

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CHILDREN & LGBT-IDENTIFYING CHARACTERS IN PICTURE STORYBOOKS

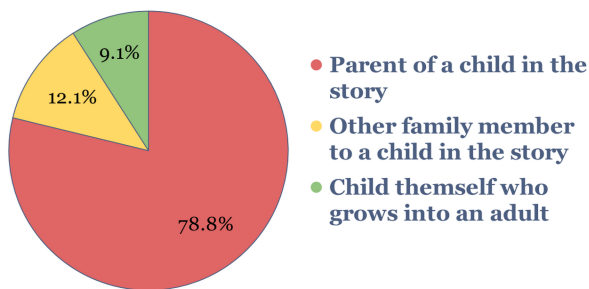
Jenna Breuer | Early Childhood Education | breuerjm@miamioh.edu
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Brenda Dales, Department of Teacher Education

Research Question: What relationships do children in picture books have with LGBT characters?

Introduction & Method

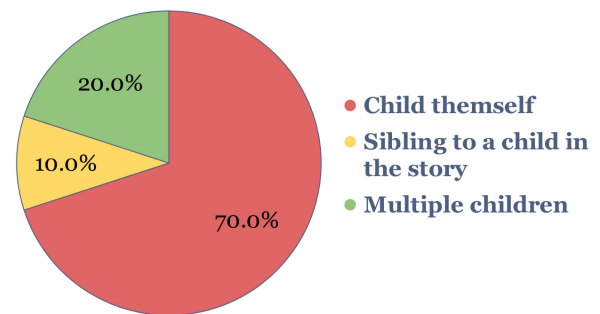
I was inspired by Elizabeth A. Ford's concept of the "safe distance" between children and LGBT adults in children's literature. I analyzed picture books including characters who identified as LGBT, either through sexuality/attraction or gender. I studied how these characters related to children, either as adults with relationships to children in the story or as children themselves. Only 44 of the 64 books I used showed relationships between children and LGBT characters.

Characters identifying as LGBT through sexuality/attraction



When looking at the picture books where characters with LGBT sexualities related to children, over 75% of these characters were parents to children in the story. These characters were also included as other family members of children, such as the same-sex grandparents in *A Plan for Pops*.

Characters identifying as LGBT through gender



When looking at picture books where characters with LGBT genders related to children, all were children themselves. For 70% of these books, these children were the main characters, such as Ho'onani from *Ho'onani: Hula warrior*. Ho'onani is a mähū: someone in between male and female.

Further Implications & Research

Future research could expand this study by adding books I could not obtain due to library shutdowns. Studying the messages of these stories, such as the effects of including intolerance in the plot, could tell more about if these books are achieving the goals the authors have for them.

References

- Ford, E. A. (1998). H/Z: Why Lesléa Newman Makes Heather into Zoe. *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, 23(3). 128-133.
- Gale, H. (2019). *Ho'onani: Hula warrior*. Tundra.
- Smith, H. (2019). *A Plan for Pops*. Orca Book Publishers.