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## Who's Out? Who's In? (Re)presentations of LGB+ Individuals in Picturebook Biographies

S. Adam Crawley

### Abstract

Through the metaphor of windows, mirrors, and maps this article draws attention to depictions in picturebooks of individuals who identified—or might now be considered because of their romantic, physical, and/or otherwise intimate relationships—as LGB+. However, some picturebook biographies limit information about the person's non-heterosexual orientation more so than others. Therefore, this article examines contemporary picturebook biographies to explore the representations of individuals' sexual orientation and the implications for young readers. The piece begins with a discussion of extant research about LGB(TQ)+ children's literature and asserts the need for biography-focused study. Then the piece outlines methodology and findings, specifically addressing the following questions: (1) What picturebook biographies about LGB+ individuals have been published? (2) How do the books reflect the person's sexual orientation? and (3) What are the implications of such representations?

### Introduction

As a child, I learned about numerous people by reading their biographies. I often lived vicariously through the individuals and the experiences in their representative texts. Though I read about people diverse in race, ethnicity, social class,

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gender, religion, and various other ways of being and who lived in various time periods and locations, the person's sexual orientation was always either depicted as heterosexual or not stated. Therefore, I assumed the individuals were heterosexual as it was what I was accustomed to seeing in books. What I would have given to read about people like me: people who identified or questioned their orientation as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or otherwise sexually queer (LGB+). Little did I know such individuals ever existed, let alone succeeded in their personal and/or professional lives. While I heard or read about the accomplishments of people like Josephine Baker, Gertrude Stein, and Andy Warhol, I was blind to their non-heterosexual, mainstream orientations. I attribute my blindedness to the limited information shared by my educators and the representations available to me in books, documentaries, and other media—and specifically the texts that formed my earliest foundational knowledge such as picturebook biographies.

Children's literature inclusive of LGB+ (and transgender, gender non-conforming, and other queer)<sup>1</sup> characters has steadily increased (Möller, 2014; Naidoo, 2012). These and other texts representative of diversity provide “windows and mirrors” (Bishop, 1990) for children to see reflections of themselves, have their or their loved ones' identities validated, and learn about others who are different than themselves. In addition to providing windows and mirrors, children's literature is sometimes a map for children, showing youth possibilities for their lives as well as the personal and professional journeys taken by others (Myers, 2014). The map metaphor is especially relevant considering biographies of individuals from marginalized populations. Readers can see how people overcame obstacles, navigated various contexts such as family and political structures, were an integral part of and contributed to society, and achieved prominence despite marginalization. Biographies show what individuals have accomplished in the past and help readers more concretely envision the potential for their futures as well as the possible steps necessary to get there.

Though the windows, mirrors, and maps metaphor has relevance to all biographies, in this article I draw attention to depictions in picturebooks<sup>2</sup> of individuals who identified—or might now be considered because of their romantic, physical, and/or otherwise intimate relationships—as LGB+. However, some picturebook biographies limit information about the person's non-heterosexual orientation more so than others. Therefore, I examine contemporary picturebook biographies to explore the representations of individuals' sexual orientation and the implications for young readers. Specifically: (1) What picturebook biographies about LGB+ individuals have been published? (2) How do the books reflect the person's sexual orientation? and (3) What are the implications of such representations? Before addressing these questions via the methodology and findings, I first discuss extant research about LGB(TQ)+ children's literature and assert the need for biography-focused study.

### The Need for LGB+ Inclusive Biographies and Related Research

It is well documented that children's literature is an important tool for creating more inclusive social and learning environments for all youth, and specifically for discussing and making visible LGB+ people and issues (Frantz Bentley & Souto-Manning, 2016; Ryan & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2018; Schall & Kauffmann, 2003). Such conversations are critical since widespread oppression based on actual or perceived sexual orientation continues to affect children and adolescents, resulting in lower academic success (Kosciw et al., 2018) or even death (e.g., Simon, 2009; The Trevor Project, 2019). Marginalization then continues into adulthood as evidenced by employment discrimination based on sexual orientation remaining legal in 32 U.S. states (National LGBTQ Task Force, 2014) and rights being repeatedly under attack by the current U.S. political administration such as discrimination for services (*Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission*, 2018), workplace discrimination (de la Garza, 2019), and other rights and protections (Gandara, Jackson, & Discont, 2017).

Although some people claim sexual orientation an inappropriate—if not taboo—topic for children, such arguments fail to account how sexual orientation is already present in the form of heteronormativity in countless children's texts via books, television, movies, and other forms of media (Ryan & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2018; Sapp, 2010). Heterosexual representations are pervasive in the texts available to young children via classroom libraries (Crisp et al., 2016). In addition, research indicates that children identify or begin to question their sexual orientation at an early age (Lopez, 2013) and converse with peers about sexual orientation based on images seen in various forms of media or heard within their networks of family and friends (Ryan & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2018). Thus, various sexual orientations are always already present in and central to children's lives regardless of how adults may want to deny or protect such knowledge.

Although the publication of LGB+ children's literature continues to increase, the majority of texts documented in scholarly literature and other resources is predominantly fiction. For example, in Naidoo's (2012) extensive annotated bibliography of extant LGB(TQ)+ children's literature, 184 fictional picturebooks and 39 fictional chapter books are listed compared to only 45 informational texts inclusive of picturebooks and lengthier texts. In Lester's (2014) content analysis of queer-themed children's books published in four Western countries across three decades and used in an undergraduate university course, only one of the 68 books was nonfiction. The American Library Association's annual Rainbow Book List includes only five nonfiction texts in the picturebook category since the list's 2008 inception, and fictional texts pervade the various middle grade and young adult categories as well (<https://glbtrt.ala.org/rainbowbooks/rainbow-books-lists>). Similarly, the Mike Morgan and Larry Roman's Children's and Young Adult Literature Award—given by the American Library Association's Stonewall Book Award

Committee—is rife with fiction award and honor recipients. The predominance of fiction in LGB(TQ)+ children’s literature lists may correlate to possible limited publication of nonfiction texts. For example, of the 3,700 books they received in 2017, the Cooperative Children’s Book Center (2018) identified 136 books as having significant LGB(TQ)+ content and only 18 of those as nonfiction.

Fictional texts are also prevalent in empirical studies with youth and educators. For example, Ryan and Hermann-Wilmarth (2018) described classroom scenarios where teachers in various settings used and facilitated conversations around LGB(TQ)+ children’s literature. Except for one media article, all of the children’s literature incorporated by the teachers or suggested by the authors was fictional. Similarly, many additional studies with youth entail primarily—if not solely—reading fictional texts (e.g., Frantz Bentley & Souto-Manning, 2016; Hartman, 2018; Schall & Kauffmann, 2003; Skrlac Lo, 2016; Souto-Manning & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2008; Van Horn, 2015). Further, research with pre and/or in-service teachers reading and responding to LGB(TQ)+ children’s literature largely or exclusively involves reading fiction (e.g., Bouley, 2011; Cumming-Potvin & Martino, 2014; Dedeoglu, Ulusoy, & Lamme, 2012; DePalma & Atkinson, 2009; Hermann-Wilmarth, 2010). The predominant inclusion of fiction in empirical studies and recommended lists may more widely impact educators’ future book selections for libraries, read alouds, and instruction as they gravitate toward such texts vetted by others.

Naidoo (2013) reported the need for increased study within the field of LGB(TQ)+ children’s literature, especially involving picturebooks, and asserted biographies of LGB(TQ)+ individuals written for children are particularly limited in number (Naidoo, 2012). The lack of LGB+ biographies written for youth is further evidenced in a recent study of books receiving the Orbis Pictus award or honor distinction between 1990 through 2017. In their analysis of the award granted to nonfiction texts, Crisp, Gardner, and Almeida (2017) found that of a 143 book corpus, only six of the books—all biographies—included focal subjects who were gay, bisexual, or had another queer sexual orientation. None of the books included focal subjects who were lesbian. Nor did any of the six books actually depict focal subjects’ gay, bi, or otherwise queer sexual orientations. In other words, the researchers’ understanding of the focal individuals’ sexual orientations was based on their extended knowledge and research rather than the texts themselves. Further, there is a lack of analysis of nonfiction—and biography specifically—beyond numerical counts or from pre-determined sets such as those receiving a particular award.

Biographies are worthy of study and have a range of affordances. For example, Haag and Albright (2009) claimed,

Biographies make the world come alive for children and are a significant genre in the classroom and in publishing. Reading about the lives of others engages children and helps them see connections to their own lives and to the past. (p. 11)

Research asserts such engagement may be particularly true for LGB+ youth. For

example, nearly a third of LGB(TQ)+ youth (ages 13 to 21) search for texts to “gain information about LGBTQ lives, people, culture, or history” (Paridis, 2016, p. 95). Kosciw and colleagues (2016) reinforced the importance of information access in relation to school climate: “LGBTQ students experienced a safer, more positive school environment when [...] they were taught positive representations of LGBT people, history, and events” (p. 61). Related, LGB(TQ)+ people, history, and events are now mandated in K-12 curriculum in California and New Jersey (California Department of Education, 2018; Ly & Thompson, 2019) with bills for similar actions under governor review in other states such as Colorado and Illinois after having passed in each state’s legislature (Botts, 2019; Edmund, 2019). Biographies can serve a vital role in these curricular objectives across content areas, especially in place of or as a supplement to textbooks. The emphasis on nonfiction within the Common Core literacy standards encourages educators to include biographies among other informational texts in their classroom instruction and students’ reading (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010).

Whether biography or another genre, educators can read and discuss picturebooks both with elementary-aged and adolescent readers (Vercelletto, 2018), and youth of all ages report reading and enjoying the picturebook format (Scholastic, 2019). Picturebooks may be many students’ first introduction to particular topics, including the significant people featured in biographies. However, research demonstrates biographies are less favored by youth compared to other genres or topics for self-selected reading (Clark & Foster, 2005; Scholastic, 2019). Thus, in some instances, picturebooks—along with other brief and/or visual forms of media such as film or news articles—may be the sole source of information for readers about some individuals, especially readers who have limited interest, access to information about, and/or exposure to particular individuals. In such instances, picturebook biographies carry tremendous responsibility for imparting information about the focal individual. Even for readers who do later read or otherwise learn about the focal individuals, the picturebooks’ depictions may form the foundational understandings on which readers build. Related, the illustrations throughout picturebooks coupled with written words create added meaning (Reynolds, 2011; Sipe, 1998), an affordance not shared by biographies consisting of words alone.

For readers of all ages, picturebook biographies depicting LGB+ individuals emphasize not only the existence of such people past and present, but also how those individuals made important contributions in their local and/or global communities. Due to the importance of LGB+ picturebook biographies along with the limited extant research and showcasing of them, I explore such texts representing LGB+ individuals’ lives and the messages they send.

### Queer Theory and the Reading of Texts and Individuals

I approach this study, read texts through, and situate my work within queer

theory. Three key tenets of queer theory are to disrupt heteronormativity (Sullivan, 2003), foreground the sexual (Blackburn & Clark, 2011), and make the “unthinkable’ thinkable” (Greteman, 2013, p. 258). Exploring the portrayal in biographies of individuals’ LGB+ orientation brings the sexual to the fore, an element that might initially be considered unthinkable both in picturebooks for young readers but also within the contexts of the individuals’ lives who are being represented therein. Similarly, queer theory can be used to make the familiar strange and the strange familiar (Fifield & Letts, 2014). In this project, I seek to “make strange” individuals whom people may think they are familiar, bringing to light or facilitating a reconsideration of the notable figures regarding their sexual orientation. By foregrounding LGB+ sexual orientation in the reading and knowledge construction about these individuals, I also promote making what might at first seem strange or unthinkable increasingly familiar and thinkable.

Much educational research using queer theory aims to disrupt heteronormative institutions, and such research frequently positions and critiques K-12 schools and higher education as heteronormative spaces. While I agree with those positionings and critiques, in this study I instead consider the field of children’s book publishing as a heteronormative institution that then informs and reinforces heteronormativity within schools. Research demonstrates the publishing industry is predominantly heterosexual (Lee & Low, 2016) which then becomes reflected in the texts produced, available to readers, and circulated in educational contexts. As I attest in this article, heterosexuality is not only most frequently represented in children’s literature but also used as a normative default even when depicting LGB+ individuals.

### *Reading Texts with a Queer Lens*

Plummer (2013) asserted using textual artifacts as items for analysis can be fruitful within queer theory, and queer theory in relation to reading practices has been widely discussed and modeled by scholars and theorists (e.g., Britzman, 1995; Butler, 1999; Doty, 1993; Foucault, 1978; Sedgwick, 1990). Recently, scholars have applied a queer lens to read and interpret a variety of children’s literature—including texts that are explicitly LGB+ inclusive (Ryan & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2018) and those that are seemingly “straight” (Crisp, Gardner, & Almeida, 2017; Hermann-Wilmarth & Souto-Manning, 2007; Ryan & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2013). Reading with a queer lens involves being attentive to portrayals and absences of sexual orientation, how representations reinforce particular stereotypes, and how depictions might be alternately read. Additionally helpful, Kubowitz (2012) described queer writing and reading strategies showing the agency of both text producers (e.g., authors) and readers. Queer writing strategies are techniques employed intentionally by authors (and arguably illustrators as well) to embed clues in their writing related to queer identities or themes. Among the various writing strategies are metaphors, clichés, or allusions to queer culture though Crisp (2018) cautions such techniques often rely

on LGB+ stereotypes and tropes. For example, the character Albus Dumbledore in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series being sensitive and having a fashion sense may be details the author used to convey his being gay, but these details are based on and reinforce stereotypes (Crisp, 2018). Even when authors and illustrators do not intentionally include LGB+ elements or nods, audiences can apply queer reading strategies. Similar to reading with a queer lens, a queer reading strategy involves foregrounding queerness, looking for elements that could be interpreted as non-heterosexual. Such reading may or may not rely on stereotypes. For example, while readers may infer Dumbledore was gay because of Rowling's stereotypical details, Ryan and Hermann-Wilmarth (2013) described how readers might interpret the gazes, physical touches, and barrier challenges between two girls of different races within *The Other Side* (Woodson, 2001) relative to exclusion and marginalization based on sexual orientation. It is through queer reading approaches that I selected, categorized, and further analyzed the picturebook biographies I later detail in this article. However, it is not only texts that are read queerly, but also the represented individuals as well.

### *Reading Individuals: Identity and Presentism*

Queer theory recognizes identities—both regarding sexual orientation and other ways of being—as fluid, multiple, and non-essentialist (Blackburn, 2014; Lovaas et al., 2006). I do not intend to infer static identity in my categorization of books and labeling of people's sexual orientations in this article. Rather, the descriptions of the historical figures throughout the analysis are about the depictions within the specific picturebooks, not the individuals themselves. Though beyond the scope of this article, additional analysis of these or other books—as well as the creation of new picturebook narratives—could increase representations of the fluidity exemplified within queerness and queer theory.

Further, and as I later detail in this article, each of the focal individuals within the picturebooks I selected were identified as LGB+ within scholarly and other expert resources (e.g., Bronski, 2011; Gibson, Alexander, & Meem, 2014; GLBTQ Archive, 2017; Möller, 2014; Naidoo, 2012; Pohlen, 2016; Prager, 2017; Sapp, 2010). It is imperative to assert that though others have identified the individuals as LGB+, the focal individuals may not have identified in the same ways and such relationships may have been interpreted differently during their lifetimes. For example, though it is documented Josephine Baker had emotional and physical relationships with women as well as men, she may not have described herself as or used the term “bisexual.” Susan B. Anthony's intimate friendships and cohabitation with women were sometimes coined “Boston Marriages” during the nineteenth century (Rapp, 2004). On the other hand, individuals such as Billie Jean King *have* identified as and used the term “lesbian” to describe themselves. Interpreting relationships from the past through contemporary lenses and terminology is a

form of presentism (Power, 2003). My analysis and discussion recognizes this aspect.

## Methodology

Methodology involves data sources, collection methods, and analytic processes to address research questions informed by and connected to the theoretical framework. To rehighlight, my research questions are: (1) What picturebook biographies about LGB+ individuals have been published? (2) How do the books reflect the person's sexual orientation? and (3) What are the implications of such representations? To answer these questions, I assembled a corpus of books as data sources based on select criteria followed by inquiry using critical content analysis.

### *Creating the Corpus*

Adding to the importance of picturebooks from earlier in this article, I selected picturebooks for this study because such texts often serve for youth as an introduction and basis of knowledge for a variety of concepts, including first glimpses of significant people in history as well as sexual orientation writ large. In conjunction with other media such as television, film, and print-based advertisements, picturebooks are often imbued with and send messages about relationships—often in ways that reinforce heterosexuality. Further, picturebooks may often be the main texts young children are initially exposed to in their homes, schools, and libraries. The picturebook format is ripe for use as a read-aloud and modeling reading texts using various lenses (e.g., feminist, queer) so that such approaches can be applied with greater independence or to lengthier texts as children's reading interest, stamina, and ability continue to increase (Ryan & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2018).

I used various criteria to search for and select books for this study. First, I defined picturebooks as those inclusive of both words and images (i.e., illustrations, photographs) in approximately equal ratio. In addition, I selected books conducive to a read-aloud or independent reading in a single session as opposed to books with lengthier narratives such as *George Washington Carver* (Bolden, 2008) which are more akin to illustrated books with higher word counts and images are more supplemental (Matulka, 2008). My initial selection of biographies about LGB+ individuals came from books described in children's literature scholarship (e.g., Möller, 2014; Naidoo, 2012; Sapp, 2010), followed by a search for texts representing those and other individuals named in LGB+ focused academic and history resources (e.g., Bronski, 2011; Gibson, Alexander, & Meem, 2014; GLBTQ Archive, 2017; Pohlen, 2016; Prager, 2017). For each individual, I searched for books via online resources including the Children's Literature Comprehensive Database, GoodReads.com, and Amazon.com. Search terms included the focal individuals' full names in isolation as well as in various combinations with "picturebook", "picture book", and "biography." Searches sometimes resulted in the recommendation of additional titles.

I selected books if they either provided a narrative of the person's whole life or moment from their adulthood. Rather than selecting biographies in which the individual's accomplishments were the *sole* focus, I chose books including at least one relationship with others such as a family member, friend, or significant other. By the book depicting a personal relationship, this aspect substantiated arguments about the inclusion or exclusion of other details related to sexual orientation. Further, I narrowed the corpus by publication date in two ways. The picturebook needed to be published after the individual's LGB+ orientation was publicly known. For example, I did not include *Sally Ride: Astronaut, Scientist, Teacher* (Nettleton, 2003) in the study because the book was published prior to her lesbian relationship being revealed by her partner following Ride's death (Rapp, 2012). Second, I only included books published since 2000. Though this criteria resulted in eliminating previously published picturebook biographies of some LGB+ people, it narrowed my search and analysis. I selected 2000 since the first picturebook biography clearly depicting an individual's LGB+ sexual orientation was published just two years later: *The Harvey Milk Story* (Krakow, 2002). Though beyond the scope of this study, selection and analysis of picturebook biographies published prior to the 21st century could further add to the findings in this article.

My search resulted in a corpus of 51 books listed in Appendix A. The list represents nearly two decades of publication, varied illustrative types (e.g., illustrations, photographs), award-winning and non-award winning texts, and stand-alone books in addition to series. In other words, the list contains the variety of texts that may exist within a school or classroom library. It is pertinent to note the corpus is evolving and thus not exhaustive. Though I searched widely, additional picturebook biographies may exist that meet my selection criteria and depict the LGB+ individuals I listed or others.

Since multiple picturebook biographies exist for the same person in some instances, the information in Appendix A is organized alphabetically by the LGB+ individual followed by demographic information, the text(s) depicting the individual, and the textual categorization based on my analysis.

### ***Critical Content Analysis***

I conducted a critical content analysis of the picturebook biographies. According to Short (2017), critical content analysis is *critical* because it “often includes questioning the concept of ‘truth’ and how it is presented, by whom, and for what purposes. Other questions also emerge around whose values, texts, and ideologies are privileged or considered normative” (p. 5). Critical content analysis is typically informed by a critical theoretical framework, including—but not limited to—feminist, critical race, postcolonial, or queer theories (Beach et al, 2009; Short, 2017). Further, Short (2017) described how content analysis:

reflects a heremenuetic, reader-response oriented research stance and so meaning is not in the text but in the reading event, which is translated between an analyst and a text (Rosenblatt, 1938). Texts thus have multiple meanings that are dependent on the analyst's intentions as a reader and the context of the study because the purpose for the reading influences the meanings that are constructed as research findings. (p. 4)

The intentional approach to reading in conjunction with the personal interpretation due to individual lived experience aligns with queer reading practices I earlier described.

For the analysis, I independently read each book multiple times and noted if and how the individual's LGB+ sexual orientation was depicted. While recursively building and reading the corpus, I noticed and developed three categories regarding if and how the individual's sexual orientation was represented: explicit, implicit, or excluded. In addition to the words in the narrative, I read and analyzed backmatter (e.g., author's notes, timelines, additional resources lists) and illustrations, especially since backmatter and illustrations may convey information not stated in the narrative alone. Critical content analysis of words and illustrations has been shown an effective approach by both multiple scholars analyzing a single text using varied theoretical stances (Beach et al., 2009) and individual scholars analyzing across multiple texts using a single theoretical frame (Crawley, 2017; Johnson, Mathis, & Short, 2019). In addition, content analysis is an approach for investigating norms and meanings embedded in texts via both written and visual narratives (Lushchevska, 2015). The exploration of how certain aspects of identity are included or excluded through words and/or images in an effort to normalize is particularly significant to this study, and troubling the concept of normal is central to queer theory (Warner, 1999).

### Three Types of Representation

In the sections that follow, I discuss three categories of picturebook biographies I identified via analysis. The categories—explicit, implicit, and excluded—regard the texts' representation of LGB+ individuals' sexual orientation. Within each section, I share examples from specific picturebooks and discuss the implications of each type of representation for youth. In addition, I label each biography's categorization as explicit, implicit, or excluded in Appendix A.

#### ***Out and Proud: Explicit Representations***

By far the smallest of the three categories, five books from the corpus clearly portray LGB+ individuals' sexual orientation: *The Harvey Milk Story* (Krakow, 2002), *Sally Ride: The First American Woman in Space* (Baby Professor, 2017), *When You Look Out the Window: How Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin Built a Community* (Pitman, 2017), *Pride: The Story of Harvey Milk and the Rainbow Flag* (Sanders, 2018), and *Sewing the Rainbow: A Story about Gilbert Baker* (Pitman, 2018). As

evidenced in the titles, two of the books depict Harvey Milk—a San Francisco city supervisor during the 1970s who was the first U.S. elected politician who was openly gay. *Sewing the Rainbow* portrays Gilbert Baker, a designer approached by Harvey Milk to create a new symbol for the LGB(TQ)+ community. Also taking place in San Francisco, *When You Look Out the Window* is a first person account of two female activists. *Sally Ride* is the only depiction of an LGB+ person not residing in northern California. In three of the books (*Harvey Milk Story*, *Pride*, and *When You Look Out the Window*), the person's sexual orientation is central to the book's narrative while the other two texts (*Sewing the Rainbow* and *Sally Ride*) include sexual orientation peripherally to other information. Regardless of how widely the person's sexual orientation is discussed across the book, each of these texts explicitly show youth that LGB+ individuals have existed in, navigated, and contributed to society.

While *Sally Ride* shares her LGB+ sexual orientation as an additional detail to her aeronautic work, the other four biographies exude a sense of LGB+ joy and pride. In *Pride*, *Sewing the Rainbow*, and *When You Look Out the Window*, the book's cover and illustrations are awash with rainbow flags. A particularly striking pagespread in *Pride* shows individuals diverse in age, ability, race, gender, gender performance, and occupation proudly facing the reader while wearing, carrying, or otherwise displaying the flag. Similarly, rainbow flags fill the community in *When You Look Out the Window*. Explicit LGB+ joy is not solely depicted via the rainbow flag. On the second pagespread of *Pride*, two men ride a two-seated bicycle with a sash reading "just married" trailing behind them (Sanders, 2018, n.p.). Multiple same-sex couples embrace and hold hands in city parks and streets across *When You Look Out the Window*. However, joy and pride is not only conveyed in public spaces but also more intimately. For example, while *The Harvey Milk Story* shows the politician riding atop a car in a parade on the book's cover, pages within the narrative show his warm embrace with a male partner along with the words: "Harvey did fall in love and settle down. But the right person was a handsome young man named Joe Campbell" (Krakow, 2002, n.p.). Representations of joy and pride show readers that LGB+ individuals can and have lived lives that are both professionally and personally fulfilling and that such emotions can be publically and privately displayed.

In addition to demonstrating positive experiences, the four books (apart from *Sally Ride*) also show how the focal individual experienced and navigated challenges due to their LGB+ sexual orientation and related work. In *Pride*, Harvey Milk speaks from a stage to a crowd mixed in support. While some onlookers hold signs reading "Straights for Gays" and "Gay Pride", other signs display "Gays Must Go" and "God Says No" (Sanders, 2018, n.p.). However, such resistance did not deter Milk, and as evidence in both *Pride* and *The Harvey Milk Story*, he advocated for various groups including African Americans, senior citizens, and people with disabilities in addition to LGB+ people. In *The Harvey Milk Story*, *When You Look Out the Window*, and *Sewing the Rainbow*, the individuals' personal challenges are

clearly depicted. Harvey Milk and Gilbert Baker are both described as lonely or feeling a sense of not fitting in with others during their childhoods. Having to keep their relationship a secret results in Harvey Milk and Joe Campbell's separation after six years, and Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin are confronted by others in their community as a same-sex couple. In the conclusion of *The Harvey Milk Story*, the politician's assassination by colleague Dan White is mentioned, along with a candlelight vigil and Gay Rights March in Washington D.C. in his memory. Though death is the ultimate retaliation against LGB+ individuals, the book includes an epilogue stating: Milk "showed the world that all people can have their hopes realized" (Krakow, 2002, n.p.). Therefore, these—and many other examples across the biographies—demonstrate to readers that LGB+ individuals encounter both private and public challenges but also navigated those to still experience joy and pride. Such representations are important for all youth to see. For youth who are straight or otherwise aligned with mainstream populations, the books show the past and still present marginalization of LGB+ individuals and may instill a sense of how dominant cultures can have a detrimental impact. For readers who are or question their LGB+ identity, the books show how they may not be alone in experiencing challenges and provide maps for how others navigated hardship.

Unlike the other four books explicitly including the individual's LGB+ sexual orientation in the narrative, *Sewing the Rainbow* relegates such information to the "Reader Note" in the backmatter. As I repeatedly read the biography and noted its focus on the rainbow flag in words and images, I began to realize my categorization of the book as an explicit representation was based on my own familiarity of the rainbow flag as an LGB(TQ)+ symbol. However, nowhere in the narrative itself are the terms "LGBTQ", "gay", or related words used. Nor are any relationships with males other than friendship depicted in words or images. Instead, Baker's "colorful, sparkly, glittery" (Pitman, 2018, n.p.) gender nonconformity are the focus. Although his acquaintances Sylvester, Mama José and her Imperial Court, and "Harvey" are mentioned, their LGB(TQ)+ identities or associations are not revealed. Therefore, unless readers enter into the narrative with familiarity of the LGB(TQ)+ symbols or the specific individuals named, then this biography loses its potential as an explicit representation. Only in the backmatter is there explicit mention of Baker and the rainbow flag as part of the LGB(TQ)+ community. Even then, while Baker's extensive involvement with and contributions to LGB(TQ)+ organizations and efforts are described, his personal LGB+ sexual orientation is unclear. Thus, it's incumbent on readers to read the backmatter and make assumptions which may or may not be fully accurate. Because of the lack of clarity about Baker's own LGB+ sexual orientation, I hesitated categorizing the biography as an explicit representation. However, the use of inclusive pronouns supposedly used by Baker and noted in the backmatter—for example, "*We* need a new logo" when meeting with Harvey Milk and "It's natural to be whomever *we* are, and to love whomever *we* love" (Pitman, 2018, n.p., emphasis added)—led me to interpret Baker as LGB+ identified and

hence I categorized the book as an explicit representation. The construction of Gilbert Baker in *Sewing the Rainbow* shows how differentiating between explicit and non-explicit representations can involve a fine and subjective line.

Through the five explicit representations, readers see an astronaut and various activists who had LGB+ sexual orientations. These biographies have the greatest potential for helping children see that not only do LGB+ individuals exist, but also contribute to society in varied and meaningful ways. The books help children visualize that a person's sexual orientation may or may not be central to their work and can be catalysts for conversations about how people's identities may impact or inspire other aspects of their lives. Regardless of how connected a person's personal and professional lives appear, the books show how lives are multifaceted and that it's possible to be personally and professionally fulfilled—and even externally successful and renowned—as an LGB+ person. On the other hand, although five focal individuals are depicted across the texts, they are largely a homogenous group. All of the focal individuals are white, and all but Sally Ride lived in San Francisco. This homogeneity limits LGB+ representation, perhaps sending the message that to be LGB+ and thrive can only exist in certain ways and spaces. However, LGB+ people diverse in race and context have long existed and are focal subjects in other picturebook biographies, though their non-heterosexual orientation is less explicitly represented.

#### *Reading Between the Lines: Implicit Representations*

With only a few books more than the previous category, nine books from the larger corpus reference individuals' LGB+ sexual orientation but use coded language or illustrations requiring inference: *Rachel: The Story of Rachel Carson* (Ehrlich, 2003); *Uncle Andy's: A Faabbbulous Visit with Andy Warhol* (Warhola, 2003); *Gertrude is Gertrude is Gertrude* (Winter, 2009); *Fabulous! A Portrait of Andy Warhol* (Christensen, 2011); *The Fabulous Flying Machines of Alberto Santos-Dumont* (Griffith, 2011); *The Boy Who Loved Math: The Improbable Life of Paul Erdos* (Heiligman, 2013); *Happy Birthday, Alice Babette* (Kulling, 2016); *Martina & Chrissie: The Greatest Rivalry in the History of Sports* (Bildner, 2017); and *What Do You Do with a Voice Like That? The Story of Extraordinary Congresswoman Barbara Jordan* (Barton, 2018). As I earlier described, it is important to note my categorization of these books and identification of their queer allusions is informed by my own perspective (a gay, cisgender male), and a different reading and interpretation may be conducted by others based on their own experiences, identities, and/or insights (Kubowitz, 2012). Though I read and analyzed the entire corpus with a queer lens, implicit books are where such a reading strategy becomes increasingly evident and necessary. Further, noticing queer allusions in the texts is enhanced by having previous knowledge of the focal individuals' LGB+ sexual orientation and other information about their lives. Without such knowledge about the individuals, readers may miss the implicit details.

Similar to the explicit representations described above, some biographies in this implicit category more clearly depict information than others. The picturebook biographies of Gertrude Stein—*Gertrude is Gertrude is Gertrude is Gertrude* and *Happy Birthday, Alice Babette*—are two implicit examples with coded language and images that are more easily recognizable. In *Gertrude is Gertrude*, the term “companion” is used for Stein and Alice Toklas (Winter, 2009, n.p.). Throughout the book, it is evident the two women cohabit and are a couple: “and Gertrude and Alice are Gertrude and Alice” (n.p.). However, the narrative is constructed so the extent of their relationship is not clear. For example, the text emphasizes the two do not sleep together: “While Alice sleeps, Gertrude is writing [...] And in the morning while Gertrude sleeps, Alice is typing. Alice is typing Gertrude’s writing, whatever it is” (n.p.). This last sentence coupled with the statement from the previous page, “Alice makes sure that Gertrude is happy” (n.p.), shows their symbiotic relationship. However, further blurring of their partnership occurs near the end of the book when Gertrude is described as being “happy as a baby” compared to Alice being “happy as a mother” (n.p.). Thus, while the text reveals a relationship exists, it is left to the reader to discern whether the two women are friends, roommates, parent and child, romantic or physical partners, or another relation. *Happy Birthday, Alice Babette* increasingly constructs the women as “friends” (Kulling, 2016, n.p.). However, one particularly significant implicit detail exists early in the book. Stein and Toklas eat breakfast in the dining room lined with artwork. One portrait depicts Stein thus situating the artwork as personal and connected to the homeowners, and another piece is a woman standing nude. Although the latter artwork does not directly correlate to LGB+ orientation, it may catch the attention of readers looking for potential queer clues.

More implicit than the Gertrude Stein biographies are *What Do You Do with a Voice Like That?* and *Martina and Chrissie*. While both Gertrude Stein and Alice Toklas appeared across the narrative in *Gertrude*, Barbara Jordan’s relationship with Nancy Earl surfaces in one illustration and the backmatter in *Voice Like That*. Though Jordan and Earl’s relationship spanned decades, readers are afforded a single illustration that can only be inferred as the couple. Jordan and a person who appears to be Earl during that time period based on photographs (i.e., White, female, short blonde hair) sit on a bench, their arms touching. However, they are separated by an armrest and seated in opposite directions. The matching narrative simply states, “Barbara would have loved spending more nights under actual stars, camping and singing with her friends, but the public wanted more of her and more from her” (Barton, 2018, n.p.). In the extensive timeline in the backmatter, Earl is named in two of the twenty-two segments: “On a camping trip with mutual friends [in 1968-69], Barbara meets psychologist Nancy Earl, who becomes her lifelong companion” and “Barbara and Nancy begin the process of buying property together and having a home built [in 1975]” (Barton, 2018, n.p.). While to some readers these two details may seem explicit, “companion”—as noted above in *Gertrude*—can be interpreted

in various ways and thus may not be read as a romantic, physical, or otherwise intimate partnership. Similarly, Jerome Pohlen's (2015) *Gay & Lesbian History for Kids: The Century Long Struggle for LGBT Rights* is listed on the final page as one of seven additional references. While the acronym LGBT is clearly evident in the title, it is unclear solely based on this listing if the book includes information about Jordan's own LGB+ sexual orientation, her work for LGB+ rights and individuals, or context more generally about the time period in which she lived and worked.

Increasingly implicit and relegated to the backmatter is Martina Navratilova's LGB+ sexual orientation. *Martina & Chrissie* primarily describes the platonic friendship and various tennis competitions of Navratilova and Chris Evert, but the backmatter includes more information about both women. The backmatter, however, does not explicitly state Navratilova's sexual orientation or having a same-sex companion though it does mention her as "a leading advocate for equality and gay rights" (Bildner, 2017, n.p.). Although this note informs readers of Navratilova's support for LGB+ people, it leaves readers to speculate her sexual orientation. In both *Voice Like That* and *Martina & Chrissie*, readers are required to refer to the backmatter – which they may not read unless strongly interested – for glimpses of implicit details relative to the focal individuals' LGB+ sexual orientation. Even then, the information must be sifted from an abundance of other details about the people's lives.

Four books use single terms, descriptors, or illustrations that might imply the individual's LGB+ sexual orientation. *Uncle Andy's: A Fabulous Visit with Andy Warhol*, *Fabulous! A Portrait of Andy Warhol*, and *The Fabulous Flying Machines of Alberto Santos-Dumont* all include "fabulous" in the title, an expressive word sometimes used stereotypically in the LGB(TQ)+ community (Urban Dictionary, 2017). In the backmatter of their biographies, Santos-Dumont is described as "flamboyant" (Griffith, 2011, n.p.) and Warhol is described as "stonewalling" interviewers (Christensen, 2011, n.p.). The author's selection of "stonewalling" rather than other alternatives may have been a strategic device by the author to allude to Warhol's sexual orientation and the Stonewall Riot, a pivotal moment in LGB(TQ)+ history that occurred in New York City in the 1960s and at the height of Warhol's career (Bronski, 2011). I acknowledge considering "stonewalling" a queer illusion may be a reach. However, this reading is again informed by my own queer reading, especially as someone who yearned for decades for any sign of queerness in texts. Similarly hungry readers may notice such details as well. In *Rachel: The Story of Rachel Carson*, the conservationist has a "summer friend" in Dorothy Freeman (Ehrlich, 2003, n.p.). On the same page as the term, the pair are illustrated as distant, overlapping silhouettes in the woods, signaling to readers there may be something secret about their relationship. The illustration is undoubtedly intimate. In other books, Andy Warhol is depicted as a lonely and often sickly child taunted by his peers and family in *Fabulous* and avant-garde, mysterious, and having male sculptures in his attic in *Uncle Andy's*. In *Improbable Life*, Paul Erdos' description reads, "He wasn't the kind of person to cook or clean or drive

a car or have a wife and children” (Heiligman, 2013, n.p.). The phrase is paired with an illustration of the mathematician consumed in his work at a table in a café. Although Erdos identified as asexual during his life (Csicsery, 1993), his later depiction in the picturebook biography leaves readers to wonder what not being the “kind of person to [...] have a wife and children” might mean. The limited but existing implicit descriptors and illustrations cue readers to the individuals’ LGB+ sexual orientations, or at the very least a different and non-mainstream aspect to how they are perceived by others. Such allusions may be particularly noted by readers yearning for any reflections of queerness—however slight—in the texts they read. On the other hand, such interpretations—whether intended by the book creators or not—again rely heavily on tropes and stereotypes of LGB+ individuals that can be damaging and inaccurate (Crisp, 2018).

Implicit representations make it increasingly difficult to recognize LGB+ individuals exist and contribute to the world. Any statements that could be interpreted as examples of queerness may be easily dismissed or unrecognized. Except for *Gertrude*, the allusions are only available in minute sections of each book and frequently buried in the backmatter. Implicitness and limited information is a disservice to all readers, regardless of their sexual orientation, as it masks information about the focal individuals and reinforces messages that LGB+ sexual orientation is something to hide or be subtle. Citing the longstanding work of scholars who study LGB(TQ)+ texts and their importance, Crisp (2018) asserts,

While it is possible for readers to “queer” many characters in the texts they read (cf., Abate & Kidd, 2011), many literary scholars advocate that creators of children’s books be explicit about the sexual identity of queer-identified characters (Cart & Jenkins, 2006) [...] relying upon readers to queer relationships or successfully interpret subtextual clues intended to signal a character is gay places the brunt of the work on readers’ ability to recognize and interpret such codes (Crisp, Gardner, & Almedia, 2018). Furthermore, it becomes the responsibility of queer-identified readers and their allies to remain vigilant for hints of possible representations, while the experiences of all other readers remain safely “undisturbed” (Boler & Zembylas, 2003; Britzman, 1998). (Crisp, 2018, p. 358)

Implicit representations have long existed in various forms of media (e.g., television, film), and the premise was so that queer audiences could see others similar to themselves while mainstream viewers might remain unaware of the subtext (Benshoff & Griffin, 2006). Although used as a device to reveal queerness in a safer and perhaps less controversial way—and ripe for critical reading of words and illustrations—implicit material also runs the risk of not being understood or seen by those who may need to see such images the most. In other words, queer audiences devoid of queer representations may also be unfamiliar with or unaccustomed to subtextual clues of which they might otherwise be attentive. It is also easier for heterosexual readers to negate sexual orientation and relationships either intentionally or due to lack of knowledge, and this is especially problematic when considering the use of

children's literature by adults with younger readers. As evidenced in this section, some implicit representations are harder to discern than others as a result of heavily coded language and/or images. The final category of texts make recognizing prominent LGB+ individuals outright impossible.

### ***Kept in the Closet: Exclusion of Individuals' LGB+ Identity***

The largest category of the corpus are picturebook biographies that exclude referencing LGB+ sexual orientation. The 37 biographies are listed in Appendix A and include focal subjects such as Langston Hughes, Frida Kahlo, George Washington Carver, and Susan B. Anthony among others. In addition, Rachel Carson—earlier described with an implicit representation—also has excluded LGB+ representations: *Rachel Carson and Her Book That Changed the World* (Lawlor, 2014) and *Spring after Spring: How Rachel Carson Inspired the Environmental Movement* (Sisson, 2018). In biographies with excluded LGB+ representations, no details reference the person's non-heterosexual orientation. Even with a close queer reading, any signs are absent. While some readers might wonder if book creators' omission of individuals' LGB+ sexual orientation is unintentional or based on not knowing such details, research shows how resources cited or recommended for further reading in biographies' backmatter often include these aspects about the person (Crisp, Gardner, & Almeida, 2017). Therefore, it could be argued book creators—authors, illustrators, publishers, and other stakeholders—consciously exclude LGB+ aspects of the person's life, presumably in an attempt to make the book and individual more acceptable for a wider audience and thus reinforcing default notions of focal individuals as heterosexual.

One aspect pervasive across many of the biographies in this category are the inclusion of heterosexual relationships. Though some of the texts depict heterosexuality via the focal individual's parents (e.g., the biographies of George Washington Carver, Langston Hughes, and Susan B. Anthony), other texts highlight the focal individual's own relationships with people of the opposite sex. This is particularly evident in the biographies of Eleanor Roosevelt, Frida Kahlo, Josephine Baker, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Georgia O'Keeffe, Babe Didrikson Zaharias, and Billie Jean King. For example, in *My Itty-Bitty Bio: Eleanor Roosevelt* (Halby, 2016) six of the nine narrative pagespreads depict the human rights leader as coupled with her husband, Franklin, though nothing is stated or alluded to regarding her relationships with women. Similarly, *Josephine: The Dazzling Life of Josephine Baker* (Powell, 2014) details across the narrative the musician's three failed marriages to men. However, the 104-page picturebook provides no content about Baker's relationships with women though the text names someone who was in actuality one of her partners: Caroline Dudley. Beyond describing Dudley as "an elegant white lady" (Powell, 2014, n.p.) and as the person who first invited Baker to perform in Paris, no further information is provided about Dudley or Baker's other same-sex relationships.

Equally if not more concerning are the seven biographies of Frida Kahlo: *Frida* (Winter, 2002); *Frida Kahlo: The Artist Who Painted Herself* (Frith, 2003); *Me, Frida* (Novesky, 2010); *Viva Frida* (Morales, 2014); *Little People, Big Dreams: Frida Kahlo* (Sanchez Vegara, 2016); *Frida Kahlo and her Animalitos* (Brown, 2017); and *My Itty-Bitty Bio: Frida Kahlo* (Devera, 2018). Each of these biographies depict the artist's relationship with Diego Rivera. For example, in *Viva Frida*, one particular illustration shows Rivera kissing Kahlo on the cheek. Their faces and heterosexual relationship literally fill the page, emphasizing opposite sex attraction and love. In *Frida*, Kahlo's relationship with Rivera is not revealed until the backmatter. However, the biographer devotes an entire paragraph to discussing their relationship:

Kahlo's popularity, which has been increasing steadily over the years since her death on July 13, 1954, began to grow when she married the world-renowned Mexican muralist Diego Rivera in 1929. Their personalities were both so colorful, and their love for each other so intense, that their marriage remains one of the most famous of the twentieth century. (Winter, 2002, n.p.)

Although Winter further explains how this was not the sole reason for Kahlo's popularity, and that she was an important example of how to "thrive as a woman in an art world dominated by men" (n.p.), it is nonetheless significant how heterosexuality is revealed and revered. However, Kahlo was known for having relationships with women, her relationship with Rivera was tumultuous, and her art was sometimes symbolic of female attraction and sex (Wilton, 2002). None of these details are explicitly or implicitly represented in any of the six biographies. Thus, multiple picturebook biographies about the same person and sharing similar details reinforce default, heterosexual understandings and a single narrative of Kahlo. Scholars assert the danger of single story representations for any culture or topic (Adichie, 2009; Tschida, Ryan, & Ticknor, 2014). Interrogating how and why heterosexuality is depicted and perpetuated, especially in conjunction with the erasure of LGB+ representation, is a key tenet of queer theory and reading practices (Blackburn & Clark, 2011; Sullivan, 2003).

Another aspect of note relative to heterosexuality in various picturebook biographies in this category is the sexualization of the focal individuals. By sexualization, I mean the depiction of individuals as attracting sexual interest or being a product of sex. Such sexualization is particularly evident in illustrations of the four biographies *Frida Kahlo: The Artist Who Painted Herself* (Frith, 2003), *Bessie Smith and the Night Riders* (Stauffer, 2006), *Jazz Age Josephine* (Winter, 2012), and *Josephine: The Dazzling Life of Josephine Baker* (Powell, 2014). Both Bessie Smith and Josephine Baker are scantily clad as they perform for their audiences. For example, in *Josephine*, Baker's evocative, famous performance at Folies Bergère is described: "the black pearl climbed down a palm tree wearing a skirt of bananas and necklace of shells" (Powell, 2014, n.p.). Equating blackness with sexuality was

a primary allure of audiences to Baker's performances (Strong, 2006). In *Bessie Smith*, it's apparent her performance is largely for a male audience as her arm is outstretched to receive a kiss from one man while on the facing page another man offers her a rose. A different type of sexualization is depicted in *Frida Kahlo*. Kahlo is illustrated as a young child standing naked in the center of the page. She holds an umbilical cord stretching in two directions, enveloping her mother and father poised immediately behind her and framing portraits of her grandparents on opposite sides of the page. Kahlo's mother is shown in the same illustration wearing a white dress, presumably her wedding dress, with a naked infant and umbilical cord inside of her. The depictions across the four books—all about women of color—sexualize the focal individuals and not only further reinforce their heterosexual representations but also provide continued juxtaposition for those who argue about appropriateness in children's literature. In other words, those who would argue depictions of non-heterosexuality are inappropriate for youth while depictions of sexualization are appropriate so long as they serve the reinforcement of heterosexuality.

Last but not least, another aspect of biographies in this category are the inclusion of vague or miscellaneous details about the person's life. For example, in *Zoom In on Trailblazing Athletes: Billie Jean King* (Strand, 2016), the author writes the tennis athlete "has long worked for social change. She supported a law called Title IX. It gives female athletes in schools equal funding to males. She still works to help all people have equal rights" (n.p.). Though not inaccurate and King's efforts for gender equality are mentioned here, there is a direct exclusion of her LGB+ sexual orientation—further reinforced by mention in the backmatter timeline of her marriage and divorce to Larry King—and LGB(TQ)+ activism. Instead, the vague phrase "all people" is used. Beyond vague, *Tommie dePaola* (Woods, 2001) includes miscellaneous details. In a section titled "Tomie at Home", the biographer provides information about the age, style, and contents of dePaola's home:

Tomie lives in a farmhouse in New London, New Hampshire. He turned the 200-year-old barn into a three-story studio. He likes to have lots of space to work and display his collection of early American folk art. His house has three kitchens because Tomie loves to cook. He has six ovens, a grill room, four refrigerators, and three dishwashers! (n.p.)

This paragraph is paired with a photo of dePaola with his four dogs. Although some readers may find these details interesting about the children's book author and illustrator, the information does little to help readers actually connect with the focal individual. Rather, the photograph and paragraph depict dePaola as excessive, and some readers may even wonder why the biographer devoted an entire paragraph to such descriptions at the extent of other information. Knowing such specific details about the home demonstrates the biographer's intimate knowledge of dePaola, so she likely knew about his cohabitation with a male partner—whether as a roommate or other relationship. For example, the biographer noted *Oliver Button is a Sissy*

(dePaola, 1979) was based on his own childhood experiences with gender nonconformity, so it's likely she knew dePaola was gay as well. Therefore, it is evident that dePaola's LGB+ sexual orientation or even queer allusions to such information were intentionally omitted and miscellaneous, extraneous details included in their place. This type of representation shows the extent to which book creators will go to hide information they deem controversial, resulting in robbing youth of representations that could be crucial windows, mirrors, and maps.

In closing, representations excluding individuals' LGB+ sexual orientations are in contrast to the picturebook biographies—and countless other children's literature—that include heterosexuality and depict it as the unquestioned norm (Ryan & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2018; Sapp, 2010). Books in this category, as well as the explicit and implicit representations I earlier describe, all show the existence or impact of relationships in people's lives. People don't exist, and frequently don't succeed, in isolation. They have friendships or partnerships. They sometimes have children of their own. They have parents, siblings, aunts and uncles, or other family members. However, as this largest of the three categories of representation in picturebook biographies reveals, heterosexual relationships are frequently privileged and thus reinforce continued privileging of heterosexuality for readers. In addition, books that exclude individuals' LGB+ sexual orientations keep readers partly in the dark about people with whom they may otherwise be familiar and hide that individuals—whether familiar or new to the reader—are LGB+ and contribute to the world past and present. As a poster created for the National Coming Out Day attests—when it comes to people like Eleanor Roosevelt, Bessie Smith, and others—“Unfortunately, history has set the record a little too straight” (Gay and Lesbian Community Action Council, 1988). In the case of this study, picturebook biographies are frequently a culprit of such history construction.

### Discussion and Future Directions

At its base, I provide in this article a list of picturebook biographies of individuals who were or may now be considered LGB+ due to their romantic, physical, or otherwise intimate relationships. I then explore the biographies further, analyzing and categorizing the books based on how the individuals' LGB+ sexual orientation is depicted—whether explicit, implicit, or excluded—in the narrative and/or peritextual components within the book. It is vital all youth know LGB+ individuals have long existed and contributed to local and/or global communities. While explicit representations clearly share such information, implicit and excluded representations deny readers such information and may perpetuate notions that most, if not all, prominent individuals are heterosexual. Although explicit representations are important for youth who may identify or question their identity as LGB+ so they have mirrors and maps, the representations are equally—if not more—important for heterosexual readers to provide windows and counteract marginalization of

LGB+ people. The texts serve a vital role in making the lives of LGB+ individuals more visible.

As I particularly reflect on the implicit and excluded LGB+ representations within the picturebooks in this study, I consider how the biographies act as *(re)* presentations. Although it may be true that no text—be it a picturebook, lengthier book, documentary film, or other media—can completely convey the life of an individual and all its complexity, producers of texts (e.g., authors, illustrators, publishers, etc...) do consciously decide which aspects to share and to what extent. To intentionally conceal information about a person as a way to make the text and the person more palatable to a wider audience is to re-present them, to not show the person as they are or were but rather to present them in an alternate way. Such alternate depictions are incomplete or inaccurate. The majority of biographies in this study do not represent the focal individuals, they *(re)*present them. The *(re)* presentations thus mold people's understandings in inaccurate or incomplete ways. The actual effects of such *(re)*presentation on readers warrants further exploration as does inquiring into the decision making of those who *(re)*present individuals in texts such as authors, illustrators, and editors.

Returning to the explicit representations, such picturebook biographies not only can serve as maps for youth, they can also serve as guides for book producers for the creation of future texts. The biographies show such representations have been published and the potential in writing, illustration, and distribution. Countless LGB+ people have yet to be depicted in picturebook biographies. The focal individuals in the implicit and excluded representations within this article could be a start, followed by others past and present such as Greek leader Alexander the Great, World War II mathematician Alan Turing, author Virginia Woolf, civil rights leaders Bayard Rustin and James Baldwin, celebrity and activist Ellen DeGeneres, baseball player Glenn Burke, September 11th hero Mark Bingham, and sheriff and former Texas governor nominee Lupe Valdez. Youth deserve and need to see such stories. They shouldn't have to wait until later in life and lengthier texts – if ever – to learn LGB+ people have existed yet remain bombarded with heterosexual depictions from an early age and introductory texts.

In his political campaigns, Harvey Milk often stated, "My name is Harvey Milk, and I'm here to recruit you!" Opponents of LGB(TQ)+ rights such as Anita Bryant targeted this notion of recruitment in conservative, right-wing movements such as the "Save Our Children" campaign, fearing non-heterosexual people as predatory and trying to sway children to become LGB(TQ)+ (Bronski, 2011; Gibson, Alexander, & Meem, 2014). However, LGB(TQ)+ individuals' biographies and their use with young readers is not about recruitment, but rather about developing equity. One way to develop equity is to show LGB(TQ)+ people exist and have contributed to the world in meaningful ways—even in ways young readers, or readers of *all* ages, may know but not have realized fully. Recognizing the presence and contributions of LGB(TQ)+ individuals is important. Equally important is understanding the

individual and social constructions of said individuals in nonfiction, especially if the individuals are positioned as models and mentors for youth. When considering how individuals are represented through images and words in picturebook biographies, it is imperative to ask: Who's out, who's in, and what are the implications of their (re)presentations?

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> I focus in this article on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and other non-heterosexual orientations (LGB+). I use the plus sign to include non-heterosexual orientations, realizing some people don't identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual and historically people may not have used such terms either. My emphasis on sexual orientation is to focus the study. I honor that the experiences and representations of transgender, gender non-conforming, and/or other gender queer individuals also warrant crucial attention.

<sup>2</sup> I use "picturebook" rather than "picture book" as the former describes texts in which images and words are symbiotic, relying on one another for meaning, whereas the latter term represents texts in which illustrations primarily mimic words on the page and provide little additional meaning or opportunity for interpretation (Reynolds, 2011, p. 57).

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## Appendix A

Focal individuals are listed alphabetically.

Biographies are listed chronologically by publication date for each focal individual.

Individual	Race or Ethnicity	Occupation	Picturebook Biography	Author	Publisher	Type of LGB+ Representation
Susan B. Anthony	White	social activist	<i>First Biographies: Susan B. Anthony</i>	Rustad, Martha	Capstone Press, 2002	Excluded
			<i>Susan B. Anthony: Fighter for Freedom and Equality</i>	Slade, Suzanne Buckingham	Picture Window Books, 2007	Excluded
			<i>Marching with Aunt Susan: Susan B. Anthony and the Fight for Women's Suffrage</i>	Murphy, Claire Rudolf	Peachtree, 2011	Excluded
			<i>Heart on Fire: Susan B. Anthony Votes for President</i>	Malaspina, Ann	Albert Whitman & Company, 2012	Excluded
			<i>Susan B. Anthony</i>	Wallner, Alexandra	Holiday House, 2012	Excluded
			<i>Friends for Freedom: The Story of Susan B. Anthony &amp; Frederick Douglass</i>	Slade, Suzanne	Charlesbridge, 2014	Excluded
			<i>Susan B. Anthony: Pioneering Leader of the Women's Rights Movement</i>	Penn, Barbra	Rosen Education Service, 2015	Excluded
			<i>Two Friends: Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass</i>	Robbins, Dean	Orchard Books, 2016	Excluded
			<i>My Itty-Bitty Bio: Susan B. Anthony</i>	Spiller, Sara	Cherry Lake, 2019	Excluded

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## Appendix A (continued)

<i>Individual</i>	<i>Race or Ethnicity</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Picturebook Biography</i>	<i>Author</i>	<i>Publisher</i>	<i>Type of LGB+ Representation</i>
Gilbert Baker	White	artist, social activist	<i>Sewing the Rainbow: A Story about Gilbert Baker</i>	Pitman, Gayle E.	Magination Press, 2018	Explicit
Josephine Baker	Black	musician, dancer, and military spy, health worker, and performer	<i>Jazz Age Josephine</i>	Winter, Jonah	Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2012	Excluded
			<i>Josephine: The Dazzling Life of Josephine Baker</i>	Powell, Patricia Hruby	Chronicle, 2014	Excluded
			<i>Little People, Big Dreams: Josephine Baker</i>	Sanchez Vegara, Isabel	Lincoln Children's Books, 2018	Excluded
Rachel Carson	White	scientist, writer	<i>Rachel: The Story of Rachel Carson</i>	Ehrlich, Amy	Harcourt, 2003	Implicit
			<i>Rachel Carson and Her Book that Changed the World</i>	Lawlor, Laurie	Holiday House, 2014	Excluded
			<i>Spring after Spring: How Rachel Carson Inspired the Environmental Movement</i>	Sisson, Stephanie Roth	Roaring Brook Press, 2018	Excluded
George Washington Carver	Black	scientist	<i>George Washington Carver: Teacher, Scientist, and Inventor</i>	Mortensen, Lori	Picture Window Books, 2007	Excluded
			<i>Famous African Americans: George Washington Carver, Scientist and Inventor</i>	McKissack, Patricia & McKissack, Fredrick	Enslow Elementary, 2013	Excluded
			<i>National Geographic Readers: George Washington Carver</i>	Jazyanka, Kitson	National Geographic Children's Books, 2016	Excluded
			<i>George Washington Carver: Botanist and Inventor</i>	Boone, Mary	Capstone Press, 2018	Excluded
			<i>My Itty-Bitty Bio: George Washington Carver</i>	Marsico, Katie	Cherry Lake, 2019	Excluded

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## Appendix A (continued)

<i>Individual</i>	<i>Race or Ethnicity</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Picturebook Biography</i>	<i>Author</i>	<i>Publisher</i>	<i>Type of LGB+ Representation</i>
Tommie dePaola	White	author, illustrator	<i>Children's Authors: Tommie dePaola</i>	Woods, Mae	Checkerboard Library, 2001	Excluded
			<i>First Biographies: Tomie dePaola</i>	Braun, Eric Mark	Capstone, 2005	Excluded
Ralph Waldo Emerson	White	writer	<i>A Home for Mr. Emerson</i>	Kerley, Barbara	Scholastic, 2014	Excluded
Paul Erdos	White	mathematician	<i>The Boy Who Loved Math: The Improbable Life</i>	Heiligman, Deborah	Roaring Brook Press, 2013	Implicit
Langston Hughes	Black	writer	<i>Visiting Langston</i>	Perdomo, Willie	Square Fish, 2002	Excluded
Barbara Jordan	Black	politician, professor	<i>What Do You Do With a Voice Like That?: The Story of Extraordinary Congresswoman Barbara Jordan</i>	Barton, Chris	Beach Lane Books, 2018	Implicit
Frida Kahlo	Hispanic	visual artist	<i>Frida</i>	Winter, Jonah	Arthur A. Levine Books, 2002	Excluded
			<i>Frida Kahlo: The Artist who Painted Herself</i>	Frith, Margaret	Grosset & Dunlap-Penguin, 2003	Excluded
			<i>Me, Frida</i>	Novesky, Amy	Abrams, 2010	Excluded
			<i>Viva Frida</i>	Morales, Yuyi	Roaring Brook Press, 2014	Excluded
			<i>Little People, Big Dreams: Frida Kahlo</i>	Sanchez Vegara, Isabel	Frances Lincoln, 2016	Excluded
			<i>Frida Kahlo and Her Animalitos</i>	Brown, Monica	NorthSouth Books, 2017	Excluded
			<i>My Itty-Bitty Bio: Frida Kahlo</i>	Devera, Czeena	Cherry Lake, 2018	Excluded
Billie Jean King	White	athlete	<i>Zoom in on Trailblazing Athletes: Billie Jean King</i>	Strand, Jennifer	Abdo Zoom, 2016	Excluded

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## Appendix A (continued)

<i>Individual</i>	<i>Race or Ethnicity</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Picturebook Biography</i>	<i>Author</i>	<i>Publisher</i>	<i>Type of LGB+ Representation</i>
Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin	White	social activists	<i>When You Look Out the Window: How Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin Built a Community</i>	Pitman, Gayle E.	Magination Press, 2017	Explicit
Harvey Milk	White	business owner, politician	<i>The Harvey Milk Story</i>	Krakow, Kari	Bobbie Combs, 2002	Explicit
			<i>Pride: The Story of Harvey Milk and the Rainbow Flag</i>	Sanders, Rob	Random House Books for Young Readers, 2018	Explicit
Martina Navratilova	White	athlete	<i>Martina &amp; Chrissie: The Greatest Rivalry in the History of Sports</i>	Bildner, Phil	Candlewick, 2017	Implicit
Georgia O'Keefe	White	visual artist	<i>My Name is Georgia</i>	Winter, Jeanette	Silver Whistle, 1998	Excluded
			<i>Through Georgia's Eyes</i>	Rodriguez, Rachel Victoria	Henry Holt & Company, 2006	Excluded
Sally Ride	White	astronaut	<i>Sally Ride: The First American Woman in Space</i>	Baby Professor	Speedy Publishing, 2017	Explicit
Eleanor Roosevelt	White	social activist	<i>My Itty-Bitty Bio: Eleanor Roosevelt</i>	Haldy, Emma E.	Cherry Lake, 2016	Excluded
Alberto Santos-Dumont	Brazilian	inventor, aviator	<i>The Fabulous Flying Machines of Alberto Santos-Dumont</i>	Griffith, Victoria	Abrams, 2011	Implicit
Maurice Sendak	White	author, illustrator	<i>First Biographies: Maurice Sendak</i>	Braun, Eric Mark	Capstone, 2005	Excluded
Bessie Smith	Black	musician	<i>Bessie Smith and the Night Riders</i>	Stauffer, Sue	G.P. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers, 2006	Excluded
Gertrude Stein and Alice Toklas	White	writers	<i>Gertrude is Gertrude is Gertrude is Gertrude</i>	Winter, Jonah	Atheneum, 2009	Implicit
			<i>Happy Birthday, Alice Babette</i>	Kulling, Monica	Groundwood, 2016	Implicit

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## Appendix A (continued)

<i>Individual</i>	<i>Race or Ethnicity</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Picturebook Biography</i>	<i>Author</i>	<i>Publisher</i>	<i>Type of LGB+ Representation</i>
Andy Warhol	White	visual artist	<i>Uncle Andy's: A Faabbbulous Visit with Andy Warhol</i>	Warhola, James	G.P. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers, 2003	Implicit
			<i>Fabulous! A Portrait of Andy Warhol</i>	Christensen, Bonnie	Henry Holt, 2011	Implicit
Babe Didrikson Zaharias	White	athlete	<i>Babe Didrikson Zaharias: All-Around Athlete</i>	Sutcliffe, Jane	Carolrhoda Books, 2000	Excluded