Sarah E. Wall, How Youth Services Librarians in North Carolina are Working to Serve LGBTQ+ Youth. A Master's Paper for the M.S. in L.S. degree. May, 2021. 53 pages. Advisor: Sandra Hughes-Hassell

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe the work being done by youth services librarians in North Carolina who are actively working to serve LGBTQ+ youth. This study aims to answer three research questions: 1) How are youth service librarians in North Carolina working to serve LGBTQ+ youth? 2) What information are they using to make decisions about these services? 3) How do they assess these services? Through content analysis of data collected through semi-structured interviews, this study illuminates the services offered by these librarians for LGBTQ+ youth and the process they use to inform and assess those services. The findings have implications for youth services librarians looking to improve their services for LGBTQ+ youth as well as for educators and professional organizations aiming to create or improve existing training opportunities for youth services librarians about serving LGBTQ+ youth in the library.

Headings:

Public libraries

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LGBTQ+ library materials

HOW YOUTH SERVICES LIBRARIANS IN NORTH CAROLINA ARE WORKING
TO SERVE LGBTQ+ YOUTH

by

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Table of Contents

Introduction

Many public libraries include in their mission statement that they aim to serve the information needs of all patrons and make everyone feel welcome in the library (Crawford Barniskis, 2016). The Young Adult Library Services Association's (YALSA) mission statement is to "support library staff…in putting all teens – especially those with the greatest needs – on the path to successful and fulfilling lives" (n.d.). If libraries aim to serve all library patrons, this means that they need to be working to serve LGBTQ+ youth. Surveys have found that fifteen percent or approximately one in six youth identify as a member of the LGBTQ+ community, and this fifteen percent figure is likely smaller than reality as not all LGBTQ+ teens feel comfortable disclosing their identity in a survey. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019). Statistically speaking, these numbers show that whether or not a librarian is aware of LGBTQ+ youth in their community, they are certainly serving some LGBTQ+ youth.

Winkelstein (2019) defines the term welcoming as "having one's presence enthusiastically anticipated, with thoughtful attention to specific needs. It is not the same as tolerance, acceptance, or inclusion. In a welcoming library atmosphere, each person who enters feels comfortable and wanted" (p. 207). This definition highlights the importance of actively working to support LGBTQ+ youth rather than taking a neutral stance or treating all patrons the same. Treating all patrons the same overlooks the ways in which libraries are inaccessible to some users and the additional barriers some users

face (Winkelstein, 2019). Additionally, we live in a heteronormative society, meaning that "our society is based around the idea that everyone is heterosexual and cisgender, and anyone who is not is deviating from what is considered normal" (Pennell, 2017, p. 65). This systemic heteronormativity influences everyone, so librarians who take a neutral stance rather than identifying and pushing back against heteronormativity will perpetuate the othering of LGBTQ+ individuals within the library (Pennell, 2017). In order to fulfill the needs of LGBTQ+ youth and make them feel welcome in the library, we need to take an equity-based approach to ensure that LGBTQ+ patrons feel welcome in the library by actively working to dismantle power structures harmful to LGBTQ+ youth, figure out their needs, and incorporate the fulfillment of those needs into our services.

Improving library services for LGBTQ+ youth can be a life-saving practice. LGBTQ+ youth are at an increased risk to face many challenges, including discrimination, bullying, harassment, and homelessness, all of which are factors that contribute to higher incidences of adverse outcomes in school, mental illnesses, self-harming behaviors, and suicide. (Kann et al., 2016; Kosciw et al., 2018; Winkelstein, 2019). Having any sort of accepting space and accepting adult has been shown to improve these outcomes (Koehler, 2011; Kosciw et al., 2018; Oltmann, 2016). Additionally, librarians who showcase the LGBTQ+ experience are able to enrich the library through queer cultural capital, or the strengths, behaviors, and knowledge people gain by being a part of the LGBTQ+ community (Pennell, 2017). Also, LGBTQ+ teens who feel safe and welcome in the library are more likely to participate in library activities

and contribute to the library through their creativity and engagement (Oltmann, 2016; Winkelstein, 2019).

Having established that libraries need to work actively to serve LGBTQ+ youth, it is essential to understand how librarians can and are doing this work. While professional organizations, such as YALSA, and LIS researchers have made recommendations about providing services and making libraries welcoming for LGBTQ+ youth, there is still not a lot known about what service for LGBTQ+ youth looks like in a typical public library and if librarians are reading and following researcher's recommendations. The majority of research on library services for LGBTQ+ youth has been done regarding school libraries, focusing on their collections and how they can be involved in making a school environment safer and more supportive for LGBTQ+ youth. While less research has been done on public libraries, public libraries have a significant potential to improve the experiences of LGBTQ+ youth. Since LGBTQ+ youth may face judgment or harassment at home and school, having a separate place that can serve as a safe place to learn and form community can have a significant impact. Brown and Linton (2019) posit that youth services librarians "have a unique opportunity to offer a welcoming, nonjudgmental space for teenagers during these 'growing up' years. YA librarians are neither parent nor teacher, so they are uniquely poised to be a neutral adult ally" (p. 151-2). This potential ability to create a safe space for LGBTQ+ youth highlights the need for more research about services for LGBTQ+ youth in the public library.

In order to learn more about what public librarians are doing to serve LGBTQ+ youth and the processes they use to inform and assess those services, I conducted a phenomenological study comprised of semi-structured interviews aimed at describing the

work being done by youth services librarians in North Carolina who are actively

working to serve LGBTQ+ youth. My findings have implications for youth services

librarians looking to improve their services for LGBTQ+ youth and professional

organizations seeking to improve their training and professional development

opportunities related to helping youth services librarians better serve LGBTQ+ youth.

Literature Review

In order to best serve LGBTQ+ youth, we first need to understand what needs LGBTQ+ youth have and what barriers stand in the way of them fulfilling those needs.

Needs

In many cases, the needs of LGBTQ+ youth are quite similar to their straight and cisgender counterparts; however, these needs are not currently being met by LGBTQ+ teenagers' schools and families, which are young people's primary sources for information and identity formation. Since many schools and parents are unknowledgeable about or unsupportive of the LGBTQ+ community and LGBTQ+-related topics, many LGBTQ+ youth struggle to find the information and support they need (Houde, 2018; Kosciw et al., 2018).

Representation

Representation is essential for young people. When young people don't see themselves represented in media, they receive the message that they are not valued by society or that they are seen as deviant or abnormal (Bishop, 1990; Houde, 2018). Currently, 92% of LGBTQ+ youth report not feeling represented by mainstream culture (Ray, 2020). Alternatively, representation can affirm to young people that they are "accepted, honored, and a part of society" (Houde, 2018, p. 36). Bishop (1990) posits a

theory of representation in fiction serving as windows and mirrors. Seeing

yourself represented in media serves as a mirror reflecting your own experiences. This

perspective helps young people understand that they are not alone and can provide

examples of people experiencing and overcoming similar challenges, provide role

models, and show positive outcomes, inspiring hope when one doesn't see that hope in

their own lives. LGBTQ+ youth also need to see themselves in history. Learning about

LGBTQ+ history, including LGBTQ+ civil rights efforts and notable LGBTQ+ historical

figures, provides LGBTQ+ youth context for what is happening now and historical

figures to serve as inspiration and role models. (Houde, 2018).

Bishop (1990) also explains that representation can serve as a window into

different cultures and experiences, which helps people build empathy and better

understand experiences different than their own. Malo-Juvera (2016) found that a unit in

a middle school English class where students read and discussed the book *Geography

Club* by Brent Hartinger, which features multiple LGBTQ+ characters, noticeably

reduced homophobia among the students. Additionally, representation can serve as a

means of counter storytelling, meaning that telling the stories of marginalized identities

can show to the majority that all members of that group are not a monolith and can push

back against harmful stereotypes (Hughes-Hassell, 2013).

Information Needs

LGBTQ+ youth often need sexual health information. Many students struggle to

get the sexual health education they need from school, especially schools teaching

abstinence-only curriculums (Levine, 2002; Marshall, 2016). This problem is even more

significant for LGBTQ+ youth, whose identities are often not acknowledged in

sex education classes (Kosciw et al., 2018; Roberts et al., 2020). In a study about the

experiences of LGBTQ+ students of color in sexual health education, many students

expressed that they felt the "lessons did not apply to their sexual and romantic

experiences" and reported wanting "more clarification about the mechanics of sexual

encounters between partners with similar anatomy, relevant safe sex methods (e.g., finger

condoms, dental dams), obtaining mutual consent in nonheteronormative experiences,

and how individuals realize their own identity" (Roberts et al., 2020, p. 5). Additionally,

many of the participating students reported that their classmates, teachers, or school

environments made them feel unsafe asking questions related to LGBTQ+ topics in their

sex education class, so they could not ask for the additional information they

needed (Roberts et al., 2020).

LGBTQ+ youth also have information needs regarding local resources and

policies. For instance, transgender and non-binary youth may need assistance finding

LGBTQ+-inclusive healthcare and understanding legal policies related to name and

gender-identification changes. In addition, LGBTQ+ youth need information about

community resources available to them, such as local LGBTQ+ centers or activist groups

(Houde, 2018; Winkelstein, 2019).

Safety and Support

In addition to needing information about and representation of the LGBTQ+

community and LGBTQ+-related topics, LGBTQ+ youth need supportive and safe

environments, which they often lack in other areas of their lives. Winkelstein (2019)

looked at the needs of LGBTQ+ youth experiencing homelessness. These youth

expressed that they needed a place to feel safe. Safety to them meant not just physical

safety but also the emotional safety of being accepted, respected, and acknowledged. To

feel safe and supported, LGBTQ+ youth need a safe place to stay, both to sleep at night

and somewhere to go during the day where they won't be in danger. They need safe

schools and communities free of harassment, bullying, and discrimination and more than

just the pocket of safety provided by a welcoming organization such as an LGBTQ+

center or school Gay-Straight Alliance. They need caring and respectful adults to support

and advocate for them and someone to help educate their families on the LGBTQ+

community (Craig et al., 2018; Winkelstein, 2019).

Opportunities for Identity Formation

Finally, LGBTQ+ youth and youth questioning their sexuality or gender identity

need a safe and supportive environment to explore their identities. Adolescence is a time

when young adults are going through the process of self-discovery and exploration as

they work to understand and define their personal identities and their place in the world.

Teenagers undergoing this process of identity formation need support and opportunities

to safely explore their identities without the fear of rejection or discrimination (Hughes-

Hassell & Hinckley, 2001; Zimmerman, 2020). Many LGBTQ+ and questioning youth

do not receive this support from their families, friends, schools, and communities and

may not know any other LGBTQ+ people to turn to for guidance (Hughes-Hassell &

Hinckley, 2001; Kosciw et al., 2018). Young people need education about different

LGBTQ+ identities as they work to understand and define their own identities and the

opportunity to socialize with other LGBTQ+ people (Roberts et al., 2020). LGBTQ+ organizations offer these opportunities for LGBTQ+ youth to connect with LGBTQ+ peers and role models. Still, it may be difficult for teens to find or access these resources, and not all teens feel safe going to an LGBTQ+ center due to potential risks if their families or communities find out they went and are not supportive. Libraries can help support LGBTQ+ youth's need to learn more about LGBTQ+ identities and interact with other LGBTQ+ people by having books with LGBTQ+ representation, resources available about local LGBTQ+ organizations, and links to websites that provide information about LGBTQ+ identities and allow for social interaction. In addition, librarians have the opportunity to foster this self-discovery within the library by making their library somewhere safe for mentorships, peer connections, and opportunities for creativity and expression to happen (Hughes-Hassell & Hinckley, 2001; Zimmerman, 2020).

Barriers

In addition to understanding the informational and developmental needs of LGBTQ+ youth, it is helpful to know what barriers stand in the way of LGBTQ+ youth having these needs met. Understanding these barriers will allow librarians to identify them in their libraries and work to minimize their impact or eliminate the barriers entirely.

Privacy

While the library has a great potential to serve as a place where LGBTQ+ youth can fulfill their information needs, a lack of privacy in a library can present a significant barrier. The ALA Policy Manual defines the right to privacy as "the right to open inquiry without having the subject of one's interest examined or scrutinized by others" and emphasizes that "protecting user privacy and confidentiality is necessary for intellectual freedom and fundamental to the ethics and practice of librarianship" (American Library Association, 2019, p. 16). Privacy is paramount for LGBTQ+ youth who may be fearful of potential consequences should other people in their community suspect that they may be part of the LGBTQ+ community. This can create a conflict of needs within the library. While a display of LGBTQ+ fiction has the potential to be incredibly affirming for LGBTQ+ youth and show that they are welcome in the library, it also has the potential to make other LGBTQ+ youth uncomfortable interacting with those displays out of fear of people making assumptions about them. LGBTQ+ youth may prefer to use self-checkout and submit reference questions that involve LGBTQ+ topics online to remain anonymous and maintain their privacy (Jardine, 2013; Pierson, 2017; Winkelstein, 2019).

Perceived Risks from Librarians

In addition to needing privacy from other patrons, LGBTQ+ youth may be hesitant to bring their information needs to librarians out of fear of a negative response. Unless librarians have some sort of physical indication that they are supportive of the LGBTQ+ community, such as displaying a Safe Zone training sign or wearing a pronoun pin, LGBTQ+ youth do not have a way to determining whether or not a librarian will be

welcoming to LGBTQ+ patrons before interacting with that librarian (Jardine, 2013; Pierson, 2017). Curry (2005) conducted a study where a teenager went to twenty different public library desks and asked the librarian for assistance finding LGBTQ+ fiction for a high school Gay-Straight Alliance. In this study, about half of the respondents were positive and helpful, but three of the librarians were upset by the question and unwilling to help.

Additionally, the remaining third of librarians in Curry's (2005) study were not openly hostile but were uncomfortable addressing this topic or not knowledgeable enough to provide relevant materials. While these study results are not generalizable to the general population of librarians, they highlight that LGBTQ+ youth often do not know how a librarian will react when presented with a question related to the LGBTQ+ community and if they will be able to provide relevant information. Chatman's (1996) theory of information poverty states that people experience information poverty "due to a sense of mistrust regarding the interest or ability of others to provide useful information" and the "perception that negative consequences outweigh benefits" when asking for assistance in finding information (p. 197). Since LGBTQ+ youth do not know that librarians will be knowledgeable enough about LGBTQ+ topics and materials or if they will react with hostility to being asked, LGBTQ+ youth may be hesitant to go to librarians with their information needs (Jardine, 2013; Lingel & Boyd, 2013; Pierson, 2017).

Barriers to Access and Information Seeking

Jardine (2013) looks at the barriers to access and information seeking for LGBTQ+ people with a focus on transgender patrons, including a lack of relevant information, geography, censorship, subject headings and cataloging, and internet filtering. Not all libraries have resources in their collections that have the representation LGBTQ+ youth are looking for or reference materials to address information needs LGBTQ+ youth have. This can be especially true for rural libraries, which may not have the funding to buy as many new young adult books, which have more LGBTQ+ representation, and in conservative areas. Koehler (2011) found that in North Carolina, LBGTQ+-themed books only make up "0.24% of the average traditional public high school collection" (p. 16).

Censorship can also present a significant barrier in LGBTQ+ youth finding the materials they need within a collection. In 2017, four of the ten most challenged books of the year were challenged due to their inclusion of LGBTQ+ characters (Frick et al., 2018). There have also been numerous examples of both community and staff challenges to library displays featuring LGBTQ+ representation (Jardine, 2013). Librarians have also been found to engage in self-censorship of LGBTQ+ materials. Oltmann (2016) interviewed thirty-one school librarians to discuss their perspectives on serving LGBTQ+ youth and collecting LGBTQ+ materials. All the librarians involved with the study said they wanted to support LGBTQ+ youth within their library, and none of these librarians had personally faced a challenge of LGBTQ+ materials. However, many of them reported that they had self-censored materials by not collecting certain LGBTQ+ materials because they were concerned that parents or administrators might object to the books.

Challenges from external parties and the censoring of collections and displays

done by librarians create more barriers for LGBTQ+ youth looking for representation

within a collection (Jardine, 2013; Oltmann, 2016; Pierson, 2017).

In addition, it can be challenging for users to find the books with LGBTQ+

representation that the library does have because of the subject headings in the catalog.

Library of Congress and other subject headings have been slow to keep up with LGBTQ+

terminology, leading to a lack of consistency and accuracy in subject headings. Because

of this, it can be challenging to do research on LGTBQ+ topics and find books in the

collection with LGBTQ+ representation (Jardine, 2013; Pierson, 2017).

This lack of relevant materials and the challenges in identifying those materials

within the library likely contributes to the fact that most LGBTQ+ youths turn to the

Internet as their primary method of fulfilling their information needs. The Internet

provides the additional benefits of increased anonymity and having the most up-to-date

information. However, LGBTQ+ youth may struggle to find the information they need

about LGBTQ+ topics on library computers. Many schools and public libraries are

required to put filters on the Internet in compliance with the Children's Internet

Protection Act (CIPA) to protect children from age-inappropriate content such as

pornography (Jardine, 2013; Pierson, 2017). The problem with these filters is that they

can stand as a barrier for LGBTQ+ people searching for information about different

gender and sexual orientations as "the software equates gender identity, sexual

orientation, and sexual health with pornography" (Jardine, 2013, p. 254). In order to

contend with the limitations of these filters, libraries should look into the category

descriptions in the software to minimize the extent to which they restrict age-appropriate

information about the LGBTQ+ community and publicize how adults can turn off filters if that is allowed under the library's local legislation. If these measures are not taken, internet filters can significantly restrict the access that LGBTQ+ youth have to relevant materials on the Internet (Jardine, 2013; Pierson, 2017).

Library policies and facilities can also pose a significant barrier for LGBTQ+ youth attempting to fulfill their information needs within the library. Transgender and non-binary individuals may face harassment or violence when using a gender-specific bathroom if others do not perceive them as matching that gender designation. Due to this, libraries without a gender-neutral bathroom can pose a risk for transgender and non-binary patrons and can limit how long they're able to spend at the library (Jardine, 2013). In addition, since up to forty percent of youth experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ+, it is also necessary to consider the barriers created by policies that limit library access for people experiencing homelessness. Rules against things such as carrying multiple bags or sleeping in the library can create barriers for LGBTQ+ youth experiencing homelessness and send the message that they are not welcome in the library. These policies are especially troubling considering that LGBTQ+ youth experiencing homelessness may rely even more heavily on library resources and computers for access to information (Winkelstein, 2019).

Research Questions and Key Terms

This study aims to answer three research questions: 1) How are youth service librarians in North Carolina working to serve LGBTQ+ youth? 2) What information are they using to make decisions about these services? 3) How do they assess these services? The following key terms are central to this research:

- **Youth Services librarian**: The American Library Association defines a young adult librarian as a librarian who "caters to the needs of the teen population, ages 12 to 18" (2016). For the purposes of this study, I am using the term youth services to mean any librarian who works in a public library and works with teenagers. I did not require that the participants in my study have a Master of Science in Library Science as many people who work in teen services do not. I also did not require that my participants only work with teens as many librarians have roles that overlap with other age groups.

- **LGBTQ+ youth**: LGBTQ is an initialism for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning and is written in numerous ways to include additional identities, such as LGBTQIA, which adds intersex, aromantic, and asexual identities. Regardless of how it is written, this initialism is meant to serve as an umbrella term that captures the community of people with marginalized sexual orientations and gender

identities. I have decided to write this term as LGBTQ+,

including the plus sign to capture queer sexualities and gender identities

not covered in either the acronym of LGBTQ or LGBTQIA (Mehra,

2019). I am defining youth as ages 12-18 in line with the ALA definition

of young adult services. Altogether this term refers to twelve through

eighteen-year-olds who identify as being a part of the LGBTQ+

community.

- **Services**: The International Federation of Library Associations and

    Institutions posits the following guidelines for public library services:

    > "Public libraries provide a range of services, both within the library and in the community, to satisfy their users' needs. The library should facilitate access to its services for all, including those who have difficulty reading print. The following services, which should be easily accessible to the user in a variety of formats and media, should be provided: loan of books and other media, provision of books and other materials for use in the library, information services using print and electronic media, readers' advisory services including reservation services, community information services, user education including support for literacy programmes, and programming and events. This is not an exhaustive list but an indication of some of the key services of the public library" (Gill, 2001, p. 25-6)

    More generally, I am defining services as any means through which

    librarians provide for their patrons and broader communities.

- **Library Assessment**: I am defining this term as the processes through

    which librarians work to learn about the needs of their users and non-

    users, evaluate how their services support those needs, and consider

    methods through which they could improve their services to support their

    community (Lakos, 2002).

Methodology

The purpose of this research is to gain a better understanding of what services are being provided for LGBTQ+ youth in public libraries in North Carolina and the processes through which librarians inform and assess these services. A qualitative phenomenological approach was most appropriate for this research as I was interested in gaining a profound, in-depth understanding of these services as well as the processes informing them and the context surrounding them. The resulting description of these services fill a gap of research as there is little research into how public librarians in North Carolina are providing for LGBTQ+ youth.

Positionality / Researcher Role

I was the sole researcher for this study, so I was responsible for all elements of the study, including recruiting participants, designing the interview guide, conducting the interviews, transcribing the interviews, and analyzing the resulting data. I was motivated to conduct this study as I believe that libraries are not neutral and that in order to fulfill the goal of making libraries welcoming to everyone and serving all of our patron's needs, we need to put additional energy into serving communities who are marginalized in our society and by library services. Specifically, I believe young adult librarians should be designing services to fulfill the information needs of LGBTQ+ youth and working to make LGBTQ+ youth feel welcome in the library because they are not having their

information needs met or being made to feel safe and welcome in other areas of

their lives. In addition, library service has historically been heteronormative and has not

met the information needs of LGBTQ+ youth or made them feel safe and welcome and

often continues to fail to meet these needs. In order to right this wrong, I believe that

librarians should be actively working to ensure that LGBTQ+ youth have their needs met

by the library and feel welcome in the library in order to fulfill the library mission

statement of serving all members of our communities.

Sample / Research Participants

I used a mixture of convenience and purposive sampling to recruit my population:

young adult librarians in North Carolina. From this population, I focused on librarians

who actively work to serve their LGBTQ+ patrons or who reached out to me about being

interested in discussing this subject with me. My intended sample size was between five

to ten participants, and I ended up conducting five interviews. To do this sampling, I

asked Jasmine Rockwell, the Youth Services Consultant at the North Carolina State

Library, to send out a recruitment email to youth services librarians in North Carolina. In

my recruitment email, I included the requirements for participants, information about my

study, and a request for participants actively working to serve LGBTQ+ youth. See

Appendix B for this recruitment email. I received three responses from this request and

sent each respondent a follow-up email with a document attached that provided more

information about how the study would work. See Appendix C for this study information

document. After confirming that the respondents were still interested in participating in

the study after reading through this information, I conducted interviews with all

three respondents.

All three of these respondents were from smaller, rural library systems, so after

conducting those three interviews, I wanted to find a few participants from larger, urban

library systems. By doing so, I aimed to get a more balanced look at the libraries present

in North Carolina and see if there would be any differences in responses from librarians

working in urban versus rural library systems. To find my final two participants, I

reached out to several youth services librarians from urban library systems, who I knew

were working to serve LGBTQ+ youth based on information I had from library contacts

or through information on their library's website, to ask if they would be interested in

participating in my study.

Data Collection Methods

I conducted this study using semi-structured interviews over Zoom. I conducted

the interviews over Zoom rather than in-person at the participant's library due to many

libraries currently being closed and safety concerns stemming from the Covid-19

Pandemic. After obtaining the participants' permission, I recorded these interviews on

Zoom to prevent a loss of data. I created an interview guide with pre-written questions

organized by topic to focus the interview around my central research questions. I

included an overview of my research in my recruitment email but did not include the

interview guide in advance, so I had the flexibility to adjust my questions as needed

during the interviews. I had my interview guide with me during all of my interviews, but

altered the wording and order of my questions, omitted questions, and added follow-up

questions as needed to adapt to my participants' responses or explore

unexpected, relevant topics brought up by a participant. Please see Appendix A for my

interview guide.

Data Analysis Methods

The first step of my data analysis was to create transcriptions of my interview

recordings. Zoom recordings have a transcription function built into them, which I used

to get a rough version of the transcription. I then went through each transcription while

listening to the recording to clean up any errors made in the automated transcription

process. I used qualitative iterative coding to organize the results into categories based on

reoccurring themes. I created my own coding guide based on my raw data. Rather than

waiting until I finished all of my interviews, I began coding after the first one and

adjusted my codes as I went so that the major themes incorporated all of the interview

findings.

Findings

In order to protect the anonymity of my interview participants, I have assigned each interview participant a letter and will only be providing their job title and a general description of their library setting. Librarians A, B, and C in my study all work in small public libraries that are a part of rural library systems. Librarians D and E work at branch libraries in larger, urban library systems. Only one librarian I spoke to, Librarian D, self-identified as being part of the LGBTQ+ community. Librarians A and B are youth services librarians who serve all children under the age of 18. Librarian C is an outreach and programming librarian, who works with all age groups but focuses primarily on ages 13 to 28. Librarians D and E are both teen librarians.

Collections

Only two of the five librarians I spoke to were responsible for managing their own collection development. Both of these librarians mentioned that they worked to make sure their collections were diverse and inclusive of all minority groups, including the LGBTQ+ community. Librarian B highlighted the importance of this, stating that diverse collections show that "there isn't just one way to be" or "just one way for a family to be." In order to find books with good LGBTQ+ representation, the librarians used a variety of sources, including newsletters from different publishers and Goodreads, blogs about inclusive books with book reviews, and Edelweiss's LGBTQ+ page. They also

mentioned speaking to their teens about books they would like to see in the collection. Librarians D and E do not do their own collecting since their library systems have a collection development department. However, they mentioned that they could submit requests if there was a book they would like to see added to the collection.

Programming

All the librarians who I spoke to were involved with planning programming for their library. Some of the common programs included reading and writing groups, groups centered around hobbies, such as an anime club, and programs centered around activities such as escape rooms, craft groups, or movie-watching nights. Many of the librarians reported engaging in summer reading programs and doing additional programming in the summer as more teens are able to find the time to come to the library during summer break. Several of the librarians had team volunteer programs within their libraries where teens had the opportunity to plan and run programming or help support younger children in the library through homework help and tutoring.

All of the librarians discussed ways in which they worked to make these programs inclusive of LGBTQ+ youth. They emphasized that they worked to build relationships and establish trust with all youth involved with their programming. While none of the librarians mentioned having any trouble with teens at their events making homophobic remarks, they said that they would intervene if it were to happen. They would let the teen making harmful comments know that this sort of discrimination would not be tolerated and would ask participants to leave if needed. The librarians with reading programs discussed the inclusion of titles with LGBTQ+ representation in their reading choices.

Most of the librarians I spoke to who had these reading programs allowed their

teens to select the books. But they noted that it was not uncommon for the teens to choose

books with feature LGBTQ+ characters and that the group and the librarians supported

this. Librarian C was the only librarian who had a reading program where he made his

own selection of the books, though notably, this program was an adult reading group, not

a teen event. He mentioned that he selected the title *Less* by Andrew Sean Greer, which

has a gay protagonist, as one of the first titles for this book club to set a precedent of

inclusivity within the group. Additionally, he mentioned that he focused on selecting

inclusive materials for the group year-round rather than relegating certain topics to

certain months, such as only reading materials featuring Black characters during Black

History Month or books with LGBTQ+ representation during Pride month.

None of the librarians I spoke to had programs aimed specifically at LGBTQ+

youth, such as a book club that only reads LGBTQ+ titles. Librarian A mentioned that

she would prefer not to have separate programs for LGBTQ+ youth as in her ideal world,

people wouldn't need to be divided up into separate groups. She said that she "would

love it to get to a point where you don't have to label anything; you just be." Instead, she

focuses on making sure the teens involved in her groups know where she stands and that

they "know they're safe" and "know that nobody within our group is going to judge them

for their orientations."

Library C mentioned that he isn't currently offering any LGBTQ+-exclusive

events, but he is open to it and is looking into whether it would be a good fit for his

community's needs. He began to consider whether this was needed in his library after

having a conversation with one of the teens at the library who wanted to make library

programs would be inclusive of LGBTQ+ youth. This teenager is gay and had

recently started an inclusive club at his high school, which received a lot of pushback,

leading him to be concerned about inclusivity within the library. Librarian C said that he

had not previously considered offering separate programming for any group of people but

is working to understand the needs of teens at his library to determine if starting an

LGBTQ+ reading group would be the best option or if it's more about "having a safe

place" within more general programming.

Librarian E mentioned that her library had tried to hold an LGBTQ+ reading

group before and that she would be open to trying again in the future, but there isn't one

being offered currently. Another librarian at her branch library had attempted to establish

a Geography Club, named after the novel by the same title, where youth would read and

discuss LGBTQ+ titles a few years ago. However, this reading group didn't end up

working because not enough youth came to the program and expressed interest in seeing

it continue. She speculated that this was because LGBTQ+ youth did not feel safe coming

to this program. The librarians involved with this program hoped that titling it Geography

Club rather than calling it an LGBTQ+ reading group would offer some protection to

interested youth and allow them to feel comfortable coming to the program. But Librarian

E said that she thought the community was just not ready for that program at the time.

She also mentioned that another librarian at a different branch within her library system

had recently set up an LGBTQ+ reading club, which would've been held over Zoom due

to current meeting restrictions. However, this program never happened as the librarian

planning to host it left the library system before the event. Librarian E said that she hoped

that someone else within the library system would take up running an LGBTQ+ reading

group as she felt the community was more ready for this type of programming

and that there was interest in it. One of the few youths who attended the original

Geography Club event had mentioned that they were hoping to see a program such as this

get off the ground. Librarian E did not want to host this program herself, though, as she is

not a part of the LGBTQ+ community and felt that it was not her place to host this event

on her own.

Displays

Two of the librarians I spoke to mentioned setting up displays within their library

for Pride month that featured LGBTQ+ titles to highlight those titles within the

collection. Additionally, many of the librarians worked to include LGBTQ+ titles within

other themed displays throughout the year. For instance, if there was a display of

romantic young adult novels, they would make sure to include at least one YA romance

with LGBTQ+ representation. Librarian E also works to build LGBTQ+ book lists to

help people find these materials within the collection. She also mentioned that as the

LGBTQ+ community is a large spectrum of different identities, she works to make sure

her lists include representation of all identities, not just gay or lesbian characters.

Outreach

Librarian E was the only librarian who discussed conducting outreach with a local

LGBTQ+ center. Her library system partners with this LGBTQ+ center, and some of the

youth librarians run programs at the center. Librarian E has not done programming at the

center, but she does keep pamphlets about this organization in her library and has used

them as a resource before. She recounted a story about a young teen at her

library who came to her for help as he didn't feel safe coming out to his family. Librarian

E set it up so a counselor from the LGBTQ+ center would meet with this teen at the

library so that he would be able to tell his family he was going to the library rather than

having to have his family take him to the LGBTQ+ center. The counselor was able to

help the teen get the resources he needed and support him as he eventually came out to

his family and started attending programs at the LGBTQ+ center. Through this

connection with local resources, Librarian E was able to connect this teen with the

resources and support he needed, which Librarian E wouldn't have been able to provide

herself.

Challenges and Attitudes

None of the librarians I spoke to had dealt with a formal challenge at their library

location. However, all of the librarians I spoke to mentioned push back against LGBTQ+

representation, either in the collections or in programming. Librarians A and B, who

manage the children and young adult collections for their libraries, mentioned that there

were certain titles they had to frequently re-purchase because they were stolen from the

library or checked out and never returned. For instance, Librarian B mentioned that the

book *And Tango Makes Three* by Justin Richardson, Peter Parnell, and Henry Cole

(Illustrator), a picture book based on a true story about two male penguins who became

partners and raised a chick together, was one that she had to frequently re-purchase.

Additionally, Librarian B mentioned that books from her collection had been vandalized,

including an instance where the page of a picture book that mentioned families could

have two moms or dad had that page of the book ripped out. While no one had

any experience of anyone being openly hostile or homophobic during an event, Librarian

A mentioned that some parents had approached her to tell her that they were not going to

allow their daughter to participate in the reading group because some of the books they

were reading had LGBTQ+ characters in them. Other librarians mentioned that they

suspected that there were community members who didn't attend or didn't allow their

children to attend reading groups due to the inclusion of materials with LGBTQ+

representation.

     We also discussed support among library staff and administration. The librarians

generally felt that other librarians and library staff were supportive of the LGBTQ+

community and making library services inclusive and welcoming for LGBTQ+ youth.

However, some of the librarians mentioned that there was less support from their library

administration or library boards. Librarian D said that when they started at this library,

they received pushback from their library's administration about a Pride month display.

However, they felt that this was beginning to change as this library system has recently

become more supportive of diversity and inclusion initiatives in the library. Library

administration has started to encourage employees to create this sort of display, wear

pronoun pins, and partake in the Project READY: Reimagining Equity & Access for

Diverse Youth curriculum.

Impacts

     Many of the librarians I spoke with discussed the relationships and trust they built

with the LGBTQ+ youth in their library. Librarian A relayed a story to me about how one

of the few out queer youth in her community had run up to her at a grocery

store parking lot, excited to see her since he hadn't in a while due to Covid. This

experience was affirming to her that she created a welcoming library and built trust with

the youth in her library. Librarian B said that in her local community, "it's very hard for

somebody to be out and be proud and not get bullied or stigmatized" by the church or by

their family. She highlighted how the library presented an opportunity for teens who

don't feel safe at home or at school to have a space where they feel safe and supported.

She emphasized that "having the chance to talk to an adult who's not going to shame

them for being who they are is huge." She also mentioned a patron who volunteered in

the library from the time he was thirteen until he left for college. This teen already knew

he was gay when he started volunteering, but he had a strict family, meaning that he had

"no outlet to be who he was at home." He was able to come to the library and be himself,

which gave him the opportunity to figure out who he was.

As the only librarian I spoke to who self-identified as being a part of the

LGBTQ+ community, Librarian D highlighted the importance of being someone

LGBTQ+ teens could rely on for support, stating that this was personal for them as:

> "I'm a nonbinary person, and I've worked with a lot of people in the
> LGBT community. It seems like every time I go somewhere, that's where I end
> up. In the various systems, we seem to find one another, both the coworkers and
> the teens. They're very good at finding someone who is empathetic and will help
> them out. Which is one of the great things about working with teenagers; they're
> pretty intuitive. But I wanted to make sure that there was someone around that I
> would have liked to have seen when I was a teenager, someone who could help
> answer my questions and who would see me as myself. I try to do that as best as I
> can. And I grew up in North Carolina…in the mountains, so that wasn't
> something so easy to find."

Librarian E discussed the bond that her teens felt with each other. She mentioned

that she had a core group of the same students who came to both her reading and writing

groups. Once, when they were introducing themselves and their writing

interests during this writing group, they began to share their identities with each other.

For many of the teens involved, this was the first time they had ever come out. She

highlighted that these youth became very close. The reading and writing groups have

stopped meeting since there was low attendance once they switched to a virtual setting

due to the pandemic. The teens were not interested in attending an additional virtual

event after spending the entire day doing school work online, so the teens from this group

started a group text to stay in touch.

Training

Four of the five librarians I spoke to had a Masters of Library Science degree;

however, none of them took a class on inclusive services as a part of their degree. Two of

the librarians I spoke to said that their program offered a class on inclusive services, but

they didn't have the opportunity to take it due to limitations on when and in what format

the class was offered. Several librarians mentioned that topics related to serving the

LGBTQ+ community and other marginalized groups were discussed as a part of other

classes in their MLS degree.

In terms of how they get information about serving the LGBTQ+ community,

several of the librarians mentioned taking part in webinars on this topic. Librarian A

spoke highly of webinars in which authors of titles that featured LGBTQ+ representation

spoke about their own experiences as being a part of the LGBTQ+ community. Librarian

D expressed a desire for better training on LGBTQ+ topics. They mentioned that their

library system did not offer any training dedicated to serving LGBTQ+ patrons, though

some trainings at the library mentioned LGBTQ+ topics, such as programs

about making the library more diverse and inclusive or in conversations about harassment

in the workplace. Librarian D expressed that they would like to see a library training on

serving the LGBTQ+ community in the future as it was never a significant focus in other

trainings. Additionally, they highlighted that many webinars or trainings focused on the

LGBTQ+ community tend to focus on terminology and not highlight much else. While

they agreed that terminology is important, they felt that training should focus more on

what LGBTQ+ people experience and that more people are part of the LGBTQ+

community than some may realize. They felt more experience-based training would give

librarians a better understanding of how to work with the LGBTQ+ community than just

understanding the proper terminology.

Assessment

Some of the librarians I spoke to used more formal assessment methods in a

library, such as an annual survey to gather feedback about library services and user needs.

Many of them also talked about taking quantitative data such as circulation statistics and

attendance numbers at their programming. However, librarians mostly used informal

methods of gathering feedback to determine how successful their services were and what

could be improved. All of the librarians I spoke to emphasized the importance of

listening to teens about what sort of programming they were interested in and their

thoughts on existing programs. They stressed that their main goal was not having a huge

amount of attendance at any given program but making sure these programs were

valuable to teens. They evaluated this through comments the teens made and by seeing

the teens engage consistently with programs. The librarians with teen volunteer

programs often turned to their teen volunteers for feedback on program ideas and

suggestions from the teens. Teen volunteers are also able to plan and run their own

programs. Librarian C has a Teen Advisory Board to gather information about the needs

and interests of youth in his community. In order to make sure this group was more

representative of the teens in his community and not just the teens already using the

library, he worked with a contact at one of the local high schools to recruit a broader

range of teens to share their opinions.

Discussion

Among all of the five librarians I spoke to, a notable trend that recurred was that these librarians were generally focusing on making programs and other library services inclusive of LGBTQ+ youth rather than creating separate programs just for LGBTQ+ youth. There was a variety of reasons for this. Librarian B said that because her library is in an area where people who are out face a lot of harassment, she had to be more subtle about her inclusivity to avoid challenges and pushback from the community. She said, "we don't go out of our way to slap it in patrons faces that we're inclusive, but we really try hard to have displays that…if somebody came in and they were being bullied or were just really struggling, the displays would make them think oh, you know what? I'm not alone."

Librarian E is based in a more urban area, which one would assume would be more accepting of LGBTQ+ people. However, teens in Librarian E's community still did not feel comfortable attending an LGBTQ+-exclusive event a few years ago. This is presumably because it would have sent the message to others that they are part of the LGBTQ+ community, and they did not feel safe with other people knowing this information. This trend aligns with the literature on the barriers that LGBTQ+ youth face. The literature noted that many teens need to maintain privacy and avoid people making assumptions about their identities to remain safe. Librarian E said that she felt that it was possible that attitudes have changed enough in her area that this sort of program would be

possible now and librarians in different cities in America do currently run

programs such as these (Houde, 2018; Vaillancourt, 2013). However, it's clear that

LGBTQ+-exclusive programs are not always going to be the best fit in a library because

they put youth in a vulnerable position.

Another theme that came up frequently was the idea of building trusting

relationships with their teens. This was one of the aspects mentioned most commonly

when librarians discussed the positive outcomes of working to support LGBTQ+ youth.

Almost all the librarians I spoke to told me a story about a teen who is part of the

LGBTQ+ community finding a safe space within the library and trusting the librarian

enough to turn to them for support and the opportunity to be open about their identities

without judgment. Some of the most commonly cited needs of LGBTQ+ youth in the

literature on this subject were having an adult who would have their back and having a

safe space to express and learn more about themselves. Librarian E also mentioned

instances of teens in her library being able fulfill other needs discussed in my literature

analysis because they trusted her enough to be open around her and come to her to find

resources. For instance, LGBTQ+ teens in her library had the opportunity to socialize

with LGBTQ+ peers and mentors and connect with resources that help support the

education of LGBTQ+ youth's families. This shows that building trust with LGBTQ+

youth is an important aspect of fulfilling LGBTQ+ youth's needs.

Finally, talking to these librarians highlighted that while attitudes are changing

and there are librarians out there who are doing the work to support LGBTQ+ youth in

their library, there is clearly still a lot more work that needs to be done. Many librarians

spoke about their communities not being welcoming of LGBTQ+ youth or library

administration that had not always supported efforts to make the library more inclusive. While generally, the librarians seemed to indicate that this was improving both within communities and within library administration, these issues are not disappearing anytime soon. Even in these libraries where the librarians are working to support LGBTQ+ youth, the librarians struggled to make their library as inclusive as they would like. For instance, Librarian D mentioned that their collection did not have as much representation as they thought it should. They noted that they would sometimes go to the library system nearby to find books with LGBTQ+ representation as that library system's collection has more books with LGBTQ+ representation.

If these librarians were not actively working to support LGBTQ+ youth in their library, it seems like no one would do anything to encourage that since library administrations are just coming around to being supportive of librarians who are doing this work. Meaning that librarians who have prejudices against LGBTQ+ people are likely not facing any repercussions for not making their library welcoming to LGBTQ+ youth. If librarians are not leading the charge on this matter within the library, these libraries would not become more inclusive and would continue to perpetuate heteronormativity. For instance, Librarians A and B both mentioned that they had to keep re-purchasing titles with representation as patrons were stealing or vandalizing these titles. If they did not care enough about having representation in their collections to keep an eye on and re-purchase these titles when they went missing, these titles would not be available within the library and LGBTQ+ youth wouldn't have access to books with representation.

All in all, this highlights the importance of actively working to support LGBTQ+ youth in the library and not simply taking a neutral stance, as a neutral stance would only serve to perpetuate heteronormativity within the library. LGBTQ+ youth need additional support to overcome the barriers preventing them from having their information and affective needs fulfilled. And the stories these five librarians shared with me of LGBTQ+ youth finding support in the library demonstrate the many benefits that come from engaging in this work. Librarians need to work actively to support LGBTQ+ youth and continue learning and improving their services to let youth know that they are wanted and that the library will fulfill their information needs.

Limitations

Due to the time and resource constraints of this research, I excluded school libraries from my study and only looked at public libraries, despite both school and public libraries being relevant to research about youth. Since more research has been done on serving LGBTQ+ youth in the school library than the public library, this focus more effectively filled the gap in research. I also limited my study to youth services librarians in North Carolina out of convenience of reach and time limitations.

Another limitation of this research is that it describes what librarians are doing to serve LGBTQ+ youth and how they make those decisions but is not an assessment of those services. Since I did not interview any LGBTQ+ youth about how well they feel these services are fulfilling their information needs and making them feel welcome in the library, it is not possible to say, based on this research, how effective these services are or if other things would be more effective. Additionally, since I focused my research on librarians who are actively working to serve LGBTQ+ youth, I could not evaluate the range of services between librarians that are not specifically working to serve LGBTQ+ youth and those that are.

Opportunities for Further Research

This research illuminates many opportunities for further research to address the limitations of this study. As my study was not intended to be generalizable, it would be useful for future research to do a more extensive evaluation of library services for LGBTQ+ youth both across North Carolina and the country. A broader study has the potential to show discrepancies in library services based on librarian attitudes toward LGBTQ+ youth, where mine did not, as I only interviewed participants actively working to serve LGBTQ+ youth and who were interested in discussing the subject with me. A more expensive study also has the potential to illuminate trends not spotted in this study, such as potential differences in services based on geography.

Additionally, there is an excellent opportunity for further research to understand youth opinions on these services. Since I did not speak with any teens during my study, I did not get to hear what teens think about library services for LGBTQ+ youth. I only heard the perspective of librarians about how they felt their services were fitting the needs of their teens. A study where a researcher speaks to LGBTQ+ youth about how well they think library services are meeting their needs would be useful in assessing the effectiveness of these programs. It would also allow researchers to hear from teens who currently don't use the library to understand why they aren't currently using the library and what would make the library more accessible or useful for them.

Conclusion

This study aimed to answer how youth service librarians in North Carolina are working to serve LGBTQ+ youth, what information librarians use to inform decisions about these services, and how librarians assess these services by conducting interviews with five youth services librarians actively working to serve LGBTQ+ youth. The resulting descriptions of the work these librarians are doing to understand and meet the needs of LGBTQ+ youth in their libraries provides insights into how other librarians can improve their own services for LGBTQ+ youth. Additionally, this research provides insight for educators or professional organizations hoping to create or improve existing training for librarians about services for LGBTQ+ youth. Based on my literature analysis of research on the needs of LGBTQ+ youth and the barriers they face in having these needs met, as well as my research with librarians in North Carolina working to serve LGBTQ+ youth, I offer the following suggestions for the stakeholders.

I found that the librarians I spoke to expressed a need for experience-based trainings. The librarians felt that trainings that spoke to the experiences of people in the LGBTQ+ community provide insights into their needs, any barriers they faced, and what good support would look like from a librarian. They emphasized that while understanding terminology is important, experience-based training was more valuable as supporting LGBTQ+ youth requires more information and insight than just knowing what certain LGBTQ+ terminology means. Due to this, my recommendation for educators and

professional organizations aiming to create or improve existing training opportunities for youth services librarians about serving LGBTQ+ youth in the library would be to ensure that any trainings primarily focus on how librarians can best serve LGBTQ+ youth in the library and establishing an understanding that more people are a part of the LGBTQ+ community than a librarian may assume. This highlights that it's essential for all librarians to engage in this work.

For librarians looking to improve their services for LGBTQ+ youth, I would recommend that they begin by thinking about what barriers exist in their library for LGBTQ+ youth and how they work to eliminate those barriers. From there, I would recommend that librarians work to build trust with their patrons by showing that they are welcoming to the LGBTQ+ community. They can do this by making collections, displays, programs, and spaces inclusive by ensuring that there is LGBTQ+ representation and encouraging LGBTQ+-inclusive practices such as sharing their pronouns and encouraging others to do the same. They can also show that they will not permit homophobia in the library by standing up to challenges and homophobic statements from patrons.

Librarians should have the means to get feedback and input from their teens so that they can adjust their services in line with that feedback to make their services better fit the needs of their teens. Librarians should consider if LGBTQ+-centered programming is a good fit for their community; however, it's not the correct option in every community as there may not be enough demand, or teens may not feel comfortable going to these events. I would also recommend that librarians find local LGBTQ+ organizations, if there are any in the area, and establish a partnership with them to provide additional resources

for the teens in their library. If there are no local organizations, librarians

should find online resources that offer LGBTQ+ information and opportunities for

support and socialization. Finally, librarians should continuously seek out opportunities

to continue learning and growing, and improving the library to be as inclusive as

possible. While attitudes in both the general population and library administrations seem

to be generally moving towards more acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community,

homophobia and heteronormativity are still common both in communities and within the

library. Because of this, it is up to librarians to continue to seek out opportunities to learn

more and work actively towards making their services more inclusive and welcoming for

LGBTQ+ youth to counteract systemic heteronormativity within the library and send the

message to LGBTQ+ youth that they welcome and wanted in the library.

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Appendix A. Interview Guide

Demographic information:

1. What is your job title?

2. What are your general job responsibilities?

3. Do you have an MSLS degree?

4. How long have you been in this position? How long have you been in the field of

   youth librarian in general?

Services:

1. What services do you provide for LGBTQ+ youth in the library?

   If the interview participant doesn't mention these aspects in their initial

   answer, I will ask if/how they serve LGBTQ+ youth in the following aspects of

   librarianship:

   a. Collection development
   b. Reader's advisory/reference questions
   c. Programming/instruction
   d. Policies
   e. Staff training
   f. Collaboration with other organizations
   g. Outreach

2. Do you have any programs specifically aimed at LGBTQ+ youth?

3. How have these services been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic? Are there any services that have been put on hold because of the move to virtual services? Any new services developed for the virtual setting?

4. Why do you think it is important to serve LGBTQ+ youth in the library?

5. What are some guiding principles for you in serving LGBTQ+ youth?

6. Have you ever experienced any resistance or challenges in response to these services?

Informing decisions:

1. How do you inform the decisions you make when considering how to best serve LGBTQ+ youth?

2. Do you involve any LGBTQ+ youth in these decision-making processes, for instance by consulting with a youth advisory group?

3. Do you use professional recommendations such as recommendations from the ALA GLBT Round Table?

Assessing services:

1. How do you assess these services?

2. What services have you found to be the most successful in serving LGBTQ+ youth?

3. How have the services you offer for LGBTQ+ youth changed over the time you have been working as a youth services librarian?

Appendix B. Initial Recruitment Email

Hello,

My name is Sarah Wall, and I am a student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I am currently in the Master's program for Library Science and in the process of conducting my Master's paper project. I am studying how youth services librarians in North Carolina are working to serve LGBTQ+ youth and how they inform and assess these services. I am looking to do interviews of youth/teen services librarians who work at a public library in North Carolina and are actively working to serve LGBTQ+ youth in their library.

A MSLS is not required for participation in this study. Additionally, I understand that the COVID-19 pandemic has led to many changes in the services libraries, and I am interested in hearing about services offered before the pandemic as well as any currently being offered.

The interviews will be conducted via phone or Zoom and are expected to last approximately forty-five minutes to an hour. With your permission, I will record these sessions and transcribe them for later analysis. I will not require that your camera be turned on for these sessions and all information will be presented using pseudonyms in my Master's paper and any resulting research reports. To compensate you for your time, I am able to offer a $20 Amazon gift card to each interview participant. This project has been reviewed by the UNC Chapel Hill IRB (919-966-3113, irb_subjects@unc.edu), project #20-3542. If you are interested in participating in this study, please email me at sewsarah@live.unc.edu.

Thank you,

Sarah Wall

Appendix C. Study Information Document

The purpose of this research study is to see what youth services librarians in North Carolina are doing to serve LGBTQ+ youth and uncover what sort of information they are using to inform and assess these services.

Being in a research study is completely voluntary. You can choose not to be in this research study. You can also say yes now and change your mind later. If you agree to take part in this research, you will be asked to participate in an interview conducted via phone, Zoom, or another video conferencing software. With your permission, I will record these sessions and transcribe them for later analysis. Your participation in this study will take between 45 minutes to an hour. I expect that 5-10 people will take part in this research study.

The possible risks of this study are minor, but include embarrassment and breach of confidentiality. Participants may experience embarrassment answering question regarding their professional work if they describe past challenges or failures. If confidentiality is breached, participants may feel uncomfortable with other professionals or their workplace knowing they participated in this study and what was said during an interview. However, since the focus of the interview is not on workplace grievances, this risk is minimal.

To protect your identity as a research subject, you are not be required to have your video on during the Zoom call and no individual's name or place of work will be included in the research paper. Each participant will be assigned a letter to identify them in the paper and their library setting will be described but not named. I am the only person who will have access to the names of participants and their place of work.

There may be professional benefits from this study, since the information I obtain will be communicated to the profession through publication in the literature. In addition, to compensate you for your time, I am able to offer a $20 Amazon gift card to each interview participant.

If you have any questions about this research, please let me know. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the UNC Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu. This project has been reviewed by the UNC IRB and assigned the project number 20-3542.