

**Discovering your own LGBTQ voice:
A Look at Queer Children's Literature and
their use in the Puerto Rican classroom**

by

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Abstract

Genders, identity, alongside portrayals of the LGBTQ community, are highly intertwined in *And Tango Makes Three* and *King & King*. The publication of Children's Queer Literature has always been surrounded by controversy, especially when being incorporated in the classroom. However, this genre of literature has become part of pedagogical contexts because of its relation to real life occurrences and society in general. This research seeks to justify the integration of the aforementioned texts in the Puerto Rican classroom as a tool for students and teachers to empathize, understand and analyze the LGBTQ spectrum. Through an analysis of the texts this research aims for students to challenge heteronormative norms, binaries established and embedded in society. Through Judith Butlers understanding and exploration of gender, Warner's views on heteronormativity and Jagose and Sedgwick's notions of queerness we explore how theses texts are richly embedded with LGBTQ themes, enough to not conform to heteronormative rules in the classroom. Lastly, teachers are provided with a working framework towards the use of these specific texts in the classroom through the creation of lesson plans based on the Curriculum Maps provided by the Department of Education of Puerto Rico.

Resumen

Géneros, identidad, al igual que la representación de la comunidad LGBTQ esta presentada en los textos *And Tango Makes Three* y *King & King*. La publicación de textos con temática homosexual para niños siempre ha estado rodeada de controversia, específicamente cuando tales textos son incorporados dentro del salón de clases. Sin embargo, tal género de literatura se ha convertido en parte de contextos educativos dado a la relación con situaciones verídicas en la sociedad en general. Esta tesis busca justificar la integración, de los textos antes mencionados, en la sala de clases en Puerto Rico como una herramienta para que el estudiante y el maestro entienda y analice el contexto LGBTQ. Basado en un análisis de los textos presentados esta investigación tiene como objetivo que el estudiante rete las normas heteronormativas establecidas y practicadas en la sociedad. Basado en Judith Butler, su entendimiento y exploración de género, Michael Warner y sus definiciones sobre la heteronormatividad y la postura de Annamarie Jagose y Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick sobre términos de homosexualidad exploramos como los textos no presentan la oportunidad para no educar sus temas LGBTQ a los estudiantes en su totalidad. Para finalizar, los educadores son provistos con un marco de trabajo práctico para el uso de estos textos en el salón de clases, basado en los Mapas Curriculares del Departamento de Educación en Puerto Rico.

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Dedication

For my three favorite persons: Mommy, El Viejo and La Vieja. Bendición!

Glossary of Terms

LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer
PR	Puerto Rico
UPRM	University of Puerto Rico- Mayagüez Campus
INGL	English Course Offerings in UPRM

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Chapter 1: Introduction- Discovering your own LGBTQ voice

I have always felt a strong passion for teaching. Being in education has been part of my life since I was growing up. I come from a family with a long line of educators, hence, I have always had the context of what it means to educate and be a teacher. Being a teacher can be very complicated, just the fact that you have in your hands the personal and professional instruction of a human being and you are responsible for imparting knowledge into that person, means a great deal to me, as a professional. Pedagogy gives teachers the opportunity to understand historical and cultural aspects that contribute knowledge constructions, which lead them to impart important tools to their students.

Education is a process in which we learn things we do not know and expand on the knowledge we already have. John Dewey (1963) describes education as, “a social process – ‘a process of living and not a preparation for future living’. As well being concerned with learning that we set out to encourage – a process of inviting truth and possibility – it is also based in certain values and commitments such as a respect for others and for truth. Education is born, it could be argued, of the hope and desire that all may share in life and be more” (p.7). As an openly gay man my relationship with education has been quite interesting to say the least. For most of my school experience I have followed the established system of teaching without questioning or identifying with curriculums I was inherently given. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire sees the flaws in the education system by arguing the conception of banking, which he defines as, “the oppressive depositing of information, hence the term banking, by teachers into their students” (p.72). I was never presented the option to look outside the established form of teaching I was being awarded, yet, I knew I was not finding myself with what was being

brought forward in my classrooms. This was due to the fact that I never really found a niche in which I could fall into and identify with what I was being given as part of my education.

I always felt different and it was not until my high school years that I really took a grasp on why that was. Being a gay man in a heteronormative pedagogical context is not simple. I never got the chance to express whom I was and much less identify to others what I was feeling. As a child and young adult I have always been an avid reader and lover of television and films, but I never really got to see myself in many, if not all, of the characters I saw and read about. It was not until I was sixteen that I came across a picture book titled *King & King* that I realized the existence of Children's Queer Literature. This was an eye-opening event, which led me to my interest in such topic. Since that moment I have always been looking for any type of Queer literature I could get my hands on to see how, I as a gay man, was being portrayed. With some portrayals I was very happy because of the realistic nature of the characters, while with others not so much, yet the fact remained that I was not able to get my hands on these books from an early age and it made me think how would that have made a difference in my understanding of the world. Not only as a self-identifying gay man but to have a sense of compassion and understanding of what I was feeling and seeing, which went against everything I was being taught in schools and in my everyday life.

Maybe it was the fact that I identify within the queer community or maybe it's the fact that I wish to see social acceptance in the world but with this in mind I entered my formative college years. I was always clear that I was going to study literature and any type of media that dealt with the queer community mixed with pedagogy. I decided to

pursue my undergraduate studies in English Education-Secondary Level at the University of Puerto Rico- Aguadilla. I did this to be part of the change I wanted to see in education and in students. While doing my coursework at the university something happened which totally changed my perception on how big the change and impact in schools needed to be. In the Fall of 2010, while in the teacher preparation program, I took a Creative Writing Course as part of my curriculum. One day the professor teaching the class walked in and said: "Gay people shouldn't be allowed to be teachers. They should not be allowed near small children". "Wow, did she really just say that?" Those were my first thoughts after hearing that in the 21st century we are still battling discrimination and fear of what is considered different and I asked myself: What message does this tell us about our society?

I believe her remarks came as opposition of protests dealing with gay marriage events being held in California during the Proposition 8 enforcement, anyhow, such event made me want to pursue, study and teach LGBTQ texts in the classroom. With this event in mind, after graduation, I was able to go into the private school system to teach English and Theater. It was within this context that I had the opportunity to explore and teach specific genres of literature to high school students in my classes. When I came in contact with the lack of knowledge and the lack of texts dealing with the queer community and the LGBTQ spectrum at large I realized this issue needed to be addressed in a formal and academic way.

In the article *Watch What You Teach: A First Year Teacher Refuses to Play it Safe*, Nicole Sieben and Laraine Wallowitz express that "English teachers often avoid controversial topics, particularly issues of race, gender, class and sexuality" (p.44). While

reading this I could relate to the experience I had as a student and how teachers never strayed from the status quo of what needed to be taught. However, by not giving the necessary space and chance for these controversial topics, we as educators, seem to underestimate our students and the capacity of understanding and tolerance they have and could achieve while discussing them. Sieben and Wallowitz clearly express this concern by stating, “sometimes high school students are not given enough credit; we [teachers] underestimate their maturity levels. Therefore, teachers often shy away from teaching seemingly controversial topics” (p.48). As an educator, the experience I had at the undergraduate level and the problem I faced while teaching high school students made me look for a possible solution to the lack of inclusion of LGBTQ texts in the Puerto Rican classroom. I have asked myself if schools in Puerto Rico have taken into account how society has changed within the last few years, if the LGBTQ community has been taken into account when it comes to approaching queer issues in the Puerto Rican classroom and if the teaching curriculum is a reflection of these issues.

On February 25th, 2015 the Department of Education in Puerto Rico approved *Policy Letter Num.: 19-2014-2015* (see appendix A) as part of a gender and equality curriculum for the public school system on the island. On August 1st, 2015 the policy letter went into full effect when classes began for the new school year. It is still unclear if the results warranted by the Department of Education when implementing this policy are being generated but it is a step forward towards the inclusion of LGBTQ texts in the Puerto Rican classrooms. In addition, the discussions of these texts in schools comply with the need to integrate transversal themes in the pedagogical context. Transversal themes are defined as “a combination of teaching contents which are integrated into the

different academic disciplines and address all areas of knowledge” (Proyecto de Renovación Curricular 65). Furthermore, “...these transversal themes address problems and current social issues which schools should not be inhibited to touch upon such as the necessity to develop civic and ethical values, democratic values, environmental conscience, culture of peace, cultural identity, good health and consumption habits, technology and education, among other relevant issues in our current society...” (Proyecto de Renovación Curricular 65).

The basis for the use of these themed texts comply with the requirements of Puerto Rico’s Department of Education which calls for teaching to be “categorized by an interdisciplinary approach where learning English as a second language is integrated with the learning of other subjects” (Proyecto de Renovación Curricular 18). Given their social, political and gender themes, the integration of these texts allows teachers to address different topics and use different approaches to present these texts. This also allows the creation of a collaborative nature between teachers and their students in order to create a community of understanding for what is socially considered different. The discussion of the texts chosen for this research integrates the essentiality of transversal themes, which give emphasis to the interdisciplinary context within the Puerto Rican classroom.

As a result, while pursuing my graduate studies and working as a Graduate Assistant in the University of Puerto Rico- Mayagüez, I began incorporating LGBTQ literature in my Intermediate English courses. Why incorporate LGBTQ literature? Within the context of this type of literature we have a variety of different characters and situations, both heterosexual and homosexual, which gives the reader, in this case

students, the opportunity to look at and understand the Queer context and community at large. According to Banks a teacher's job is to encourage students to read available YA queer literature "empathetically and critically [and be] aware of the contexts that bring these books into existence and how changes in our culture could provide more positive, complex experiences for us all" (p.36). They allow the reader to explore different identities and situations that in other types of texts they might not have the chance to explore nor identify, it gives them the opportunity to socially engage in discourse to what they consider different or do not understand and finally it creates an environment of social justice for the LGBTQ community.

It is just in recent years that Children's Queer Literature has made its way into pedagogical curriculums and educational settings. With the integration of such texts children's notions of heteronormativity are slowly being challenged, since a different perspective of understanding and compassion is being offered through LGBTQ materials in the classroom. Queer literature helps establish a discourse about what is considered different and what goes against the status quo. Studies have shown how students are becoming more accepting about the queer community. In her academic journal, Brittany Beaudry, states, "Through literature children can engage in understand and develop their own sense on how they want to see the world we live in" (p.1). It was the objective of this research to explore how two specific queer texts help redefine the notion that there should be only one correct way of viewing the world and how effective they are in overcoming such notions.

Queer literature allows teachers to integrate critical thinking skills, rhetorical discourse and empathy in their class, presenting their students with a variety of tools to

use in the future. A conscious effort must be made by educators to motivate students to understand certain aspects and issues regarding the LGBTQ spectrum. Such discussion and academic exercises can be incorporated into already existing rhetoric about diversity, sexuality, family, relationships, discrimination and more. Teachers give their students the opportunity to complete both, academic and social justice, tasks by having them analyze, research, understand and even respond to themes brought forward when approaching LGBTQ texts. This is, in effect, to see how readers, both hetero- and homosexual, think about LGBTQ issues beyond superficial readings and to show that these books contain more than surface non-relatable issues.

In other words, it is important to be aware of the texts incorporating LGBTQ themes in order to approach and teach them. Previous research has shown that we have gone beyond whether or not this type of literature should be taught in schools but rather, Blackburn & Clark state, “how these texts might be used in classrooms and how they should be approached to the community” (p.13). Furthermore, they explain how LGBTQ literature has contributed to the learning and social understanding of students identifying as queer, as well as creating a sense of empathy to situations in society directly dealing with the LGBTQ community.

The purpose of this research was not to use Queer literature as an accurate portrayal of every student’s identity. On the contrary, while some students may be able to relate to the themes within these texts, the purpose of this research was to understand queer literature in order to incorporate them in school classrooms. One aspect that is still uncertain to me is the relationship, which educators and students have with LGBTQ themed texts, and how they are approached and presented in a pedagogical context.

This research was guided by two main questions:

- i. What discourse emerges from the images and texts of Children's Queer Literature?
- ii. How can these texts help redefine and overcome notions of heteronormativity in readers?

To this end, I looked at the importance of considering and integrating alternatives for teachers and students to approach queer literature. It is important to empower teachers; students and the community in general in order to connect with Queer texts, understand their importance and present them in the pedagogical context. This is, in effect, to see how readers, identifying both as, straight or queer, think about the LGBTQ issues beyond superficial readings and to show that these texts are of great value to the classroom.

The results and outlook of this research could, hopefully, have interesting implications within the pedagogical context in Puerto Rico and the perception, not only of Children's Queer Literature, but also of the queer community in general. Open discussion of these texts could make students identifying as queer feel empowered, valued and could make those identifying as heterosexual to feel compassion and understanding for the LGBTQ community at large. By hearing what students have to say about such topics and themes, the teacher could have a better understanding of his or her classroom and educational context in general.

In its structure, this thesis will be composed of the following chapters: Chapter One serves the purpose of an Introduction to the research and a general overview of what was looked at and presented; Chapter Two presents the Literature Review pertinent to the research at hand in which a detailed theoretical framework of seminal and important

research was presented to understand the research at hand. Chapter Three consists of an examination and discussion of themes within *King & King*, *And Tango Makes Three* and how these texts are richly saturated in queer themes, enough to not have them pave way for heteronormative constructs in the classroom. Finally, Chapter Four focuses on a discussion of pedagogical implications of the integration of the specific queer texts looked at in the research, a look on what can be done to further explore LGBTQ literature and a unit created for the classroom utilizing the specific texts looked at in this research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

“There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very expressions that are said to be its results.”

– Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter*

The theoretical framework developed for this research is described and presented in this chapter. This project explores LGBTQ Children’s Literature and how saturated they are with Queer themes, therefore, making it impossible for teachers and students to avoid any conversations about such topics in the Puerto Rican classroom. Given that this research examines specific LGBTQ texts and the impact they may have in the rhetoric of pedagogical settings, the purpose of this chapter is to define and contextualize concepts crucial to this project. I apply, in my research, interpretation, which is characterized as a concern for an individual, opening the door for social justice utilizing LGBTQ literature. I also utilize action, which focuses on how we are able to interact with the “...intentions and understandings of individuals and how they share their experiences. A large number of our everyday interactions with one another rely on such experiences” (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 21).

Since this research looks at LGBTQ Children’s literature and its implementation in the Puerto Rican classroom, it is necessary to look at theories and views on gender, queerness and heteronormativity, which establish diverse perspectives on the interpretation of each. Additionally, a discussion of various theoretical views explaining censorship, illustrations and Children’s Queer literature will follow, expanding the main focus of this study to the teaching of Queer texts in the pedagogical context. When teachers apply LGBTQ texts in classrooms, they are forced to re-examine their assumptions on the Queer community and the materials consisting of queer themes in

order to incorporate them in the pedagogical context. By doing so, teachers and students may become more critical and understanding to the LGBTQ experience.

Gender Theory

Gender is the process by which cultures and society divide and expand their dominating forces on what it means to fall into two categories, in this case, male and female. As a result, society has become a place where people establish themselves in certain cultural constructions and conform to specific binaries on how society should be and what people must do. This has established a co-dependent relationship on what a man and a woman should do and act, creating a disadvantage, which leads to the division and non-conforming binaries of people who do not identify themselves as the established constructed genders.

Gender theory has been contested and debated by many scholars, as it has been widely accepted as topic for discourse within academia. The natural order of gender questions dichotomy and hierarchy in the way it deconstructs social assumptions that are drawn from a preexisting and natural order. The basis of Gender theory comes from the notion in which the nature of identity and the ways in which that identity takes place in society plays a role in the formation of a person, in this case man and woman, in social constructions.

Butler (1990) defines gender as “the effect of a static or normal gender while obscuring the contradiction and instability of any single person’s gender act” (p.8), while this can also produce what is considered to be “true gender”, which could be a narrative sustained by “the tacit collective agreement to perform, produce and sustain discrete and polar gender as cultural fictions and the punishments that attend not agreeing

to believe in them” (p.9). Coming from the basis of construction, it is established that such term, referring to gender, is a social construction directly establishing formation in society. In the past, the creations of such constructs brought about in society were deemed successful as long as people were conformed to such views. Butler establishes how gender has become a construct in which we rely on to identify each individual and how it goes hand in hand with ‘gender performativity’, which becomes a construct on how we, based on the gender we are assigned or decide to be, act and are taken action upon. Understanding gender performativity cannot be regarded as an example of subjective or singular identity, Butler regards it as “there is a ‘one’ who is prior to gender, a one who goes to the wardrobe of gender decides with deliberation which gender will it be today” (p.19).

Gender performativity can be seen daily in such simple practices as the color of clothes we wear, to the type of cars we drive and to the types of toys we assign our children. While performing in our assigned or chosen gender we change depending on the situations around us or the choices people make in our vicinity to which we have a natural reaction. This gives us the opportunity to choose which responses we can give by being a specific gender and performing it to the best of our abilities. Suggesting that "the critical promise of performance does not have to do with the proliferation of genders...but rather with the exposure of the failure of heterosexual regimes ever fully to legislate or contain their own ideals" (p.24), Butler suggests that by performing in our, given or chosen gender, we may accurately identify how we feel and not how we act based on the gender binary or construction we were assigned or the one we are utilizing at any given moment.

In *Bodies That Matter*, Butler notes:

Performativity cannot be understood outside of a process of iterability, a regularized and constrained repetition of norms. And this repetition is not performed by a subject; this repetition is what enables a subject and constitutes the temporal condition for the subject. This implies that ‘performance’ is not a singular ‘act’ or event, but a ritualized production, a ritual under through constraint, and through the force of prohibition and taboo, with the threat of ostracism and even death controlling and compelling the shape of the production, but not, I will insist, determining it fully in advance. (p.95)

Butler differentiates between notions of performativity and notions of performance, even when pressed to define a clear division, she argues on how each can be used at any given time depending on the scenario at hand. In general, performativity is considered as “describing the process of discursive production” (p.25), whereas, performance is “a specific type of self-presentation” (p.26). This can be accurately seen in relationships people have with certain aspects of society. For example, the way in which a man acts in front of his boss is not the same way he acts in front of his parents; this falls in the category of performance, since the man gives a specific but different self-presentation in both. Whereas, when falling into performativity it is the actions and production the man does with his boss and the different production and results he does and has with his parents.

By working into the idea that the gender which one person is said to have or be could be implied and not necessarily be the absolute identity of a person comes

‘rudimentary gender binaries’, which Butler defines as “the categories and situations we fall into by performing in a specific gender,” (p.10). Having such binaries gives society the opportunity to keep the distinction between what goes into being one specific gender. For example, when babies are born we tend to assign the color blue for boys and the color pink for girls; this is seen as rudimentary gender binary since it creates a category to what one given gender should have or be. Obviously, such relationship of gender binaries, doesn’t only affect the person as a whole but it could affect culture at large. Both, the person and society are required to believe in such binaries in order to establish themselves as part of a group in which they can identify with the aspects created by and for society.

It has become the norm, in recent years, to debate how gender is given at birth instead of how people identify to a specific gender. Butler establishes a clear distinction on how we are equipped with a specific gender norm in society and we do not defy our own feelings just because of the socially constructed notions we are assigned and forced to work with, which have been embedded in our existence. As a key figure in Gender theory Butler suggests that we create the categorization of identities and we take such categorizations from personal to political. By doing this it would be almost impossible to disassociate a person from terms like “man”, “woman”, “gay”, “straight”, “lesbian”, “bisexual”, “transgender”, “questioning” and others, since it would be very difficult to move on from the individual experience of each person, each binary and each personal identity.

On the other hand, Nealon & Giroux (2012) add, “Gender is the difference of ‘two’ biological sexes and the ‘fact’ that only two could be understood” (p.181). The reason for

accepting only two genders is “because we tend to understand the difference between men and women as an essential difference” (p.181). It is easier, by doing this, to determine and understand what each gender, be it male or female, entails and be aware of how essential differences of each are presented. Hence, the importance of rudimentary genders binaries and their functions in society of creating specific frameworks that fit into specific cultural categories. For example, men have a certain reproductive equipment while women have a different one, hence creating the determining factor on the creation of gender binaries instead of an “essential difference” (p.181). From Nealon & Giroux’s perspective we are looking at gender through a natural biological difference, argued as “...physical aspects you are born with” (p.188) and not a social construct. As the aforementioned theorists suggest, by this perspective, what it is being felt at the moment of your performance or performativity is dismissed because what matters and establishes a person in the framework of gender construction is the biological parts you are born with.

Parting from this we see the creation of sex and gender as two distinct ideologies and definitions to better understand where we stand as men and women. Nealon, to better explain this difference, explains “men and women are different but so are sofas and rocking chairs, and we don’t tend to think of them as “essentially” different” (p.182). Thus, if we want to understand the true identity of gender we may refer, to both, natural and emotional responses and feelings. This opens the door to define the notion of gender as chromosomal factor, which focuses solely on the biological aspects of the body, hence, disregarding any social component and construction entwined in the basis of the performance rhetoric established by Butler. This research was taken and expanded on how fictional narratives support ideological frameworks that relish on the fact that gender;

queerness and heteronormativity can be supported as a whole.

Understanding Heteronormativity

With the creation of gender binaries and their categories comes what we have come to see as normal aspects of performance, which can be argued that, they are the expectations from each gender and the performances in society that they behold and how each of them are presented in cultural binary context. It has become part of social construction norms that the heterosexual system, currently established as heteronormativity, is the established norm for society. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines heterosexual as “of, relating to, or characterized by a tendency to direct sexual desire toward the opposite sex or gender”.

Those who are forming or identifying as homosexual are being established outside the gender binary of heterosexuality because of their different perspectives, hence flourishing into heteronormativity. In, *Introduction: Fear of a Queer Planet*, Warner defines heteronormativity as “a viewpoint that expresses heterosexuality as a given instead of being, often expressed subtly, heterosexuality is widely “accepted” as the default sexuality by both” (p.4). From this, he begins questioning the social aspects and constructions given to, both men and women, and how they have changed during time. He goes on by saying, “...asserting that heterosexuality is the only sexual orientation, sexual and marital relations are most fitting between people of the opposite sexes.

Heteronormativity does not give the chance to choose or be who you want to be since it is considered a normal, given practice of cultural relevance and is thought to be the normality of society as a whole, hence, assuming there is no need for further discussion on gender matters. When this situation arises the individual identifying within

the LGBTQ spectrum realizes that the identity they naturally want to be or identify as, is considered against the norm and is going against the established binaries of society. This opens the door for the individual to form gender binaries in which their true identity is considered not normal, straying away from the established, male and female patterns. Furthermore, it paves the way for individuals identifying as heterosexual to be reinforced as correct while viewing individuals identifying as homosexuals as incorrect and going against the established gender norms.

Chambers (2003) refers to heteronormativity as “a concept that reveals the expectations, demands, and constraints produced when heterosexuality is taken as normative within a society” (p.26). This is where there is no room for self-identification or expression to a person not following the established heteronormative norms. Certain parameters are set forward due to gender binaries and gives individuals socially constructed guidelines on how to act and behave. For example, when kids are little we see a clear division in the emotional state for boys compared to the one we see for girls. Boys are encouraged to be tough, build a wall and never show emotions because the exposition of such is considered weak in binary heteronormative constructions, whereas, the girls are always told and are expected to show emotion, cry and be expressive. Emotions are considered and taught to be weak for men but, to some extent, an attribute for women. Chamber makes reference to these expectations and demands that when heteronormativity and the creation of binaries occur it should be in equal form for both men and women.

One aspect of heteronormativity, which is considered to be crucial on how expression may or may not occur, is silence. Silencing can be done through two processes:

systematic inclusion and systematic exclusion (Friend, 1993). Systematic inclusion is defined as “when discussions regarding homosexuality do occur, they are consistently placed in a negative context” (p.212). One example of systematic inclusion at work is when male dancers are assumed to be homosexual. Dancing is a binary construct believed to be mostly female and when a male enters that binary he is automatically identified as homosexual. The implication of having to come out as heterosexual, for many male dancers, reinforces the idea that being gay is not the normal binary and heterosexuality is assumed to be the normality. Most students, when presented with LGBTQ texts, are silent and do not wish to discuss them; this is an example of how heteronormativity has worked to create just one specific correct identity and is seen as normal.

Systematic exclusion is defined as “ignoring or denying the presence of lesbian, gay and bisexual people” (p.212). When educators do not address LGBTQ characters and situations from direct or indirect texts in the classroom this opens the door for systematic exclusion and heteronormativity. By doing this, teachers are giving a sense of shame about anything related to the LGBTQ community since it is not being acknowledged as relevant, hence, implying negative connotations about LGBTQ spectrums.

Is the inclusion of the gay text or character enough? Not according to Sumara, Davis and Iftody who conclude that “teachers should provide opportunities for students to analyze the diversity of personal readings within a safe and intellectually supportive context” (p. 65). When approaching such texts it is important to understand and empathize with, not only the situation, but with the identification of the larger spectrum. If the teacher does not facilitate a broader discussion about the LGBTQ identity of the characters or situations, heteronormative norms are maintained through the reading. It is

important to recognize heteronormativity as culturally relevant to our binaries and only then can heteronormativity be challenged.

The problem with silencing is that the simple fact of including LGBTQ related texts and themes in the classroom is not enough to uncover heteronormativity. Sumara, Davis and Iftody argue that both, the teacher and student, should be given the opportunity to, "...analyze the diversity of personal readings within a safe and intellectually supportive context" (p.65). When discussion of themes regarding LGBTQ identities is not correctly handled, it opens the door for heteronormative constructions to stay present since the teacher never created a correct space for discussion of such topics.

Based on his study, *Literacy issues and GLBTQ Youth*, (Martino, 2009) establishes that when teachers do not correctly open the classroom discussion to adequately talk about LGBTQ characters and themes "students dismiss them as non-important and non-relevant" (p.45). By doing this, the teacher paves the way for the reinforcement of heterosexual norms and for heteronormativity to take over the classroom. Furthermore, the simple act of including LGBTQ literature with gay themes and/or characters is not enough since literature plays a crucial part on the formation of personal identity. Therefore, when incorporating LGBTQ literature in the classroom it is important to have a pedagogical framework and understanding on what is and will be discussed; not simply over the surface but enough discussion to disrupt and challenge binaries in the classroom.

Queer Theory

Queer theory is a field of critical theory, which first came to light in the 1990s as a direct result of gender studies, it also pervades the notion that gender is part of one's

natural identity and not just a simple social constructed binary. Many people who believe that within the Queer context all notions of what goes against the heteronormative spectrum should be included in that specific rhetoric. For purposes of this research I refer to the term Queer to specify five sexual orientation categories: Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and, Queer.

During the early 20th century homosexuality, which is defined in the Merriam-Webster dictionary as “of, relating to, or characterized by a tendency to direct sexual desire toward the same sex or gender”, was considered erratic and deviant behavior. During the 1950’s and 60’s it was considered a disease and viewed as a personality disorder. The American Psychiatric Association listed homosexuality as a disease until 1973 when it was revoked. After this event a broad quest for acceptance and civil rights began and the interest for studying homosexuality focusing on identity began.

In queer theory the word ‘queer’ is not necessarily a synonym for ‘gay’ but rather a position that rejects conventions or mainstream expressions of all types of behavior including sexuality and gender. Butler argues that, “Identities are not fixed but rather constantly changing and not only within different people but within one specific individual” (p.87). Queer theory looks at any kind of identity or behavior that would fall outside and challenge the typical mainstream, in this case heteronormativity, which also examines non-normative expressions of gender, sexuality and identity.

Sedgwick (1993) describes queer theory as: “the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonance, and resources, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone’s gender, of anyone’s sexuality aren’t made (or can’t be made) to signify monolithically” (p.15). Sedgwick gives us the opportunity to choose how and

where can queerness fall into. It allows the person to move in array when it comes to his or her personal identity as long as it goes against the established norm, which in this case is heteronormativity. Moreover, this notion of queerness is presented as very vast, hence, giving the opportunity to better understand the different arrays of binaries established by each person. Finally, as more teachers familiarize themselves with queer notions, the more attention and emphasis could be given to the creation of queer frameworks in the classroom.

The implication and definition of queerness fluidity given above, allows us to consider concepts such as transgenderism, which is defined as, “of, relating to, or being a person who identifies with or expresses a gender identity that differs from the one which corresponds to the persons sex at birth” and pansexualism, which is defined as, “of, relating to, or exhibiting or implying many forms of sexual expression”. At it’s most radical, it implies all currently accepted definitions of sex, gender and sexuality are questionable, if not redundant. Therefore, with the aforementioned, it is important to be aware of the identification binaries which occur in persons since that may lead to bigger discussion and array of socially constructed norms in society.

Keeping in mind that heterosexuality and homosexuality look very different through a queer theory perspective, how do we get to the notions that both sexualities are performable? As Sedgwick (2007) points out, “...a dizzying array of things that people experience as “sexual”; the same sexual act can mean very different things to different people” (p.5). Referring to sexual acts and how they can be different for every person; for some it might be a genital act, for others a mind game, while for others it is an emotional connection. Sedgwick suggests that although the consummation of sexual acts can be

considered to be the same, when referring to physical aspects, it is the persons engaging in the act that define and identify with what it means for them.

On the other hand, David Halperin *In How to be Gay* (2012) defines queer theory as “whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. There is nothing in particular to which it necessarily refers” (p.14). Arguing that people do not simply categorize them in a specific binary way, representations do not conform to either side of binary constructions; instead, there is another space outside of created binaries that create opposition to the normal and introduce the queer aspects of society. Essentially, Queer theory does not agree with the black and white version in which the world divides its binary systems like boy/girl, blue/pink, etc. There is no male/female, gay/straight because the argument establishes room for expression and space for opposing such binaries. Going back to Butler she establishes that queer theory is all about “...fluidity, identity and performance” (p.34). Seen this way, our identities, gendered or otherwise, do not express some authentic inner core or self but are the dramatic effect rather than the course of our performances as established by Butler.

Moreover, Nealon & Giroux clarify “if gender theory demonstrates the disentanglement of “gender” from an essentialist notion of “sex”, queer theory demonstrates a similar disentanglement of sex acts from gender identity” (p.184). By this explanation we see that sexuality and identity could be very different aspects within the queer spectrum. Hence, the notion to refuse the acknowledgement of an LGBTQ identified child since he is not given permission, by society, to be intertwined in any sexual and identity crisis. Going along with what is previously stated, Jagose (1996) argues, “sexuality is not an essentiality personal attribute but an available cultural

category” (p.79). In other words, queer theory shows there is no relation between ‘natural’ equipment and what does it mean to have that equipment in a specific context. This creates the notion that identifying as queer is a choice provided and constructed by social binaries and cultural categories.

Queer has become a substitute for the word “gay”, hence, Jagose reminds us of the importance of terminology by recalling “the shift from ‘homosexual’ to ‘gay’ as a self-identifier is already caught up in the denaturalization of sexuality” (p.73). Language has become a big part of the rhetoric behind this movement; it is up to the person at hand to clarify how is the specific language being used and expressed in regards to the queer notion. What needs to be mentioned in order to create awareness is how Queer theorists dismantle specific areas of heteronormativity and gender as being simple social constructs. When doing this and presenting their views of queerness there seems to be a contradictory terminology since their notions of queerness may fall into the variation of socially constructed binaries as defined by Butler. Hence, every aspect of the gender, heteronormative and queer framework might be considered, or is considered if we take Butler’s definition, as a social construction.

There has always been a clear division in Children’s Literature when it comes to the exploration of the relations between the readers, in this case the child, and the adults who present the inception of any text. Children’s literature is focused on challenging the notions of socially constructed assumptions or binaries. Many theorists believe that children should be kept or are assumed to be kept away from constructs like ‘straight’ and ‘gay’; therefore, creating a lineation that transcends and marks the differences of childhood and adulthood. This is done in order to maintain the innocence of a child intact

and pure. There could be many ways to interpret, analyze and discuss a queer text and all queer aspects within the LGBTQ literature presented.

Halperin defines queer texts as “texts that explicitly deal with ‘queer’ themes and characters that can be read as queer, accumulated as queer readings and identified as non-normative” (p.56). Queer theory in literature argues that representations of queer people, in texts, should not be about assimilation or attempting to get the mainstream audience to pay attention or accept them but to be cohesive to the LGBTQ experience in order to be understood to readers. Queer texts should be aware on the positive representations of queer characters and situations but should not be aloud to pander the normal cultural binaries since that could create further rift between heteronormativity and queerness.

Abate & Kidd establish that, “Queer children’s literature both endorses and moves against a pedagogical or instrumentalist program...as expressed in more didactic works of lesbian/gay literature” (p.6). We see how they begin integrating ‘Queer Literature’ with education and the effect pedagogy has in the teaching of these texts. Another point established by Abate & Kidd is how the transversal and universal themes and characters in ‘Queer Literature’ have become more relatable and realistic in time, they explain, “universal, linear sexual identity models to represent the lives of ‘gay youth’ and then a hopeful forecast of same sexual identity and desire” (p.6).

Sanders & Mathis (2013) ask, “How these texts might be used in schools?” (p.1), and continue by saying “the integration could facilitate an inclusion and/or understanding of the LGBT experience” (p.2). Parting from what is previously mentioned, Children’s queer texts and the ones presented in classrooms should be saturated enough to the point that LGBTQ themes make it possible to disrupt the notions of heteronormativity in the

pedagogical context. These texts do help to bring positive aspects towards LGBTQ issues yet “the practice of simply including diverse texts without discussing LGBT issues could cause greater marginalization for students” (p.3). Bringing it together with ‘heteronormativity’ they argue, “...the LGBT themes must be so deeply embedded in the development of the story that teachers would not even have an option to practice heteronormativity” (p.2).

While on the same tangent, Edelman (1998) states, “pedagogy should include ways of discovering how heteronormativity has taught that such characters are not part of the norm” (p.5). By this we see the challenge of the “norm”, which he defines as, “the strand of normal texts and tools utilized in everyday pedagogy” (p.7), has been established by the educational context and how teachers should give tools to discover different perspectives. Furthermore, he brings children to the front seat by saying, “The persuasive trope of the child as a figure for the universal value attributed to political futurity and to pose against it the impossible project of queer oppositionality that would oppose itself to the structural determinants of politics” (p.19). He gives the child the power to choose and establish a personal system in order to achieve a broader educational knowledge and understand LGBTQ themed texts within the classroom utilizing what works for their specific identity.

Moreover, Cobb (2005) establishes that, “Children are forced to do some incredible things. They are, as we all know required to represent our future” (p.119). By establishing this, we see how the hopes for the future rely on our children, the awareness of queer children has grown in the last decade, giving them an open forum of understanding and respect, thus creating an open window for them in the pedagogical

context. Edelman (1998) establishes, “Children are the essence of life, whether they are straight or gay, they should be allowed to be heard. We should give them the politics and social constructs to be who they are no matter what experience it should bring” (p.20). Edelman brings forward the argument, which allows students, and children to be themselves and that society should give them the necessary forums and tools to be who they are. Believing education needs techniques to help incorporate queer texts, dispel prejudice and help strengthen identities for the LGBT community and the ‘heterosexual’ community in general, LGBTQ texts should be undeniably explained and analyzed as long as they hold enough substance for rhetorical discussion.

Censorship & Picture Books

Censorship can be traced back as far as 500 B.C. in Greece. One of the first censors in recorded history was the Greek philosopher and author, Plato who:

“Used many of the same measures suggested by contemporary censors.

He believed that many of the writers of his time were out of step with his thinking and he made sure that they were banished from society because they were not working for the well-being of the young” (Bushman, p.253).

There is a notion that certain texts corrupt the youth, something that author’s today face when it comes to specific genres of literature. A recent example of censorship in Puerto Rico was in 2014 when author Tere Marichal Lugo began getting backlash and began being censored for writing the children’s story “*Carla Feliz*” which is about a transgendered girl and her journey to realizing who she is.

Censorship is defined by the American Library Association as “The removal, suppression, or restricted circulation of literary, artistic or educational materials- of images, ideas, and information on the grounds that these are morally or otherwise objectionable in light of standards applied by the censor”. As of 2009 the most “dangerous” book to teach in schools is *And Tango Makes Three*, one of the texts utilized in this research. Reasons for the banning and censoring of this book were the themes of homosexuality and same-sex parenting presented in the story. Furthermore, the other text utilized in this research, *King & King* has also made banned book lists across the United States in the last ten years.

Books are usually challenged for the best intentions, however, challenges do not simply involve a person expressing a point of view; rather they are an attempt to remove material from the curriculum or library, thereby restricting the access of others. It is important to note that the texts should be taken as a whole and not out of context. Many challenges occur for specific characters or certain parts without the dire consideration for the text in its entirety.

Book banning and censorship in Children’s Literature has been a present phenomenon for ages. We have to remember how censored books reflect values and ideologies of the current society and its binaries to its readers. In *Literature and Revolution* Leon Trotsky argues “the author can find material for his art only in his social environment and transmits the new impulses of life through his own artistic consciousness” (p.1008). This gives the author the freedom to create a piece of literature from what they know and become as creative as they desire. Many have come to see Trotsky’s argument, that a text is a direct result of the social constructions and ideologies

in which it was created, as a reality for the existing notion of constructed binaries and the effect they have on censorship. Pat Scale's article *What Makes a Good Banned Book?* argues how censors ban books for different reasons and how that sentiment changes over time. Scales mentions there are some scopes, which are always in the eyes of the censors, like texts that deal with homosexuality, such as *And Tango Makes Three* and *King & King*. Scales states, "these books are the biggest targets of censor" (p.534), simply because of the nature of the themes they contain.

Picture books, like the ones used in this research, may very well be our first formative experience with literature. We are immersed in these texts, since we begin our official education at grade level. Picture books give children the assertion of visual and narrative needs needed to acquire primary education at a certain age. Chava and Schwarcz explain that the picture book "attempts to entertain...and aid the child by offering plots, relationships, and metaphors for the various facets of the search for identity" (p.84). Therefore, picture books give children a sense of reliability and realness when confronting the narrative style of life. However, this is not the case with children that gravitate to the queer identity. Indeed, relevant depictions of queer themes lacks in children's literature, since many texts "deal more with adult homosexuality than with childhood queerness" (Huskey, p.66). Furthermore, picture books dealing with the LGBTQ experience are being removed from schools or not taught with the correct affirmation and knowledge of the queer context.

When adulthood is reached we create a distinction between what it means to be a child and what it means to be an adult. This, however, falls into socially constructed binaries of limiting what we do not understood while being a child and what we do not

wish to understand as an adult. According to Rose, childhood can be constructed through the ascription of innocence, and childhood innocence “involves the assumption that children are without distinction of sexuality” (p.29). This leaves the construction of childhood sexuality out of rhetoric when referring to LGBTQ picture books, since it is the notion of society to leave the child innocent of contact when dealing with queerness, since they are assumed to be heterosexual.

The Association for Library Services to Children defines picture books as “a book that essentially provides the child with a visual experience. It has a collective unity of story line, theme, or concept, developed through the series of pictures of which children are intended potential audiences. The book displays respect for children’s understanding, abilities and appreciations.” Traditionally picture books are no more than 32 pages long, plots are simple with one main character that creates an emotional connection with the child. The picture or illustrations are on every page or every other page as they play a key role to telling the story.

To read a picture book the child “reads” and assimilates the picture, as an adult would read applicable wording or texts in any other book. The story and illustrations are unified so a child may get the sense of the story through the picture and/or illustrations. Huck & Kuhn in their text *Children’s Literature in the Elementary School* establish “Picture books are very important for young children whose appreciation and interest level far surpass their reading ability” (p.26). Picture books content is expressed through its images, the story is told with pictures through its visual language. Nodelman states “illustrations imply an overall mood or atmosphere that controls our understanding of the

scenes depicted” (p.42). I would add that illustrations are in complete congruence with the text stated in a particular text.

The text and illustrations should work in congruence to create and enhance the meaning within what is being read. Therefore, with all the aforementioned the picturebook should work in tandem and be a seamless work of both, art and text. Moreover, a picture book, which presents an entire story through illustrations, not only reflect the idea of the narrative, but it moves the story along to the point that if no texts are presented in a specific page the image itself would guide the narrative.

The way the visual stimuli works is not how the norm of communication is transmitted. Visual illustrations use “systems of signification that work to create specific expectations in viewers” (Nodelman, 42). Nodelman also notes “like other aspects of pictorial significance, these systems depend upon a viewer’s prior acquaintance with a variety of forms of experience” (p.42). By noting this we can derive that the reader has in his or her hands, or in this case, in there eyes the power to receive the message they want to receive from the images in the book. It relates back to meaning; based on our knowledge and our experiences, as a reader we decide what message we take away from the images we are looking at. Hence, the more experience and knowledge we have, the more information we will be able to receive from the visual texts of the story. Here is where a slight problem would arise, since the pictures are a direct result of the narrative text, the child reader does not have an open opportunity to introduce their own knowledge and experience. It is with this didacticism that authors utilize the wording and texts presented in the books, in order to achieve a level of comprehension from the reader.

Chapter 3: Tango and King: Creating Queer Discourse in Picture Books

Picture books may very well be the first formative experience with literature that a child might have. Children are unclear of what lies ahead and even as adults they are not at all clear of the future, yet, when coming into adulthood we tend to create a clear distinction between our childhood past and our adulthood present. This is done, greatly in part to create a divide between children and adults, but Chava also explains that it is also done, “for us to step away from our past childhood and not reconnect with in certain aspects of it” (p.96). In *The Case of Peter Pan, or, The impossibility of Children’s Fiction* Jacqueline Rose asserts how “...childhood is culturally constructed through the ascription of innocence...” (p.43), the assumption created here is that in order for children to be innocent they are nurtured to stay away from any sexual related discourse and identities. Hence, opening the door for teachers to not bring in queer literature into the classrooms. If our initial thought is to stray children from any sexual discourse, we undoubtedly do the same, with more emphasis, to the queer child. Rose argues, “It is in our nature to assume that children are to follow the norm of society, which is to be heterosexual” (p.59). By means Warner explains how, “...the very existence of a queer child goes against the expected heteronormality of a future, promising adult” (p.77). This assumption can become problematic, when referring to the child because, if a child is without any sexual desires how can they be assumed to be appointed any sexual orientation, like heterosexuality.

Schwarcz explains how subtextualization in Children’s Literature comes from the act of editing and/or avoiding any sexual topics in the texts. Children should have the tools available, in this case LGBTQ text, regarding a safe space for the discourse of such

topics. We often hear that every written text is open to interpretation; this can be assumed in queer readings since there is nothing that asserts us a heterosexual understanding of a clear homosexual text. In regards to this Butler notes, "...as we are often unable to detach identity from gender it is necessary instead to develop non-normative identities by subverting and disrupting cultural assumptions" (p.4). We can see how we have come to the realization that subtext within children's queer literature makes us use culturally familiar archetypes regarding heterosexuality, hence, opening the door for heteronormative binaries.

This chapter looks at themes and subtexts presented in, *And Tango Makes Three* as well as *King & King*, while aiming to illustrate how these books present queer themes through narration and visuals in such a way in which heteronormativity cannot be affirmed in the pedagogical context.

And Tango Makes Three

And Tango Makes Three, written by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell, and *King & King*, written by Linda de Haan & Stern Nijland, came into play at a time where most queer children's books like, *Heather Has Two Mommies* and *Daddy's Roommate*, dealt with adult sexuality, not giving the opportunity for queer child discourse. The following close reading will aim to look at the ideologies pervading these queer children's books to make visible the contextual subtexts of LGBTQ themes and how they are presented and cannot be evaded within the specified text.

A story about two male chinstrap penguins in New York City's Central Park Zoo, which begin exhibiting mating-relationship rituals and eventually are given an egg; they hatch the baby, named Tango, and raise it as their own. The book takes us on their

journey as they exhibit the same patterns of penguin love as a male-female penguin couples. *And Tango Makes Three* deals with homosexuality as well as same-sex parenting. Both of these themes have been conflicting ideas for not incorporating this text to children in classrooms, yet the importance and relevance of same-sex couples and homosexuality in society is undeniable.

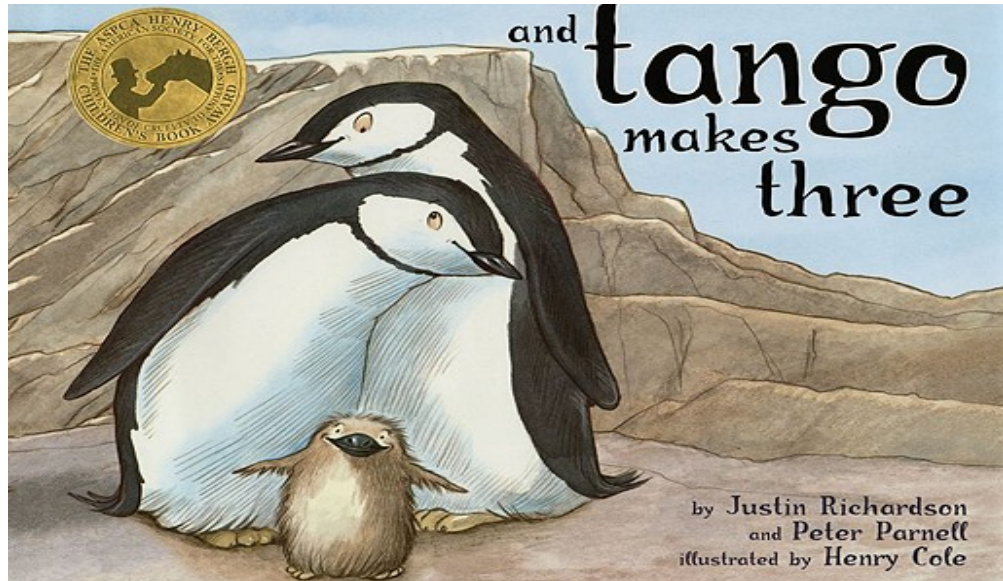


Image 1: *And Tango Makes Three* Cover Art

And Tango Makes Three opens up to the idea to have children understand, what has been previously established as different, in order to promote equality and avoid discrimination in the established cultural binaries. Kirk Fuoss suggests that while homosexuality is kept away from children's literature and classrooms we give in to the idea that, "...heterosexuality is the natural state of society permitting such ideology to persist" (p.163). There is still great discourse on when a child becomes aware of their sexuality and sexual intentions yet as Kathryn Stockton explains, "The queer child, whatever its conscious grasp of itself, cannot unfold itself according to the category established by society" (p.283). Whether or not the child is aware of his or her sexuality

and sexual desires they should be allowed to look at and understand texts in regard to queer themes in order to have a safe place to engage in discussion and understanding on culturally different established binaries.

As established beforehand, the downfall of children's LGBTQ texts is that most of them deal with queerness from an adult perspective and do not give way to a coherent explanation to the child, hence giving leeway to the queer child to not be recognized and accepted in the construction of societal binaries, thereby, blocking the construction of identity. What is interesting about *And Tango Makes Three* is the way in which, Richardson and Parnell as well as Illustrator Henry Cole, introduced the theme of homosexuality in the text. In order to locate queer themes we have to understand heterosexual ideologies inherently presented in LGBTQ literature.

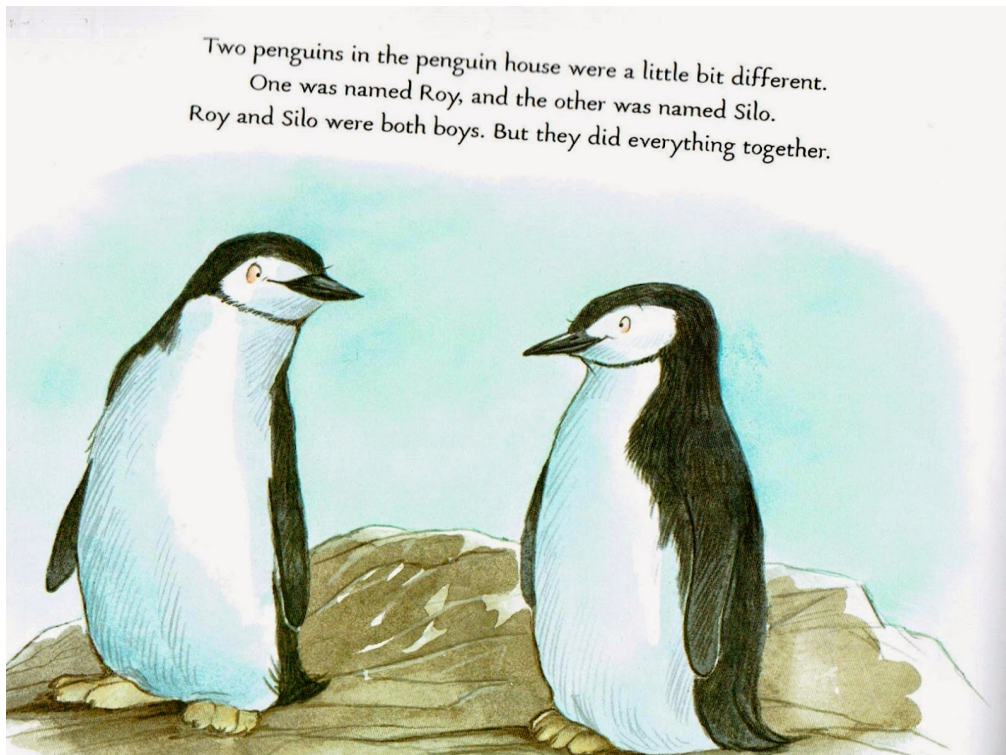


Image 2: Silo and Roy established as a couple

A heterosexual reading does not necessarily exclude a queer understanding of the

text nor a queer reading exclude a heterosexual understanding of it but, what needs to be understood is that both can be presented at the same time, depending on the reader. Butler asserts, "...we are unable to detach identity from gender, therefore, it is necessary instead to develop non-normative identities by subverting and disrupting cultural assumptions" (p.4). When this happens we are avoiding the recognition and acceptance of the queer child by simply making use of details and familiar binaries within the text. There are three ways in which queer subtexts and/or themes are developed and presented, as pointed out by Doty in *Making Things Perfectly Queer: Interpreting Mass Culture*:

"...a) intentional inclusion on the part of an author, illustrator, or publisher...b) a specific reception position on the part of a reader and/or c) through the inclusions of culturally recognized markers of queerness (whether intentional or not)..." (p.xi)

The story explores how Silo and Roy followed the typical line of love between penguins:

Two penguins in the penguin house were a little different, one was named Roy, and the other was named Silo. Roy and Silo were both boys. But they did everything together. They bowed to each other. And walked together. They sang to each other. And swam together. Wherever Roy went, Silo went too. (Richardson & Parnell 7-8)

It is here that we actively see how the author clearly does not shy away from the storyline about to male penguins, which can be interpreted as a homosexual relationship. Butler reminds us that it is clear how "...gender and sexuality matters in order to understand who you are and understand your actions" (p.83).

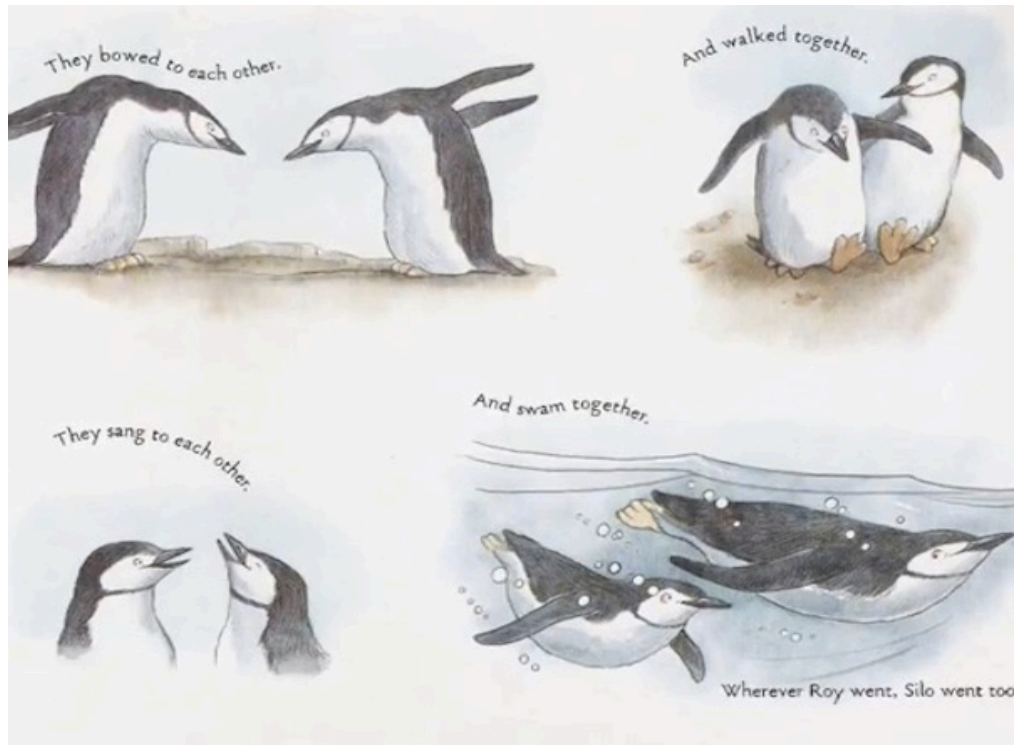


Image 3: Silo and Roy presenting relationship rituals

In the middle of the book the caretaker realizes how the girl penguins stayed away from Roy and Silo and how they would wound their necks around each other and demonstrate how much in love they are; they did this by having the same patterns as heterosexual penguin couples. It is near here that:

Roy and Silo watched how the other penguins made a home. So they built a nest of stones for themselves. Every night Roy and Silo slept there together, just like the other penguin couples (10).

It is when the caretaker notices this, that he places an egg, which was abandoned by another penguin couple in the middle of Roy and Silo's nest:

Roy and Silo knew just what to do. They moved the egg to the center of their nest. Every day they turned it, so each side stayed warm. Some days

Roy sat while Silo went for food. Other days it was Silo's turn to take care of their egg. (Richardson & Parnell 19-20)

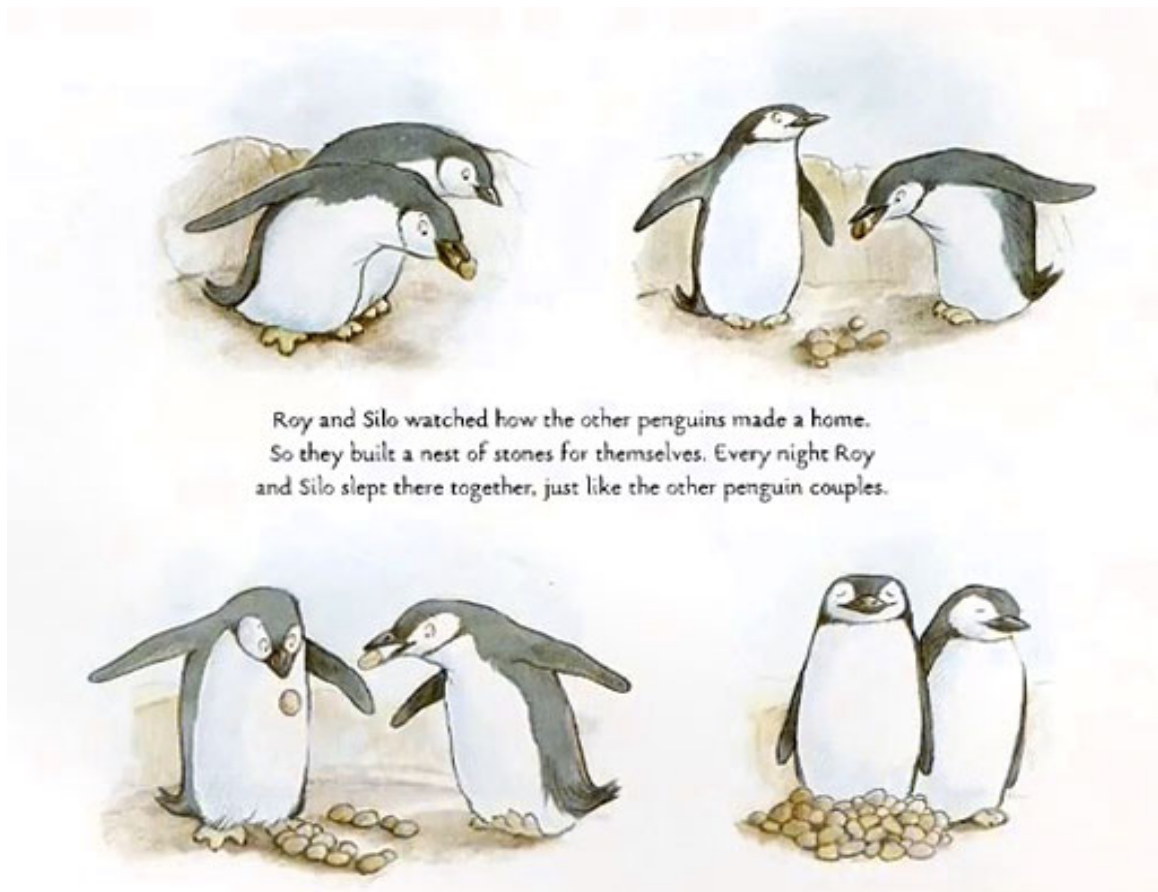


Image 4: Roy and Silo create a nest

It is after this that Tango is born and, they as a family do everything the rest of the penguin families would do; swim, play, and sleep together. They became the zoo's main attraction because of their non-normative status as a homosexual penguin couple and their willingness to adopt a hatchling from other penguins and raise it as their own. The actions taken by both, Silo and Roy, clearly remount to the idea presented by Butler when it comes to performance and performativity, "...the actions taken when performance comes into play can be derived and/or separated when acknowledging performativity"

(p.78). It is clear that the author presents us how both penguins discern from what it's expected from them and act out on what they feel is their identity.

The story's plot is very simplistic in nature as it tells the true story of two homosexual penguins to children. What I find most interesting about *And Tango makes Three* are the illustrations. I find them to be ambiguous enough in order for the reader to not have pre-conceptions of whether the penguins are male or female. The reader just focuses on the fact that they are reading a story about two penguins in love. Nodelman states how, "illustrations imply an overall mood or atmosphere that controls our understanding of the scenes depicted" (p.42). I would add that the illustrations are in complete congruence with the text stated in the book, as the images show the love story and the description being narrated in the text. The text and illustrations work in tandem to create and enhance the meaning within *And Tango Makes Three*.

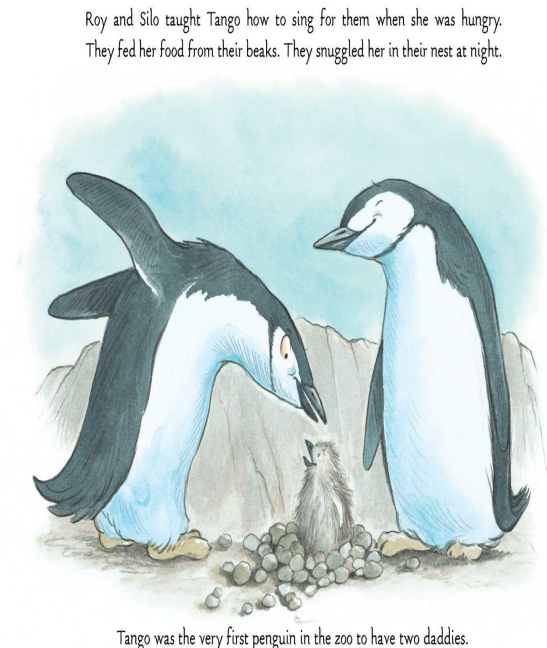


Image 5: Roy, Silo and Tango

The way Cole provides the artistic form of his illustrations take the reader in the visual journey they are absorbing from the story. The mood and context is created by the simplistic and right to the point imagery at hand, enhancing the emotional attachment we may have to the story and illustrating the sense of colorful and happiness. The way our visual stimuli works is not how the norm of communication is transmitted. Visual illustrations use “systems of signification that work to create specific expectations in viewers” (Nodelman, 42). Nodelman also notes “like other aspects of pictorial significance, these systems depend upon a viewer’s prior acquaintance with a variety of forms of experience” (p.42). By noting this we can derive that the reader has in his or her hands, or in this case, in there eyes the power to receive the message they want to receive from the images in the book. It relates back to meaning; based on our knowledge and our experiences, as a reader we decide what message we take away from the images we are looking upon and what messages simply do not work in our favor. However, it is clear that the text presents us enough evidence regarding queer themes, that the reader does not have the opportunity to evade such topics.

The more experience and knowledge we have, the more information we will be able to receive from the visual texts of the story. Here is where a slight problem would arise, since the pictures are a direct result of the narrative text, the child reader does not have an open opportunity to introduce their own knowledge and experience. It is with this didacticism that Richardson and Parnell address the narrative, giving the reader a slight view of the story speaking at, rather than to, the child.

King & King

King & King also comes in a time where children’s fables were only falling into

the heteronormative spectrum. With this text we get your typical formula of a prince in search of the love of his life, which, is regarded as a princess. The queen pressures him to search the kingdoms for a beautiful bride in order to have the big lavish wedding the kingdom wants to see. At the end of the story he does meet the love of his life but in a random turn of events he falls for the brother of a young lady he was meeting with. The interesting thing about *King & King* is that the way the main character and what could be considered his queerness is presented to the reader in a more direct but subtle way.



Image 6: *King & King* cover art

The basic set up, for the formulaic, story begins when the queen walks into the prince's room:

Wake Up! Called the queen. We're going to have a little talk you and I.

I've had enough! You're getting married and that's all there is to it

(Haan, Nijland 3-6)

While returning to the text above we get the usual rhetoric we have heard for years in stories. The Queen or King is pressuring the prince or princess to find a person to fall in love with in order to become the rightful heir to the kingdom. The difference here is not, so much what the queen asks, but instead the answer the prince replies:

Very well, Mother. I'll marry. I must say, though, I've never cared much for princesses. (Haan, Nijland 9)



Image 7: The King's mother

Going back to what Nodelman argues, we directly get an opportunity to achieve our own conclusions based on our previous experiences. It is here we get to bring forward our precognitions of heteronormativity or the understanding of the hidden queer subtext. The rhetoric behind the texts easily suggests that the prince is not interested in the heterosexual relationship; in this case he does not care for a princess. The question would

be: Will a child reader pick up on this? Probably not. It is inducted in such a subtle way that not even an adult reader might pick up on the message being delivered by the prince. What I find interesting is what his mother, The Queen, responds to him, “To your future happiness!” (p.12). There is no indication that The Queen picks up on the response she has just gotten from her son or whether or not we can deduce that she decides to ignore the comment altogether, as she is surely only worried for his happiness and his quest for love. This can be a direct narration of what the authors want us to see; the non-heteronormative dilemma of a prince from the LGBTQ community.



Image 8: The King

The visual subtexts within this text may very well be indicative on how the authors present us with the idea of an LGBTQ character. The King is presented to us in a fashionable statement, by this I mean, he has luxurious fur robes, an over the top personality and, in what may be a suggestive pose, he is flaunting high-heel platform

shoes. These might be considered direct themes of homosexuality as we see a man in high heels, yet the story and the illustrations subtly introduce us his form and character in a way in which those aspects maybe overlooked. When doing this, the author has an authoritative figure in the King and is clearly affording us the possibility of hope and strength in a powerful stature; breaking from the idea that being queer does not lead to positive reinforcements in society.

This, of course, goes against the heteronormal clothing options of the heterosexual community. This gives readers the image of a man in, what could be considered drag. Butler suggests, “the critical promise of drag does not have to do with the proliferation of genders...but rather with the exposure of the failure of heterosexual regimes ever fully to legislate or contain their own ideas” (p.24). Therefore, drag could be used to express how you feel; who you are and not necessarily align with the specific gender you were assigned or identify with. The King gives us exuberance in the way he moves and is presented in the imagery form the book, this might very well fall into the practice of performance established by Butler while expressing his performativity through drag, enhancing his identity.

King & King helps unfold themes of queerness in a very nuanced and complex way. This narrative presents us very subtle subtexts of homosexuality, how they are able to break free of the binary heteronormative constructions and how subversive they may become. We see this in the King’s quest to find a princess and, as an end result, find his true love. We are presented various images of a variety of women who throw themselves at the King yet he is apprehensive and dismiss their actions. In *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature* Trites argues that in order to explore the

queerness within these texts the reader needs to bring his or her own textual and cultural knowledge in order to achieve a level of understanding of the explicit underlying subtexts in the story.

Nodelman, who engages us to bring in our own experiences based on what we read, establishes that a child would be able to bring his own interpretation of the image. A child reader does not have the necessary experience to decipher what that image might entail. Was this image done intentionally or in a way to mock the LGBTQ community? It might very well be up to the reader to get a grasp on how the image or text evades our contextual reading in order to present us what the author wants us to see. For example, one of the women the King meets in the book is a Mumbai Princess who comes because she had heard about his long arms. The way the text presents us this princess intertwined with the written text could undoubtedly be interpreted as sexually implicit. The King says to the princess, “Boy, those long arms will certainly come in hand...when waving to the people” (p.14). What can be presented with this text and visual imagery of such is how there is a pause between his comments in the wording about long arms. An avid reader may see this text and how the illustration works with the text to the point that a sexual innuendo is being presented in a child’s book. This is of great importance because the author clearly established such a visual, going against what Trites establishes, “...society tends to regulate sexuality very carefully in Children’s Literature” (p.84).

Sexual acts in Children’s Literature are very limited. Society has always been keen on presenting children with sexuality in order to preserve their innocence, yet Trites considers, “...sexual acts as metaphors for empowerment” (p.68). In many ways acting on sexuality in Children’s literature may be controversial yet beneficial to a child to

understand how human beings act. Michael Foucault differentiates between sexuality and sex; he expresses how sex is, “A biological act” (p.69) while sexuality is, “...a simplistic construct of language” (p.70). We see how this difference is a simple way to regulate between both in our society. King & King finishes off, with what I believe to be the most interesting part of the book, a kiss between both Kings, since they were married at the end.



Image 9: The Kiss

The last visual we see from the book is both Kings embracing in a loving kiss with each other, yet, we do not actually get to see the kiss because there is a heart placed right above the lips of each. Two things happen or are intended with that final illustration. First, the subversive way that the kiss is not shown may very well be, as Trites says, “to not leave childhood and innocence behind” (p.84). Even if the Kings seem to be

empowered throughout the story they are repressed. Trites argues how the shared presentation of a sexual act between two people in Children's texts, especially a homosexual act, is to be feared due to the lack of understanding of what goes against the established heteronormative patterns.

Second, the very notion of obscuring what the authors wanted to present creates unconscious prejudice among its readers. For this text censor motivation is based on heteronormative precognitions and speculations in which imagery containing homosexual sexuality may be damaging to the child. Therefore, censor's limited accessibility to the fact that the King married his one true love and such theme, of homosexual love, has caused panic amongst them. Scales argues:

Picture books featuring gays and lesbians are now the biggest targets of censors. *Annie on My Mind* by Nancy Garden had its day in court in Kansas in the 1990's; more recently, *Daddy's Roommate* by Michael Willhoite and *Heather has Two Mommies* by Lesléa Newman have been topic of heated discussions on talk radio shows across the nation. *And Tango Makes Three* by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell is the latest book to cause debate on this subject (p.534).

The presented illustration, which was censored in *King & King*, show the reader human behavior when referring to a kiss. It is evident that through these texts readers can be aware and learn about the LGBTQ community, but while they keep getting censored and such themes are alienated, the level of understanding and empathy desired will never be reached and we will maintain a one-dimensional view of culture and society.

Existing Themes in Texts

Three main themes emerging in the texts looked at in this research are presented in this section. Some themes are shared by both texts and others are solely seen in one of the two. The purpose of presenting these texts, as stated before, is to see how enriched these texts are with each theme and how the uses of these texts in the classroom do not allow the construction of heteronormativity in the educational context.

Coming Out

The coming out process is a very personal decision in which a person decides to tell his or her sexuality to another person(s). The coming out process could be as simple as accepting yourself that you are queer or as complicated as telling your family and friends about your sexuality and sexual identity. Referring back to Butler, we can consider using the terms of performance and performativity to full extent when dealing with this personal process. This can be done because it is considered that when a person comes out as queer there is a persona in place and on hold to see how the other people react and then decide what step to take.

In *King & King* the Prince never really does a coming out process or scene. Yet there is a hidden subtext and very subtle moment within the story in which the Prince let's out a comment regarding a queer innuendo. Going back to the aforementioned lines from the book there is a part when the king says: "...I've never cared much for princesses" (p.9). This line said to his mother can be taken as a subtle coming out scene that was either, never picked up by the mother or simply ignored. Throughout the book we don't see the coming out process as a main focus of the narrative. Yet, when the prince meets

the love of his life, which ends up being another man, we never get any dissonance from his mother or from the people in the kingdom that attend his wedding.

Acceptance

Acceptance is one of the most important aspects on why LGBTQ literature should be presented in classrooms. Within the last few years the cases of queer people being harassed or worse in the media has gone up, which is in contradiction with recent measures taken by the government to protect LGBTQ citizens and the culturally significant advances that have been made like, marriage equality.

In *And Tango Makes Three* we see how, Silo's and Roy's caretakers, are accepting and understanding that the two have engaged in relationship rituals. This is even more evident the moment the caretaker gives them an egg to see if they follow the procedure to take care and hatch it. By the end of the story, and the most significant acceptance we see, is how the zoo's visitors are happy and emotional to see Tango and her family. They become the main attraction of the zoo even though they are clearly two male penguins in a relationship, moreover, in a family.

When it comes to *King & King* we see acceptance in various aspects. The first being that his mother, The Queen, does not approach him about a comment he said in which he argues he does not like princesses. This can be seen as dismissive, hence, opening the door to the fact that The Queen accepts her son. Further along in the story when he meets the love of his life, The Queen sees them, she is drawn and presented with a clear happy expression, giving the reader the sense that she is happy for her son and does not mind that he has found love with another man. Furthermore, the day of the wedding is presented in the story as a loving festivity with the townspeople, The Queen

and the other man's family. This goes with Warner's idea that, "When accepting is done with total clarity the person defying as queer will be free of any notions holding them back" (p.94).

Family Inclusion

Family as a cohesive institution is presented in both texts. In *And Tango Makes Three* we see how the constitution of the family occurs. In it Roy and Silo begin a relationship utilizing the rituals used by heterosexual penguins. When tango comes into the picture they, as a family, have swimming time together and become the main attraction of the zoo. Tango becomes the first penguin to have two dads. The idea of inclusion about a different family comes into play since the caretakers, after noticing Silo and Roy's relationship, do not try to break them up or separate them. They are aware of what is going on and do not try conform heteronormative norms within that specific relationship.

When talking about *King & King* we see family constituted right from the beginning. We see this with the mother and her relationship with her son, the King. She prompts him to find a Queen yet, is not bothered when he clearly expresses he does not want one. Furthermore, we see how his mother is happy with the fact that he finds love even when it is with another man. She promptly promotes the wedding and is front seat when her son marries his husband. Trites argues how, "...it is important for children to understand how families are crucial to the formation of the self and the constitution of the family entity in society" (p.83). It is clear how both these texts fall in Trites idea of how families are important and make an impression in the reader, especially children.

It is more than evident that both these texts are saturated enough with queer

themes and subtexts to the point that they can be used in classrooms with no opportunity of evading those themes and fall into heteronormativity. Permitting the inclusion of these texts guides' students to a better understanding of what is considered different and what goes against the norm helps teachers and students identify and establish a community of empathy from early years. Permitting such theme become taboo or be censored does not have a positive outlook on education, quite the opposite; it takes pedagogy in a obscure route which censors a part of the student population. If teachers give students the opportunity to understand and internalize the LGBTQ community they will certainly have an opportunity to grow as human beings and have a sense of conscious with what goes against the status quo.

Chapter 4- Conclusion- What happens next?

The purpose of this research, as previously established, was to engage in the discussion, integration of LGBTQ Children's literature and how to look and approach the themes presented in those texts. The idea behind the use of these texts was not to use them as an accurate portrayal of every student's identity. On the contrary, while some students may be able to relate to the themes presented in these texts, the purpose was to guide a discussion and understanding of this genre of literature in order to explore and understand the LGBTQ community as a whole.

This analysis serves as a starting point and basis towards the development of rhetoric and correct approach of LGBTQ Children's texts and their integration in the Puerto Rican classroom. The integration of this literature is not aimed to replace traditionally used texts nor does it cover traditional features of implementing the teaching of this type of genre. Teachers are mostly faced with difficult and controversial topics within classrooms. Not only are teachers under informed about LGBTQ texts but they also do not have the proper training and resources to approach them within the pedagogical context. Furthermore, students are also misinformed, or worse, come with negative pre-cognitions of these themes, hence creating a negative and sometimes hostile environment in classrooms.

Even with these negatives it is important to create a diverse environment in classrooms for the benefit of students as a whole. Clarke states, "English studies is 'utterly troubled' by diversity" (Bauer and Clarke 294). We, as educators, have come to realize that diversity in every sense of the word cannot be ignored within pedagogy. With the turn of the 21st century, our classrooms have grown as diverse niches that embody

every section of society. If we have learned anything from literature is that it deals with different perspectives that our students and teachers have. Kopelson points out that queer theory “challenges [readers]...to reorganize or, perhaps more accurately, to disorganize, rather than merely organize around, out terms [regarding sexuality and gender]” (p.19). It may be time for educators to overcome any fear of what they consider different and be confident in addressing issues that are considered socially contentious.

The discussion and integration of *And Tango Makes Three* and *King & King* integrate many transversal themes emphasized by the Department of Education in Puerto Rico. By discussing these texts, students and teachers are able to explore related areas to these themes and this leads into perspective the benefits of LGBTQ literature in classrooms. In this research it was discovered that with the correct analysis, rhetoric, discussion and approach of these texts there is no room for the expansion of heteronormative binaries in the Puerto Rican classroom due to the extensive queer themes imbedded in the texts. Both texts at hand are so enriched with LGBTQ narratives and imagery that it provides a large enough spectrum of discussion and rhetoric between teachers and students. When the implementation of these texts occurs there is a notion of understanding to what is considered different by binary and social standards.

There is an argument in society that LGBTQ issues should be included in the pedagogical context for children. We can see how the integration of these themes, in some pedagogical situations, can work; but the problem becomes a high-risk station when we want to make the integration into a broader spectrum. By exploring themes of sexuality and gender within certain pedagogical contexts, students as well as teachers are pushed to expand their knowledge and are forced to critically think about society, culture

and the reality of the LGBTQ community. It is crucial to eliminate false conceptions with factual knowledge about the LGBTQ context, thereby, promoting critical thinking, instead of imposing preconceived heteronormative. Playful and conceptual teaching of the texts looked upon in this research may become some of the earliest lessons about heteronormative and queer subjects for children. These tactics become of great importance in the students ideals of what is different but Warner argued, that all these text introductions “are produced within a heteronormative framework of compulsory heterosexuality” (p.65). It is then up to the teacher to be aware of the framework being created to impart educational objectives in students since, by cultural standings, they are assumed to be learning the heteronormative construction of a correct society.

Teaching *And Tango Makes Three* and *King & King* in the classroom requires teachers to be able to guide students through different views in order to have the opportunity to construct their own meanings of social binaries and specific cultural constructs. Remembering that Butler establishes gender and sexuality as social constructions, it is important for the student to understand that they do not have to oblige by the specific binaries given to them by society. She reminds us that heterosexuality and it's constructs subverts the homosexual foundations of children: “Heterosexuality is cultivated through prohibitions, and these prohibitions take as one of their objects homosexual attachments, thereby forcing the loss of attachments” (p.83). For Butler, becoming hetero or homosexual requires a person to move beyond what expectations are put on them by society and have them absorb what works for their specific definition and identification of constructs and binaries they see themselves as. Therefore, giving the teacher enough room to discuss identifiable subjects with their respective students.

There are some educators, however, that argue the use of these texts in classrooms is not necessary, because they are creating an environment of commodity and acceptance through the use of anti-bullying, anti-homophobic workshops and curriculums. It is my observation that these curriculums and workshops are not enough to create a sensible and understandable environment needed for further generations. Edelman delves into queerness and it's importance of implementing it in the classrooms because they give students the opportunity to delineate their own explicit guidelines of what works for them in cultural context by stating:

On every side, our enjoyment of liberty is eclipsed by the lengthening shadow of a Child whose freedom to develop marks of fixation of heteronormativity: an erotically charged investment in the rigid sameness of identity that is central to the compulsory narrative of reproductive futurism. (p.64)

There is a need for schools and school districts to implement directly related LGBTQ curriculums and texts so there can be a thorough understanding of the LGBTQ context, community and spectrum as a whole. It is only then that students and teachers will have the opportunity to really approach and discuss that spectrum at large.

Pedagogical Implications

Integrating *And Tango Makes Three* and *King & King* will have one immediate advantage for both students and teachers. It will bring diversity to materials teachers use to structure their classes. The more options of materials given to teachers the greater chance of implementing diversity exist. Both *And Tango Makes Three* and *King & King* provide current insight and relevance when implemented in the Puerto Rican classroom.

Both texts are designed for readers four and up, hence giving readers the opportunity to understand themes of gender, same-sex families, heterosexuality, homosexuality and heteronormativity. By utilizing these texts teachers can discuss the realities of the themes and the treatment of the LGBTQ community at large. Sieben and Wallowitz point out, “a powerful lens with which to disrupt traditional power hierarchies and imagine alternate ways of being in the world” (45). The different notions already explained, *Queer and Gender*, usually focus on normality binaries (man/woman, black/white, gay/straight) and how we tend to use and define these binaries in order to create the sense of identification within our culture.

The teacher has the opportunity to discuss what it means to be different, when referring to hetero and homosexuality, and the chance to challenge constructs imparted to students since a young age. They have the opportunity to discuss the love parents have for their children and the love partners have for each other even though the characters of *And Tango Makes Three* Roy, Silo and Tango, as well as *King & King's* characters, Bertie and Lee, do not follow the traditional family and relationship established by society and its binaries. The integration of both these texts in the Puerto Rican classroom will help to derive the ideas and notions that many people have when concerning gender. It is of crucial importance to engage in a discussion of discriminatory constructs and ideas of society in order to challenge and address them in the pedagogical setting. By using these texts we give teachers and students leeway to think outside the box as well as develop their own interpretations and notions of what Butler described as “an apparatus by which the production and normalization of gender, queer, and heterosexual notions take place in our societal every day life” (p.92).

Lesson Plans

In light of what has been discussed, as an educator, I have realized that this research is necessary for pedagogy, in both schools and college level courses. This research helped me to find solutions for the lack of inclusion and LGBTQ texts and how to approach such texts in classrooms. Furthermore, Queer texts have not been explored as an educational tool within the Puerto Rican classroom. Thus, it is my desire that this research will further help to better understand this genre of literature and it is approached with the up most empathy in classrooms. As a result, it is pertinent for my research to be beneficial to educators in Puerto Rico, be it in public or private schools, specifically the English Curriculum Framework and the University of Puerto Rico- Mayagüez.

The Department of Education of Puerto Rico requires teachers to create daily lesson plans based on the specific grades they teach as established by the English Curriculum Framework and Curriculum Maps. While teaching INGL 3104 at UPRM I have adapted weekly lesson plans as presented by the Department of Education into my courses, fitting the specific objectives established by the university. Therefore, I have provided a series of lesson plans created as a weekly unit when teaching *And Tango Makes Three* and adaptable with any type of LGBTQ related literature (see appendix C). The unit presented in the appendices are based and adapted from requirements the Department of Education in Puerto Rico established in Policy Letter *Planning the learning Process 06-2014-2015*. The unit is aimed towards the development of critical thinking, writing skills while including interdisciplinary topics and taking students to be aware of concepts of gender, heteronormativity and queerness. These plans were designed based on the objectives and guidelines established by the UPRM for the

Intermediate courses in the English Department. These lessons cover a five-day session out of a larger unit of critical and analytical thinking and writing in the course. It is important to point out these lessons are solely based on the picture book *And Tango Makes Three* yet; the unit is adaptable to all grade levels and could incorporate any LGBTQ related text and themes. There is also a list of guide questions used in the unit, which lead students to begin their journals (see appendix B).

Limitations of the Study

This research promotes the integration of *And Tango Makes Three* and *King & King* in pedagogical contexts and how to approach the themes and subtexts presented within them. However, the scope of this research is limited to two children's picture books, hereby, solely focusing on texts, which may be considered for children only. It is important to keep in mind that the texts at hand are being used as general LGBTQ related texts and not classifying them solely as only being for children. The lesson plan unit presented is focused at college students who were assigned these texts as part of their syllabus. It is, however, important to integrate these texts at early ages in order to contextualize the reality of society in younger generations. Nevertheless, through the use and integration of these texts, as well as others, the discussion of these themes and subtexts can be used and adapted for any grade level.

One critical component in this discussion was student's background and knowledge of gender and sexuality notions needed to understand such texts and themes. As such a discussion of these notion varies according to the background of children, which are exploring these texts, and how they are affected by such topics as well as the knowledge and context created by the teacher. Also, it is important to keep in mind that

each student is different and they can react in many ways when approached with these texts in the classroom.

Furthermore, due to the questions and objectives of this specific research, there are some aspects of LGBTQ themes and their integration in the pedagogical context that can be explored and expanded upon. One of the major areas, which can be explored, is the integration of these themed texts at specific age groups and grade levels. This leads the way for LGBTQ literature to be adaptable to any grade level and school context. In the same manner, future research could also address an examination of LGBTQ literature in conjunction to other types of genres and themes, which are crucial to the formation of literary curriculums in pedagogical contexts. For example, instead of focusing on picture books there can be an exploration of Young Adult novels like *Rainbow Boys*, which explore other themes presented in the LGBTQ context.

An additional point of future research could be the integration of specific cultural, geographical settings and contexts. This research is a general discussion of these texts and how to approach them within the Puerto Rican classroom. It would be beneficial to explore the same approaches and texts in different pedagogical contexts like the United States and beyond. Since each context differs in cultural binaries and constructs as well as their specific interpretations it would be beneficial to see this research implemented in other pedagogical settings. Furthermore, if this study were to be redone the researcher would look at the fantasy elements of the texts and relations they might or might not create with reality. By saying this, I refer to the fact that *And Tango Makes Three* takes a fantastical approach to a conventional binary by giving us themes through animals instead of human characters and *King & King* also gives us the elements of fantasy by

presenting us with castles and kings. It would be of interest to look at how students react to these aspects and if they might be able to intertwine them with the conventional and realistic aspects of their experience in society.

One last point for future research could be an in-depth exploration of students who identify within the LGBTQ context and how each can reflect their experience through these texts. Since the study can be adapted for any age and grade level utilizing the texts at hand and/or looking at other picture books or texts with LGBTQ themes, the researcher could look at how students who identify within the LGBTQ community relate to the themes presented in the texts.

Closing Remarks

The LGBTQ community and their allies are fearful of the reactions they might receive from parents, friends, teachers and society in general when they identify within the LGBTQ community. Therefore, many often remain silent of expressing who they really are, sometimes for their entire lives, and not being true to themselves and to others around them. What there needs to be is exploration and integration of LGBTQ literature in classrooms and the pedagogical context in general.

At moments in which teachers and students are able to see a rise in critical rhetoric and discourse of what used to be considered different, it is extremely important for teachers to open their classrooms and their minds to the use of LGBTQ literature. With this research, I hope to have addressed and eased any concerns over the use of *And Tango Makes Three* and *King & King* as well as how to approach the themes and subtexts embedded in each. As an educator, I believe we must challenge students and ourselves to break the notions established by society and have them critically think in order for them

to come to their own conclusions. These texts, although not considered traditional educational literature, provide the chance for critical analysis and assessment of LGBTQ representations and different elements used to introduce such texts into pedagogical discourse.

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Appendix A: Policy Letter 19-2014-2015



25 de febrero de 2015

Carta Circular Núm.: 19-2014-2015

Subsecretario para Asuntos Académicos, Subsecretaria de Administración, Secretario Asociado de Educación Especial, Secretarios Auxiliares, Director Interino del Instituto de Capacitación Administrativa y Asesoramiento a Escuelas, Directora del Instituto para el Desarrollo Profesional del Maestro, Directores de Oficinas, Programas y Divisiones, Directores de las Regiones Educativas, Ayudantes Especiales a cargo de los Distritos Escolares, Superintendentes de Escuelas, Superintendentes Auxiliares, Facilitadores Docentes, Directores de Escuela y Maestros

POLÍTICA PÚBLICA SOBRE LA EQUIDAD DE GÉNERO Y SU INTEGRACIÓN AL CURRÍCULO DEL DEPARTAMENTO DE EDUCACIÓN DE PUERTO RICO COMO INSTRUMENTO PARA PROMOVER LA DIGNIDAD DEL SER HUMANO Y LA IGUALDAD DE TODOS Y TODAS ANTE LA LEY

El Gobierno del Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico, ejerciendo su responsabilidad social de promover los derechos humanos, sostiene como principio fundamental la búsqueda de la equidad entre los seres humanos, como lo estipula el Artículo 1 de la Declaración Universal de Derechos Humanos (1948): "Todos los seres humanos nacen libres e iguales en dignidad y derechos y, dotados como están de razón y conciencia, deben comportarse fraternalmente los unos con los otros". El Departamento de Educación de Puerto Rico (DEPR) es indispensable en ese esfuerzo. El sistema de educación pública, ente fundamental de la sociedad puertorriqueña, no puede estar ajeno a las desigualdades sociales y le corresponde fomentar una cultura de paz, justicia y equidad.

La meta de esta política pública consiste en afianzar e institucionalizar la equidad entre los géneros en todas las disciplinas académicas, niveles, iniciativas y proyectos del DEPR. Por esta razón, el DEPR se compromete a transformar e implantar los contenidos y las prácticas curriculares, proveer servicios y difundir información que promuevan la equidad entre los géneros. De esta manera, se eliminan las desigualdades en materia de educación entre los géneros y se avanza hacia el logro de la equidad. Además, el DEPR está comprometido con impulsar y garantizar la equidad entre hombre y mujer dentro de su fuerza laboral.

Según los documentos internacionales de las conferencias mundiales e interamericanas,¹

¹ *Convención para la Eliminación de Todas las Formas de Discriminación contra las Mujeres (CEDAW, 1979), Educación para Todos (Jomtien, Tailandia, 1990), Convención Interamericana para Prevenir, Sancionar y Erradicar la Violencia contra la Mujer (Belém do Pará, 1994), Consenso de Montevideo sobre Población y*



han surgido importantes mandatos por los que los gobiernos nacionales se comprometen a promover la equidad de género en la formulación de todas las políticas y programas públicos. En la Convención sobre los Derechos de la Infancia se establece como un principio fundamental el derecho a la no discriminación de los niños y las niñas.

Base Legal

El Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico tiene leyes que imponen al DEPR la obligación de incorporar la equidad de género de manera transversal en los ofrecimientos curriculares de todos los niveles escolares, así como garantizarla en su fuerza laboral. Algunas de las leyes que sustentan la equidad entre hombre y mujer en la educación son las siguientes:

1. La Constitución del Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico, en su Artículo 2, Sección 1, proclama que **la dignidad del ser humano es inviolable y todas las personas son iguales ante la ley**. De ese modo se consagra en máxima jerarquía el principio de no discriminación por motivo de raza, color, sexo, nacimiento, origen o condición social, ni ideas políticas o religiosas. Además, se afirma que **"las leyes y el sistema de instrucción pública encarnarán estos principios de esencial igualdad humana"**.

Asimismo, la Sección 5 del Artículo 2 establece que **"[t]oda persona tiene derecho a una educación que propenda al pleno desarrollo de su personalidad y al fortalecimiento del respeto de los derechos del hombre [y la mujer] y de las libertades fundamentales. Habrá un sistema de instrucción pública el cual será libre y enteramente no sectario"**.

2. La Ley Núm. 149-1999, conocida como Ley Orgánica del Departamento de Educación de Puerto Rico, según enmendada, reconoce la responsabilidad de ofrecer educación más allá de las áreas tradicionales. Esta ley establece que la educación se oriente hacia el desarrollo y formación integral del estudiantado; por lo tanto, la equidad de género es un elemento fundamental de la función educativa.

En particular, el inciso (bb) del Artículo 6.03, Facultades y Obligaciones del Secretario en el Ámbito Académico, dicta que se "establecerá, en coordinación con la Oficina de la Procuradora de las Mujeres, un currículo de enseñanza dirigido a promover la equidad de género y la prevención de violencia doméstica. Además, tendrá la obligación de implantar este currículo a través de los ofrecimientos académicos regulares, o integrándolo a los programas académicos y otras modalidades educativas".

Desarrollo (2013), Conferencia Mundial de la Mujer Beijing (1995), Conferencia Educación para Todas (Dakar, 2000), Beijing + 5 (2000) y Beijing + 10 (2005).

3. La Ley 212-1999, Ley para Garantizar la Igualdad de Oportunidades en el Empleo por Género, establece en su Artículo 2 que: "Es política del Gobierno de Puerto Rico proveer igualdad de oportunidades en el empleo, independientemente de su género. Se ordena a las agencias e instrumentalidades antes señaladas y estas tienen la obligación de desarrollar e implantar Planes de Acción Afirmativa para garantizar que no se discrimine contra ningún empleado o aspirante a empleado por razones de su género, conforme se dispone en el Artículo 3 (d) de la presente Ley".
4. La Ley 217-2006, Protocolo para Manejar Situaciones de Violencia Doméstica en el Lugar de Trabajo, requiere que, en aras de promover proactivamente la política pública de cero tolerancia hacia la violencia doméstica, se promulgue e implante un protocolo para manejar situaciones de violencia doméstica en lugares de trabajo o empleo, el cual debe incluir una declaración de política pública, una base legal y un procedimiento uniforme a seguir, entre otras disposiciones.
5. La Ley 75-2007, Ley para ofrecer talleres educativos en todos los niveles del Sistema dirigidos a prevenir el abuso sexual infantil, establece que el secretario del Departamento de Educación, por medio del Programa de Salud Escolar, de la Secretaría Auxiliar de Servicios Académicos y con el apoyo y colaboración del Centro de Ayuda a Víctimas de Violación del Departamento de Salud, coordine y ofrezca talleres educativos en todos los niveles del Sistema dirigidos a prevenir el abuso sexual infantil.
6. La Ley 246-2011, Ley para la Seguridad, Bienestar y Protección de Menores, según enmendada, establece en el Artículo 7 que el Estado es el contexto institucional en el desarrollo integral de los menores. En cumplimiento de sus funciones deberá:
 - a. Asegurar las condiciones para el ejercicio de los derechos y prevenir su amenaza o que se afecten mediante el diseño y la ejecución de políticas públicas sobre infancia y adolescencia.
 - b. Educar a los menores y las familias sobre la importancia del respeto, la dignidad, los derechos de los demás, la convivencia democrática, los valores humanos y la solución pacífica de conflictos.
 - c. Prevenir y atender de forma inmediata las diferentes acciones violentas que atenten contra el derecho a la vida y la calidad de vida de los menores.
7. La Ley 22-2013, Ley para establecer la Política Pública del Gobierno de Puerto Rico en contra del discrimen por orientación sexual o identidad de género en el empleo, público o privado, declara como política pública del Gobierno de Puerto Rico el repudio a la discriminación por orientación sexual o identidad de

género en el empleo y reafirma los principios de inviolabilidad de la dignidad del ser humano y la igualdad de todas las personas ante la ley.

De igual modo, el Título IX de las Enmiendas de Educación de 1972, 20 U.S.C. Sec. 1681-1688, prohíbe el discrimen por razón de sexo en programas y actividades educativas que reciben ayuda económica federal. El Departamento de Educación Federal emite normas de aplicación de estos preceptos legales, entre las cuales ha indicado la responsabilidad que tienen las instituciones receptoras de fondos de evitar reforzar los estereotipos de género.² Estas directrices federales son el requisito legal al amparo de la reglamentación federal bajo Título IX.

Conceptos básicos

Según la Organización Mundial de la Salud (OMS, 2013) la equidad es la resolución de inequidades que son innecesarias, evitables e injustas. La equidad es distinta al concepto de la igualdad. No significa una distribución igual de recursos, sino una distribución diferencial de acuerdo con las necesidades particulares de cada persona. La OMS (2013) explica que "el género se refiere a los conceptos sociales de las funciones, comportamientos, actividades y atributos que cada sociedad considera apropiados para los hombres y las mujeres". Este concepto contrasta con el concepto sexo, el cual se refiere a la distinción entre hombres y mujeres a base de sus características físicas, anatómicas y fisiológicas. El género se refiere a las expectativas socioculturales de los hombres y de las mujeres, respecto a sus cualidades, comportamientos o roles. Esta distinción produce inequidad cuando se favorece sistemáticamente a uno de los dos grupos sobre el otro o cuando se limitan las posibilidades de las personas por razón de estereotipos de género.

La equidad de género significa una distribución justa de los beneficios, el poder, los recursos y las responsabilidades entre las mujeres y los hombres. La inequidad de género se refiere a las desigualdades injustas, innecesarias y prevenibles que existen entre las mujeres y los hombres. Esas desigualdades suelen privilegiar lo masculino, subordinar a las mujeres y afectar a todas las personas. La inequidad de género y el discrimen producen violencia contra las niñas y las mujeres. Esto también afecta a los niños y a los hombres, ya que las expectativas de género se relacionan con los altos niveles de violencia y conductas de riesgo que se asocian con el género masculino. A nivel internacional (ONU), se ha establecido que los esfuerzos de prevención de la violencia deben enfocarse en la niñez y la juventud, pues es mediante la formación de valores de respeto y equidad que se logra combatir más efectivamente la violencia de género.³ Siendo así, es crucial tomar acción afirmativa a favor de la equidad de género.

² Oficina de Derechos Civiles, Departamento de Educación Federal, *Questions and Answers on Title IX and Single-Sex Elementary and Secondary Classes and Extracurricular Activities*, 1 de diciembre de 2014.

³ ONU Mujeres, *Enfoque en la Prevención de la Violencia*. Disponible en: <http://www.unwomen.org/es/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/prevention#sthash.5t1WbQYh.dpuf>

Para lograr la equidad de género, es necesario atender los retos existentes e identificar instancias concretas de inequidad. En el marco de los derechos humanos, se considera que la perspectiva de género es una herramienta necesaria para identificar los desafíos que enfrenta el sistema en su trabajo por la equidad. Según el Instituto Interamericano de Derechos Humanos (2008),⁴ "la perspectiva de género constituye un enfoque teórico de análisis que facilita repensar las construcciones sociales y culturales de la distribución del poder entre mujeres y hombres y que afectan de manera directa, las formas de relacionarse de las personas en todos los ámbitos. Es una herramienta conceptual y práctica que permite desarrollar propuestas metodológicas de análisis, con el fin de variar la forma de estas relaciones, que han derivado en discriminación, falta de equidad, poco acceso a oportunidades y al desarrollo, así como poco conocimiento de sus derechos[...]". Entender estas diferencias socioculturales permite que se identifiquen necesidades de las personas que se relacionan con su género, de modo que se puedan satisfacer adecuadamente y propender al pleno desarrollo de la persona. La perspectiva de género no es un fin en sí mismo, sino que es una herramienta para lograr la equidad.

Aspectos pertinentes

El Departamento de Educación de Puerto Rico implementará un plan de acción en el que se concrete la implantación de su política pública con respecto a la equidad de género en el ámbito escolar. Este plan encamina sus esfuerzos hacia:

1. La incorporación de la perspectiva de género de manera transversal en los currículos escolares, las prácticas educativas y las actividades extracurriculares. La perspectiva de género se refiere al "enfoque teórico de análisis que facilita repensar las construcciones sociales y culturales de la distribución del poder entre mujeres y hombres y que afectan de manera directa, las formas de relacionarse de las personas en todos los ámbitos".⁵ Su implementación transversal significa que esta herramienta conceptual se incluirá en el conjunto de contenidos de enseñanza integrados a las diferentes disciplinas académicas y se abordan desde todas las áreas de conocimiento. Se denominan así porque es un tema que atraviesa cada una de las áreas del currículo escolar y etapas educativas.⁶

⁴ Instituto Interamericano de Derechos Humanos, *Herramientas básicas para integrar la perspectiva de género en organizaciones que trabajan derechos humanos* / Instituto Interamericano de Derechos Humanos, San José, C.R.: IIDH, 2008.

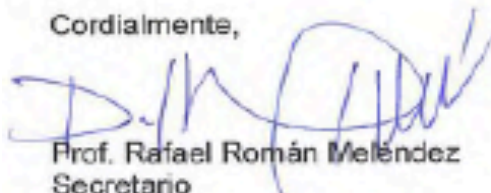
⁵ Instituto Interamericano de Derechos Humanos, *Herramientas básicas para integrar la perspectiva de género en organizaciones que trabajan derechos humanos* / Instituto Interamericano de Derechos Humanos, San José, C.R.: IIDH, 2008.

⁶ *Proyecto de Renovación curricular*, 2003.

2. El desarrollo de estrategias y metodologías educativas para fomentar la equidad entre hombre y mujer en la educación.
3. La identificación de contenido sexista en los textos y materiales docentes para evaluar sus manifestaciones y reflexionar críticamente sobre su contenido.
4. La capacitación del personal sobre la equidad de género en todos los programas académicos, en los programas de educación ocupacional, educación especial y servicios comunitarios.
5. La divulgación de información sobre la equidad entre hombre y mujer en los medios tecnológicos.
6. El establecimiento de acuerdos de colaboración con universidades y otros organismos relacionados con la preparación de personal docente y no docente para que se incorpore la equidad y la perspectiva de género en las políticas públicas institucionales.
7. El uso de lenguaje inclusivo en las prácticas, los materiales educativos y las comunicaciones de carácter administrativo.

Esta carta circular deroga todas las disposiciones anteriores y otras normas establecidas, mediante cartas circulares o memorandos que estén en conflicto, en su totalidad o en parte, con lo que aquí se establece.

Cordialmente,



Prof. Rafael Román Meléndez
Secretario

Appendix B: Guide Questions for the Journal Activity

And Tango Makes Three

1. *And Tango Makes Three* is a true story. What does this mean? Do you know of other true stories that have been made into books?
2. “Family” is a prominent theme in *And Tango Makes Three*. Discuss the concept of a “family.” What constitutes a family? Tango’s family is different, but how is it the same as any other family in the zoo?
3. Roy and Silo are a little bit different from the other penguins in the zoo. What does it mean to be different? Why is it sometimes good to be different?
4. The Central Park Zoo, where *And Tango Makes Three* takes place, is home to all kinds of animal families. But Tango’s family is unlike the other families in the zoo. Tango has two fathers instead of the traditional mother and father. Do you have a nontraditional family, or do you know someone who does? Do you think that Tango is missing out by not having a mother?
5. Mr. Gramzay, the penguin keeper at the Central Park Zoo, is very sympathetic to Roy and Silo. He is accepting of their differences and wants to help them become a family. How can you learn from Mr. Gramzay’s actions in the book? Who else is accepting of Roy, Silo, and Tango in this story?
6. Mr. Gramzay decides to give Roy and Silo an egg to hatch in their nest. Why do you think he does this? What does he see in Roy and Silo that makes him decide that they would be good at raising a baby? Do you think that Roy and Silo are good parents? Why?
7. Responsibility, devotion, caring, and persistence are all important themes in this book. How so? Can you identify different parts of the book where these themes are obvious?
8. Think about Roy and Silo and their behavior in the book, both with each other and with Tango. How is penguin behavior similar to the behavior of humans? How is it different?

Appendix C: Lesson Plan Unit

Lesson Plan #1

Unit Theme: Genres Overview, Elements of Fiction (Adaptable to all levels)

Transversal Themes: Identity, Culture

Desired Result (Enduring Understanding):

Students will understand that the intended meaning in fiction and picture books is influenced by cultural constructs and the world around us.

Summative Evaluation (Performance Task):

By the end of the unit students will complete and present a reflective journal related to the discussion of *And Tango Makes Three* and/or *King & King* as they explore the meaning of identity and cultural binaries as a concept and the elements of influence to society and the manner in which they are reflected in Puerto Rican culture.

Learning Plan (Suggested Learning Activities):

Standards & Expectations (INGL 3104 Objectives):

INGL3104.O.1 - Reacting to and interpreting works of literature through the adoption of traditional modes of literary analysis such as comparison and contrast, in-depth study of a literary work, or analysis of elements of fiction.

INGL3104.O.3 - Demonstrating knowledge and recognition of elements of fiction, drama and poetry in selected works of literature in analysis and interpretation of these readings in writing.

Academic Strategy:

Participatory Approach (Critical Thinking)

Objective:

By the end of the unit the students will be able to define the concepts of gender, heteronormativity and queer.

Initial Activities:

Students will define, discuss and analyze the concepts of gender, heteronormativity and queer after being introduced to them by the teacher. This will enable the students to discuss the concepts as presented in the text.

Development Activities:

After the discussion students will give examples of how these concepts are seen and perceived in society. Students will be asked to divide into small groups and create a visual aid on the perceived notions of those concepts.

Closing Activities:

Afterwards the teacher will show them a short clip on how the concepts can be effective in society.

Formative Assessment:

Teacher-Student Questioning and Discussion

Materials:

Board, markers, computer with projector and speakers.

Lesson Plan #2

Unit Theme: Genres Overview, Elements of Fiction (Adaptable to all levels)

Transversal Themes: Identity, Culture

Desired Result (Enduring Understanding):

Students will understand that the intended meaning in fiction and picture books is influenced by cultural constructs and the world around us.

Summative Evaluation (Performance Task):

By the end of the unit students will complete and present a reflective journal related to the discussion of *And Tango Makes Three* and/or *King & King* as they explore the meaning of identity and cultural binaries as a concept and the elements of influence to society and the manner in which they are reflected in Puerto Rican culture.

Learning Plan (Suggested Learning Activities):

Standards & Expectations (INGL 3104 Objectives):

INGL3104.O.3 - Demonstrating knowledge and recognition of elements of fiction, drama and poetry in selected works of literature in analysis and interpretation of these readings in writing. **INGL3104.O.4** - Collecting and evaluating evidence from a text and presenting such evidence effectively in support of the current writings and/or arguments.

Academic Strategy:

Participatory Approach

Objective:

By the end of the class the students will be able to identify and explain how the story at hand presents the concepts of queer, heteronormativity and gender.

Initial Activities:

A brief discussion of the previous class will occur. After the discussion the teacher and students will read, as a group, the picture book chosen for the unit (*And Tango Makes Three*).

Development Activities:

After reading the story the students will evaluate the picture book in small groups with a rubric (SEE APPENDIX) handed out by the teacher.

Closing Activities:

The teacher and students will have an aloud discussion on the evaluations of the book based on the rubric used for the activity.

Formative Assessment:

Participatory Approach

Materials:

Picture Book, evaluating rubric.

Lesson Plan #3

Unit Theme: Genres Overview, Elements of Fiction (Adaptable to all levels)

Transversal Themes: Identity, Culture

Desired Result (Enduring Understanding):

Students will understand that the intended meaning in fiction and picture books is influenced by cultural constructs and the world around us.

Summative Evaluation (Performance Task):

By the end of the unit students will complete and present a reflective journal related to the discussion of *And Tango Makes Three* and/or *King & King* as they explore the meaning of identity and cultural binaries as a concept and the elements of influence to society and the manner in which they are reflected in Puerto Rican culture.

Learning Plan (Suggested Learning Activities):

Standards & Expectations (INGL 3104 Objectives):

INGL3104.O.3 - Demonstrating knowledge and recognition of elements of fiction, drama and poetry in selected works of literature in analysis and interpretation of these readings in writing. **INGL3104.O.4** - Collecting and evaluating evidence from a text and presenting such evidence effectively in support of the current writings and/or arguments.

Academic Strategy:

Participatory Approach

Objective:

By the end of the class the students will be able to identify and explain how certain aspects like family, love, relationships and homosexuality are presented in the story.

Initial Activities:

A brief discussion of the previous class will occur. After the discussion the teacher and students will have an in depth analysis of the images and texts of *And Tango Makes three*. Themes of family, love, relationships and homosexuality will be explored and analyzed based on how they are presented in the story.

Development Activities:

After the in-depth discussion has occurred the students will be given guide questions (SEE APPENDIX) to use for their personal journal. They will begin a brainstorm session on what they will write about in the journals.

Closing Activities:

The teacher will address a recap of the themes presented in the story and any doubts about the journal will be answered.

Formative Assessment:

Participatory Approach (Critical Thinking)

Materials:

Picture Book, guide questions, journal notebook.

Lesson Plan #4 & #5 Two-day Activity

Unit Theme: Genres Overview, Elements of Fiction (Adaptable to all levels)

Transversal Themes: Identity, Culture

Desired Result (Enduring Understanding):

Students will understand that the intended meaning in fiction and picture books is influenced by cultural constructs and the world around us.

Summative Evaluation (Performance Task):

By the end of the unit students will complete and present a reflective journal related to the discussion of *And Tango Makes Three* and/or *King & King* as they explore the meaning of identity and cultural binaries as a concept and the elements of influence to society and the manner in which they are reflected in Puerto Rican culture.

Learning Plan (Suggested Learning Activities):

Standards & Expectations (INGL 3104 Objectives):

INGL3104.O.3 - Demonstrating knowledge and recognition of elements of fiction, drama and poetry in selected works of literature in analysis and interpretation of these readings in writing. **INGL3104.O.4** - Collecting and evaluating evidence from a text and presenting such evidence effectively in support of the current writings and/or arguments.

Academic Strategy:

Writing and Rhetoric Approach

Objective:

By the end of the second day of this activity the students will have finished their journals writing pieces on *And Tango Makes Three*. The students will have been able to connect cultural reality and how it is presented in the story.

Initial Activities:

The teacher will conduct a brief discussion on the guide questions the students have as well as any doubts with their writing pieces.

Development Activities:

The students will have the class period to, individually, work on their journals about the story. It is important for the teacher to go around to clarify and help the students with the mechanics of writing within their pieces.

Closing Activities:

The teacher will collect the journal notebooks as this is an in class activity.

Formative Assessment:

Participatory Approach

Materials:

Picture Book, guide questions, journal notebook.

Observation:

A six-day could be added to the unit if the teacher wants the students to share their writing pieces in front of the class and have small presentations and discussion on them. This is optional.