The Williams Institute, 2016). As expressed by the participants in this study, Boxwood County is viewed as largely diverse and inclusive and this is mirrored in the school district as well. Schools display district-created posters stating all are welcome, including immigrants. Further, the district has a long-standing policy supporting multicultural

education, including sexual orientation, in its “instructional program philosophy.” A variety of LGBTQ-related organizations exist within the county, and Pride and other LGBTQ-related activities occur annually. Three participants live in and have children attending elementary public schools in Boxwood.

Diya. Diya identified as mother, female, straight, Asian, and 38 years old. In interviews, she described she grew up in India and then moved to the U.S. for graduate school. She works as a research professional. She described having a husband and two children – a daughter in kindergarten at Robin Elementary as well as a one-year-old son. She stated the current school year is her daughter’s second year at the school. Diya loves the school and especially the media specialist who she sees as advocating for diverse children’s literature, but she also expressed still feeling relatively new and thus not knowing how school decisions are made, what children learn about, the books available in the library, or what to expect for her daughter in the older grades.

Diya described herself as a GL/LG supporter. She has friends and former roommates who identify as gay or lesbian and discussed she has enjoyed marching in Pride parades in cities in which she has past lived. She also described wanting to find gay and lesbian-inclusive books to share with her children which is part of the reason she desired to participate in this study. Diya repeatedly emphasized wanting to instill positive self-esteem within her children for themselves and kindness toward their peers, seeing the reading of children’s literature as a way to encourage this.

When asked about which books her elementary-aged child reads from home or school, Diya shared that *Goodnight Moon* (Brown, 1947), the *Llama Llama* series (Dewdney, 2005), and books by Eric Carle were favorites. She also described that her daughter had recently become fond of books with princess characters – a type of book Diya wished to discourage. When Diya

was asked if she was aware of any children's books including gay and/or lesbian characters, she was not aware of any and was surprised to realize that she could not think of any books written for adults with gay and/or lesbian characters as well. She found this latter element particularly surprising since she is an avid reader. She wondered if she had perhaps read books with such characters and had overlooked the element or if there is a dearth of such books available. Her statements also indicated that she had not specifically sought such books.

Lindsay. Lindsay identified as mother, female, straight, White, and 37 years old. In interviews, she described growing up in rural Georgia. On the demographic questionnaire, she identified as a work-at-home mother. In our conversations, she mentioned her husband and three children – a son in second grade and daughter in Pre-K at Bluejay Elementary as well as a two-year-old daughter who often accompanied her to our one-on-one interviews. Lindsay stated that the current school year is her children's first year at Bluejay Elementary and that they were homeschooled prior to this year. She expressed reticence at the initial decision for her children to attend school and that she and her husband continue to reconsider the decision, especially since she felt her son had a difficult transition and was not receiving differentiated instruction for his advanced abilities. Lindsay shared her continued disappointment with various aspects of the school, including the lack of diversity in books and the curriculum.

Lindsay described herself as an GL/LG supporter. As examples of support for GL/LG individuals and their rights, she expressed befriending gay and lesbians in her rural community during her adolescence and her quest to find books with LGBTQ characters or themes via the public library to share with her children. Lindsay frequently also discussed church. She yearned in her youth and much of her adulthood to find a church she felt was truly accepting, and she was happy that she and her family have now found such a space.

When asked about which books her elementary-aged children read from home or school, Lindsay shared her elementary-aged son enjoys science books, comic books, and graphic novels such as *Zita the Spacegirl* (Hatke, 2011) and *Mighty Jack* (Hatke, 2016) while her daughter in PreK gravitates toward books based on Disney's *Frozen*. Lindsay mentioned that her children often read one another's books as well. When Lindsay was asked if she was aware of any children's books including gay and/or lesbian characters, she expressed frustration that she did not know any though she did state knowing a book about gay penguins. She described another picturebook she had read where she inferred a character might be gay based on his attire, but Lindsay said the book did not make the character's sexual orientation explicit – though she thought that would be a worthwhile and easy element to include.

Crystal. Crystal identified as mother, female, bisexual, Arab, and 39 years old. In interviews, she described growing up and spending her earlier adulthood in New York. On the demographic questionnaire, she identified as a therapist, and in our conversations she also described previous work as a teacher and school administrator within private schools that emphasized equity and social justice. In our conversations, she mentioned having a husband and three children – a daughter in fifth grade and son in kindergarten at Canary Elementary. Crystal stated her children have attended a variety of schools within the district as well as other places they have lived. She expressed being active in her children's and other schools to share books and topics representative of diversity, including gay and lesbian identities though she would like to see more done in her children's current elementary school.

Crystal described a long-history of her various experiences with GL/LG advocacy including serving as a teacher and administrator in an independent school in which equity was a focus, participating in various LGBTQ organizations, and writing policy with school district

administrators. In her current work as a therapist, she facilitates trainings for educators, administrators, and youth in local school systems about LGBTQ inclusivity.

When asked about which books her elementary-aged children read from home or school, Crystal predominantly shared titles with gay, lesbian, trans, or gender non-conforming characters as being favorites. Examples included *And Tango Makes Three* (Richardson & Parnell, 2005); *Mommy, Mama, and Me* (Newman, 2009), *The Different Dragon* (Bryan, 2006), *I am Jazz* (Herthel & Jennings, 2014), and *Drama* (Telgemeier, 2012). When asked if there were any favorites that did not include LGBTQ characters, Crystal mentioned her son particularly enjoyed *One Cool Friend* (Buzzeo, 2012), *The Secret Garden* (Burnett, 1911), *Bunnicula* (Howe, 1979), and books by Dr. Seuss.

Walnut School District. A county neighboring Boxwood, Walnut's landscape has changed geographically and economically during the last two decades. Though largely rural, the county has also seeing an influx of subdivisions spurred by and spurring the construction of retail and industry in various parts of the county. This growth is reflected in the district with the opening of a new elementary school every ten years on average. In the 2016 presidential election, more than double the number of people voted Republican than Democrat (The New York Times, 2017). According to 2010 U.S. census data, on average there are 0.165 same-sex couples per 1,000 households in Walnut County though some parts of the county have a higher population (The Williams Institute, 2016). As expressed by participants, both the county and the school district are viewed as conservative and not diverse racially or in sexual orientation, though there is diversity in socioeconomic level. Two participants live in and have children attending elementary public schools in Walnut.

Kelly. Kelly identified as mother, female, straight, White, and 40 years old. In interviews, she shared she has lived in Walnut County her entire life and she feels it is special her kids are being raised in the same area she grew up. On the demographic questionnaire, Kelly identified as a senior administrative assistant. In our conversations, she mentioned having a husband and three children – a daughter in third grade at Hummingbird Elementary and twin daughters who are high school juniors. Kelly expressed being pleased with her daughters’ schools and the education they are receiving, though she also felt it was not very diverse, school faculty do not like to implement practices that may cause upset, and teachers predominantly use the instructional strategies and texts they have used for many years and with which they have grown comfortable.

Though Kelly identified as a GL/LG supporter, she also expressed not feeling like a vocal person. She stated her support is largely through being a friend to everyone regardless of their sexual orientation or other identities but that she’s also happy to be a listening ear and confidant. Kelly expressed that being busy with her family keeps her from doing more advocacy but that she wanted to participate in this research study to be a more active “ally” (interview, 9/17/2017).

When asked about which books her elementary-aged child reads from home or school, Kelly shared the series *Pete the Cat* (Litwin, 2008), *Judy Moody* (McDonald, 2000), and *Wayside School* (Sachar, 1978) as favorites. She also mentioned her daughter enjoying and/or being assigned to read from school *Charlotte’s Web* (White, 1952) and *Bud, Not Buddy* (Curtis, 1999). Kelly felt the books her daughter read were those in the mainstream, books she heard her friends talking about or that teachers had used in schools for years. When Kelly was asked if she was aware of any children’s books including gay and/or lesbian characters, she was not aware of any. She shared that she also asked her daughter in third grade because such topics were openly

discussed and seen as non-problematic in their household, so she knew her daughter would share if she was aware of any. However, Kelly's daughter did not know of any GL/LG books, either.

Anne. Anne identified as mother, female, straight, White, and 40 years old. In interviews, she shared that she moved to Walnut County a few years ago for her husband's job but she grew up in Chicago. On the demographic questionnaire, Kelly identified as an extension forester. In our conversations, she mentioned having a husband and two children – a son in second grade at Finch Primary (a school including PreK through second grades) and a three-year-old son attending pre-school. Anne often compared her school experiences growing up in Chicago, Finch Primary, and the child development center. Anne appreciated the diversity in many forms she encountered in school, and while she feels the child development center is ethnically diverse and would likely aim to be inclusive of GL/LG identities as well, she feels Finch Primary is in stark contrast to both of these settings – a homogenous setting with practices she finds problematic. One concern she shared was how children dress as Native Americans at Thanksgiving.

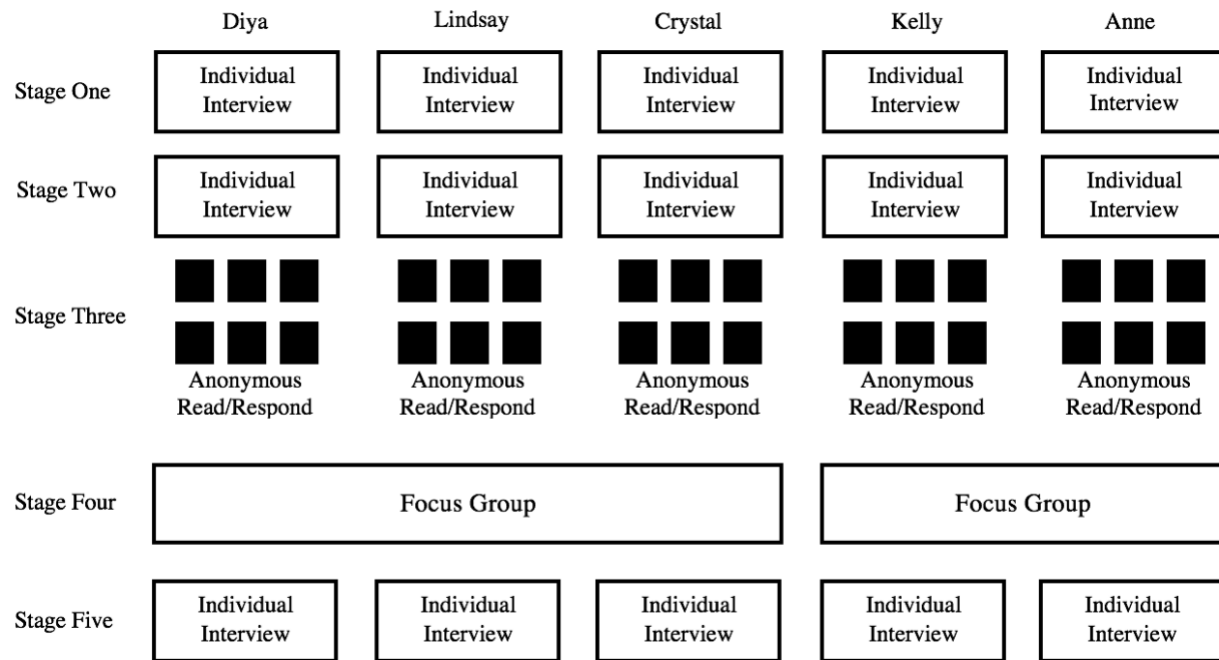
Anne identified as a GL/LG supporter and described that her support is largely centered around social media and family. Anne often mentioned her membership in social media groups involving parents and/or progressive individuals, and she serves as an administrator for some of the groups. She also described interactions with a variety of family members and claimed she's more likely to be vocal with them when encountering discriminatory situations. For example, when overhearing her elementary-aged nephew make a remark about something being "so gay", she told him that such remarks were "not okay" and "being gay is a totally fine thing" (interview, 10/5/2017). Another instance occurred earlier in her life. When watching television with her uncle, a gay couple was depicted. When the uncle made a disparaging remark, Anne responded that same-sex couples deserve to be depicted on television like straight couples. Anne also

expressed having family members who are queer or queer-supporting such as an adolescent cousin who is gender non-binary who she feels is great with children, including her own.

When asked about which books her elementary-aged child reads from home or school, Anne shared the “Gerald and Piggie” [*Elephant and Piggie*] (Willems, 2007) and *Harry Potter* (Rowling, 1997) series as favorites. *The Daddy Book* (Parr, 2002) was also mentioned as one her son enjoyed when younger. When Anne was asked if she was aware of any children’s books including gay and/or lesbian characters, she felt she had heard of one or two previously but could not think of any specific titles or descriptions. Anne thought *The Daddy Book* (Parr, 2002) could possibly be gay-inclusive with its theme on diverse family structures, but she stated the book did not explicitly depict a gay character.

Procedures and Methods

With the participants selected and described to provide context, I now detail the stages of the study I designed and implemented to collect, or rather construct (Prior, 2003; Ruona, 2005), data. The study consisted of five stages over a period of five months. The first two stages consisted of individual, semi-structured interviews (Roulston, 2010) with each participant. The third stage involved participants reading and anonymously responding to books via online surveys (Ponto, 2015). The fourth stage involved a focus group (Morgan, 2002) which brought participants together in conversation, and the fifth stage was a final individual, semi-structured interview (Roulston, 2010) with each of the participants. Figure 3.1 provides a visual for the overall research design. The stages of involvement, and when each stage occurred per participant, are provided in Table 3.3.

Figure 3.1: Study Design**Table 3.3: Participants and Their Involvement Across Stages**

	Initial Screener Open 9/4/17- 9/17/17	<u>Stage 1</u> Individual Interview	<u>Stage 2</u> Individual Interview	<u>Stage 3</u> Online Responses	<u>Stage 4</u> Focus Group	<u>Stage 5</u> Individual Interview
Diya		9/17/17	10/15/17	11/10/17 - 1/2/18	1/13/18	1/21/18
Lindsay		9/29/17	10/20/17	11/10/17 - 1/2/18	1/13/18	1/29/18
Crystal		9/28/17	10/26/17	11/10/17 - 1/2/18	1/13/18	1/27/18
Kelly		9/17/17	10/18/17	11/10/17 - 1/2/18	1/14/18	1/23/18
Anne		10/5/17	10/26/17	11/10/17 - 1/2/18	1/14/18	1/26/18

Data from across the study included:

- GL/LG-inclusive picturebooks,
- audio and/or video-recordings and transcripts from individual and group interviews (Stages One, Two, Four, and Five),
- participants' responses in personally-identifiable online surveys (pre-screening, Stage One),
- book lists shared by each participant about what their children read from home, schools, and/or libraries (Stage Two)
- participants' responses in anonymous online surveys (Stage Three),
- texts, e-mails, and/or other personal communication,
- interactive charts (Stage Four), and
- researcher field notes.

Appendix D lists each of the data sources along with the research questions they helped to address. Appendix E further extrapolates some of the data sources in conjunction with the research questions. It includes sample questions from each of the interview guides matched to the research questions they helped to address. The subsections below discuss where and how these data sources were incorporated, collected, and/or constructed across the study.

Stage One

After notifying each participant of their selection, confirming their availability to participate in the study, and in preparation for the first one-on-one meeting, I requested each participant complete a brief demographic questionnaire (Appendix F) via a Google Form I e-mailed to them. The purpose of this questionnaire was to provide information about the various ways the participant identified, information which I believed may shape and inform how they responded to GL/LG-inclusive picturebooks and their actual/potential use in elementary

classrooms. I also believed such information would be of interest to readers of this research who might wonder whose perspectives are being heard. I opted to ask these questions via the online form rather than in person to further ensure the eligibility and diversity of the participant pool and because I hesitated that asking the questions in person 1) may cause participants to feel they are put on the spot, 2) would result in a series of closed-questions and thus create a trend of shorter responses by participants for subsequent interview questions, and 3) would take time and focus away from the purpose of the initial interview.

Each Stage One interview lasted approximately one hour, was audio-recorded, and took place in person. Following each interview, I wrote reflective field notes to capture what I noticed from the session as well as questions I wanted to explore further with the participant or myself.

Upon meeting each participant and before commencing with the interview, I reviewed the consent form (Appendix G) and asked them to sign. After much consideration, I began each interview by briefly sharing information about myself such as that I identify as a gay man, my past teaching experiences, and why I was conducting this research. I then asked participants if they had any questions they wanted to ask me based on what I shared. The decision to begin the interviews in this way was multifaceted. In advance of these interviews, I asked my dissertation chair her thoughts on such sharing, and she agreed that whether or not I shared about myself, it would impact how participants responded. Though I realized sharing about myself could sway how participants responded in this and subsequent interviews, particularly in biased ways, I also felt that by being open about myself, this could help build rapport with the participant and perhaps encourage how open they were in their responses and dialogue with me as a researcher. My dissertation chair also noted that regardless of whether or not I shared about myself, participants would likely construct in their minds their own story about me and why I was

conducting this research, thus also shaping how they may or may not respond. Further, sharing about myself connects to one of the tenets of queer theory – disrupting binaries, including distinctions between researcher and participant, the public and the private (Britzman, 1995; Meyer, 2007).

After this initial sharing, I then interviewed each participant using a semi-structured approach (Roulston, 2010). The purpose of this interview was to begin building rapport with the participants (Esterberg, 2002; Johnson, 2002; Roulston & Shelton, 2015) as well as to learn more about them, their children, their children's schools, and their conceptualization of gay/lesbian support (see Appendix H for the interview guide).

At the conclusion of the interview, I shared that our next few stages would include the participant browsing, reading, and responding to a selection of GL/LG-inclusive picturebooks. I also asked the participant to bring to the next interview a list or photograph of books their child reads (independently or with a parent) as well as any picturebooks the participant felt included gay and/or lesbian content or characters that we might discuss. However, I expressed to the parents I would also understand if they did not have or know of any GL/LG-inclusive picturebooks, there was not an expectation to search for such books if not known, and there were no “right” or “wrong” types of books to bring.

Stage Two

Each Stage Two individual, semi-structured interview (Roulston, 2010) occurred approximately one month after the Stage One interview. The purpose of this interview was to 1) see what types of picturebooks, if any, participants conceptualized as gay and/or lesbian inclusive based upon the books they brought to the session or discussed, and 2) observe what types of picturebooks inclusive of GL/LG content and themes, if any, participants gravitated

toward or resisted from a selection of 27 picturebooks. An interview guide (Appendix I) was used to guide the discussion. Interviews ranged from 60 to 90 minutes (inclusive of time for participants to explore the GL/LG-books brought to the session) and took place in person.

The interviews were both audio- and video-recorded, and I wrote reflective field notes while participants explored the books independently and after the interview itself. Video-recording the sessions provided me the opportunity to revisit each participant's exploration of the books to observe facial expressions, comments made, utterances, the order in which the books were read, and the amount of time spent per each book.

After participants shared about the books their child(ren) read and the GL/LG-books of which they were aware, if any, I then invited participants to explore the set of 27 GL/LG-books I brought to the session. I informed participants that while they read, I would be working on my laptop. I did this so participants would not feel self-conscious with me watching them and thus might be more prone, when not self-aware, to provide visual or verbal responses to the texts. While each participant read, I monitored their actions and typed field notes.

Book selection and grouping. I selected twenty-seven GL/LG-picturebooks to share with participants in Stage Two (see Table 3.4 below). The books represented diversity in race, ethnicity, language, gender, and sexual orientation as well as genre, publication year, and ways gay and/or lesbian concepts are portrayed (marriage, adoption, AIDS, Pride parade, love between two individuals without parenting, etc.), and the types of characters (human, animal, alien). The books included in the corpus were selected based on their award or honor distinctions, such as the Stonewall Book Award presented by the American Library Association, or being positively-reviewed within scholarly literature (e.g., Möller, 2014; Naidoo, 2012). Though 27 books are a relatively small set, the corpus reflects the larger set of GL/LG-picturebooks published thus far.

My initial plan was to provide the group of books in mass for each participant to explore. The intent of this protocol was to show participants a sampling of the hundreds of books which exist and invite them to develop their own categories, if noticed, from the set based on their reading. Upon reflection, though, I felt providing over two dozen books as one entire set and only twenty minutes to read may not contribute to as thorough or generative an exploration and discussion of the different types of books. Therefore, I instead divided the books into the following seven categories I created and named: 1) how families are made, 2) love between two, 3) family diversity, 4) adversity or anxiety about gay/lesbian identity, 5) AIDS, 6) celebrating visibly, and 7) families being families. The use of such categories could both facilitate our subsequent conversation as well as a way to organize and analyze my data. Descriptions and books included per category are listed in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4: Stage Two Book Categories

Category	Description	Books Included
How families are made	Books about donor conception, adoption, and foster care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Felicia's Favorite Story</i> (Newman, 2002) • <i>Home at Last</i> (Williams & Raschka, 2016) • <i>The White Swan Express: A Story about Adoption</i> (Okimoto & Aoki, 2002) • <i>Zak's Safari: A Story about Donor-Conceived Kids of Two-Mom Families</i> (Tyner, 2014)
Love between two	Books in which the primary focus is love or close friendship between two same-sex characters and in which the couple are not parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Christian, the Hugging Lion</i> (Richardson & Parnell, 2010) • <i>Gertrude is Gertrude is Gertrude is Gertrude</i> (Winter, 2009) • <i>Hello, Sailor</i> (Godon & Sollie, 2004) • <i>Jack and Jim</i> (Crowther, 2000) • <i>Steven Universe: The Answer</i> (Sugar,

		2016)
Family diversity	Books depicting a variety of family structures exist (e.g., two moms, two dads, heterosexual couples, single parent homes, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>1, 2, 3: A Family Counting Book</i> (Combs, 2001) • <i>A,B,C: A Family Alphabet Book</i> (Combs, 2000) • <i>Families</i> (Kuklin, 2006) • <i>Heather has Two Mommies</i> (Newman, 1989)
Adversity or anxiety about gay/lesbian identity	Books where the characters experience adversity from others or have anxiety about themselves or family members who are gay or lesbian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Antonio's Card / La Tarjeta de Antonio</i> (Gonzalez, 2005) • <i>In Our Mothers' House</i> (Polacco, 2009) • <i>My Two Uncles</i> (Vigna, 1995)
AIDS	Books in which AIDS is depicted. In these particular books, the character with AIDS is a male family member.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A Name on the Quilt: A Story of Remembrance</i> (Atkins, 1999) • <i>Too Far Away to Touch</i> (Newman, 1995)
Celebrating visibly	Books depicting Pride events or same-sex weddings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Best Best Colors / Los Mejores Colores</i> (Hoffman, 1999) • <i>Donovan's Big Day</i> (Newman, 2011) • <i>Gloria Goes to Gay Pride</i> (Newman, 1991) • <i>Uncle Bobby's Wedding</i> (Brannen, 2008)
Families being families	Books in which same-sex headed families are depicted doing things other families might also do. The emphasis is not on being gay or lesbian but rather a family with challenges and joys.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Daddy, Papa, and Me</i> (Newman, 2009) • <i>Daddy's Roommate</i> (Willhoite, 1990) • <i>Mini Mia and her Darling Uncle</i> (Lindenbaum, 2007) • <i>Mommy, Mama, and Me</i> (Newman, 2009) • <i>The Entertainer: A Story in Pictures</i> (Willhoite, 1992)

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When I first began developing the categories, though, I felt conflicted because queer theory resists categorization (Duggan, 1995), and here I was trying to place books into distinct and discernable groups. To address this, I shared with each participant prior to their exploration that the groups were arbitrary, developed by me, other groups could certainly be formed within the set, the current groups were simply to help facilitate our conversation, and several of the books could exist in more than one category. For example, *In Our Mothers' House* (Polacco, 2009) was placed in the “adversity or anxiety about gay/lesbian identity” category because adversity against the two-mom family is depicted on three page-spreads in the book – glares from a mother when the family is present in the neighborhood and that same mother later approaching the lesbian couple pointing at them snarling, “I don’t appreciate what you two are!” (Polacco, 2009, n.p.). However, this book could have also been included in at least three other categories – how families are made (the family is multi-racial and the children are adopted), family diversity (a variety of family structures are depicted in words and illustrations throughout the book), and families being families (the lesbian-headed family is shown doing a variety of activities – cooking, building, and trick-or-treating among others activities). In instances when books could be grouped in more than one category, I placed it in a category where there were fewer books and if the element seemed a recurring theme within the text.

Independent reading. Participants were informed they would have twenty minutes provided to explore the books but could take additional time if desired. Appendix J shows for each participant the order in which the categories (and books within each category) were read, the amount of time spent reading each book, and their total reading time. Appendix K illustrates the position of the participant, researcher, and each set of books. Within each set, the books were

placed in a random order, and upon revisiting the video of each session, participants read the books within each group in the order they were stacked. This information and the appendices are provided for context as the information is peripheral to the findings shared in the subsequent chapters.

Post reading. Once the participant expressed being finished, I used the interview guide (Appendix I) to inquire about what the participant noticed, if there were any books or concepts within the books they were particularly drawn to, and if there were any books or concepts which they particularly resisted – not only as a parent thinking about the book for their own child but also considering the book’s potential use in elementary classrooms with all learners.

At the conclusion of the interview, I described what would occur for Stages Three and Four and provided the six picturebooks that would be used during those next components: *And Tango Makes Three* (Richardson & Parnell, 2005), *King & King* (de Hann & Nijland, 2003), *Molly’s Family* (Garden, 2002), *Orca’s Song* (Cameron, 1987), *The Harvey Milk Story* (Krakow, 2002), and *This Day in June* (Pitman, 2014). Synopses and rationales for each of these books are provided in Appendix A. I was able to provide each participant a set of the six picturebooks due to funding awarded by the Children’s Literature Assembly 2017 Research Award. (Funds from this award also aided with the purchase of books within the Stage Two corpus and refreshments for the Stage Four focus groups described later in this chapter.)

This use of six designated texts was influenced by Cumming-Potvin and Martino’s (2014) study in which four texts were provided to each of their participants. In that study, the participants – all elementary teachers - read/viewed the texts in preparation for a one-on-one interview and were then asked to discuss two of the texts which they could envision using with their students and how they would do so. My decision to include six picturebooks for this part of

the study was for various reasons: a desire to provide as many and diverse depictions as possible (see Appendix A for more information), budget, and considering the participants' time.

Stage Three

Stage Three (the stage involving the reading and online response to six provided picturebooks) began in the concluding minutes of each Stage Two interview. When participants were provided their set of six picturebooks, they were informed the books were theirs to keep but would need to be accessible for upcoming parts of the study. Participants were asked in person, and then reminded via e-mail, to read each book from the perspective of a parent and considering the book being available and/or used in their child's classroom. Participants were encouraged to attend to the written narrative, illustrations, and peritext such as backmatter, jacket-flap, etc... Following the reading of each book, the parents completed an online survey using a link and randomly assigned number e-mailed to them by my dissertation chair. My dissertation chair was involved to anonymize the Stage Three responses at the onset (assigning and sharing with participants the random numbers) and once the deadline had passed (blinding responses, removing computer identifications automatically shared by the online system). The survey was created using SurveyMonkey. Appendix L shows the questions included in the survey. Participants were encouraged to devote at least twenty minutes to reading and online response combined per book, and I invited the parents to read the books independently or with family members. The parents were also informed that their responses would be anonymous to me during data collection but their identities would be matched to their responses once data collection concluded to aid my further analysis.

To provide ample opportunity for reading and response, and because this stage took place during the winter holiday season and I wished to respect participants' time, approximately two

months were provided for this stage. I provided a deadline to participants for the completion of all surveys and e-mailed reminders as the deadline approached. In addition to completing the online surveys during this timeframe, I invited (but did not require) participants to contact me via text, phone, and/or e-mail if desired to discuss any of the books further. However, none of the participants did this.

Once the survey deadline passed and my dissertation chair ensured all surveys were submitted by each participant, the responses were shared with me via an Excel spreadsheet. Names and other identifying information were removed by my dissertation chair prior to sending me the spreadsheet, although the randomly assigned numbers were included so that I could see how responses compared from the same participant. The rationale for anonymous responses connected to my third research question: to see how parents responded to GL/LG-picturebooks across different contexts, particularly when not meeting face-to-face and anonymity increased.

Once I received the Excel file from my dissertation chair (with their identities anonymized since data collection was still in process), I contacted the participants to schedule the focus group session for Stage Four.

Stage Four

In the fourth stage of data collection, I invited the participants together for a conversation via a focus group (Morgan, 2002) to discuss the six picturebooks read and anonymously responded to during Stage Three. I initially intended for all of the participants to join for one session, but everyone was not available on the same date or time. Thus, I coordinated two separate meetings that occurred within the same weekend. Diya, Lindsay, and Crystal were the first group, and Kelly and Anne comprised the second group. A third person had also committed to participate in this second group but did not show due to sickness in the family. Though it was

not the original intent to have two separate groups and there would be benefits to having everyone dialogue together, there were also benefits to having two, smaller groups. For example, each person had more opportunity to speak and I could compare and contrast the conversations across groups.

Both focus groups took place in my university department's conference room, and refreshments were provided. Each session lasted approximately two hours and was both audio- and video-recorded. An interview guide (Appendix M) was used to facilitate the semi-structured conversation. Each session began with reviewing consent and confidentiality, sharing brief introductions (Roulston, 2010), and inviting participants to determine which picturebook(s) we would discuss first. The purpose of this session within my study was to see 1) which books and/or themes participants were particularly accepting of or resistant to, if any, 2) if and how participants' responses to the books were shaped by fellow participants, 3) if and how participants' responses within the group setting differed from those within the individual interviews and anonymous online responses, 4) how participants might support the use of any/all of the books in elementary spaces, and 5) if/how such support was strengthened due to hearing other participants' responses. From a queer theory perspective and when facilitating interviews centered on sexuality, Kong, Mahoney, and Plummer (2002) stated,

What starts to be sensed are all the typically silenced questions around an interview that more and more need to be brought to the fore. We can take all this one stage further, into slightly dangerous, certainly controversial, territory. Here we turn to the hidden dimensions of romance, passion, and sexuality that must impinge on some, maybe much, research, even if rarely spoken about. (p. 249)

Such an approach is well aligned to queer theory which aims to make the unthinkable thinkable (Greteman, 2013) and the not spoken about spoken about, especially in regards to sexuality and the topic's inclusion at the elementary level.

In addition to interview questions, I also created an interactive chart that was introduced and used mid-way through the conversation. The inclusion of this activity was spurred by the suggestions of scholars for incorporating activities to ignite further dialogue or approach topics in an alternate way (Delgado, 2015; Robinson, 1999; Roulston, 2010). For this activity, I created columns and rows on chart paper for different grade level bands: PreK-1st, 2nd-3rd, 4th-5th as well as intermittent columns for PreK-3rd and 2nd-5th. In addition, I included columns titled “none” (i.e., none of the grade levels) and “all” (all of the grade levels). Figure 3.2 depicts the chart.

Figure 3.2: Sample Focus Group Interactive Chart

<u>PreK-1st</u>	<u>(PreK-3rd)</u>	<u>2nd-3rd</u>	<u>(2nd-5th)</u>	<u>4th-5th</u>
<u>All</u>				
<u>None</u>				

Participants were provided six differently colored post-it notes, with each post-it color representing a different book. When I first devised this activity, I only planned for one round and asked participants to place the post-it notes based on where they could envision each book being used in classrooms, if at all. However, once the post-it's were placed and we began discussing the chart in the first focus group, I noticed participants were discussing their choices in different ways – sometimes about content and sometimes about perceived interest. In some instances, these two ways of thinking were reflected in the same participant about different book

placement. I then immediately adapted the activity to activity to occur over two rounds – one for appropriateness of content and the other for perceived interest.

For the first round, participants were asked to consider which grade levels, if any, they felt each book would be appropriate in regards to content. After this round and once I took a photograph of the chart, participants then removed their post-it notes and were asked to consider where they would place each book in regards to possibly being of interest to children (e.g., amount of text, illustration style, literary devices). After this round, another photograph was taken of the chart and we commenced with a discussion of their post-it placement. Photographs of the completed charts and an analysis of how participants responded via these charts are provided in Chapter Six.

At the conclusion of each focus group, I informed participants I would e-mail them to schedule our concluding individual conversation, Stage Five. I also once again wrote reflective field notes following each session.

Stage Five

These final individual interviews with each parent also used a semi-structured approach (Roulston, 2010) following an interview guide (see Appendix N) informed by the preliminary analysis of data from the previous stages. Each interview took place in-person, was audio-recorded, and lasted approximately thirty minutes. Reflective field notes were written after each session.

Primarily, this final interview provided an opportunity to follow-up with each parent regarding comments made during the focus group and if there was anything else she would like to discuss, either from the Stage Four session or her participation across the study at large. This final interview also provided an opportunity for clarification from comments made during any of

the earlier sessions and to invite the parents to voice any additional perspectives not shared during the group conversation, especially if they felt their voices were silenced or marginalized.

As a form of reciprocity following each final interview, I e-mailed each parent articles on LGBTQ-inclusive literature for young readers (e.g., Hermann-Wilmarth & Ryan, 2014; Lester, 2014; Möller, 2014). These articles provided brief analyses of texts but also shared a wealth of titles in case the parents would like to have lists of additional books for their own browsing. The three articles, along with the six picturebooks and refreshments provided during the Stage Four focus groups, were ways I expressed gratitude to the parents in addition to my verbal and written comments of appreciation throughout the study.

Data Analysis

The data collected/generated from the various stages included audio and/or video-recordings, transcriptions, participant artifacts (e.g., book lists, e-mails), field notes, pre-screening and stage one questionnaires, anonymous online responses, focus group chart papers, and the picturebooks themselves. I analyzed the data using a variety of processes and tools. The sections below detail my process of 1) writing analytic memos and transcribing, 2) reading and interpreting with queer theory, 3) coding and conducting thematic analysis, and 4) developing a thematic network. Though my analysis was iterative, each part of the process warrants its own discussion.

Analytic Memos and Transcription

Researchers advocate for writing analytic memos as an early stage of reflection and analysis (Glesne, 2011; Saldaña, 2009), so this was my initial analytic process. Another early stage of my analysis was the transcription of the talk generated and recorded from the individual interviews and focus groups. Though some may view transcribing interviews as a step between

data collection and analysis, Lapadat and Lindsay (1999) discussed how transcription is part of the analytic process, especially when conducted by the researcher him/herself. Listening to the recordings closely and repeatedly as part of transcription affords a closeness to and “mak[ing] sense of” (p. 82) the data. During the process, the researcher is likely to begin noticing patterns or other items of interest within the data. This was certainly my experience as I transcribed the fifteen individual interviews and two focus groups which resulted in 514 pages of typed data. As I transcribed, I kept my three research questions at the forefront of my mind and thus began to annotate the transcriptions with analytic memos and preliminary codes in the margins.

Queer Analysis

I analyzed the data through my theoretical framework – queer theory – looking for instances in which theory could be used to analyze, support, and make sense of the data (Mazzei, 2014). Queer theory’s “challenge is to bring stabilized gender and sexuality to the forefront of analyses in ways they are not usually advanced and that put under threat any ordered world of gender and sexuality” (Plummer, 2013, p. 426). Using a combination of a priori, iterative, and aposteriori coding (Constas, 1992), I analyzed the data to explore: 1) participants’ explicit and implicit messages related to sexual orientation in response to the picturebooks and their use in elementary classrooms; 2) how participants’ statements created, maintained, and/or potentially disrupted social structures and institutions; 3) what participants found un/acceptable and how/if that reinforced particular GL/LG representation; and 4) if/how responses differed in one-on-one, anonymous, and group settings. I analyzed the participants’ pre-screening and Stage One questionnaires in conjunction with their statements and interactions across subsequent stages to explore how/if their positionality as members of dominant or marginalized cultural groups was enacted. These analytic lenses align with my three research questions and use of queer theory.

Sedgwick (2003) described two approaches to interpreting texts: reparative reading and paranoid reading. I understand these as possible processes for data analysis as well. In short, reparative reading entails looking for the positive, assuming good intentions, and has the “provision for pleasure” (p. 138) whereas paranoid reading takes a more critical and skeptical approach and involves the “anticipation of pain” (p. 138). Although Sedgwick asserted both could be used and useful within queer theory depending on the motive of the reader, I embarked on a paranoid reading of the data. Such a reading aligned with the four analytic lenses described above as well as my research questions – particularly the third research question exploring how the parents “produced themselves” as supporters. I further discuss reparative and paranoid reading in Chapter Seven when I reflect on the study at large.

Coding and Thematic Analysis

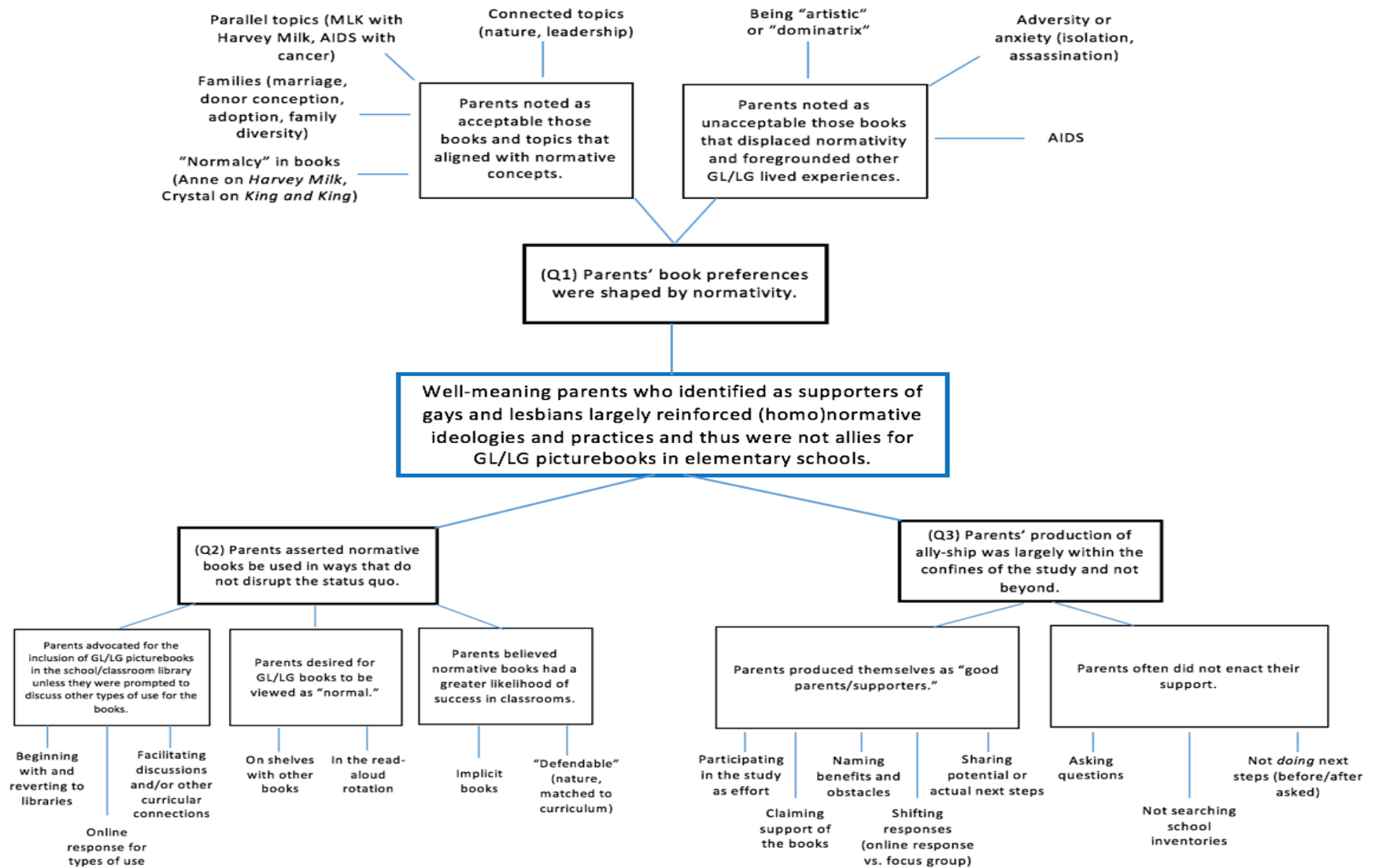
Using a thematic analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) guided by my three research questions and theoretical framework, I developed and annotated the data with codes based on aspects I began to notice in the data that related to the research questions. I then developed a code book in which I listed the codes – 73 in all – and then grouped into categories that led to developing themes (Richards & Morse, 2007) matched to each research question. To assist with the coding and ability to retrieve excerpts across transcripts more quickly, I uploaded the transcripts into DeDoose, a password-protected online resource similar to NVivo and ATLAS.ti, and coded the data within the site. However, I assert that *I* conducted the analysis rather than the online tool analyzing the data. Woolf and Silver (2018) compared using software for analysis to using a word processor to write a paper; the word processor does not write the paper, but rather the author writes the paper. The word processor is simply a tool that facilitates the process. Such was my use of DeDoose.

Once I had coded the data within DeDoose and began generating initial themes, I then felt the need for an additional tool and process to further develop my analysis. I wanted to consider the data, codes, and initial themes more broadly as well as better understand, construct, and illustrate the connections between concepts. Attride-Stirling's (2001) approach for thematic network data analysis served this need.

Thematic Network Data Analysis

Using this analytic approach, I first considered how each of my evolving themes in response to each research questions could be basic themes, "the most basic or lowest-order theme that is derived from the textual data" (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 388). For each basic theme, I identified examples from the data that supported that theme. I then considered how the basic themes for each research question connected. This led to my creation of one organizing theme for each research question. Attride-Stirling (2001) suggested organizing themes have two roles: 1) "clusters of signification that summarize the principal assumptions of a group of basic themes, so they are more abstract and more revealing of what is going on in the texts", and 2) tools that "enhance the meaning and significance of a broader theme that unites several organizing themes" (p. 389). Attride-Stirling (2001) called the broader theme the "global theme." Figure 3.3 shows the thematic network I developed for this study based on the data and my analysis.

Figure 3.3: Entire Thematic Network



I share the thematic network above to provide a preview for the chapters that follow. The organizing theme and the basic themes for each research question are the content of Chapters Four, Five, and Six. I include within the introduction of each of those chapters the corresponding section of the overall thematic network. I discuss the center, global theme and revisit the network in its entirety in Chapter Seven.

Summary of Data Analysis Processes

In the four subsections above, I described the various ways I analyzed the data for this dissertation. I embarked on data analysis with the understanding that data is not “independent of the interpretive desires of the data ‘collector’” (St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014, p. 716), but rather data from which I would construct meaning (Prior, 2003; Ruona, 2005). Hence, I construct myself and others construct me as researcher.

Limit(ation)s

As I described in Chapter Two, one type of inquiry within queer theory is the study of limits (Britzman, 1995). According to Britzman, such an inquiry might explore the limits of what is intelligible to people, what people are willing to consider or want to know, or inclusive curricular practices that actually result in perpetuating privileged hierarchies. I also consider how the conception of limits within research is a contestable notion when considering queer theory in conjunction with the oft expectation for researchers (especially within qualitative research) to name and discuss the limitations of their studies. While describing a study’s limitations shows the researcher’s cognizance of their work and its limits (its boundaries as well as areas for future development or revision), acknowledging and elaborating on limitations also works to delegitimize the research. I compare such delegitimization to Britzman’s description of how particular sexual identities and topics are devalued: “But these limits, in order to be recognized

as limits, require the presence of the dismissed, the unworthy, the irrelevant” (p. 156). To name limitations of a study emphasizes, using Britzman’s terms, elements that make the study increasingly unworthy, irrelevant, and thus dismissible. In other words, alluding to a mantra that “this study would be stronger if only...” and creating an ever-present yet impossible to fulfill aim. Further related to the research process, Britzman argued, “The study of limits [...] attempts to get at the unmarked criteria that work to dismiss as irrelevant or valorize as relevant a particular mode of thought, field of study, or insistence upon the real” (p. 156). Thus, by describing below some of the limit(ation)s of this study, I attempt to “get at” and “mark” some of the elements of this study – not as a means to describing how the study is weakened, but rather how it is impacted and nuanced in particular ways by the choices I did and did not make. I conceptualize the former (the idea of weakening) as a limitation, while the latter (the idea of a boundary) as a limit.

The concept of a limits within research connects to my discussion in Chapter One of how this study is bounded. I understand this study to have the following limits, each described in their own subsection below: 1) design of the study, 2) researcher subjectivity, and 3) complexity of discussion. The last of these three limits – complexity of discussion – particularly relates to how my writing in this dissertation is bounded by my focus on the three research questions.

Design of the Study

To begin, the design of this study undoubtedly affected how participants responded. Kong, Mahoney, and Plummer (2002) stated, “[Researchers] need to take account of the distinct possibility that, within the research process itself, interviews are moral and political interventions through and through” (p. 245). Though they emphasized this could be addressed and represented through the writing of the research, I nonetheless envision this as a limit within my study.

Providing GL/LG-inclusive picturebooks to participants, eliciting their responses, and asking questions related to how these books are or could be used in schools is quite similar to an intervention, and my subjectivity as a gay male former elementary educator is blatant and may further influence how the participants responded. I also realized that the construction of my questions, both those prepared in advance as well as those developed on-the-spot while using the semi-structured approach, may have led participants to respond in particular ways and exclude other potential responses. Because of this possible limit, I incorporated Stage Three with the opportunity for participants to respond to books anonymously.

Similarly, various aspects of the study design were normative. I established a researcher/participant relationship, conducted interviews, collected data through surveys, and elicited responses to artifacts. Further, I presented myself as a former elementary teacher and current scholar of GL/LG children's literature, thus positioning myself as an "expert" to the parent participants. As described in Chapter Two, Britzman (1995) stressed that normative conventions cite particular performances. The conventions I used may have incited the parents to perform in certain ways, such as discussing the various ways books have value (possibly based on their own school experiences) or asking me questions about how books are selected for school and classroom libraries or use. I further describe the possible causes for and impacts of the parents' performances in Chapters Six and Seven.

Even before commencing with interviews, there were limits caused by my participant recruitment and selection. Though as described earlier I was looking for a particular type of participant in regards to various criteria, the respondent pool was further limited by the ways in which I recruited – social media groups, listservs, and public spaces that may be accessible or used more so by particular socioeconomic levels or affiliations. In addition, questions about how

participants identify in regards to age and race were postponed to the demographics questionnaire rather than the pre-screener, and thus I was not able to use such information in my initial participant selection. As a result, though my group of participants were diverse in some ways (age of children, school district, ethnicity), it was homogenous in ways unintended and narrowing (age, socioeconomic level).

As the study progressed, I increasingly felt that selecting particular GL/LG-picturebooks was a limit. Though it was inherent and necessary to the study to provide participants specific books for which to respond, any selection of texts thus excludes other texts that might elicit different responses. Therefore, I realize that my analysis and findings are specific to only *those* books included in *this* study and with *these* five parents. The findings are not generalizable.

Researcher Subjectivity

Considering subjectivity as a researcher leads to another potential limit. As an elementary teacher, I often felt constricted about revealing aspects of my sexual identity let alone facilitating conversations about gender or sexual orientation in the classroom, and such hesitation was due to fear on personal and professional levels. As a researcher exploring such topics, my subjectivities are inherent and inform this study (Roulston, 2010). However, Roulston and Shelton (2015) urged researchers to re-conceptualize their subjectivities and bias not as a limitation, but rather as yet another relevant component of the study at large. Thus, it is a limit (a boundary and integral part) but not a limitation (a weakening factor).

Complexity of Discussion

As described above, by using normative conventions in this study, I established such relationships and hierarchies as researcher/participant, GL/LG children's literature "expert" and

learner, and teacher/parent. Related, the following aspects possibly further influenced responses and interactions amongst the parents and myself:

- me, as an out gay man who was a local elementary teacher and knowledgeable in GL/LG children's literature;
- their roles as parents of elementary school children;
- their relationships with teachers, librarians, and/or administrators at their children's schools;
- the norms around books within formal and informal learning spaces;
- the other participants they met in the study; and/or
- knowledge of and/or connection to broader LGBTQ community.

Discussing the complexities of these aspects and myriad other social discourses in how they may have influenced the participants' performances and responses is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Similarly, an in-depth discussion of the complexities of the dataset relative to the multidimensional context of the study is also beyond the scope of this dissertation. Thus, the analysis and discussion of the data has its own limit(ation)s.

With the limits of this study acknowledged and the participants, contexts, methods, and analytic process introduced throughout this chapter, I now share findings in response to the three research questions – each discussed in its own subsequent chapter. In Chapter Four, I discuss how participants responded to GL/LG picturebooks in regards to what they found un/acceptable. In Chapter Five, I share parents' responses to the picturebooks as (potential) classroom materials, and I describe in Chapter Six how the parents produced themselves as supporters across research settings in relation to the picturebooks as (potential) classroom materials.

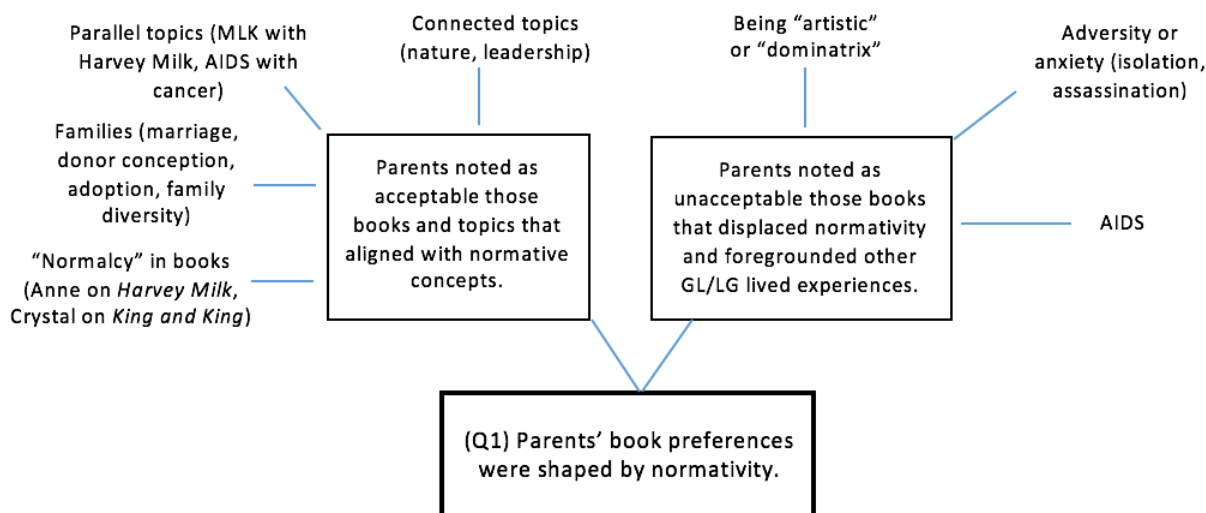
CHAPTER FOUR

“I’M FINE WITH ALL OF THEM, BUT...”: THE UN/ACCEPTABLE IN GAY AND LESBIAN PICTUREBOOKS

In this chapter, I address the first research question: What themes, if any, emerge across parents’ responses to gay/lesbian-inclusive picturebooks, specifically in regard to what they find un/acceptable? Analyzing the data, I constructed two themes relative to the research question:

- Theme Q1-A: Parents noted as acceptable those books and topics that aligned with normative concepts.
- Theme Q1-B: Parents noted as unacceptable those books that displaced normativity and foregrounded other GL/LG lived experiences.

Using thematic network analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001) to determine and illustrate the connection between the two basic themes listed above (described in Chapter Three), I developed an overarching organizing theme: Parents’ book preferences were shaped by normativity. The basic themes and organizing theme, along with elements from the data to support each basic theme, are shown in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1: Q1 Thematic Network

In the sections that follow, I begin by describing how I conceptualize “acceptable” and “unacceptable” in relation to the parents’ responses. I also provide context for the findings by briefly describing influences and queer theory connections. I then discuss each of the two basic themes in its own section. I conclude the chapter with a discussion section where I elaborate on the organizing theme that connects the two basic themes.

Considering Terminology and Influences for Context

Per the research question, I explored what parents found un/acceptable within the GL/LG picturebooks shared with them. In using the word “acceptable,” I mean the books or topics parents spoke of favorably or endorsed. For example, parents might have expressed particularly liking the book or topic, and parents may have shared what they found valuable about it. However, I also defined acceptable in other ways. When parents said they were “fine with” (Kelly, focus group, 1/14/2018), didn’t have a “problem with” (Anne, focus group, 1/14/2018), or otherwise seemed indifferent about a book or topic, I equated this with the parents’ acceptance. (It is important to note that this latter descriptor of acceptance is similar to tolerate

rather than a more positive and enthusiastic embracing of books or topics.) On the other hand, I used the word “unacceptable” when parents expressed worry or resistance about a book or topic.

Based on the data – partly influenced by how I phrased the interview questions – I primarily focus on what the parents found un/acceptable for children rather than what they found un/acceptable for themselves and/or other adults. (For example, later in this chapter I describe how Lindsay’s favorable opinion of *The Harvey Milk Story* changed after seeing how her children were disturbed by the book.) However, queer theory emphasizes that individuals and their subjectivities are fluid, multiple, and informed by various cultural, historical, and social influences (Butler, 1990; Lovaas, Elia, & Yep, 2006; Slagle, 2006). The parents’ responses were also likely informed by their positionalities toward other people (e.g., teachers, children, fellow community members), concepts (e.g., books as instructional tools, GL/LG marginalization and/or equality), and institutions (e.g., public/elementary schools, universities, children’s book publishers). Therefore, the data – and specifically how the parents described books’ un/acceptability relative to children – was not solely based upon my questioning and interactions with the participants. Instead, many factors shaped the parents’ responses about un/acceptability in GL/LG picturebooks. I recognize these complexities. In this chapter, I focus on a particular element of the parents’ response in the dataset – what they found un/acceptable for children – for which I developed themes via thematic network analysis. (Considering further complexity, such as the parents’ responses as performances influenced by multiple factors, will be the focus of Chapter Six.)

I realize that the concepts of acceptable and unacceptable, and the basic themes I constructed, reflect a binary. Binaries are resisted by queer theory (Meyer, 2007; Tierney & Dilley, 1998) which instead sees overlap and complexity. I observed such complexity in the

parents' responses to the GL/LG picturebooks, and I will further explore this concept in the final, discussion section of this chapter.

Another aspect to foreground before sharing the findings is the book categorization. As described in Chapter Three, the 27 GL/LG picturebooks shared during Stage Two were divided into seven categories: 1) how families are made, 2) love between two, 3) family diversity, 4) adversity or anxiety about gay and/or lesbian identity, 5) AIDS, 6) celebrating visibly, and 7) families being families. I developed these categories not only to help parents see the various types of depictions available in GL/LG picturebooks, but also as a means to further facilitate conversation that would help me better understand if there were particular books or topics the parents found un/acceptable. Undoubtedly, my development of these categories influenced how the parents responded to particular books and topics. I share this to provide context for the parents' responses as shared in the findings below. Further, the categorization is somewhat reflected in the way the chapter is organized. The sections that follow – Theme Q1-A and Theme Q1-B – are comprised of subsections, some of which align with the categories of books shared with the parents (e.g., family diversity, AIDS, anxiety and adversity). (For the list of book categories, see Chapter Three. For the two themes and overall network for this chapter, see Figure 4.1 above.)

Finally, I wish to foreground for context how queer theory connects to the subsequent findings at large. The ways in which queer theory informed the entire study was described at length in Chapter Two. Relative to the first research question and findings in this chapter, I use three particular tenets of queer theory: concepts and critiques of normativity (Warner, 1999), foregrounding the sexual (Blackburn & Clark, 2011), and the study of limits (Britzman, 1995). I

embed connections to these and other aspects of queer theory throughout the findings and discussion sections that follow.

Theme Q1-A: “Normal” Books as Acceptable

The first theme I constructed in regard to what parents found un/acceptable was: Parents noted as acceptable those books and topics that aligned with normative concepts. Though all of the parents made generalized comments throughout the study that they found all 33 of the GL/LG picturebooks acceptable, the parents’ responses also showed there *were* books and topics they found more acceptable than others. In this section, I begin by describing the concept of “normal” as I interpreted it based on the parents’ comments as well as how queer theory and the parents themselves troubled “normal.” I then describe the four ways I noted the parents aligning normative concepts with the books they found acceptable: 1) “normalcy” in books, 2) families, 3) parallel topics, and 4) connected topics.

Conceptualizing and Problematizing Normal

In listening to the parents’ responses, it appeared they conceptualized books or the characters within them as normal when the actions and visual portrayal aligned with otherwise heterosexual, mainstream society such as having or adopting children, wearing clothes typically worn by people of the same gender, not making their sexual orientation an agenda or issue, or doing anything that might be interpreted as transgressive beyond simply being in a same-sex relationship. I use quotation marks when referencing “normal” and “normalcy” in this section because, according to queer theory, such concepts are arbitrary and mean different things to different people based on evaluative and/or statistical standards that are impossible to meet or perfect (Warner, 1999).

All of the parents used the word “normal” at least once across the study to describe GL/LG books or topics. However, three of the parents (Lindsay, Crystal, and Diya) also expressed feeling the word was problematic. They stated that their use of the word was due to not having a better word for immediate retrieval and that they did not intend to communicate that gays and lesbians are not “normal.” For example, when discussing how she wished there were more depictions of gays and lesbians in the books her children read, Lindsay stated,

I hate to use the word normalizing because that implies that there’s something not normal about it, but I just wish that that it was a little bit more normalized in the books. That in his comic books, that there was, you know, a gay couple. (interview, 10/20/2017)

However, despite three of the parents acknowledging the concept of “normal” as problematic, all of the parents not only used the word “normal”, but they also expressed across the study that books and topics aligning with normative concepts were the most acceptable for them. In the following subsections, I describe the four ways parents described books as being acceptable for them, all of which were aligned with concepts of “normalcy.”

“Normalcy” in Books

Parents appreciated how particular books depicted the GL/LG character as “normal.” In these instances, the parents took a “gay blind” approach (similar to a “color blind” approach [Winkler, 2009]) in which notions of sameness were valued and emphasis on difference, unique experiences, or marginalization were minimized. Research asserts that taking a “blind” approach and avoiding conversations about difference perpetuates issues of injustice that may become more implicit for youth later in life (Winkler, 2016). A “gay blind” also aligns more with an LGBT Studies (and GLS) theoretical framework as it holds assimilation as an aim (Lovaas, Elia, & Yep, 2006) and reinforces normativity rather than interrogating it as queer theory would

challenge (Blackburn & Clark, 2011). In the following sub-subsections, I detail how three of the parents specifically demonstrated a preference for “normalcy” in the picturebooks.

Crystal. As shared in Chapter Three, Crystal identified as bisexual and was the only non-straight person in the study. She worked with and for various LGBTQ initiatives and was familiar with many LGBTQ-inclusive children’s books in addition to those used within this study. In the Stage Four focus group, she noted many of the LGBTQ-inclusive books with which she was familiar made hardship an emphasis of the story. For her, this was problematic because “we have plenty of books [...] that are cis[gender] or hetero where that’s not a concept at all and we just get to talk about happiness” (focus group, 1/13/2018). While she also emphasized that she had “absolutely no hesitation to discuss adversity by any means” (focus group, 1/13/2018), she also appreciated books like *King & King* because it provided a “break” from hardship and emphasized “diversity and normality for any type of relationship” (focus group, 1/13/1980). Therefore, Crystal appreciated how the picturebook created a sense of “normalcy” by not focusing on hardship. Another book Crystal appreciated for its emphasis on “normalcy” was *Molly’s Family*. Though this book is about a girl who experiences anxiety about her same-sex parents and thus emphasizes difference, Crystal liked how the teacher in the book normalized the child’s different family structure with minimal fanfare:

The teacher handled it in a really kind of nonchalant, you know, learning opportunity method, but she didn’t suddenly go into this big lecture “Well, like, families can be anything.” She didn’t have an agenda about it. She was just like, “Obviously, a family can have two mommies cause she [Molly] just told us that her family has two mommies, so duh” (laugh) and I liked that. (focus group, 1/13/2018)

Here, Crystal showed that even in books where gays and lesbians are portrayed as experiencing difference, she appreciated when efforts were made by the characters to “normalize” it and make being gay or lesbian a non-issue.

Lindsay. During the Stage Two interview, Lindsay appreciated *Uncle Bobby’s Wedding* (Brannen, 2008) because she felt the emphasis of the story was on the young female protagonist feeling angst about losing her favorite uncle when he got married to his boyfriend. She was glad the book did not focus exclusively on the gay couple and how they were different than other couples. On the other hand, Lindsay expressed in her Stage Three online response that she appreciated the depiction of family diversity in *Molly’s Family*. Nevertheless, Lindsay also specified “normalcy” as a favorable aspect of the book:

I could appreciate the way the book reinforced the normalcy and pride in a variety of family structures both by authority figures (parents and teacher) and eventually by the children as well. The text was clear and relatable to my children [...] with familiar school and home settings. (Stage Three online response)

In this response, Lindsay further asserted that the story was “clear”, “relatable”, and “familiar” to her children when she read it to them. However, the story held all of these characteristics for Lindsay and her children because it closely reflected their “normal” experiences from school and home. I will discuss more about the connections between family, intelligibility, and normal later in this section. However, Lindsay’s explicit use of the word and appreciation of “normalcy” connects to the current discussion of the theme.

Anne. Similar to Lindsay’s appreciation of *Uncle Bobby’s Wedding*, Anne also perceived some of the GL/LG picturebooks as not emphasizing difference and spotlighting the sexual

orientation, and this was an aspect she appeared to find favorable. When discussing *The Harvey Milk Story*, Anne stated,

I just like the normalcy aspect [of *Harvey Milk*] that so, like you know, he's not a gay hero. He's a hero who's gay, you know, in terms of he's got this American story. So I like that everything's, you know, I don't know, kind of made normal by the fact that, you know, talking about his history where it's like, "Oh, he's playing football" and he's not I guess the way that they introduce him, he's not other. He's just this kid so, you know, who even- who is influenced by what he's doing, but I mean they talk about the thing that makes him different, but they talk about all these things that make him, you know, a football star or whatever. (focus group, 1/14/2018)

Here, Anne's takeaway from the picturebook is not how Harvey Milk identified as gay, fought for social justice for gays and lesbians and others, and was murdered by a discriminatory straight colleague, but rather that he was depicted as "normal" and aligning with values associated with mainstream conceptions of masculinity such as playing football. As she stated, "he's not a gay hero. He's a hero who's gay" (focus group, 1/14/2018). To Anne, Milk's sexual orientation was not the primary emphasis; it was secondary to his heroism and "normalcy." Anne felt like Harvey Milk was "made normal" by how he was depicted in the book. He had an "American story" and was not othered. Though what Anne meant by "made normal" and "American story" were not clear, I interpreted her statements as meaning Milk's participating in politics, serving in the military, and wearing male business suits. In other words, if a reader didn't know Milk was gay, they might assume he was a cisgender straight male. Such "normalcy" caused Anne to further find the book acceptable. Anne's favorable opinion of *The Harvey Milk Story* expressed in the focus group was further made evident in her preceding Stage Three online response about

the book: “I think it’s a great book [...] a nice normal example of people living their normal lives LGBT (though his life was not very normal)” (Stage Three online response). Here, Anne’s repeated use of “normal” to describe *The Harvey Milk Story* clearly demonstrated her preference for depictions that did not deviate from normative ways of being.

Anne’s concept of normal versus abnormal – especially in regards to attire – was further revealed when describing depictions she preferred in *This Day in June*: “these are fine (showing book) [Figure 4.2¹] like girls with short shorts and men with legs showing and I don’t know and most of the images are just fine you know a guy in a tie and everything” (focus group, 1/14/2018).

Figure 4.2: *This Day in June*, Ninth Opening



Thus, when characters performed gender or sexuality in ways with which Anne could relate and aligned with normative ways of being, she found it to be acceptable. On the other hand, Anne demonstrated resistance to depictions that did not align with normative ways of performing

¹ Reproduced with permission from Pitman, G. E. (2014). *This day in June* (K. Litten, Illustrator). Washington, DC, US: Magination Press/American Psychological Association. Text copyright © 2014 Magination Press/American Psychological Association. Illustrations copyright © Kristyna Litten. No further reproduction or distribution is permitted.

gender or sexuality. Examples of such resistance will be described later in this chapter when discussing Theme Q1-B.

Families

Another way the parents showed their preference for normative concepts was through their discussion of books depicting families. I identified three ways the parents demonstrated a preference for family representations: 1) family diversity, 2) same-sex parents, and 3) donor conception. Before describing the findings for each within their own subsections, I begin by briefly sharing context about how the concept of families may have been foregrounded through the research design and books shared.

Three of the seven book categories I developed for Stage Two explicitly focused on families: how families are made, family diversity, and families being families. Across the other categories, there were also depictions and/or emphases on families. For example, books such as *Uncle Bobby's Wedding* (Brannen, 2008) and *Donovan's Big Day* (Newman, 2011) were about same-sex marriages though these books were in the “celebrating visibly” category. In both of the books depicting AIDS (*Too Far Away to Touch* [Newman, 1995] and *A Name on the Quilt* [Atkins, 1999]), the story revolved around how family members coped with their loved one having AIDS. The emphasis on families may very well be a trend in extant GL/LG children's literature thus far as publishers may feel that families, a normative concept, may be more readily accepted and embraced by a larger readership and that they are often left out of the concept of “family” among more conservative populations. Such acceptance was certainly the case for the parents in this study, both within Stage Two and other stages of the research. All of the parents expressed liking the depictions of families, though I realize upon reflection that the categories I

constructed and the books I shared may have influenced the parents' focus on families. I share the parents' responses in the following subsections.

Family diversity. Family diversity, or in other words books depicting families with same-sex parents among a range of other family types, was a topic parents appreciated. In *Families* (Kuklin, 2006), Diya and Kelly liked the diverse family depictions: families with single parents, grandparents as guardians, heterosexual parents, adoptive parents, and same-sex parents. They also felt family diversity is an important message to share with youth. Further, Kelly also appreciated the racial, ethnic, and religious diversity within the text. She specifically mentioned how she was pleased by the inclusion of Muslims. Later, Diya commented appreciating the emphasis on family diversity within *Molly's Family* since it showed "not all families fit the cookie cutter model of one mom plus one dad" (Stage Three online response). Lindsay also commented on *Molly's Family* in her online response: "I feel like this book is an excellent example of introducing the idea of different types of family structures to young children" (Stage Three online response). Crystal responded, "The story provided a realistic presentation of all different types of families" (Stage Three online response). Kelly felt similarly:

The story was a good one too – about how there are all different types of families, not just a mom and a dad with children. I liked how it didn't focus on just one type of family, but 'all kinds of families,' which for me, is what I'd like children to see and understand. Just because it doesn't look like your family, doesn't mean it's not a family. (Stage Three online response)

Kelly's written response to *Molly's Family* mirrored her earlier comments about the depictions in *Families* – that she appreciated diverse family depictions including in structure (different sex parents, same-sex parents, single parents) as well as race and religion. Kelly wanted children to

see and understand the value of diversity and that not all families are the same. Thus, she reinforced the teaching quality of such books. In different research stages and in response to different books, Kelly consistently demonstrated her appreciation of family diversity as a depiction with the GL/LG picturebooks. As Kelly and the other parents' responses attest, family diversity was a topic parents felt acceptable and even welcomed.

Same-sex parents. The parents also expressed liking books that focused solely on a family with same-sex parents. One particular book that all of the parents particularly enjoyed was *And Tango Makes Three*. Anne claimed it was “one of [her] favorites” (focus group, 1/14/2018) and that she read it to her own children on several occasions (Stage Three online response). She expressed appreciating the emphasis on families and “how the dads were good dads” (focus group, 1/14/2018) which she connected more so to parenting in general rather than specifically a same-sex couple: “it’s kind of more just about penguin families and it’s minorly about like the two male penguins. Like, I feel like a lot of it is just, like, talking about what penguin families do” (focus group, 1/14/2018). Anne understood the book to be less about gay characters, experiences, and difference and instead about constructing the characters as “normal” and similar to (heterosexual) others.

However, Anne was not the only parent who noted enjoying *And Tango Makes Three* for its family emphasis, and particularly the depictions of parents. In her Stage Three online response, Lindsay wrote that she liked how the book showed “all family types are equally capable of being supportive, nurturing parents.” This comparison of the same-sex parented family to other families, and thus being “normal” was echoed by Crystal in her online response. She quoted from the book: “There they snuggled together and, like all the other penguins in the penguin house, and all the other animals in the zoo, and all the families in the big city around

them, they went to sleep” (Richardson & Parnell, 2005, n.p.). Crystal stated that she and her son both appreciated the phrase and that she felt it was “such a beautiful ending to a well written story” (Stage Three online response). However, the selection of this sentence also demonstrated Crystal’s appreciation for how the same-sex parented family was shown as similar to other (heterosexual) families and immersed within larger communities. The responses of the three parents (Anne, Lindsay, and Crystal) to *And Tango Makes Three* emphasized their appreciation for near GL/LG invisibility due to “normalcy.”

Donor conception. While *And Tango Makes Three* depicted child adoption or foster care, as did other books in the corpus such as *The White Swan Express* (Okimoto & Aoki, 2002) and *Home at Last* (Williams, 2016), another type of family creation was also discussed in one of the books. *Zak’s Safari* (Tyner, 2014) is a book about a donor-conceived child in a lesbian headed household. This was a book I predicted some parents may find problematic, an assumption I made because of my own biases and past concerns about parents when an elementary classroom teacher. Three pagespreads within the book discuss in words and show in illustrations a sperm, egg, and fertilization. The book also discusses how lesbian couples can seek a male friend or go to a sperm bank to assist with the process. I included this book in the corpus because, more than any other book in the set, it uses terminology and illustrations explicitly and unapologetically linked to sex and reproduction. However, to my surprise, parents did not express resistance or worry about this book. For example, Lindsay stated,

I really like this one, too, because we do talk a lot to our kids about um (clear throat) about sex and about anatomy and about, you know, how babies are made, and we have had this talk a lot about um, you know, sperm and egg and how different types families come together, and we have talked a lot about that. (interview, 10/20/2017)

In my conversation with Anne, she responded,

I think they did a good job of explaining the technicalities and everything. I like the illustrations which are always important. Um, yeah I think they did a good job. I was thinking about that cause I have a, you know, seeing that this just applies to beyond people who are two mom families cause I have a friend who's single and, you know, used a donor for her child but she's just single. (interview, 10/26/2017)

Crystal had a more ecstatic response to the book:

Oh, I loved this one! Yeah, so thank you for reminding me of this. This one was, I just thought what a beautifully written dear reader section. I've never seen this. I just thought this was one of my favorite as far as um aesthetics. It was just gorgeous. The story was so beautifully told. Yeah I just thought this was a lot of fun. I really enjoyed this one, and this is one I thought, like, I'm definitely making sure my kids have this um because I want to regardless of the fact that we don't have a sperm donor, you know, in our own personal lives, I want my kids to know all of the possibilities, so I really enjoyed this one. (interview, 10/26/2017)

Each of these excerpts demonstrate the parents' approval of the specific book and topic of donor-conception in discussions with youth. Further, Lindsay, Anne, and Crystal all connected the books to their own lives by sharing about the conversations they have with their own children, friends to whom the book could relate, and a desire to obtain a copy.

In retrospect, I realize that I should not have been surprised. Like marriage, foster care, and adoption, donor-conception is yet another way that the structure of family is created and maintained. Thus, the parents' acceptance of the book and topic aligned with their preference for families at large. Though the parents did not specifically name or describe donor-conception as

normal, the concept of desiring and creating a family structure aligns with normativity. I also acknowledge that the parents' responses to donor-conception were likely conditioned by a number of factors, including their participation in this study and potential desire to produce themselves as supporters of such books and topics. More on the parents' production of support in their responses to the books will be shared in Chapter Six.

Parallel Topics

In some instances, the experiences of gay and lesbian characters were noted as similar to others. When this occurred, the gay and lesbian depictions were “normal” because they were comparable to other challenges or situations the parents, and perhaps people at large, were familiar. I use the term parallel topics to refer to these instances of comparison, borrowing the term from Hamilton's (1993) description of “parallel cultures” used to describe other non-White/European races and/or ethnicities. Scholars have used the term “parallel texts” for books depicting the experiences of racial and/or ethnic populations apart from White/European representation (Crisp et al., 2016). In this study, the parents equated the GL/LG representation with another specific topic or representation. I note here that viewing GL/LG topics as “parallel” to other topics was something the parents did. I do not align the GL/LG topics with other topics myself, as will be noted further in this section. I identified four parallels in my analysis: 1) AIDS and other terminal diseases, 2) GL/LG identity and other identity, 3) Harvey Milk and other civil rights leaders, and 4) “gay penguins” and nature.

AIDS and other terminal diseases. Two of the parents (Diya and Lindsay) saw AIDS and other terminal diseases, such as cancer, as parallel topics. However, these two topics – much like the other instances of “parallel topics” that will be discussed in this subsection – are *not* parallel. AIDS, unlike cancer and other terminal diseases, did not have to be terminal and result

in such a large number of deaths. It could have been remedied. Queer theory would say that AIDS and other terminal diseases are not parallel topics, especially because the response to AIDS was about power. Queer theory argues that sexuality is a central component of power (Slagle, 2006). In the instance of the AIDS epidemic, those with power (heterosexual, conservative Republican men) made decisions and took inaction that kept those without power (LGBTQ people) increasingly powerless, possibly with the hope to annihilate the entire population and thus further bolster their own dominance.

Nevertheless, Diya and Lindsay both connected the books about AIDS – *A Name on the Quilt* (Atkins, 1999) and *Too Far Away to Touch* (Newman, 1995) – to other terminal diseases. Diya suggested one could even “change” the emphasis from AIDS to another terminal disease and it would still be similar in meaning and discussion for a child (interview, 10/15/2017). When she discussed the books with me, Lindsay noted that they “didn’t talk about what AIDS was” (interview, 10/20/2017). However, like Diya, she did connect the books to another disease:

I just kept thinking like, so my mother had cancer a couple of years ago and I remember having conversations with the kids similar to both of these. My mother didn’t die, but with her just being really sick I could see where the kids would feel like. I could see how they would relate that to my mother. (interview, 10/20/2017)

In their statements, Diya and Lindsay connected AIDS to other diseases. Though they mentioned that connecting AIDS to other diseases may help the book be increasingly relatable for youth, neither of them stated that they would share more about AIDS specifically with their children. AIDS was simply a concept parallel to others – diseases that can be terminal and that families grapple with in regards to hardship and loss.

When discussing *A Name on the Quilt*, Diya reminisced about her experience seeing the AIDS Memorial Quilt with a friend:

I went with a friend who is from Germany and she remembered. She's about 20 years older than me, and she remembered the AIDS epidemic, you know, at the time. How afraid everybody was, how unknown everything was, you know, as to what this strange new disease is and she had lost friends to AIDS. And so looking at the quilt with her was a different kind of experience. (interview, 10/15/2017)

Here Diya showed that she had some knowledge about the gravity of AIDS due to her friend. Even so, she still related it to other diseases when discussing the book just seconds later: "I think this book explained it [where] you could change [to] almost any, you know, terminal disease for AIDS. I mean, it was, you know, what would you do if a beloved family member was, you know, getting sick?" (interview, 10/15/2017) Thus, AIDS was a parallel topic to other terminal diseases for Diya. It was not specific to the experiences of gays and lesbians, especially in regard to discrimination and marginalization.

As noted in the introduction of this subsection, equating AIDS with other diseases was something the parents did. Though the parents envisioned these parallels as a potential support for helping children understand AIDS specifically or other, non-related diseases, making such parallels diminishes the significance of AIDS with GL/LG history and the large scale marginalization that occurred with it. Within the United States between 1981 and 2015, there were 658,507 people who died from the disease, and nearly half of those were gay or bisexual men (Center for Disease Control, 2015). The government's lack of response to the epidemic in large part accounted for the number of deaths. The Reagan administration greeted the first cases of the disease with silence, followed by ridicule and indifference (Deschamps & Singer, 2017;

Stern, 2015). Though likely well-intentioned, the parents' equating AIDS with a parallel topic does not account for this highly political history and its ramifications. The parents in this study, due to a combination of their age and the geographic contexts in which they were raised, may lack such understandings about AIDS and thus result in their equating it as a parallel topic with other terminal diseases.

GL/LG identity and other identity. While queer theory contends GL/LG identity is not fixed nor congruent for all (Lovaas, Elia, & Yep, 2006), it would also contend the identities and experiences of gays and lesbians are *not* parallel to other (assumedly heterosexual) people's identities particularly because of issues of power informed by sexuality (Slagle, 2006). However, I identified parents describing GL/LG and other identities as parallel topics. For example, when describing how she perceived the majority of the 27 books in Stage Two, Anne stated, "It's just a family, like reading about a kid who lives in Africa or reading about a kid who lives in (unclear) with two moms" (interview, 10/26/2017). Here, Anne equated GL/LG books with any type of book showing something different than the "norm." She made a similar comment during the Stage Four focus group when discussing *Molly's Family*:

It fits that genre of, like, I'm nervous about going to school and my family is different and I feel like I've read, I feel like, as a kid, I read books like this that were just like, "Oh, you know, Molly was sad because whatever, because she didn't have a dog or because she lived in an apartment and not a house" so to me it's like the basic differences of like, you know, again and like this is very interesting if your family is like this. (focus group, 1/14/2018)

Here, Anne equated the anxiety felt by a child who has same-sex parents to anxiety a child might feel about any form of difference such as not having a pet or living in a certain type of residence

– a longing for material possessions or elements associated with privilege. Near the end of her statement, she mentioned that such books are “interesting if your family is like this.” Therefore, not only did she see anxiety about same-sex parents as parallel to other experiences of anxiety and thus normal, but she also emphasized such books are even further suited for those who have such experiences – who don’t have what others have and thus aren’t “normal.”

Anne was not the only parent who saw parallels between the experiences of GL/LG people and others, especially in regard to anxiety. Diya made similar comments when discussing the “anxiety and adversity” category of books during Stage Two:

It’s something, you know, anxiety about any sort of identity is something that whether you like it or not happens. You know, even children are anxious about something as simple as, you know, my eyebrows look weird, my hair is weird, I mean just the most superficial thing that you would never think of they might be feeling self-conscious about and they might be. So, you know, your identity is something that, yeah, I mean you want this to be out and say, “If you feel anything, say something so we can talk about it.

(interview, 10/15/2017)

In this statement, Diya described the various types of things she perceived youth might be anxious about themselves, and she saw the GL/LG depictions as both helping to provide reflections as well as a catalyst for conversation. Similar to Anne, the experience of being anxious about GL/LG identity was not unique and something to specifically address but rather a parallel topic that’s “normal” for others.

Harvey Milk and other civil rights leaders. Two of the parents (Anne and Kelly) described Harvey Milk, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Abraham Lincoln in ways I interpreted as parallel topics. In their discussion of *The Harvey Milk Story* during the Stage Four focus group,

they compared the leaders' work for civil rights and resulting assassinations. Anne mentioned that Harvey Milk was a "historical figure" and Kelly later stated, "it just so happens that he was a gay man" (focus group, 1/14/2018). Kelly followed this comment, stating, "It just so happens that Abraham Lincoln was President" and "it just so happens that MLK was a black man." Thus, Kelly saw being President, black, and gay as parallel topics. They all were descriptors for people who worked for civil rights, were murdered, and part of history. None of the descriptors warranted discussion about their distinctions because they were all parallel.

Similarly, Anne stated Harvey Milk was "murdered because of um his standing up for things" (focus group, 1/14/2017). Anne's comment in the focus group echoed the parallel she created in her Stage Three online response. Describing her appreciation for the writing and illustrative style of *The Harvey Milk Story*, she wrote, "You would see the same dreamy watercolor drawings for Abe Lincoln. I love that it's told in that same style too, including his boyhood and his military service and explaining his drive to change things and why" (Stage Three online response). It is particularly interesting in this excerpt that Anne chose Abraham Lincoln as a depiction to compare Harvey Milk, as there was no prompt to do so and a comparison with any other book and/or historical figure could have been made. Considering Anne's Stage Three (online) and Stage Four (focus group) remarks in conjunction with one another clearly shows the parallel she made between Harvey Milk, Abraham Lincoln, and politicians who were assassinated in response to their efforts for equity. Comparable to Kelly's statements, Anne excluded sexual orientation while highlighting other similarities among the historical figures. Thus, according to Kelly and Anne, because Harvey Milk is similar to others who are a part of history and well known, he and his depiction in *The Harvey Milk Story* are normal.

Viewing these leaders as parallel topics is problematic, however, because it ignores the distinction that Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King, Jr. combatted *racial* injustice and were not gay compared to Harvey Milk who largely combatted injustice based on *sexual orientation* and *was* gay. When discussing Theme Q1-B, I will discuss more about the comparison of Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Harvey Milk in regards to their assassinations and how some parents exhibited a double-standard when considering acceptability of topics for youth.

“Gay penguins” and nature. Soon after discussing Harvey Milk, Anne and Kelly segued into discussing *And Tango Makes Three*, a fictional story based on a true event where two male penguins co-parented an egg provided to them by the zookeeper. This book has been recognized for depicting same-sex love (Young, 2011). However, the extent of the penguin relationship was developed for the book. It is important to note that same-sex love and same-sex parenting are not necessarily synonymous. Same-sex love involves a physical and/or emotional relationship between two people of the same sex and though it might include parenting, the relationship also exists without it. On the other hand, individuals of the same sex might co-parent yet not have a physical and/or emotional relationship beyond friendship. The distinction and overlap between these two connect to queer theory’s emphasis on the complexity in seeming binaries (Meyer, 2007; Tierney & Dilley, 1998). However, as shown below, the parents’ comments reject such complexity and aim to keep the binary intact via seeing “gay penguins” and nature as parallel topics.

Anne connected the book to the parallel topic of animal behavior in Science to which Kelly agreed: “It’s just part of part of it. It’s not, it has nothing to do with the sexual orientation” (focus group, 1/14/2018). Here, Anne and Kelly saw the topic of animal behavior and sexual

orientation as two separate things rather than integrated, similar to how they saw Harvey Milk's work and assassination as separate from his sexual identity. Though Kelly immediately followed her comment by stating, "I have no problem with that being part of it though" (focus group, 1/14/2018), she showed that her preference for the book was to emphasize its connection to other, "normal" topics rather than the depiction of gay individuals and experiences. Even in stating "I have no problem with that being a part of it though", Kelly alluded to an ability to make it separable and for a reader to be able to pick and choose what elements of the text to attend to.

Each of the responses described above show how parents connected GL/LG books to parallel topics, making an effort to "normalize" them. In both *The Harvey Milk Story* and *And Tango Makes Three*, Anne and Kelly connected the books to other topics, though in a slightly different way than parallel topics. These connections are the focus of the next section.

Connected Topics

In other instances, the parents discussed the books in direct connection to another topic. To distinguish this approach from parallel topics (i.e., using or considering the book due to its similarity to another topic), connected topics involved the parents saying they liked or would use the book because it *also* involved another aspect they found beneficial. In other words, the parents found the book acceptable in part because of its inclusion or connection to something else and thus alluded that if the book did *not* have the connection, the book would have been less desirable. When parents emphasized connected topics, what the parents connected the books to was always normative.

During the Stage Two and Stage Four interviews, I asked the parents how books might connect to classroom curriculum. I made such inquiries to explore the parents' thoughts about if

and how the books should be used in classrooms. Though their responses relate more to the second research question and will be described further in Chapter Five, the parents' responses also demonstrated their valuation of the books due to their connection to other topics. I identified three instances of connected topics: 1) "gay penguins" to nature, 2) fairytales and folktales, and 3) Harvey Milk to character education.

"Gay penguins" to nature (as connected topic). The topics of "gay penguins" and nature were parallel for some parents (as described earlier in this chapter), but in other instances the two were connected topics. In such instances, *And Tango Makes Three* could primarily be shared *because* of its connection to nature. Diya and Anne both connected *And Tango Makes Three* to animals and nature since these were a large focus in Science classrooms. In her Stage Three online response, Kelly wrote, "I like how it showed the animal world and how homosexuality is found in all species." Anne commented at various stages of the study how one of her favorite aspects of the book was how it showed same-sex relationships occurring with non-human organisms and thus it was a part of the natural world. Unlike *The Harvey Milk Story* which she felt people might argue that nurture rather than nature led to sexual orientation, such as being influenced by living in the "Castro neighborhood" (focus group, 1/14/2018), Anne felt *And Tango Makes Three* supported the nature argument. This connection to nature was also evidenced in her Stage Three online response:

What I like about this, is that, I don't think people can argue that there is something "wrong" about a male penguin loving another male penguin...since it's "nature," then technically, it's not wrong. Nevermind that being LGBT is also human nature, but it's another story. So, all along the story, the parallels between humans and penguins is clear.

(Stage Three online response)

In this excerpt, Anne demonstrated her appreciation of how the book could be used to *also* show how same-sex relationships are natural and exist in nature as opposed to solely valuing the book for its depiction of same-sex attraction and love alone. Further, her use of the disclaimer “technically” increasingly connected the topic to science and supposed truth. The use of the word also suggested that because same-sex relationships exist in nature, then they are acceptable. Hence, if same-sex relationships did not exist in nature, then they would be less acceptable. Queer theory would argue that same-sex relationships don’t need to be validated by nature or anything. Relationships and intimacy – physical and/or emotional – are explicitly transgressive and don’t rely on normative thinking or ways of being (Britzman, 1995).

Fairytales and folktales. Fairytales and folktales have been critiqued for reinforcing pervasive (hetero)normativity (Sapp, 2010; Tschida, Ryan, & Ticknor, 2014). However, another way parents connected GL/LG books to other topics was by associating them with fairytales and folktales depicting heterosexuality. Though the parents’ connections were in response to my questioning and prompting, the parents’ excitement about particular books heightened when such a connection was made. For example, though all of the parents readily connected *King & King* to units involving fairytales that might occur in younger grades, two of the parents (Lindsay and Kelly) were more reticent at first about the traditional tale *Orca’s Song*. In her Stage Three online response, Kelly wrote,

[...] things like that may go over the head of children. It was a nice story about two different species finding love, but I prefer less ambiguous stories. Message was good, but I’m not sure what impact the story would have in terms of understanding and compassion. (Stage Three online response)

Though developing “understanding and compassion” is perhaps an admirable aim for using GL/LG books, Kelly’s response also showed a lack of awareness for why else GL/LG books might be used. Her response showed a general ambivalence to the book and that she wanted depictions to be more transparent. Similar to earlier discussions in the chapter, Kelly had strong notions that books should teach and what they should teach.

However, when I mentioned during the Stage Four focus group how *Orca’s Song* might be connected to folktale units or studying indigenous cultures, Kelly’s enthusiasm for the book increased as evidenced in this interchange between her and Anne:

1	Anne	Cause there’s a lot of stories of like you know just from being aware you know cul- you know that there’s a lot of stories of like the the two-spirit people
2	Kelly	Right
3	Anne:	Or whatever
4	Kelly	Or have it and it’s a female spirit not necessarily sexuality
5	Adam:	Hrm-mmm
6	Kelly:	But just like you know Mother Earth and
7	Anne:	Yeah
8	Kelly:	And that kind of mothering female vibe as
9	Anne:	Uh huh
10	Kelly:	Opposed to you know actual
11	Anne:	And we’re kind of prepped for that culturally to hear you know you hear about the talks of um the different things of like you know tortoise and Mother Earth and turtle
12		[...]
13	Kelly:	It was more of like you [to Anne] said a mythological more of
14	Anne:	Yeah
15	Kelly:	Fantasy more you know just almost like um um a a tale that was told through generations of you know
16	Adam:	Hrm-mmm
17:	Kelly:	Uh how how things were how to explain something through nature

In this conversation, Kelly showed how she began to see greater relevance and use for *Orca’s Song* once it was connected to something else, such as the emphasis on being a folktale. As the

dialogue proceeded, Kelly even suggested in line 4 reading and using the book in ways that not only connected to another topic, but actually erased the same-sex relationship completely. Thus this becomes a danger when using GL/LG books in ways such as parallel or connected topics. The same-sex relationship may be minimized or overshadowed when emphasizing something else, and therefore reinforcing normativity.

Harvey Milk to character education. Accepting books because of their connection to other topics did not only occur when I inquired about their possible integration into the curriculum. Such connections were also made directly by the parents themselves. In their Stage Three online responses, Crystal, Anne, and Kelly each commented on the possibilities of *The Harvey Milk Story* for character education. Anne and Kelly particularly appreciated the depiction of leadership. Kelly wrote, “[The book] gives children someone to look up to, to see what making a difference is and how to do it” (Stage Three online response). Similarly, Anne commented, “I also like how they discuss leadership and how someone needs to do it and that someone is sometimes Harvey Milk and sometimes you” (Stage Three online response). These responses from the parents demonstrate their connection between the book and emphasis on leadership and being a role model – traits that are desirable by normative standards.

A different, yet still reinforcing normative, connection to the book was made by Crystal. Through her work as a therapist collaborating with educators and facilitating trainings on topics of diversity and inclusion, Crystal was familiar with schools’ emphasis on bullying and Positive Behavior Intervention Standards (PBIS). In her online response, Crystal wrote, “[*The Harvey Milk Story*] would be a great addition to the required curriculum on bullying and PBIS standards in schools today” (Stage Three online response). While it may be the case that Crystal would have found the book acceptable for its own merit, her statement about the book’s connection to

bullying and standards – both normative concepts – demonstrated her further acceptance and valuation of the book. Though bullying in its various forms occurs and is important to address, it is also part of a common mantra within schools and society – especially in relation to the experiences of gays and lesbians. Therefore, the idea of gays and lesbians being bullied and the need for education to counteract this becomes a normative concept and one that maintains a binary between the bullied homosexual and the empowered, bullying heterosexual (Blackburn, 2014; Lovaas, Elia, & Yep, 2006).

Summary of Theme Q1-A

In this section, I described data that reflected Theme Q1-A: Parents noted as acceptable those books and topics that aligned with normative concepts. After discussing the concept of “normal” per the parents and queer theory, I described the four ways I identified parents aligning normative concepts with the books they found acceptable: 1) “normalcy” in books, 2) families, 3) parallel topics, and 4) connected topics. Pervasive across most, if not all, of these types of acceptability were ways that parents tried to “straighten out” the GL/LG books. In other words, the parents often tried to make GL/LG-inclusive books *less* GL/LG and *more* straight by minimizing (almost to point of exclusion) same-sex experiences and increasing other, typically heterosexual norms. In some ways, the books the parents read in this study prompted straight readings, especially by including topics that were intelligible to the straight parents such as families. Thus, if the parents could “straighten” the texts and/or align them with normativity, then the books were acceptable. However, Britzman (1995) encouraged readers to stop “reading straight.” In the next section, I describe how parents found books or topics increasingly unacceptable when they weren’t able to align them with the “straightness” and “normativity” to which they were accustomed.

Theme Q1-B: The Unacceptable in Books

The second theme I constructed in regard to what parents found un/acceptable was: Parents noted as unacceptable those books that displaced normativity and foregrounded other GL/LG lived experiences. This theme is especially evident when considering how the parents responded to books in ways that were different than their responses relative to the first theme. When books depicted topics or elements that did not reinforce normativity, particularly in regards to what may be typical for heterosexuals, then parents expressed worry or resistance. It could be argued that these depictions were unacceptable for the parents because they provided alternate realities that the parents didn't understand, didn't want to accept, or feared their children might become. Thus, finding the books or topics unacceptable could be a way of sheltering or protecting children. Such possibilities add to existing research demonstrating comparable responses to GL/LG children's literature by pre and/or in-service teachers (Cumming-Potvin & Martino, 2014; Dedoglu, Ulusoy, & Lamme, 2012; Hermann-Wilmarth, 2010).

Though not all of the parents expressed resistance or worry about the same topic or book, each of the parents did note books or depictions therein which they found unacceptable. All of these instances occurred in instances in which normativity was displaced or in which lived experiences unique to GL/LG individuals were foregrounded. Again, the parents' statements of worry or resistance occurred despite each of them commenting at various points of the study that they found all of the books acceptable. In the following subsections, I describe the three depictions I noted parents discussing as unacceptable: 1) being "artistic" or "dominatrix" in *This Day in June*, 2) anxiety and adversity, and 3) AIDS.

Being “Artistic” or Dominatrix” in *This Day in June*

The terms “artistic” and “dominatrix” were used by Anne in her description of *This Day in June*. This picturebook depicts a Pride parade in which each pagespread includes colorful illustrations of different groups marching in the parade: nuns, Human Rights Campaign members, leather-clad men and women on motorcycles, and drag queens among others. This picturebook also received the most commentary by the parents in regards to unacceptability. Though Anne was the only parent who used the specific words “artistic” and “dominatrix” when sharing her concerns about the book, the other parents’ statements also expressed resistance to the depictions to which Anne referred. Due to the various ways parents responded to this book, I have organized this subsection into the following sub-subsections: 1) expressing and transferring hesitation, 2) reading into the text, 3) being “confused”, and 4) contradicting statements about sexual expression.

Expressing and transferring concern. Across various stages, three of the parents (Anne, Kelly, and Crystal) expressed hesitation about the book in ways that showed their own personal reluctance and how they assigned their concerns to others rather than themselves.

The parents first read and responded to the book during Stage Three. In her online response, Anne wrote, “I think some of the concepts in the book are too much for an elementary school, such as the ‘sainting sisters’ [...] I also think that the lines about clad in leather and sisters sainting are much more risqué for an elementary school audience than it would be at home” (Stage Three online response). Anne reinforced her concern about the book during the subsequent Stage Four focus group. The following exchange was one of several instances during the focus group in which Anne expressed her disapproval about the book:

1	Adam:	so I just want to clarify, would that be, you know, a concern that you, like, is that your
---	-------	--

		personal concern and you wouldn't want it on the shelves, or are you okay with the book and you're thinking that concern would be something parents, other parents would have?
2	Anne:	Uh, it would be a concern about other parents.
3	Adam:	Okay
4	Anne:	Like, I feel fine about it and I feel calm, but um yeah, I mean like, this is kind of a graphic outfit (showing pagespread), you know [Figure 4.3 ²]
5	Adam:	Yeah
6	Anne:	kind of a dominatrix thing
7	Adam:	Yeah (laugh)
8	Anne:	so it's just hard in terms of, like, if they are older, then the kids kind of get that meaning like that sexual meaning
9	Adam:	Yeah
10	Anne:	and that's, like, and so, you know, like this guy (showing book) is totally fine
11	Adam:	Hrm-mmm
12	Anne:	and um even this woman and this guy, you know, it's kind of, you know, these people are kind of more covered than these people who are more scantily clad, then it's just more sexual
13	Adam:	Hrm-mmm
14	Anne:	and that's the problem for, you know, elementary school students. But then, you know, you flip this page, even this (showing book) [Figure 4.4 ²] is kind of like, it almost has like a weird, like art, art look. A very artistic illustration, but um it's almost like, oh okay, there's men dressed up and it's, like, they're so other worldly looking that it's not as confusing
15	Adam:	Hrm-mmm
16	Anne:	But, you know, and these are fine (showing book) [Figure 4.5 ²] like girls with short shorts and men with legs showing and, I don't know, and most of the images are just fine, you know, a guy in a tie and everything like that, so I think it's probably just that that page only because depending on their age it would seem a little sexual, a little confusing

² Reproduced with permission from Pitman, G. E. (2014). *This day in June* (K. Litten, Illustrator). Washington, DC, US: Magination Press/American Psychological Association. Text copyright © 2014 Magination Press/American Psychological Association. Illustrations copyright © Kristyna Litten. No further reproduction or distribution is permitted.

Figure 4.3: *This Day in June*, Fourth Opening



Figure 4.4: *This Day in June*, Fifth Opening



Figure 4.5: *This Day in June*, Ninth Opening (Revisited)



There are several aspects of note in the above focus group exchange. For one, Anne began by stating her resistance was not based on her own worries but rather those she speculated others might have. She felt “fine” and “calm” with the book and couched her following statements as a

rebuttal other parents might voice. Of course, this was also in response to how I phrased the question, providing Anne an option to either own the concerns for herself or transfer them to others. She chose the latter. However, Anne then spoke at length about particular depictions within the book she found problematic as well as those she found more neutral, showing she had a clear sense of what she found acceptable and unacceptable. She showed she had concerns both about the written text (i.e., “sisters sainting”) as well as various illustrations. In addition, her comments in the focus group were a shift from her Stage Three online response in which she wrote, “I think some of the concepts in the book are too much for an elementary school” (Stage Three online response). This online statement showed her ideas of acceptability were *not* due to speculating the concerns of other parents, but were her personal stance.

Similar to Anne, both Kelly and Crystal expressed concern about the book, but couched their comments as a hesitation about how other parents might respond. In her online response, Kelly wrote,

This book may not be favorably looked upon by those who do not support this movement simply because of the images and pictures. As much as I would like to see more books like this in our schools, this one probably would not make it. (Stage Three online response)

Though Kelly stated that she would like to see books “like this” (thus perhaps insinuating not *this* particular book) in schools, Crystal wrote at length about how much she enjoyed the book and particular aspects she liked. Nonetheless, she also expressed doubt about the book’s acceptability to others:

I think it would be a bold move for this to be a part of a classroom experience because of the illustrations including being brave in not making allusions to LGBTQ relationships

and so directly depicting them. While that thrills me, of all of the books I made an assumption that this one was the least likely to make it on a library shelf in my kids' schools. (Stage Three online response)

Crystal's use of the words "brave" and "bold" to describe the book and its potential use demonstrated her belief of the book's transgressiveness and displacement of normativity. In her response, she also emphasized that *she* made an assumption and thought the book may not be accepted in schools. However, in the subsequent Stage Four focus group, Crystal claimed that she initially did not consider possible backlash to the book until her son in high school picked up the book, read it, and commented that it might incite controversy or censure. This shift in Crystal's response, from claiming personal concern online to deflecting the concern to someone else (i.e., her son) during the focus group, demonstrated her attempts to not appear that *she* was considering or reinforcing normativity. Further examples and analysis of how the parents' responses altered across stages and settings will be discussed in Chapter Six.

Reading into the text. The parents' comments about *This Day in June* also showed how their resistance to the text stemmed from their own background knowledge they placed on the text rather than what was in the words or illustrations themselves. Considering Anne's word choice from her online response and focus group, she expressed concern about "sisters sainting" and "artistic" (Figure 4.4., above). While "sisters sainting" is the exact phrase used in the book, "artistic" likely derived from the word "artist" used on the same page. However, the reason why Anne felt such words and illustrations were "risqué" is unclear. The corresponding illustration shows what appear to be men dressed in drag as nuns. The reading guide in the backmatter, which provides more information about each couplet from throughout the book, describes how this page alludes to the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence:

[...] an order of LGBT nuns that formed in San Francisco in 1979. The Sisters wear exaggerated and campy nuns' habits and makeup. The Sisters engage in outreach to various LGBT groups, promoting human rights and a respect for diversity. Over the years, the Sisters have "sainted" hundreds of people who have contributed to the acceptance of LGBT people, including former San Francisco mayor Gavin Newsome, comedian Margaret Cho, and the first married lesbian couple in California, Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin. (Pitman, 2014, n.p.)

This description from the reading guide, although informative about the group, is still slightly ambiguous. To be clear, the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence is not a Catholic order but rather a non-profit organization comprised largely of men dressing in drag and promoting human rights (The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, online). Nonetheless, based on both the reading guide description and page within the narrative, it is unclear what Anne found inappropriate. Thus, it appeared Anne speculated about what "sisters sainting" meant based on her own presumptions outside of the text.

Anne also exhibited such imposing on the book by using the word "dominatrix" to describe the characters wearing leather (Figure 4.3, above). Unlike the terms "sisters sainting" and "artistic" that were evident in the book, Anne's use of "dominatrix" was entirely her own creation. The words on the page are "Clad in leather / Perfect weather." The illustrations show people walking as couples or individually, one eating an ice cream cone. The reading guide describes how leather has been visibly important for gays and lesbians since the 1940s, especially as a form of solidarity and resistance to stereotypes. Nothing in the book denotes sexual actions, particularly a dominatrix – a woman who sexually dominates her partner regardless of gender or sexual orientation, often in sadomasochistic activities. It appears that Anne's reasons for classifying the depiction as unacceptable were informed by her feelings or

assumptions about leather culture. Further, she conflated several aspects: stylistic expression, sexual expression, sexual orientation, and sexual actions. Anne's response aligns with the responses of adults in other studies who have equated same-sex orientation with sexual acts as a reason to not share GL/LG books or topics with youth (Cumming-Potvin & Martino, 2014; Hermann-Wilmarth, 2010; Phillips & Larson, 2012; Schieble, 2012). Thus, Anne is not alone in making such conflation, and her statements show that it is not only opponents of LGBT people who articulate such reasoning.

Anne was not the only parent whose presumptions caused hesitation about the book. During the focus group in which she participated (separate from Anne), Crystal discussed her high school-aged son's comments which then informed her own response:

He felt that [*This Day is June*] was the only one that highlighted through imagery sexuality and just the way he depicted the pictures, bikinis or leather cause he knows what all of this means [...] there was a bandana and my son knows the different color bandanas and what those might mean and so there was something that stood out to him and so he just has this teenage brain of it being like, "This one is not just about the pictures that you're seeing. There's more of an underground." (focus group, 1/13/2018)

In this response, Crystal – by sharing her son's comments – named a variety of items which are supposedly symbolic and have "underground" meanings: bikinis, leather, and differently colored bandanas. However, neither the narrative nor the reading guide assign meaning to the *Pride* participants' clothing. On the other hand, unlike Anne, Crystal did mention that such interpretations were not the only way to understand the book and illustrations. This was evidenced in her use of "might mean" when describing the bandanas.

However, not all of the parents used their own interpretations as ways to discredit the book and its depictions. In the same focus group in which Crystal participated, Lindsay offered a rebuttal to the statements being made about the illustrations:

I think looking at these pages, even the ones that have a sexual connotation to somebody maybe reading that into it, I mean, my five-year-old isn't going to look at this, you know, woman in the bikini and be like, "Oh, well. She's about to have sex." She's going to say, "Oh, she's a mermaid!" You know, "This is awesome" or the people kissing. My daughter is like, "Oh, they're kissing." It wasn't like, "Oh, they're about to have sex."

(focus group, 1/13/2018)

In this statement, Lindsay called out the presumptions Crystal brought to and imposed on the text as an adult reader compared to how children might interpret the book. Further, Lindsay's use of past tense toward the end of her comment (i.e., "It wasn't like") emphasized how she had already experienced reading the book with her daughter and that discussion of sex had not arisen. This comment echoed what Lindsay had written in her Stage Three response: She had read the book with her children, they all enjoyed it, and she had not found anything unacceptable about the text. However, in her online response, Lindsay also wrote,

What struck me first about this book was both the simplicity of the text and the detail of the illustrations. My children easily listened to the text but the deeper meaning of the words in conjunction with the illustrations were a little *lost* on them (and to me as well).

We then went over the reading guide together and it gave us all a much better understanding of the book. (Stage Three online response, emphasis added)

What is interesting about this quote is that, despite rebuking Crystal's comments about the book based on background knowledge during the focus group, Lindsay had earlier shared her own

sense that the book had meanings beyond the words and illustrations. Because she and her children were puzzled by these meanings for which they felt “lost”, they consulted the reading guide in the backmatter for further information. Lindsay’s sense of being “lost” closely connects to being “confused,” a feeling Anne expressed as well.

Being “confused.” Returning to the above excerpt from the focus group in which Anne participated, I also noted that she twice used the word “confusing” to describe depictions: “they’re so other worldly that it’s not as confusing” (line 14) and “it would seem a little sexual, a little confusing” (line 16). Anne’s comments indicate that she wanted things to be clear and easily understood. She also expressed connections between what she determined would and would not be confusing for youth. If something was “other worldly”, it was “not as confusing.” In other words, if it was possible to be detached because the depiction and what it represented seemed other-than-human, that was acceptable. On the other hand, things that were “sexual” *were* confusing; when it was evident that the characters were humans and sex might be involved, then that was “confusing” and thus unacceptable. Perhaps the confusion was less about Anne’s or a child’s lack of understanding and more about the discomfort in possibly having to talk about sex.

Anne’s use of “confusing” to describe *This Day in June* was not the only time she or other parents asserted a desire for simplicity. The preference for depictions to be not confusing was repeated across the study. For example, Anne expressed liking *King & King* because “the concept is very simple”, “it’s not complex”, and “it’s uncomplicated” (Stage Three online response). As described earlier in this chapter, Kelly and Lindsay hesitated about *Orca’s Song* because it was ambiguous and more complex. Diya and Crystal both appreciated the “simple” narrative of *Molly’s Family* (Stage Three online responses). In the discussion section that

concludes this chapter, I further describe the concepts of confusion and (dis)comfort as expressed by the parents.

Contradicting statements about sexual expression. The parents' contradictions about particular books and depictions exhibited the numerous and imbricating binaries they operated under: acceptable/unacceptable, normative/non-normative, and confusing/non-confusing. Though various parents found depictions within *This Day in June* unacceptable due to what the characters wore, books depicting actual physical interactions between same-sex couples did not result in such discussion. For example, same-sex characters are shown kissing in both *King & King* and *Donovan's Big Day* (Newman, 2011). In *Daddy's Roommate* (Willhoite, 1990), there are multiple pages in which the character's father and his male partner embrace and are shown doing intimate things while topless such as shaving and rubbing sun lotion on one another's backs. None of the parents expressed concern about these books. When I asked Anne's thoughts about these books and their depictions during the Stage Two interview, including if there should be kissing or if books should be more implicit, she responded, "Um I think it should be in there. I think it should be. I think it should be a little bit more blatant about the love story I guess" (interview, 10/20/2017). Here, Anne mentioned love rather than sex, and she not only found the depictions acceptable, but she stated such depictions should be included. Therefore, Anne showed an important distinction here compared to her response to *This Day in June*: books and their depictions are only acceptable when they do not transgress too far from normative ways of being.

Kissing, shaving, and embracing around the house (such as depicted in *Daddy's Roommate*) align with the concept of families and normativity whereas looking "artistic" or "dominatrix" (such as depicted in *This Day in June*) displaces normativity and foregrounds other

GL/LG – or further queer – lived experiences. Thus, Anne demonstrated her creation of a binary of acceptable and unacceptable. Depictions that aligned with normativity were acceptable; depictions that strayed from her concept of “normal” were unacceptable. Not only was this evident in Anne’s responses about different books, but also within *This Day in June* itself such as when she categorized specific pagespreads by their acceptability (see focus group excerpt, above). This binary also connects to the notions of “confusion” Anne had expressed. When depictions were normative for her, she wasn’t confused and thus it was acceptable. When depictions were non-normative for her, she was confused and thus it was unacceptable. Though the description here is focused on Anne, she was not the only parent who resisted depictions in *This Day in June* while endorsing depictions in other books. Kelly and Crystal made similar contradictions.

Anxiety and Adversity

Another aspect the parents expressed concern about were depictions of anxiety or adversity. Feeling anxiety and/or adversity because of one’s sexual orientation are real and common experiences of many GL/LG people. Though they are experiences straight individuals might realize occur for GL/LG people, they are often experiences straight people have not had to navigate themselves due to their heterosexual privilege (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007). Such experiences became sources of unacceptability for some of the parents.

In *The Harvey Milk Story*, the third pagespread includes an illustration of Milk alone in his bedroom, sitting on his bed looking depressed and gazing out the window. The text on the page reads,

Harvey knew he was gay by the time he was fourteen, but he would keep that part of himself a closely guarded secret for many years to come. Like so many people of his

time, he was afraid of what would happen to him if others knew he was gay. Fears that he would be beaten up at school and abandoned by his friends and family troubled his sleep and tormented his days. (Krakow, 2002, n.p.)

Diya wrote about this element of the book in her Stage Three online response. Though her response to the book as a whole was positive, and she began by stating she “would welcome this book being used in [her] child’s classroom”, she later wrote in the same paragraph:

I don’t know if the book is age appropriate for kindergarten or should be used in slightly older classes. “Harvey knew he was gay by the time he was fourteen.” I don’t know at what age generally kids learn (or should be taught) the correct use and meaning of the term “gay”, but when this book is read this certainly could be a question that comes up: what is “being gay” and “how did he know that he was gay.” (Stage Three online response)

In this response, Diya emphasized that the phrase telling Harvey’s age was troublesome for her and she wondered if and how someone would know they were gay at that age or even younger. This was a concern she also raised during the subsequent Stage Four focus group, to which I responded about my own experiences as a gay person and having known I was attracted to people of the same sex since the early elementary grades. In this response, Diya also expressed concern about the types of questions children might ask in response to the book – questions Diya might not feel prepared to answer. Concerns about questions children might ask and the lack of preparedness she or teachers may feel was an element Diya raised across the study as well. Further, Diya’s concern about “appropriate-ness” indicated three aspects: 1) It demonstrated a belief that most, if not all, youth are heterosexual until they know otherwise which aligns with the concept of compulsory heterosexuality (Ahmed, 2006; Butler, 1990; Pinar, 1998); 2) It did

not acknowledge what research has demonstrated – that some children in early elementary grades or younger begin to realize their sexual identity and/or attractions to people of the same or opposite sex (Lopez, 2013; Savin-Williams, 2005); and 3) It ignored that depictions of (hetero)sexuality are always already pervasive in literature and other media for children (Sapp, 2010; Tschida, Ryan, & Ticknor, 2014) and thus implied conversations about sexuality should not occur until youth are older.

Lindsay also expressed worry about depictions of anxiety – as well as adversity – in GL/LG books, especially when considering her own child. While she claimed to find value in such representations and the importance of sharing them with youth, she also hesitated at sharing such depictions with children at a young age because of how the books might foster the children's own anxiety. Lindsay connected this to her son in second grade who likes to paint his fingernails and how she wanted to support his individuality. Though she realized he may be taunted at school for having painted nails, she also wanted to assure him in those instances that he was okay and those who mocked him were wrong. Lindsay felt that preempting children's experiences with depictions of anxiety or adversity may cause undue stress. Though perhaps well-intentioned, it is also ironic that as a parent who realized adversity may occur, Lindsay did not consider using GL/LG books as a means to show how to navigate in advance such experiences.

As described earlier in this chapter, Crystal felt that depictions of anxiety and adversity were important, but she also felt it was a common theme in GL/LG picturebooks of which she was aware even before this study. Thus she appreciated that books like *King & King* and *This Day in June* exist where there is joy in being gay and/or lesbian without being clouded by such aspects. She equated the absence of adversity or anxiety in some GL/LG picturebooks with the

numerous books depicting heterosexuality without such angst and hardship. Though Crystal's comparison of depictions within GL/LG to straight books is true, it also conveyed a lack of understanding. The very reason for the lack of adversity/anxiety depictions within "straight" books is because of heterosexual privilege. To not call this out – and to then want to perhaps minimize depictions of adversity or anxiety experienced by gays and lesbians – does not interrogate heteronormativity, a central tenet of queer theory (Blackburn & Clark, 2011).

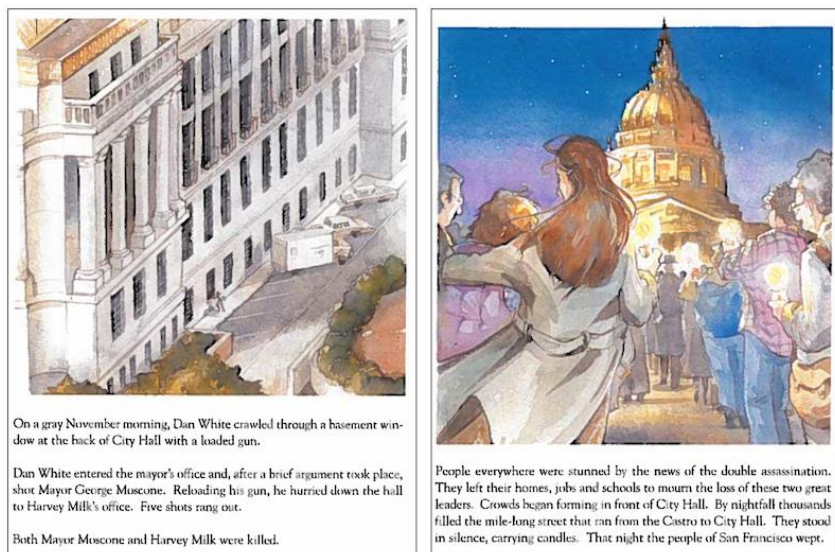
In regards to adversity, *The Harvey Milk Story* depicts the ultimate hate crime: murder. As described earlier in this chapter, this book and its depiction of assassination was acceptable for some of the parents because, in their view, it was a parallel topic for (straight) leaders who had fought and been killed for their efforts with race-related civil rights such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and Abraham Lincoln. However, the depiction was also unacceptable for some of the parents. For example, Lindsay was aware of Harvey Milk and his death prior to receiving the book and reading it to her children. However, when she read the book to her children, she was alarmed at their response and this affected how she felt about the book's acceptability in general:

I would be hesitant for this book to be available in my child's classroom, only because of the age of my children (lower and middle elementary). [...] When Harvey Milk and the Mayor were shot, even with a softer version of the text read aloud, both of my children were fairly upset with the details of events. I feel like this would be more appropriate and useful for a slightly older group of children, and as long as they were mature enough to process the violent nature of the deaths. (Stage Three online response)

Not only did Lindsay describe her children's reaction to the book and how it affected her own thoughts about its "appropriateness", she also included two other details of particular interest: reading a "softer version" and the "violent nature." Lindsay did not specify in her response, nor

subsequent research stages, what she meant by these terms. Nor did I think to ask her at the time. However, both of the terms further show Lindsay's resistance to the inclusion of Milk's assassination, regardless of the extent of its graphicness. According to Lindsay, the following depictions from *The Harvey Milk Story* are "violent" (Figure 4.6³, below):

Figure 4.6: Depictions of Assassination in *The Harvey Milk Story*



In the subsequent Stage Four focus group, Lindsay shared she had not anticipated her children being as disturbed by Harvey Milk's assassination as they were, especially her son who is in second grade. Though Lindsay initially felt the book was acceptable, her son's reaction changed her stance. She acknowledged that other children his age or younger may not be as upset by the death as her son, but based on her experiences she felt the book may be better suited for older elementary grades. Lindsay's anecdote and discussion during the focus group then affected how Diya felt about the book. *The Harvey Milk Story* was one of three books Diya did not report reading to her daughter in Stage Three. In her online response, Diya did not express worry about the assassination or its depiction in regards to sharing with youth. However, when

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Lindsay shared during the focus group, Diya's opinion about the book and its acceptability for youth began to waver. Diya's changing opinion was particularly evident when discussing the interactive chart. Both during the initial post-it placement and the subsequent conversation, she deliberated and moved her post-it note for this book back and forth between sections for various grade spans due to perceived appropriateness. For both Lindsay and Diya, the inclusion of assassination at all, regardless of the "softness" (Lindsay, Stage Three online response) of how it was read or depicted in the book, was a source of worry. This unacceptability shows the parents' resistance to books that displaced heteronormativity, especially problematic since this was a book showing the targeting of an individual and his colleague specifically because of sexual orientation. Further, the parents' responses indicate their creation of a double-standard.

According to the parents who expressed reluctance about *The Harvey Milk Story*, assassination is an inappropriate depiction to share with youth in lower elementary grades. However, there are holidays and kindergarten curricular standards (Georgia Standards of Excellence, 2015) that raise awareness about the work and assassinations of the race-related civil rights leaders Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King, Jr. In other words, the parents expressed reluctance about GL/LG-based assassination while leaving acknowledged that such topics are introduced to and discussed with young children (as part of "normal", common knowledge) when related to race-based assassination.

AIDS

The topic of AIDS was discussed earlier in this chapter in how some parents saw it as a parallel topic to other terminal diseases (which, as I described, it is not). Other parents (Anne and Kelly) did not describe AIDS as a parallel topic but rather something they would not share with youth. For example, when I asked about the entire corpus of 27 books in Stage Two, Anne

mentioned how many of the books were about “just natural points of life” (interview, 10/26/2017). However, she singled out the AIDS category: “It’s different now than, you know, third- twen- thirty years ago, twenty years ago that was a little bit, that was a more relevant and intense story, but now it’s kinda relegated to the background I think” (interview, 10/26/2017). This one sentence revealed a lot about Anne’s stance on AIDS and its depiction. First, she wavered on how long ago the AIDS epidemic actually took place. Second, because the AIDS epidemic took place in decades past, Anne no longer saw it as a “relevant” topic. Third, because the AIDS epidemic was something from the past in Anne’s view, it had been “relegated to the background.” It was no longer really a topic that merited discussion. Of course, by suggesting that the book not necessarily be shared with youth, this would result in the topic of AIDS becoming further “relegated to the background” for youth and thus potentially contribute to an erasure of history.

It is interesting to note, though, that both books depicting AIDS were published in later years than what Anne perceived as the “relevant” time period of the epidemic. *Too Far Away to Touch* was first published in 1995 and then released in paperback in 1998. *A Name on the Quilt* was first published in 1999 and then released in paperback in 2003. Thus, book creators found the topic of AIDS important to share in the final years of the 20th century and early years of the 21st century, approximately fifteen to twenty years after the AIDS epidemic began in 1981 (Deschamps & Singer, 2017). Also of note is that a pagespread within *This Day in June*, published in 2014, also includes characters wearing red ribbons and holding signs about AIDS-awareness – a depiction to which none of the parents responded verbally or in writing.

Kelly was another parent who expressed reluctance to the topic of AIDS when considering the entire corpus and various categories of books. In the following Stage Two

interview (10/18/2017) interaction, Kelly shared several reasons why she hesitated about the topic:

1	Adam:	Any books or particular topics that you came across again thinking as a parent thinking about books for your child that you thought were problematic or kind of made you bristle a little bit?
2	Kelly	Oh no. No but the AIDS ones were, that, that's tough. And I don't, I don't know if that would be a book I would pick out for my child
3	Adam	Hrm-mmm
4	Kelly	Not simply because I, I think nowadays too with the advances with AIDS
5	Adam	Hrm-mmm
6	Kelly	and the medicines and, and it's not like it was when we were growing up
7	Adam	Right
8	Kelly	So I, I don't know if I would choose those just because that is a tough subject and it has nothing to do um with homosexuality
9	Adam	Hrm-mmm
10	Kelly	It's just, you know, the death and, and the disease and that's a tough subject and not having anybody to relate that to, those may not be on the top of my list in that I don't want to cry when I read books to my children (chuckle)

Reviewing Kelly's statements in this one interaction, I identified four reasons she would not share the book with her daughter and potentially youth at large:

- 1) Medical advances: This reason echoes Anne's statement from her Stage Two interview. Per this reasoning, AIDS is no longer a "relevant" topic to discuss because the disease has largely been remedied.
- 2) Tough subject (death, disease): Kelly expressed reticence about sharing books – and potentially even discussing topics – that do not exude happiness or pleasure. Kelly further asserted this stance in the end of the excerpt: "I don't want to cry when I read books to my children". This latter statement showed that not only did Kelly worry about how

youth might grapple with “tough subjects,” but she as a parent wanted to avoid uncomfortable or unpleasant experiences.

- 3) Disconnected from homosexuality: Even though both of the books in the AIDS category – *A Name on the Quilt* and *Too Far Away to Touch* – depict that the protagonist with AIDS had a same-sex partner, Kelly saw the books as having “nothing to do with homosexuality.” For her, AIDS and being GL/LG are two separable topics. While it is true that AIDS is not specific only to gays and lesbians, Kelly’s claim ignores the political discrimination that resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths – nearly half of whom were gay or bisexual men (Deschamps & Singer, 2017) – as described earlier in this chapter when I discussed how some parents considered AIDS as a parallel topic to other terminal diseases.
- 4) Inability to relate: With this reason, Kelly demonstrated that AIDS was not a parallel topic for other terminal diseases (e.g., cancer) according to her. Because AIDS was not an experience her children had encountered personally or in the people they knew, Kelly felt they would not be able to relate to the books or topic. Thus, Kelly may feel that only books depicting events or experiences to which children can relate should be the ones they read or to which they are introduced. This would then result in a vast array of topics and books people may or should not interact with, whether about GL/LG experiences or other diverse depictions.

The four reasons Kelly shared to defend her reluctance to share the AIDS depictions were compounded in her continued statements a few seconds later:

Growing up in the 80s, well I mean, I was young but still, that was a big deal and the quilts were a big deal and nowadays my kid may not even know what the AIDS quilt is

because of the advancements and, you know, everybody talks about cancer [...] but I like that it's out there cause there are people who are, who have AIDS, who have HIV and, you know, and there are people who need to explain it to their kids and maybe can't so that's why we have these books. (interview, 10/18/2017)

Here, Kelly shared an awareness of the magnitude of the disease, when the epidemic was at its peak, and how the AIDS quilt was a way to raise awareness and honor those who died.

Nevertheless, Kelly expressed that her child may not be familiar with the topic, and she as a parent is seemingly okay with the lack of knowledge. This was evidenced not only in Kelly's statements but also by hesitating to share the picturebooks in order to develop her child's awareness. Kelly felt that AIDS has been replaced by cancer since that's what "everybody talks about" now. Cancer, then, is the new normal when it comes to diseases and what may be on people's minds. For those few who still need to talk about AIDS because it affects *them*, that's when such picturebooks may be helpful according to Kelly.

Summary of Theme Q1-B

In this section, I described data that reflected Theme Q1-B: Parents noted as unacceptable those books that displaced normativity and foregrounded other GL/LG lived experiences. I found three instances in the data supporting this theme:

- 1) being "artistic" or "dominatrix" (Anne, Kelly, & Crystal),
- 2) anxiety and adversity (Diya, Crystal, & Lindsay), and
- 3) AIDS (Kelly & Anne).

Each of these three depictions that the parents expressed resistance to or reluctance about are experiences that are real for some, if not many, gays and lesbians. They are experiences that are in many ways queer and thus possibly not intelligible to the majority of heterosexual people

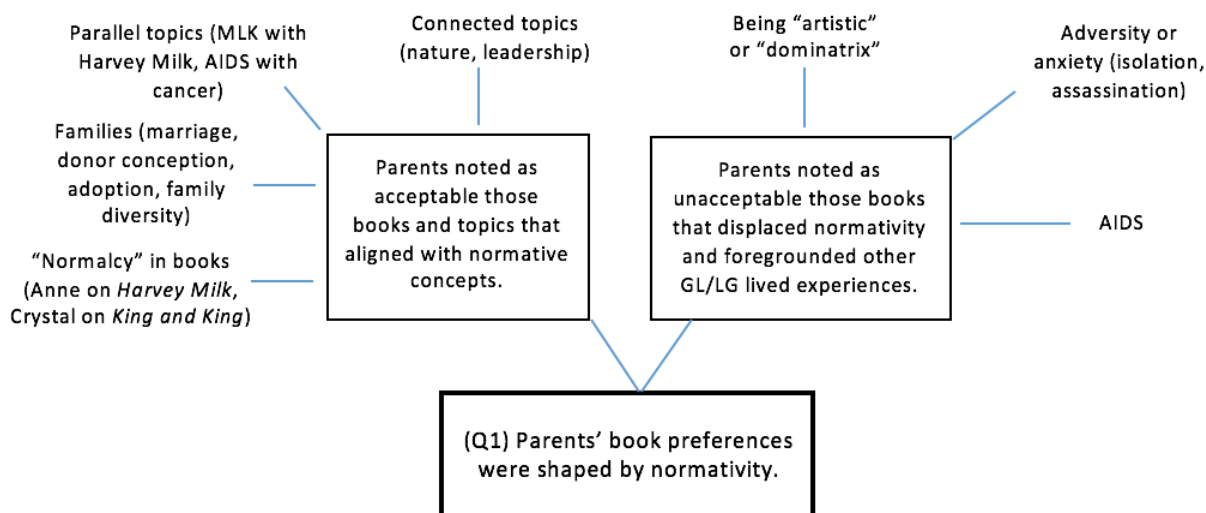
based on their own experiences. Such depictions subvert representations within some of the picturebooks that reinforce homonormativity. Thus, this theme and my findings that support it connect back to queer theory by interrogating normativity (Warner, 1999) and inquiring into people's limits of acceptability (Britzman, 1995).

Summary and Discussion

In this chapter, I addressed the first research question: What themes, if any, emerge across parents' responses to gay/lesbian-inclusive picturebooks, specifically in regard to what they find un/acceptable? Analyzing the data, I constructed two themes relative to the research question:

- Theme Q1-A: Parents noted as acceptable those books and topics that aligned with normative concepts.
- Theme Q1-B: Parents noted as unacceptable those books that displaced normativity and foregrounded other GL/LG lived experiences.

Using thematic network analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001), the above two basic themes led to my construction of an overarching organizing theme: Parents' book preferences were shaped by normativity. The basic themes and organizing theme, along with elements from the data to support each basic theme, are shown in Figure 4.7.

Figure 4.7: Q1 Thematic Network (Revisited)

Before elaborating on the central organizing theme, I want to acknowledge and address the binary reflected in the two basic themes – particularly the concepts of acceptable versus unacceptable. Queer theory challenges binaries and encourages considering overlap and complexities (Meyer, 2007; Tierney & Dilley, 1998). As the parents in this study demonstrated, a binary of acceptable and unacceptable was not clear cut. There was sometimes overlap in how parents felt about particular books or topics. For example and as described in the section about Theme Q1-B, three of the parents (Anne, Kelly, and Crystal) shared concern about depictions of non-normative sexual expressions within *This Day in June* while two of the parents (Lindsay and Diya) did not. In some instances, the parents found non-normative depictions acceptable in some books and unacceptable in others. For example, although Lindsay expressed liking *This Day in June* which foregrounded more queer experiences of gays and lesbians, she found the inclusion of assassination within *The Harvey Milk Story* troubling. Sometimes responses to the same book by the same parent demonstrated complexity and contradictions. Crystal was both “thrilled” about *This Day in June* “so directly depicting” the experiences of gays and lesbians, but then she also hesitated about those exact same depictions. I revisit this data here to emphasize and

illustrate how even though the two basic themes may appear to be binaries, the concept of acceptable and unacceptable was in fact quite messy and complex.

Despite the messiness between concepts of acceptable and unacceptable, the parents' statements showed their preferences were shaped by normativity, and this was the organizing theme I observed across the data. The majority of the parents in this study are members of privileged groups based on their race (white), gender (cisgender), and/or sexual orientation (heterosexual), thus they likely experience the world where their existence and ways of being are not challenged – at least due to their identity categories. Thus, the parents may be more likely to identify with books that depict and reinforce “normalcy” whereas they are unable to relate to books depicting other, non-normative experiences.

The parents may also likely be considering their own children's futures and thus thinking about the type of people they want their children to become and not become, especially if their children were to be gay or lesbian (which three of the parents [Anne, Diya, and Lindsay] even acknowledged). They may want their children to be “normal” in all ways *except* their sexual orientation, thus remaining intelligible and hence acceptable to the parents, families, and the “normal majority” of society at large. One type of intelligibility is the concept of family. Family depictions were particularly favored by the parents, and this may be because the concept of family provides hope for their children's future procreation. The parents' resistance to depictions of other gay and lesbian experiences such as isolation, anxiety, adversity (including assassination), and AIDS all have or allude to another commonality – death. Even the depictions of alternative sexual expressions, such as looking “artistic” or “dominatrix” in *This Day in June* correspond with death because 1) sexual practices such as bondage and submission are about sex as sex rather than the intent to procreate, and 2) public exhibitions of “non-normalcy” draws

attention to oneself and thus possibly incites targeting. To present youth with depictions of gays and lesbians that show or connect to death is antithetical to the hopes parents typically have for their children – a future comprised of hope, love, acceptance, promise, and life. Edelman's (2004) concept of the cultural fantasy of futurity relative to the figure of the child is intricately linked to reproduction, survival, and death. An exploration of the parents' responses to the GL/LG picturebooks in conjunction with Edelman's concepts merits further investigation.

The concepts and depictions of isolation, anxiety, adversity, AIDS, leather, and death all connect back to confusion and discomfort as described earlier in this chapter. Many of these concepts are emotionally laden for adults as well as children. They are not tidy concepts to grapple with and discuss in broader mainstream U.S. culture, let alone GL/LG-focused discussions. They are confusing and cause discomfort. By categorizing these as unacceptable in contrast to more normative and thus acceptable depictions, the parents showed that they wanted to both protect the innocence of their children as well as avoid discomfort for themselves as adults. However, it is more courageous – and reflective of ally-ship – to address topics of discomfort in order to prepare youth for the realities of the world they inhabit and will likely encounter later in life.

As this chapter demonstrates, there was much complexity to the parents' responses about the un/acceptability of GL/LG picturebooks, and the parents' preferences for normative books was evident. How these preferences were manifested in the parents' responses about GL/LG picturebooks as potential classroom materials comprises the next chapter.

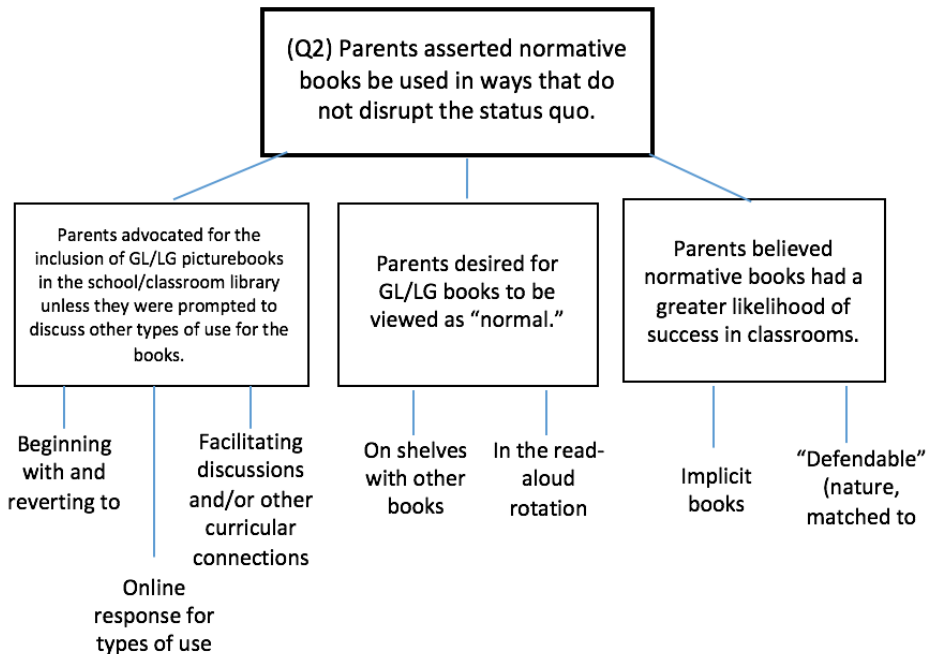
CHAPTER FIVE

IN LIBRARIES AND LESSONS: HOW GL/LG PICTUREBOOKS MIGHT BE USED AS ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM MATERIALS

In this chapter, I address the second research question: What themes, if any, emerged across parents' responses to how gay/lesbian-inclusive picturebooks could be used as (potential) classroom materials? Analyzing the data, I constructed three themes relative to the research question:

- Theme Q2-A: Parents advocated for the inclusion of GL/LG picturebooks in the school/classroom library unless they were prompted to discuss other types of use for the books
- Theme Q2-B: Parents desired for GL/LG books to be viewed as “normal.”
- Theme Q2-C: Parents believed normative books had a greater likelihood of success in schools and classrooms.

Using thematic network analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001) to determine and illustrate the connections among themes (described in Chapter Three), the above three basic themes led to my construction of an overarching organizing theme: Parents asserted normative books be used in ways that do not disrupt the status quo. The basic themes and organizing theme, along with elements from the data to support each basic theme, are shown in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1: Q2 Thematic Network

In the sections that follow, I begin by briefly defining “classroom materials” and describing how I elicited parents’ responses about how the books might be used as such. I then describe each of the three basic themes in its own section. I conclude the chapter with a discussion section where I elaborate on the organizing theme that connects the three basic themes.

Contextualizing the Parents’ Responses

As I designed this study and prepared for interviews and other research activities with the parents, I conceptualized “classroom materials” in a variety of ways based on my own experiences as an elementary teacher. Books were available in my classroom library for students to borrow at their leisure. I often read aloud to students for encouraging reading as pleasurable and a habit, modeling fluency and expression, or connecting to the curriculum in various content areas. I also assigned books to my students in guided reading groups or book clubs. These were just a few of the ways I used children’s literature as classroom materials, though I never used books with GL/LG characters or themes. Therefore, when I asked the parents questions about

how the GL/LG picturebooks shared with them might be used as classroom materials, I wanted to provide various possibilities, especially since the parents may not necessarily think about or be aware of the ways educators may use children’s literature in their classrooms. Table 5.1 lists questions I asked across stages that elicited responses from parents about GL/LG picturebooks as actual or possible classroom materials.

Table 5.1: Questions Asked of Parents about GL/LG Picturebooks as Classroom Materials

Stage One (Interview)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To your knowledge, is there representation of gays or lesbians in books or the curriculum within your child’s school? Share more about that.
Stage Two (Interview)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To your knowledge, are any of the books (or other books like them) available or used in your child’s school? What are your thoughts about that? How would you feel about these books being in your child’s school? How do you envision these books might be included? What might that look like – school counselor, school library for check-out, classroom library, read-aloud, connected to instruction, book groups, or something else?
Stage Three (Online Response)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please write one or two paragraphs (or more, if desired) to discuss your thoughts about the book as a parent considering this book being used/available in your child’s classroom. I welcome you to include specific examples of words, phrases, themes, illustrations, or other aspects of the book within your response.
Stage Four (Focus Group)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As parents, how would you feel about these books being available in your child’s classroom? How would you feel about these books being read by the teacher or used in lessons? Let’s say these books were going to be used within the classroom as a read-aloud or connected to instruction. Which of the books might work well for that? How so? What subjects or curricular standards/topics do you have in mind? Should they be connected to particular standards/concepts or used specifically to address gay/lesbian identities?

As I demonstrate in Table 5.1 (above), I asked a variety of questions across Stages One through Four in order to get at the heart of this research question and hear parents' responses in consideration of the various ways children's literature could be used in classrooms. I also acknowledge, similar to the description of book categories in the introduction of Chapter Four, that the way I phrased/presented the questions to the parents could have prompted particular responses. For example, the third bulleted question in Stage Two (Table 5.1, above) provided a menu of options from which the parents could speak. Similarly, the third bulleted question in Stage Four (Table 5.1, above) suggested that books could be "connected to particular standards/concepts" and/or "used specifically to address gay/lesbian identities." For curricular standards or concepts, I often provided parents with further examples, such as using *King and King* in units on fairy tales or *Orca's Song* when learning about indigenous cultures or folktales. I bring attention to the questions I asked and how I further led the parents with possibilities because it shaped how they responded and what they said. It is important to consider this context in conjunction with the analysis and findings described in the following three sections.

In addition to asking the parents how books *might* or *could* be used (thus insinuating that GL/LG books *should* be used) in classrooms, I also asked the parents if they were aware if any of the books shared with them in this study – or others like them – were housed or used in their children's schools. None of the parents were aware if GL/LG picturebooks existed or were used in their elementary children's schools or classrooms. (I will discuss this topic further in Chapter Six.) Thus, all of the parents' responses described in the following sections are in response to potential rather than actual, current, or previous use of the books in their children's schools or classrooms.

Beyond addressing the interview/survey questions I employed, it is important to forefront that it was not *only* my questions and interactions with the parents that influenced how they responded. As described in the introductory sections of Chapter Four, the parents' responses were also likely informed by their positionalities toward other people (e.g., teachers, children, fellow community members), concepts (e.g., books as instructional tools, GL/LG marginalization and/or equality), and institutions (e.g., public/elementary schools, universities, children's book publishers). Using the theoretical frame of queer theory, I understand that people's identities and beliefs shift, are multiplicitous, and are shaped by overlapping and compounding cultural, historical, and social influences (Butler, 1990; Lovaas, Elia, & Yep, 2006; Slagle, 2006). These many factors thus affected how the parents performed and responded to GL/LG picturebooks as potential classroom materials. The performances, enacted through the parents' verbal and written responses, are complex and warrant deep, critical analysis. While the parents' performances will be the content of Chapter Six, I focus in this chapter on the themes of the parents' responses relative to the second research question – themes I constructed from the data via thematic network analysis.

Theme Q2-A: Gravitating Toward Libraries

The first theme I constructed about how parents responded to GL/LG books as potential classroom materials was: Parents advocated for the inclusion of GL/LG picturebooks in the school/classroom library unless they were prompted to discuss other types of use for the books.

I organize this section by first describing how the parents initially responded in Stage Two followed by describing how the parents' responses both shifted and were also perpetuated in later stages of the study. This section concludes with a summary and discussion section

detailing connections among the subsections, the relevance of this theme at large, and how the findings further relate to queer theory.

Beginning with Libraries

The Stage Two interviews were the first time I asked the parents to respond to GL/LG picturebooks as potential classroom materials. In those individual interviews, I asked the following or a similarly phrased question: “If these books were to be included in schools, what might that look like in terms of library shelves, being used as read-alouds in classrooms, other ideas?” As described above, this question provided the parents options from which to elaborate such as the books simply being included in school library inventories to more direct classroom use.

All of the parents, except for Lindsay, responded to the question by discussing the GL/LG picturebooks as library materials children could check out at their leisure. For example, Anne replied, “Oh, I think that’s great. I think that’d be awesome. I think it’d be an uphill battle with some schools because I feel like the media specialist would not want to, you know, like stir controversy” (interview, 10/26/2017). Here, Anne mentioned the media specialist, showing her consideration of the books for the school library. Diya immediately mentioned libraries in her response: “So our library has recently moved to um instead of the Dewey Decimal System type of classification, they’ve moved to a genre based. So [these books] would go into fiction and non-fiction and within them I think these would go into family life [...] and they would be available for kids to check out” (interview, 10/15/2017). Here, Diya not only initially considered libraries as the place for GL/LG books, but she also provided great detail about how the books might be classified – showing insight into her child’s school library and its organization. However, she did not demonstrate similar specificity or insight as to how the books could be

used more directly with youth in classrooms. Further, her response equated the GL/LG picturebooks with families – a normative concept described in more detail in Chapter Four – though several of the books shared during Stage Two did not depict gays and lesbians within families (e.g., *Steven Universe: The Answer*; *Jack and Jim*; *Christian, The Hugging Lion*; *Gertrude is Gertrude is Gertrude is Gertrude*; *Hello Sailor*).

Similar to Diya in the instant connection to libraries, Kelly replied,

In a perfect world, I would prefer [the GL/LG picturebooks] just to be with every other book and treated just like every other book. I would prefer that they be promoted like librarians do for certain books just to let people know it's there, to let children who are in these situations who want to read about it or learn about it or feel like they can relate to something, you know. I would like the librarians to promote that. I don't know how classrooms do picturebooks to be honest with you. (interview, 10/18/2017)

Kelly's response provides a substantial amount to consider. First, she not only began by discussing GL/LG books as library materials, but she described her preference for their inclusion alongside other books and to not have special attention brought to them. (This type of use will be described more in Theme Q2-B.) Further, Kelly described such library existence as "a perfect world." Queer theory would see Kelly's statements as creating a binary (Meyer, 2007; Tierney & Dilley, 1998): a perfect world versus an imperfect world. According to Kelly, an imperfect world existed since the GL/LG picturebooks were not in the libraries and librarians weren't promoting such books. However, in the way she discussed a perfect world, Kelly absolved herself of responsibility and placed the onus on librarians. Kelly did not envision herself as having a part in disrupting the status-quo in order to make the world more perfect, and thus she resigned herself

to imperfection. I discuss more about such (in)actions and resignations, as well as what these instances suggest, in Chapter Six.

Returning to Kelly's statements (block quote, above), she also expressed a belief that the books should be available in libraries for youth who "want to read about it or learn about it." Hence, the GL/LG books are merely an option for children *if* they are interested rather than tools which teachers would proactively use with all youth. In addition, Kelly asserted that school librarians promote certain books, thus showing she had a conception of how school libraries operate based on her own assumptions or past experiences. Kelly's statement about libraries is particularly interesting when placed alongside her comment that she's unsure of how picturebooks are used in classrooms. In other words, Kelly had a very specific idea about how libraries operate, but she couldn't or wouldn't transfer such ideas to the classroom. Based on her response, how picturebooks might be used in classrooms was unintelligible to Kelly. This is even more surprising since Kelly has twin daughters in high school, a daughter who is in third grade, and mentioned being active in her children's elementary school parent-teacher organization for several years – thus potentially having much experience over time with what occurs in various elementary classrooms.

Crystal, a former teacher who now worked with youth in schools and facilitated professional learning with educators, also initially discussed library inclusion rather than more direct classroom use. I asked, "Would [the books] just be available on the library shelves, would they be a part of the classroom curriculum at all? What might it look like?" Crystal replied,

I mean yeah, I mean I think that there's an appropriateness for both. I'm of two minds. I can totally appreciate sections at a library that help to, you know, promote specific categories that are not necessarily part of the normal reading experience and to really just

draw some light, but I also just love the idea of books being on the shelves and kids just read what they read. (interview, 10/26/2017)

In her response, Crystal responded to my two options – library inclusion or classroom curriculum – by first stating she saw “an appropriateness for both.” However, she then spoke over the next several sentences only about libraries for which she then provided two different options – making a designated section to showcase GL/LG books and having the books immersed within the rest of the library collection. Thus, a parent with past and current teaching experience *and* who would presumably know a range of strategies for ways to teach and use literature still gravitated toward the books as library materials. Though she did a few moments later state,

We just have to prioritize it and we have to continue to bring up diversity of all different kinds in school settings and bring these books forward and read these books and talk about these issues as much as possible (interview, 10/26/17)

Crystal did not provide any specific ways she thought the books might be used directly in classrooms, which is ironic given that her suggestions for libraries *were* so specific.

The above responses demonstrate that the parents predominantly spoke about including GL/LG books in school libraries even after I planted the seed for alternative possibilities in the interview question. As the study progressed, the parents did mention other ways the books could be used as classroom materials, sometimes at my prompting and sometimes not. The parents’ discussion of other possibilities is the content of the next subsection.

Sharing Additional Possibilities

At the conclusion of each Stage Two individual interview, I provided the parents with the six GL/LG picturebooks they would read and respond to on their own time. On the online response form, the following question was posed for open-ended reply:

Please write one or two paragraphs (or more, if desired) to discuss your thoughts about the book as a parent considering this book being used/available in your child's classroom.

I welcome you to include specific examples of words, phrases, themes, illustrations, or other aspects of the book within your response. (Stage Three online form)

Unlike their responses in Stage Two which initially gravitated toward libraries, the parents mentioned other possible uses in their online responses – including classroom use. In some instances, what such classroom integration might look like was unclear. For example, parents responded they would like to see particular books “used in their children’s classroom”, they thought a book would be “useful in a classroom”, or they thought a book should be “available” or “in” their child’s classroom. (These responses incorporated identical or similar wording from the prompt.) In other instances, specific use of the GL/LG picturebooks as read-alouds or for classroom discussions were mentioned in response to the open-ended prompt. The prompt and the parents’ responses are provided in Table 5.2. The keywords and phrases in the left column are those parents specifically used (i.e., “classroom reading list”, “addition to required curriculum”) or terms I considered and looked for in my reading and analysis (i.e., “on shelves”, “classroom library”).

Table 5.2: Stage Three Online Responses about GL/LG Picturebooks’ Use/Availability

Prompt: Please write one or two paragraphs (or more, if desired) to discuss your thoughts about the book as a parent considering this book being used/available in your child’s classroom. I welcome you to include specific examples of words, phrases, themes, illustrations, or other aspects of the book within your response.								
	<i>And Tango Makes Three</i>	<i>Molly’s Family</i>	<i>This Day in June</i>	<i>King & King</i>	<i>Orca’s Song</i>	<i>The Harvey Milk Story</i>	TOTAL	UNIQUE PARENTS
Available /	Kelly	Diya	Diya	Anne			6	4

in classroom				Diya Lindsay				
Discussions	Lindsay	Lindsay	Lindsay Kelly			Diya	5	3
Read-aloud	Lindsay Crystal	Lindsay			Crystal	Diya	5	3
Available / in school		Anne	Kelly	Crystal		Kelly	4	3
Used in classroom	Diya	Diya	Lindsay		Diya	Diya	5	2
School library	Anne				Anne	Crystal	3	2
Check out / read on own		Lindsay	Anne				2	2
Addition to required curriculum						Crystal	1	1
Classroom reading list		Crystal					1	1
Useful in classroom					Lindsay		1	1
Classroom library							0	0
On shelves							0	0
TOTAL	6	7	6	4	4	6		
UNIQUE PARENTS	5	4	4	4	4	3		

I share this analysis of the parents' online responses because it demonstrates that the parents *did* suggest the GL/LG picturebooks be used in other ways besides inclusion in school libraries and without my immediate prompting with options. As Table 5.2 shows, "read aloud" and "discussion" were among the most frequently written suggestions in the parents' responses, even when not directly provided such options by me in the form of the question. These specific

uses were also among the most frequently suggested when considering unique parents rather than the term being by the same parent for various books. However, I also recognize that the parents' responses may have been shaped by my Stage Two questioning such as wondering if the books could be used as read-alouds in the classroom. (In addition, Table 5.2 demonstrates the two books that received the most responses for potential use were *And Tango Makes Three* and *Molly's Family*. As described in Chapter Four, both books depict families and are arguably the most "normative" of the set. More about the parents' preference for normative books as potential classroom materials will be described later in this chapter.)

During Stage Four, the parents in each focus group also spoke about how various books could be used more directly in the classroom. For example, they discussed how books such as *The Harvey Milk Story* could be connected to civil rights, *King and King* to fairy tales, and *And Tango Makes Three* to units about animals. Again, though, such considerations by the parents were in response to my direct questioning and examples I provided. The parents also shared how they would like dialogue about each of the books in regard to GL/LG experiences and marginalization specifically. For example, when discussing *This Day in June* and ways it might be used in a classroom, Kelly stated, "In a school system read-aloud I think I personally would prefer that because I think it would allow more communication" (focus group, 1/14/2018). Later in that same conversation and about the same book, Kelly shared,

I want that dialogue cause I think that's only where we get to that point. If the books are just going to be on the shelf and nobody talks about them, the kids read them and then they don't understand or they just think, "Oh, well these people are happy and they're having a parade with balloons and wearing these clothes or whatever." I'm concerned

that if we don't have that open communication and the questions, it's not going to get us anywhere. It's just another book on the shelf. (focus group, 1/14/2018)

Kelly's comments here show not only did she want the picturebook read-aloud to students, she wanted there to be discussion about the book to aid students' understanding and eventually lead to greater acceptance of gays, lesbians, and books representing them. Kelly's desire for discussion and communication about GL/LG picturebooks were similar to statements I heard from other participants as well. In an earlier interview, Diya stated such books should be read-aloud "because it sparks a conversation and it's an on-going conversation, but how can you if you don't even have the book" (interview, 10/15/2017). Diya's comments showed her stance that not only did their need to be conversation around books when read-aloud, but that such conversations should happen more than once and over time.

In the focus group, Lindsay made similar comments about the need for conversation to increase understanding which she connected to an article she had recently read about discussing race with children:

I read in some study about it's not enough just to talk to your children about race issues, that you actually have to. It's not okay to say to them, "Oh, this is a black child and this child is okay and this child is okay." It's not enough to do that. They don't actually internalize that. You have to have resources like this. You actually have to talk about the issues behind it. You have to help them understand if you actually want them to understand. You can't just present the material as this very neutral like, "Oh, everything's okay." Like you have to go that step further if you actually want to internalize the (sigh) acceptance of, you know, of skin color, of sexual orientation, of whatever and yeah I mean (sigh) if children didn't have access to it, if it wasn't kind of put in their face, then

how are they supposed to understand it, you know, if they don't have the real world experience [...] it is very important to have something that does take it that next step forward, that opens conversation, that educates them better about issues related to each one of these different topics. (focus group, 1/13/2018)

Lindsay combined what she had read about racial issues and combined them with her beliefs about gays and lesbians to assert the importance of having conversations with children, using picturebooks as a tool to facilitate conversations, and having those conversations not gloss over issues of hardship and marginalization. Lindsay not only emphasized wanting conversations in conjunction with read-alouds, but she described why she felt such conversations are important and beneficial. In a separate focus group, Kelly also discussed two additional benefits she envisioned from conversation, both of which related to comfort. She described how reading aloud and having conversations about GL/LG picturebooks could be comforting to children who “live in an environment that doesn't support this” (focus group, 1/14/2018) and thus might be afraid to take the book home and ask questions. A classroom, on the other hand, might provide “protection [...] but more of a read along so the teachers can talk and discuss” (focus group, 1/14/2018). Kelly also described how she felt reading aloud and having conversations about GL/LG picturebooks could ease parents' concerns who might otherwise object, that they might “feel better if a teacher was facilitating it” (focus group, 1/14/2018) rather than a child reading the book on their own. This idea connected to Kelly's other statements expressing if children read the books on their own, they might not understand the content as fully or may have questions that go unanswered.

However, although the parents discussed how books could be connected to curriculum or used to facilitate conversations about GL/LG experiences and equity, their comments were

primarily in response to the examples I presented as part of my interview questions. Typically, when the parents weren't provided prompts about such use, the parents reverted back to discussing the books' inclusion in libraries.

Reverting to Libraries

Similar to the Stage Two interviews, I asked each focus group during Stage Four about possibilities for the GL/LG picturebooks' use in classrooms. In each instance, the parents discussed the books being included in libraries – even when other, specific options had been suggested. This is particularly evident in this excerpt from the focus group in which Diya, Crystal, and Lindsay participated:

1	Adam	So a question that I have for you all is, if these books were in classrooms
2	Diya	Hrm-mmm
3	Adam	What would you like that to look like? Would you want it to be these books are on the shelf for kids to read? Would you want teachers reading these books aloud to kids and facilitating conversations?
4	Lindsay	Yeah. Absolutely
5	Adam	Would you want it to be like in little book clubs where different kids are reading different books? I'm just giving a few of the options. That's not to say those are the only options.
6	Lindsay	(overlap) I guess that's I mean if it's just on a shelf I don't know that my child would necessarily pick this over any other book
7	Diya	Right
8	Lindsay	but I mean just like there's a black history month and I'm sure that they pull it. In a public library every month there's
9	Diya	Hrm-mmm
10	Lindsay	a different highlighted section with with books that might go unnoticed but have a pertinence to something that's going on and I mean this would be an excellent way to do you know to showcase these books
11	Diya	Yeah
12	Lindsay	and put them forward. I mean like you (to Adam) said it's obviously a minority book that most teachers don't have
13	Adam	Hrm-mmm

14	Lindsay	and so I mean that alone (chuckle)
15	Diya	Yeah
16	Lindsay	seems like they would need to be encouraged like let's actually talk about this so let's actually highlight these and encourage the children to pick them up and look at them. I mean it's learning about anything else that if you are not educated about this, if you don't know how to talk about this, there need to be resources available to you to help you understand and help you talk about it.
17	Diya	Absolutely
18	Lindsay	Yeah
19	Diya	I mean, you know, kids gravitate towards certain things. My daughter is also going through a princess phase and if I just let her loose in the library [...]

In my questioning, I suggested four different possibilities: 1) books being on shelves, 2) read-alouds, 3) facilitating conversations, and 4) book clubs. I also stated there were other possibilities not named but they were welcome to discuss. However, it was *only* the books' use in libraries on which Lindsay and Diya focused. Lindsay spoke at length about how the books could be showcased in libraries to bring attention to them, showing her understanding of the specific practices used in libraries. Though it could be argued that her description was based on having a greater knowledge of library rather than classroom practices, this was not the case for Lindsay since she had previously homeschooled her children, volunteered in her children's school, and had just been provided in the question specific possibilities for classroom use. Therefore, even with knowledge about pedagogical strategies, Lindsay reverted to library inclusion and Diya then continued in a similar manner rather than returning to the original question.

During the Stage Four focus group with Kelly and Anne, I asked about censorship. The following conversations occurred after reading from the author's note of *And Tango Makes Three* in which the authors spoke about community support in Singapore when the book had been banned:

1	Adam	They're in the library, and then the government ended up backing down and the li- and the book was able to stay in the library. I guess comparing that to our context that we're in, what are your thoughts about you know whether it be this book specifically or other books if there was a op- opposition to books, should the books be removed? Should the books stay in classrooms, and then what would your response be to that?
2	Anne	Um well I don't think the books should be removed from classrooms (chuckle) and um but of course that yeah I I think it's um you know good good books and good solid matter. I think um I don't know like being in Walnut districts which I feel like are more conservative (chuckle) that's why I say like it's been an eye opening for me like only having a first grader versus being in like the [redacted] daycare setting so you just it's a different population but um but no I could see parents complaining and then I can see school districts immediately stopping or
3	Adam	Hrm-mmm
4	Anne	teachers or principals being like "well, oh that's controversial like we're just not going to deal with it"
5	Adam	Hrm-mmm
6	Anne	um and I can see that happening in a heartbeat (chuckle) at my kids' school
7	Kelly	(overlap) It has happened
8	Adam	Hrm-mmm
9	Kelly	I grew up in Walnut county
10	Anne	Oh you did? Okay.
11	Kelly	The only time we got on [the news] was when we banned books. That's a whole nother story but
12	Anne	Yeah, I mean yeah so I was think- I and I could just see like I know the school board um I've never I haven't heard great things about the school board. They're not particularly I don't particularly active and I haven't heard great things about the superintendent. He doesn't he seems like a real um piece of work so I just feel like if there was like any opposition like there was any kind of loud voice then boom it's going to like be removed but I feel like there's also things that are swept under the radar a lot so I don't think that we would hear opposition. I think
13	Adam	Hrm-mmm
14	Anne	there would be a personal phone call and we would never know that that book was even in the library and that it was offered and then it was gotten rid of.
15	Adam	Hrm-mmm
16	Anne	so um cause I feel like a lot of parents would speak out in the other direction but I feel like it would just be kind of a surprise. You wouldn't know

17	Adam	Hrm-mmm
18	Anne	that this happened and um
19	Kelly	I absolutely agree with that
20	Anne	(chuckle)
21	Kelly	that would absolutely happen and I think they need to be in the library

As evidenced in my initial question (line 1), I transitioned from public libraries (where the event in Singapore had occurred) to classrooms specifically. Anne at first responded, “I don’t think the books should be removed from classrooms”, thus using the wording from my question. However, she then continued to speak at length about her district and her perception of it as conservative. When she returned to the idea of where the books may specifically be included within schools, she mentioned their potential removal from libraries (line 14). Continuing the conversation, Kelly concurred that the GL/LG books “need to be in the library” (line 21). Though it could be that Kelly and Anne were considering school libraries and classrooms interchangeably, their reverting back to libraries is nonetheless noticeable. Further, Kelly and Anne’s statements are congruent with the responses from the participants in the other focus group as well as the majority of the Stage Two interviews in which the parents gravitated toward library inclusion.

Summary and Discussion of Theme Q2-A

In this section, I discussed Theme Q2-A: Parents advocated for the inclusion of GL/LG picturebooks in the school/classroom library unless they were prompted to discuss other types of use for the books. I demonstrated how the parents initially responded to my question about classroom use by discussing the books’ inclusion in school libraries. I then described how even though the parents did name in later stages other possible and more direct uses of the books within classrooms specifically, the parents still reverted back to considering the GL/LG picturebooks as items available for access in school libraries. It might be reasoned that this

gravitation occurred because the parents were using the concept of school libraries and classrooms interchangeably, or perhaps the parents had a stronger understanding of library rather than classroom practices. However, I believe neither possibility was the case, especially since I specifically asked about classrooms and embedded specific examples of how picturebooks could be used in classrooms in my questioning on multiple occasions with the same parents and across stages.

The topic of how the parents gravitated toward library inclusion warrants discussion because of how the practice reinforces passiveness. The books being available on library shelves – whether showcased in a designated section or shelved within the general collection – means that the books are merely accessible to children *if* they want to read them. It thus becomes incumbent on the child to find, read, reflect upon, and be affected by the book. Queer theory resists passivity and instead aims for explicit transgression (Britzman, 1995). A less passive approach would be the teacher selecting the book, reading it to children, and facilitating a conversation. While queer theory would argue that even this latter practice might be “unqueer”, could be problematic due to an emphasis on inclusivity (Britzman, 1995), and has the potential to reinforce hetero/homonormativity in other ways (Blackburn & Clark, 2011), directly using the books with youth is a further queer practice than simple library inclusion that perpetuates normativity because of its failure to enact dialogue.

Theme Q2-B: GL/LG Books as “Normal” Books

In this next section, I discuss Theme Q2-B: Parents desired for GL/LG books to be viewed as “normal.” As discussed in Chapter Four, I place “normal” in quotation marks because the concept of normal is subjective and impossible:

Moreover, to be fully normal is, strictly speaking, impossible. Everyone deviates from the norm in some way. Even if one belongs to the statistical majority in age group, race, height, weight, frequency of orgasm, gender of sexual partners, and annual income, then simply by virtue of this unlikely combination of normalcies one's profile would already depart from the norm. (Warner, 1999, p. 54-55)

However, the parents in this study frequently used the word “normal” across stages in reference to specific GL/LG picturebooks as well as non-GL/LG books more generally. In regards to how the GL/LG picturebooks might be used as potential classroom materials, the parents frequently discussed their preference for the books to be viewed, shelved, or used like “normal” books. By “normal” books, I infer the parents meant books that are typically in school and classroom libraries and which predominantly depict heterosexual characters and topics (Crisp et al., 2016; Hardie, 2011). For example, as described in the above section, Crystal and Kelly both expressed a desire for GL/LG books to be housed on library shelves with other books, and Kelly had even described this as a “perfect world” (10/18/17). In the same interview, Kelly similarly stated, “In a perfect world, we’d rather it just be all together [...] It’s a book’s a book’s a book” (interview, 10/18/2017). Here, Kelly also used the word “we”, though it was unclear to whom she was referring. She may have been referring to other GL/LG supporter parents who she believed may exist and think like her – parents who may want the books in schools and desire their “normalcy.”

It was not only during the Stage Two interview, though, that Kelly emphasized her preference for GL/LG books to be shelved with other, non-GL/LG books. Her desire was also made evident during the Stage Four focus group. Though she described her belief for the

importance of reading and discussing GL/LG books with children, she also reiterated her preference for the books to simply exist in library inventories alongside other books:

1	Kelly	[re: discussing <i>This Day in June</i>] “and wearing these clothes or whatever.” I I’m concerned that if we don’t have that open communication and the questions it’s not going to get us anywhere it’s just another book on the shelf
2	Adam	Hrm-mmm
3	Kelly	Where I think I think these books the the point is to make it to normalize it
4	Adam	Hrm-mmm
5	Kelly	so that it’s not hey do we need these books on the shelf? It’s just oh, it’s another book on the shelf.

What is particularly interesting in this excerpt is that Kelly also contradicted herself. She first described her desire for there to be conversation about books such as *This Day in June* so that it would affect change and not simply be “just another book on the shelf” (line 1), but then she stressed the goal was to “normalize” such books and topics so that they would *become* “just [...] another book on the shelf” (line 5). Kelly’s preference for GL/LG books to be placed alongside other books was also evident in her Stage One interview when discussing her initial reaction to seeing the recruitment flier for this study: “When I saw this, it was more like, ‘Why are we doing this? Just put the books in the library along with the other books and move along’” (interview, 9/17/2017). Thus, Kelly’s preference for GL/LG books to be “normalized” and not further highlighted was consistent and clear.

Though Crystal and Kelly were the most explicit about their preference for GL/LG books to be housed alongside other books, other parents also alluded to such “normalcy.” For example, when I asked Diya if the GL/LG picturebooks should be read aloud in classrooms, she responded, “Yes they should. Just like I think you should have a nice well-rounded selection of, you know, books on many different subjects. This should definitely be in the rotation just like

everything else” (interview, 10/15/2017). Diya echoed her desire for GL/LG books to be viewed and used as other, “normal” books in her subsequent interview. When describing the controversy that sometimes arises around difference, Diya stated, “This should just not be something that you need to have to think about so much. It’s just like any other book out there” (interview, 10/15/2017). Unlike Crystal and Kelly who primarily discussed “normalcy” in regard to library inclusion, Diya’s comments showed her desire for the books to be “normalized” in classroom use as well.

Theme Q2-C: Normative Books as More Successful

The third theme I constructed based on my analysis of the data was Theme Q2-C: Parents believed normative books had a greater likelihood of success in schools and classrooms. Of the 33 books the parents read across the study, the parents viewed some books as having more potential for existence and use in schools and classrooms than others. This was due to the books being less likely to cause controversy for parents who may not support GL/LG books or topics. I noticed the parents discuss two types of books as having the most potential for successful inclusion: implicit and “defendable” books. The subsections below further describe each of these types of books and how the parents spoke about them.

Implicit Books

When I presented the parents with 27 GL/LG picturebooks to read and explore during Stage Two, a few parents noted some of the books were more implicit than others. In some instances, the depiction of a same-sex relationship could be interpreted as simply a friendship. Examples of these books included *Jack and Jim* (Crowther, 2000); *Hello, Sailor* (Godon & Sollie, 2004); and *Christian, the Hugging Lion* (Richardson & Parnell, 2010). Other implicit books involved the same-sex relationship being embedded within a larger, non-same-sex

relationship focused narrative where the characters' sexual orientation may be overlooked. Examples of these books were *The White Swan Express* (Okimoto & Aoki, 2002) and *The Entertainer* (Willhoite, 1992). Anne and Lindsay both commented on these more implicit books as being possible entry points for other GL/LG picturebooks in the classroom. In response to *Hello, Sailor*, Anne stated, "Even this *Hello, Sailor* would be much more accepted I think. Something where men are kissing would be less accepted" (interview, 10/26/2017). When I asked Anne her thoughts about this and if books *should* be more explicit, she responded that the love story should be more "blatant" (10/26/2017). However, she continued to make comments about the possibilities and benefits of implicit books, perhaps showing despite her own personal acceptance, she considered the possible realities of schools. For example, she later stated in the same interview:

Like just talking about that *Jack and Jim* book or the sailor book where it's much more subtle but, you know, someone who's gay might see themselves in that and, you know, I guess find some examples of who they could be whereas someone who's heterosexual might not, like, see those angles or someone or, you know, parents might not see those angles and might not feel threatened by it, so I guess just more subtlety for the less welcoming crowds. (10/26/2017)

Here, Anne described her belief that some books may be able to exist under the radar and the same-sex themes go unnoticed to straight readers whereas those who identify as or with gays and lesbians may see reflections of themselves in the books. This idea of the creation of books for and susceptibility of gay and lesbian readers to identify with the representations – whether intentional by the author or not – connects to the concept of encoding (by authors) and decoding (by audience) used in film (Hall, 2000). Queer writing and reading strategies have also been

discussed in connection to various forms of literature, including children's literature (Hermann-Wilmarth & Ryan, 2014; Hermann-Wilmarth & Ryan, 2015; Kubowitz, 2012).

During our discussion following the reading of 27 books in Stage Two, Lindsay also mentioned implicit books may fare more successfully without objection in the classroom, though she also expressed frustration with this:

I feel it's a shame because you know elementary is when (chuckle), you know, when [teachers and children] should be talking about it and when it should be just, you know, intertwined into the curriculum they're doing, but um I don't know. I mean maybe one of the stories where it wasn't the primary focus, where it was just like secondary. I could see them maybe reading that as part of another curriculum. (interview, 10/20/2017)

Though Lindsay expressed the importance of having conversations about GL/LG topics with young children, she also acknowledged that more implicit books (those in which the gay or lesbian depiction is more "secondary" than "primary") may have to be the entry point.

In later conversations, Kelly and Anne both discussed the implicitness of *Orca's Song*, especially when considering their school system which they both expressed feeling was conservative. Because of the book's implicitness, Anne stated, "I can't see any big issues coming out of it" (1/14/2018). Kelly concurred in her final interview with me: "I think it has to, especially in that community, [be] very conservative, very non-confrontational. It's going to have to be, you know, maybe like *Orca's Song* where it's not very right there, obvious" (interview, 1/23/2018). In this final interview, Kelly reflected on the entire corpus of 33 books read across the study. She described how she envisioned implicit books creating a path for more explicit books later:

And then maybe looking at these or the thirty-three books and seeing, “Okay, which one’s least controversial? So let’s start.” You know what I mean? Let’s start at kinda grassroots and get one in, build it up, build the library with these books with this topic.

(interview, 1/23/2018)

Though Kelly reverted here to a consideration of libraries rather than more direct classroom use, she showed her belief of implicit books as a starting point. Further, she didn’t assert only implicit books should be included, but rather they might be the initial books so that more explicit books could be added in the future.

“Defendable” Books

Similar to how Anne and Kelly considered their self-described conservative contexts and the possibilities of implicit books to be less likely for objection, both of these parents also discussed how particular GL/LG picturebooks were more “defendable” (Anne, focus group, 1/14/2018) than others might be. The term “defendable” was used by Anne, and I employ the term here to describe similar statements made by other parents as well. I interpreted “defendable” books as GL/LG picturebooks the parents felt could be rationalized for classroom use because they

- 1) matched curricular standards,
- 2) represented identities existing in the school or local community, or
- 3) emphasized a “nature” more so than “nurture” cause for being GL/LG.

Though the idea of having to defend being gay or lesbian, or defend using GL/LG books within classrooms, is problematic, some of the parents found “defendability” as a possible asset or entry point for particular picturebooks.

The concept of a book's "defendability", particularly due to curricular connections or nature versus nurture debates, relates to and builds upon the findings about particular books' acceptability described in Chapter Four. For example, Anne – who appreciated *And Tango Makes Three* for its depiction of same-sex relationships in nature – stated the book would be an "easy sell" (Stage Three online response). She continued to speak about the defendability of this book in subsequent interviews. During the focus group, she stated,

The non-fiction aspect of *And Tango Makes Three* makes it less arguable, you know, because these are penguins. This is observed behavior, and this is science. They're talking about behavior you know exists in the animal kingdom. (focus group, 1/14/2018)

Here, Anne showed that she equated defendability with animal behavior and science. She also alluded to thinking a common knowledge exists for which everyone would understand and agree. For these reasons, Anne felt the book depicted something that could be proven true and was not susceptible to arguments of the characters being swayed by their social or cultural environments. This belief about animal and natural behavior contrasts with other statements made by Anne such as discussing the "Castro neighborhood" in Harvey Milk's life (focus group, 1/14/2018). Kelly also expressed her appreciation for and defense of *And Tango Makes Three* in relation to science, a belief she expressed during our final conversation and an idea she claimed she had not thought about previously until Anne expressed it during the focus group. Kelly stated,

The only thing was looking at it from a scientific, you know, here's some hard evidence cause we can prove this in science that animals have these tendencies in the wild and that it's completely normal. So I think that made me think about that, which I didn't. I was thinking, "Oh, it's a cute cartoon with two male penguins. That's adorable", you know? But it's true. It's, you know, and I knew that and I knew in science there's a lot of, you

know, there are a lot of animal species. I haven't done research but, you know, from what I've read I think it's, you know, they've got evidence and studies and stuff that homosexuality is in the animal world, and so when [Anne] brought that up, I was like, "Ah, good point", you know. That's evidence, more evidence right there. (interview, 1/23/2018)

Here, Kelly demonstrated that she felt the book, and being GL/LG in general, was "defendable" because it also occurred in animal populations. Not only was being GL/LG defendable because of this, but Kelly also felt that such existence – for which there was "evidence", even "hard evidence" – made it "normal" for humans as well.

It wasn't only books with animal characters or non-fiction books parents found defendable. When discussing *Molly's Family*, Anne explained how she found the book defendable since same-sex parented households exist, likely in her own school. She stated, "You can't like remove their family effectively at this, hopefully at 2017" (focus group, 1/14/2018). Anne's comment was not an argument for discrimination against same-sex families, but rather an acknowledgement that such families exist and should be represented in the books used in schools and classrooms. Another GL/LG picturebook with human characters Anne stated would be defendable was *The Harvey Milk Story* due to its ability to connect to the curriculum: "If the teacher can say, 'Oh, this is part of the civil rights standard,' then you have a nice defensible thing" (interview, 1/26/2018). For Anne, if a book was defensible, that was a "nice" and possibly helpful attribute. To aid a book's defendability, the GL/LG depiction had to be coupled with another topic (e.g., nature, civil rights, families existing within the school) rather than the book being worthy on its own merit.

Across the various stages and discussions about different books, Anne – more than any other participant – looked for ways to defend GL/LG picturebooks so they may have more likelihood of being and remaining in classrooms. Thus, she envisioned how the books could be potential classroom materials. This statement is not to indicate the other parents did *not* want to consider or advocate for the books in these ways. Rather, because of her context compared to the parents and their families in Boxwood, Anne may have felt she had to increasingly consider ways to support GL/LG picturebooks. Such consideration by Anne was also evident when discussing the books she worried might not be as defensible. For example, Anne stated *This Day in June* had “elements that people would argue against and be able to, like, successfully argue against” (focus group, 1/14/2018). In comparison to Anne’s statements about other books, her comment about *This Day in June* demonstrated her belief that books that didn’t reflect normativity would be more susceptible to censorship, the potential result of being “successfully argue[d] against.”

Summary and Discussion of Theme Q2-C

Three of the parents (Anne, Lindsay, and Kelly), discussed the potential success of implicit books. Two of the three (Anne and Kelly), also discussed the affordances of books they viewed as “defendable.” The parents developed these strategies especially when considering contexts where objections from other parents may arise and stifle books’ use, contexts which Anne and Kelly described for their children’s schools. Suggesting possible paths as a way to get GL/LG picturebooks in elementary classrooms also demonstrated these parents’ attempts for advocacy and ally-ship. However, I interpret the discussions about both types of books – implicit and “defendable” – as favoring “normative” books. Concepts of implicitness and “defendability” in regards to GL/LG representation are antithetical to queer theory. Queer is a positionality

against normalcy (Sullivan, 2003). Queer theory is perverse and unapologetic (Britzman, 1995; Halperin, 2003) rather than aiming to be “defendable.” Queer theory has no desire to be implicit but instead “bothersome” and “explicitly transgressive” (Britzman, 1995, p. 157). Therefore, the parents’ preferences for books and their potential use in schools or classrooms maintained normativity.

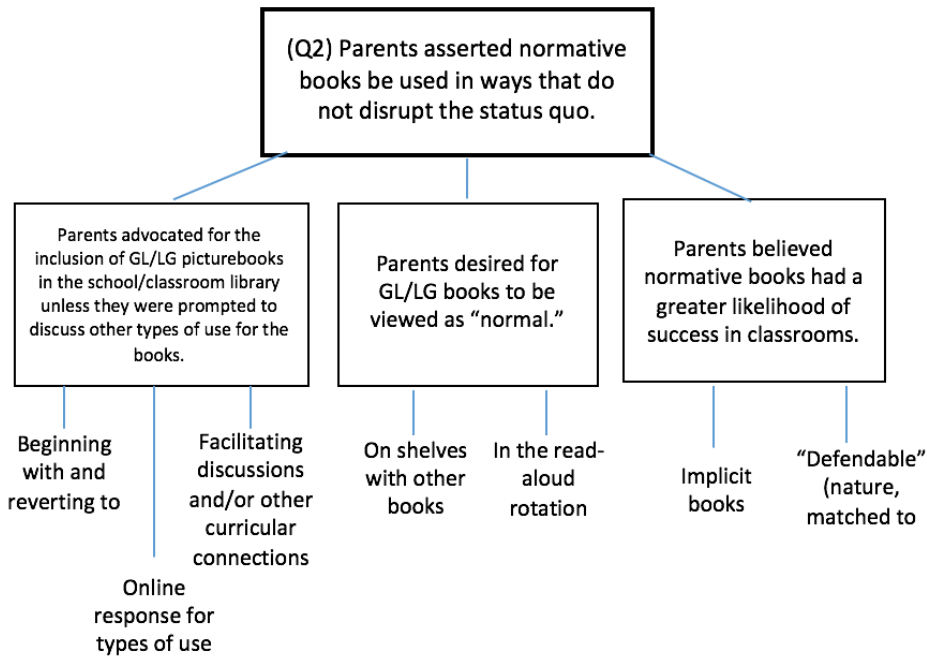
Summary and Discussion

In this chapter, I addressed the second research question: What themes, if any, emerge across parents’ responses to how gay/lesbian-inclusive picturebooks could be used as (potential) classroom materials? Analyzing the data, I constructed three themes relative to the research question:

- Theme Q2-A: Parents advocated for the inclusion of GL/LG picturebooks in the school/classroom library unless they were prompted to discuss other types of use for the books.
- Theme Q2-B: Parents desired for GL/LG books to be viewed as “normal.”
- Theme Q2-C: Parents believed normative books had a greater likelihood of success in schools and classrooms.

Using thematic network analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001), the above three basic themes led to my construction of an overarching organizing theme: Parents asserted normative books be used in ways that do not disrupt the status quo. The basic themes and organizing theme, along with elements from the data to support each basic theme, are shown in Figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2: Q2 Thematic Network (Revisited)



The overarching, organizing theme was evidenced across this chapter when discussing each of the basic themes. When considering the first part of the organizing theme – “Parents asserted normative books” – this was demonstrated by the parents in their preference for books that were implicit or “defendable.” When books were either of these types, the parents reasoned that they would be less likely to cause controversy, thus connecting to the latter phrase of the organizing theme: “be used in ways that do not disrupt the status quo.” This latter phrase was also demonstrated by the parents in their persistent gravitation toward school libraries when discussing how GL/LG picturebooks might be used as *classroom* materials. Though there is a chance the mere inclusion of GL/LG picturebooks in school libraries could cause controversy (as described about public libraries in the Chapter One literature review), library inclusion is less disruptive to the pervasive heteronormative practices of schools. Incorporating GL/LG picturebooks more directly and actively in classrooms both has the potential to incite controversy, which queer theory invites, and also interrogates and disrupts the heteronormative

status quo (Blackburn & Clark, 2011). The latter phrase within the organizing theme was also evident by the parents' desire for the GL/LG books to be viewed as "normal," for the books to simply exist alongside other books already within the library or curriculum rather than having extra attention brought to them. Thus, as potential classroom materials, the parents expressed a desire to maintain "normalcy."

As this chapter attests, the parents who identified themselves as GL/LG supporters from the onset of the study responded to the books' potential school or classroom use in ways that reinforced (hetero/homo)normativity. Though each of the parents did discuss other, more transgressive ways the books could be used, such considerations only occurred when I explicitly asked or provided one, particular option for them to respond. *How* the parents responded about potential use and hence produced themselves as allies across stages and settings is the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

“SO WHAT DO WE DO?” PARENTS PRODUCING THEMSELVES AS ALLIES IN RELATION TO GL/LG PICTUREBOOKS

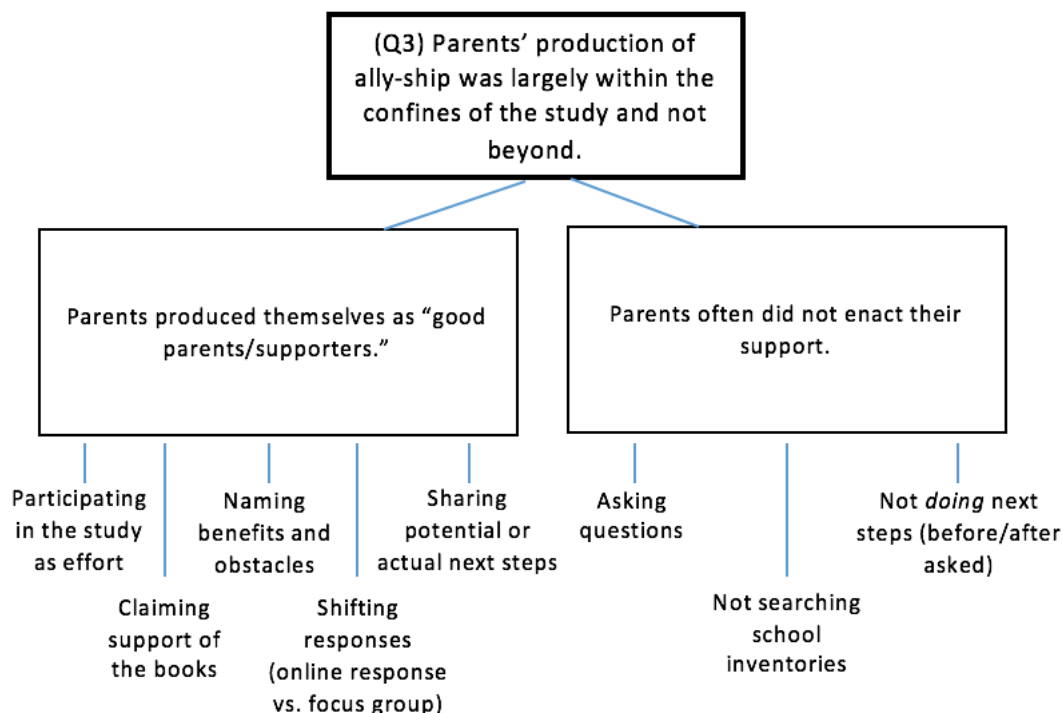
In this chapter, I address the third research question: How do parents who identify as straight and also supportive of gay/lesbian rights produce themselves in various settings (as allies) in relation to gay/lesbian-inclusive picturebooks as (potential) classroom materials?

Analyzing the data, I constructed two themes relative to the research question:

- Theme Q3-A: Parents produced themselves as “good parents/supporters.”
- Theme Q3-B: Parents often did not enact their support.

Using thematic network analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001) to determine and illustrate the connections among themes (described in Chapter Three), the above two basic themes led to my construction of an overarching organizing theme: Parents’ production of ally-ship was largely within the confines of the study and not beyond. The basic themes and organizing theme, along with elements from the data that support each basic theme, are shown in Figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1: Q3 Thematic Network



In the sections that follow, I begin by unpacking and elaborating upon aspects of the research question. I then describe each of the two basic themes in its own section. I conclude the chapter with a discussion section where I discuss the organizing theme connecting the two basic themes.

Unpacking the Research Question

Before commencing with the findings, it is important to address terms and phrases from the research question I used to guide my analysis of the data and writing of this chapter.

“Identify as Straight”

In response to the third research question, I limit my discussion in this chapter to the four parents in the study who self-identified as straight: Anne, Diya, Lindsay, and Kelly. These parents’ self-identification occurred at the onset of the study when they completed the pre-screening questionnaire (Appendix C). Additional information about how the parents identified,

including how they described their past experiences with and/or support of gays and lesbians, is described in Chapter Three.

“Supportive of Gay/Lesbian Rights / As Allies”

A supporter and ally are not necessarily synonymous terms. As discussed in Chapter One, my definition of ally aligns with Riddle’s (1994) notion of “supporter” and higher stages (admiration, appreciation, and nurturance). Riddle defined a supporter as one who “safeguard[s] the rights of those who are different. Such people may be uncomfortable themselves, but they are aware of the climate and the irrational unfairness in our society” (Riddle, 1994, p. 33). As the scale continues, classifications beyond “support” increasingly acknowledge the challenges gays and lesbians experience, value GL/LG people’s contributions, and confront bias in themselves and others.

However, the distinction between supporter and ally is in who can claim it. A person can claim they are a supporter, but they cannot claim to be an ally. A person is deemed an ally by others. For example, as a gay man, I might consider someone to be an ally because of their words or actions. This distinction between supporter and ally is imperative within this chapter and the findings discussed. Per the pre-screening questionnaire (Appendix C), each of the parents self-identified as a supporter of gay and lesbian individuals and their rights. I did not ask them to self-identify as allies. As I demonstrate in this chapter and will further discuss in Chapter Seven, though the parents identified as supporters, I do not necessarily consider them to be allies – at least in regards to the use of GL/LG picturebooks at potential classroom materials per the research question – based on my findings.

“Produce Themselves”

By “produce themselves,” I mean the actions and statements parents made as an attempt to demonstrate their support for gays, lesbians, their rights, and/or the inclusive books used in this study. When I embarked on this study, I predicted how the parents responded to texts one-on-one, online, and in groups with other parents may differ and shift. I also thought about how the participants may intentionally produce themselves as a parent and/or GL/LG supporter for various reasons such as their knowledge of my sexual orientation and background as a teacher, desire to assist a doctoral student in his degree requirements, frustration during a resurgence of conservative political leadership, and/or other potential motivations. The idea of production of ally-ship connects to queer theory, and specifically Butler’s (1990, 1993) concepts of performance and performativity.

Performance and performativity are connected and also differ. Both performance and performativity can be intentional, or “voluntarist” (Sullivan, 2003), actions, but they are also both informed and engrained by history, culture, and social interactions – especially through the repetition of acts and ways of being which lead to what is deemed normal and law but in actuality are “regulatory fictions” (Butler, 1990, p. 141). Performativity involves more of the day-to-day existence, the largely unintentional or un-thought about due to its “normalcy”, although actions and productions of self can certainly still be intentional. Further, “identity is performatively constituted in and through relations with others and with a world, thus all action is contextual, uncertain, dispersed, inter-subjective, in-process, and so on” (Sullivan, 2003, p. 85). Notions of context, inter-subjectivity, and being in-process are particularly relevant to my study and the findings described in this chapter.

To be distinguished from performativity, performance entails an increased intentionality and recognizes a voluntarist and subjective agency. Performance can also be more time-bound, context-specific, and limited in duration, what Butler (1993) referred to as a “bounded act” (p. 24). Sullivan (2003) noted that scholars sometimes describe drag – both theatrical but also discursive - as an example of performance. However, performance exists within performativity. Performance is not separate to performativity but rather exists within the same discursive constraints and productions. Butler’s concept of performance and performativity are largely connected to gender, but I also consider how such concepts are inherent in productions of individuals’ sexual orientation, support or ally-ship, and various other ways of being. In this chapter, I particularly focus on how the parents in this study produced themselves, and thus performed, as GL/LG supporters across research stages and settings.

“In Various Settings”

I explore how Anne, Diya, Lindsay, and Kelly produced themselves as allies across three settings: online, in-person individually, and in a focus group with at least one other parent. Table 6.1 matches the three settings with the relevant stage(s) of the study. For example, the pre-screening questionnaire of Stage Three occurred in an online setting. The semi-structured interviews of Stage One, Stage Two, and Stage Five occurred in in-person individual settings. The group setting only occurred in Stage Four. More information about each stage, including its format and purpose, also appears in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1: Settings and Stages of the Research Study

Setting	Stage	Format	Purpose
Online		Online surveys: Not anonymous, included selected-response and open-ended questions	Determine eligibility, develop participant group, and collect demographic information

Individual / in-person	Stage 1	Individual interview	Introduction; learn more about the participant, their children, and their context
Individual / in-person	Stage 2	Individual interview	Discuss types of literature their children read, the participants' familiarity with gay/lesbian-inclusive children's literature, and explore/discuss selection of 27 books
Online	Stage 3	Online survey: Anonymous with open-ended questions	Provide individual responses to six provided picturebooks
Group	Stage 4	Focus group	Discuss the six provided picturebooks
Individual / in-person	Stage 5	Individual interview	Re-visit aspects from throughout the study, provide opportunity for participant to share further thoughts

The following two sections detail the findings about how Anne, Diya, Lindsay, and Kelly produced themselves as allies across stages and settings within this study.

Theme Q3-A: Producing “Good Parent/Supporter”

The first theme I constructed was: Parents produced themselves as “good parents/supporters.” I use the term “good” to mean the production of self in ways that one feels may be looked favorably upon by others depending on interest or motive. For example, someone wanting to present themselves as a “good” parent to a teacher might discuss how they practice math facts and/or read with their child at home. Someone who wants to produce themselves as a “good” supporter of gays and lesbians might discuss how they have GL/LG friends or have

participated in Pride parades. I chose the word “good” because of its subjective and evaluative nature.

In my analysis, I found that the parents produced themselves as “good” supporters in five ways regarding GL/LG picturebooks as potential classroom materials: 1) participating in the study, 2) claiming support of the GL/LG picturebooks, 3) shifting their responses, 4) naming benefits and obstacles regarding the books, and 5) sharing potential or actual next steps. The following sub-sections describe each of these instances along with examples from the data.

Participating in the Study

In order to participate in this study, those who expressed interest had to note on the pre-screening questionnaire (Appendix C) their support of GL/LG people and their rights. During the Stage One interview, I asked each of the parents selected for the study to further discuss their support of GL/LG people as well as to share their reasoning for wanting to participate in this study. In their individual interviews with me, Anne, Diya, and Kelly each mentioned how part of their reason for wanting to participate stemmed from their desire to have GL/LG books incorporated in schools and classrooms. For example, Diya expressed during the Stage One individual interview, “Anybody who’s sort of trying to research more about how we can make our books more inclusive is something that I want to support” (interview, 9/17/2017). Therefore, Diya was specifically interested in aspects of inclusion and literature. Similarly, Anne stated, “Whenever I can help with people who, I don’t know, further something to make it more diverse at school, it works for me” (interview, 10/5/2017). In her comment, Anne did not specify GL/LG books, but she did emphasize her desire for increased diversity in schools as a rationale for participating in the study. Although Diya and Anne used “inclusive” and “diverse” more broadly,

Kelly specifically noted the connection between her desire to participate and her belief that GL/LG books should be in schools:

When I saw [the recruitment flier], I was like I can easily be a part of something that may end up getting these books in our schools and making more people understand and see how this is just another view you know aspect of life and that's okay. (interview, 9/17/2017)

In her statement, Kelly not only described how her participation was a way to show her support of GL/LG books as classroom materials, but she also mentioned why she felt such inclusion was important. The benefits Kelly mentioned, along with the other benefits the parents discussed relative to the GL/LG picturebooks, will be further described later in this section.

As this brief subsection demonstrates, all of the parents produced themselves as GL/LG supporters from the onset of this study simply by completing the online pre-screening form and agreeing to participate in the study. Anne, Diya, and Kelly further produced themselves as supporters of GL/LG picturebooks as potential classroom materials specifically by stating their participation in the study was due to help foster such inclusion.

Claiming Support of the GL/LG Picturebooks

As discussed in detail in Chapter Four, questions I frequently asked the parents after sharing the GL/LG picturebooks with them in various stages and providing time to read were: “Were there any particular books or types of books you didn’t care for?”, “Did you find any of the books problematic?”, and “Are there any of the books or groups of books that you felt uncomfortable about when considering your child or the book being in school?” Every parent responded they felt “fine with” (e.g., liked, had no problems with) all of the books in the sets. In other words, they claimed to support the GL/LG picturebooks as potential classroom materials.

For example, after reading the set of 27 picturebooks in Stage Two, Anne responded to my question by stating, “Yeah, I’d be comfortable sharing all of them. Um I wouldn’t have any problems” (interview, 10/26/2017). In addition, and as described in Chapter Five, the parents also claimed within their Stage Three online responses to support specific books for school or classroom use. For example, in response to *King & King*, Anne wrote, “I would be happy with this book in my kids’ classroom” (Stage Three online response) and Diya wrote, “This would be a great addition to a kindergarten or other elementary grade classroom” (Stage Three online response). Even more specific to classroom use, Lindsay wrote, “I would be happy for [*And Tango Makes Three*] to be read in my children’s classrooms and for the subsequent discussion” (Stage Three online response). In her entry for *This Day in June*, Lindsay responded, “I would love to see this book used in a classroom especially where the children were encouraged to use the reading guide to re-examine the illustrations and where there was an open dialogue to help them understand the significance of the historical events referenced and of pride parades in general” (Stage Three online response). Therefore, not only did Lindsay claim to support all of the books, she further produced herself as a supporter of the GL/LG picturebooks as potential classroom materials by elaborating on specifically how the books could be used.

As I read and analyzed the parents’ Stage Three online responses, I discerned there were discrepancies among the parents about the grade levels particular picturebooks might be incorporated, especially in regard to “appropriateness.” (More about the parents’ conceptualization of appropriateness is discussed in Chapter Four.) To aid my understanding, I designed and implemented an interactive chart activity to occur during the focus groups (described in Chapter Three). I provided six differently colored post-it notes to each parent. Each color represented a different book. I told the parents that, based on what I was hearing from

them, they felt fine with all of the books being available in libraries. However, I wanted them to think about the books being shared with youth in more direct ways such as read-alouds, whole-class conversations, book clubs, or other forms of use. I asked parents to place their post-it notes on the chart by grade level band, and there were sections included for “All” (e.g., “I feel fine with the book being used in all the grades”) and “None” (e.g., “I do not feel fine with the book being used in any of the grades”). Parents were asked to complete the chart in two rounds. The first round was for parents to consider the books in regards to appropriateness of the content. The second round was for parents to consider the books in regard to interest level for youth (e.g., text length, narrative style, illustrative style). Tables 6.2 and 6.3 show the parents’ responses combined across both focus groups. Figures 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, and 6.5 provide the photographs of the chart paper activity.

Table 6.2: Combined Focus Group Interactive Chart – “Appropriateness of Content”

Question: Where would you place the books in regards to <u>appropriateness of the content</u> ? (* indicates parents in focus group #2)							
	PreK-1st	(Grades PreK-3rd)	2nd-3rd	(Grades 2nd-5th)	4th-5th	All	None
<i>And Tango Makes Three</i> (orange)		Diya Anne*				Lindsay Crystal Kelly*	
<i>King & King</i> (purple)	Anne*	Diya				Lindsay Crystal Kelly*	
<i>Molly’s Family</i> (bright green)		Diya Anne*				Lindsay Crystal Kelly*	
<i>Orca’s Song</i> (blue)						Diya Lindsay Crystal Anne* Kelly*	

<i>The Harvey Milk Story</i> (yellow)				Lindsay	Diya	Crystal Anne* Kelly*	
<i>This Day in June</i> (pink)				Anne* Kelly*		Diya Lindsay Crystal	

Figure 6.2: “Appropriate” Chart – Group One



Figure 6.3: “Appropriate” Chart – Group Two



Table 6.3: Combined Focus Group Interactive Chart – “Interest”

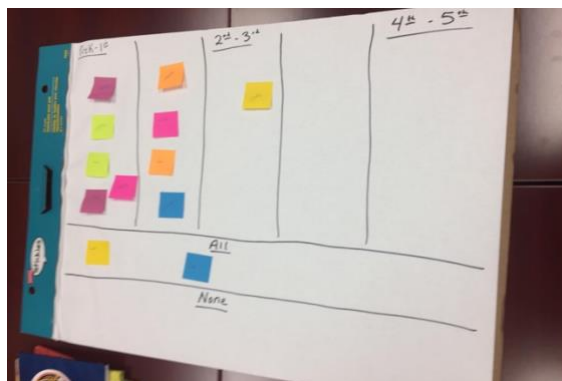
Question: Where would you place the book in regards to <u>interest</u> ? (* indicates parents in focus group #2)							
	PreK-1st	(Grades PreK-3rd)	2nd-3rd	(Grades 2nd-5th)	4th-5th	All	None
<i>And Tango Makes Three</i> (orange)		Diya Lindsay Crystal Kelly* Anne*					
<i>King & King</i> (purple)	Kelly* Anne*	Diya Lindsay				Crystal	
<i>Molly's Family</i> (bright green)	Kelly* Anne*	Diya Lindsay Crystal					
<i>Orca's Song</i> (blue)		Kelly*		Diya Crystal		Lindsay Anne*	
<i>The Harvey</i>			Kelly*	Lindsay	Diya	Anne*	

Milk Story (yellow)					Crystal		
This Day in June (pink)	Kelly*	Anne*				Diya Lindsay Crystal	

Figure 6.4: “Interest” Chart – Group One



Figure 6.5: Interest Chart – Group Two



Both charts show 1) all of the parents responded that all of the GL/LG picturebooks could be used in direct ways with youth beyond inclusion on bookshelves, 2) a clear sense of which grade levels the parents envisioned classroom use occurring, and 3) they claimed to support all of the books being used in classrooms. Thus, in a group setting, each parent physically produced herself as a supporter by placing post-it notes on the chart paper in ways that demonstrated an endorsement of the books – both in appropriateness and interest – somewhere within the elementary grades. No parent produced herself as resistant to a single book by placing a post-it note within the “none” section. Such placement of the post-it notes in a group setting with other parents, and how this was a production of “good parent/supporter”, is particularly intriguing when considering how responses sometimes shifted across settings and stages of the study.

Shifting Responses

In considering the third research question I am addressing in this chapter, I was particularly interested to explore if and how each parent’s responses differed across settings and

stages of the study. As I designed the study, I predicted such discrepancies might occur. The predictions were actualized, and the parents' shifting responses – and the contexts in which those shifts occurred – demonstrate how the parents were producing themselves as “good parents/supporters.”

One example of this occurred with Diya. In her Stage Three online response to *The Harvey Milk Story*, Diya typed, “I would welcome this book being used in my child’s [kindergarten] classroom” but also pondered “I don’t know if the book is appropriate for kindergarten or should be used in slightly older classes” (Stage Three online response). Through these comments, it was apparent Diya wavered about potential grade level in her online response. In the subsequent Stage Four focus group in which Diya participated, Lindsay expressed how upset her children were by the assassination discussed in the picturebook. When later completing the interactive chart for “appropriateness” during the focus group, Diya hesitated about where to place her post-it note for *The Harvey Milk Story*, partly due to Lindsay’s concerns. Diya oscillated between sections for upper elementary grades, lower elementary grades, and all grades. As the discussion about the chart paper ensued, Diya moved her post-it note three times as she considered the other parents’ perspectives in conjunction with her own. Diya elected the “Grade 4-5” column to be her final placement for the post-it note, placing it in even higher grades than the other two parents in her focus group who had already place their post-it notes for the same book. Even though Diya’s eventual categorization of *The Harvey Milk Story* did not shift from her earlier online response in which she considered the book a better fit for older grades, her in-the-moment shifting of the post-it note demonstrated that she was trying to produce “good parent/supporter” by wavering between what she felt was her gut instinct as a

parent (i.e., the book being in the upper elementary grades) and how she wanted to present herself as a GL/LG supporter (i.e., placing the book in the lower or all grades sections).

Anne was another parent who shifted her response to a book, particularly evident when comparing the Stage Three online response and Stage Four focus group. In her Stage Three online entry in response to *This Day in June*, Anne wrote, “I think some of the concepts in the book are too much for an elementary school” and “I also think that the lines about clad in leather and sisters sainting are much more risqué for an elementary school audience that it would be at home” (Stage Three online responses). These responses clearly showed that Anne did not advocate for this book as a potential classroom material. However, when discussing the book in the subsequent Stage Four focus group, Anne shifted in her response. When discussing specific illustrations and their “graphic[ness]”, Anne stated her comments were more a “concern about other parents” and that she felt “fine” and “calm” about the book (focus group, 1/14/2018). Thus, in a group setting, Anne produced herself as an ally in a way different than the anonymous setting. Online, she would not advocate for the book as a classroom material. In a group, she alluded to advocating for the book personally and shifted her concerns to those of other parents. Anne’s production as “good supporter” was also made evident later in the focus group during the interactive chart activity. Despite having vehemently responded to *This Day in June* as a potential classroom material both within her Stage Three online response and Stage Four focus group discussion, Anne placed the post-it note in the “second through fifth grades” column in regards to appropriateness and “kindergarten through third grades” column for interest. Thus, Anne demonstrated several shifts, at least in regards to *This Day in June*. She went from being a non-supporter in her online response, to producing herself as a hesitant and wavering supporter

verbally in the Stage Four focus group, to producing herself as a full supporter physically via the online chart.

In some instances, the parents shifted within a single setting in their response to GL/LG picturebooks as classroom materials. For example, during the Stage One interview, I asked Kelly's thoughts about advance notice to parents if such books were to be read at school. Kelly responded, "It's ridiculous, but if that's what it takes to make changes to get these in there, then we've got to do it" (interview, 9/17/2017). In other words, although she believed advance consent should not have to be requested, she would acquiesce it if meant the books could be in schools. However, earlier in the same session, Kelly claimed, "I feel like it's easier to get forgiveness than permission, but that's a whole other story" (interview, 9/17/2017) when discussing the potential inclusion of GL/LG picturebooks in classrooms and schools. Kelly's shifting responses were focused on how books more generally might be incorporated rather than conflicting statements about specific books. Nevertheless, her inconsistency showed her performance of "good parent/supporter" by claiming to do whatever it would take to support the books' inclusion. It is ironic that she stated in her earlier response that asking for forgiveness rather than permission was "a whole other story" because her later comment within the same interview showed that in fact permission was very much intertwined in her belief about how to get the books in schools. Considering permission also connects to the next way parents produced themselves as "good parents/supporters" – naming possible obstacles and benefits relative to the GL/LG picturebooks as potential classroom materials.

Naming Benefits and Obstacles

Another way that parents produced themselves as “good parents/supporters” was by listing the benefits of GL/LG picturebooks in schools and classrooms as well as discussing obstacles that might hinder such inclusion.

Benefits. Across the study, I asked the parents to list potential benefits, if any, of GL/LG picturebooks – both for youth who identify as, question themselves, or have loved ones who are GL/LG as well as for other youth. I did not, however, provide the parents possible benefits from which to discuss. Five benefits were predominantly named by the parents: 1) children can see reflections of themselves and/or their loved ones, 2) books raise awareness and help youth learn about the world/society, 3) books encourage empathy and kindness, 4) their own children might be GL/LG and need to know it’s okay, and 5) books show challenges exist and how to navigate them. Additional benefits, such as how books show GL/LG individuals as leaders (*The Harvey Milk Story*) or showing “love as an act of sharing and generosity” (Diya, Stage Three online response to *Orca’s Song*), were also discussed by the parents. Table 6.4 shows benefits discussed by each parent in various settings and stages.

Table 6.4: Parents’ Naming of Benefits Across Settings and Stages

	Anne		Diya		Kelly		Lindsay	
	Setting	Stage	Setting	Stage	Setting	Stage	Setting	Stage
Children can see reflections of themselves or their loved ones	I	1, 2			I, O	2, 3		
To raise awareness and learn about the world/society	I	2	O, G	3, 4	I, O	2, 3	O, G	3, 4
Encourage empathy and kindness	I	2	G	4	I	2		

Participants' children might be GL/LG and need to know it's okay	I	2	I, G	2, 4			I	1
Navigating challenges	I, O	2, 3	G	4	I	2	O, G	3, 4
Other benefits	O, G	3, 4	O	3	O	3		

As the table demonstrates, all of the parents discussed at least three types of benefits of GL/LG picturebooks. Except Kelly, all of the parents produced their support connected to this theme across all three settings – online, individual, and group.

By naming and describing benefits of the GL/LG picturebooks, the parents produced themselves as supporters in response to my questioning. However, how could they not? The question itself required responses that helped the parents produce themselves as supporters.

Obstacles. Though I asked the parents about the benefits of the GL/LG picturebooks, potential obstacles to such books as classroom materials were readily named by the parents whether or not I directly asked. By considering obstacles and how such obstacles might be addressed, the parents further produced themselves as supporters. I identified three obstacles the parents discussed: 1) expectations on teachers, 2) gatekeepers, and 3) possible critiques.

Expectations on teachers. Kelly, Lindsay, and Anne all considered how teachers may be hesitant to use GL/LG picturebooks because of the demands already placed on them. For example, Kelly expressed how “maybe teachers are just in a routine where the curriculum says you got to teach this to pass your, you know, your Milestones for the end of the year, so diversity takes a back seat cause we gotta make sure all the students are passing those horrible tests” (interview, 9/17/2017). Lindsay shared, “his teacher has told me that most of the kids in his class

are in a remedial level right now, and so I don't see them like getting the books and taking it a step forward" (interview, 10/20/2017). Similarly, Anne stated,

The schools have a lot on their plates. We put a shitload on teachers and principals and stuff like that, so I think, you know, it's hard for them to stick their necks out or want to. I mean they got enough just to like keep going. (interview, 1/26/2018)

The parents' statements echo Britzman's (1995) argument that "more is required than simply a plea to add marginalized voices to an already overpopulated site" (p. 158). Public schools particularly are burdened with mandated curriculum, standardized testing, and a range of other challenges that leave little room for adding anything new.

Gatekeepers. The parents also identified how various school personnel or others may act as gatekeepers, thus being another or compounding obstacles of GL/LG picturebooks as classroom materials. They expressed teachers, media specialists, administrators, and other parents as such gatekeepers. For example, Lindsay wondered, "If you give [books] to the library, can the library just be like, 'Oh, nope, we're chucking those. We don't want to hold them.' I mean, is that just up to the librarian?" (interview, 1/29/2018). Here, Lindsay acknowledged and expressed worry that a single school faculty member could be a gatekeeper blocking GL/LG picturebooks from being included in the school. Anne and Kelly both shared how they felt that even if the books were included in school libraries, that the complaints of even one parent would result in the book being removed and other parents – who might have supported such a book – not even knowing the censorship had occurred. In response to the obstacle of potential single gatekeepers, Anne surmised donating books to a variety of spaces within the school followed by a letter to the principal endorsing the books. More about Anne's and the other parents' considerations of possible steps – in response to my questioning – will be discussed later in this

section. Nonetheless, the parents' concern of various potential gatekeepers as obstacles was a way they produced themselves as supporters of the GL/LG picturebooks.

Possible critiques. Each of the parents also named and responded to potential critiques of the GL/LG picturebooks or topics more generally. For example, Diya stressed, "like [other parents] don't even want to teach sex education to teenagers thinking that that's going to lead them to be more sexually active and we know that it leads them to be less sexually active. (focus group, 1/14/2018). In a separate interview, Kelly also named and responded to the critique of how reading or learning about something leads to doing it:

Reading a book about a Jewish kid or about a kid who's gay is not going to make you Jewish or gay, so move along. It's always, "I don't want my kids seeing that or it's going to turn them gay." No, (whisper) that's not how science works, and I think it's uninformed and uneducated, and that's why we need this. (interview, 9/17/2017)

Not only did Kelly call out this sometimes used objection and her response to it, her concluding phrase "and that's why we need this" demonstrated her support for GL/LG picturebooks as classroom materials. (On the other hand, such an expression of support also acknowledges the stigma associated with being or becoming GL/LG. Queer theory would argue that being or becoming GL/LG is not negative or deviant. Thus, even if the reading of books *did* lead to youth identifying as gay or lesbian, that is not problematic.)

Anne and Lindsay named a different and more insidious critique: the idea that romance or physical intimacy are inappropriate depictions for youth. For example, Anne stated: "Cause people will just say, 'I don't want to see that' even though other people they wouldn't remember that you see heterosexual examples of people kissing, too" (interview, 10/26/2017). Similarly, Lindsay called out the pervasiveness and unquestioned acceptance of heterosexuality: "Why

should it just be hetero families, hetero love that is shown in those books?” (focus group, 1/13/2018). Here, Lindsay asserted other sexual orientation representations should also exist within the books children read at school. In both excerpts and occurring in different settings, Anne and Lindsay addressed the critique of “appropriateness” by pointing out the existent and often unacknowledged pervasiveness of heterosexuality in the books shared with children.

Sharing Next Steps

Yet another way the parents performed as “good parents/supporters” regarding the GL/LG picturebooks as potential classroom materials was by sharing ways they might advocate for the books, including potential or actual next steps. Similar to several other instances discussed in this dissertation, the parents’ responses about advocacy and next steps were in reply to my specific questioning on the topics. When parents discussed how they might advocate for the books, which I interpret as potential next steps, I identified two types of advocacy described by the parents: retroactive and proactive advocacy.

Potential, Retroactive Advocacy. I categorized retroactive advocacy as the ways parents would advocate for GL/LG picturebooks in response to other situations, such as if objections about the books arose. For example, in the Stage Four focus group, Diya said, “If there was a controversy, I would definitely speak up and say ‘Look, you know, I am in favor of having uh a very wide ranging diverse selection of books’” (focus group, 1/13/2018). Later in the same conversation, she made a similar statement: “I think those parents need to speak up as to what their opposition is and then it can be handled” (focus group, 1/13/2018). Lindsay made a similar statement in the focus group: “[Other parents] need to react so that so that we could have an appropriate response to their reaction” (focus group, 1/13/2018). In other words, the ways in

which objections arose, as well as the content of those objections, would inform how to retroactively respond.

Potential, Proactive Advocacy. I define proactive advocacy as the ways parents would recommend or advocate for GL/LG picturebooks in advance of any other situations arising in regards to the picturebooks. In response to my question about potential next steps the parents might take in regards to the GL/LG picturebooks as classroom materials, each parent responded in a way I categorized as proactive advocacy. I identified four types of proactive, next steps mentioned by the parents: 1) contacting teachers, media specialists, and/or administrators in their children's schools, 2) inquiring with friends or acquaintances who work in schools, 3) donating books to the school or classroom, and 4) creating and/or providing resources to support the books' use. Table 6.5 demonstrates the potential next steps discussed by each parent in various settings and stages.

Table 6.5: Parents' Naming of Potential, Proactive Next Steps Across Settings and Stages

	Anne		Diya		Kelly		Lindsay	
	Setting	Stage	Setting	Stage	Setting	Stage	Setting	Stage
Contact teacher, media specialist, or administrator	G, I	4, 5	G, I	4, 5	I	5	G, I	4, 5
Inquire with friend or acquaintance working in schools	I	5			I	5		
Donate books to school or classroom	I	5	I	5	I	5	G, I	4, 5
Create and/or provide resources	I	5						

In some instances, the parents' expressed reticence or uncertainty regarding their potential next steps. For example, in the concluding Stage Five interview, Diya stated, "I wouldn't mind donating to the school or to the child's classroom if I have to check in with the teacher if she would be interested. So that's something I wouldn't mind doing at all" (interview, 1/21/2018). Here, Diya expressed she may donate books, but she also indicated speaking with the classroom teacher "to see if she would be interested." Diya also claimed she "wouldn't mind" approaching the teacher, demonstrating an indifferent agreeance in response to my question rather than an emphatic action plan. Similarly, Lindsay began by expressing uncertainty about how she might proceed:

I was kind of thinking like could I just talk to their teachers and donate some copies or you know would I need to go to an administrator or should we have a read-in and just go and sit on the school steps? I don't know. I mean I'm not sure what would be needed necessarily in a school system like ours. (focus group, 1/13/2018)

As this quote shows, Lindsay's plans became more specific as she continued to consider possible ideas. It is interesting to note that her idea of the read-in was shared after recently discussing the tenth year anniversary afterword in *And Tango Makes Three*. The afterword described how community members in Singapore staged a read-in of the book when it had been removed from the public library. The read-in led to the reinstatement of the book within the library's collection.

In other instances, the parents shared potential next steps with even greater specificity and excitement. In both group and individual settings, Anne shared she might contact faculty within the school to inquire about the GL/LG picturebooks. During the focus group, Anne thought about her younger son's teacher: "If I were to say, 'Oh, there's a great book,' he would definitely read it" (focus group, 1/14/2018). However, this statement was made in reference to

her child's PreK teacher and at a school separate from the elementary school her older child attended. She did not make similar claims about teachers at her other son's school. On the other hand, Anne shared during the individual Stage Five interview her plans in regard to the latter school:

I think I would also separately approach the principal and then just tell like, "Oh, you know, I noticed that there's no books on gay and lesbian families in our school and you know we need some" and then separately say, "Oh, I donated some to the media center" or whatever. I don't know. I'm not sure what the best tactical way to do it is, cause I think the principal is just gonna forget and ignore it, but it's still good to like, she's got one e-mail about it and maybe someone else will e-mail her about it, or I would encourage some other people to, like, express support. (interview, 1/26/2018)

In this excerpt, Anne specified who she would contact in the school – the principal and media specialist. Further, through her description of the process and use of the word "tactical", Anne demonstrated a strategic plan for how to integrate GL/LG picturebooks into her son's school. In other parts of the Stage Five interview, Anne also mentioned strategies and specific people she might contact. For example, she considered contacting the school's music teacher, who she knew personally and felt would have a good knowledge of how faculty may or may not be supportive. Anne also considered, "I could, like, call attention to my son's teachers that I donated these books into their [school library]" (interview, 1/26/2018). Realizing that a single gatekeeper, such as the principal, might thwart GL/LG books' inclusion, Anne considered contacting a variety of school faculty to inquire about and support the integration of GL/LG books. In addition, she would initiate contact with other parents so they could compound the effort.

In addition to donating the books, Anne also mentioned she might create resources to supplement the books. Anne was the only parent who suggested this. During the Stage Five individual interview, she pondered,

Maybe it would be information on how diversity strengthens, you know, kids overall and their academic progress, and so books that express the whole, you know, spectrum of human experiences, you know. Having those in the school library or all the schools' learning, so actually I could put something like that together. (interview, 1/26/2018)

Anne suggested here that a rationale for why such books are important may be helpful to educators so the books may have a greater likelihood of being used. Also during the Stage Five interview, Anne mentioned another resource she'd share with the principal along with her offer to donate: "Like especially with a nice summary, I would share it with a list of books. I would offer to buy them" (interview, 1/26/2018). Anne did not specify if the summary would be a description of each book, an overview of all the books combined, or a statement for why such books matter. Nonetheless, Anne again emphasized her understanding that additional resources may help and she considered creating them.

Kelly also considered contacting school personnel as a potential next step. Although her plan had less components than Anne's, Kelly appeared the most excited about her potential next steps compared to all of the other parents. Kelly shared in the individual Stage Five interview her intention to speak with the media specialist at her third grade daughter's school. While discussing the media specialist, Kelly remembered she had a close friend who is a media specialist at another school within the same district. As soon as she thought of her friend, Kelly was immediately excited:

You know, I just real- my best friend's sister is a media specialist at the middle school. I've known her for my entire life and we are thicker than thieves and I'm so tunnel-vision on elementary school. I'll just ask her! Anyway, she'll know, and I'd be more comfortable talking to her and being flat out, you know, as opposed to maybe having to beat around the bush just because, I don't know, it's my kid's elementary school as opposed to dealing with a friend. That's what I'm going to do. As soon as we're done, I'm going to text her and find out about the process. I forgot about her! Oh, that'd be awesome! (interview, 1/23/2018)

Kelly's excitement about her plan was palpable. She produced herself as a "good parent/supporter" by not only sharing a potential next step in response to my direct questioning, but also exhibiting enthusiasm about the plan and committing to follow through with it. However, Kelly's comments occurred during our final interview and she never shared with me afterward whether or not she had actualized her next step. This is particularly interesting since I e-mailed the participants a final e-mail and included an invitation for them to share updates with me. I never received a response from Kelly, nor did I receive a response from Lindsay or Anne if they had commenced with the next steps they had mentioned. One parent, Diya, did respond – even before I e-mailed to inquire.

Actual Next Steps

After the Stage Five individual interview, Diya e-mailed me twice without my initiation. I received the first e-mail on March 4, 2018. In this e-mail, Diya wished to share about a recent event. Her daughter's kindergarten teacher had invited parents to visit and read-aloud to the class to celebrate Read Across America Day. Diya asked her daughter if she had any preferences for the read-aloud, and her daughter chose *And Tango Makes Three*. Diya had shared with me in the

previous stages how this book and the topic of penguins in general had become a favorite for her daughter due to a recent class unit on the animal. Diya contacted the teacher in advance, mentioning she would like to read this book which depicted a same-sex relationship. According to Diya, the teacher seemed “pretty unfazed” (personal communication, 3/4/2018), and thus she read the book to the class. A couple of days after this event, Diya e-mailed me to share about the experience. She mentioned how much the children enjoyed the story and “the sky didn’t fall or anything” (personal communication, 3/4/2018). Both the wording in the e-mail as well as her decision to send it in the first place exuded Diya’s excitement and pride in actualizing this next step regarding GL/LG picturebooks as classroom materials. Further, it is interesting that Diya – the parent who had responded with the most uncertainty and hesitation about a potential next step (as described earlier in this section) and who wavered about issues of age-level appropriateness (as described earlier in this chapter) – was the only parent who, to my knowledge, enacted a next step.

Diya again e-mailed on March 29, 2018. This time, her e-mail was to share about a new GL/LG picturebook she had recently discovered – *Jerome by Heart* (Scotto, 2018). She mentioned that she thought about this study when she saw the book and thus wanted to share the title. Though this second e-mail was shorter than the first and did not specifically address GL/LG picturebooks as classroom materials, her message was significant nonetheless. Diya’s e-mail showed that she was attuned to the existence of GL/LG picturebooks and would share them with others she thought may be interested and could benefit from them. This e-mail, along with her March 4 message, demonstrated Diya’s efforts to produce herself as a “good parent/supporter” by sharing her next steps via communication regarding her awareness and action.

Summary of Theme Q3-A

The above subsections detail the five ways parents produced themselves as “good parents/supporters”: 1) participating in the study, 2) claiming support of the GL/LG picturebooks, 3) shifting their responses, 4) naming benefits and obstacles regarding the books, and 5) sharing potential or actual next steps. All of these actions by the parents support Theme Q3-A: Parents produced themselves as “good parents/supporters.” As described at the onset of this chapter, I view the parents’ responses – as well-intentioned and genuine as they might potentially be – as performance and production. I am cognizant of how the parents’ responses may have been impacted by my interactions with them. As described in Chapter Three, I shared about myself at the onset of the study. I described myself as a gay male, former elementary educator, and current doctoral candidate. I also described the rationale for the study. The parents may have heightened how they produced themselves as supporters because they would like to support the use of GL/LG picturebooks as classroom materials. They may have heightened how they produced themselves as supporters because they wanted to support a graduate student in his research. They may have heightened how they produced themselves as supporters because they thought it may make them look like stronger supporters or allies from my view. It could be any, a combination of, or none of these reasons. Further, as described within the limit(ation)s section of Chapter Three, interviews are “moral and political interventions” (Kong, Mahoney, & Plummer, 2002, p. 245). Research studies focus on particular topics and have an agenda. Participants perceive this and respond, and perhaps perform, accordingly. Plus, the ways in which research questions are asked elicit particular types of responses (Johnson, 2002; Roulston, 2010). These factors are all inherent in research, but also limit(ation)s.

The above subsections demonstrate that the parents produced themselves as “good parents/supporters” in a variety of ways across settings and stages of this research study, particularly in response to my direct questioning. However, each of the parents also demonstrated that they often did *not* actually enact their support. This is the focus of the next section.

Theme Q3-B: Often Not Enacting Support

The second theme I constructed was: Parents often did not enact their support. In my analysis, I identified three ways the parents did not enact their support: 1) asking questions of the researcher, 2) not searching school inventories, and 3) not implementing or sharing their stated next steps. The following sub-sections describe each of these instances along with examples from the data.

Asking Questions

One way the parents did not enact support was by repeatedly asking me questions throughout the study about actions they might take rather than pursuing the questions themselves. This was evidenced by each parent. Because of the extent of each parent’s questioning and what it revealed, I discuss each parent in her own subsection.

Diya. In Stage Two, Diya expressed her uncertainty for how books are selected for libraries. She wondered if book decisions were made by the media specialist, district representative, or someone else. I responded that book decisions were typically made by the school’s media specialist. I mentioned that I knew her school’s media specialist personally and thus had some insight into how that particular person selects books for the school’s collection. However, a few months later, Diya again expressed uncertainty during Stage Four and Stage Five. During the Stage Four focus group, Diya stated,

I think it would be interesting to just talk to the librarian and see if any of these books are [available] cause he's absolutely wonderful and I know that he goes out of his way to pick a very diverse selection of books. I should find [the list of GL/LG picturebooks previously shared] and I should just write him a friendly hello e-mail and just say, "Are these books in our library?" (focus group, 1/13/2018)

In the subsequent Stage Five interview when asked about potential next steps, Diya responded, "I wouldn't mind donating to the the school or to the child's classroom if I have to check in with the teacher if she would be interested. So that's something I wouldn't mind doing at all" (interview, 1/21/2018). In both her Stage Four and Stage Five comments, Diya did not specifically ask me questions. However, she still expressed an uncertainty about the process for book incorporation, even after such information had been shared with her months earlier.

Lindsay. Similarly, Lindsay expressed uncertainty about how books are selected for use and inclusion in schools. During the Stage Four focus group, she expressed,

I was kind of thinking, like, could I just talk to their teachers and donate some copies or, you know, would I need to go to an administrator, or should we have a read-in and just go and sit on the school steps? I don't know. I mean I'm not sure what would be needed necessarily in a school system like ours. (focus group, 1/13/2018)

In this statement, Lindsay pontificated about possible action plans. It could be that she was thinking aloud about possibilities, but her questioning could have also been an appeal for guidance about how best to proceed. However, her direct questioning of me was more evident during the subsequent Stage Five interview: "If you give them to the library, can the library just be like, 'Oh, nope, we're chucking those. We don't want to hold them.' I mean, is that just up to the librarian?" (interview, 1/29/2018). In this instance, Lindsay relied on me as a former educator

and current educational researcher to provide her with insight into how schools operate regarding book selection and censorship. Though her asking was not entirely problematic, and in some ways showed her continued inquiry into how to possibly work toward the incorporation of GL/LG books, I wondered why Lindsay waited until our final sessions to ask such questions.

Anne. Anne was another parent who asked questions as my time with her drew to a close. During the Stage Five interview when I asked her about potential next steps, Anne replied,

Like, what's the right approach? Like, do I give them to a teacher who can explore them and it's more likely to be presented? Do I give it to the media center person who may or may not share it? So, I'm not really sure. I was actually kinda wondering about that.

(interview, 1/26/2018)

Three things are evident in Anne's statement. First, she turned my question about potential next steps back on me, absolving her of taking responsibility by asking my guidance. Second, she showed even through her questioning that she had clear ideas about who to ask and what the possible benefits or ramifications of each person might be. Third, Anne concluded her statement by saying she was "kinda wondering" about these questions. In other words, she had given a little thought to how to proceed, but not a great deal of attention to it. Nor had she acted on her wondering.

Anne's continued comments made immediately following her above statement were further striking:

My first thought was like, "Oh, I should share these books with, you know, with the schools" actually. So, I don't know, I thought, you know, one thing that would be interesting, yeah actually, if you as a researcher could provide like a little write-up.

(interview, 1/26/2018)

Here, she continued to appeal for guidance by saying “I don’t know” after sharing a specific idea. Then, similar to her reversal of responsibility evidenced in the earlier comment, she then put the onus of responsibility for next steps on me by suggesting I provide a resource. Again, by questioning and directing me, this relieved Anne of responsibility.

Kelly. Though all of the parents asked questions, Kelly asked them with the greatest frequency. During Stage Two, I asked Kelly if and how she might advocate for GL/LG picturebooks. She responded with a series of questions:

I don’t know what all of us who would want this, like, how would we come together?

What would we do? Would there be petitions? Would we, you know, I don’t know to be honest with you. But I would support anything, any kind of movement. (interview, 10/18/2017)

Similar to Lindsay’s statement from above, Kelly’s questions could be interpreted as her thinking aloud about possible steps. On the other hand, her questions could have been posed as a way to seek guidance. Despite the intent of her questions being unclear, what *was* clear was how she responded with a collective “we.” Kelly did not envision herself – alone – advocating for the books, even though the question had been posed that way. As Kelly continued her response, she also transitioned from that of an organizer (e.g., “How would we come together?” “What would we do?”) to being a follower of a “movement” launched by others. Thus, Kelly’s questioning led to an absolving of responsibility.

Kelly’s questioning, and the use of those questions to transfer responsibility to others, was particularly evident a few months later during the Stage Four focus group (1/14/2018):

1	Kelly	Is there a plan to get these books into libraries or what’s, how does that work? How do we do that?
2	Adam	Yeah, I was going to ask y’all that same question.

3	Kelly and Anne	(laugh)
4	Adam	and that's going to be part of what we talk about at our next meeting
5	Kelly	(overlap) No, I'm asking you.

As this exchange occurred and Kelly posed her questions (line 1), I wanted her to not rely on me for answers but rather for her to consider the possibilities (line 2). I also suggested that her answer did not have to be given immediately and that she could think about how she might respond in preparation for our next conversation (line 4). Regardless of my attempts, Kelly asserted that she did not want to take responsibility for even considering how she might respond to the questions and possibilities herself.

Kelly continued to ask questions during our final conversation, the Stage Five interview. When I asked about possible next steps, Kelly replied with uncertainty and questions:

I don't know the process to be honest with you. I don't know. I have a good relationship with our librarian at the elementary school [...] so I definitely could reach out to our librarian, and I just don't know what the procedure, like, how do you get a book into the library? Could I donate a book? I know we donate books. You know, do they have to be approved? I don't know. So I would I guess that would be the first step is finding out what is the procedure – how do you get a book into the library? (interview, 1/23/2018)

Her comments show contradictions. Kelly repeatedly claimed “I don't know”, yet she also expressed that she *did* have experience and specific ideas in mind, such as having previously donated books and having a “good relationship” with the media specialist at her child's school. Thus, even with experience and relationships, Kelly was still asking questions and had not acted as a supporter beyond participation in this study. Finally, at the end of her series of questions,

Kelly concluded with an action plan for herself to address her own question, something she would “guess” she would do.

Summary regarding parents’ questions. The above descriptions show how each parent asked questions across settings and stages of the study. On one hand, I interpret the parents’ questions as a form of possible support because, as people who may not be versed in the policies and procedures of schools, they were looking to me as a resource for how to proceed. As described in Chapters One and Three, the possibility that parents considered me as resource could have been a result of the normative conventions of the study such as the positionalities of researcher/participant as well as that I shared being a former elementary educator and presented myself as a scholar of GL/LG children’s literature. In addition, at the conclusion of each interview, I asked the parents if there was anything else they wished to discuss, and it was often (but not only) in these instances when parents posed questions such as those described in this section. Such a conclusion to an interview is a normative convention, and in the case of this study, it served as a foundation for the participants’ questions.

I interpret the parents’ questions as their way of seeking guidance about a preferred way to take action. Notions of a “correct method” were especially evidenced in Anne’s ponderings about the “best tactical” and “right” approach – a wondering which may have inhibited further next steps. This idea of a “right” approach also aligned with findings from my pilot study when one of the participants stated, “Certainly I’m for it. I just want to make sure that we do it right” when discussing his desire for the two gay-inclusive picturebooks to be incorporated in elementary schools and classrooms.

On the other hand, asking me questions – especially during later stages of the study when the parents had then known about the GL/LG picturebooks for a few months – signaled the

parents' lack of action and/or initiative. In some instances, as demonstrated above, I had answered the parent's similar question earlier in the study. By asking the question again in later stages, it was apparent they did not remember the answer and had not taken action on it, even after provided insight on how to do so.

In many instances, the parents' questioning seems to have been done as a way to relieve themselves of responsibility. Sometimes the parents, through their questioning, tried to shift the responsibility for action to me. Not only was this problematic since I was the one initiating and implementing this study in the first place, but also that these heterosexual parents were expecting a gay male to take up the mantle for further action.

Not Searching School Inventories

Another way the parents did not enact support was by not searching their schools' library inventories online to inquire if the GL/LG picturebooks existed, or at least existed within that searchable space of their school. In preparation for the Stage Five concluding individual interviews, I searched each school's online library catalogue for the 33 GL/LG picturebooks used in this study. I conducted this search for three reasons: 1) to further learn about the parents' schools to inform this study, 2) to ask the parents their responses to the findings of my search, and 3) to echo searches a few of the parents had earlier suggested doing themselves. After conducting the search, I learned that only one of the schools, Robin Elementary, had any of the books listed in their library collection. The particular books at Robin, and the results for the other schools, are shown in Appendix O.

During the Stage Five interviews, I shared the results for that parent's particular school. For each parent, two things were evident: they expressed disappointment about the lack of books in their child's school library and they had not conducted the search themselves. This latter

finding was particularly compelling since it demonstrated inaction and suggested that the parents weren't supporters beyond their participation in this study. For example, Lindsay repeatedly shared across stages that she intended to search the online catalogue for her children's school library, yet she never did. This was even more complicating since during the Stage One interview she described at length her frustration and efforts to find books with diverse representations via the public libraries. When discussing the limited experiences with diversity she personally had earlier in her life, Lindsay segued to discussing how she tried to create a different experience for her children:

[My husband and I] go out of our way to try to find books that have children of color, gay characters, and it was hard to find them. I mean, we're here at the [public] library all the time and just pulling stuff off the shelf. There aren't any. There aren't any, and I have found lists online that say, "Oh, this is a good book that discusses race. This is a good book that discusses homosexual couples" or, you know, just anything (sigh). I have to go into the library database to search for those books and put a hold on them to get them to be able to read them to my kids. (interview, 9/29/2017)

Thus, though Lindsay may have exerted effort to search for books via the public library – including physical and online searches when she *didn't* know specific titles to look for – she didn't transfer that effort to search her children's smaller school library when she *did* have a list of titles for which to search.

Although I had not asked the parents to conduct such a search themselves, their lack of action to do so of their own initiative causes me to question their level of support for GL/LG picturebooks as potential school or classroom materials. By participating in this study, each parent had a list of 33 picturebooks they could search for within their own schools. It appeared

their support was confined to this study and did not exist beyond it. If the parents would not even conduct an online search for books, which they could potentially do from a home or work computer or mobile device, it is doubtful they would go to greater and more involved lengths to inquire about or support the books.

Not Doing Next Steps

A third way most of the parents did not enact support was by not implementing, to my knowledge, any next steps for the GL/LG picturebooks as classroom materials – whether the potential steps they had shared with me or another form of action. As I described in the methods section of Chapter Three, I invited the parents to contact me via phone call, text, or e-mail if they had any questions or wished to share anything related to the study throughout data collection. Except for a few communications regarding logistics (e.g., rescheduling an interview), none of the parents other than Diya (as described earlier in this chapter) contacted me. After the Stage Five interview, I then e-mailed the parents twice more. The first e-mail was sent March 4, 2018 as a culminating message to thank the participants for their participation in the study, share additional resources, and invite them to share with me any next steps they had enacted. The second e-mail was sent a few days later, March 8, to share information about the controversy involving a local private school and *The Best Man* since the topic was so related to this study (described in Chapter One). None of the parents responded to the first message, and Diya and Anne responded to the second message sharing their awareness of and interest in the controversy. Besides these responses, there were no replies by the parents (except Diya who had contacted me prior) describing any next steps they had pursued.

One possible reason Anne, Lindsay, and Kelly did not implement, to my knowledge, next steps is because they are members of groups that experience privilege. As white and

heterosexual, they may rarely, if ever, experience discrimination and thus have no personal incentive to act beyond their participation in this study as their form of support. Despite potentially experiencing discrimination or marginalization for other reasons, such as being women, none of the three parents expressed this. On the hand, Diya as a woman of color, emphasized at various times across the study how her experiences and needs influenced her desire to participate in the study and support the inclusion of GL/LG picturebooks. During the Stage One interview, Diya shared feeling her participation is especially important since so much research, from her perspective as a researcher, uses white undergraduate students as participants. Also during the Stage One interview, Diya specifically described how her desire to support GL/LG individuals and their rights equated with her personal desire for equity:

If I want people to give me my rights, then I should be willing to give them their rights. So, you know, by saying yes to people who through their hypocrisy are denying gay and lesbian rights, then tomorrow they're going to get up and also be like, "Hey, you're a foreigner" or "You're an immigrant" or "You're, you know, dark-skinned." I think the more equality we have, it's better for everybody, and frankly it's better for me.

(interview, 9/17/2017)

Diya also emphasized her experiences with difference in the Stage Four focus group. The following exchange occurred when discussing the possible benefits of GL/LG picturebooks for youth.

1	Crystal	So, I think there's benefits for kids regardless of who they are and their personal experiences
2	Diya	Also I think that young kids there's a thing of "I haven't seen it so it must not be true"
3	Adam	Hrm-mmm
4	Crystal	Yeah
5	Diya	Or "I haven't experienced this, so this is horrible" like a food that you haven't eaten.

		"I've never eaten milk, um, rice and yogurt together. That's gross and that's yucky." No, but you know what, it's a big world out there
6	Crystal	and it's delicious (chuckle)
7	Diya	Exactly, and there are people who eat that and it is a thing
8	All	(chuckle)
9	Diya	and it is delicious so you just want kids to not be so stuck in the "Oh, I haven't seen it so"
10	Lindsay	Yeah
11	Diya	"so it must be horrible."
12	Adam	Hrm-mmm
13	Lindsay	They have to see it to visualize it. They don't have that that depth yet to just be like "Oh," (chuckle) "this exists somewhere"
14	Diya	(overlap) and also you have these over-confident kids, right, who are very happy to tell the other person
15	Lindsay	Uh-huh
16	Diya	"Hey, I haven't seen this, so your thing must be wrong"
17	Adam and Lindsay	(affirming)
18	Diya	so that needs to be corrected I think. That you should just expose them more to different things.

Although Diya did not specifically mention her experiences as a woman of color here, she did express examples of marginalization based on difference. The emotion with which she spoke led me to believe that these were instances she or her daughter had faced and were upset, and this was something she had alluded to in her online response to *Molly's Family* when listing differences children might perceive about themselves: "my skin is too brown" or have "immigrant parents who speak with strange accents" (Stage Three online response). Diya again expressed her perspective as a woman of color during the Stage Four focus group when discussing what she had noticed about her daughter's reading:

She's going through a phase right now where she looks for herself in books, so she looks at something like this [raises *This Day in June*] and will say, "This is me because I love rainbow hair." "Oh, no, this is me because I have brown skin" or "This is me because she's wearing cute heels." (focus group, 1/13/2018)

In her comment, Diya expressed how daughter looks for reflections of her various identities, whether by fashion or skin color. Thus, in multiple instances across various stages and settings, Diya showed how being a person of color and an immigrant shaped her perspective. For this reason, it is possible that Diya felt more incentive to enact next steps than did the other parents who had not experienced life as a minority who was perceived by others as different.

Summary of Theme Q3-B

In response to the research question, this section described the second theme: Parents often did not enact their support. The subsections above describe the three ways parents did not enact their support for GL/LG picturebooks as potential classroom materials: 1) asking questions of the researcher, 2) not searching school inventories, and 3) not implementing or sharing their stated next steps. These actions – and inactions – by the parents stand in stark contrast to the findings shared in the first theme where parents had repeatedly produced themselves as “good parents/supporters.” While parents claimed in myriad ways that they supported the books, the findings from this second theme demonstrated that the parents’ production of themselves was largely not reflected by actions of support.

Summary and Discussion

In this chapter, I addressed the third research question: How do parents who identify as straight and also supportive of gay/lesbian rights produce themselves in various settings (as

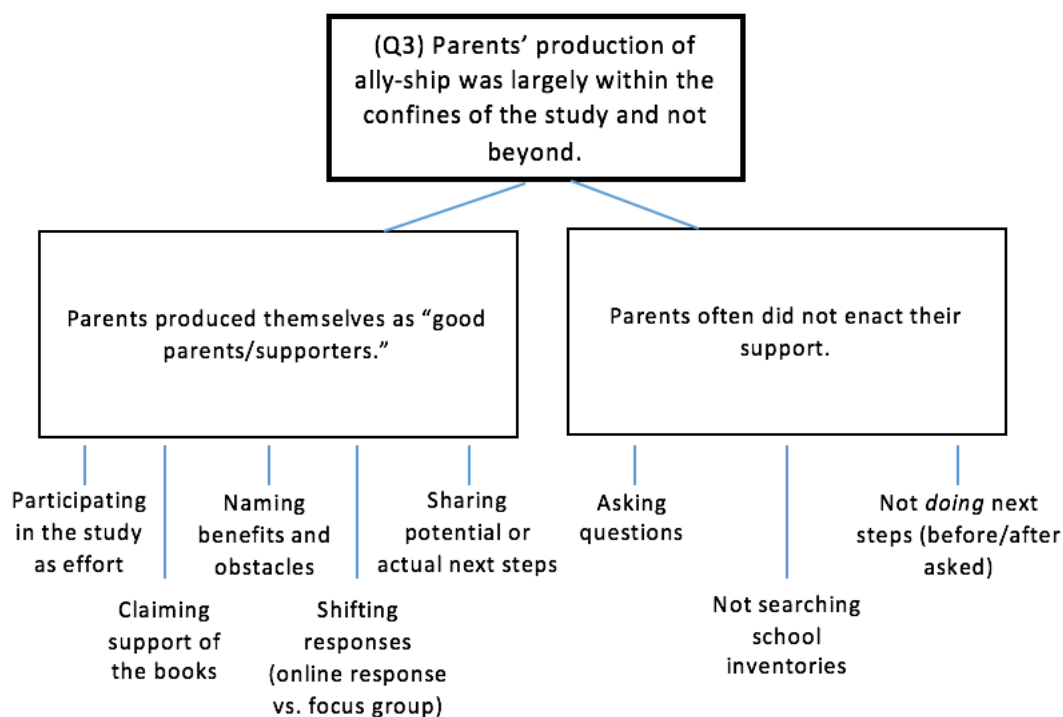
allies) in relation to gay/lesbian-inclusive picturebooks as (potential) classroom materials?

Analyzing the data, I constructed two themes relative to the research question:

- Theme Q3-A: Parents produced themselves as “good parents/supporters.”
- Theme Q3-B: Parents often did not enact their support.

Using thematic network analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001) to determine and illustrate the connections among themes, the above two basic themes led to my construction of an overarching organizing theme: Parents’ production of ally-ship was largely within the confines of the study and not beyond. The basic themes and organizing theme, along with elements from the data that support each basic theme, are shown in Figure 6.6.

Figure 6.6: Q3 Thematic Network (Revisited)



The overarching, organizing theme was evidenced across the chapter when discussing each of the basic themes along with their contributing examples from the data. The parents “production

of ally-ship” was evidenced in multiple ways by how they performed “good parent/supporter” via their responses across stages and settings of the study. In one-on-interviews, online responses, and focus groups with other parents, each parent responded in ways – verbally, in writing, and physically via the interactive chart – that exhibited support of the GL/LG picturebooks as potential classroom materials. However, all of these statements and productions of support occurred within the confines of the study. The parents demonstrated that they often did not enact support when it involved efforts beyond the study itself. What is particularly interesting when considering the overarching, organizing theme is how several of the parents had expressed their rationale for participating in this study was because they wanted to increase their level of support for gays, lesbians, and more diverse and inclusive schools and classrooms. Relevant to this discussion is a comment made by Kelly during Stage One, an additional piece of data that connects back to study participation as described in Theme Q3-A:

I’m very passionate when it comes to certain things, but [my husband’s] like, “Well, what do you do?” And it’s a good point. I don’t. What is there I can do? What more can I do to help or to be an ally besides just saying it? I think there’s so much more I could do [...] and that’s exactly when I saw [the recruitment flier], I was like, “Let me fill this out right now” because I feel I’m not doing enough and I’m like, well, okay, I have time for this. I can fit this in between softball and swimming and dance and choir and everything else.

(interview, 9/17/2017)

Kelly mentioned how she was busy as a parent and that her participation in this study was a way to be a better supporter. However, even though she questioned what more she could do, she did not act on it beyond participation in the study itself. And as this chapter demonstrates and to be fair to Kelly, she was not the only parent who agreed to participate in the study, produced herself

as a “good supporter”, and then largely did not enact that support in other ways. These findings demonstrate the distinction between being a supporter and ally, reflected in the second basic theme and the overarching organizing theme. To be an ally requires more than making statements. It involves action.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This dissertation details a qualitative interview study I conducted to explore three research questions:

1. What themes, if any, emerge across parents' responses to gay/lesbian-inclusive picturebooks, specifically in regard to what they find un/acceptable?
2. What themes, if any, emerge across parents' responses to how gay/lesbian-inclusive picturebooks could be used as (potential) classroom materials?
3. How do parents who identify as straight and also supportive of gay/lesbian rights produce themselves in various settings (as allies) in relation to gay/lesbian-inclusive picturebooks as (potential) classroom materials?

Guided by queer theory, I elicited the responses of five parents across five research stages and three settings (online, individual, and group) to a corpus of 33 GL/LG picturebooks. I collected data from September, 2017 through January, 2018. The preceding chapters share my findings from data collection and analysis.

In this final chapter, I begin by briefly reviewing my analytic process because it so directly informs the conclusions that will follow. I then further reflect upon how I interpreted the data and how the data could also be differently interpreted. I end this chapter by suggesting implications and considerations for future research.

Summary of Queer and Thematic Network Data Analysis

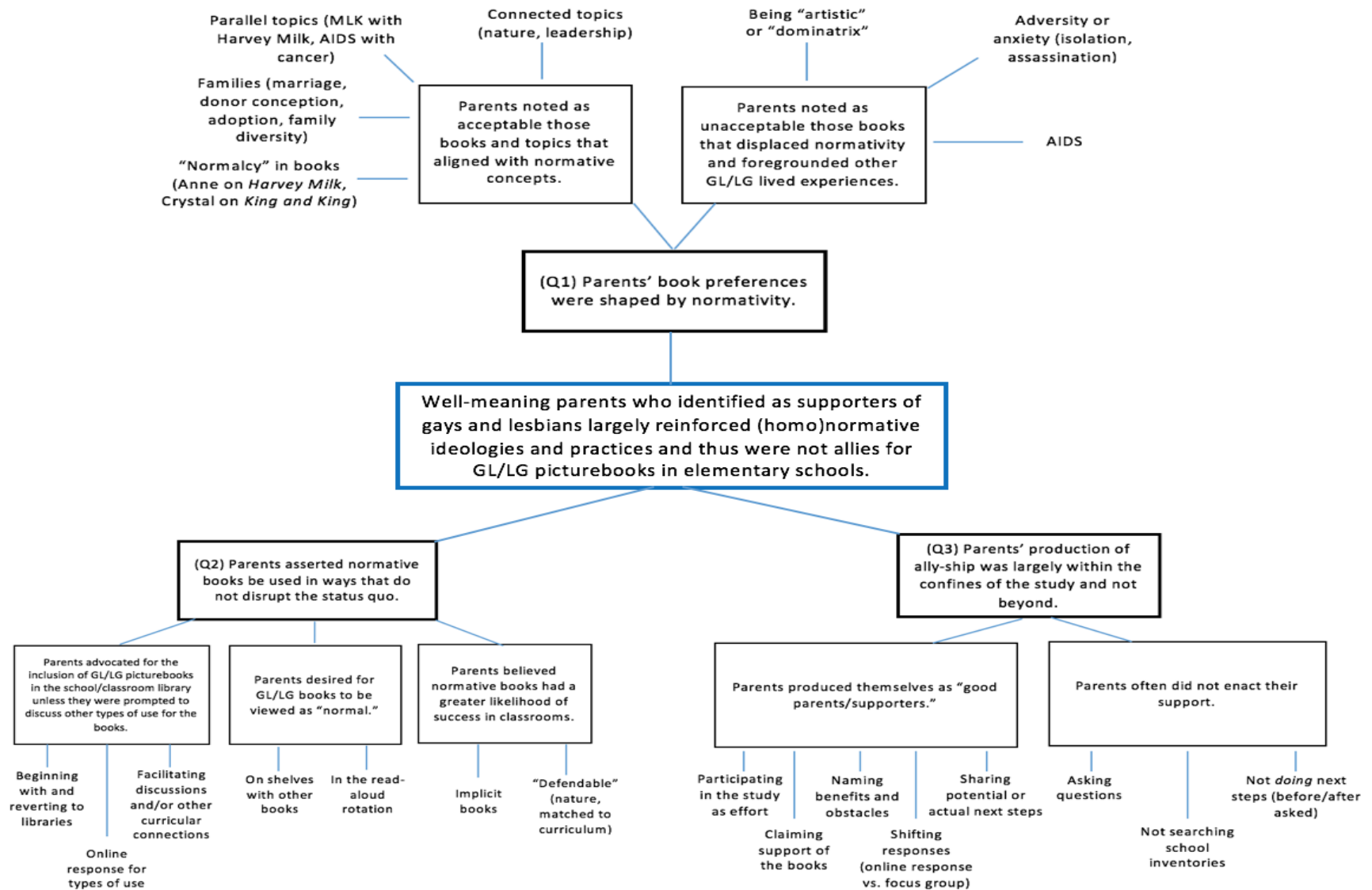
I used queer theory and thematic network analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001) to analyze the data for this dissertation. I briefly revisit here the description of my analytic process from Chapter Three because it so directly connects to the conclusion section that follows.

Queer theory informed the rationale for and process of this dissertation in a variety of ways. Primarily, I drew from queer theory's foregrounding the sexual (Blackburn & Clark, 2011), critique of normativity (Sullivan, 2003; Warner, 1999), and concepts of performance and performativity (Butler, 1990, 1993). I approached data analysis with an intent to primarily explore four areas: 1) participants' explicit and implicit messages related to sexual orientation in response to the picturebooks and their use in elementary classrooms; 2) how participants' statements created, maintained, and/or potentially disrupted social structures and institutions; 3) what participants found un/acceptable and how/if that reinforced particular gay/lesbian-representation; and 4) if/how responses differed in one-on-one, anonymous, and group settings. I analyzed the participants' pre-screening and Stage One questionnaires in conjunction with their statements and interactions across subsequent stages and settings to explore how/if their positionality as members of dominant or marginalized cultural groups was enacted.

After coding all of the data and developing initial themes, I enhanced my understanding of the data using thematic network analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001). With this process, I determined and illustrated the connections between basic and organizing themes as well as the overarching, global theme of the study. Figure 7.1 shows the thematic network I developed based on the data and my analysis. The global theme, outlined by the center blue box, is the focus of the next section. Each of the three organizing themes surrounding the global theme were the focus of the discussion sections in Chapters Four, Five, and Six. The basic themes, branched

from each organizing theme, comprised the content of those chapters. All of the themes, and the entire network, were informed by queer theory.

Figure 7.1: Entire Thematic Network (Revisited)



Summary of Findings and Conclusions

I developed the following global theme based on my analysis of all the data and connections between the themes: “Well-meaning parents who identified as supporters of gays and lesbians largely reinforced (homo)normative ideologies and practices and thus were not allies for GL/LG picturebooks in elementary schools.” In the following subsections, I unpack and elaborate upon aspects of this global theme.

Well-meaning Parents

In regards to this study, I use “well-meaning” as a way to describe the parents who entered into this project because they identified as supporters of gays and lesbians and expressed supporting the GL/LG picturebooks as classroom materials. In Chapter Three when I described each parent and how they had past shown support to gays and lesbians, I shared how each parent had participated in Pride parades, spoken out against discriminatory comments, and/or befriended gays and lesbians. In Chapter Four, I emphasized how all of the parents made general statements of acceptance or support for all the GL/LG picturebooks. Similarly, Chapter Five demonstrated how the parents spoke in favor of some – if not all – of the GL/LG picturebooks as potential school and/or classroom materials. In Chapter Six, I showed how the parents repeatedly – across various settings and stages – produced themselves as supporters of the books in their verbal comments, online written responses, and interactive chart participation. Therefore, I conclude the parents “meant well” in their participation in this study.

However, in the context of this study, being “well meaning” only served me as the researcher and the parents as participants. It served me because the parents provided responses (I believe) they thought I wanted to hear as a researcher, former teacher, and gay man. In other words, the parents – via their answers to my questions and participation in this study – performed

in certain ways (Britzman, 1995; Butler, 1990, 1993) that demonstrated support of me as a gay man, empathy for my experiences as a former elementary teacher, and contributions toward a research project in which I am both personally and professionally invested. Such support, empathy, and contributions not only involved performance, but were also performative (Butler, 1990) in that the participants' responses were likely largely shaped by their positionalities as parents (with knowledge of school practices) and community members (with ideologies that correlate to or resist the contexts in which they reside).

In serving me, the parents' "well meaning-ness" also potentially served them by fostering identities as better supporters to gays and lesbians. This was particularly evident in Kelly's statement about her desire for ways to be a better, more involved supporter amidst her busy schedule as I described in the discussion section near the end of Chapter Six. This finding adds to extant scholarship that discusses feelings of self-gratification as part of straight people's LGBT support or ally-ship (Grzanka, Adler, & Blazer, 2015). Being "well meaning" resulted in the parents, whether intentionally or not, largely reinforcing some depictions while marginalizing others.

Largely Reinforced (Homo)normativity

I use the phrase (homo)normativity because the parents in this study largely reinforced both homonormativity as well as normativity more generally. Homonormativity involves gays and lesbians assimilating to be like "normal" heterosexuals in all ways except for their sexual orientation. For example, homonormativity includes the desire for marriage, to have a nuclear family, and equality in the workforce and military (Warner, 2012). Normativity, more generally, involves sameness – even to the extent where when gays and lesbians exist, they are not noticed or focused upon. Although the parents may not have realized it, they largely reinforced

(homo)normativity throughout the study. As described in Chapter Four, the parents preferred books that depicted families – same-sex or otherwise – more so than books depicting other experiences of gays and lesbians such as Pride parades or AIDS. In Chapter Five, I discussed how the parents repeatedly supported the GL/LG picturebooks for use in libraries rather than more direct classroom use, thus making the books more “normal” and invisible. Further, the parents felt books that were implicit and/or “defendable” – or in other words, so “normal” that they wouldn’t be recognized or challenged – had the most likelihood of survival in schools and classrooms. In Chapter Six, I described how the parents’ inaction maintained the status quo and “normal” school experience despite their production of support within the study itself.

Support Versus Ally-Ship

The distinction between support and ally-ship was primarily the focus of Chapter Six. Nonetheless, the other findings chapters also demonstrate that the parents’ productions of support did not equate with actual ally-ship. As described in Chapter Four and again noted above, the parents had a preference for GL/LG picturebooks depicting homonormativity and reluctance toward books representing other experiences of gays and lesbians that did not align with their own personal experiences or understandings. A true ally would not pick and choose which gay and lesbian individuals or topics to defend. Instead, allies would approve of and defend all. Similarly in Chapter Five, I demonstrated how the parents aimed to have GL/LG picturebooks assimilate with other books currently used as classroom and school materials. An ally would not aim for assimilation and even erasure, but rather an ally would fight for gay and lesbian recognition and spotlight.

Further Discussion on the Global Theme

In its entirety, the global theme I identified in my thematic network analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001) is: “Well-meaning parents who identified as supporters of gays and lesbians largely reinforced (homo)normative ideologies and practices and thus were not allies for GL/LG picturebooks in elementary schools.” In addition to considering each part of this global theme separately, it is imperative to think about how the parts work together and the possibility of why this global theme exists. Thinking about the parents as “well-meaning”, supporters, and allies involves much complexity. Queer theory problematizes binaries (Britzman, 1995; Meyer, 2007; Tierney & Dilley, 1998), and as this dissertation demonstrates, binaries between ally and not ally, supporter and not supporter, ally and supporter, or well-meaning and not well-meaning do not exist. There is much gray area, and concepts of support and ally-ship are messy.

The parents in this study wanted to be allies. They wanted to demonstrate their support for the GL/LG picturebooks in a variety of ways, even if – as discussed previously – their desire was related to self-gratification. However, many of the parents’ statements and (in)actions did not reflect this. Even for the best-intentioned people, the dominant discourse of “normal” is so pervasive that it infiltrates their thinking and makes it difficult to be increasingly reflective. Such embeddedness connects to performativity (Butler, 1990) in how people’s actions and ways of thinking are constructed through repetition and influenced by history, society, and culture. These repetitions become so engrained and constructive of “regulatory fictions” (Butler, 1990) that they become incredibly difficult to recognize, interrogate, and disrupt. All of that said, it may also be true that the parents – by participating in this study – experienced self-gratification (Grzanka, Adler, & Blazer, 2015) and thus fulfilled *their* goal for ally-ship in their view. The parents, intentionally or not, performed (Britzman, 1993; Butler, 1990, 1993) for varying audiences (e.g.,

me in my various roles/identities, fellow participants in the Stage Four focus group, potential readers of this dissertation and related publications, other parents and educators, their communities at micro and macro levels, and LGBTQ individuals and their supporters/allies writ large), further developing their self-gratification and complicating their responses. With such gratification, the parents may not have recognized or found problematic that their statements and (in)actions reinforced normativity.

Related to discourses of normal and its being caused by repetition, the past decade has seen an increased emphasis on curriculum and standardized testing within U.S. public schools. The parents in my study were attuned to such pressures and expectations on teachers and students. This awareness by the parents may have been what influenced how they responded to the GL/LG picturebooks as potential classroom materials. Rather than thinking about the affordances and possibilities of increasingly queer books (e.g., *This Day in June*) or conversations (e.g., AIDS, a gay hate crime of assassination), the parents gravitated toward books they felt could be “defendable” and clearly match the mandated curriculum. The emphasis of primarily envisioning books as teaching tools – particularly teaching tools for a mandated curriculum – connects to a Curriculum First stance (Dávila, 2012). Teachers and parents who take such a stance believe that the determination of a book’s merit and its selection for use is largely based on if and how it can support the curriculum. If it is not clear how the book can support the curriculum, then it’s more likely the book will not be shared with youth in ways beyond existence on school and classroom library shelves.

Bringing together the concepts of embeddedness, (mis)recognition of reinforcing normativity, and curriculum is the realization that parents are operating under and reinforcing a double-standard. For example and as described in Chapter Four, the parents endorsed *King &*

King because it was similar to other fairytales with which they were familiar that depicted heterosexual couples. On the other hand, other parents (Lindsay and Diya) would not endorse *The Harvey Milk Story* with its mention of Harvey Milk's assassination and feeling the topic was too mature despite the fact that the stories of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Abraham Lincoln are engrained in youth from a young age through national holidays and curricular standards in kindergarten (Georgia Department of Education, 2015). Feeling that Martin Luther King, Jr. and Abraham Lincoln – both of whom were also shot – *is* okay to share with youth but Harvey Milk *is not* okay to share creates a double-standard, especially when otherwise stating that *The Harvey Milk Story* would be acceptable without the depiction. The parents are trying to create a binary of “this is acceptable and this isn't”, but the binary doesn't work and queer theory reminds that binaries are fraught. The double-standard is so pervasive because – again – it is embedded within what is constructed as “normal” via repeated curriculum, calendars, and “common knowledge.” The parents do not even realize the double standard and how they are perpetuating it.

As the global theme from this dissertation shows, the parents and their responses to the GL/LG picturebooks are complex. While parents exist who claim to support GL/LG picturebooks as classroom materials, much work remains for further exploring and enacting allyship for diverse depictions within GL/LG-inclusive children's literature.

Paranoid Versus Reparative Reading

In this dissertation – from conception, to design, to data collection, to analysis, to writing – my aim was to share the responses of parents who would read and respond to GL/LG picturebooks in ways that would support the books' use in elementary schools and classrooms. I wanted to conduct this research to provide a response to the concern about parents as so often expressed by pre- and in-service teachers when reading and responding to GL/LG books as

potential materials for their own classrooms (Bouley, 2011; Cumming-Potvin & Martino, 2014; Dedeoglu, Ulusoy, & Lamme, 2012; GLSEN, 2012; Hermann-Wilmarth, 2010; Schieble, 2012). This dissertation document, however, shares different results than the original intent. Through this study, I produced data and results that showed while parents exist who claim to support gay and lesbian people, rights, and inclusive children's literature (which *was* part of my initial intent), such support was limited. The parents primarily favored books and use that reinforced normativity, and the parents largely did not support or proactively work toward further queer possibilities. This finding that differed from my initial intent is largely because of my theoretical approach as well as how I interpreted and wrote about the data.

In Chapter Two, I described two theoretical approaches: gay and lesbian studies (GLS) and queer theory. While both approaches have similarities, they also have many differences. These differences inform how data might be interpreted as well. For example, with a GLS approach to the data, I would look for and emphasize how the parents were trying to combat homophobia, but such an inquiry may not recognize how their statements also perpetuated heteronormativity (Blackburn & Clark, 2011) and reinforced binaries. On the other hand, a queer theory approach to the data interrogates normativity (whether heteronormativity or homonormativity) and disrupts binaries. I employed the latter approach.

Another way that data can be interpreted is through reparative or paranoid reading practices (Sedgwick, 2003). These are not necessarily synonymous with GLS and queer theory. For example, Sedgwick asserted how both types of reading – reparative and paranoid – can be fruitful within queer theory. The importance of the type of reading is the motive. Sedgwick wrote reparative reading involves the “provision for pleasure” while paranoid reading involves the “anticipation of pain” (p. 138). Further, Sedgwick argued that “neither can be called more

realistic than the other” (p. 138), and she responded to critiques sometimes leveled against reparative readings as being too “naïve, pious, or complaisant” (p. 126). To provide more – but brief – elaboration, reparative reading entails hope, is additive, and takes an “empathetic view of the other as at once good, damaged, integral, and requiring and eliciting love and care” (p. 137). Paranoid reading involves an increasingly critical approach, taking an “x-ray gaze” (p. 149), and exploring particularly how “homophobia and heterosexism work” (p. 126) to systemically oppress. A non-paranoid, and thus perhaps reparative, approach does not, however, equate to the “denial of the reality or gravity of enmity or oppression” (p. 128). A reparative read is simply more hopeful and looks for the positives amongst the rubble.

Connecting the two types of reading to this dissertation, I approached data analysis and wrote about the findings using a paranoid approach. Much like queer theory emphasizes, I critically looked for where normativity was being reinforced and how aspects of privilege (sexual, racial, class) may have influenced and been perpetuated by the parents. Although the data and analysis support the findings described throughout this dissertation, I want to again assert that this was due to approaching and writing about the data in paranoid ways. As described earlier in this chapter, I *also* interpret the parents who participated in this study as well-meaning. I want to honor that. They completed the online form to express interest during the recruitment process, expressed from the study’s onset their desire to support diversity and inclusiveness, and shared time and time again throughout the study their support of gays and lesbians as well as their desire for the GL/LG picturebooks to be in schools and classrooms. Another way the data could have been read and the findings written about would be via a reparative approach that depicted the parents differently. Such an approach would have focused, for example, upon the parents’ supportive intentions and the various ways they spoke in favor of the books. However,

such a reading and resulting document may not have demonstrated the parents with as much complexity as I observed in the data using a paranoid approach.

Paranoid strategies “represent *a* way, among other ways, of seeking, finding, and organizing knowledge. Paranoia knows some things well and others poorly” (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 130). Much like paranoia is one way of reading, so too is queer theory one way of understanding and interpreting the world. This dissertation reflects the way I analyzed the data, but it not the *only* way the data could have been interpreted. The approaches used by researchers have implications. The implications of this dissertation are what I next describe.

Implications

I believe this research involving parents’ responses to GL/LG picturebooks and their potential use in elementary classrooms has several implications for a variety of stakeholders. The research process, findings, and conclusions provide aspects for consideration for researchers, teacher educators, elementary school faculty (teachers, media specialists, administrators), and parents. The following subsections detail implications for each of these stakeholder groups.

Researchers

Throughout this study and the writing of this dissertation, I have thought increasingly deeply about how theoretical frameworks inform inquiry and the writing about that research. Researchers inquiring into LGBTQ-related topics and who plan to use queer theory to guide and support their work may find it generative to revisit LGBT Studies (or GLS if focusing on sexual orientation specifically) as another potential theoretical framework. Though contemporary scholars continue to write about LGBT Studies as well as its “contested terrain” alongside queer theory (Blackburn, 2014; Blackburn & Clark, 2011; Lovaas, Elia, Yep, 2006; Slagle, 2006), I find that LGBT Studies (and GLS) is not often used in recent scholarship – especially in studies

involving LGBTQ-related topics in elementary grade contexts. Similar to the paranoid and reparative reading practices discussed earlier in this chapter, LGBT Studies and queer theory each have their own merits – and drawbacks – and can be used in particular ways based on the motive of the researcher. Scholars should not automatically align their work with queer theory, as their work may not necessarily be that queer. Smith (2010) reminded, “People want to make theory queer, not just have a theory about queers” (p. 44). For researchers intending to use queer theory, they may do well to ask themselves such questions as: How is the work I’m doing transgressive and/or perverse? Is my work interrogating normativity, or is it only combatting homophobia? Am I considering people’s sexual or other identities as inherent and essentialist or complex and shifting? These are questions I continue to grapple with myself when considering if my research is queer. This dissertation may help researchers further consider the processes and possibilities of LGBT Studies, GLS, or queer theory informed work.

Teacher Educators

As shared earlier, my initial intent in conducting this study was to provide research that would respond to concerns about parents as cited by pre- and in-service teachers (Bouley, 2011; Cumming-Potvin & Martino, 2014; Dedeoglu, Ulusoy, & Lamme, 2012; GLSEN, 2012; Hermann-Wilmarth, 2010; Schieble, 2012) and researchers who explore LGBTQ-related topics with elementary aged youth (Schall & Kauffmann, 2003; Van Horn, 2015). During a recent presentation at the National Council for Teachers of English annual meeting, Caitlin Ryan addressed an attendee’s concern about parents by reminding that the loudest voice isn’t the only voice (Ryan, Hermann-Wilmarth, & Bednar, 2015). In other words, though some parents who may object to GL/LG-inclusive literature and its use in classrooms, other parents also exist who are indifferent or even support such work. Parents have the right to determine what books or

topics their own children encounter, but they do not have the right to impede other children's learning. Although the findings shared in this dissertation complicate how a group of parents responded to GL/LG picturebooks as classroom materials, it *does* show that parents – generally – were supportive of the books. Thus, this research could be shared by teacher educators with their students to help allay concerns about parents and show how *some* parents responded to *some* books.

Speaking of books, another contribution of this study is its emphasis on the various types of GL/LG picturebooks. In Chapters Three and Four, I described my categorization of the 27 books into groups. Some of these groups had depictions that perpetuated normativity, such as a nuclear family focus (e.g., families being families, how families are made), while other groups showed more queer possibilities (e.g., AIDS, celebrating visibly). Scholars have begun to analyze representations and the pervasiveness of homonormativity in children's literature (Epstein, 2012; Lester, 2014; Herman-Wilmarth & Ryan, 2014; Ryan & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2018), but there is little – if any – research that showcases the *types* of books available. This dissertation can help. When sharing and exploring GL/LG-inclusive children's and young adult literature, teacher educators should be mindful if the books they are sharing perpetuate normativity, certain ways of being, and/or stereotypes. Teacher educators can share the different types of GL/LG books, along with how parents responded to the various types, to further inform the practices of pre- and in-service teachers.

Elementary School Faculty

Similar to the implications for teacher educators, elementary school faculty – teachers, media specialists, and administrators among others – could use this study in two ways: 1) to be aware that parents do exist who support GL/LG-inclusive literature and its use, and 2) to think

about the types of representations that exist in GL/LG books and thus build their collections in ways that do not solely perpetuate (homo)normativity. Further, this dissertation emphasizes the importance of elementary school faculty to recognize their roles as gatekeepers. Concerns about gatekeeping were expressed by several of the parents in this study. Whether intentional or not, elementary school faculty's selections regarding the children's literature shared with youth sends messages about what is valued or accepted in that learning community. For example, my search of the library inventories of the six elementary schools which the parents in my study represented reflected a dearth of GL/LG books. This limited availability is congruent with larger scale studies of elementary school libraries (Hardie, 2011) and PreK/HeadStart classroom libraries (Crisp et al., 2016). Much like teachers and librarians should make efforts to include diverse racial, ethnic, gender, language, religion, and social class representations in their collections and use to provide windows and mirrors for youth (Sims Bishop, 1990), they should also aim to include diversity in sexual orientation (as well as diverse GL/LG depictions). In several instances within my search of the online catalogs, I found schools had many books by Patricia Polacco. Sometimes, they also had books in their collections by Leslea Newman. However, the libraries did not include the GL/LG books by these authors. Due to this study's design, I was unable to discern if such omission was intentional censoring or not. However, my hypothesis is that the exclusion of GL/LG picturebooks by these authors is not by chance. Elementary school faculty need to consider the benefits of GL/LG books for youth, regardless of whether or not faculty are aware of gay and lesbian students or families in their own school communities. In some instances, GL/LG students and families may exist within the school community and not be publicly out. Not being out may also be reflected in the (lack of) circulation of GL/LG books in libraries. Some youth may engage in "stealth reading" of such books on-site because they are

afraid to borrow the books through the official check-out process. These readers may need GL/LG depictions more than anyone (Downey, 2013). Regardless of whether this is the case, including and using GL/LG books increases understanding, develops empathy for others, and reflects the diversity of society for all youth.

In addition, elementary school faculty could consider the geographic context of this dissertation study. In a state which is largely conservative in political and social ideology, parents existed who supported GL/LG picturebooks and their use in elementary classrooms. If such parents exist here, it is likely they exist in similar or less conservative contexts as well.

Parents

This dissertation also has implications for parents. In my experience as a teacher in four different elementary schools, parents' opinions were highly valued by administrators and various school faculty. The effect of parents' opinions on teachers' practice have also been documented specifically in regards to GL/LG books (e.g., Bouley, 2011; Cumming-Potvin & Martino, 2014; Dedeoglu, Ulusoy, & Lamme, 2012; GLSEN, 2012; Hermann-Wilmarth, 2010; Schieble, 2012). Knowing that some parents would have supported the incorporation of GL/LG-inclusive children's literature would have affected my pedagogy. However, as this dissertation demonstrates, parents need to enact their support in order to truly be allies. Rather than wondering about how media specialists make book decisions or considering donating books, parents should actually ask and donate. As discussed in Chapter Six, parents could enact proactive rather than retroactive advocacy. Parents who believe diversity and inclusiveness matter should contact their school's administrators, media specialists, and teachers to let them know. Further, and as Diya, Kelly, and Anne all emphasized, parents could work together as part

of a “movement” to affect change. This dissertation can inform parents ways to support, what depictions they may or may not be supporting, and the ramifications of inaction.

Possibilities for Future Research

Not only do I see this dissertation as having implications and impact within the field of education and children’s literature, I also envision it to be a component of or lead to future research. The following sub-sections discuss the ways I plan to expand and grow this research agenda via inquiry from the current data set and participants as well as additional participant groups such as other parents and elementary school faculty (e.g., pre/in-service teachers, media specialists, and administrators).

Current Data Set and Parents

As I emphasized throughout this dissertation, I recognize the complexities of the parents’ responses and performances that were likely influenced by their positionalities toward:

- the purposes for using children’s books in elementary schools;
- their roles as participants in a study facilitated by an out gay man who was a local elementary teacher and who is knowledgeable in GL/LG children’s literature;
- their roles as parents of elementary school children;
- their relationships with teachers, librarians, and/or administrators at their children’s schools;
- their relationships with other local parents; and
- their connections or disconnections with members of the LGBTQ community.

Though my analysis and writing about the data in this dissertation specifically focused on the three research questions, critical analysis and discussion of each parent’s performances relative to the normative conventions and mainstream social narratives of the U.S. Southeast is vital.

Therefore, the next phase of my research agenda will be to produce comprehensive case studies of each participant.

In addition to continuing my research agenda from the current data set, I can also conduct future studies with these parents – all of whom agreed to contact for possible future studies when asked during the concluding Stage Five interview. Thus, the current study could become longitudinal. I plan to interview the same parents in a year or more and inquire if/how they used the GL/LG picturebooks or thought about the topic further. Questions to explore will include: Did they share the books with their children's teachers or school libraries? Did they advocate for such books in their children's classroom or school, and how? If they did share and/or advocate for the books, what happened? If they did not share or advocate for the books, why not? How have the parents further thought about GL/LG picturebooks and their potential use as classroom materials?

Additional Parents

Though the dissertation project focuses on five parents meeting specific criteria for selection, I plan to replicate this dissertation study – in part or in full – with other parents. Such parents could be representative of other geographic locations and/or stated stances of support of gay and/or lesbian individuals. I will then compare the results from those studies with this dissertation to affirm, nuance, or further complicate the findings.

Another way that I plan to expand this research agenda on the topic of parents, GL/LG children's literature, and its use in elementary classrooms and schools is to engage in participatory action research. Rather than me asking parents their potential next steps and hoping they will proceed, the parents and I could work together to create and implement an action plan

to advocate for and integrate the books in their children's schools. Though the plan would be co-constructed, I foresee five preliminary parts to the process:

- 1) gather and share information about why GL/LG topics matter in school;
- 2) raise educators' awareness of GL/LG books;
- 3) find, create, and/or promote resources that show how such books can be used (e.g., sample lessons, curriculum standards matching);
- 4) devise, enact, and periodically reflect upon the action plan; and
- 5) brainstorm future (queer) possibilities.

Such participatory action research could also involve pre-service teachers, in-service teachers, media specialists, and/or administrators as co-researchers. An inquiry of this type would also have potential for longitudinal research and the added benefit of increasingly connecting GL/LG-inclusive books with youth.

Pre/In-Service Teachers, Media Specialists, and Administrators

In addition to the participatory action research described above, other future research opportunities with pre/in-service teachers, media specialists, and/or administrators could stem directly from this dissertation. I plan to grow my research agenda by sharing the findings from this dissertation with each of these groups to explore if/how the responses of the parents from this study inform or shape perspectives regarding the inclusion of GL/LG children's literature in classrooms and schools. Alternately, parent participants from this dissertation could participate in physical or virtual conversation(s) with the pre/in-service teachers, media specialists, and/or administrators. I could then research if/how either group shapes or informs the other's perspectives followed by studies in subsequent years to explore if/how classroom/school practices changed as a result of the initial study.

My Commitment to the Research

I am committed to continuing this line of research involving GL/LG children's literature – and LGBTQ-inclusive children's literature at large – with parents as well as pre/in-service elementary school faculty. Informed by previous scholarly research, the coursework I have taken, and my own life experiences, I truly believe sharing GL/LG children's literature has the potential to impact lives in positive and meaningful ways. It has certainly been the case for me. Near the end of our Stage Two interview after she had read and responded to 27 GL/LG picturebooks, Kelly asked me, "How would this have changed your life if you had these [books] in the school system growing up?" (interview, 10/18/2017). I told her the difference would have been night and day. I grew up in fear of others. Throughout my life, I worried what they (my parents, teachers, friends, colleagues, administrators, students, students' parents, society at large) might say if they knew I was gay. Seeing reflections in books with characters who shared my sexual orientation would have changed my life. I find it both ironic and purposeful that one of those groups I most worried about as a teacher – students' parents – are the group with whom I now inquire. What do they actually say? I believe continuing to explore this question relative to GL/LG picturebooks and their use in elementary classrooms can shape future research and new directions in teaching and learning.

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APPENDIX A

GL/LG PICTUREBOOKS AND RATIONALE FOR SELECTION

Though there is a growing amount of GL/LG-inclusive children's literature available (Möller, 2014; Naidoo, 2012), the following six picturebooks are selected for this study:

- Cameron, A. (1987). *Orca's Song*. (N. Olsen, Illus.). Canada: Harbour.
- de Haan, L., & Nijland, S. (2003). *King & King*. Berkeley, CA: Tricycle Press.
- Garden, N. (2002). *Molly's family*. (S. Wooding, Illus.). New York: Farrar Strauss Girroux.
- Krakow, K. (2002). *The Harvey Milk story*. (D. Gardner, Illus.). Ridley Park, PA: Two Lives.
- Pitman, G.E. (2014). *This day in June*. (K. Litten, Illus.). Washington, D.C.: Magination Press.
- Richardson, J., & Parnell, P. (2005). *And Tango makes three*. (H. Cole, Illus.). New York: Simon & Schuster.

These books were selected in order to depict diversity in sexual orientation, family relationships, genre, and prominence. A limit(ation) of the corpus is the lack of racial and ethnic diversity, also a critique of GL/LG-inclusive children's literature at large.

	Sexual orientation	Relationship/ Family Structure	Genre	Characters – Human, Animal, Alien	Human/Non-White Representation in Main Characters	Marginalization Depicted	Prominence or Other Notes
<i>Orca's Song</i>	Lesbian	Couple as parents	Traditional tale	Animal	n/a	No	
<i>King & King</i>	Gay	Couple, marriage	Fantasy	Human	No	No	Often written about in scholarly work
<i>Molly's Family</i>	Lesbian	Couple as parents	Realistic fiction	Human	No	Yes	
<i>The Harvey Milk Story</i>	Gay	Couple	Biography	Human	No	Yes	
<i>This Day in June</i>	Lesbian, Gay	All types	Realistic fiction	Human	Yes	No	Stonewall Award Winner for Children's/YA (ALA) - 2015
<i>And Tango Makes Three</i>	Gay	Couple as parents	Creative non-fiction	Animal	No	No	Often written about in scholarly work; has been on ALA "top ten" challenged book list for multiple years

Rationale for Book Selection

Six books were selected so as not to bombard the participants who are volunteering their time toward this study with a cumbersome task load. A smaller corpus may assist with comparing individual responses as well as keeping the group interview session targeted. Also, a smaller corpus increases the likelihood of discussing the texts in greater depth than might occur with a larger set of books.

Though I aimed to include diversity of gender, sexual orientation, relationship type, genre, and other aspects, any inclusion of a book meant another, likely equally viable, relevant, and thought-provoking text was excluded that may differently shape participants' responses in any of various ways. Although the books are diverse in characterization, gender, and genre, there is a lack of diversity in regards to race and ethnicity of the characters. Unfortunately, this is a limitation of LGBTQ-inclusive children's and young adult literature at large and an area in which scholars continue to argue and advocate (Lester, 2014). In addition, the majority of the books included in this study reinforce homonormativity which aligns with heteronormative expectations and values and thus *doesn't* align with tenets of queer theory which seek to disrupt such notions. However, this too, is a limitation within what is available in LGBTQ-inclusive children's and young adult literature at large (Hermann-Wilmarth & Ryan, 2014; Lester, 2014). That said, these six books were selected because they represent diversity in characterization, genre, representation of relationships to others (both as partners but also within society), and because several are noteworthy due to awards received, the extent to which they've been discussed in scholarly literature, and/or the prevalence of controversy surrounding them. I am interested to explore if and how parents' responses differ based on the type of representation within the book. For example, when considering classroom use, do parents favor books with animal protagonists more so than those with humans? With the increased emphasis and valuation of non-fiction within the Common Core Standards, as well as notions of non-fiction being associated with fact rather than subjectivity (though still a fraught concept), do parents privilege non-fiction texts over other genres such as fantasy or realistic fiction?

A brief synopsis of each book is provided below, along with the rationale for its selection. In some of the rationales, specific curricular connections are listed. However, *all* of these books could be matched to curricular standards related to reading books of various genres, analyzing story elements such as character and plot, considering how illustrations affect and enhance interpretation, and various other curricular standards.

	Synopsis	Rationale
<i>Orca's Song</i>	This traditional tale stems from the Pacific Northwest and shares the story of two female animals – a black orca and white osprey – who love one another and together birth an orca. The story explains that it was this partnership that created the black and white orca, its song, and its movement. Written in 1987 by a Canadian author known for her retellings of First Nation myths, this is one of the earliest picturebooks depicting same-sex love.	It was particularly selected due to concerns expressed by pilot study participants about curricular connections. This book would pair with the following third grade standards which are part of the Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE) in Social Studies (beginning implementation in 2017-2018): SS3H1 – Describe early American Indian cultures and their development in North America; SS3H1a – Locate the regions where American Indians settled in North America: Arctic, Northwest, Southwest, Plains,

		Northeast, and Southeast; SS3H1c – Discuss how American Indians continue to contribute to American life (e.g., arts, literature).
<i>King & King</i>	Originally written and published in the Netherlands, this story mimics traditional tales of a prince and princess. In this story, the queen desires to pass the throne to her son but wants him to be married first. A variety of princesses are invited to the castle to meet the prince (including princesses diverse in color and body type), but the prince is not interested in any of them. However, when the final princess visits with her brother, the brother wins the prince's affection and the two marry.	This book has been written about extensively within scholarly literature, including its contextualized reading and discussion with elementary-aged children. The book was also selected because of its potential curricular connections, especially considering how similarly narrated traditional tales of heterosexuals are prevalent in classrooms (Sapp, 2010). A matching curricular standard is second grade GSE in English Language Arts: ELAGSE2RL2 – Recount stories, including fables and folktales from diverse cultures, and determine their central message, lesson, or moral.
<i>Molly's Family</i>	Molly is in kindergarten. In preparation for Open School Night and to decorate the room, each student is asked to draw a picture of their family. When Molly draws a picture with her two mothers, she is critiqued by her classmates and told that it's not possible to have two mothers. Though the teacher consoles Molly and tells her that it's okay to have two mothers, Molly remains hesitant. Molly not only questions her own family but also worries about having her drawing on display.	This book is the only one in the set featuring a child as the main protagonist. Marginalization occurs due to sexual orientation, but it is the child of a same-sex couple who experiences the marginalization. Though the "draw a picture of your family" and "bring you parents to school" motif is used in other picturebooks as well (e.g., <i>Heather Has Two Mommies</i> , <i>Stella Brings the Family</i>), the critique experienced by the character is not as pronounced in other books. The experience of the protagonist may closely mirror the experiences of other children, and thus the book may most closely reflect the very need for these types of books in schools.
<i>The Harvey Milk Story</i>	This is the biography of Harvey Milk who was elected San Francisco city supervisor in the 1970s, was the first openly gay man ever elected to public office, and was assassinated in 1978. The story tells about his life from childhood through death and includes information about his personal relationships as well as his work for diverse constituents in his community. The story concludes with the candlelight vigil upon his assassination as well as how Milk's influence continues to be important.	This book was one of two used in the pilot study. I selected it because it is non-fiction but also because it is not solely homonormative and focused on being in a relationship, but rather depicts how the protagonist is further connected to a larger LGBT community – a queer element of texts encouraged but often lacking according to Hermann-Wilmarth and Ryan (2014). It also depicts marginalization due to sexual orientation.
<i>This Day in June</i>	Written in rhyming couplets, the book features a Pride Parade. Throughout the book are various depictions of the LGBT community, including people in drag, nun habits, and Human Rights Campaign symbols as well as motorcyclists in leather and others	This book was published by the American Psychological Association and was the winner of the 2015 Stonewall Book Award within the Children's and Young Adult Literature category, the first and only time the award has been given to a picturebook. Similar to <i>The</i>

	<p>in rainbow attire. Characters within the parade range from birth to the elderly and vary in race as well. Backmatter includes more information about each pagespread (e.g., why nuns are associated with the LGBT community, what the Human Rights Campaign is) and guidance for the types of conversations to have with children at various age spans.</p>	<p><i>Harvey Milk Story</i>, this book portrays gay and lesbian individuals as connected to a larger LGBT community. In addition, it shows a variety of ways gays and lesbians perform identity. This book was recently at the center of controversy within a public library in Texas (Schaub, 2015). I, personally, would argue that of all the books, this book is the most transgressive and overtly queer.</p>
<p><i>And Tango Makes Three</i></p>	<p>Based on true events in New York's Central Park Zoo, two male penguins mate and begin to mimic heterosexual penguin couples' attempts to hatch an egg. However, unable to create an egg themselves, they care for a rock instead. Noticing their habits, the zookeeper provides the male couple with an egg from a heterosexual couple that has repeatedly had difficulty nurturing and hatching their own eggs. The male couple successfully nurtures and hatches the egg. The couple and the chick, Tango, live happily among the other penguin families and are marveled at by zoo attendees. The emphasis is on how the love and actions within this family are no different than those of the other penguins.</p>	<p>This book was used in the pilot study. <i>And Tango Makes Three</i> has often been written about in scholarly literature, both through content analysis as well as studies with pre-/in-service teachers. The book has been included in the American Library Association's top ten most frequently challenged book list for several years, and was <i>the</i> most censored book for three years (2007, 2008, 2009). This book also pairs with kindergarten and first grade GSE (and their sub-standards) in Science: SKL2 – Obtain, evaluate, and communicate information to compare the similarities and differences in groups of organisms; S1L1 – Obtain, evaluate, and communicate information about the basic needs of plants and animals.</p>

APPENDIX B

RECRUITMENT FLIER

Study Invitation Parents Reading and Responding to Gay and Lesbian Picturebooks



Criteria:

Are you a parent with elementary-aged children (grades PreK-5) and live in or near Athens, Georgia?

Do you...

- think about the books they read in school and how those books might represent diversity, including gay and/or lesbian representation?
- support gay and lesbian rights, including those in educational settings?

If so, please contact me to express interest in participating in a research study!

The study will include:

- Reading and responding to a variety of picturebooks (for elementary-aged children) provided to you, and
- Participating in a small number of individual and small group interviews.

As a thank you for participating:

You will get to keep the books, and additional resources will be provided to you as well!

For more information and/or to express interest in participation:

Please complete a brief online questionnaire [see link below or QR code] or contact the researcher at sacraw@uga.edu.

Online questionnaire: <http://bit.ly/2exXvma>



This study is being conducted by Stephen Adam Crawley, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Language and Literacy Education at the University of Georgia. The study has been approved by the University's Institutional Review Board and is under the supervision of Dr. Denise Dávila, Graduate Faculty.

APPENDIX C

PRE-SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE

The following message and questions were included in a Google Form. The link to the Google Form was hyperlinked within the recruitment flyer for those who receive the call digitally. For those who contacted me directly by e-mail, the link was sent to them for completion. All submitters were contacted regarding selection for the study.

PAGE 1 (Introduction and Consent)

Thank you for your interest in the study [TITLE]. My name is Stephen Adam Crawley, and I am a doctoral student in the University of Georgia's Department of Language and Literacy Education.

The purpose of this research study is to explore parents' responses to picturebooks including gay and/or lesbian characters and such books' potential use in elementary classrooms. The study seeks the perspectives of a specific subgroup on this topic. Thus, participants should have elementary-aged children and support gay and lesbian rights. The study will help inform educators about particular parental perspectives and if/how gay and lesbian-inclusive picturebooks might be used in their classrooms.

Before enrolling people as participants in this study, I need to ask some questions to determine eligibility. Therefore, the following page will ask a series of questions about you (e.g., sexual orientation, support of gay and lesbian individuals) and your children (e.g., grade level, the type of school they attend). There is a possibility that some of the questions may make you uncomfortable or distressed. You don't have to answer those questions if you don't want to.

The questionnaire should only take about 10 minutes of your time.

All information you share, including your name and any other information that can possibly identify you, will be strictly confidential. If you aren't selected for participation in the study, all the information you share will be destroyed.

You will be notified in the near future with the decision about selection for participation.

Remember, your participation is voluntary. You can refuse to answer any questions or end the questionnaire at any time without any penalty.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to contact me via phone (770-265-6033) or e-mail (sacraw@uga.edu). My faculty advisor is Dr. Denise Davilá (ddavila@uga.edu). Questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant should be directed to the Institutional Review Board, 629 Boyd GSRC, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; telephone 770-542-3199; e-mail irb@uga.edu.

Please mark below if I have your permission to ask you the questions on the following questionnaire.

- Yes [redirects to Page 2]
- No [redirects to a message “Thank you for time and interest in this study. No further information is needed.”]

PAGE 2 (Screening Questions)

Q1: Please note which grade(s) your child(ren) attend during the 2017-2018 school year? (check all that apply)

- Pre-K
- K-1st
- 2nd-3rd
- 4th-5th
- I do not have children who are elementary-aged.

Q2: How many children do you have currently in the elementary grades?

- [OPEN RESPONSE]

Q3: Do you have children who are younger and/or older than the elementary grades as well? If so, how many, and what are their ages?

- [OPEN RESPONSE]

Q4: In what type(s) of school will your children attend during the 2017-2018 school year? (check all that apply)

- Traditional public
- Public charter
- Other (please specify)

Q5: In what Georgia county do you reside?

- [LOCAL DISTRICT NAME]
- Other (please name)

Q6: Do you support gay and lesbian individuals and their rights?

- Yes
- No
- It depends

Q7: If desired, please share more about your response to question 6. (optional)

- [OPEN RESPONSE]

Q8: How do you identify in regards to sexual orientation?

- Straight
- Lesbian
- Gay
- Bisexual

- Other: [OPEN RESPONSE]
- Prefer not to answer

Q9: This study will likely include four conversations focused on your personal responses to six picturebooks: three individual interviews lasting approximately one hour each and one small-group discussion with the other participants that will last no longer than two hours. Participants will also be asked to respond to the six picturebooks via a web-based form. All components should take place between September, 2017-March, 2018. Do you foresee being able to participate in all (or the majority) of these opportunities?

- Yes
- No
- It depends (please explain)

Q10: Is there anything else you would like to share with me that you think might affect your participation in the study? (optional)

- [OPEN RESPONSE]

Q11: Name (first name only)

- [OPEN RESPONSE]

Q12: E-mail address and phone number

- [OPEN RESPONSE]

Q13: Preferred type of communication (check all that apply)

- Phone - call
- Phone - text
- E-mail

APPENDIX D

DATA SOURCES MATCHED TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research questions:

1. What kinds of themes, if any, emerge across parents' responses to gay/lesbian-inclusive picturebooks, specifically in regard to what they find un/acceptable?
2. What kinds of themes, if any, emerge across parents' responses to how gay/lesbian-inclusive picturebooks could be used as (potential) classroom materials?
3. How do parents who identify as straight and also supportive of gay/lesbian rights produce themselves in various settings (as allies) in relation to gay/lesbian-inclusive picturebooks as (potential) classroom materials?

Data Sources	Q1	Q2	Q3
GL/LG-inclusive picturebooks	X	X	X
Survey: Pre-screening questionnaire			X
Survey: Demographics questionnaire			
Stage 1 interview audio/transcripts			X
Stage 2 interview audio/video/transcripts	X	X	X
Stage 2: book lists shared by each participant about what their children read from home, schools, and/or libraries (Stage 2)			X
Stage 3: Surveys - anonymous responses	X	X	X
Stage 4 interview audio/video/transcripts	X	X	X
Stage 4: interactive charts		X	X
Stage 5 interview audio/transcripts			X
Texts, e-mails, and/or other personal communication			X
Researcher field notes	X	X	X

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS MATCHED TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following lists sample questions from each interview guide and matches them to the research questions they helped to address. The full interview guides are available in subsequent appendices.

	Q1	Q2	Q3
Stage 1 Interview Guide			
To your knowledge, is there representation of gays/lesbians in books or the curriculum within the school? Possible probes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share more about that. • How do you feel about the representations currently available? 			X
On the questionnaire, you stated supporting gay/lesbian individuals and their rights. Share more about that.			X
Stage 2 Interview Guide			
As a parent and considering books for your child, were there any particular books or types of books you liked? Share more about that.	X		
As a parent and considering books for your child, were there any particular books or types of books you didn't care for at first glance or while skimming? Share more about that.	X		
How would you feel about these books being in your child's school? Possible probes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there certain books from the set that you feel more comfortable about being included? Why? • Are there certain books from the set that you feel more uncomfortable about being included? Why? 		X	X
How do you envision these books might be included? What might that look like? Possible probes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School counselor? • School library for check-out? • Classroom library? • Read-aloud? • Connected to instruction? 		X	

What might be the benefits of such books within schools and classrooms?			X
Stage 3 Online Form			
Please write one or two paragraphs (or more, if desired) to discuss your thoughts about the book as a parent considering this book being used/available in your child's classroom. I welcome you to include specific examples of words, phrases, themes, illustrations, or other aspects of the book within your response.	X	X	X
Stage 4 Interview Guide			
I noticed that as we went around the circle, several of you listed [TITLE] as one to discuss. Let's begin there. What were your thoughts about the book?	X		
As parents, how would you feel about these books being available in your child's classroom?		X	X
How would you feel about these books being read by the teacher or used in lessons?		X	X
Let's say these books were going to be used within the classroom as a read-aloud or connected to instruction. Which of the books might work well for that? Possible probes: ○ How so?		X	
Another aspect some of us discussed was advocacy for such books if there were resistance from others. What might such advocacy look like?			X
Stage 5 Interview Guide			
We discussed it briefly when we first met a few months ago, but I thought it might be nice to revisit. What led you to participate in this study? Why did you want to participate?			X
What are your plans for the six books provided to you? For example, will you keep them in your personal collection, keep with your children's other books, share with others, etc...?			X
Do you envision any next steps you might take in regards to these or other such books in schools and classrooms? If so, what?			X

APPENDIX F

STAGE ONE – DEMOGRAPHICS QUESTIONNAIRE

The following questionnaire was provided to participants via e-mail/online form to be completed prior to the Stage One interview.

This study is interested in the perspectives of parents of elementary-aged children in response to gay and lesbian-inclusive picturebooks. Our various identities sometimes shape/inform how we respond to texts as well as how others might perceive our responses. To help inform this study, please note how you identify within each category. You are welcome to skip any/all questions desired.

Q1: Name (first name only)

- [OPEN RESPONSE]

Q2: What is your race/ethnicity?

- White
- Black
- LatinX
- Asian
- First Nation
- Multiracial
- Other:

Q3: What is your age?

- [OPEN RESPONSE]

Q4: What is your occupation?

- [OPEN RESPONSE]

Q5: What is your gender identity?

- Woman
- Man
- Non-binary
- Other:

Q6: How do you identify as a parent/guardian?

- Mother
- Father
- Step-parent
- Other:

APPENDIX G

CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA CONSENT FORM

Research Title

What Do They Say?: Parents' Responses to Gay and/or Lesbian-Inclusive Picturebooks and Their Potential Use in Elementary Classrooms

Researcher's Statement

I am asking you to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. This form is designed to give you the information about the study so you can decide whether to be in the study or not. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called "informed consent." A copy of this form will be given to you.

Principal Investigator: Dr. Denise Dávila, Graduate Faculty
Department of Language and Literacy Education
ddavila@uga.edu / 702-895-2632

Co-Investigator: Stephen Adam Crawley, Doctoral Student
Department of Language and Literacy Education
sacraw@uga.edu / 770-265-6033

Purpose of the Study

You are invited to participate in a project conducted as part of a student's doctoral dissertation in the College of Education at the University of Georgia. The research will be supervised by the student's doctoral advisor. The purpose of the study is to examine how parents/guardians who support gay and lesbian individuals and have children in public elementary schools respond to picturebooks that include gay and/or lesbian characters as well as their potential use in elementary classrooms.

Study Procedures

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to ...

- Participate in three audio and/or video-recorded one-on-one interviews (approx. one hour each)

- Participate in a small group discussion with the other participants (approx. two hours) that will be video-recorded
- Read six picturebooks including gay and/or lesbian characters and respond to each anonymously using a Google Form (approx. 20 minutes per book for a total of approx. two hours)

The above steps will occur between September, 2017 – February, 2018.

Risks and discomforts

- I do not anticipate any risks from participating in this research. The only risks I foresee is that you might encounter discomfort in the group discussion if/when hearing or discussing views that differ from your own.
- Part of this study will include a group interview. Though information you share individually in other parts of the study will not be shared with other participants, limited confidentiality can be guaranteed for information you and other participants share during the group interview. At the beginning of the group interview, all participants will be reminded to be respectful of the privacy of others.

Benefits

- Your direct benefits for participating are that you will be introduced to a variety of picturebooks including gay and lesbian characters which you may wish to share with your family, friends, and/or child's school. You will also have the opportunity to reflect on your own perspectives and meet other parents with common interests, values, and/or experiences.
- The expected benefits of the study to society are that pre-service and in-service teachers can be informed about parents' perspectives on children's literature including gay and lesbian characters which may then shape their selection and use of such books in their own classrooms, which would in turn provide representation of gays and lesbians for students who may identify this way, question their identity, have a friend or family member who identifies as gay or lesbian, and/or who could have their understandings of gays and lesbians expanded.

Incentives for participation

Participants will be able to keep the six picturebooks including gay and lesbian characters used in this study. In addition, refreshments will be provided during the group interview and additional resources that describe other children's literature including gays and/or lesbians will be shared.

Audio/Video Recording

The individual and group interviews will be audio and video-recorded. Audio-recording will allow the researcher to transcribe the interview for further analysis. Video-recording will be helpful since we will be looking at and discussing various books, and the video will help the researcher see particular books or pages within books being discussed. Video will also be helpful for the researcher when transcribing and analyzing the group interview to discern turn-taking and the non-verbal ways participants interact and/or respond.

Upon completion of the research, the recordings will be kept by the researcher for three years in case they need to be re-visited for analysis, at which time they will be destroyed.

Privacy/Confidentiality

All information will be treated confidentially. The researcher will use a pseudonym in any transcripts and writing about the study. All audio/video files, transcripts, and any other data related to this study will be stored on the researcher's password-protected computer.

For the anonymous responses to the picturebooks using a Google Form, the primary investigator (Dr. Denise Dávila) will e-mail you a 5-digit number to use for your response. Only Dr. Dávila will know how the numbers match participants.

The researchers will not release identifiable results of the study to anyone without your written consent unless required by law.

Taking part is voluntary

Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

If you decide to withdraw from the study, the information that can be identified as yours will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed, unless you make a written request to remove, return, or destroy the information.

If you have questions

The main researcher conducting this study is Dr. Denise Dávila, a graduate faculty member at the University of Georgia. The co-researcher is Stephen Adam Crawley, a doctoral student at the University of Georgia. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Dr. Denise Dávila at ddavila@uga.edu or at 702-895-2632. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chairperson at 706.542.3199 or irb@uga.edu.

Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research:

To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must sign on the line below. Your signature below indicates that you have read or had read to you this entire consent form, and have had all of your questions answered.

Name of Researcher

Signature

Date

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

APPENDIX H

STAGE ONE – INTERVIEW GUIDE

Thank you for participating in this study! As you know, I'm interested in the perspectives of parents who have elementary-aged children, especially in regards to gay and lesbian-inclusive picturebooks. During this first interview, I'm interested to know more about you, your child(ren), and their school. I'll also ask some questions related to your responses on the recruitment questionnaire about gay/lesbian individuals, rights, and levels of support. Let's begin by discussing your children and their school...

In your pre-screening questionnaire, you mentioned your children are in the [GRADE LEVEL(S)]. Do I have that correct? Is there anything else you'd like to share about your children as we begin?

Based on the questionnaire, you mentioned your children attend a [TYPE] school. Share more about that and why your child attends that type of school.

Possible probes:

- How does the school take up (or not) diverse perspectives?
- From your experience, how liberal or progressive is the school? Share more about this.
- Are you aware of any gay/lesbian staff members, family, and/or students at the school? What do you feel is the level of support of these individuals?

To your knowledge, is there representation of gays/lesbians in books or the curriculum within the school?

Possible probes:

- Share more about that.
- How do you feel about the representations currently available?

On the questionnaire, you stated supporting gay/lesbian individuals and their rights. Share more about that.

Possible probes:

- What has influenced your support?
- Do you have friends and/or family members who you know (or believe) are gay/lesbian?
- How have you shown support for these friends or family members, or perhaps gay/lesbian individuals at large?
- Would you say your support is more internal, or are there times you've been more public in your support as well? Share about that.

Based on your perspective and experiences, how would you describe the gay/lesbian community where you live?

What else would you like to share that we haven't discussed yet?

Before we leave today, I'm curious to hear about the books your children engage with.

- What books do you read with them?
- What books do they read on their own?

During our next session, I'll be sharing various picturebooks with you that include gay and lesbian characters or content. I invite you to also bring any picturebooks you think include gay and/or lesbian content or characters. However, please do not feel obligated. If no such books come to mind, that's okay, too. There are also no "right" or "wrong" types of books to bring in, and please don't feel that you have to search for such books. This is simply an invitation to bring in any books that come to mind, of which you're aware, or that you think are gay/lesbian-inclusive, if any.

APPENDIX I

STAGE TWO – INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview re: picturebook(s) brought by participants (approx. 15 min.)

For today's session, I invited you to bring any picturebooks you know of or have come across that you view as having gay and/or lesbian content or characters. Please share about the books you brought with you today (if this happened).

Share about your process for selecting these books (if this happened).

Possible probes:

- Were these books you had at home, or did you get them elsewhere?
- Did you select them on your own, or did you seek advice from elsewhere (librarian, bookseller, friend/family, online)?

What are your thoughts about these books? In your perspective, how do they include gay and/or lesbian characters or content?

Interview re: 30+ picturebook selection (approx. 45 min.)

I've brought a collection of additional picturebooks with gay and lesbian characters as well. Please take some time to browse the various books, and then we'll discuss what you've viewed and noticed. (Provide 20 min. or more for participant to explore the books.)

As you explored the books, what did you notice?

As a parent and considering books for your child, were there any particular books or types of books you liked? Share more about that.

As a parent and considering books for your child, were there any particular books or types of books you didn't care for at first glance or while skimming? Share more about that.

Some of these books include human characters while others have animal characters. What are your thoughts about this in regard to appropriateness for children?

Possible probe:

- Is one type of book preferable to the other when considering child readers?

A couple of these books are non-fiction (or based on true events), some are realistic fiction, and some are fantasy or traditional tales. What are your thoughts about this?

Possible probe:

- Is one type of book preferable to the others when considering child readers?

To your knowledge, are any of these books (or other books like them) available or used in your child's school?

Follow-up questions:

- What are your thoughts about that?
- What do you think might happen if these books (or books like them) were used in your child's school?
- As a parent, would you advocate for such books if there was resistance? How so?
- Have you heard other views from parents about such books or their use in classrooms?

How would you feel about these books being in your child's school?

Possible probes:

- Are there certain books from the set that you feel more comfortable about being included? Why?
- Are there certain books from the set that you feel more uncomfortable about being included? Why?

How do you envision these books might be included? What might that look like?

Possible probes:

- School counselor?
- School library for check-out?
- Classroom library?
- Read-aloud?
- Connected to instruction?

What might be the benefits of such books within schools and classrooms?

What else would you like to discuss that we haven't yet?

If there's anything that comes to mind after today's session and you'd like to share further, I invite you to e-mail or text me that information as well!

Before we leave, I'd like to share with you the six books we'll be using during the next steps and future conversations. These books are yours to keep and share with your family. I'll soon send you an e-mail with more information about these next steps. Basically, I'll ask you to read each book and respond to it using an online form that will be provided to you. Your responses will be anonymous to me, but my professor (Dr. Denise Dávila) will contact you with an identification number when submitting your responses. I'd recommend devoting at least 20 minutes to reading and responding to each book. Approximately six weeks will be available for this part of the process, and then I'll invite all of the participants to meet as a group to discuss the books. I will ask that these books be brought to our group conversation as well in case they are needed for

reference. Again, all of this information will be shared via e-mail soon. Do you have any questions, though?

APPENDIX J

STAGE TWO – TIME SPENT READING PER PARTICIPANT AND BOOK

The table below shows the order in which parents read the books (top number in each box) and the amount of time spent reading each book (bottom number in each box). Parents read the books per group in the order in which they were stacked.

	Diya	Lindsay	Crystal	Kelly	Anne	Total time per book	Average time per book
<i>How families are made (A)</i>							
Felecia's Favorite Story	8 0:40	2 1:18	11 0:04	6 0:29	2 0:44	3:15	0:39
Home at Last	11 0:48	4 3:21	13 2:19	8 0:25	3 0:39	7:32	1:30.4
The White Swan Express	10 0:45	3 1:45	12 0:56	7 0:44	4 0:38	4:48	0:57.6
Zak's Safari	9 0:41	1 1:40	10 1:48	5 0:57	1 0:56	6:02	1:12.4
<i>Love between two (B)</i>							
Christian, The Hugging Lion	12 0:58	9 0:33	25 2:13	27 1:11	8 1:16	6:11	1:14.2
Gertrude is Gertrude is Gertrude is Gertrude	16 1:11	5 1:27	23 2:11	23 1:09	12 0:40	6:38	1:19.6
Hello,	13	8	24	26	11		

Sailor	0:43	0:51	1:21	0:38	1:12	4:45	0:57
Jack & Jim	15 1:00	6 1:14	26 0:38	24 1:13	9 0:32	4:37	0:55.4
Steven Universe: The Answer	14 0:49	7 1:04	27 1:47	25 0:54	10 0:09	4:43	0:56.6
<i>Family diversity (C)</i>							
1, 2, 3: A Family Counting Book	17 0:37	19 0:26	18 1:04	4 0:16	18 0:09	2:32	0:30.4
A, B, C: A Family Alphabet Book	18 0:27	20 0:31	17 1:06	3 0:31	17 0:27	3:02	0:36.4
Families	19 0:57	22 1:01	20 3:55	1 2:39	19 1:41	10:13	2:02.6
Heather Has Two Mommies	20 0:44	21 0:47	19 0:36	2 1:06	20 0:13	3:26	0:41.2
<i>Adversity or anxiety about gay/lesbian identity (D)</i>							
Antonio's Card	22 0:10	16 1:51	15 1:10	10 0:10	6 1:06	4:27	0:53.4
In Our Mothers' House	23 0:20	17 1:53	16 4:34	9 0:33	7 1:46	9:06	1:49.2
My Two Uncles	21 0:26	18 1:58	14 1:58	11 0:24	5 0:51	5:37	1:07.4
<i>AIDS (E)</i>							
A Name on the Quilt	2 0:56	14 1:13	21 1:04	22 1:07	22 0:17	4:37	0:55.4

Too Far Away to Touch	1 0:54	15 0:58	22 1:53	21 1:22	21 0:27	5:34	1:06.8
<i>Celebrating visibly (F)</i>							
Best Best Colors	25 0:16	23 0:54	8 0:45	20 1:03	15 0:20	3:18	0:39.6
Donovan's Big Day	27 0:28	26 1:16	6 0:20	18 0:35	13 0:20	2:59	0:35.8
Gloria Goes to Gay Pride	24 0:21	25 1:04	7 1:05	17 0:23	14 0:24	3:17	0:39.4
Uncle Bobby's Wedding	26 0:17	24 0:52	9 0:15	19 0:51	16 0:24	2:39	0:31.8
<i>Families being families (G)</i>							
Daddy, Papa, and Me	4 0:19	While reading <i>Mommy, Mama, and Me</i> - looked over baby's shoulder	1 0:34	13 0:04	23 0:07	1:04	0:16
Daddy's Roommate	6 0:41	13 0:55	5 0:04	15 0:48	27 1:37	4:05	0:49
Mini Mia and Her Darling Uncle	7 0:21	12 1:59	4 1:22	16 0:30	26 0:43	4:55	0.59
Mommy, Mama, and Me	3 0:19	10 0:17	2 0:02	12 0:07	24 0:07	0:52	0:10.4
The Entertainer	5 0:20	11 0:38	3 0:54	14 0:19	25 0:24	2:35	0:31
Total time per person	16:28	31:46	35:58	20:28	18:09	2:02:49	

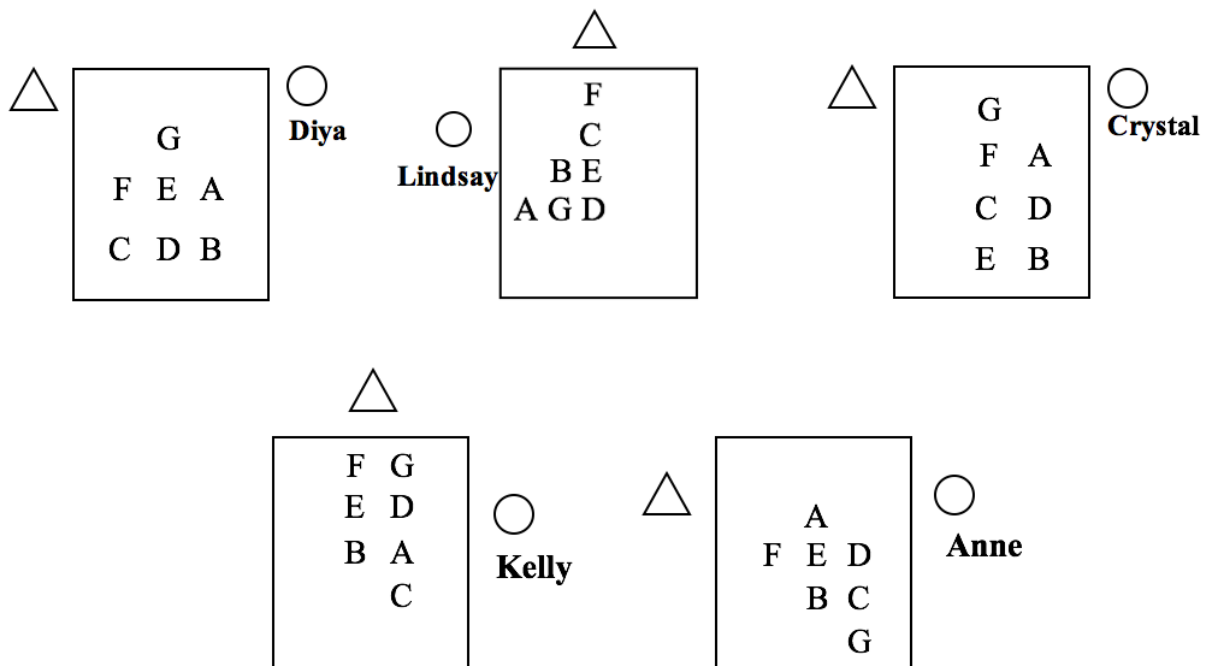
Average time per book	0:36.593	1:13.308	1:19.926	0:45.481	0:40.333		
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APPENDIX K

STAGE TWO – INTERVIEW SEATING ARRANGEMENTS WITH BOOKS

The following images represent the configuration of each Stage Two individual interview. The triangle represents the researcher (me), the circle is the participant, and each letter represents the placement of each group of books.

- A: How families are made
- B: Love between two
- C: Family diversity
- D: Adversity or anxiety about gay/lesbian identity
- E: AIDS
- F: Celebrating visibly
- G: Families being families



APPENDIX L

STAGE THREE – E-MAIL INTRODUCTION AND ONLINE SURVEY

E-mail Introduction

Dear _____,

My name is Dr. Denise Dávila, and I serve as Adam Crawley's dissertation advisor. I am writing on Adam's behalf to share information about the next steps of the study, including your assigned number to use when completing the online form (link below) for responding to each of the six picturebooks provided to you.

The purpose of the assigned number is so that the responses will be anonymous to Adam. The matching of numbers to individuals' names will not be shared with Adam until all stages of the study have occurred, including the group conversation and final one-on-one interviews that will take place in early 2018. However, Adam will receive the responses themselves before this time to aid his evolving analysis and inform future stages of the study.

Your assigned number is: _____

Link to Online Response Form [hyperlink]

As Adam mentioned near the end of your last conversation, please complete this form for each of the six picturebooks provided to you. He asks that you devote at least twenty minutes to reading and responding to each book, for a total time of approximately two hours which may of course be completed over a period of several days or weeks.

Please submit your responses for all of the books by Sunday, December 17th at 11:59 p.m.

Adam will send you a separate e-mail in the near future to schedule the group conversation for January.

Thank you for your participation in Adam's dissertation study. If you have any questions about the assigned number or anonymity, I invite you to contact me – ddavila@uga.edu. Other questions about the study should be directed to Adam – sacraw@uga.edu. However, you are certainly welcome to contact me as well.

Warmest regards,

Denise Dávila

Anonymous Response Online Survey

Please read each of the six picturebooks provided at the end of our last interview. As you read each book, please read from the perspective of a parent considering that the book would be used and/or available in your child's school.

I encourage you to not only pay attention to the written narrative but also closely to the illustrations, especially since illustrations can not only support the words, but may even share additional/different information and be what some children attend to more closely. In addition, I welcome you to read and consider other components within the book (if any), such as the publication/Library of Congress information (colophon), "about the author/illustrator" statements, additional facts section, etc...

After reading each book, please complete and submit the following form. Your response will be anonymous, and please do not reveal any identifying information about yourself in the response.

I recommend devoting at least twenty minutes per picturebook for reading and the online response.

I kindly request all responses be submitted by Sunday, December 17, 2017.

We will also discuss the six books during our group conversation to occur in January (which will be scheduled via a follow-up e-mail in the near future).

If you would like to discuss any of the books with me individually prior to our group conversation, please don't hesitate to contact me – sacraw@uga.edu / 770-265-6033.

Thank you!

Q1. Your assigned number provided to you via e-mail by Dr. Denise Dávila.

- [OPEN RESPONSE]

Q2. Which book are you responding to here? (drop-down menu)

- *Orca's Song*
- *King & King*
- *Molly's Family*
- *The Harvey Milk Story*
- *This Day in June*
- *And Tango makes Three*

Q3: Please write one or two paragraphs (or more, if desired) to discuss your thoughts about the book as a parent considering this book being used/available in your child's classroom. I welcome you to include specific examples of words, phrases, themes, illustrations, or other aspects of the book within your response.

- [OPEN RESPONSE]

Q4: Please describe the setting where you read the book. (Did you read the book alone, with a family member, or someone else? Where did the reading take place, and why?)

- [OPEN RESPONSE]

APPENDIX M

STAGE FOUR – INTERVIEW GUIDE

Thanks everyone for taking the time to meet today. It's great to see you all! I anticipate our conversation will last approximately two hours. We'll take a break midway through, unless everyone decides at that time they would prefer to keep the conversation going. Before we begin, I'd like to reiterate that I will keep everything shared in today's session confidential, and I will use pseudonyms for individuals' names. I also kindly ask that everyone respect the privacy of their fellow participants and not share what is discussed, or the names of fellow participants, beyond our time together.

To begin our conversation today, let's take some time to introduce ourselves. As you are likely aware, all of you are parents of elementary-aged children, and you've each read six picturebooks with gay/lesbian characters. When you introduce yourself, please share your name, the grades your children are in, and which of the books you really want to discuss (perhaps because it was a personal favorite, intriguing, or even one you found concerning).

I noticed that as we went around the circle, several of you listed [TITLE] as one to discuss. Let's begin there. What were your thoughts about the book?

What other books would you like to discuss?

Let's think about how these books are, or might be, used in schools. When I met with each of you individually, some people expressed [THEME]. I'm interested to hear thoughts about that within the group.

As parents, how would you feel about these books being available in your child's classroom?

How would you feel about these books being read by the teacher or used in lessons?

Let's say these books were going to be used within the classroom as a read-aloud or connected to instruction. Which of the books might work well for that?

Possible probes:

- How so?
- What subjects or curricular standards/topics do you have in mind?
- Should they be connected to particular standards/concepts (i.e., civil rights, folklore, science, plot) and used specifically to address gay/lesbian identities?

ACTIVITY/DISCUSSION

Since participating in this study, have you noticed any of the books – or others like them – in your child’s school?

PART TWO (FURTHER CONVERSATIONS)

Another aspect some of us discussed was advocacy for such books if there were resistance from others. What might such advocacy look like?

Research has shown that some teachers and/or parents don’t think such books are appropriate for children. What are your thoughts about that?

Possible probe:

- Books or stories with heterosexual relationships are often included in schools.
What are your thoughts about that compared to the books in the set we’ve read?

How might these books be beneficial for all learners?

The six picturebooks that we all read are just a few of the books that exist with gay/lesbian characters. Other picturebooks and chapter books exist for young readers to adolescents and beyond. What other books have you read or are aware of that feature such characters/topics?

Follow-up question:

- Beyond the books we’ve read or that you’re aware of, what other books or themes would you like to see exist or feel might be important in regards to gay/lesbian representation?

What else would anyone like to discuss as a group before we depart?

WRAP-UP

- Discuss next steps (scheduling Stage 5 interviews)
- Discuss copies of Harvey Milk book

APPENDIX N

STAGE FIVE – INTERVIEW GUIDE

Thank you for your participation throughout this study. Today's conversation will consist of two parts: Questions about the recent group conversation and then some questions about the study overall.

QUESTIONS ABOUT FOCUS GROUP

To begin, please share your thoughts about the group discussion in general.

Possible probes:

- What parts surprised you, if any?
- How do you agree or disagree with any of the comments made?

Did the group discussion change your thoughts about any of the books? How so?

Was there anything you wished we had discussed that we didn't?

Is there anything you wanted to share during the group discussion that you didn't?

Possible probes:

- What were reasons for not sharing these thoughts during the group discussion?

QUESTIONS ABOUT STUDY AT LARGE / WRAP-UP

We discussed it briefly when we first met a few months ago, but I thought it might be nice to revisit. What led you to participate in this study? Why did you want to participate?

You or others mentioned in past conversations not knowing if any of the books are available in your child's school library. I searched their online catalog and noticed that [NUMBER] of the books are in their collection. What are your thoughts about this?

What are your plans for the six books provided to you? For example, will you keep them in your personal collection, keep with your children's other books, share with others, etc...?

Do you envision any next steps you might take in regards to these or other such books in schools and classrooms? If so, what?

I wish to express again how much I appreciate your participation in this study. In the future, I may wish to do further research about this topic and/or invite parents to speak with teachers in education classes I teach. May I contact you in the future about such opportunities?

What else would you like to share, either from the group discussion or our time together across this study?

APPENDIX O

INVENTORY OF GL/LG PICTUREBOOKS IN SCHOOL LIBRARIES

The table below shows which books were in the inventory of the school library for the school in which the parents' elementary-aged children attend. The inventories were searched using the online catalogs publicly available via each school's webpage.

	Robin ES (Diya)	Bluejay ES (Lindsay)	Canary ES (Crystal)	Hummingbird ES (Kelly)	Finch PS (Anne)
<i>How families are made</i>					
Felecia's Favorite Story					
Home at Last					
The White Swan Express	X				
Zak's Safari					
<i>Love between two</i>					
Christian, The Hugging Lion	X				
Gertrude is Gertrude is Gertrude is Gertrude					
Hello, Sailor					
Jack and Jim					
Steven Universe: The Answer					
<i>Family diversity</i>					
1, 2, 3: A Family Counting Book					
A, B, C: A Family Alphabet Book					
Families	X				
Heather Has Two Mommies					
<i>Adversity or anxiety about gay/lesbian identity</i>					
Antonio's Card					
In Our Mothers'	X				

House					
My Two Uncles					
<i>AIDS</i>					
A Name on the Quilt					
Too Far Away to Touch					
<i>Celebrating visibly</i>					
Best Best Colors					
Donovan's Big Day					
Gloria Goes to Gay Pride					
Uncle Bobby's Wedding					
<i>Families being families</i>					
Daddy, Papa, and Me					
Daddy's Roommate					
Mini Mia and her Darling Uncle					
Mommy, Mama, and Me					
The Entertainer					
<i>Six books for stages 3-5</i>					
And Tango Makes Three	X				
King & King					
Molly's Family					
Orca's Song					
The Harvey Milk Story					
This Day in June	X				
TOTAL (33 total books)	6	0	0	0	0