

**A STUDY OF LGBTQ+ CHILDREN'S LITERATURE RECOMMENDED FOR
USE IN MANITOBA EARLY YEARS CURRICULA**

by

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Abstract

In this qualitative research study, I investigated current LGBTQ+ children's literature that was recommended for early years students (K- Grade 3) by five local organizations for use in Manitoban schools. This study is significant to the field of education, since it shows how the recommended texts may support the acknowledgment of LGBTQ+ people and families. I provide a list of 22 LGBTQ+ children's literature books recommended from five local organizations that are responsible for selecting, recommending, and purchasing books for teachers and parents: 1) The Manitoba Learning Resource Centre, 2) The Manitoba Curriculum Support Centre, 3) The Winnipeg Public Library, 4) The Rainbow Resource Center, and 5) The Direction des Ressources Éducatives Françaises. The research questions guiding this study were: (1) What LGBTQ+ literature is most often recommended and made available to teachers in Manitoba for students from Kindergarten to Grade 3? Has the availability of LGBTQ+ children's literature increased or changed in response to the implementation of Bill 18?; (2) What is the readability level of this literature?; (3) How do the language and illustrations in the recommended books voice, silence, or shape the following values and messages: a) homonormativity; b) ally or inclusive stances; c) conceptualizations of LGBTQ+ people and families? There were three implications that emerged from the findings from this research project. First, publishers seem more comfortable publishing homonormative narratives and they continue to omit certain members of the queer community, for example, bisexual parent. Second, suggested readability levels related to LGBTQ+ children's literature seem to be determined by the content of the story instead of the linguistic criteria. Finally, there are differences in the portrayal of LGBTQ+ families between the English and French language books.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction and Overview

This thesis originated from a personal interest in children's literature that was highly connected to my work context as a provisional Reading Clinician. My role is to help improve students' learning through "instruction, assessment, and leadership" (Board of Directors, January 2000, International Reading Association, p. 101). I work collaboratively with teachers to support the implementation of reading programs that meet their students' needs. However, when some students continue to experience difficulties with literacy, there are times when I conduct formal and informal assessments to help determine their strengths and needs in order to help fine-tune their current programming. I always share results from my assessments with the following parties: school personnel and parents, and at times with other clinicians such as Speech and Language Pathologists or Psychologists. These interdepartmental consultations among clinicians provide additional support that helps develop appropriate literacy programs that best meet the students' needs. There are times when these consultations also determine if further assessments from other disciplines are needed. I also support a variety of school-based literacy initiatives either through consultations with staff, students and parents, and provide workshops to school staff, students and the community at large, all in an effort to enhance literacy instruction.

I was also motivated to do this research because as a gay father of now three adult children, I always was saddened by the fact that none of their classroom books depicted families like ours. Though I made sure that these books were available to my children at home in their family setting, the ones that represented having and living with a gay dad were seldom discussed or acknowledged in their school literature. In my many years of being a teacher and as a father with my own children, I have noticed that when I use literature where children can relate to the

characters, their attention, understanding of the stories, and enjoyment towards reading increases. Aspects of family, identity and self-identification to texts will be further discussed in Chapter 2. However, what remains important here is that providing children's literature that is diverse in the classroom allows teachers opportunity to "close the gaps between aging textbooks and the continuous shifts in our diverse global society" (Thompson & Lehr, 2008, p. 247). Having diverse literature helps "combat socialized aspects of heteronormativity and other forms of oppression" (Lester, 2014, p. 244). It is important to note that teachers are professional allies in children's education. Teachers' years in education training and accessibility of resource materials through their field of work provide them with many opportunities to consult with colleagues and other professionals that help to them choose materials that best suit their curricula. Therefore, through this research study, I aimed to provide more opportunities for teachers to explore children's literature that acknowledges queer people and families.

As a researcher in the field of reading, I also wanted to investigate the reading levels/grade levels of the current contemporary queer literature for students in Kindergarten to grade 3. This research is important to anyone working with primary students because there is a proven increase in motivation towards reading when a reader directly self-identifies to the literature read in class. Because of this need for students to self-identify and become independent readers, a great deal of time is spent in primary grades teaching students to read using a variety of leveled texts. Children's identification to text (Burt, Gelnow & Lesser, 2010; Casper & Schultz, 2000; Dedeoglu, Ulusoy & Lamme, 2012; Ebe, 2010; Herzog, 2008; Letts & James, 1999; Miller, 2014; Olta & Pardo, 2015; Zygmunt, 2015) and the use of leveled texts to support early literacy acquisition skills in young children in primary grades (Clay, 1991; Fitzgerald et al., 2015; Fountas & Pinnell, 1999) have been studied. Several studies have already

demonstrated that students who do not develop good literacy skills in their early years end up struggling in school (Clay, 1991; Linan-Thompson, Vaughn, Hickman-Davis, Kouzekanani, 2003; Mathes et al., 2005).

My professional role and knowledge of this research influenced my desire to know whether contemporary LGBTQ+ children's literature is written at a level that is suitable for children from Kindergarten to Grade 3 to read independently. The current context of where I work as a reading clinician influenced my decision to use reading levels as a way to determine whether these books can be read independently. I am a reading clinician in a school division that relies heavily on reading levels to help teachers and reading clinicians alike guide our decisions about matching the right linguistically-leveled books to the right readers. However, it should be acknowledged that reading levels, especially those that are determined by external criteria, are often contested and suggested to be used with extreme caution by many reading researchers and teaching professionals. For example, Harvey & Ward (2017) write:

For too long, we have assessed children's reading based on one vertical measure: reading level. We deem readers strong or weak based simply on the level at which they can read. A reading level certainly indicates to some degree a reader's proficiency. But reading is about much more than levels (pp. 22-23).

Although using reading levels as the only way to assess a reader's proficiency or level of independence is to be discouraged, I believe reading levels can help teachers and reading clinicians determine students' reading abilities on instructional texts. Instructional texts are texts that offer adequate literacy challenges to students while providing information to the observers (teachers and reading clinicians) as to which literacy skills students have mastered and which ones they need to learn next in order to continue to make literacy gains. Some of the skills that

can emerge from these observations are: “letter-sound associations; punctuation; decoding strategies; phonics; “and” vocabulary” (Wharton-McDonald & al., 1997, p.519).

Identifying reading levels to mainstream children’s books allows teachers the opportunity to enhance their book diversity used in guided reading activities and classroom libraries in an effort to create a more balanced literacy approach. Having a collection of books that students can read, but also may be of greater interest to them enhances their motivation in wanting to learn to read. In addition, as a reading clinician, I see the value of attaching levels to mainstream books to help in the assessment process of students’ reading proficiency and comprehension skills. Sometimes the leveled literature that I use as part of my assessment does not match with my reader’s interests, and therefore, a lack of interest or background knowledge in the text at hand can undermine a student’s overall performance as will be further discussed in the next chapter.

In this thesis, I developed an inquiry into whether recommended LGBTQ+ children’s literature is written at a level that students could be read independently. In addition, I aimed to uncover the values and messages about LGBTQ+ people and their families that children may learn from reading this type of literature. Two questions lingered as I began this work: (1) Is the information depicted in these books representative of all members of the LGBTQ+ community? and (2) Can students independently read these texts or do they need an adult to read the texts aloud to them? I used these questions as reference points throughout the study.

As laws towards the acceptance of queer people continue to evolve, it was important to find out if there existed a collection of recommended Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender or

Queer (LGBTQ+)¹ children's literature that teachers could use to support their literacy and classroom programs in Manitoba. This study is also important as it provides teachers with a list of recommended LGBTQ+ resources from Manitoba Education and Training and other public agencies to use with their students and supplement their reading programs or classroom libraries. It also provides teachers with a reference list of recommended materials to use with their students when discussing families and other types of loving relationships.

Theoretical Groundings for This Study

Queer Theory

As the theoretical foundation, queer theory best guided the design of this study and provided a powerful analytical lens for this research project. Queer theory emerged as a new focus generated from both postmodernist and poststructuralist theories. Postmodernist theory looks at how knowledge is created within today's world conditions, and how knowledge creates divergent viewpoints among people of social classes, race, gender and various group affiliations (Creswell, 2013). Before poststructuralist theory emerged, structuralist theory conceptualized knowledge as being acquired through the identification of differences within social structures (Williams, 2005). For example, researchers grounding themselves in structuralist theory might categorize the types of work according to roles that men and women do. As many researchers began to shift towards poststructuralist theory, they would now interrogate and critically examine the assumptions held within the limitations and/or binaries found within structures.

Poststructuralist theory became a springboard for researchers to challenge preconceived notions of existing social structures and construct knowledge in new ways.

¹ LGBTQ+: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer people + "indicate inclusion of a broader range of identities not represented by LGBTQ alone" (Taylor et al, 2018, p. 156).

Emerging as a poststructuralist theoretical framework, queer theorists focus their attention on socially constructed and negotiated understandings of individuals' gender identity and sexuality. Queer theorists look at how genders and sexualities are fluidly constructed and performed (Butler, 2007) in social settings, while challenging the binary structures (male/female; hetero/homo, etc.) in which society has conventionally confined them (Creswell, 2013; Robbins, Goss, & McInerney, 2016; Skyes, 2014; Smith & Shin, 2015). Queer theory allows for a plurality of identities rather than specific categories and promotes identity-differences that would have been otherwise rendered silent and/or perverse.

As a theoretical framework for both educational research and pedagogical approaches, queer theory invites researchers, teachers, and reading clinicians to question the socially, historically, and politically constructed binary categories in which gender (male and female) and sexuality (heterosexual or homosexual) are usually assumed and maintained (Martino & Cumming-Potvin, 2011). Queer theory helps people understand how human experiences have been organized and represented through the use of categories, and how heterosexuality is assigned the status of normal and any other categories are assumed deviant. Consequently, teachers and students can learn to acknowledge that some individuals or groups in our society are marginalized and treated differently than others because of these maintained social structures and ideologies. When this happens, these teachers and students can begin to promote inclusivity and acceptance of others (Kumashiro, 2000). Researchers and teachers who are able to adopt queer theory as a lens can question and “destabilize normative associations among gender, sexuality, bodies and desires” (Ryan & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2013, p.142).

Embedding queer theory into pedagogical and research approaches provides teachers, researchers, and reading clinicians with the ability and skills to use every day texts as a way to

discuss and question gender, sexuality, and love. Two questions could be: Who is privileged and silenced? What kinds of behaviours are presented as normal? (Letts & Sears, 1999; Martino & Cumming-Potvin, 2011; Ryan & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2013; Schall & Kauffman, 2003; Thomas, 2016; Youngs & Serafini, 2011). If teachers and reading clinicians were to approach pedagogy through queer theory, they would then have the skills to better address sexism, and homophobic and heterosexist attitudes in their classrooms (Kissen 2002; Letts & James, 1999; Warner, 1993). Therefore, queer theory best suited this research study, because it addressed my need to understand how the participants viewed gender identity, sexuality and diverse families, and how these views affected the purchasing of LGBTQ+ children's literature. Using a queer theory lens to analyze children's literature helped produce insights into whether LGBTQ+ identities within these books were homogenized, perpetuate hetero or homonormativity, or stifle queer performativities (Butler, 2007) and representations.

Critical Literacy Theories

Researchers and theorists interested both in language and literacy events and LGBTQ+ experiences are likely to also situate their work within a critical literacy framework. As Sangster, Stone & Anderson (2013) explain, critical literacy transforms teachers' views of teaching literacy from developing a personal capacity in "the ability to read and write" to collectively placing their learners' experiences of language and literacy into "a web of social and cultural practices" (p.617). Within a critical literacy framework, the classroom pedagogy shifts from students who are passive learners to active thinkers and activists. Students and teachers together are asked to look at texts and deconstruct them. In doing so, they develop skills to question and critique systems of powers and injustice resulting in social justice advocacy thinking and activities within the classroom setting. Janks (2010) describes how critical literacy

teachers are “interested in what all kinds of texts (written, oral, visual) do to readers, viewers, and listeners, and whose interest are served by what these texts do” (p. 19). She describes four interdependent key components of critical literacy: domination, access, diversity, and design (Janks, 2000). Although I am just beginning to explore critical literacy theories, this approach became an important way for me to frame my analysis of the language and illustrations of the LGBTQ+ children’s literature recommended within this study (see Chapter 3 for further discussion on the critical literacy analysis approach and Chapter 5 for a critical discourse analysis of the books).

Background to the Study

LGBTQ+ rights have been fought and won over the past few decades around the world and in Canada, but issues of rights and equity continue to be contested. Children’s literature portraying LGBTQ+ families, love, and relationships have been in existence for quite some time. Yet even today, teaching and reading about LGBTQ+ topics in schools remains controversial and, at times, censored.

A Historical View on Banned Queer Children’s Literature

The process of censoring children’s literature has been in existence for many years. Censorship appears when certain published stories don’t match society’s norms, so the stories are no longer made available or accessible to the public (Burnett, 2016). LGBTQ+ children’s literature is often the target of public complaints because the texts may depict family types and loving relationships that differ from what many people know and accept as normal. However, since we live in a pluralistic society, it is understandable that not all children’s literature that is published responds to all “beliefs and values, family backgrounds and child-rearing practices” (Saltman, 1998, para. 43).

There are people and parents alike in our society who object to children's books that present "flank language and profanity, images of nudity, references to sexuality, especially homosexuality" because they presume this kind of content will not be age appropriate (Saltman, 1998, para. 21.; see also Gross, 2014). For many, this fear is based on a feeling of losing control over their parenting rights, what their children ought to know, and how and when it should be taught in school. Consequently, when teachers use diverse literature to teach the curricula, there may be times when the literature goes against parents' belief systems. When this happens, some parents feel alienated within public schools and disconnected from teachers in general. As a result, complaints about the content within children's literature often come from a common core based on feelings of anger and fear. Parents' belief systems may be threatened when children are exposed to literature that they see unfit. However, when parents try to protect their children from certain texts out of a fear that their children's understanding may be undermined, or belief systems unsettled, the result can be that the children become narrower thinkers with fewer world perspectives.

The fear of controversy and challenges from parents and society in general encourages teachers and librarians alike to self-censor books. According to Pavornetti (2011), it appears that 60% of teachers interviewed would not purchase books that include anything "risky" (Pavornetti, 2011 in Tunnell, Jacobs, Young & Bryan, 2016, p.216). Sadly though, a lack of exposure to a diverse literature diminishes the ability of learners to notice when certain groups of people in our society are rendered inferior to others, and therefore, they are not provided with literature that will allow them "to become critical readers, to question what they read, see, and hear so that they can become independent thinkers" and question any forms of discrimination based on gender, religion, or sexual orientation (Tarr, 1998, p. 248). This thesis contributes to a goal of creating

more critical readers, because when I co-created and reviewed a list of recommended LGBTQ+ children's literature for teachers in the province of Manitoba, this information now offers more avenues for discussing LGBTQ+ topics, families, and loving relationships. This recommended list may inadvertently become a pedagogical support in the implementation of Bill 18, which I discuss in greater detail at the end of this chapter and in Chapter 2.

The Negative Effects of Banning Books

Censoring children's literature and legislating what should be read in school has the negative effect of providing children with "fewer opportunities to read authentic texts" resulting in literature that ceases to "excite the minds of children and to make them want to explore and learn more about the world" (Thompson & Lehr, 2008, p. 246). While "books have the power to change things for the better because prejudice is all about ignorance" (Drabble, 2014, para. 4), there are many social consequences when books fall on the banned list. Censorship limits authors' intellectual freedom to write on topics of interest because their publishers may refuse to print their works for fear of reprisal from the public. Banishing books also diminishes the quality and variety of what is being published in today's market, resulting in lost opportunities for children to read meaningful texts. Importantly, children seek "information beyond what adults give them, and go out of their way to find it" (Gross, 2014, para. 9). Therefore, not providing students, even our youngest students, with opportunities to be exposed to and to read a wide variety of texts and discuss those texts with teachers and other caring adults in their lives, diminishes children's inquiries and understanding of the world in which they live. Reading a wide range of literary materials enhances children's judgment and supports their journey to becoming informed adults. At times, bans on children's literature have increased the censored book's popularity and sales have increased because people want to see for themselves what the

controversy is about. As Pearlman (2016) writes, when we tell children they “shouldn’t read a particular book, their desire only intensifies” (para. 9).

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms states that every Canadian citizen is granted “freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication” (The Charter of Rights and Freedom, 2006, section 2.2). When school authorities, or even individual teachers, allow books to be banned or censored, it creates a conflict with the Canadian Charter of Rights. This type of censorship produces a situation of intolerance towards using certain kinds of literature in schools. Teachers, school librarians, and reading clinicians may become fearful about how parents, school administrators, the community, or students will react to their selection of literature. Without guidelines, it becomes difficult for school personnel to make informed decisions about what books to put on their shelves, especially in terms of children’s literature focusing on LGBTQ+ issues.

Guidelines for the selection of books, which are available to teachers, goes beyond Canadian literature, because many books are published in America and Europe. Consequently, in this research, sources outside Canada such as The Office for Intellectual Freedom (The American Library Association) were used. Their staff compiles lists of books challenged by libraries, schools, and the media “in order to inform the public about censorship efforts that affect libraries and schools” in America (American Library Association, 2017, para. 1). A search on the American Library Association website revealed that many children’s literature books with a focus on LGBTQ+ relationships and families have been challenged and frequently put on a banned list. Books that discuss queer families such as: “*Heather Has Two Mommies*” (Newman, 1989); “*Daddy’s Roommate*” (Willhoite, 1990); “*And Tango Makes Three*” (Richardson and Parnell, 2005) have been frequently put on the banned list (The Office for Intellectual Freedom

of the American Library Association, 2015). Depending on their personal stance or external context, teachers who may want to read books that have appeared on the banned list with their students may face a difficult choice. According to the Pen America (2016) website, banned books are often challenged by parents or worried community members who believe certain books to be unsuitable for children, and consequently, fewer teachers are willing to read literature that has been considered inappropriate and/or could upset parent populations.

Some Case Studies of Censorship of LGBTQ+ Children’s Literature in Canada and Around the World

In the nineties in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, customs agents at the Canada/U.S. border unlawfully targeted a gay bookstore called the Little Sisters and Art Emporium. This bookstore was a place where queer people could “access materials which acknowledge and foster” their “diverse identities, communities, cultures and sexualities” (Busby, 2004, p.131). Some of the customs agents viewed the products being ordered for this particular store as “obscene”; however, when other bookstores in Canada ordered the same products, they were quickly processed and shipped. Owners of the Little Bookstore launched a lawsuit in 2000, and the Supreme Court of Canada “unanimously agreed that the actions of Canada customs officials were discriminatory against Little Sisters” (Women’s Legal Educational and Action Funds, 2014, para. 3).

In another case in 1997, James Chamberlain, a Kindergarten teacher from Surrey, British Columbia, was challenged by some parents of students in his classroom because he wanted to read three children’s books depicting same sex families as a support to teaching of the Family Life curriculum. The books were: *Asha’s Mums* (Elwin, 1990), *Belinda’s Bouquet* (Newman, 1989) and *One Dad, Two Dads, Brown Dad, Blue Dads* (Valentine, 2004). Although the Surrey

School Board sided with the parents' position, Mr. Chamberlain challenged the ban in court. He won in 2002. The Supreme Court of Canada "declared that B.C.'s School Act required secular and non-discriminatory education. A ban on books about same-sex parents could not be legally justified" (Freedom to Read. ca, 2013, para. 2). As Chief Justice McLachlin said, "Children cannot learn [tolerance] unless they are exposed to views that differ from those they are taught at home" (McLachlin as cited in Makin, 2009). It is important to note that this legal case prompted the Surrey's Board of Education in 2003 to approve two children's books depicting same-sex families in their "recommended reading list for the Kindergarten and Grade 1 family-life curriculum" (Canadian Press, Globe and Mail, March 20, 2009). The approved books were *Who's in a Family* (Skutch & Nienhaus, 1997) and *ABC a Family Alphabet Book* (Combs, 2012).

Attempts to ban LGBTQ+ children's literature still emerges in today's news. In 2015, many residents from Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas demanded that LGBTQ+ children's books should be banned from the public library's children's section. This demand failed, because according to the librarian, parents should have the right to decide which books their children read, but not which ones should be made available to them. The librarian said, "we let people know that we serve a diverse community and things that might be appropriate for some families are not appropriate for others ... and so we expect the parents to guide their children in their reading material" (Chavez, 2015, para 27). These events mentioned above demonstrate the shift in our society towards the acceptance of having LGBTQ+ children's literature accessible to teachers and the public in general.

Current Context for the Study

The Manitoba Context: Bill 18

A current contextual factor that affected this research project was the amendment of Bill 18. In 2012, the Government of Manitoba adopted Bill 18. Bill 18 is a public schools amendment act also known as the Safe and Inclusive Schools Act. This Act requires school policies to respect human diversity as a means to ensure that equality based on gender, race, sexual orientation, and sexuality for all students (Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, 2014). This Bill stipulates that all public school divisions must put in place policies to address any type of bullying behaviours and to protect and respect human diversity. Consequently, this Bill allows students in any middle and high schools to create Gay Straight Alliance clubs. Having such clubs gives students safer environments to discuss topics related to genders and sexualities. Another way to broaden students' perspectives and support the implementation of Bill 18 is to promote literature that both supports the literacy development of all students and also represents and introduces students to an array of loving families and relationships.

New Manitoba English Language Arts Curriculum

The province of Manitoba is currently developing a new K-12 English Language Arts curriculum that is currently being piloted in several schools with plans to roll out the curriculum to all schools in the province over the next few years. Whenever there is a new curriculum, the teachers who will be asked to implement it often look for strategies and resources to make the curriculum come alive for their students in their unique classroom contexts. This made this study timely, because I explored and critically analyzed LGBTQ+ children's literature that could be used in K-3 settings. The new provincial curriculum is conceptualized around four practices of language: language as sense-making, language as system, language as exploration and design, and language as power and agency. The component of the curriculum that focused on language as power and agency was key to this proposed study. The description of this language practice

states, “in order for students to be active citizens, they need opportunities to use language – and alternative symbol systems- that reflects their identities and enables them to advocate for themselves, their communities, and the environment” (Manitoba Education and Training, 2017, p. 14). For this Language as Power and Agency practice, the three key elements, which remain the same throughout K-12, ask students to “(1) recognize and analyze inequities and viewpoints, and bias in texts and ideas; (2) investigate complex moral and ethical issues and conflicts; and (3) contemplate the actions that can be taken, alternative viewpoints, and contribute other perspectives” (Manitoba Education and Training, 2017, p. 14). Consequently, the new Manitoba ELA curriculum is situated within the theoretical framework of critical literacy (please see discussion earlier in this chapter). The critical literacy approach that the new ELA curriculum promotes, embeds Janks’ (2000), four interdependence key components of critical literacy: *domination*, *access*, *diversity* and *design*. Students will be encouraged to study texts to better understand how the language and other symbolic forms and discourse are used to *dominate* and/or *provide access* to certain groups of people while restricting it to others. Teachers will be asked to integrate *diverse literature* to ensure that students’ perspectives of the world are broadened. Consequently, the pedagogical *design* of teachers’ lesson plans will need to shifting to better meet the conceptualizations of the new ELA. Therefore, the recommended list that has been generated as part of this research can now act as a reference list to support teachers when addressing LGBTQ+ topics and families with their students as part of the new curriculum.

The Problem Statement/Research Questions

The problem statement for this research was to identify current societal factors that influence the selection and utilization of LGBTQ+ children’s literature with early year students. The purpose of this study was to determine: (1) the nature of this literature (e.g., independent

reading by student /teacher-student reading); (2) the values this literature conveys to the reader (homo-normative or not); (3) the messages this literature communicates to the reader (ally, inclusive); and (4) the ways the discourse in these books may shape students' views towards LGBTQ+ people and LGBTQ+ families. The reason I conducted this research into the LGBTQ+ children literature recommended by various organizations in Manitoba was to persuade more teachers to use these text sets to discuss the following topics with their students: LGBTQ+ people, diversity of sexual orientation, gender identity, and family makeups. One of the parallel goals of this research was to encourage more teachers to address the above points in their classrooms without fearing retaliation from parents, administrators and society in general.

The research questions that guided this study were:

- 1) What LGBTQ+ literature is most often recommended, and made available to teachers in Manitoba for students from Kindergarten to Grade 3? Has the availability of LGBTQ+ literature increased or changed in response to the implementation of Bill 18?
- 2) What is the readability level of this literature?
- 3) How do the language and illustrations in the recommended books voice, silence, or shape the following values and messages: a) homonormativity; b) ally or inclusive stances; c) conceptualizations of LGBTQ+ people and families?

This research is important because it focused on finding out what recommended LGBTQ+ children's literature is available to teachers of early years students in Manitoba and whether the implementation of Bill 18 has changed or increased this availability. The research is also important because it examined whether the literature is written at levels children of that age group can read independently and if the targeted organizations have mandates to purchase

and recommend such literature. Consequently, this thesis provides educators with knowledge of where to find and how to select LGBTQ+ children's literature that supports the development of students' early literacy skills as well as represents a wider array of families and loving relationships.

Definitions

This research project has many key terminologies related to queer people. In order to ensure that readers have a common understanding of these words, a lexicon is provided in this section.

Ally. An individual (usually straight) who is supportive of the LGBTQ+ community. S/he believes in the dignity and respect of all people and is willing to stand in that role. Allies do not identify as members of the groups for which they are fighting (My GSA, 2011, p. 9).

Allyship. Defined as “an active, consistent, and arduous practice of unlearning and re-evaluating, in which a person of privilege seeks to operate in solidarity with the marginalized group of people” (The Anti-Oppression Network, in Garbus, Jubas, & Mizzi, 2016 p. 397). This is an important effort practiced by allies to help cease inequality in our society

Bisexual. A person who is attracted emotionally and sexually to both males and females (My GSA, 2011, p. 14).

Bullying. A behaviour that is (a) is intended to cause, or should be known to cause, fear, intimidation, humiliation, distress or other forms of harm to another person's body, feelings, self-esteem, reputation or property; or (b) is intended to create, or should be known to create, a negative school environment for another person (Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, Section 1.2(1), 2014).

Cisgender. Refers to someone whose gender identity corresponds with their assigned sex (My GSA, 2011, p.16).

Gay. A person who is emotionally and sexually attracted to someone of the same sex and/or gender—gay can include both males and females, or refer to males only (My GSA, 2011, p.24).

Gender Expression. The way a person presents and communicates gender identity to society, through clothing, speech, body language, hairstyle, voice, and/or the emphasis or de-emphasis of bodily characteristics or behaviours and traits used publicly to express one's gender as masculine or feminine or something else. The traits and behaviours associated with masculinity and femininity are culturally specific and change over time. It can also be called gender presentation (My GSA, 2011, p.26).

Gender Identity. A person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender—his or her internal sense of being man, woman, or another gendered being entirely. A person's gender may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth. Since gender identity is internal, one's gender identity is not necessarily visible to others (My GSA, 2011, p.27).

Heteronormativity. A cultural/societal bias, often implicit, that assumes all people are straight and so privileges heterosexuality and ignores or underrepresents same-sex relationships in law, policy, curricula, and aspects of every day life (My GSA, 2011, p.31).

Heterosexual. A person who is emotionally and sexually attracted to someone of the opposite sex and/or gender. Also referred to as "straight" (My GSA, 2011, p.32).

Homonormativity. is "a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions but upholds and sustains them while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity

and consumption” (Duggan, 2002, p. 179 in Jasmine, 2014, p. 247). For example, according to Duggan (2004), homonormativity is present when people say that all “gay people are very much like everyone else. They grow up, fall in love, form families and have children” (p.18).

Homophobia. A fear and/or hatred of homosexuality often exhibited by name-calling, bullying, exclusion, prejudice, discrimination, or acts of violence- anyone who is LGBTQ+ (or assumed to be) can be the target of homophobia (My GSA, 2011, p.33).

Homosexual. It is a person who is sexually and emotionally attracted to someone of the same sex. Because the term is associated historically with a medical model of homosexuality and can have a negative connotation, most people prefer such other terms as lesbian, gay or bisexual (My GSA, 2011, p.33).

Leveled Texts. Texts that are leveled “according to a gradient of difficulty based on multiple supportive features of the *whole text*, which allow for an emphasis on meaning, such as text structure, themes and ideas, or language and literary features (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012). Leveled texts typically feature naturalness of language, close picture- text matches, and predictable text structures (Cunningham et al., 2005 in Murray, Munger, Hiebert, 2014, p. 483).

Queer. Historically, this was a derogatory term for homosexuality in North America that was used to insult LGBT people. Although, it is still used as a slur by some, the term has been reclaimed by some members of LGBT communities, particularly youth and those of privileged classes (e.g., with academic degrees). In its reclaimed form, it can be used as a symbol of pride and affirmation of difference and diversity or as a means of challenging rigid identity categories (My GSA, 2011, p.48).

Sexual Orientation. A person’s capacity for profound emotional and sexual attraction to another person based on their sex and/or gender (My GSA, 2011, p.54).

Two-Spirit. An Aboriginal spirit-name for indigenous people who identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender. It is unique to North American Aboriginal LGBTQ+ people because First Nations peoples' connections to this land and ecology are cultural, historical, and familial (My GSA, 2011, p. 60).

The Local Organizations Under Study

A description of the five organizations that agreed to participate in the research study is explained here.

The Manitoba curriculum support centre. The Manitoba Curriculum Support Centre is a provincial organization for registered early years childhood educators, teachers, and parents of home-schooled children from Kindergarten to Grade Twelve students. This library gives educators both in schools and at home access to “curriculum implementation support, educational research and professional development materials” (The Manitoba Education Resource Library, 2016, Homepage, para.1). The collection development process is done in consultation with the Department's various subject consultants. Consultants offer purchase suggestions, and the Library's collection development staff also provides suggestions for the consultants to review and to approve. The selection criteria for the learning resources must be consistent with the educational goals and curriculum objectives of the province. The content must be current, factually accurate, obtained from a reliable source, and the emphasis is placed on the selection of Canadian content, Canadian authored, or Canadian produced learning resources. The library resources include books, DVDs, kits, eBooks, video streaming, as well as other online resources, made available to the registered patrons.

Consultants who work at the Manitoba Education and Training Department are in charge of creating and writing curriculum guides for all K-12 subjects taught in Manitoban schools. The

resources that are required to support the curriculum are then recommended by an ongoing review process that consists of teacher review teams selected from Manitoba Teachers' Society working in the classrooms. This review team analyses resources submitted by publishers. This review process sources out the best educational materials that will support the implementation of the new curriculum guides. They review all materials publishers have sent them and generate a list of recommended materials that will suit best the curriculum guides. The recommended material list is submitted to the Manitoba Learning Resource Center.

The Manitoba learning resource centre (MLRC) also known as the **Manitoba Textbook Bureau**, is an organization that provides: “schools with educational learning resources, both print and multimedia, and related products to support teaching and learning of the Manitoba’s curriculum guides” (MTBB, 2016, About MTBB, para.1). This organization’s mandate is to seek out the recommended list of materials, purchases them and ensures that schools throughout the province can purchase them at a cost-effective price. The province allocates \$60.00 per student; whereas half of this amount must be spent on purchasing learning resources for the classroom/school from the Manitoba Learning Resource Centre. The other \$30.00 can be used to make individual purchases of resources through the school division direct from various stores and suppliers (B. McKinny, personal communication, Chief Operating Officer, April 12, 2017).

La Direction des ressources éducatives Françaises. La Direction des Ressources Éducatives Françaises (DREF) is the French Resource Library in Manitoba, which mandates is identical to the Manitoba Education Resource Library. It is a provincial organization for registered early years childhood educators, teachers, and parents of home-schooled children from Kindergarten to Grade Twelve students. This library gives educators both in schools and at home access to “curriculum implementation support, educational research and professional

development materials” (The Manitoba Education Resource Library, 2016, Homepage, para.1). The collection development process is done in consultation with the Department’s various subject consultants. Consultants offer purchase suggestions, and the Library’s collection development staff also provides suggestions for the consultants to review and to approve. The selection criteria for the learning resources must be consistent with the educational goals and curriculum objectives of the province. The content must be current, factually accurate, obtained from a reliable source, and the emphasis is placed on the selection of Canadian content, Canadian authored, or Canadian produced learning resources. The library resources include books, DVDs, kits, eBooks, video streaming, as well as other online resources, made available to the registered patrons.

The Rainbow resource centre. The Rainbow Resource Centre of Winnipeg is a non-profit organization whose goal is to provide “support, education, and resources to foster a proud, resilient, and diverse” LGBTQ+ community (Rainbow Resource Centre, About, Mission and Vision, 2016, para.1). The Centre provides a variety of services to the LGBTQ+ community such as: counseling, peer support groups for youths and adults, education and training for schools, public, and private organizations. The Centre is also equipped with a library that contains materials pertinent to the needs of the LGBTQ+ community, their allies, parents, and teachers.

The Winnipeg public library. The Winnipeg Public Library has twenty active locations within the city of Winnipeg, Manitoba; a city comprising a population of 663,617 (Statistics Canada, Demography Division, customized data (Winnipeg, 2011)). The librarians provide a wide range of literary programs and materials geared to all ages; toddlers to seniors, and to the diverse population’s needs. Their services are varied, including learning to use current

technology software and databases for research and personal purposes, supporting the literacy needs of newcomers and EAL learners, and providing literacy materials and services to the Aboriginal population. Its mission statement is “to enrich the lives of all Winnipeg citizens and their communities by providing high quality, responsive and innovative library services.” (Winnipeg Public Library, 2016, Mission Statement and Strategic Plan, Winnipeg Public Library’s Mission para. 1). Their selection of materials aligns with the “Canadian Library Association Statement on Intellectual Freedom and Libraries” (2015) and therefore, they ensure to “provide access to materials that represent a wide diversity of subjects and viewpoints, including those which may express controversial or unpopular ideas” (Winnipeg Public Library, Material Selection Policy, Intellectual Freedom, 2016, p. 1).

The next chapter is a literature review that explores children’s literature in our society, in education, and in the formation of children’s identities. I examine how children’s literature is used as a vehicle to promote societal changes such as the acceptance of civil rights and LGBTQ+ people and families. I review current Canadian and provincial legislative laws that support the inclusion of LGBTQ+ people and families. Finally, through the literature review I determine the topical gaps that I addressed in this research project.

CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

Determined by my review and synthesis of the literature, I focus in this chapter on the historical development of children's literature and how contemporary LGBTQ+ literature is being used to support literacy acquisition. Next, I discuss literature associated with LGBTQ+ people, diversity of sexual orientation, gender identity, and family makeups. Finally, in order to investigate the local contemporary context of these issues, I briefly examine what has been written on the implementation of Bill 18 (Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, 2014). I conclude this literature review by identifying the gaps in this field of research and raising potential research questions to address these gaps, which provided the foundations for questions and methodology of this study.

Historical Overview of Children's Literature

Children's literature has been around for many hundreds of years and just as in former times, it continues to be strongly influenced by “the social and political landscape of the world in which [the children's literature] are produced” (Kennon & Bhroin, 2012, p.13). With the accessibility of print materials, stories which had previously been shared orally became a commodity for adults and children alike to enjoy and to be taught what was deemed to be important moral lessons.

Historical View of Early Print (1400s-1800s)

Children's literature has existed for a long time. According to the following literature, its main purposes were to support learning to read, educate children about the world they live in, and reinforce the moral values of the time. Iskander (1989) argued that “the child's entire culture—home, school, church, books—taught the same message, resulting in most children developing

a strong sense of conscience” (p.51). The early distribution of children’s literature was frequently done through the use of: “the hornbooks” or lesson paddles for the teaching of “the alphabet, numbers, verses, or prayers” (Jordan, 2000, p.18). A few of the books published during this early print period were also about the world we live in such as: *The World of Things Obvious to the Senses Drawn in Pictures*, (Comenius, 1658 as cited in McNamara, 2017, para.1), and on moral values such as “*The Fables of AESOP*, (Caxton’s 1484 as cited in Tunnell & Jacob, 2013, p.80).

A turning point in children’s education emerged in the late 1600s when John Locke, an English philosopher, introduced to the world the concept of “childhood”. This was a concept that differed from the prior societal beliefs in which children were conceptualized as smaller versions of adults who ought to “dress, work, and live like their adult counterparts” (Tunnell & Jacob, 2013, p.80). Locke’s believed that “a key to good teaching” was “to help students reflect more about their own thinking processes” (Tokujama-Espinosa, 2016, p.42). Therefore, to achieve this process, a child’s education should be complemented by people other than those found in the child’s immediate family. Locke’s ideology argued for the need to have a society educated by teachers whose role was to “build the child’s moral profile from scratch, to make him adapt to the demands of social life, searching for the best way to harmonize his interests to the interests of the community he lives in” (Androne, 2014, p.75). Locke’s ideology paralleled the Puritans’ values of good prevailing over evil and that discipline and patience would achieve that goal. Locke (1693) wrote that it is through teaching that the “custom of foreboding grown into Habit, will help much into preserve him, when he is no longer under his Maid’s or Tutor’s Eyes” (p.9). Locke’s philosophical ideas about education likely influenced the children’s writers of the time, so consequently, “alphabetic education was designed for success not simply in

commerce or in culture, but in spirit” (Lerer, 2009, p. 83). Literacy and morality were closely connected.

The espoused virtues of the late 1600s to the late 1700 such as “courage, love, and self-discovery” (Livingston & Kurkjian, 2003, p. 96), and obedience to adults were strongly represented in many of the stories published at the time. Stories such as *Robinson Crusoe*, (Defoe, 1719), *Cinderella*, (Perrault, 1795) and *The History of Little Goody Two Shoes*, (Goldsmith & Newberry, 1796) to name a few were popular among children and adults. The stories were designed to be entertaining to children, who were meant to relate to the stories. Yet these stories still carried their “preachy and pious” messages (Tunnell & Jacob 2013, p.81). Grendy (2017) also concurs with this notion of children’s literature abiding with the approved moral values of the time. Therefore, even in those days, books that did not conform to the moralistic values of the time were criticized and banned (See Chapter 1 for a discussion of banned children’s literature).

Public Education in Britain and in North America

According to Brackemere (2017), public schools emerged in England and the United States of America as early as 1840, and as well in Canada in 1852 (Oreopoulos, 2005, p.7). Public school systems were designed to support all of society’s children’s moral and academic development, but to also ensure that all of a nation’s youth, whether they were rich and poor, were sufficiently educated for an ever-changing workforce. Mass production of goods, such as textile, steel, as well as book production, helped propel the economy of the time. It is no surprise that having an educated population would create a niche for the newly found market that was geared to publishing books exclusively for children. One example of such book was the “*Little Pretty Pocket Book*” (1744) by the author and owner of Newbery Print in England

(British Library, para. 1, 2017). Therefore, this research will look at including literature made available to early years teachers published outside Canada.

As the industrialized revolution continued to progress, the emerging children's literature reflected new societal values. Consequently, stories were published that reflected children's realities as well as explored the world of imagination. Some of the popular stories published at this time are still cherished today: *Little Women* (Alcott, 1868); *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Twain, 1884); *Alice in Wonderland* (Carroll, 1865), and *The Wizard of Oz* (Baum, 1900). However, it is important to note that even some of these stories were put on banned lists, because they were perceived to feature "rebellious and free-thinking characters", which caused some "parents and moralists" alarm because they "saw their control over young people's reading matter slipping away" (Burnett, 2016, para. 2). The moral representation found in many of the books published at the time featured Christian values from the time, so the family was characterized as nuclear and the loving relationships were of heteronormative in nature. Close relationships among same sex characters in the children's literature represented those of close friendships. Two examples of these close friendship relationships in nature were found in *Anne of Green Gables* (Montgomery, 1908) and in *The Wind in the Willows* (Grahame, 1908). The protagonists were friends, and their love for each other would not amount to anything else but brother and/or sisterhood.

Throughout the 1900s, many social changes affected children's literature. The Great Depression of the 1920s, in conjunction with the two World Wars, provided room for authors of the time to write stories that represented other types of families resulting from these events. Consequently, it is to no surprise that stories of widowed mothers or fathers as in *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (Potter, 1902), and those of children being orphaned such as *Bambi* (Salten, 1930)

or *Pippi Longstocking* (Lindgred, 1945) appeared in the literature. Stories of children being raised with extended family members, as in *Circus Shoes* (Streatfeild, 1938) or with strangers as in *Curious George* (Rey & Rey, 1945) were also being created. As social changes emerged and were noted by adults, these changes were gradually written about in children literature.

Children's Literature and Civil Rights

In the post-World War II era, US president Lyndon Johnson's upbringing in the Christian faith helped him lead members of his caucus to the enactment of the Civil Rights Bill in 1964 (Woods, 2007, p.4). In Johnson's view, moral justice could not be achieved in America until racial segregation ended and consequently his Civil Rights Bill "outlawed discrimination in public places and facilities and banned discrimination based on race, gender, religion or national origin by employers and government agencies. It also encouraged the desegregation of public schools" (Stewart & Escobedo, 2014, para. 4). With the Civil Rights Bill, he declared that "each man and woman" had the right "to find their rightful place in a free society to which they" were "entitled by merit" (Johnson in Woods, 2006, p.4). The amendment of the Civil Rights Bill also helped the US Supreme Court to make "interracial marriage bans illegal across the country" in 1967 (Goodwin, 2011). However, it is interesting to note that it was not until the 1980s that the emergence of interracial families in children's literature appeared as seen in *Through My Window* (Bradman & Browne, 1986).

The legitimization of social activism activities of the fifties and sixties encouraged LGBTQ+ people to also take a stand regarding their civil rights. A pivotal example of early protests was the Stonewall event, which was resistance led by gay customers against a police raid on a popular gay bar in Greenwich Village, New York City in 1969 (Gilbert, 2011). This event reflected "a culmination of prior organizing efforts on behalf of gay civil rights" (Korball, 2000,

p.21) to propel changes in queer civic rights. According to Johnston (2016), the sixties' social movements lead to the decriminalization of homosexuality in the Criminal Code of Canada in 1969, and the removal of homosexuality as an illness classification in the diagnostic manuals of the American Psychiatric Association in 1973. In 1992, gay men and lesbians were given permission to serve in the Canadian armed forces. In 1996, it became illegal in Canada to discriminate against someone based on his/her sexual orientation. In 2000, same-sex couples could get the same social and tax benefits as heterosexuals in common-law relationships, but it was not until 2005 that same-sex marriage was legalized in Canada (Johnston, 2016). This chronology depicts a slow, but important social movement that continues to gain momentum across Canada.

Even though the civil rights for LGBTQ+ rights started long before the sixties and continues in today's time, queer families and relationships others than heterosexuality among protagonists did not appear in children's literature until the eighties as in *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin* (Bösche, 1983) and *Heather Has Two Mommies* (Newman, 1989). This gradual appearance of other types of families and loving relationships in children's literature was not only the result of many years of arduous and tenacious work from those who were oppressed by social injustice, but also from an emerging acceptance in societal values. The social movements as they relate to the history of children literature are important foundations for this research, as they outline factors that affect literature over time.

Identity Formation: Children's Literature and the Mirror Effect

Children's literature is a vehicle used by adults to help young readers make sense of the world in which they live. Books allow children the chance to have a glimpse of the world and to experience it without having to leave the comfort and security of their homes or classrooms.

Yet, for some children, the literature that they are offered by adults does not reflect the reality of the worlds in which they live. Burt, Gelnow & Lesser (2010) explain, “When someone with the authority of a teacher says, describe the world and you’re not in it, there’s a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked into a mirror and saw nothing” (p. 1). Consequently, in order for children’s literature to be inclusive, it must represent all readers. Casper and Shultz’s (2000) study on the realities and needs of queer headed families within the school setting, demonstrates that there is a direct correlation between children’s safety and openness to discuss their family composition when it is mirrored through the use of inclusive children’s literature.

Research on children’s literature indicates that books read to and by children help shape their social identity and social development (Bainbridge, 2001; Oltra-Albiach & Pardo-Coy, 2015) because the literature helps transmit and reaffirm cultural values, ethnic heritage, customs, and traditions (Hughes et al., 2006). If children can identify to literature because it is representative of their families and their lives, then the literature will reinforce their identity. This is one of the important reasons that LGBTQ+ families and relationships should be included in children’s literature. Letts & James (1999) argue, “choosing literature for children with explicitly gay and lesbian themes, characters, and situations is a direct approach to including part of many children’s home lives” (p.129). Children’s understanding and affirmation of their cultural background and family values help develop their sense of pride in who they are, forging their identity within the society. This strong sense of pride and identity provides children with the insight to question values that differ from those of their upbringing and interrogate their own adherence to the dominant culture (Hughes et al., 2006; Rumbaut, 1994). Literature where children can “find themselves” enhances their sense of worth and self-esteem as a person and a learner.

Studies on children's literature challenges educators to question the lack of representation of minority characters such as those with Black protagonists (Barksdale-Ladd & Hefflin, 2001; Pescosolido, Grauerholz & Milkie, 1997), Indigenous people (Korteweg, Gonzalez & Guillet, 2010; McKeough et al., 2008), female protagonists (Estes & Lant, 1989; Jackson & Gee, 2005; Sensoy & Marshall, 2010) or people who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community (Dedeoglu, Ulusoy & Lamme, 2012; Herzog, 2008; Miller, 2014). Studies such as these are important as they encourage educators to find representative literature since it is so important in shaping children's identity and self-esteem. Researchers studying the use of children's literature that include the representation of the above-mentioned minorities show that this kind of literature can be used as social justice agents. Reading such books followed by class discussions help normalize the existence of other people in children's lives (Gray, 2009; Hope, 2008; Kim, 2015; Kurkjian, Livingston & Siu-Runyan, 2003; Morgan, 2009; Rogers & Mosley 2006; Wickens, & Wedwick, 2011). These types of readings and discussions help to decrease racial and stereotypical attitudes among the predominant group towards marginalized groups. The social identity of the minority groups is enhanced by their recognition by other groups in society. Dodge and Crutcher (2015) state, "making LGBTQ stories a standard part of curriculum, just like other issues of diversity, serves to validate and promote acceptance of the experiences of LGBTQ youths who might otherwise not see themselves reflected in texts they read" (p. 96).

Self-esteem and academic achievement. Studies on students' self-esteem in relation to their academic achievement have demonstrated that minority students, such as those who are LGBTQ+, perform better in schools that have supportive staff, inclusive curricula, comprehensive anti-bullying policies and support groups such as Gay Straight Alliances (Biddulph, 2006; Kosciw et al, 2012; Vacca & Kramer, 2012). These components create a safe

and caring atmosphere within the school setting where children feel valued and respected for who they are. As their sense of security is protected, minority students demonstrate skills to persevere in the face of adversity and to have their voices heard when they feel threatened, which then positively influences their school attendance (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger & Vohs, 2003; Birkett, Espelage & Koenig, 2009). Regular attendance helps minority children keep up to par with their peers.

Motivation to read and children's literature. The literature shows children's reading skills to be greater when there is a motivation factor attached to the reading. Researchers have shown that when texts are culturally relevant, students' comprehension is greater and they are more proficient in their reading (Ebe, 2010; Zygmunt, 2015). Cultural relevancy is also important when assessing students' reading and comprehension skills. Having culturally relatable texts help increase students' retelling skills, as well as their ability to make inferences (Ebe, 2010; Zygmunt, 2015).

The scholarly literature also suggests a range of criteria to look for when selecting books for early-years students. The process of selection should include examining books with language that supports decoding and comprehension skills, but this should be in conjunction with texts that are motivating for students on a personal level. There needs to be a connection between what is being read at school and children's personal lives (Gambrell, 2011). There are several other early years' text characteristics that help young readers when they attempt to read them. These characteristics are: (1) texts and concepts which are sufficiently supported by pictures, (2) vocabulary which is familiar to the reader, (3) sufficient numbers of high frequency words to support the reader's reading, and (4) the length and complexity of the sentences must be aligned with the reader's reading level (Clay, 1991; Fitzgerald et al., 2015; Fountas and Pinnell, 2017a).

Additionally, for stories to be meaningful to children, they need to be written with a rich vocabulary that is age appropriate. Stories that are written from a child's point of view often allow readers, children and parents alike, to better relate to the stories because the characters and their culture are reflected in them (Kelly 2012; Zolotow, 1998).

Selecting LGBTQ+ Children's Literature

In order to guide the selection of children's literature that focuses on LGBTQ+ families and relationships, Fischler (2015) suggests that stories that depict everyday life events and focus on children's experiences rather than discussing the parents' sexual orientations are easier to understand for young children. These everyday stories are more likely to reflect concepts that matter to them such as: (a) the need for love, (b) the importance of close attachments, (c) the fear of abandonment and separation, and (d) the need for self-acceptance (Fischler, 2015).

There are many selections of books reflecting LGBTQ+ topics now available within children's literature. For example, in the queer family themed book category the following narrative stories are mentioned: *Heather Has Two Mommies* (Newman, 2015), *Daddy's Roommate* (Willhoite, 2000), *And Tango Makes Three* (Richardson & Parnell, 2005). Among gay marriage themed books, there are: *King and King* (de Haan, 2003), and *Uncle Bobby's Wedding* (Brannen, 2008). Books geared to identity and gender expression are also present such as: *My Princess Boy* (Kilodavis, 2010), and *I Am Jazz* (Herthel, 2014). There is also a book that discusses the queer community in general and what Pride Day means in *This Day in June* (Pitman, 2014). However, none of these books discuss the topic of bisexuality.

According to Taylor (2012), there are some disadvantages associated with current LGBTQ+ children literature. Many of these books encourage homonormative values, which are values that are associated with a heteronormative society. These kinds of books reinforce "a

focus on monogamous relationships, family, consumerism, middle-class, and White values” (p.149). Generally speaking, these books neglect to recognize other kinds of kinship, such as protagonists who are bisexual. Often children’s books neglect to include characters that are from diverse socio-economic backgrounds and ethnicities, a reality in today’s society. This results in a text set that is predominantly geared to those who identify as being gay, lesbian or transgender. Many children’s books that are currently available refrain from introducing readers to different narratives (Taylor, 2012), resulting in a narrow view of the world being presented to young readers. Therefore, children’s literature should be read with a critical view to ensure that those of the LGBTQ+ culture do not assimilate values of the dominant community. Literature for children that acknowledges some of its members while neglecting others has the negative effect of fracturing the LGBTQ+ community at large (Taylor, 2012). Also, according to Walling (1996), small publishing companies often publish the majority of LGBTQ+ books, the writing and presentation quality can be considered inferior to those found in more established companies. At times, the quality of the books would be better if the “text flowed smoothly” and the “illustrations [were] more professionally done” (p.77).

In order to counteract the above problems, the literature indicates that more LGBTQ+ books need to be written by authors from the LGBTQ+ community, reflect allyship, and offer narratives from other countries to reflect societal diversities. LGBTQ+ writers offer perspectives that make their writing authentic and identifiable to members of the community (Fischler, 2015; Thomas, 2016). According to Epstein (2012), there is a lack of books that represent some members of the LGBTQ+ community, as it appears that LGBTQ+ authors have “focused primarily on lesbian and gay parenting (i.e. not bisexual or transgender parenting) and even more specifically on white, coupled, middle-class lesbians.” There is also a need for books that reflect

LGBTQ+ people's journey and their "interconnections with non-gay people" (Walson as cited in Dellon, 2015) to reinforce the inclusive concept that we are living in a diverse society, and that living harmoniously with each other is feasible. Consequently, the current body of LGBTQ+ children's literature needs to be read critically by all to ensure that no one from this community is under or over represented.

LGBTQ+ Topics in Education

A look at the current curriculum guides in early years education shows that the inclusion of LGBTQ+ topics could be integrated. For example, the Manitoba's Kindergarten to Grade 4 Social Studies curriculum could easily support the inclusion of LGBTQ+ themes. For example, current key concepts indicate recurring themes: (a) the identification of important people who shape students' lives; (b) the identification of "rules and responsibilities" that advocate for "human rights" and human "diversity"; (c) the acceptance of various "community groups", and their "traditions"; (d) the significance of drawing parallels between past and present history to understand how societies evolve; and, (e) the importance of acknowledging and celebrating "global connections" to enrich world harmony (Manitoba Education and Training, 2005). Therefore, teachers can feel supported in their decisions to include LGBTQ+ children's literature in early years classrooms, because curricular outcomes allow for discussions on various social justice topics such as those related to the LGBTQ+ community. However, in order to feel equipped to use LGBTQ+ children's literature and facilitate these important discussions, many teachers may feel they need further education.

Teacher Education

Several studies (Belloni, 2012; Liboro, Russell, Kosciw & Horn, 2010; St-John & al, 2014) on LGBTQ+ inclusive education reveal a gap in LGBTQ+ topics in teacher education

programs. This may be a factor in the lack of teachers' awareness for including LGBTQ+ topics in their pedagogy. Teachers who are provided with in-services and who have access to LGBTQ+ materials are better equipped to include LGBTQ+ topics on diversity of sexual orientation, gender identity, and family makeups into their teaching.

Teacher education starts at the university level. LGBTQ+ topics are seldom part of teachers' coursework. According to Clark (2010), "Teachers in K-12 settings are woefully ill-prepared to teach LGBTQ+ and non-gender conforming youth and to work against heterosexism and homophobia in schools" (p. 711). Few universities neither offer courses on LGBTQ+ topics in education, nor are there many openly LGBTQ+ staff (Bellini, 2012; McCabe & Robinson, 2010; Walton, 2004). The lack of LGBTQ+ staff in combination with few courses that address LGBTQ+ topics in the teachers' undergraduate programs makes it difficult for future teachers, straight or not, to become adept at including LGBTQ+ topics in their pedagogy. Kissen (2002) argues, "The number of courses devoted exclusively or even substantially to the topic of gay issues in education is minuscule" (p.13). Consequently, what is being taught to teachers continues to perpetuate heterosexual norms. Therefore, in order for teachers to become accustomed to including LGBTQ+ literature in their pedagogy, universities need to include more LGBTQ+ topics in their undergraduate education program in the same way as they do on topics related to racism or anti-Semitism (Bellini, 2012; Kitchen & Bellini, 2012; McCabe & Robinson 2008; Szalacha, 2004; Taylor, 2015).

School Inclusivity for LGBTQ+ Students and Families

Since the legalization of same sex marriage in 2005, there are now 64,575 same sex couple families living in Canada; 21,015 are legally married whereas 45,560 are in common law relationships (Statistics Canada, 2015a). In 2011, there were 9,600 children living in same-sex

families and it is understood that this number will continue to rise in Canadian families, and these children will be educated in Canadian schools (Statistics Canada, 2015e). Consequently, schools must adapt to this new reality of family composition and be ready to have strategies that will make these families and their children welcome. According to Haggard (2014), there are several strategies schools can put in place to create a safe and inclusive environment for all students in order to show respect for and acknowledges its population's diversity. For example, having "gender-neutral forms and communication" sheets that use a broader and more neutral approach to family diversity such as saying "guardian or parent" instead of "mother and father" (Haggard, 2014, p. 46). Educating staff members to be mindful and respectful when celebrating family events and other special celebrations such as Mother's Day, Father's Day, and Valentine's Day is also necessary. A student who has two mothers should be allowed to make two Mother's Day cards as it fits their family composition. The same idea applies to students wanting to give Valentine's cards to same gender students, which should be allowable under class and school policies. Staff members should be encouraged to become familiar with LGBTQ+ terminology and always use it appropriately when referring to students who live in LGBTQ+ family relationships. This knowledge of terminology not only shows respect towards these students and their parents/guardians, but it also acknowledges their family composition within the school setting. It should never be the student's responsibility to be faced with the "dilemma of having to make choices about whom it might be safe to tell and whom it would not be safe to tell" (Lubbe, 2007, p. 48). Rather, it is the school staff's responsibility to ensure that all children are treated equally and with dignity and therefore, teachers should make a conscious effort to inquire with LGBTQ+ parents about how they would like their family composition to be represented and celebrated in their class.

Parental Engagement and Children's Success in School

When school policies reflect LGBTQ+ inclusivity, parents are more inclined to participate in school-based activities that enhance their children's education. Researchers of studies on parental involvement in schools have demonstrated that there exists a close relationship between children's academic success and their parents' involvement in school related activities (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Miedel & Reynolds, 1999 as cited in Hill & Taylor, 2004, p.161; Zellman & Waterman, 1998). For many children, schools are their first look at the outside world because they provide an "introduction to families who are different than their own" (Haggard, 2014, p. 2). Parents' perceptions of and relationships towards schools influence their children's engagement in school, social skills development, as well as their self-esteem (Burt, Gelnow, & Lesser, 2010). According to Goldberg and Smith (2014), the "educational philosophy was the most frequently endorsed consideration" for any parents when choosing a school, regardless of their sexual orientation (Goldberg & Smith, 2014, p.70). Therefore, schools that acknowledge family diversity through their use of inclusive children's literature and curriculum approaches promote a safe and caring environment for all students in their care and allow students to become confident in themselves and accepting of others. Embracing diversity has the positive effect of giving students the knowledge and lexicon to respectfully address societal differences, "thus lessening the likelihood of inappropriate use of language that can slide into hate speech, due to either ignorance or prejudice" (Sanders, 2013, p. 135).

Teachers' Reinforcement of Gender Roles

In early years, students spend the majority of their day with one teacher. When the teacher models acceptance and inclusiveness, students feel accepted and safe. If there is a

dissonance between the student and the teacher, students' acceptance and safety is threatened, because as Walling (1996) writes, "the school community is a microcosm of the entire society" because it mirrors society's values and, too often, its prejudices" (p.15; see also Bower, 2009). According to Kissen (2002) "traditional gender roles affect early childhood education and reinforce a traditional culture" (p. 73). Early year teachers often reinforce gender conforming roles in children, especially for boys, where masculine behaviours such as being active and loud are approved and normalized. In contrast, feminine characteristics such as playing with dolls, socializing with girls, or having a generally gentle demeanor are more likely to be frowned upon by both teachers and other children (Cahill & Adams, 1997; Jordon, 1995).

The conforming attitude towards male students' adherence to masculinity may also explain why so few men become primary teachers. As children's first exit from home is often to go to school and female educators are primarily seen as the carrier of family and moral values. This pedagogy of love as described by Letts and Sears (1999) reflects how society perceives early years teachers, "schools should be like home with the "good mother; open hearted, nurturing and gentle" (Letts & Sears, 1999, p. 28). When early years teachers are males, they are asked to negotiate and prove their masculinity with their colleagues. Their female counterparts may scrutinize them if they display behaviours similar to those of the "nurturing good mother" (Mills, 2004; Skelton, 1996; Thornton, 1999). As the early years profession is largely female dominated, it affects male teachers' status within the society, subjects them to false sexual complaints, and renders them as being different from the norm. Mills (2004) states "to some extent this has been facilitated by portraying men who enter, or seek to enter, teaching as wanting to be like women, and thus as "abnormal men" (p. 30).

Children's Gender Identities

At a very young age, children learn specific stereotypical gender behaviours of likes and dislikes attributed to boys and girls. They learn to do this by observing social cues given to them by adults and other children around them (Brody, 1997; Tenenbaum & Leaper, 2002). They use these social cues to help shape their understanding of masculinity and femininity. When children have an understanding of what being a boy or a girl might mean, they learn to adhere more to gender stereotypical behaviours associated to a specific gender than those who do not have a clear understanding of gender identity (Martin & Ruble, 2004; Wohlwend, 2009).

Early-years teachers' practice is often influenced by the pressure to become a "good mother" (Letts & Sears, 1999) who carries forward the moral values found in the children's home. This pressure is combined with teachers' lack of training on queer issues, so it is no surprise that Burt et al. (2010) argue that "without thinking about it, many teachers act on the assumption that all children in their classes are or will be heterosexual" (Burt et al, 2010, p.2). Often teachers will choose to read books to their students that promote a heteronormativity (Lapointe, 2014; Kissen 2002). Consequently, teachers, without really thinking about it, promote compulsory heterosexuality through the stories they read to their students—stories that represent nuclear families, heterosexual relationships and the types of questions, which are heteronormative in nature (Letts & Sears, 1999). The result is that classroom libraries end up being "collections that make adults comfortable, not necessarily ones that will serve as places where children can explore the world that surrounds them" (Walling, 1999, p.77). Consequently, children who do not adhere to heteronormative norms learn early to "edit, filter and translate their own experiences to match the normative mode" (Ryan, 2016, p.87). As their understanding

of heteronormativity grows, so does their reluctance to share their family composition or same sex feelings.

Whether consciously or unconsciously, heteronormativity among staff and students is reinforced through traditional schools' structures. It is often difficult for students and staff to be true to themselves or to show allyship for fear of being stigmatized and labelled as being part of the LGBTQ+ community (Lesko, 2000; Mills 2004; Walling, 1996). Even though school divisions are slowly developing policies that support the implementation of policies such as Manitoba's Bill 18, teachers can also help support this implementation by intentionally selecting children's literature that reflects LGBTQ+ populations to help combat heteronormativity.

Canadian Legislative Laws on Bullying and Bill 18

Bullying issues among youth in schools have captured the attention of the Canadian government: "Bullying among school-aged youth is increasingly being recognized as an important problem affecting well-being and social functioning" (Nansel et al., 2001, p. 2094-100). Bullying behaviours take on many forms to hurt the victims and can be demonstrated through physical or verbal assaults and the spreading of rumors. Studies on victims of bullying demonstrate that they have poor social and emotional adjustment, have difficulty making and keeping friends, suffer from depression resulting in victims' loneliness, and are ostracized by their peers (Limber, 2011; Nansel et al., 2001; Pepler, 2016). Drawing public attention to these issues, there have been several high-profile youth deaths that have been the result of homophobic bullying, such as Matthew Shepard (1998) and Lawrence King (2008). Shepard, who was an openly gay 21-year-old man, was a student from Laramie, Wyoming, USA. In the fall of 1998, two men he had met at a pub abducted Shepard. They severely beat him, and as a result, he succumbed to his injuries a few days later (Kim, 2011). King was an openly gay youth. He was

a 14-year-old student attending E.O. Green Junior High in Oxnard, California. In winter 2008, he was brutally shot to death by a grade eight male student from his school (Perkiss, 2013). These two incidents demonstrate the violence that can be perpetrated towards LGBTQ+ people. Students are not safe in schools due to their sexual orientation or perceived orientation by peers (Taylor & Peter, 2012). Although the previous cases were from an American context, according to Canada's Statistics 2013, there were 183 reported police cases that were motivated by hatred of a sexual orientation; 25% of these victims were under the age of twenty-five (Statistics Canada, Hate Crimes, 2013). Consequently, laws that address students' safety from any forms of bullying, in particularly those of LGBTQ+ rights, are in dire need.

In Canada, each of the ten provinces and three territories is in charge of creating and administering student education policies and curricula. There are laws addressing any forms of bullying in schools, and these laws vary across the country. For example, Bill 13 (Brotten, 2012, Ontario, Canada), mandates that school policies be drawn regarding the inclusion of students from any sexual orientation, gender identity or expression; Bill 56 (Gouvernement du Québec, 2012), requires that school authorities write policies to address any forms of bullying or violent acts made toward LGBTQ+ youths; and Bill 18 (Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, 2014), requires that school policies be written regarding respect for human diversity to ensure that equality based on gender, race, sexual orientation and sexuality is available to all students. Gay Straight Alliance groups are now allowed to be in existence in all Canadian territories and provinces (Canadian Civil Liberties Association and Canadian Civil Liberties Trust, 2014, p.2 second para., Egale, Canada Human Right Trust, 2017) such as Ontario, Manitoba, and Alberta (Taylor et al., 2016). In addition, the province of Manitoba has an amendment to its Human Rights Code that addresses gender identity. This amendment prevents anyone from being

discriminated against or harassed on the basis of the individual's actual or perceived gender identity (Manitoba Human Rights Commission, 2016). At this time, only two Manitoban school divisions out of the thirty-eight have school policies that address the inclusion of transgender students: Winnipeg School Division and River East Transcona School Division.

Since bullying continues to be an issue in schools, the current legislation alone is not sufficient to solve it, and more studies are needed to better understand why bullying issues towards LGBTQ+ students still prevail in schools. A year-long national survey conducted by Taylor et al. (2016) involved 3400 teachers from kindergarten to grade twelve on the topic of LGBTQ+ inclusive education. This study suggested that: (a) most teachers felt their schools were safe, but not for LGBTQ+ students; (b) teachers believed that LGBTQ+ rights were human rights, but some teachers did not approve of having an LGBTQ+-inclusive education, and few were willing to talk about the issue with their students; (c) few teachers were comfortable to include LGBT issues in their pedagogy; and (d) teachers did not feel supported by their school administrators (Taylor et al., 2016). Consequently, the findings from this important research demonstrate that teachers' education on LGBTQ+ topics is lacking. The current amendments are a great start in supporting the inclusion of LGBTQ+ students in schools, but they are insufficient to address Taylor's findings. For example, Bill 18 does not mandate school divisions to have training for teachers on the inclusion of LGBTQ+ topics in their pedagogy, and so it falls back on school divisions to individually create professional development sessions for their staff. In addition, Bill 18 does not mandate the Manitoba Education and Training department to develop new curriculum guides that would support the inclusion of LGBTQ+ topics in schools, and consequently, that may perpetuate a heteronormative attitude in the education system. Without

mandated policies, teachers are still without recommended materials to use with their students when wanting to address LGBTQ+ topics in their classrooms.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the literature review reveals several topical gaps. I found that many of the LGBTQ+ books portray white, middle-class homonormative values that parallel those of heteronormative values regarding loving relationships and families. The protagonists in these stories are most likely to be gays, lesbians, or transgender resulting in a literature that not only provides a narrow view of the LGBTQ+ community to the children, but it also fractures this community. The literature also indicates that there is a gap in teacher education regarding the inclusion of LGBTQ+ topics in their pedagogy, which results in perpetuating heteronormative values at the core of the education system. There is also a trend in which LGBTQ+ children's literature is often released from small publishing companies. One has to wonder if small, independent publishing companies are willing to publish alternative stories than those found in big companies. The advantage of the independent publishers allows for the publication and distribution of such literature. The disadvantage may be a compromise its quality in terms of storyline, picture quality, and text characteristics, which may be inferior to the literature released from big publishing companies.

Consequently, my research aimed to research the following gaps. Current research on LGBTQ+ children's literature does not indicate if the contemporary literature is written at a level that is suitable for children from Kindergarten to Grade 3 to read independently. The literature does not indicate which members of the LGBTQ+ community, aside from those who identified as being bisexual, are being neglected and what other kinds of loving relationships and families are being omitted. The amendment of Bill 18 in 2013 has led some school divisions in Manitoba

to develop policies to address bullying issues affecting students in Manitoban Schools. What the literature did not indicate was if the named public organizations targeted in this research project:

1) The Manitoba Learning Centre, 2) The Manitoba Curriculum Support Centre, 3) The Winnipeg Public Library, 4) The Rainbow Resource Center, and 5) Direction des Ressources Éducatives Françaises (DREF) had purchasing agendas that support the implementation of Bill 18 in order to provide teachers, parents, and students the accessibility to an LGBTQ+ recommended literature. Finally, the literature did not provide specific criteria educational institutions use when selecting and buying children's literature, and whether or not that criteria differs when selecting and purchasing LGBTQ+ children's literature.

In Chapter 3, I discuss my methodology and research design. I state my problem statement and my three research questions. I explain the process of how I recruited my participants from the five local organizations, and how I collected and analyzed my data. Finally, I explain how I ensured that my research was valid and trustworthy.

Chapter III

Methodology and Research Design

I used a qualitative interpretive research methodology in this study because it relies on linguistic rather than numerical data to generate meaning from the data analysis. According to Elliot and Timulak (2005) the data collection for qualitative interpretive research is often gathered through analysed interviews and books, which is what I have done in this study. In this type of research, interviews contain open-ended questions that allow interviewees the flexibility to elaborate their viewpoints, while pointing out important features related to the research that could be otherwise missed with close-ended types of questions. This approach ensured that each interview becomes a unique source of data.

Justification for the Methodology

Since this research study was grounded in queer theory/critical literacy theories, the qualitative interpretive research methodology suited this research best. As discussed in greater detail in the Chapter 1, queer theory focuses attention on socially-constructed and negotiated understandings of individuals' gender identity and sexuality. Critical literacy theories focus on “what all kinds of texts (written, oral, visual) do to readers, viewers, and listeners, and whose interest are served by what these texts do” (Janks, 2010, p. 19). Aligning with queer and critical literacy theorists, Serafani (2014) argues:

Meanings constructed during the act of interpretation are socially embedded, temporary, partial, and plural. There is not a single, objective truth about a particular multimodal text or visual image, but many truths, each with its own authority and its own warrants for viability aligned with a particular interpretive theories and perspectives (Aiello, 2006; Elkins, 2008). (p. 37)

My collection and interpretation of data came from a series of interviews and reviews of the text and illustrations of recommended LGBTQ+-themed children's books. The analyses of data provided emerging themes and an identification of the values and messages of homonormativity, ally or inclusive stances, and conceptualizations of LGBTQ+ people and families in the literature recommended for K-3 students in Manitoba. In addition, the analysis provided the readability levels of each of the recommended books. I analyzed the content of 22 of the most popular books recommended by the representative of the participating organizations to understand how individuals buying LGBTQ+ children's literature are responding to the changes resulting from Bill 18. The purpose of the interviews was to determine what LGBTQ+ children's books are available for teachers and caregivers for students from Kindergarten to Grade 3.

The Problem Statement/Research Questions

The problem statement for this research was to identify current societal factors that influence the selection and utilization of LGBTQ+ children's literature with early year students. The purpose of this study was to determine: (1) the nature of this literature (e.g., independent reading by student /teacher-student reading); (2) the values this literature conveys to the reader (homo-normative or not); (3) the messages this literature communicates to the reader (ally, inclusive); and (4) the ways the discourse in these books may shape students' views towards LGBTQ+ people and LGBTQ+ families. The reason I conducted this research into the LGBTQ+ children literature recommended by various organizations in Manitoba was to persuade more teachers to use these text sets to discuss the following topics with their students: LGBTQ+ people, diversity of sexual orientation, gender identity, and family makeups.

The research questions guiding this study were:

- 1) What LGBTQ+ literature is most often recommended, and made available to teachers in Manitoba for students from Kindergarten to Grade 3? Has the availability of LGBTQ+ literature increased or changed in response to the implementation of Bill 18?
- 2) What is the readability level of this literature?
- 3) How do the language and illustrations in the recommended books voice, silence, or shape the following values and messages: a) homonormativity; b) ally or inclusive stances; c) conceptualizations of LGBTQ+ people and families?

Research Participants

I solicited the participation of people from the following five public organizations in Manitoba in order to answer the questions above: 1) The Manitoba Learning Centre, 2) The Manitoba Education Resource Library, 3) The Winnipeg Public Library, 4) The Rainbow Resource Center, 5) Direction des Ressources Éducatives Française. I focused on the above five local organizations, because they are the places most schools, librarians, teachers and home school parents go to when borrowing or purchasing educational materials to support the provincial curricula.

I wrote a letter and sent it to the administrator of each of these organizations describing my research project. S/he made the project outline and my contact information available to whoever was interested in participating within the organization. This information was provided electronically and through a paper-format poster. Interested participants contacted me and we arranged a mutually acceptable time for an interview. Before the interview began, I reviewed the consent form and the research proposal outline with the participant. I also answered the participants' questions and queries about the project. I did not start the interview until the

consent form had been signed by the participant. In the event that a few organizations chose not to participate, I had proposed that I would continue the research with the remainder of the organizations. There might have been a need to analyze more recommended books from each of the remaining participating organizations to provide a richer data source. However, I only had one organization, the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre that was unable to participate in the study. The other five organizations offered a total of 22 recommendations to review and analyze.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data Collection

When the participants contacted me to arrange a time to meet, I provided them with the interview questions in advance, so they were aware of the type of information I would be inquiring about. At the beginning of the interview, I reviewed the consent form and got their signature before we begin the open-ended interviews that lasted approximately 45 – 90 minutes using questions listed in Appendix A. All five interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed verbatim for analysis purposes. I provided each participant with a copy of his or her interview transcript to review and ensure accuracy (see section on validity and trustworthiness later in this chapter). I replaced the names of the participants with a pseudonym to ensure as much confidentiality for the participants as possible.

Once the interviews were completed, I made a chart with the names of all books recommended by each of the interviewees. All recommended books were recorded, but the five most highly recommended books from each interviewee were analyzed, except for the DREF, which I chose to analyze eight books as a balance to the many recommended English books. Because there were some repeated recommendations, the total data set was 22 books. I obtained

copies of each of the books on the list in order to analyze the content of the language and the illustrations.

The following table shows how the data for each research question was collected.

Table 3.1

Table of Data Sources to Answer Research Questions

Research Questions	Data Source	
	Appendix A: Interview Guide	Appendix B: Book Critical Discourse Analysis and Book Readability
What LGBTQ+ literature is most often recommended, and made available to teachers in Manitoba for students from Kindergarten to Grade 3 ? Has the availability of LGBTQ+ literature increased or changed in response to the implementation of Bill 18?	✓	
What is the readability level of this literature?	✓	✓
How do the language and illustrations in the recommended books voice, silence, or shape the following values and messages: a) homonormativity; b) ally or inclusive stances; c) conceptualizations of LGBTQ+ people and families?	✓	✓

Data Analysis

The multiple sources of data collected were analyzed through queer and critical literacy lenses. I conducted an interpretative thematic analysis of the interview data following the research questions as a framework. I also conducted a content analysis of the recommended books through two different methods of analysis: readability and critical discourse analysis. Each

of the methods of analysis are described in detail below.

Thematic Analysis of Interview Data

I followed Stringer's (2008) methodology when analyzing the data from the interviews. First, I reviewed through multiple readings the interviews transcriptions and written data gathered during the interviews. Second, I divided all the data into "units of meaning" by associating key words to the data. Third, I regrouped the unitized key word data into categories based on features that relate to them. Fourth, I analyzed and coded data in each category to create subcategories if needed. Lastly, I conducted a bigger picture analysis of these categories and subcategories to help me see how this information was interrelated and themes emerged from the interview data (Stringer, 2008, p.101).

Analysis of Readability Levels

As an initial way to determine the readability level for each of the five most recommended books, I first asked if the participants were familiar with readability levels and if they already have an idea of what level they believe the books may fit. When the participant did not know about readability levels of books and whether or not the books may be read independently by a K-3 child, this became an important finding of the study. I triangulated the participants' assessments of the reading levels, by using one (or more) of the following approaches to determine the readability of the books:

Publisher's levelling criteria [French and English books]. To crosscheck any information provided by the interviewees, I examined the general public presentation of the book from the publishing companies' back covers, websites, and advertised descriptions of the books.

The website applications that I used are: Scholastic Book Wizard, Level It and Book Depository for the English books. For the French books, I used Renaud-Bray bookstore and Livres Ouverts (Open Book).

Scholastic book wizard. This online free website provides a reading level for books found within their data base. It also provides a letter correspondence leveling system that aligns with the Fountas and Pinnell leveling system. This site is accessible to the general public.

Level it books. This is a purchased application that patrons use to scan the International Standard Book Number (ISBN) in order to find out the reading level of a book. This application provides guided reading levels as per Fountas and Pinnell leveling system, grade level equivalency or a Lexile level. According to Scholastic, a Lexile level determines how “difficult a text is OR a student’s reading ability level” (Scholastic.com, 2018, para.1). Scholastic’s Lexile levels have been developed by MetaMetric. According to MetaMetric, this scientific approach uses a developmental scale to determine the reading ability and text complexity of reading materials (MetaMetric, 2018, para.1). Information provided from Scholastic’s website stipulates that there are two ways to determine a student Lexile level: 1) taking a school administered test such as the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) or a standardized test. Both translate “the readers results to a Lexile measure” (Scholastic.com, 2018, para.2). Unfortunately, I do not find the Lexile chart provided by Scholastic user friendly, because there are many reading levels associated to a Lexile range. Therefore, I decided to cross-check Scholastic’s chart with the Lexile Chart provided on the Learning A-Z website, another paid application. On this website, teachers can download and print leveled books for their students, listen to stories, and do some interactive and paper and pencil activities related to the books to name a few. Even though Learning A-Z Lexile chart is not MetaMetrics certified, the Lexile numbers are closely

associated to a reading level and therefore, I find comparing both charts helped me estimate which reading level a book is.

Book Depository. Book Depository is an online bookstore owned by Amazon. According to its website, it has over “18 million titles at low prices -- all with free delivery worldwide to over 100 countries” (The Book Depository LTD, 2018, para.1). This website provides book synopses as well as age levels for which books are intended for.

Renaud-Bray. Renaud-Bray is a French-language bookstore with more than 30 outlets in the province of Quebec. Its warehouse holds more than 200,000 products that are processed electronically and delivered worldwide. Renaud-Bray’s mission statement is to “help expand and diversify the offering of French-language cultural products and play a leading role in the promotion and dissemination of culture” (Renaud-Bray.com, 2018, Mission Statement, para.1).

Livres ouverts (Open Books). Livres Ouverts is an online website developed by the Minister of Education in Québec. It provides book synopses as well as grade levels to which books are intended for. The Livres Ouverts’ collection has approximately “7412 books” from primary to secondary school. Its collection of books contains Canadian as well as international authors (Livres Ouverts, 2018, February 19, para 6).

Fountas and Pinnell application [English books]. Irene C. Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell have worked collaboratively for the last twenty years to develop a systematic teaching methodology in an attempt to improve reading and writing instruction in many schools across the United States of America. Their expertise comes from their many years of being classroom teachers, language arts specialists, consultants in school districts, and academics in universities. Their field-based research approach has helped develop and market comprehensive approaches to literacy education that are now widely used by many teachers in North America (Fountas &

Pinnell, 2017a). Fountas and Pinnell are perhaps best known for developing a systematic method that levels children's books based on text characteristics. Text characteristics refer to the: "length, size and layout of print, vocabulary and concepts, language structure, text structure and genre, predictability and pattern of language, and supportive illustrations" (Fountas & Pinnell as cited in Hoffman, 2011, p. 513).

Letters of the alphabet are used to represent the Fountas and Pinnell leveling system. The letters A-C represent books considered appropriate for independent reading by most kindergarten students, while the letters X-Z are for those books deemed most appropriate linguistically for students who are in grades seven to eight. One of the advantages for teachers and reading clinicians to use leveled texts is that these kinds of "reading materials represent a progression from more simple to more complex and challenging texts" (Brabham & Villaume 2002, p. 438). Leveled texts ensure that students who are reading them can do so with little difficulty, while practicing newly mastered reading strategies. In addition, the leveling system also provides teachers with an ongoing reference benchmark as to where their students' reading skills are and where they ought to be compared to other readers in their age group. However, scholars caution teachers to refrain from exclusively using leveled texts for independent reading with their students, because some of the stories may not be relevant to them resulting in a decrease both in self-identification from the readers and in motivation for wanting to read them. Burton (2001) writes, "Leveled books are only one type of reading resource available to students. If we restrict all of the students' independent reading choices to our collections of leveled books, we jeopardize the motivation that comes from self-selection of reading materials" (p. 355; see also Glasswell & Ford 2010).

Since one of the research questions focused on the readability levels of these books, in part to determine whether or not students can independently read the currently recommended LGBTQ+ literature, a computer application developed by Fountas and Pinnell (2017b) was used to help determine the level of each of the suggested English books. This application compares a variety of text characteristics with books found within its database to determine the reading level of the books. This automated tool is greatly appreciated by teachers and reading clinicians, as it allows them to quickly determine the reading level of each new book that enters their classroom and adds it to its respective reading level bin for guided reading purposes. This application allows teachers from Kindergarten to grade eight to supplement their classroom library and reading program in an effortless and accurate way.

Parallel matching [French and English books]. In the event that none of the leveling systems discussed so far provided answers to the reading level for some of the targeted books, I manually reviewed each book by comparing it with those found in the Fountas and Pinnell “Matching books to readers” (Fountas & Pinnell, 1999, and in comparison, to the chart in appendix C). This informal matching provided an approximate reading level for the targeted books. I also had another reading clinician do an independent levelling of the books, so there was increased credibility of findings.

Critical Discourse Analysis of the Text and Visuals in the Recommended Children’s Books

I needed an analysis framework for the text and illustrations of the recommended books that would align with and enhance my exploration of queer and critical literacies theories. Critical discourse analysis (Gee, 2011) and critical visual discourse analysis (Albers, 2007; Serafini, 2014) were apt frameworks to analyse the explicit and implicit values and messages of the text and illustrations of the recommended K-3 LGBTQ+ children’s books.

Gee (2011) argues that “all discourse analysis needs to be critical, not because discourse analysts are or need to be political, but because language itself is . . . political” (p. 9). Languages are socially constructed, which generates power for some while disempowering others. Gee (2011) argues:

Language is a key way we human make and break our world, our institutions, and our relationships through how we deal with social goods. Thus, discourse analysis can illuminate problems and controversies in the world. It can illuminate issues about the distribution of social goods, who gets helps, and who gets harmed” (Gee, 2005, pp. 9-10). Just as language is political and situated, so are visuals used in books. Serafini (2014) argues that “visual images play an important role, and often unseen role, in our developing identities” (p. 1). Therefore, it is important “to analyze the structures and conventions within visual texts and how social identities get played out in their production” (p. 23). Gee’s (2011) methodology for conducting critical discourse analysis in conjunction with visual discourse analysis helped me examine the language and visuals from the recommended books. This analysis illuminated which values and privileges of some members in the LGBTQ+ communities/families were being represented.

Gee (2011) argues that there are seven building tasks of language, which become the framework for analysis. The method Gee developed for critical discourse analysis is meant to be used as “thinking devices” and not “as a set of ‘rules’ to be followed ‘step-by-step’” (p. 125). Therefore, I took the questions Gee has generated for each of the building tasks to create an analysis rubric found in Appendix B. Within the rubric, I also created specific questions to guide my analysis and focus on LGBTQ+ representations in the language and illustrations. In the table below, I provided the questions that guided my critical discourse/visual analysis:

Table 3.2

Table of Questions to Guide Critical Discourse Analysis

Gee's (2011) Building Task	Gee's about the Building Task	Specific Questions to Guide LGBTQ+ Analysis
Significance	“How is the speaker of writer [artist] trying to give significance to things?” (Gee, 2011, p. 102)	<i>Who are the protagonists? What are the messages the reader is getting from this book?</i>
Practices (Activities)	“What practices (activities) are relevant in this context? How are they being enacted?” (Gee, 2011, p.102)	<i>What is the story about?</i>
Identities	“What identities are depicted and relevant in this context?” (Gee, 2011, p.102)	<i>Which sexual orientations are being included or omitted? Which gender identities are being portrayed?</i>
Relationships	“Which relationships are shown as being relevant in this context? How are they being enacted? (Gee, 2011, p.102)	<i>What kinds of kinships are being shown?</i>
Politics	“What social goods are relevant and how are they distributed among the characters?” (Gee, 2011, p.102)	<i>Which values are being promoted in the story (homonormative)? Which socioeconomic background does it represent?</i>
Connections	“What are the relevant connections and disconnections between things/visuals and characters?” (Gee, 2011, p.102)	<i>How are these narratives shaping children's views towards LGBTQ+ people and their families?</i>
Signs systems and knowledge	“What language and visuals are relevant in this context? How are they privileged or deprivileged?” (Gee, 2011, p.102)	<i>How do the language and visuals promote allyship and inclusivity?</i>

Criteria to Ensure Validity or Trustworthiness

To ensure trustworthiness, this research adhered to the four criteria recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as cited in Stringer (2008): *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability*, and *confirmability*. First, in order for this research to be *credible*, I practiced *triangulation* by examining the questions through multiple data sources. I included perspectives gained through interviews, the content of recommended books, and sought external perspectives through the literature review. Also, to ensure credibility, I conducted a *member check* with each participant following the interview to ensure that my verbatim transcripts reflected their perspectives. During the member check process, I provided a copy of the transcription to each participant who was allowed to add and delete any information they judged necessary to represent their experiences for this research study (Stringer, 2008, pp. 49-50). By engaging in this member check process, I have greater confidence the participants' perspectives, experiences, perceptions and language are authentically captured, and by doing so the data collection and analysis will demonstrate that the findings reflect those of my participants' perspectives and voices and not mine (Stringer, 2008, p.51). This detailed approach ensured that there was internal consistency on how the data is being collected and analysed. It provided also a "thorough description of source data and a fit between the data and the emerging analysis" (Geertz 1973, 1983 in Morrow, Hansen, Haverkamp, Ponterotto, 2005, p. 252).

I aimed for the findings of this research to be *transferrable*, which will allow for other researchers "to take advantage of the knowledge acquired from this study" and apply it to other similar settings for further research (Stringer, 2008, p. 50). In addition, I provided "sufficient information about" who I am as "(the researcher as instrument) and the research context, processes, participants, and researcher-participant relationships to enable the reader to decide

how the findings may transfer” (Morrow, Hansen, Haverkamp, Ponterotto, 2005, p. 252).

Consequently, another researcher in another province or territory who would want to conduct a similar research study has full access to this research project including the methodology and appendices if s/he wanted to replicate it.

I also needed to make sure that the research process demonstrated *dependability*.

According to Morrow et al (2005), dependability is ensured when the research design is well laid out so that “the audit trail is a detailed chronology of research activities and processes” (Morrow, Hansen, Haverkamp, Ponterotto, 2005, p. 252). To increase dependability of results, I had two co-coders who provided another perspective during analysis. The first co-coder, my advisor, reviewed my data collected, and checked the coding of the emerging themes from the interviews and the critical discourse analysis from the recommended books. The second co-coder, a work colleague who is also a reading clinician, reviewed the readability levels from the books that are written in English and French languages. Having two co-coders ensured accuracy of findings and it also provided better confirmability of my results, because the findings represented “the situation being researched rather than” my beliefs or biases (Gasson, 2004, p.93 in Morrow Hansen, Haverkamp, Ponterotto, 2005, p.252).

Ethical Considerations

In this research, I followed the ethical considerations outlined in the TCP-2 (2014). This proposal was submitted with the ENREB’s protocol submission form and accompanying documents to the review board for approval. I contacted the participants and informed them of the general purpose of the study. The participants were provided with informed consent letters and I discussed with them the purpose of this study and how the data would be used. I reported all my findings including those of multiple perspectives and contrary findings. The participants

were made aware of the nature of the data collected, how it would be stored and who had access to it.

There were some ethical considerations around the confidentiality/anonymity of the participants. I used pseudonyms and referred to job titles rather than individuals to ensure participants' anonymity, however, there may still be a risk of identification of participants, because the names of the organizations studied are provided. This is a relatively small province and other educators who frequent these organizations may have an idea of who the participants in the study may be—therefore, I aimed for confidentiality, but could not guarantee anonymity, despite the pseudonym. However, I clearly explained to the participants the risks and benefits of participating in this research, and I made them aware how my results would be disseminated: to whom and for what intended purpose. The participants will be provided copies of my report. I will also refrain from using the same material for more than one research publication (Creswell, 2013, pp. 58-59).

Strengths and Limitations of the Methodology

There were several strengths to this methodology. The interviews were unstructured, which allowed for rich dialogue data to emerge from the interviews and allowed me to explore evolving themes about the interviewee's current knowledge about contemporary LGBTQ+ children's literature. The questions within the unstructured interviews could be adapted for clarification purpose or to get further insights on interviewee's answers (University of Sheffield, 2014). The data collection from these types of interviews are often compelling and complex. Also, the findings from this research will be transferrable to other similar contexts. A final strength of this methodology emerges from the critical discourse analysis of the recommended books. Through this analysis I now have a better idea of the kind of messages and values this

literature provides to readers and I hope this analysis can guide other teachers, parents, and interested readers in choosing appropriate kindergarten to grade 3 literature.

In terms of limitations, this research focused on the impact of a localized government bill (Bill 18), which leads to largely localized findings. Also, the data collection was framed using data from five organizations from one province. This meant that there was a limit to the number of perspectives provided within this study. Additionally, within this research, I did not ask for teachers' input on where they go to borrow and purchase literary materials for classroom use or whether they borrow or purchase those of LGBTQ+ content. Instead, I limited the study by focusing on the main five organizations that I believed teachers were most likely to use to borrow or purchase literary materials for classroom use. Consequently, the interviews focused only on five people: one from each organization who has responsibility in selecting, recommending and purchasing. The small sample of people may not provide sufficient data to find emerging themes (Learning and Teaching Services, the University of Sheffield, UK, 2014). In order to create a realistic and achievable data set to study, the top five (eight for the DREF) recommended books from each of the five organizations were analyzed in detail for discourse/language and visual/illustrations. This meant that there were only a limited number of K – 3 level books that were studied.

Delimitations

The first focus for this study was to interview people who initiated book selection and purchasing of children's literature to supplement the teaching of school curriculum guides and school libraries. The second focus was to analyze the discourse in the recommended LGBTQ+ children's literature for early years' students. There were several delimitations associated with this research.

- 1) I only looked at children's literature geared to students who are in primary grades (Kindergarten to grade 3) and I neglected to look at the literature geared for older students. I also looked at the readability level of books written only for primary students.
- 2) Bill 18's aim is to ensure that schools develop policies that protect all students from any forms of bullying, and yet I only paid attention to one group of students that are being mentioned in Bill 18: LGBTQ+ students. Consequently, I neglected to look at other groups of students who could be bullied in schools based on their gender, ethnicity, or from any physical or cognitive disabilities they may have.
- 3) I only included the titles of the books that were recommended by members from five local organizations and I neglected to interview similar organizations in the other provinces and territories in Canada.
- 4) I neglected to survey people who are part of the school communities: teachers, parents and students in Manitoban schools. I also neglected to interview staff and students in the Faculty of Education of the four universities in Manitoba, which limits the scope of this research.
- 5) As each province and territory in Canada is in charge of creating and administering students' education policies and curricula, I did not investigate if those provinces and territories that have laws that protects students from any forms of bullying, have developed a recommended LGBTQ+ children's literature list for students from Kindergarten to grade 3. I did not seek to answer if there are Canadian curriculum guides that acknowledge and support the discussions on LGBTQ+ people, families and relationships in other provinces and territories.

- 6) Students' perspectives in using queer literature have not been taken into account for this research and therefore, I did not find out if the current literature appeals or not to them (LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+) or if it reflects the lives of those who live in LGBTQ+ households. I will not know if primary students can read it either. I will also not know if using LGBTQ+ books with primary students reinforce LGBTQ+ students' identity and their well-being within the school setting.
- 7) I also did not interview non-LGBTQ+ students to see if reading LGBTQ+ children's literature increases their acceptance of Queer people, families, other sexual orientations and gender identity. I also did not interview LGBTQ+ parents to get their perspectives on the values promoted in the contemporary LGBTQ+ children's literature and to find out who's is not represented in the stories, and which other kinds of loving relationships are being omitted.
- 8) In order to make this research manageable and time efficient, I decided to first look at the places where teachers who reside in my province will likely go when they buy/borrow books to support their curricula.
- 9) Additionally, to further manage time and data, I decided that I will only review the five (eight for the DREF) most recommended books from participants in the five organizations to get an initial idea of what these organizations are recommending, and whether or not teachers and the public in general use them.

In my research project, I only paved the way to create a reference list for early years teachers to use with their students when wanting to support the implementation of Bill 18. I put the above delimitations to ensure that my research stayed manageable and focused.

Significance of the Study Results and Analysis

This research is significant in the field of education, since I have shown how the recommended texts may support the acknowledgment of LGBTQ+ people and families. I have created an annotated list of 22 LGBTQ+ children's literature books that were recommended from five local organizations responsible for selecting, recommending, and purchasing books for teachers and parents. School librarians, classroom teachers, reading clinicians, and parents may find this research important, as it will provide them with a recommended list along with a critical discourse analysis of the messages and values these books convey. Additionally, this research provides an analysis of the reading levels of these recommended books. This is important because it informs school librarians, classroom teachers, reading clinicians, and parents about the readability level of these books and whether or not they are written at levels K-3 students can read independently.

In Chapter 4, I will present the context of each organization. This will be followed by the presentation of my findings and analyses for each of the five interviews in connection to my research questions.

CHAPTER IV

Organizational Interviews

This chapter discusses the findings from the five interviews that were conducted with representatives from the following organizations: the Manitoba Learning Resource Centre, the Manitoba Curriculum Support Centre, the Winnipeg Public Library, the Rainbow Resource Centre, and the Direction des Ressources Éducatives Françaises (DREF). The findings are organized and discussed according to the interview questions and analyzed thematically to answer my three research questions: (1) What LGBTQ+ literature is most often recommended and made available to teachers in Manitoba for students from Kindergarten to Grade 3? Has the availability of LGBTQ+ literature increased or changed in response to the implementation of Bill 18? (2) What is the readability level of this literature? (3) How do the language and illustrations in the recommended books voice, silence, or shape the following values and messages: a) homonormativity; b) ally or inclusive stances; c) conceptualizations of LGBTQ+ people and families?

In the first part of the chapter, I will present the context of each organization. This will be followed by the presentation of my findings and analyses in connection to my research questions. In Chapter 5, I will present the findings and analysis from the 22 books that were recommended from the five organizations.

The Manitoba Learning Resource Centre

The Manitoba Learning Resource Centre (MLRC) serves all schools in the province of Manitoba. This outreach includes all private and public schools, as well as all independent and First Nation Schools. The Centre also serves the needs of two types of overseas schools. The first type of schools has an affiliation with the Manitoba Certification Branch. It means that

teachers who work at this type of schools follow the Manitoban curriculums, and their students graduate with a diploma from this province. The other type of overseas schools is those that teach English as a second language. Both types of overseas schools purchase resources from the Manitoba Learning Resources to support their educational programs. At this time, these overseas schools are found in China, Egypt, and Bangladesh. The Centre has a wide collection of educational resources containing approximately 15 000 items.

I interviewed Teresa of the Manitoba Learning Resource Centre who is in charge of selecting and purchasing learning resources requested by school personnel and also by consultants who work at Manitoba Education and Training. These learning resources are available to support the implementation of the curriculum documents developed for all K-12 subjects taught in Manitoban schools and from students who are home schooled. It is important to specify that Teresa's role makes it extremely difficult for her to answer some of the interview questions, because they are not pertinent to her position, but she answered in a way that is relevant to her position. Teresa's role is to seek out resources submitted by publishers and buy those that best fit the needs of the provincial curriculum documents at a cost-effective price. This organization is run like a business, so customer/client demand determines the purchases in an effort to be cost efficient to the schools. The provincial government allocates \$60.00 yearly per pupil in all schools; \$30.00 must be used to purchase resources from the Manitoba Learning Resource Centre, and the other \$30.00 can be used by school personnel to purchase classroom supplies and resources from other vendors at their own discretion. If the allocated money for a school is not used within the academic year, the funds remain available within an individual school's budget-line at the Manitoba Learning Resource Centre. It continues to accumulate until school personnel is ready to use it: "The fact that we are a special operating agency allows the

money to just continue to build each and every year” (Teresa, p. 30). This strategy ensures that the provincial money allocated to all schools is distributed fairly and used equally.

According to Teresa, the Manitoba Learning Resource Centre’s collection of LGBTQ+ children’s literature is good, but it is “underdeveloped” (Teresa, p. 5). Although this may seem contradictory, Teresa acknowledged that her current collection is as good as it can be, but she would continue to seek more materials to supplement what she currently has. Although one of the consultants at the Department of Education has “done some extensive work in providing lists of highly recommended resources,” some of these books remain difficult to source out, because “they’re not available or they don’t stay in print for a long period of time” (Teresa, p. 5). It also appears that the last update of the current list of LGBTQ+ resources provided from the Department of Education was done in “the last three or four years” (Teresa, p.5), and consequently, she believes that it’s time for an update.

Even though the requests from teachers for children’s literature and educational resources with LGBTQ+ content have increased over the last four years, the Teresa has identified that there is a lack of availability of some of the requested resources and this impedes the volume of resources that can be purchased at a cost-effective price. This negatively affects the Manitoba Learning Resource Centre’s business model.

At this time, there is not an LGBTQ+ section within the Manitoba Learning Resource Centre. One way she hopes to counteract this problem is through the launch of the MLRC’s new website and its new cataloguing capacity. This website will allow users’ searches to be cross-referenced among subject areas. For example, a search for Science resources may also provide titles with LGBTQ+ content materials. Teresa hopes that this cross-referencing approach will increase teachers’ awareness of the Centre’s LGBTQ+ offerings when they are purchasing

resources to supplement their classrooms. This increase in purchase requests of LGBTQ+ materials from teachers will expand the volume base needed to meet the Manitoba Learning Resource Centre's business model of bulk purchasing materials at a cost-effective price.

The Manitoba Learning Resource Centre uses a four-part process to select children's literature and educational resources. First, requests come from an internal unit at the Department of Education called the Instruction Curriculum Assessment Branch (ICAB), which does a "formal review" (Teresa, p.7) of educational resources. Staff within this unit provide a list of titles to Teresa to purchase and add to the Manitoba Learning Resource Centre's catalogue. These resources are recommended because the ICAB members believe that "the content and the fact that it has been reviewed or vetted by an educator" makes it "applicable to the Manitoba curricula" (Teresa, p. 15). In the second stage of the process, recommendations come "directly from consultants" (Teresa, p.7). The third phase of the selection process is market-driven: first coming from what resources are purchased from teachers from the list/stock already in the MLRC's catalogue. Secondly, the market-driven decisions come from special orders made by teachers that are not found within the Manitoba Learning Resource Centre's catalogue, which staff at the Centre help find. If the demand for these special orders is high, about eight or ten teachers requesting the same resource, staff at the Centre "go and investigate to see if they can buy them in a larger quantity to save dollars" (Teresa, p.8). Consequently, these new resources are then added to the Centre's catalogue and become visible, accessible, and more affordable for all teachers in the province. The fourth part of the selection process comes from discussions between Teresa and vendors and publishers. Based on publishers' recommendations, the MLRC's staff reviews and analyses whether or not to add these resources to the Centre's catalogue. These decisions are made based on "teachers' demands, quality, and whether the

content matches the provincial curricula” (Teresa, p.9). Therefore, the resources that the Centre offers are directly influenced by school divisions’/teachers’ demands, and provincial policies and priorities.

Findings and Analysis by Research Questions

(1a) What LGBTQ+ literature is most often recommended and made available to teachers in Manitoba for students from Kindergarten to Grade 3? Teresa was unable to give the titles of the LGBTQ+ children’s literature that are available to teachers from Kindergarten to Grade 3, but she was able to mention existing Canadian resources for teachers to use. One of these resources was developed in this province and it is called: *My GSA.ca, Safe and Caring Schools- A Resource for Equity and Inclusion in Manitoba Schools* (2011). This resource, in particular, is frequently purchased by teachers.

Teresa’s perspectives about her staff’s selection of materials with LGBTQ+ content was positive. Because of the nature of the MLRC’s position working with the consultants and staff at the Department of Education, staff are required to have an open mind when seeking, selecting, and acquiring materials that have been requested for purchase. In addition, MLRC staff do not hesitate to help teachers seek out special orders and to check other provinces’ lists of materials: “We always look to see what our neighbours are doing” (Teresa, p.16).

(1b) Has the availability of LGBTQ+ literature increased or changed in response to the implementation of Bill 18? The demands for LGBTQ+ literature from teachers has increased at the Manitoba Learning Resource Centre over the past 4-5 years. This trend, according to the Teresa, could be explained by the implementation of Bill 18 (Safe and Caring Schools Amendment Act). Feedback from staff who answer calls from teachers indicate that there is a need for the Manitoba Learning Resource Centre to create an LGBTQ+ section in their

online cataloging system “so that they could just look in that one spot and see” which materials they have (Teresa, p. 26). While parents cannot make specific requests or purchase items from the Manitoba Learning Resource Centre, requests can be made through their child’s teacher.

Teresa also said that major publishing companies such as Pearson, Nelson, and Scholastic are starting to produce good LGBTQ+ materials geared for students in Kindergarten to Grade 3. She recalled browsing through catalogues sent from publishing companies and noticing that there is a levelled series that included LGBTQ+ content. She could not remember the series’ name, but she was able to say that this type of literature geared for Kindergarten to Grade 3 was being produced: “I see more than what I saw ten years ago” (Teresa, p.22).

(2) What is the readability level of this literature? Teresa of the Manitoba Learning Resource Centre was unable to answer this question due to the nature of her position.

(3) How do the language and illustrations in the recommended books voice, silence, or shape the following values and messages: a) homonormativity; b) ally or inclusive stances; c) conceptualizations of LGBTQ+ people and families? Teresa of the MLRC was also unable to answer this question due to the nature of her position. As she had not reviewed the type of literature targeted in this research project, so she was unable to tell me which type of LGBTQ+ families, sexual orientation, and gender identities are portrayed in the resources available in their collection. I have completed this kind of analysis of the recommended books from this organization and provided it in Chapter 5.

The Manitoba Curriculum Support Centre

The Manitoba Curriculum Support Centre gives educators access to materials that support the implementation of Manitoban curricula. Various Department of Education subject consultants contribute to the collection development process. This organization serves all

teachers in the province which includes: public, independent, First Nations, and non-funded schools. For this research project I interviewed the Consultant of the Diversity and International Languages named Tozé [pseudonym]. His role is to support the development of support documents and curricula. He works collaboratively with staff at the Manitoba Learning Resource Centre to add to their collection on issues of diversity.

Tozé's approach on diversity has been guided by Tim McCaskell's (2018) work from the Toronto Board of Education on anti-racism, anti-sexism, and anti-homophobia education. McCaskell's work, originally developed for secondary students is now used with students ranging from elementary to university levels. According to McCaskell, through a series of activities, students learn how "racist ideas are connected to present and past inequalities, power relationships and conflicts" para.1). The ideology reflected in McCaskell's work guides Tozé's approach on various equity topics such as women's equity and gender equity. Tozé reviews "texts, approved texts, and resources with respect to gender bias" (Tozé, p.5) and "question[s] the stereotypes people had about gender" (Tozé, p.5) to ensure that materials used in the curriculum are anti-biased and reflect Canada's diversity. He also develops teacher equity workshops which address some of the following topics: cultural, linguistic, racial diversity, gender identity and expression, and sexual orientation.

Tozé's work is also influenced by the provincial and federal law amendments of the province of Manitoba and in Canada. For example, since the installment of the amendment 15, Equality of Rights, to the Charter of Rights in the Canadian Constitution Acts in 1982, Tozé has worked collaboratively with the Rainbow Resource Centre, a non-profit organization serving the LGBTQ+ community in Manitoba. In the early 1990s he consulted with staff at the Rainbow Resource Centre regarding the new Health Curriculum that was developed at the time. His

collaborative work with the Centre ensured that the curriculum document had an anti-bias approach that reflected a variety of perspectives regarding sexual diversity. Tozé's consultation with the Rainbow Resource Centre remains ongoing.

Findings and Analysis by Research Questions

(1a) What LGBTQ+ literature is most often recommended and made available to teachers in Manitoba for students from Kindergarten to Grade 3? Tozé was unable to give me the titles of LGBTQ+ children's literature made available to teachers from Kindergarten to Grade 3, but he shared with me a list of book titles that he created that contains LGBTQ+ and same-sex/mixed sexual orientation families headings. I cross checked both headings and found out that they contained fourteen LGBTQ+ content books geared to children who are in Kindergarten to Grade 3. The head librarian at the Manitoba Curriculum Support Centre was able to provide me with the names of five books based on the highest frequency of borrowings by teachers: *And Tango Makes Three* (Richardson and Parnell, 2005), *Mom & Mum are Getting Married* (Settingington, 2004), *A Family is a Family is a Family* (O'Leary, 2016), *A Tale of Two Mommies* (Oelschlager, 2011), and *In Our Mother's House* (Polacco, 2009).

The library within the Manitoba Curriculum Resource Centre has had materials related to diversity, sexuality, gender identity and expression since the mid 1990s. According to Tozé, the library's collection on LGBTQ+ children's literature is not bad and has improved over the years. When he recommends titles of books for the library to purchase, these titles do not go through a formal review process, because of the "nature of these materials; they're usually neither the depth nor breadth" (Tozé, p.16), and so, they are complex enough to be used as pedagogical materials. LGBTQ+ children's books are supplementary materials that teachers can use to support the learning of equity issues that may arise within the curricula. The Manitoba

Curriculum Support Centre has a policy on diversity and human rights, and therefore, staff working at that library are used to purchasing materials that abide to this policy. To supplement the library's collection, Tozé cross-referenced his research with staff at the Rainbow Resource Centre, American and Canadian publications from the Centre for Children's Literature, and what the Good Reads website offers.

Tozé wants the selection of literature to ensure that it represents the LGBTQ+ population authentically and explained that there are “no stereotypes on race or sexuality” (Tozé, p. 19). In addition, he stated that what is “going on in the world” and “what are the challenges” (Tozé, p. 23), influence the curricula development and Tozé's searches for new resources. Tozé works with classroom teachers to help them select literature that responds to a classroom's or a school community's needs. According to Tozé, the literature that he recommends ensures that the targeted group such as LGBTQ+ people “are included, and that they can see themselves” in the books that are being read (Tozé, p.37). The literature must also strive to represent those who are often missing or not heard. According to Tozé, biased literature is usually represented through 1) “discrimination by commission”, books that portray stereotypical assumptions about LGBTQ+ people, e.g., all gay men dress fashionably, and 2) “discrimination through omission”, books that omits members of the LGBTQ+ community, e.g., stories that only portray gay/lesbian parents as opposed to gender fluid parents. Consequently, Tozé's approach to selecting literature is to prepare students to read about a broader community so as to not to limit their perspectives of the world.

Since the 1990's the English Language Arts and Social Studies curricula facilitate the integration of diversity topics to reflect Manitoban's population diversity: “I would say that the curricula, particularly from the 1990s onward, started to have much more of a social justice and

an equity focus” (Tozé, p.39). Tozé was positive about selecting LGBTQ+ children’s literature. He wants this literature to have a Canadian perspective as much as possible, for example, stories that reflects Indigenous people who may identify as Two-Spirit, for example. The characteristics of the literature that he seeks out must present racial diversity and quality text with good sentence structures. The illustrations and visuals must be age and grade level appropriate. He said what he was looking for is a piece of children’s literature that not only fits the Manitoban curricula, but that is “unique or outstanding” so as to reflect his equity and anti-bias ideology (Tozé, p.44).

He sees the demand for LGBTQ+ children’s literature is increasing. According to Tozé: “changing attitudes in the society” make “people more vocal” and “more likely to identify as allies” (Tozé, p.57). The requests that he or staff working at the Manitoba Curriculum Support Centre get are threefold: 1) Teachers feel this is a topic they haven't addressed or addressed to their satisfaction; 2) Teachers are responding to a classroom or school situation that needs attention; and 3) Parents are asking for this kind of literature to be present in their children’s classrooms: “the LGBTQ+ community and same-sex parents are being more vocal” (Tozé, p.57).

Tozé believes that societal attitudes both within and towards the LGBTQ+ community are changing due in part to an increase in people’s awareness of LGBTQ+ issues and rights. This new awareness has been created through media attention of various human rights cases won over the last decade or so. Tozé gave an example of the Chamberlain case in 1999, in which there was an amendment of legislation policies, which allowed for Gay Straight Alliances in schools, and demanded that school boards implement policies to protect LGBTQ+ students and staff. Consequently, these changes in legislation and policies empowered LGBTQ+ parents to request schools to include literature that reflects how they talk, live, and love at home. Parent-

school communication has had the positive effect of increasing teachers' awareness in choosing resources that are less biased.

(1b) Has the availability of LGBTQ+ literature increased or changed in response to the implementation of Bill 18? Tozé knew a lot about Bill 18 because he helps support its implementation within the Department of Education. The goal of Bill 18 is to reflect diversity of people and the cessation of prejudices against some groups. Therefore, Tozé's work as a diversity consultant is informed by two lenses: diversity and equity. Tozé explained that he seeks out opportunities to integrate these lenses within the curricula so it will be anti-biased and free of discrimination. Tozé's ongoing work with the Department's curricula is to ensure that the language they use is inclusive. For example, instead of saying nuclear families, it now says "extended families", so as to not "act as a limitation" (Tozé, p.27). His perspective in selecting and purchasing materials containing LGBTQ+ content has continued to evolve over the years, because of his understanding and acceptance of societal changes.

(2) What is the readability level of this literature? Due to the nature of his work, Tozé was unable to answer this question.

(3) How do the language and illustrations in the recommended books voice, silence, or shape the following values and messages: a) homonormativity; b) ally or inclusive stances; c) conceptualizations of LGBTQ+ people and families? According to Tozé, many of the books in the Manitoba Curriculum Support Centre are about same-sex families, gays and lesbians, with a majority of them being female-led same-sex families. He assumed this trend may be explained because of the historical human rights violations of male homosexuality. Throughout history there have been many laws that have targeted homosexual people, for example, during the Holocaust, or sodomy laws in various countries that "didn't target lesbians,

but they did target men” (Tozé, p.57). He assumes that the literature may still be portraying families that may have been affected by these laws. There are several books on gender identity and expression in the collection, but fewer on bisexuality and fluid sexuality, which Tozé predicted may be “because there’s a tendency to not deal as directly with sexuality in the early years” (Tozé, p.52). He believes children’s authors and publishers may not want to create books that focus on children’s understanding of sexuality and procreation. However, he noted that diversity in sexuality should be addressed in the health curriculum in the older grades. Children’s literature reflects intimacy and affection, but not sexuality, because it is not considered age-appropriate: “We don’t talk about relationships that their parents may be having in their bedroom” (Tozé, p.53).

Winnipeg Public Library

The Winnipeg Public Library provides a wide range of literary programs and materials geared to all ages from toddlers to seniors, and to the diverse population needs of the residents of the city of Winnipeg. I interviewed Susan [pseudonym] who is in charge of purchasing materials for the juvenile and teen collections. She informed me that there are approximately 301 257 public library cardholders in Winnipeg. She described her LGBTQ+ collection to be “good” with about 12 000 items ranging from kids-adults. Much of their collection appears to have been published in last ten years. According to Susan, her juvenile and teen collection is healthy. She also said that there are more picture books with LGBTQ+ content that have been developed in the last five years. Susan said that this is an area that is always in development, so it always aims to improve its catalogue. However, she noted that the collection remains limited by publishing trends, “so we are limited by what is available” (Susan, p. 4).

The Winnipeg Public Library's process for selecting and purchasing books comes from their vendors and publishers. They provide "hot lists, super forthcoming lists" (Susan, p. 5), which they put together based on popularity. These lists are reliable, according to Susan because they contain names of popular authors, topical titles, and current trends of stories that reflect what readers might be interested in reading. However, as the vendors and publishers do not always provide many LGBTQ+ children's book titles, she relies on review journals, school library journals, booklists, and online publications to find more potential LGBTQ+ titles. Some of the publications she turns to as resources are: *The Horn Book* Publications, Kirkus Book Reviews, and *Quill & Quire*, a Canadian magazine of book news. These journals have titles that are not on the hotlists, because they may provide titles that are not within the mainstream trends. Using these journals help her find "the sleeper hits" (Susan, p.6), which is a term used to describe newly published LGBTQ+ titles.

In the event that Susan does not find enough information to make decisions about acquiring titles on a particular topic, she will then visit other Canadian libraries' websites to get ideas and advice. She also cross-references her findings with booklists and holdings from other English-speaking libraries that are located in the United States of America and in the UK. These searches, which are based on demands and popularity, provide her with purchasing suggestions. She also gains feedback from staff and looks at customers' reading reviews and recommendations, which also help her predict what her audience wants to read.

Susan's process for selecting books is not influenced by school policies. The Winnipeg Public Library has its own material selection policy, which is a twelve-page document that guides librarians. The policy ensures that the library's materials reflect quality stories and illustrations and also that the book binding will endure multiple users over the years. The policy

also guides librarians to choose materials that will be the right fit for the targeted audience. As Susan asked, “Is it appealing to the picture book crowd or to the fiction readers’ crowd?” (Susan, p.7). These kinds of questions are what she keeps in mind while making her selections.

Findings and Analysis by Research Questions

(1a) What LGBTQ+ literature is most often recommended and made available to teachers in Manitoba for students from Kindergarten to Grade 3? Susan had a positive perspective about selecting and buying books that contain LGBTQ+ content for K-3 children. She looks for quality of content and positive reviews when making her selections. A lot of the books are purchased sight unseen, so the reviews of lists and recommendations become very important. The books must be topical but written and illustrated in an educated and sensitive way that do not pander or present the readers with stereotypes. The stories must represent society’s diversity, while the language and images must support children’s understanding. The Winnipeg Public Library’s book collection has developed an LGBTQ+ children’s book brochure. The brochure is divided into four categories: Fiction, Non-Fiction, Board Books, and Picture Books. The legend in the brochure indicates whether a book is written by a Canadian author (red maple leaf), is available in French (FR) or is available as an electronic book (eBook). Each category contains several names of books with their synopses. There are several Canadian authored books mentioned in the brochure such as: *Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress* (Baldacchino, 2014) and *Pride: Celebrating Diversity & Community* (Stevenson, 2016). A similar brochure exists for teen books.

Susan said that she and her staff get requests for LGBTQ+ picture books from the public, especially those that address transgender topics: “Those seem to be the bulk of the requests” (Susan, p.11). However, books with transgender content do not yet appear as readily available as

those that have gay/lesbian content. In her opinion, this might have to do with the publishing trends. In the past, a book with a character who is transgender may not have been written or printed, because it was considered too controversial as a topic. As society changes, people's understanding of LGBTQ+ people improves. This understanding has resulted in many queer topics being deemed less controversial now. Therefore, a more varied range of queer topics are starting to appear in children's literature. According to Susan, many LGBTQ+ books have been banned in North America, such as *And Tango Makes Three* (Richardson and Parnell, 2013) and *Heather Has Two Mommies* (Newman, 1989), but they are not anymore, at least not by the Winnipeg Public Library. Susan suggested that the question to ask when looking at books that have been censored is, were the books "controversial necessarily because they were controversial, or because of when they came out?" (Susan, p.12).

Susan has indicated that it is difficult to say who is requesting LGBTQ+ children's books at the Winnipeg Public Library, unless the borrowers present themselves to the front desk person. As Susan said, "We know there's an interest by teachers because we've been asked to do presentations" (Susan, p.21) of their collection of books to schools. However, she does not know if the LGBTQ+ children's books that the teachers, or the public in general, are borrowing are being read to the children. Susan says that LGBTQ+ children's books are being requested more frequently now, but she wonders if it "is because they are now available versus when they weren't" (Susan, p.21). She knows that requests and interests in LGBTQ+ children's books have increased in the last five years. She also notices that the literature presents with better quality materials. There are "books that kids want to read" (Susan, p.22). The picture books are "fun, interesting, colourful" (Susan, p.22) and they have "good stories" (Susan, p.22). She does not know if the children are taking something away or internalizing the themes when they are being

read or reading these types of books. For example, she shared her opinion that in a book called *Worm Loves Worm* (Austrian, 2016) which is about two worms getting married, children were unlikely to really think about the worms being gay. Instead, she predicted the children would be more interested in the idea of getting married and having a wedding. She suggested that the current LGBTQ+ books are considered mainstream picture books, but mainstream books that now provide stories about content that might not have been there ten years ago. For example, these books now tell stories about same-sex weddings, which might help make these unions more acceptable and universal.

Susan was able to provide me with the names of five of the most borrowed books based on frequency of checkouts: *10 000 Dresses*, (Ewert, M. 2008), *Red, A Crayon* (Hall, M. 2015), *The Great Big Book of Families*, (Hoffman, M. 2010), *It's Okay to Be Different*, (Parr, T. 2001), *And Tango Makes Three*, (Richardson, and Parnell, 2005). However, she cautioned me that her list may be inaccurate, because some of the books have multiple copies and others have been in the system longer so may have been borrowed more at an earlier time, for example, *Heather Has Two Mommies* (Newman, L. 1989). In her opinion, the list of books she did provide are more frequently borrowed based on the quality of the story plots, binding, colourful picture books, and the fact they are “interfiled and found through serendipity” (Susan, p.26). She also believed that they are good reads because they normalize families, allow for the exploration of diversity in a variety of ways, and open up the world to children. She identified the most prevalent themes found in these books as lesbians and gays, transgenderism in children, individual's diversity and identity, normalization of love, everyday life events, and gay families.

(1b) Has the availability of LGBTQ+ literature increased or changed in response to

the implementation of Bill 18? Susan was not very familiar with Bill 18, but an online search led her to conclude that her selection of books reflects bullying prevention, promotes gender equity and anti-racism. The Winnipeg Public Library's LGBTQ+ children's collection is interfiled within all of their book collections and therefore it is made accessible to all patrons. Her perspective in selecting and purchasing LGBTQ+ children's literature has not been affected by the implementation of Bill 18. However, she notices that there has been an uptake in LGBTQ+ books being published in the last 5 years, which may be due in part to our society being more aware of LGBTQ+ issues, and publishers noticing a gap in the available books on these issues: "People are noticing that there's a dearth of information and all those things blend together... and all of a sudden, the publishers are like, "Hey! Here are the books!" (Susan, p. 9).

(2) What is the readability level of this literature? Susan believed that children who are from Kindergarten to Grade 3 could read many of the mentioned books, because they are classified as juvenile fiction books by the publishing companies. These picture books are 32 pages long on average, a typical length for a picture book for children aged 4-8. Some publishing companies also indicate if a book is a beginner/early reader. Many of the mentioned books are recommended by school library journals and have received star reviews, which Susan describes as a "high quality book, a must have, this is a title winner!" (Susan, p.30).

(3) How do the language and illustrations in the recommended books voice, silence, or shape the following values and messages: a) homonormativity; b) ally or inclusive stances; c) conceptualizations of LGBTQ+ people and families? According to Susan, there are many more books on gay families than on transgender and non-binary families, because she believes gay families have become more accepted concepts and, therefore, are more understood by the society at large. She thinks that transgender and non-binary families are not yet upcoming

trends because they are less discussed and understood at this time. Acceptance in our society affects book production. The publishing companies are businesses and as she said, “They need to make money. And if they think they are producing things that they do not think would make money on, then they won’t do it” (Susan, p.20). Libraries have no control over what is being produced. Even though there are available authors and stories, publishers are likely to refrain from publishing certain topics that may not generate revenues.

The Rainbow Resource Centre

The Rainbow Resource Centre of Winnipeg is a non-profit organization that serves the LGBTQ+ community. The Centre has a library that contains a wide selection of materials pertinent to the needs of the LGBTQ+ community, their allies, parents, and teachers. There are several volunteers who work at the Rainbow Resource Centre. I interviewed Robin [pseudonym]. As a volunteer, she works at the Rainbow Resource Centre every two weeks after the Centre’s business hours. She was unable to tell me how many people use the Centre’s services annually. However, Robin knew that many of the Centre’s services are used by teacher-leaders of school GSA (Gay Straight Alliance) groups, and also by school librarians who are asking for “recommendations or specific titles” (Robin, p. 2) to supplement their school’s LGBTQ+ collection. According to Robin, the children’s collection is well used, but she would like to add many more books to it because it “is one of our highest-use sections between what we call our kids’ section and our young adults’ section” (Robin, p. 2).

The Rainbow Resource Centre’s selection and purchasing process is mostly done through donations, because it does not have a huge budget to draw from. Their book collection is non-archival, “we don’t keep books just for the sake of keeping them on” (Robin, p.3). She described the three criteria used to select books by identifying the following three questions: 1) Is the book

affirming? 2) Is the content significant? and 3) Does it represent a cross-section of the LGBTQ+ community, for example, gender creative, gay, lesbian, intersex, two-spirit? She explained that the Centre's collection of books contains titles written by Canadian authors as well by local authors such as Jackie Swirsky's book, *Be Yourself* (2015). However, the Centre's database was not set up to yield such a list on demand and therefore, unless the patron knew the background of an author of a particular book, a book search will currently give only the names of books and their authors.

According to Robin, school divisions and provincial policies do not influence her book selection, because most of the books are donated, with the occasional purchases. Robin's goal is to develop a collection that: "represents a variety of contents and a variety of representations" of the LGBTQ+ community (Robin, p. 6). When she does purchase books, she will do so through one of the local bookstores, McNally Robinson. There are also times when she buys books online to get certain titles. Her decisions are based on the needs the Centre has, the price of the books, whether shipping fees and services are reasonable, and whether the purchase fits the Centre's budget: "we are working with a limited budget, so we have to take that into considerations for sure" (Robin, p.7).

Findings and Analysis by Research Questions.

(1a) What LGBTQ+ literature is most often recommended and made available to teachers in Manitoba for students from Kindergarten to Grade 3? Robin uses parents', teachers' and school librarians' requests to identify gaps the Centre has in its book categories' collections. She searches for titles by talking to colleagues and browsing through publishing companies' flyers in an effort to close those identified gaps. She acknowledged that there is a weak representation of intersex and two-spirit materials in general in both in the young adults

and children's collections. In the young adult collection, she identified that there is a gap where one of the parents of the protagonist is gay and coming out, which is not the case in children's books, "We don't see it really in our young adult section, but we see that in our kids' section as in "Daddy and Daddy Are Getting Married" (Robin, p.14), but I think the book she was referring to is actually the book called "*Daddy's Roommate*" (Willhoite, 1994).

Robin was positive about selecting LGBTQ+ content books. She said that it is important that her books have appropriate content, so the children can relate to them. She wants books where the characters "have presence and agency" (Robin, p.17), in order for their voices to be heard. She believes the stories must be affirming and significant to the child's life. Robin has been living in Winnipeg for about five years, and therefore her knowledge of which category a school falls under (private/public) was limited. She also said that she would not know when a patron comes into the Centre to request a book, whether the patron works at a private or public school unless they specified it. However, she is confident that schools are requesting books. Also, she could not tell if an adult who requests a specific book is home schooling a child or not. Therefore, these types of unspecific adult requests fall under the category of parent interests. The Centre has also recently had a request for more information about LGBTQ+ children's and young adult books from a professor in the Faculty of Education from one of the universities in the province. Robin provided this list to the Centre's Education Coordinator who used them to present to teacher candidates at the university about the importance of having LGBTQ+ content books in the classrooms.

Robin believed that requests for LGBTQ+ children's literature has increased over the last five years. Using information from the cardholders, Robin was able to provide the names of the five most borrowed books: *King and King* (De Haan & Nijland, 2002), *Be Yourself*, (Swirsky,

2015), *Boy Who Cried Fabulous* (Newman, 2004), *My Princess Boy*, (Kilodavis, 2010), and *One Dad, Two Dads, Brown Dad, Blue Dads* (Valentine, 1994).

(1b) Has the availability of LGBTQ+ literature increased or changed in response to the implementation of Bill 18? Robin's knowledge of Bill 18 was limited, due to the nature of her position at the Centre and her relative new arrival in the province. As a volunteer, she selects books that best suit the Centre's library categories to ensure that they answer the needs of the LGBTQ+ population. In her opinion, she finds that many of the children books focus on learning about differences regarding gender identity, trans community, gender non-conforming, gay parents, or gay family members. In her opinion, these topics are most often addressed in the literature because they are easy to understand and reflect the child's life. She is also aware that the library's books are often used by the Centre's counsellors. She could not say whether they are used to support parents, family members, or children, but said that "definitely our books get taken out by the counsellors" (Robin, p.30).

(2) What is the readability level of this literature? Robin believed that the recommended books could be read by students in primary grades. She believed that the sentence structures in these books are relatively simple, and that unfamiliar words are explained. For example, she said, "gender creativity, it sorts of talks about what that means" in the story (Robin, p.28).

(3) How do the language and illustrations in the recommended books voice, silence, or shape the following values and messages: a) homonormativity; b) ally or inclusive stances; c) conceptualizations of LGBTQ+ people and families? In her collection of books, Robin said that gay/lesbian parents and gender creative children are well represented. She believes that two-spirit and intersex people are the least represented. She also does not see many

books that address bisexuality and asexuality: “It’s not something that’s ever been donated” (Robin, p. 21) or has ever been requested.

(DREF) Direction des Ressources Éducatives Françaises

La Direction des Ressources Éducatives Françaises (DREF) is the French Resource Library in Manitoba that gives educators access to curriculum materials to support the implementation of provincial curricula. The library resources include books, DVDs, kits, eBooks, video streaming, as well as other online resources which are made available to the registered teachers.

I interviewed Stéphanie. Her role is to coordinate all library activities for teachers and future teacher candidates in the Faculty of Education at St-Boniface University. She does not know how many patrons use her library, but explains it services all teachers who teach French (Core French, French Immersion and Français) in the province. She describes the DREF as having a homogenous and restricted clientele that serves teachers whose language of instruction is French. The selection of materials addresses the academic needs of the Français, French Immersion, Core French programs from pre-kindergarten to Grade 12, and, therefore, all her requests are from teachers and consultants who work for the Department of Education.

She described the DREF’s collection of LGBTQ+ children’s literature as being between satisfactory, “I would like there to be more available in French on these topics that I could include,” and good, “because I have as much that is available and appropriate in our collection” (Stéphanie, p. 3). Her process for selecting and purchasing books has been greatly influenced by her eleven-year work experience in Montréal, Québec. When working in Montréal, she would purchase books directly from independent bookstores due to a provincial amendment called Bill 51 that came into effect in 1981. Bill 51 is a policy that requests all librarians in the province of

Quebec buy their books from a minimum of three accredited bookstores within their region with the exception of textbooks: “la Loi sur le développement des entreprises québécoises dans le domaine du livre (chapitre D-8.1) oblige les acheteurs institutionnels à acheter tous leurs livres, à l'exception des manuels scolaires, dans au moins trois librairies agréées de leur région administrative” (Culture et Communications Québec, Acquisition de livres par les acheteurs institutionnels, para.1, 8 septembre 2017). Consequently, this direct, hands-on approach led her to develop a trusting relationship with bookstore owners. She relies heavily on the bookstore owners regarding their selection process of books, suggestions about reliable publishers, and recommended authors: “I relied a great deal on what they offered, what they chose, their comments, their selections, their suggestions, and so, over the years, I developed my own feel for good authors, good publishers, good styles of books for any topic generally” (Stéphanie, p. 4). Therefore, the on-the-job knowledge that she gained in Montréal helped her to develop a strong knowledge of publishing companies, whom she now calls directly. For example, she will now directly approach companies such as Dominique et Compagnie, which is located in the province of Quebec. She also uses two local bookstores. She also refers to review journals from Québec, such as Lurelu, and France to supplement her selection of books at the DREF. When she cannot find what she is looking for, she described how she searches the Internet. The comments that she receives from publishers, reviews from journals and her searches on the internet help to select literature that best fits the linguistic needs of students in Manitoba. Some of her book selections are influenced by teacher requests: “someone is looking for topic X and we don't have anything on that topic” (Stéphanie, p.7), but she could not say whether these requests are influenced by provincial policies. In her opinion, teacher requests are often made to answer individual needs within the school or school divisions.

When she does not find what she is looking for, Stéphanie explained that she contacts former colleagues in Quebec and also librarians across the country. At least once a year, she goes to Montreal to attend showrooms that local bookstores organize, which provide her with the opportunity to make “much more personalized decisions” (Stéphanie, p.13). In these showrooms, she is able to look at books and decide if the texts and the illustrations are appropriate for her readers in Manitoba. This approach, in her opinion, allows her to make more informed personalized decisions in her selection process than English librarians, because she does not have to rely solely on vendors’ lists.

Findings and Analysis by Research Questions.

(1a) What LGBTQ+ literature is most often recommended and made available to teachers in Manitoba for students from Kindergarten to Grade 3? A search in the DREF system reveals that there are approximately 48 titles of books that are tagged under the LGBTQ+ category. The majority are geared towards readers in Grades 9 to 12. Only six of the books fall within the Kindergarten to Grade 3 grade levels, and eight books fall within the Grades 4 to 8 grade levels. There are several children’s board books, picture books, and some beginner readers that contain LGBTQ+ content in the DREF’s collections. Stéphanie described how she is likely to buy this type of literature, because books like these, as well as books that represent Aboriginal perspectives “are important current topics” (Stéphanie, p. 18). When she described the criteria that she looks for in children’s LGBTQ+ literature, she identified the following questions: Are the terms in the story explained clearly? Are the characters portrayed in a non-stereotypical way? Are the illustrations and texts of high quality? Is the vocabulary going to create a challenge to the local readers? She identified the local vocabulary as important because “there may be slightly different vocabulary that’s used in France that’s not as common here. I may not

choose that book, especially for the youngest readers, because it's going to add an extra challenge" (Stéphanie, p. 19). She described how the DREF has several Canadian LGBTQ+ Children's books, some of which are published in French and others have been translated into French.

Stéphanie could not say if the demand for LGBTQ+ children's literature has increased over the last two years, which is how long she has worked at the DREF. She said that no one has made any specific requests for this type of literature, nor has there been any complaints from any patrons about this literature. She described her approach to promoting this type of literature to teachers is determined by knowing her clientele: "If it was someone I knew who had a very, from my perspective, conservative family attitude, I don't think I would bother suggesting that book to them" (Stéphanie, p.38). According to Stéphanie, she bases her deliberate censorship approach on her knowledge of her patrons, which helps her guide these teachers' selection of materials in a way that might best be appreciated by them. She said that her role is not to censor what is available to everybody, but she also felt like she does not want to force anyone to read a particular book. Instead, she said it was best to respond directly to her patrons' queries. She said, "when it's somebody I don't know or maybe a group of people I'm speaking to, I, if it's pertinent, might suggest it, and give a small comment as information. Then I let them make their own choices" (Stéphanie, p.39). According to the Stéphanie, she believes a library should have a good mix of books that answer the needs and interests of all readers with the understanding that some of the books may offend some of the patrons.

It is important to note that many teachers use the DREF as a showroom to look at books and purchase them later on their own, which then decreases the number of times some of the books are being borrowed. Still, based on the number of times that certain LGBTQ+ children's

books were taken out, Stéphanie was able to provide me with the names of the eight most borrowed books: *Le secret d'Ugolin*, (Alemagna, B. 2000), *Marius*, (Alaoui, L., Poulin, S. 2001), *Jason et la tortue*, (De Luca, F. 2011), *Et avec Tango, nous voilà trois!* (Richardson, J., Parnell, P. 2013), *Deux garçons et un secret* (Poulin, A. 2016), *Boris Brindamour et la robe orange* (Baldacchino, C., 2015), *Jean a deux mamans* (Textier, O., 2004), *La princesse qui n'aimait pas les princes* (Haquet-Brière. A. 2010). I decided to feature eight books to counterbalance the number of English books discussed in this research project. Some of the books on this list come with a pedagogical card or "books that pack a punch", which originated from a library committee in Quebec that Stéphanie used to belong to. These cards are created to be an adult accompaniment to the book in order to discuss topics that might not be straightforward or understandable for children, such as self-esteem, divorce, separation, death and mourning, war, and homelessness. These one-page cards that are provided along with the book give a summary of the "context of the book, and the topic and themes discussed in it" (Stéphanie, p.32). Adults who read these books may choose to use the question provided on these pedagogical cards to invite discussion with children. Stéphanie decided to initiate this practice at the DREF with some of her LGBTQ+ books to facilitate teachers' discussions with their students. The most prevalent themes mentioned in the LGBTQ+ children books from the DREF list are gay families and children who are transgender. There appears to be more books written about lesbian families than families with gay men. Stéphanie did not seem to be quite sure of why that is, but she thinks the literature is reflective of society's reality of gay families.

(1b) Has the availability of LGBTQ+ literature increased or changed in response to the implementation of Bill 18? Stéphanie was not very familiar with Bill 18 and she admitted to having to look it up before the interview. From this research, she understood that the focus of

Bill 18 is on the prevention of any forms of bullying within the school system. Stephanie's perspectives are not affected Bill 18 when selecting materials for her library. She described her decisions as being based on the needs of the community: "I can't say it does or does not affect my purchasing in the sense that the way I select things is based on both my professional experience and requests or needs from the community" (Stéphanie, p. 9).

(2) What is the readability level of this literature? Stéphanie believed that many of the recommended books could be read independently by students who are from Kindergarten to Grade 3. Her analysis of the readability level of the books is based on the suggested recommended age levels from review journals and catalogues. She frequently makes adjustments to the recommended reading level based on the linguistic needs of her population: "If it says 6-years-old in France, I'm not necessarily going to say a 6-year-old reader here can tackle that same book, because I know there are differences in vocabularies" (Stéphanie, p. 46). Then, she also looks at the number of illustrations per page to gage the age group into which some of her books may fall. In her opinion, children depend upon illustrations, just as much as the text, to understand the story. She also noted that there are times when "pictures add information or tell a slightly different version of things. So, you have to be a good enough reader to read both of those and figure out" the message the author is conveying (Stéphanie, p. 47).

(3) How do the language and illustrations in the recommended books voice, silence, or shape the following values and messages: a) homonormativity; b) ally or inclusive stances; c) conceptualizations of LGBTQ+ people and families? The collection of children's LGBTQ+ children's books at the DREF mostly reflects stories about ~~and~~ gay and lesbian families and characters who are transgender. Some of the characters are portrayed by animals instead of people. According to the Stéphanie, she sees same-sex family stories as similar to

stories about people of colour and/or different cultural backgrounds, which she described as “other versions” of families now presented in picture books: “LGBTQ+ families are just another version of families” (Stéphanie, p. 26).

Interpretive Qualitative Analysis of Interviews

After multiple readings of the transcriptions and conducting an interpretive qualitative analysis of my interviews (see Appendix D), I was able to regroup the emerging themes from each interview into similarities and differences across the interviews. One of the first similarities that I identified came from the design of the study and purposeful recruitment of participants: all five interviewees were in charge, in some way, of recommending titles of LGBTQ+ children’s literature to be purchased. They all worked with teachers in the province and one interviewee also worked with the public at large. However, similarities also moved beyond what might be credited to the design of the study or the recruitment of the participant. For example, none of the organizations described being affected by school policies in their selection of materials. They all believed their current LGBTQ+ children’s collection could be improved, but they were satisfied with the resources they had at the moment. They agreed that their choices in buying quality K-3 LGBTQ+ literature was limited by publishing companies and so, if the market is not driven by certain topics than the production of diversity will be limited. When deciding on books for their collections, all of the participants looked for quality of content, authenticity in characters’ portrayal (no stereotypes), and that the stories must be written with an anti-bias stance, be linguistically appropriate, and have quality illustrations. They all used review journals to find supplemental titles/topics that vendors may not have offered to them as a way to supplement their LGBTQ+ children’s collection. They all also used their human resources and drew upon their connections and relationships with other people, such as consultants, librarians, and former

colleagues, within the city or across the country when they could not find what they were looking for through their more immediate search channels.

All of the organizations had LGBTQ+ books that they believe were geared to students who are within the Kindergarten to Grade 3 age range. All of the interviewees also shared an affirmative outlook in their selection and purchasing of LGBTQ+ children's literature. They agreed that many of their books are about same-sex families and that the sexual orientations that were the most talked about in the literature relate to being gay, lesbian, and straight. The interviewees all described how their selection of books had been driven by the demands of teachers and the public at large, as two of the organizations could only know if their patrons were teachers if they stipulated they were teachers. However, all of the interviewees described how requests mostly emerged from needs that arise within the classroom setting or the school community. Teachers seemed to be seeking literature that would best address these needs. Consequently, all of the individuals from these organizations referred to client requests and frequency of checked out items to determine which other topics they may need to add to their collection in order to stay up to par with the demand.

The key differences among interviewees' perspectives and practices were also varied. One of the organizations dealt closely with consultants from the Department of Education to determine which products to seek out and to purchase. Two of the five organizations mentioned the importance of accessing literature that is cost effective. The two participants from the organizations that worked most closely with the consultants from the Department of Education could identify what Bill 18 or the Public Schools Amendment Act (Safe and Inclusive Schools) entails without having to look it up. Only one participant from these two mentioned organizations believed her perspective in selecting LGBTQ+ children's literature changed as a

result of the amendment of Bill 18. The other four participants explained that their selection of literature was not affected by Bill 18.

Other differences came through the process of selecting the literature. One interviewee preferred a collaborative and consultative approach with staff who work in two local bookstores and also from other bookstores in another province in Canada. Two other participants mentioned a greater prevalence of lesbian mothers, rather than gay fathers in the available stories depicting same-sex families. Only one participant mentioned the lack of characters who are two-spirit or asexual in the literature. Participants from four of the five organizations described seeing an increase in their requests for an LGBTQ+ literature over the last five years. Two participants attributed this increase of requests to the amendment of Bill 18, while two other participants believed more general, recent legislation in favor of queer people that have been brought to public attention in Canada and around the world have led to more accepting societal attitudes towards queer topics and people. One participant hypothesized that this societal change in attitude towards queer people has encouraged publishing companies to produce higher quality materials to respond to public demand. Only the three interviewees who were not directly working with the consultants from the Department of Education were familiar with readability levels. They could provide an affirmative answer to whether or not their current LBTTQ collection was suitable for students who are from Kindergarten to Grade 3. In the next chapter, I will explore both readability levels as well as provide a critical discourse analysis of the books recommended by all of the participants in this study.

CHAPTER V

Analytical Findings of LGBTQ+ Books

This chapter discusses the findings and analysis of the 22 LGBTQ+ books recommended for K-3 students from the members working within the five targeted organizations. The findings are first organized and analyzed using my Appendix B: Critical Discourse Analysis Framework. Then a further level of analysis of the books answers the three research questions: (1) What LGBTQ+ literature is most often recommended and made available to teachers in Manitoba for students from Kindergarten to Grade 3? Has the availability of LGBTQ+ literature increased or changed in response to the implementation of Bill 18? (2) What is the readability level of this literature? (3) How do the language and illustrations in the recommended books voice, silence, or shape the following values and messages: a) homonormativity; b) ally or inclusive stances; c) conceptualizations of LGBTQ+ people and families? In the first part of my analysis, I will explain how I organized the recommended books into four distinct categories. I will then present the roadblocks that I encountered when I attempted to find the books' readability levels, and how I resolved the readability levels roadblocks using a variety of strategies. Finally, I will provide a brief synopsis and critical discourse analysis of each of the recommended books in each of the four distinct categories. The description of the books is written purposefully in teacher, parent, or reader clinician-friendly language, so that they could use this annotated bibliography as a resource for selecting books for curricular activities or for building their class libraries.

Book Categories

As I started receiving names of recommended books from the interview participants, I borrowed these resources and began the critical discourse analysis [please see Chapter 3 for further discussion of critical discourse analysis]. See Appendix C for a graph that represents

some of the findings that emerged from my analysis. All 22 books fall into four categories based on the stories they portrayed: a) Diversity; b) Gay/Lesbian Parents; c) Transgender; and d) Gender Expression. I created a queer children's literature spectrum to help me sort the recommended books into thematic categories. I sorted books into the "Diversity" category when the content of the book discussed, in a broad and inclusive way, queer people and families to readers without labeling them. Also, authors of the books in the "Diversity" category often also discussed many other issues of diversity beyond gender and sexuality. In contrast, the books sorted into the "Gays/Lesbian Parents", "Transgender", or "Gender Expression" categories all label specific groups within the queer community.

From first observations, we see that there are 13 of 22 books that contain Gay and Lesbian content, more than any other category. There are three books in each of the other categories: Diversity, Transgender, and Gender Expression. This first finding that emerges from the analysis indicates that the targeted organizations from this study have more books that deal with the subject of gay and lesbian families and people than any other members associated with the queer community. Secondly, it indirectly shows which categories of books may have received the most attention from the publishing companies. Please see the next chapter for a discussion of potential implications of these findings. However, the spectrum table (Appendix C) also indicates the dates of the books' publications, so trends within the categories can also be traced depending on the wider historical development of the rights movements within the LGBTQ+ community.

Readability Measures

As mentioned in my methodology section (see Chapter 3), an initial way to determine the readability level for each of the recommended books from each organization was to first ask my

participants if they were familiar with readability levels, and whether or not they thought that the books could be read independently by a K-3 child. The next step for this analysis was to triangulate the participants' assessments of the reading levels using one (or more) of the following approaches: publisher's levelling criteria, Book Depository (an Amazon owned company), Fountas and Pinnell application, Scholastic Book Levelling, Level It Books application (a downloaded phone application). Sometimes Level It book offers a Lexile level, but not a reading level for a targeted book, and therefore, to counteract this problem, I went to the Learning A-Z website, a leveled literacy site that provides a combined leveling and Lexile chart to determine the approximate reading level of a book. According to the Learning A-Z website, Lexile are estimates and teachers' judgement should be taken into consideration when leveling books: "Lexile® ranges are provided only as an additional resource. They are estimates and not certified by MetaMetrics®." (Reading A-Z Level Correlation Chart, 2018, p.1). For the books written in French, I use Livres Ouverts (a Canadian French online leveling application). When I could not find a particular book on Livres Ouverts, I then checked on Renaud-Bray's bookstore website to see if they have an approximate age level for the books. I also had a reading clinician colleague check the reading levels of the books to ensure that my findings are accurate and valid. Finally, to also ensure accuracy in findings, I parallel matched each of the books to the leveling criteria found within the Fountas and Pinnell (2008) Benchmark Assessment System books 1 and 2.

Table 5.1

Recommended Books by Organization and Reading Level

Name of the Recommended Books	Organization(s) that Referred the Books	Reading Level of the Recommended Books
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<i>10 000 Dresses</i> , (Ewert, M. 2008)	Winnipeg Public Library			End-Gr.3
<i>Red, A Crayon</i> (Hall, M. 2015)	Winnipeg Public Library			Mid-Gr.2
<i>The Great Big Book of Families</i> , (Hoffman, M. 2010)	Winnipeg Public Library			Mid-Gr.2
<i>It's Okay to Be Different</i> , (Parr, T. 2001)	Winnipeg Public Library			End-Gr.1
<i>And Tango Makes Three</i> , (Richardson, J., Parnell, P. 2005)	Winnipeg Public Library	Rainbow Resource Centre	Manitoba Learning Resource Centre	End-Gr.3
<i>Le secret d'Ugolin</i> , (Alemagna, B. 2000)	DREF			Mid-Gr.4
<i>Marius</i> , (Alaoui, L., Poulin, S. 2001)	DREF			End-Gr. 3
<i>Jason et la tortue</i> , (De Luca, F. 2011)	DREF			Beg-Gr.3
<i>Et avec Tango, nous voilà trois!</i> (Richardson, J., Parnell, P. 2013)	DREF			End-Gr.3
<i>Deux garçons et un secret</i> (Poulin, A. 2016)	DREF			Mid-Gr.2
<i>Boris Brindamour et la robe orange</i> (Baldacchino, C., 2015)	DREF			End-Gr. 3
<i>Jean a deux mamans</i> (Textier, O., 2004)	DREF			End-Gr.1
<i>La princesse qui n'aimait pas les princes</i> (Haquet-Brière. A. 2010)	DREF			Beg-Gr.5
<i>King and King</i> , (De Haan, L., Nijland, S. 2002)	Rainbow Resource Centre	Manitoba Learning Resource Centre		Beg-Gr.2
<i>Be Yourself</i> , (Swirsky, J. 2015)	Rainbow Resource Centre			End-Gr.1

<i>Boy Who Cried Fabulous</i> , (Newman, L. 2004)	Rainbow Resource Centre	Mid-Gr.2
<i>My Princess Boy</i> , (Kilodavis, C. 2010)	Rainbow Resource Centre	End-Gr.1
<i>One Dad, Two Dads, Brown Dad, Blue Dads</i> , (Valentine, J. 1994)	Rainbow Resource Centre	End-Gr.1
<i>A Tale Of Two Mommies</i> (Oelschlager, V. 2011).	Manitoba Learning Resource Centre	End- Gr.1
<i>A Family Is A Family Is A Family</i> . (O'Leary, S. 2016).	Manitoba Learning Resource Centre	End-Gr.2
<i>In Our Mothers' House</i> (Polacco, P. 2009)	Manitoba Learning Resource Centre	Mid-Gr.4
<i>Mom and Mum Are Getting Married</i> . Setterington, K. (2004)	Manitoba Learning Resource Centre	Mid-Gr.3

The findings from my analysis indicate that the readability levels of most of the books are within the targeted grade levels for my research project, Kindergarten to Grade 3 range. The only exception are three books; two of them are written in French: *Le secret d'Ugolin* (2000), mid-grade four level, and *La princesse qui n'aimait pas les princes* (2010), beginning grade five level, and one English book *In Our Mothers' House* (2009) mid-grade four level.

Book Analysis

I will now review in chronological order the recommended books in each section starting from the earliest to the latest publication. As all 22 books fall into four categories: a) Diversity; b) Gays/Lesbian Parents; c) Transgender; and d) Gender Expression. The analysis synthesizes findings from the Appendix B Discourse Analysis Framework, in which I included: 1) a story

synopsis, 2) the kinds of messages the author is consciously or unconsciously intending the reader to get from the story, and 3) how the language and illustrations in the recommended books voice, silence, or shape the following values and messages: a) homonormativity; b) ally or inclusive stances; c) conceptualizations of LGBTQ+ people and families. Please see Chapter 1, pages 17-19 for a reminder of the terminology used in the book analysis.

Diversity Category

1. Parr, T. (2001). *It's okay to be different*. New York: Hachette Book Group.

Reading level. Hachette publishing company does not provide a recommended age level for this book. Book Depository levels it for children aged 0-5 years old. This book appears on the Fountas and Pinnell application as a Level I (end of Grade One). My parallel analysis revealed that the text characteristics of this book also fall within the level I or at the end of grade one level.

Story synopsis. The story is about the celebration and acceptance of people's activities, skills, and abilities. The story reinforces that it is okay to do and like things that may differ from others: "It's okay to need some help" (Parr, 2001, p. 2); "It's okay to eat macaroni and cheese in the bathtub" (Parr, 2001, p.12).

Messages for the reader. This book celebrates the acceptance of people's individuality and diversity in our society. The story promotes characters' self-confidence, which in turn may support the reader's self-esteem development.

Critical discourse analysis of values. There is a greater representation of heteronormative than homonormative values in this book. For example, the author/illustrator portrays loving relationships among people: friends, men, and women. The boys wear clothing often associated to their gender: (blue, green, yellow colours and pants or shorts), while the girls wear clothing

often associated to their gender: pink dresses and jewelry. The only explicit homonormative values presented occurs when there is a statement about how it is acceptable to have two parents of the same gender: “It’s okay to have two different moms” (Parr, 2001, p. 20). Overall, this story promotes the acceptance of gay families and all forms of people’s diversity in an inclusive way. The story also supports allyship, because the main sentence found in every page starts with: “it’s okay to...” which guides the reader to be accepting and welcoming of people’s divergent skills, likes, and lifestyle choices. The pictures are colourful and amusing. For example, we see a girl helping a female squirrel collect nuts and the phrase on the page says: “It’s okay to help a squirrel collect nuts” (Parr, 2001, p. 27).

2. Newman, L. (2004). *The boy who cried fabulous*. Berkeley: Tricycle Press.

Reading level. Tricycle Press recommends this book for children between 3-7 years old. Book Depository assesses it for ages 0-5 years old. None of the mentioned applications offered a reading level. My parallel analysis revealed that the text characteristics of this book fall within the level K books or Mid-Grade Two.

Story synopsis. This is a story about a young boy named Roger. He likes to explore the world around him and to comment on everything he sees using the word “fabulous.” His parents and teacher are getting discouraged by his behaviour, because he often comes late to school and home. Therefore, his parents ask him to see the world the way they do, which means not to say “fabulous” at everything he sees. They do so in hopes that this will make Roger focus on what he needs to do and be more punctual. When they go to town, Roger is incapable of restraining his enthusiasm of discovering the world, and he replaces the word “fabulous” with other words that he knows such as: “marvelous”, “wonderful”, “dazzling”, “glorious” ..., (Newman, 2004, pp. 24-25). Roger has so much fun meeting new people because of his enthusiastic perspective, and

his parents notice and realize that Roger's way of seeing the world is alright too. In fact, they find it quite amusing and transformational, too: "We've never, ever had such fun, and you are the world's most fabulous son!" (Newman, 2004, p. 30).

Messages for the reader. The message the reader gets from this story is that children may have opposing views from their parents in regards to how they express their likes of the world. Even when parents wish their children would express their likes and behave more in the ways they do, there are times when this is not authentic. Consequently, the story shows that it is okay to express ourselves differently than our parents. When these different ways of expression are respected, the relationship between children and parents can become more respectful and joyful.

Critical discourse analysis of values. The values promoted in this story are heteronormative in nature because we see Roger living with his two parents. The story appears to be taking place in the 1940/50s, because of the way the characters dress and the vintage details in the illustrations. On page 13, we see his mother wearing a pink sweater and blue jeans whereas his father wears brown pants and a white shirt. On page 18, the mother wears a pink coat, a hat and jewelry, and the father wears a suit and tie.

The narrative and illustrations do not directly shape children's views on any LGBTQ+ people and families. The book may be used to introduce readers to people who have divergent views of how they see the world and how they want to express their likes. The author may have used the word "fabulous" as an indicator that the boy's mannerisms are perceived as being "flamboyant" and thus, reflecting some stereotypical gay behaviours. The language promotes allyship only towards the end of the story when Roger's parents agree that his way of seeing the world is also acceptable and delightful: "But then they smiled with such delight, he knew that it would be all

right” (Newman, 2004, p. 30), because they may have realized that nobody minds Roger’s behaviours except them.

The illustrations and text promote a sense of inclusivity because the reactions of the people Roger meet in town show that he is well liked. Roger comments on a man’s attire, and the man smiles at him, “what a fabulous coat, is it silk or wool?” (Newman, 2004, p. 4). Everyone Roger meets smiles at him, “what a fabulous man in a fabulous hat,” “what a fabulous dog” (Newman, 2004, pp. 5-6). On pages 23-24, we see Roger at a restaurant with his parents. The customers like Roger’s way of commenting on everything he sees, even when he is walking on the counter. At the end of the story, when his parents realize that Roger’s way of looking at the world and interacting with the people he meets are not that bad after all, resulting in Roger sitting on his parents’ shoulders. They are all smiling. The pictures are realistic and filled with warm colours.

3. Asquith, M. H. (2010). *The great big book of families*. London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books.

Reading level. Frances Lincoln Children’s Books publishing company does not provide a recommended age level for this book. A search on Book Depository suggests that it would be an appropriate read for children aged 0-5 years old. None of the mentioned applications could provide an accurate reading level, because this book is not part of their databases. My parallel analysis reveals that the text characteristics of this book fall within the level K book or (mid-Grade Two) according the Fountas and Pinnell levelling criteria.

Story synopsis. The story is about the celebration of family compositions in today’s world. We see families that have two parents, while others have single parents. There are gay parents, blended families, multigenerational families, and so on. The story also portrays the types of activities and traditions many families have.

Messages for the reader. The intended message for the readers of this book is that families come in different shapes and sizes and that is okay. Diversity of family composition is celebrated throughout the book.

Critical discourse analysis of values. The values this book conveys are predominantly heteronormative in nature, because most families have two parents of different genders. It also promotes homonormativity, because there is a mention of two same sex families, where they each have a child like many families portrayed in this book. However, this book does try to destabilize our understanding of activities often associated to male/female gender roles. For example, we see a father feeding his baby and taking care of his toddler (p. 3), a mother going to work, while the father stays at home (p.11), and a father knitting a scarf while his children are reading books (p. 22).

The narratives normalize gay families as being able to raise children in a happy/safe environment just like those shown in heterosexual families. The language and visuals in this book promote allyship and inclusivity for gay families. The story reinforces the idea that all families are accepted. The language is inclusive as it allows for diversity of families to be celebrated: “Lots of children live with their mummy and daddy” (Asquith, 2010, p. 3), “some children have two mummies or two daddies...” (Asquith, 2010, p. 4).

However, there is a predominance of white middle-class families portrayed in the illustrations throughout the book. There are few mixed families. The illustrations are realistic in the sense that children can relate to the characters and families presented throughout the book. Their facial expressions are engaging and allow children to imagine the characters’ dialogues. The colours of the illustrations are realistic and they reflect well the ethnicity and cultural diversity of the world we live in.

Gays and Lesbians Category

4. Valentine, J. (1994). *One dad, two dads, brown dad, blue dads*. Boston: Alyson Wonderland.

Reading level. Alyson Wonderland publishing company does not provide a recommended age level for this book, nor does Book Depository. In addition, none of the mentioned applications could provide an accurate reading level, because this book is not part of their databases. My parallel analysis revealed that the text characteristics of this book fell within the level I book, or end of grade one, according to the Fountas and Pinnell levelling criteria.

Story synopsis. The story is about Lou, who explains to his friend that he has two blue dads. Throughout the story, Lou explains that having two dads does not differ from having a mom and a dad as parents. Lou's dads are his parents, but his life is not different from his friend's because he has two blue dads.

Messages for the reader. The message the reader may be expected to take from this story is that families can be composed of a mother and a father, but families can also be composed of two fathers. Regardless of the family composition, what matters the most is the love and care children get from their loved ones.

Critical discourse analysis of values. The language and illustrations promote homonormativity, inclusivity, and allyship. First, the author promotes homonormativity because Valentine portrays two blue dads who are living in a committed relationship and raising a son. In order to represent the fathers' sexual orientation as gay, without explicitly mentioning it, the author chooses to draw them in blue. The author's omission of naming the father's sexual orientation may have been done deliberately to avoid censorship issues at the time the book was published. On the inside cover page, we see a picture of Lou with his two blue dads. Throughout the book, we see illustrations of the dads doing daily activities: combing hair, swimming,

singing, taking care of each other, and doing household chores. In this way, the story normalizes the idea that children who are raised in same-sex households have normal lives like those who are raised in heterosexual households: “Our life is routine, and they’re just like all other dads—black, white, or green” (Valentine, 1994, p. 26). Secondly, the language Valentine uses in this story promotes inclusivity because of how, Lou, who is the main character of the story, normalizes to his friend the day-to-day life with his fathers: ““Of course blue dads work! And they play, and they laugh. They do all of those things,’ said Lou” (Valentine, 1994, p. 11). Third, the language in the story also promotes some allyship. Towards the end of the story a new character is introduced and who overhears Lou’s conversation with his friend. She announces to them that she too has two dads, but hers are green: “I have! My name is Jean. I have two dads who both are green.” (Valentine, 1994, p. 28). By joining in the conversation and sharing her family composition, Jean shows allyship towards Lou and his family. However, it is interesting to note that she lets the reader wonder who her dads might be, because she informs them that there is no more room in this book to explain it. However, Jean lets the readers know that other members of the LGBTQ+ population exist, and they too can have children and families of their own, but one will have to read about them in another book that has yet to be published.

5. Nijland, L. D. (2000). *King & king*. Berkeley: Tricycle Press.

Reading level. Penguin Random House publishing company provides a recommended age level for this book at 5-9 years old. On Book Depository, this book is described as a good read for children aged 0-5 years old. This book appears on the Fountas and Pinnell application as a level W or beginning Grade Six. My parallel analysis reveals that the text characteristics of this book fall within the level P book or end of Grade Three according to the Fountas and Pinnell levelling criteria. I believe that the word and sentence complexity do not match those found

within a Grade 6 text. The disparity of my findings with Fountas and Pinnell may reside with the content of the book, which they may have decided to be a more appropriate read by Grade 6 students. See chapter six for further discussions on the implications of this mismatching of reading levels.

Story synopsis. In this story, a queen wants to retire from reigning over her kingdom. In order to do so, she needs her son, the prince, to get married. Throughout the story, a variety of princesses are introduced to the prince, but he instead falls in love with the brother of one of the princesses. It is love at first sight for the two princes and their wedding takes place at the end of the story.

Messages for the reader. The message the author wants the reader to take from this book is that not all men fall in love with women. Some men fall in love with other men and get married and that is okay too.

Critical discourse analysis of values. The values promoted in this story are those of homonormativity because they portray two male princes getting married and living happily ever after in their kingdom. Although the characters have changed to be two princes instead of a prince and a princess, the homonormative fairy tale narrative doesn't change.

The illustrations promote acceptance and inclusivity of gay love. On pages 19-20, we see the prince falling in love with the princess' brother, but she does not appear to be upset by this turn of events. On the next pages, we see the princes smiling at each other and falling in love. This pleases the princess, but not the queen, because of the frowning expression she has on her face. However, later in the story we see on pages 23-24 the princes who are getting married, and these illustrations show that the queen now seems happy for them. We even see in the audience some of the other princesses who were previously invited by the queen to court her son,

attending the wedding. They have smiles on their faces. On pages 26-27, we see the princes sitting outside of their castle with the queen and some members of the court, all enjoying a leisurely day. Everyone seems accepting of the princes. We also see one of the princesses being courted by the prince's page. Both gay and straight love is portrayed and normalized in this story.

The conceptualizations of LGBTQ+ people and families is demonstrated through the narratives and illustrations. At first, we see an existing narrative from the queen where she seems to assume and believe that in order to have a wonderful life a man has to marry a woman. The language demonstrates to children that unless you ask someone who they really like, one will likely assume that they will like the opposite gender: "that night, the queen found her list of princesses and called every castle, alcazar, and palazzo near and far" (Nijland, 2000, p.11). The prince tries to upset this assumption when he says, "I must say, though, I've never cared much for princesses." (Nijland, 2000, p. 9), yet his words are ignored or are (un)consciously misinterpreted by his mother. However, as the book develops, a new narrative emerges that when someone is true to self, true love can happen. This new narrative shows that love between two people of the same sex can happen and that they can also live a happy life.

6. Poulin, L. A. (2001). *Marius*. Québec: Les éditions Les 400 coups.

Reading level. The éditions Les 400 coups did not provide an age level for this book. According to the Livres Ouverts application, this book is at a Grade Three level. My parallel analysis revealed that the text characteristics of this book fell within the level P book, or end of Grade 3 according the Fountas and Pinnell levelling criteria.

Story synopsis. This is a story about a five-year-old boy named Marius, whose parents are divorced. He spends time with each parent and their new partners; both his mother and father

have a new male partner in their lives. Marius does not seem to be disturbed by this new reality. The readers are given insight into how Marius's family is discussed and accepted (or not) by those who are close to him.

Messages for the reader. The author may be intending for the readers to take away several different messages from this book. One message focuses on the importance of the acceptance of being true to self and sexual identity. Another message seems to highlight the diversity of family compositions, for example some families have heterosexual parents and some have homosexual parents. There are also important messages of the needed acceptance of another sexual identity (gay), and the continued fight against prejudice and discrimination.

Critical discourse analysis of values. There is an equal representation of heteronormativity and homonormativity in this story. Marius lives in two parent/partnered households. Both parents have their own sets of rules in which Marius thrives, feels safe, and is happy. Marius's mother and her new partner promote allyship through their use of language and actions. Even his grandmother and his teacher at first are not supportive of Marius' father's new relationship, but after Marius has explained his life reality to them, they show respect and acceptance of it. This acceptance from these characters may reflect some societal changes that were taking place in the province of Quebec towards the amendment of the civil union in 2002: "its purpose was to allow same-sex couples to enter into a legal relationship, so they could have the same benefits as married couples" and in Canada regarding the legislation of same-sex marriage in 2005 (Educaloi, p.1, 2nd para, 2018). There is no animosity among the parents: "maman a un amoureux et mon papa aussi" ["Mom has a new love in her life and so does my father"] (Poulin, 2001, p.9). The story promotes understanding of another sexual orientation (gay) and shows that children can thrive in a family with gay parents. This is demonstrated when

Marius explains to his grandmother that it is not a bad thing for two men to love, but that they can't have children the "biological" way: "maintenant elle sait que deux garçons ensemble c'est pas "mal" seulement ils ne pourront jamais faire de bébés ensemble." ["now she knows that two men together is not a bad thing, but they will never be able to procreate"] (Poulin, 2001, p. 15). It also promotes inclusivity from all parties: the new mother's partner, his grandmother and his teacher all show understanding and acceptance of the father's relationship with a man. Marius describes how his teacher was surprised with his family's openness and honesty: "Je crois que la maîtresse a été surprise par notre vérité car elle a changé de tête" ["I think my teacher was surprised by my honesty, because she changed her mind afterwards"] (Poulin, 2001, p. 21).

The story normalizes same-sex relationships among parents. It also normalizes that gay fathers can be good parents and can raise their children too. The images are realistic. On page 5, we see two boys, one kneeling in front of the other, holding and kissing his hand. This illustration could be a reference to acceptance of same sex love. However, this image may also represent some forms of bullying that Marius has experienced in school, because in this same picture we see him sitting behind a picture frame crying. Perhaps Marius feels that these boys are mocking or trying to shame his own family. Marius's true love is depicted as an imaginary pirate girl that we see in the picture frame. On page 12, we see four different feet walking around Marius' remote-controlled car. The feet represent Marius' parents and their partners and how their lives are intertwined with his. On page 16, we see his grandmother listening to Marius when he is explaining how loving someone of the same sex is alright. In this illustration, there is a flower pot with the soil in it and the two packs of seeds: all symbols of fertility. We can assume the illustrator is implying that fertility will not happen in a same-sex relationship, even if you try the "natural" way. On page 21, we see a chicken under an umbrella, which represents how

Marius was *not* a coward when he told the truth about his father's homosexuality in school. This brave act of talking about his family had the consequence of his teacher changing her attitude towards Marius: "Monique a dit que je n'étais pas vraiment une poule mouillée" ["Monique said that I was not a really a coward"] (Poulin, 2001, p. 21). Later, we see Marius marrying his imaginary pirate girl, surrounded by all the people who are important to him: his parents, their new partners, and his grandmother. Everyone is wearing an eye patch to demonstrate their acceptance of Marius' lifestyle and life partner. Under the picture, we see a treasure map that shows a path leading to a heart with a cross on it. This could signify that love can be found if one keeps searching for it. Marius' mother and partner are holding his teddy bear, which may represent that more children may come from this union. Please see the next chapter for further discussion about the implications of this "biological" discourse present in this and other books.

7. Setterington, K. (2004). *Mom and mum are getting married*. Toronto: Second Story Press.

Reading level. Second Story Press publishing provided a recommended age level (5-8) and reading level for this book, which was Guided Reading: M. My parallel analysis agreed with the publisher's analysis that the text characteristics of this book fell within the level M as well or end of Grade two, according to the Fountas and Pinnell levelling criteria.

Story synopsis. This is the story of a little girl named Rosie whose mother is getting married to her partner. Rosie is happy for them and so is her extended family. The story ends with the mothers' wedding.

Messages for the reader. The message the author seems to intend for the readers to take away is that two women can get married and live happily with their children. Their friends and extended family members can be supportive and welcoming of their marital union.

Critical discourse analysis of values. This story embraces homonormativity, because it portrays a same-sex parent household getting married and living in a house with their children. The narratives seem to tell the reader that lesbian parents can raise children and that their relationships can be stable and healthy. The language in this story is inclusive as it normalizes same-sex weddings: “We really want to celebrate how happy we are together – and we want everyone we love to celebrate with us” (Settingington, 2004, p. 1). It also shows allyship from their extended family members: “Pop was full of questions. ‘Who will we invite? Where will we have it?’” p.7, “Nana said she’d make lunch” (Settingington, 2004, p.11).

The pictures also promote allyship. On page 4, we see the grandparents (Pop & Nana) coming to Rosie’s house and hugging everyone after they heard the news. On pages 19-20, we see all the guests at the wedding with their loved ones waiting for the mothers to get married and celebrating this event with them.

8. Textier, O. (2004). *Jean a deux mamans*. Paris: L'école des loisirs.

Reading level. The éditions l'école des loisirs provided an age level for this book, which was 2-4 years old. This book does not appear on the LivresOuverts website. My parallel analysis revealed that the text characteristics of this book fell within the level H book, or end of Grade 1, according the Fountas and Pinnell levelling criteria.

Story synopsis. This is a board book. The story is about a young wolf who lives with his two mothers. It shows the wolf’s daily activities with his mothers, and how they take care of him in their own way.

Messages for the reader. The message the author intends for the readers to take away is that a family can be composed of two same-sex parents. It also shows that within a same-sex relationship, a child can be conceived and born from one of the parents.

Critical discourse analysis of values. This story embraces homonormativity, because it portrays a same-sex parent household having a child. The family's daily activities mimic those of stereotypical heteronormative families in nature; two mothers raising a child and living in a monogamous relationship. One of the mothers takes on a normative feminine role and does the "female-oriented chores" around the house, such as cooking and cleaning. The other mother takes on a more normative masculine role does the "male-oriented chores," such as fixing things around the house. The illustrations show that both mothers wear dresses, but that Maman Jeanne wears a blue dress with a pink apron indicating her female role within the relationship. She is also the one who is expecting Jean, as we see on the picture of her pregnant and sitting on a bench on page 5. Maman Marie wears a red dress and does what would be stereotypically conceived as "male activities" with Jean. On page 7, we see Mother Marie painting, fishing with Jean on page 8, and pretending to be a horse for Jean on page 13.

The narratives are shaping the reader's view that two same-sex parents are just as able as any other parents and caregivers to raise children. It is the only book that portrays a same-sex relationship where one of the parents assumes the female gender activities such as taking care of the house and the other parent is assuming the male gender activities such as painting and going fishing. This story presents the reader that daily activities are not exclusive to a specific gender.

The language promotes the acceptance of same-sex families. Jean says that his mothers' love is just like any mom and dad's love: "mes deux mamans s'aiment comme un papa et une maman." ["my two moms love each other just like a dad and a mother do"] (Textier, 2004, p. 3). It demonstrates how each mother's interests show how much they care about Jean. One shows him how to fish, "Maman Marie m'a appris à pêcher!" ["Mother Marie taught me how to fish"] (Textier, 2004, p. 10), whereas the other mother shows him how to cook, "et Maman Jeanne a

cuisiné les petits poissons!” [“Mother Jeanne taught me how to cook small fish”] (Textier, 2004, p. 11). Regardless of their aptitudes, their love for Jean is true and equal, which is shown at the end of the book. On pages 19-20, when Jean feels very sad, they both rushed to give him a hug.

9. Richardson, J., & Parnell, P. (2005). *And tango makes three*. New York: Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing.
10. Richardson, J., & Parnell, P. (2013). *Et avec tango, nous voilà trois!* New York: Rue du Monde.

Reading level. Simon and Schuster publishing company provided a recommended age level for this book; 2-5 years old. This book appeared both on the Scholastic book leveling application and also on the Level It application. They both suggested that this is a level Q book, or beginning Grade 4. According to the Livres Ouverts application, the translation of this book falls within the Grade 3 range. My parallel analysis reveals that the text characteristics of this book fall within the level M book, or end of Grade 2 according to the Fountas and Pinnell levelling criteria. There is a grade-level disparity between how the English and French applications recommended the reading level. I believe that this may have more to do with the content of the book focusing on LGBTQ+ issues, rather than the linguistic features of the book. Scholastic and Level It may have decided that this book is more appropriate content for Grade 4 students. My linguistic analysis of both the French and the English books was more closely aligned with the Livres Ouverts application.

Story synopsis. The story is based on a true story about a gay male penguin couple that wanted to start a family like all the other penguins living at the zoo. With the help of the zookeeper, they were given an abandoned egg from another penguin couple. They took care of the egg until it hatched. They raised a healthy baby penguin.

Messages for the reader. The message that the author seems to intend for the reader to get from this story is that even in the animal world, there are gay couples. When given a chance to raise baby animals, they can rise up to the challenge and do just as well as their heterosexual peers.

Critical discourse analysis of values. Homonormativity is being promoted throughout this book, as the only male couple in the story wants to have a family like all the other straight couples living at the zoo. Just like their counterparts, they are a monogamous couple. The story promotes acceptance of gay love and families because their love is not undermined by any of the other animals or the zookeeper. It is, in fact, respected and valued by the other animals as they do not bother the couple. In addition, the zookeeper gives this same-sex couple an egg to take care of.

The language used in this book promotes allyship and inclusivity. It acknowledges and normalizes gay and straight love among the penguins: “Mr. Gramzay noticed the two penguins and thought to himself, “they must be in love.”” (Parnell, 2013, p. 9). The narratives are inclusive because they normalize the penguin’s love for each other, “they built a nest of stones for themselves. Every night Roy and Silo slept there together, just like the other penguin couples.” (Richardson & Parnell, 2013, p. 10).

The pictures are very realistic of the zoo in New York City. The activities the penguins do reflect their daily lives: eating, making their nest, playing, and raising a family. The storyline and the pictures are engaging and relatable to the readers. On page 17, there are two toy penguins on Mr. Gramzay’s desk, likely representing Roy and Silo. There are also some photos. In one of the photos, there appears to be a father with his two children. In the picture frame behind and at almost the same height as the first frame with the family, we see a picture of what

appears to be another man. There is also another smaller picture frame sitting beside the first frame showing another man with a beard. It could be the same man as in the second picture frame, but we can't tell, but we know these men are important to Mr. Gramzay because they occupy centre-place on his desk. Therefore, we could presume that Mr. Gramzay is gay and that these pictures represent his family or people that are important to him.

11. Polacco, P. (2009). *In our mothers' house*. New York: Penguin Group.

Reading level. The Penguin Group publishing company leveled this book for children who are 6-8 years old. Fountas and Pinnell application, Leveled It, and Scholastic did not provide a reading level for this book. On Book Depository, the book is a recommended read for children between the ages of 0-5 years old. My parallel analysis revealed that the text characteristics of this book also fall within the Level R, or mid-Grade 4.

Story synopsis. The story is about three adopted children who are raised by their lesbian mothers. It portrays their daily life activities from birth to adulthood. It shows how the love and care they received from them helped them become well-adjusted adults.

Messages for the reader. The message the reader gets is that a family with two moms is no different than having a family with a mom and a dad. What matters the most for the family is that there is love, respect, and caring for each other, which creates an environment where everyone can thrive. The reader also sees that not everyone will agree to same-sex families and they may show their disapproval through words and actions, but retaliation is not the answer. The answer is for every family to be true to self by respecting other families' viewpoints.

Critical discourse analysis of values. The values that are promoted in this story are homonormative in nature, because we see two mothers living in a house and raising three children. Their daily life activities are shown throughout the book such as: going to work,

helping with chores, and homework. We always see both mothers working together around the house and including their children in the daily activities: cooking spaghetti, (pp. 5-6), dancing (pp. 7-8), and admiring the art work of one of the children (pp. 11-12). On pages 39-40, we see the two mothers, who are now elderly, taking care of one of their grandchildren. Later, we see the two mothers sitting together and holding each other (p. 43). Their faces, as it is throughout the book, are radiant with love for each other, showing a monogamous life.

Inclusivity and allyship are represented in the story through the neighbours' and extended family members' actions and language use: "One of the best things about our mothers' house was the tree house that we built in our backyard. Practically the entire neighbourhood helped us" (p. 17); "our grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins usually came for the weekend" (p. 20); "one of the niftiest things that happened in our neighbourhood was the Woolsey Street block party. Marmee organized it. It became a tradition" (p. 26). When one of the neighbours came to see the mothers to express her disapproval towards their same-sex family situation, we see how diverse the ethnicity of the neighbours is and how they support and console the mothers: "The neighbours agreed—the Mardicians, the Polos, the Yamagakis, the Kiernans, the Goldsteins, the Abduallas, everybody—and one by one they hugged our mothers" (p. 31).

The illustrations are realistic and charming. They also demonstrate inclusivity and allyship. On several pages, we see both mothers looking adoringly at each of their adoptive children when they first came home (pp. 1, 3, 4). We see the neighbours helping build a tree house, have a barbeque in the mothers' yard, and watch the children playing with the neighbours' children (pp.17-18).

12. Brière-Haquet, A. (2010). *La princesse qui n'aimait pas les princes*. Arles: Actes Sud Le Méjan.

Reading level. The Actes Sud Le Méjan publishing company did not provide a recommended age level for this book. However, a bookstore located in the province of Quebec called Renaud-Bray indicated that this book is a good read for children aged 5-9. This book does not appear on the Livres Ouverts application. My parallel analysis reveals that the text characteristics of this book fall within the level T book or beginning Grade 5 according to the Fountas and Pinnell levelling criteria.

Story synopsis. This story is about a young princess whose father thinks she is ready to be married because she knows how to make good mayonnaise. Like the plot in *King and King*, this king calls potential men from his country and from abroad to present themselves as his daughter's future partner. However, the princess likes none of the men that are presented to her. The king, in desperation, calls for a fairy to come help solve the mystery with her magic. Yet when the princess sees the fairy, she falls in love with her and they get married.

Messages for the reader. The author's intended message for the readers is that not all women fall in love with men. Some women fall in love with and marry other women. If you wait long enough, you may find true love.

Critical discourse analysis of values. Some homonormative values are represented here as the princess and the fairy get to live together happily ever after in their castle, just like any heteronormative story. However, the story makes mention that the princess and the fairy are not allowed to get married, a fact at the time when this book was published. Gay marriage and adoptions were only allowed legally in France in the Spring of 2013, three years after this book was published: "The French president, François Hollande, has signed a law authorising same-sex couples to marry and adopt children" (The Guardian, May 18, 2013, para.1). However, what differentiates this story from other stories in this recommended list is how explicitly the author

states that the couple can't get married and have children, because it would be complicated: "Elles ne peuvent pas vraiment se marier, et pour faire des bébés, ce fut un peu plus compliqué" (Brière-Haquet, 2010, p. 37). This narrative seems to be telling the reader that you can find true love in a homosexual relationship, but you won't be able to have the same lifestyle as your heterosexual parents. It will be more complicated for you to live in a castle/house and raise children.

The language at first supports only heterosexual relationships with all the future men wanting to marry the princess. When the fairy appears in the story, the princess falls in love, and the author explains what falling in love looks and sounds like, "elle la vit, elle rougit, elle pâlit à sa vue. Était-ce donc cela l'amour tant attendu?" ["blushing, going pale at the sight of her. Is this the long-awaited love?"] (Brière-Haquet, 2010, p.33). The language becomes inclusive of same-sex love. Her father is surprised but not opposed to the relationship, which shows a form of allyship. This allyship is repeated through the attention that is given to the aunt in the picture frame who now smiles, because she is happy the princess has found true love: "le miracle était arrivé! Le roi, très étonné, en fit tomber son spectre doré. Mais on dit qu'on vit sourire le portrait de tante Zoé" ["A miracle came! The king was astonished and felt weak. But it is said that Aunt Zoé's picture was smiling"] (Brière-Haquet, 2010, p.36). On page 35, we see the princess and the fairy riding a unicorn and flying away to another country. They smile at each other and hold hands. A few pages later we see the house in the woods where they now live. This move to a new place maybe the author's way of saying to the reader that in order to live happily and in a same-sex relationship, one has to move to another country. As the book ends, we see the princess and the fairy getting ready to kiss and there's a heart above their heads.

13. Oelschlager, V. (2011). *A tale of two mommies*. Akron: Vanita Books.

Reading level. The Vanita Books publishing company marked this book for children ages 4-8 years old. It is not leveled by Fountas and Pinnell application, Leveled It and nor Scholastic. Book Depository suggested this book as a good read for children that are between 6-8 years old. My parallel analysis revealed that the text characteristics of this book fell within the Level I, or end of Grade 1.

Story synopsis. The story shows a conversation between three children at the beach: two boys and one girl. One boy and the girl ask questions to the other boy about what it is like to have two mothers. His answers normalize life with his mothers.

Messages for the reader. The author wants the readers to understand a family can be composed of two mothers. The mothers' daily interactions with their son demonstrates how each of the mothers shares interest in their son's activities. Experiences such as learning to ride a bike and setting up a campfire enhance the son's life.

Critical discourse analysis of values. The values promoted in this book are homonormative in nature as they depict a boy living with his two mothers. The story portrays daily activities that the boy does with his mothers. "Momma helps me climb a tree" (p. 21), "Both moms help when I skin my knee" (p. 22), and "Mommy helps to set up the campsite" (p. 13). The message the reader gets is that same-sex parents can provide love and care for their children as any other parents and caregivers do.

The language is inclusive as we see the boy talking to two other children he met at the beach and explaining to them what his mothers do with him. The children ask, "Which mom's there when you've had a bad dream?" (p.16), and the boy replies, "Both mommies are there when I've had a bad dream" (p.18). There is one sentence in the story that promotes allyship: "Mommy is the coach of my T-ball team" (p.17), which indicates that one of the boy's mothers

has been accepted by the other parents of the team to be their children's coach. The illustrations promote inclusivity because while the children are asking questions regarding what the boy's mothers do with him, we also see them playing together throughout the day at the beach.

14. Luca, F. D. (2011). *Jason et la tortue des bois*. Québec: Soulière Éditeur.

Reading level. The Soulière Éditeur publishing company did not provide a recommended age level for this book. Renaud-Bray Library's website recommended this book to be a good read for young children, aged unassigned. This book appeared on the Livres Ouverts application as a Grade 4 book. My parallel analysis revealed that the text characteristics of this book fall within the level N book or Beginning Grade 3 according the Fountas and Pinnell levelling criteria. Once more, it appears that the theme and content of the book, rather than the complexity of the vocabulary and sentence structures, influences how the applications determine the readability level of the book. I will be exploring the implications of this finding further in the final chapter.

Story synopsis. This author tells the story of a young boy named Jason who lives in a single-parent household with his mother. He has never met his father. His mother meets a woman who becomes her partner. The three of them have a good life and engage in all kinds of family activities. The mother's partner likes to play games with Jason. She reads him stories. She helps around the house, even gives Jason his bath at times, and tucks him into bed at night by telling him his favorite story of a turtle who lives in the woods. As the presence of the mother's new partner increases, Jason becomes jealous of her, because he feels she is taking his mother's attention away from him. Jason's displeasure at having his mother's partner in their lives results in the partner leaving Jason and his mother. His mother becomes very sad and life at home is not the same anymore for Jason and his mother. One night, Jason dreams of the turtle

story that the mother's partner used to tell him. The voice of wisdom from the turtle teaches Jason to appreciate life's moments, to be open minded, tolerant of differences, and generous with his time and love. The next morning, Jason writes a letter to his mother's partner asking her to come back, which she does.

Messages for the reader. The author uses the turtle's voice of wisdom to encourage readers to learn about life, think before saying something that they might regret, and to be open-minded and tolerant to changes. The book promotes having a sense of freedom, and to be generous towards others: "D'abord la lenteur: ne rien bousculer, faire mûrir ses idées avant de les exposer. Puis la tolérance, les différences, la liberté, la générosité" ["First to take your time: not to rush anything, to let your ideas grow before you disclose them. Then tolerance, differences, freedom, liberty and generosity"] (Luca, 2011, pp.17-18).

Critical discourse analysis of values. The values promoted in this story are homonormative: a two-family household where two women and a child are living together. The narratives demonstrate to the readers that children can live in a one (at first) or two parent household and be happy. The book also shows that when a parent falls in love with a person of the same gender, this relationship can create a joyful household where children can thrive. The language normalizes the daily activities of the family such as setting up the table and eating pancakes: "le dimanche, Jason, sa maman et Anna dressaient la table de la cuisine" ... "ils mangeaient des crêpes, et buvaient du chocolat" ["on Sunday, Jason, his mother and Anna set up the kitchen table" ... "they ate pancakes and drank hot chocolate"] (Luca, 2011, p.29). The turtle shows allyship when he listens to Jason's sorrows and helps him accept that his mother's love for her partner will not diminish her love for him: "maman, je veux faire un dessin à Anna pour lui

dire que je l'aime et que je veux être avec elle et toi" ["mom, I want to draw a picture for Anna to tell her that I love her and that I want us to be together"] (Luca, 2011, p.50).

The black and white illustrations are fairly realistic. They show the characters' emotions. For example, on page 7, we see Jason and his mother together and they are happy. On pages 10-11, Jason, Anna and his mother enjoy daily activities and Jason receives presents from Anna. Later, we see Jason sleeping with the forest turtle inside its shell (p. 18). It appears that the shell represents safety against harm from the outside world. We see that a friendship develops between Jason and the turtle. The illustrator represents the evolving friendship through images of the meals they eat, walks they take, and discussions/confessions they share (p. 20).

When Anna leaves, the shadows in the drawings are long, dark, and dominant. This artistic technique of shading is used to indicate loneliness and perhaps symbolize a long and dark road ahead for Jason and his mother. This loneliness is shown throughout the book such as on page 41, where we see Jason's mother sitting at the kitchen table drinking coffee. The shadows from all three chairs are accentuated to show his mother's life's emptiness without Anna. There are several illustrations where we see Jason's stuffed turtle that Anna gave him (pp. 40, 45, & 46). After the departure of Anna, this stuffed turtle is drawn with a sad facial expression. Later in the book, we see Jason dreaming about the turtle from the story that Anna used to tell him. We see the turtle talking to Jason and him listening intently. In my opinion, the turtle represents what Anna means to Jason and his mother: happiness, safety and a life full of adventures. When Anna comes back in their lives, Jason's stuffed turtle is now illustrated with an expression of happiness (pp. 51, 52, 53, 57, 59, & 60).

15. O'Leary, S. (2016). *A family is a family is a family*. Toronto: Groundwood Books.

Reading level. The Groundwood Books publishing company recommends this book for children who are from Kindergarten to Grade 2. According to Book Depository, this book is a recommended read for children ages 6-8 years old. Level It does not provide a reading level, but it provides a Lexile level of 500, which according to Reading A-Z website, it would correspond to the reading levels within the Grade 3 range or N-P as per Fountas and Pinnell leveling system. Scholastic does not provide a reading level. My parallel analysis reveals that the text characteristics of this book fall within the end of Grade 2 or level M.

Story synopsis. This is a story about a young girl whose teacher asks all of her students to describe their families. The little girl is embarrassed of her family, because she thinks “her family is not like everybody’s else” (O’Leary, S. 2016, p.2), though we do not really get to know what her family is like. While listening to her peers telling her teacher what their families are like, the little girl realizes that many families that they describe are different from the nuclear type of family; having a mom and a dad. She realizes that what counts in a family is not the composition, but the love and care the children get from the adults that care for them.

Messages for the reader. The message conveyed to the reader through this book is that families have all kinds of compositions: a mom and a dad, 2 parents of the same gender, grandparents, single parent, and so on.

Critical discourse analysis of values. The values presented in this book are homonormative in nature as the story portrays two same-sex families living in a house with children. Heteronormative values are also portrayed in this story as we see families with a mother and a father that have been created either through blended families or marriages. The narratives about gay families are shaping the reader’s view that gay parents can love and care for their children, just as well as any other types of families, and that the children will thrive.

The language promotes inclusivity as it portrays same-sex families along heterosexual families: “one of my dads is tall and one is short. They both give good hugs” p. 25-26, says one little boy to his classmates. “Both my moms are terrible singers. And they both like to sing really loud” p. 7-8, says another boy who is listening to his mothers singing together. There is also a sign of inclusivity when on p. 30, we see the children in the classroom showing the drawings of their families. Everyone is smiling and proud of their families, and no one is left out.

The pictures are comical and fairly realistic. On pages 3-4 we see a little girl talking about her mom and dad being best friends since Grade 1 and having a meal at a restaurant with her parents. The parents are kissing each other. On pages 7-8 we see the two mothers of a little boy singing on the roof of what appears to be their apartment building. The little boy and the neighbours are looking and smiling at them. On pages 25-26 we see a little boy being tucked in bed by both his fathers.

16. Lafrance, A. P. (2016). *Deux garçons et un secret*. Montréal: Les Éditions de la Bagnole.

Reading level. The Éditions de la Bagnole publishing company also did not provide a recommended age level for this book. However, it is leveled at a Grade 3 level on the Livres Ouverts application and nor Renaud-Bray Bookstore’s website. My parallel analysis revealed that the text characteristics of this book fell within the level L book or mid-Grade 2 level according the Fountas and Pinnell levelling criteria.

Story synopsis. This is the story about two young boys who are best friends. One day, one of the boys finds a toy ring in the sandbox and decides to ask his best friend to marry him. Together with their friends, they have a pretend wedding ceremony and exchange rings. When the children tell their parents at night, one set of parents disapproves, while the other approves of their “marriage.” The next day, the boy whose parents disapprove tells his friend of his parents’

reaction. Together, they agree to keep their marital status a secret to his parents by wearing their rings around their necks.

Messages for the reader. Whether it was intended by the author or not, the message for the readers of this book seems to be that some people will have a different opinion than yours, and disagree with you whether it is okay to have two boys pretend to be married. In some instances, others may discourage you to pursue your idea or identity. Consequently, the message of the book seems to be implying that the solution to these problems and difference of opinions is to keep your idea, relationships, and identity secret from those who disapprove.

Critical discourse analysis of values. Homonormativity is being presented when the two boys want to get married, a concept regularly re-enacted in children's play. They want to live together happily ever after, just like the rest of the society does, in a matrimonial and monogamous union. However, there is resistance shown by some characters when they do not see fit that two boys marry. These characters reinforce heteronormative values, as they disagree with gay marriages and unions. Some characters such as Justin, another boy in the playground, and one of the boy's mothers express their disapproval. Justin says, "un mariage entre deux gars, ça ne se peut pas" ["a wedding between two boys can't happen"] (Lafrance, 2016, p. 8). Émile's parents say, "ne dis pas de bêtises, Émile. Un gars ne se marie pas avec un gars. Ça ne se fait pas" ["Don't be silly, Émile. A boy does not marry another boy. It does not happen » (Lafrance, 2016, p. 18).

The language in this story promotes allyship and inclusivity. Marianne, one of the boys' friends, agrees to give them one of her toy rings, so they can exchange rings at their pretend wedding ceremony. She only has the condition that she can be their flower girl, to which they readily agree: "je te donne une de mes bagues, à une condition, dit Marianne... je serai votre

bouquetière” [“I’ll give you one of my rings said Marianne only if you let me be your flower girl”] (Lafrance, 2016, p. 7). Mathis’ mother also supports her son’s pretend wedding and tells him that when he’s older, and if he still loves Émile, then he could marry him—even though other people object to the idea (p. 22). The narratives show children that not everyone approves of gay relationships/marriages, but others do. Consequently, for some people, it seems that the best way of being true to themselves is to keep their same-sex feelings secret to those who may disapprove. This may be problematic for the reader to understand. On the other hand, it also shows a reality some of the children in today’s society live. See chapter six for further explanation.

The pictures promote allyship. On the first pages, we see one boy walking on a wall and the other one holding his hand (pp. 1-2). In the background we see a woman who does not seem to be bothered by this act. Later, we see Émile asking Mathis to marry him, and none of the children around seem to react negatively to this proposal (pp. 5-6). In the illustration where the boys get ready for their wedding, their friends are shown in the background decorating the park bench and tree with paper chains and confetti (pp. 11-12). On the next pages, when we see the boys exchanging vows, their friends watch with smiles on their faces (pp. 13-14).

Transgender Category

17. Alemagna, B. (2000). *Le secret d'Ugolin*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil.

Reading level. The Éditions du Seuil recommended this book to be a good read for children who are four years old and older. It did not appear on the Livres Ouverts website. My parallel analysis revealed that the text characteristics of this book fall within the level R book, or mid-Grade 4 level according the Fountas and Pinnell levelling criteria.

Story synopsis. The story is about a shepherd's dog, named Ugolin, who lies about his true identity to his parents. As the story develops, Ugolin becomes unhappier, because he does not feel that he is a dog. Instead, he feels like he is actually a cat. After much reflection, Ugolin decides that the only way to be happy is to be his true self. He makes the decision to come out and to behave as a cat in front of his parents and the world: "parce que dans son coeur, il avait compris qu'il était un chat" ["because deep down in his heart, he knew that he was a cat"] (Alemagna, 2000, p. 24). After he made his decision to live as a cat, Ugolin finds happiness.

Messages for the reader. The author seems to want the readers to get the idea that lying to yourself will only make you feel unhappy. When you are true to self and accept who you are, life is much easier to live.

Critical discourse analysis of values. The values promoted in this story are those of heteronormativity. Ugolin lives in a two-parent household with a mother and a father. His mother makes the meals. His father asks him if he chased cats away from the house like dogs do. At first the narrative seems to be telling the reader that it might be best to hide your true identity to those that you love the most, for example, your parents. It also seems to be telling readers to behave according to what societal gender norms tells them to act. The illustrations also develop this narrative. The illustrator has created a series of houses all lined up showing life has to follow a certain order with numbers visible on the doors to indicate life's predictability. Even the smoke from the chimneys moves towards the same direction as if to show that there is only one way of doing things or looking at life (pp. 17-18). Yet as this becomes intolerable to the main character Ugolin, the reader will hopefully notice that in order to be happy, one has to behave authentically. This is reinforced when Ugolin accepted, rather than denied his cat's identity and discovers life becomes easier to live.

There is minimal inclusivity mentioned in the book. Towards the end of the book, we find out that there is also a cat who questions his identity and believes that he is a dog. This may explain why he is attracted to Ugolin, “la nuit passée, au plus profond de lui, il s’était senti terriblement chien” [“last night, in his soul, he felt terribly like a dog”] (Alemagna, 2000, p. 29).

The pictures are not realistic, but instead utilize a variety of artistic techniques. The dogs and cats are oval shapes. The smoke from the chimneys and the clouds are also oval shapes. The pictures are full of dark colours, seeming to intensify Ugolin’s sadness and the difficulties he faces as he conforms to his dog life. The house and people are drawn two dimensionally and appear to be drawn by a child. For example, on page 14, we see a drawing of a little girl. Her shoes both facing to the right, while she faces the readers. This drawing characteristic is often associated with children who are learning to draw. The drawings are all covered with line/crayon marks as if to demonstrate how rough life is.

The illustrator integrates newspaper prints on many of the pages, which seem to indicate what the characters are thinking. On page 22, we see “le caviar” on the newspaper Ugolin’s mother holds when he comes out to his parents. Le caviar represents a type of food cats like to eat, and likely a type of food Ugolin would like to eat. On pages 27-28, we see a woman walking and reading the newspaper. She is entranced by her reading and does not seem to be preoccupied by Ugolin’s news of an identity transition. In the background we see a car with several people in it. They are smiling as if to show that life is an adventure that awaits to be discovered. Earlier in the book, we see the cat and the dog looking at each other (p. 10). The cat’s fur lines are horizontal, and his fur colour is brown, just like Ugolin’s fur used to be when he was a dog. Ugolin’s fur lines are vertical and his fur colour is orange, just like the cat’s fur used be. This page indicates that the external appearance of what a dog and cat may not

accurately portray how they feel on the inside. On the last page, we see Ugolin and the cat's faces merging together. This visual reinforces that the cat who now wears Ugolin's fur is, in fact, a dog, and Ugolin who is now wearing the cat's fur is, in fact, a cat. Both are smiling as if to indicate that life is easier to live if you are true to yourself.

18. Ewert, M. (2008). *10,000 dresses*. New York: Seven Stories Press.

Reading level. The Seven Stories Press publishing company did not provide a recommended age level for this book. Book Depository marked it as an appropriate read for children aged 0-5 years old. Fountas and Pinnell application marked it at level W (Beginning Grade Six). My parallel analysis revealed that the text characteristics for this book fall within the level P book, or End-Grade Three level, according the Fountas and Pinnell levelling criteria.

Story synopsis. The story is about a boy who dreams of dresses and wants to wear them. His parents and brother refuse to let him wear dresses, because he is born a boy. But deep down, she feels she is a girl, "with all her heart, Bailey loved the dress made of crystals that flashed rainbows in the sun" (Ewert, 2008, p.6). In the story, Bailey meets an older neighbour girl who tries to make dresses. Bailey offers to help her and together they make one of the dresses that she dreamt about. A friendship starts between the two and they decide to continue making many more dresses together.

Messages for the reader. The author seems to be offering at least two messages in this book. The first message is that birth genders may not always align with inner selves. The second message is that a person whose gender expression conflicts with societal norms will have a more difficult life until they find allies.

Critical discourse analysis of values. The values portrayed in this book are heteronormative in nature. For example, Bailey's mother does the shopping, collects coupons to save on purchases, and does the chores around the house. These activities represent

consumerism, gender-oriented performative roles, and a two-parent household. We see Bailey's father doing the gardening and other labor in the yard. The brother plays soccer with his friends. This is a middle-class family. The pictures show Bailey's family as having enough money to own a house. Parents' adherence to their gender identity is shown through their clothing: a plaid shirt and dark pants for the father, and a blue skirt and a grey/red blouse for the mother.

The author uses the pronoun "she" and "her" when talking about Bailey. The narrative in this story tells the reader that life is difficult when your inner self conflicts with your birth gender. The story shows Bailey's family refusal to listen to her dreams about dresses and to buy them for her: "Bailey, what are you talking about? You're a boy. Boys don't wear dresses!" (Ewert, 2008, p. 9). When Bailey is talking to her family, she is always shown as being small and away from the centre of the image. The images in the book represent how Bailey's dreams are being crushed. When Bailey tells her family that she wants to wear dresses, the speech bubble and the clouds in the sky all have lines going down, as if tears were falling out of Bailey's eyes.

However, towards the end of the story, the narrative changes to tell readers that if you keep looking, you will find allies in the world who will accept you. When the neighbor girl meets Bailey, she does not question Bailey's gender identity and interest in dresses. We then see inclusive language, "together the girls made two new dresses, covered with mirrors of all shapes and sizes." (Ewert, 2008, p.26). One of the realities the author may be trying to say to the reader is that in order for a transgender person to find allies and be true to self, he/she must leave home. The narratives in the story do not indicate how long Bailey's wishes to wear dresses have been going on in Bailey's mind, which then leaves the reader wondering if this is something new or

not for Bailey; a reality that manifests and is expressed early by many transgender people: Perrin & al., 2010, Malone, 2014).

19. Hall, M. (2015). *Red: A crayon's story*. New York: HarperCollins Children's Books.

Reading level. HarperCollins publishing company did not provide a recommended age level for this book. Book Depository marked it as an appropriate read for children ages 0-5 years old. My parallel analysis revealed that the text characteristics for this book fall within the level L book or mid-Grade 2 level according the Fountas and Pinnell levelling criteria.

Story synopsis. This is a story about a red crayon that can only draw in blue. Even though his family and members from his community try to fix him, it does not work. Eventually he meets a friend who accepts him for who he is. From then on, he becomes popular, because he is good at drawing pictures in blue. His drawings are authentic and align with his inner self.

Messages for the reader. The author seems to be intending to create a book with a message of acceptance. The book seems to intend for readers to believe that it is okay for their inner selves not to align with their outer selves. The author seems to want readers to have the take-away message that they can't be what they are not, and therefore, it is better to embrace who they really are.

Critical discourse analysis of values. At first, the narrative of needing to align his inner colour to his outer wrapper crushes Red's sense of inner self: "his teacher thought he needed more practice" (Hall, 2015, p.4)... "but he couldn't, really" (Hall, 2015, p.6). Towards the end of the story he meets a friend who accepts him as he is. She does not try to change him in any way, and that is when Red starts to blossom. He starts drawing things that better fit his true self, and he becomes very good at it. It is when he shifts to this more authentic place that his

skills and talents are seen as his strengths, rather than his deficits. Consequently, his talents are admired by all and he becomes popular.

The values that are being promoted in this story are those of heteronormativity, because we see a single family that has a mother who is raising her son. There are also grandparents who are part of his life and try to figure out why their red grandchild was drawing blue. They share that “his grandparents thought he wasn’t warm enough” (Hall, 2015, p.8). Young students can relate to the pictures, because the drawings represent what many of them in this age group are able to draw. The author alternates his text from being written on black background, which indicates what other people are telling Red what to do, to a white background when, which indicates when Red’s attempts to conform to everyone’s expectations. This design feature of alternating the page colours between black and white backgrounds represent how many people see the world in “black and white”—with only dichotomies (black/white, red/blue, right/wrong, male/female) as options. This is challenged in the book. At the end of the story, we see Red filling the white pages with lots of blue drawings, breaking expected norms of his outer wrapper, and finding a new way to be authentic.

Gender Expression Category

20. Kilodavis, C. (2010). *My princess boy*. New York: Aladdin.

Reading level. Aladdin Publishing Company did not provide a recommended age level for this book. Book Depository marked it as an appropriate read for children ages 0-5 years old. None of the mentioned applications provided a reading level for this book. My parallel analysis revealed that the text characteristics for this book fell within the level I book, or end-Grade 1 level according to the Fountas and Pinnell levelling criteria.

Story synopsis. This author tells a story about a four- year-old boy who likes to wear traditional girls’ clothing, especially those for princesses. His immediate family and friends love

him as he is, and they accept his clothing preferences, but this is not the case when he goes out in public. People laugh at him and at his mother for letting him wear girls' clothing, "and when he buys girl things, they laugh at him, and then they laugh at me." (Kilodavis, 2010, p.10). The story tells the mother's point of view and acceptance of her son's clothing preferences and her hope that the world will too: "Our princess boy is happy because we love him for who he is" (Kilodavis, 2010, p. 23).

Messages for the reader. The main message the author seems to want the readers to get from this story is about acceptance. The author wants the reader to know, accept, and love people who have preferences that differ from the societal norms, such as liking to wear traditional girls' clothing if they are boys. These preferences do not make them any less human than any other boys or girls they meet.

Critical discourse analysis of values. This story does not mention any LGBTQ+ people. It focuses on how traits, behaviours, and gender performances associated to masculinity and femininity are culturally created. It invites the reader to question and challenge cultural norms regarding how certain clothing is associated to boys and girls. The language in this story promotes allyship and inclusivity: "He dances like a beautiful ballerina" (Kilodavis, 2010, p. 2) and "Our Princess Boy is happy because we love him for who he is" (Kilodavis, 2010 p. 23).

The illustrations are gentle and fairly realistic, with the exception that none of the people in the story have faces. The illustrator may have done this on purpose, perhaps to allow the reader imagine the expressions on the characters' faces. This use of faceless characters may have been intentional so that as readers' attitudes towards gender activities evolve throughout the story, then they can imagine these changed expressions. Many of the illustrations promote allyship and inclusivity. For example, we see the Princess Boy and his father hugging each other (p. 5),

Princess Boy having a party at his house with his friends (pp. 11-12), and Princess Boy holding his brother's hand and being consoled by him (p. 14).

21. Swirsky, J. (2015). *Be yourself*. Winnipeg: Jackie Swirsky.

Reading level. Jackie Swirsky, the author of this book and the owner of her own publishing company, did not provide a recommended age level for this book. It did not appear on the Book Depository website, nor is it mentioned on any of the leveling applications. My parallel analysis revealed that the text characteristics for this book fall within the level I book or end-Grade 1 level according to the Fountas and Pinnell levelling criteria.

Story synopsis. This is a story about a seven-year-old boy who identifies as a boy but likes to wear traditional girl clothing: "I am a boy. I express myself in a feminine way. This is my style" (Swirsky, 2015, p.5).

Messages for the reader. The message the author wants readers to take away from this story is that "children should be loved and accepted for who they are not for who we expect them to be" (Swirsky, 2015, p.4).

Critical discourse analysis of values. This story does not address homonormativity nor heteronormativity. It invites the reader to question and challenge cultural norms regarding how certain types of clothing are associated to boys and girls. This story does not mention any LGBTQ+ people.

The language promotes allyship and inclusivity, right from the title *Be Yourself* onward. Some of the phrases in the book explicitly instruct on how children can empower themselves to create conditions for inclusion and allyship: "It can feel hard, confusing and strange, not to fit in with the crowd... but don't change" (Swirsky, 2015, p. 10); "Be proud of yourself; keep your chin up high. It's awesome to be you; no need to be shy" (p. 14); and "It's good to be special, brave and unique. There's not one thing that you need to tweak." (p. 18). The illustrations also

reinforce this empowerment. For example, we see the main character wearing a dress and lining up at the boys' washroom with other boys. Everyone in the picture is smiling (p. 7). We also see the main character wearing his hair in a ponytail. He wears purple shoes with blue flowered socks. He compliments a boy's hat, and the boy thinks that the main character "is pretty cool" (pp. 16-17).

22. Baldacchino, C. (2015). *Boris Brindamour et la robe orange*. Montréal: Bayard Canada.

Reading level. Bayard Canada did not recommend an age level for this book.

According to the Livres Ouverts website, the reading level for this book was recommended within the Grade 3 range. Renaud-Bray Bookstore's website recommends this book as a good read for children ages 2-7 years old. My parallel analysis revealed that the text characteristics of this book fall within the level P book, or end-Grade 3 level according to the Fountas and Pinnell levelling criteria.

Story synopsis. This is a story about a young boy who goes to school, likely Kindergarten, and likes to wear an orange dress found in the dress up section of the classroom. He likes the colour orange, because it reminds him of his "mother's hair, tigers, and the sun" (Baldacchino, 2015, p.5). He also likes to wear nail polish at times. When he wears the dress or nail polish, his peers exclude him from their activities and mock him for wearing girls' clothing. The taunts become so unbearable to Boris that he misses a day of school. During the weekend, Boris has a dream of exploring a space safari located on another planet. When he wakes up, he draws the animals he saw in his dream and brings his picture to school to show his peers. At school, his peers don't want him to join their play on their spaceship, because he wears the orange dress. Instead, Boris makes his own spaceship and hangs his painting above it. When his peers see what he has made and painted, they become curious and want to know more about his

space safari. Boris invites them to play with him, and they do, even when he wears his orange dress. At the end of the story we see Boris playing with his friends. None of them mind him wearing his orange dress anymore.

Messages for the reader. The message the reader may get at first from this book is that when your likes (being a boy and wearing a dress and nail polish) do not conform with societal norms and those that your peers are used to, then peers may retaliate and make your life difficult. However, the author's intended message for the readers seems to be that when you stay true to self and continue to do things that make you feel happy and feel good about yourself, your peers will notice your qualities and strengths. Eventually they will accept you and cease to question your uniqueness.

Critical discourse analysis of values. There is a strong sense of an individual's gender expression clashing with societal gender role expressions being portrayed in this story. Boys wear pants and t-shirts, and girls wear ribbons in their hair, nail polish and dresses. The story makes no mention of any character's sexual desires. At first, the children seem very negative towards someone whose gender expression differs from societal norms regarding masculinity and femininity. Boris is taunted by his peers and excluded from their activities: "Parfois, les garçons se moquent de Boris. Parfois, les filles aussi se moquent de lui" ["Sometimes the boys mock him. Sometimes the girls mock him »] (Baldacchino, 2015, p.7); "Tu ne peux pas la porter! Tu es un garçon!" ["« You can't wear it! You are a boy! »] (p.9); of "Les astronautes ne portent pas de robe" ["« Astronauts don't wear dresses »] (p.10). Towards the end of the story, it shifts as we see the children's acceptance grow towards Boris as a gender non-conforming person, "En retournant sur la Terre, Élie et Henri ont décidé que cela n'avait pas d'importance qu'un astronaute porte une robe" ["Upon their return to Earth, Élie and Henri

decided that it didn't matter if an astronaut wore a dress"] (p.27). His mother supports Boris' gender expression by painting his nails, "Mercredi, Béa et Léa ont remarqué que la maman de Boris lui avait mis du vernis à ongles sur les doigts" ["Wednesday, Béa and Léa saw that Boris' mother had painted his nails"] (p.11). Near the end of the book, the children accept Boris' gender expression and they appreciate him for who he is. We see Boris eating his snack with his friends, playing with them, while always wearing his orange dress.

Findings from the interviews and the book analysis reveal three implications that will be further discussed in Chapter Six: 1) disputable reading levels for the targeted books, 2) differences among the French and English children's literature regarding gay families, and 3) how publishing companies portray queer topics in children's books. The final section of Chapter Six will talk about future research and development that could emerge from this research project.

Chapter VI

Implications and Conclusion

In conclusion, I was able to find answers to my three research questions. First, I was able to determine how contemporary LGBTQ+ children's literature is selected in five organizations that are influential in providing resources for teachers, consultants, librarians, reading clinicians, and parents in the province of Manitoba. I was also able to obtain a list of 22 recommended books from these organizations for children in the Kindergarten to grade 3. Second, I was able to determine that the majority of the recommended LGBTQ+ children's literature was not already leveled by the targeted companies. Through a variety of triangulating strategies on my part, I was able to confidently conclude that the books on the recommended list should be able to be independently read by most students who are in Grades 1 to 3. Third, through my discourse analysis of texts and illustrations, I was able to conclude that even though the recommended literature conveyed a narrow, predominantly homonormative view of queer families and queer people, it also promoted allyship and inclusivity from those who were not part of the queer community. In this final chapter I will explore three implications that have emerged from this research for the field of education, in particular for school librarians, classroom teachers, reading clinicians, and parents. I will examine each implication in detail, and in particular I will connect how this study begins to answer some of the topical gaps I identified in the literature review (see Chapter 2, pp. 43-44). I will conclude this thesis by identifying three potential areas of further research or development that I believe are inspired by this study.

Implications

I returned to the topical gaps in the current literature about LGBTQ+ children's literature that I identified in Chapter 2 (pp. 43-44) and reflected upon how the data from my study

responded to these gaps. Two of the gaps, determining the criteria for selection of LGBTQ+ books and gaining an understanding of whether or not book purchases were influenced by the implementation of Bill 18, were already addressed in the findings and analysis sections of Chapter 4. However, two other gaps in the literature needed to be further explored and discussed as I now looked at the data set as a whole and thought about the implications of the findings for the field of education.

First, I wanted to examine whether the findings from my data could add to the understanding of whether contemporary LGBTQ+ literature is written at a level that is suitable for children from Kindergarten to Grade 3 to read independently. As already discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, finding reading levels became a more complex process than what I first anticipated. The process of finding reading levels and then determining whether the suggested level from an organization like Fountas and Pinnell actually matched their own linguistic criteria raised some interesting wonderings: Are suggested readability levels restricted or determined by the content, especially content that may be externally determined as “too mature” for a younger reader? Why should LGBTQ+ families or stories depicting diversity and identity formation be more mature and require a higher reader level than more heteronormative and gender conforming representations? This complexity will be explored in my discussion of the first implication.

Second, I wanted to explore “which members of the LGBTQ+ community, aside from those who identified as being bisexual, were being neglected and what other kinds of loving relationships and families were being omitted” (Chapter 2, p. 43). As I analyzed and interpreted my data that responded to this gap, I found two interesting implications arose from my data. The second implication that I will explore in this chapter focuses on how there were interesting differences in the portrayal of LGBTQ+ families between the English and French books. And

finally, the third implication examines how publishers currently seem to be more comfortable publishing homonormative narratives and omitting certain members of the queer community.

Implication 1: Reading Levels were Difficult to Find and Often Disputable for LGBTQ+ K-

3 Literature

Reading levels were difficult to find. As discussed in previous chapters, I found through this research that there is a lack of LGBTQ+ children's books that have been leveled for independent readers. This lack of levelled books may render the task of finding queer literature arduous for teachers, librarians, and reading clinicians. Having to level these books on my own made this task strenuous because the parallel matching approach that I used was subjective, difficult to do, time consuming, and the results may be inaccurate. Therefore, not having many LGBTQ+ books already leveled by the mentioned applications could easily discourage staff working with primary students from including queer literature in their literacy program because of this increased workload and uncertainty about reading levels. In addition, if teachers, librarians, and reading clinicians cannot find LGBTQ+ books in the mentioned applications, the likelihood to buy such literature for their classroom library decreases. In my opinion, this will have the negative effect of limiting the diversity of the literature presented in the classrooms. This limitation in diversity of books involuntarily censors teachers' conversations with their students about who is heard and who is silenced in literature. Without diverse literature that excites the mind and makes the reader question what he/she reads, opportunities for students to become critical readers who are encouraged to question any form of discrimination will be lacking in the classroom.

While discussing the difficulty of finding suggested independent reading levels, it is also important to discuss the implications of two other findings from my study. First, most of the

English LGBTQ+ children's literature was not leveled by the available applications, but more of the French LGBTQ+ books were leveled by Livres Ouverts (see Appendix E). This finding has greater implications for teachers whose language of instruction is French because it shows that they have an advantage over their English counterparts in finding literature that is already leveled for them. Second, none of the recommended books were leveled to be read independently by Kindergarten students. The consequence for teachers and librarians is that they will be less likely to provide LGBTQ+ books to this age group at this important stage when their literacy is emerging, and they are beginning to gain their identities as readers. However, I did find that publishing companies such as Book Depository and Renaud-Bray bookstore provided an age level that suggested when a book could be read to a child. The age level associated to a book was often for a much younger audience (see Appendix E) than the independent reading level associated to it. This finding indicated that publishing companies acknowledge that young children can understand and appreciate topics found in LGBTQ+ literature when these books are read to them.

My analysis of the targeted books indicated that many stories were culturally relevant. The text and concepts were supported by pictures, and the vocabulary was rich, familiar, and appeared age appropriate. From my observations, many of the recommended stories were written from a child's point of view and reflected the lives of children in the LGBTQ+ community. This finding has a positive implication for staff working with primary students, because it showed that the current LGBTQ+ literature has the components necessary to make these books good reads in primary grades, because students can relate and identify to the characters portrayed in these stories.

Reading levels were often disputable. Not only did I discover that that finding reading levels was difficult, I also noticed there were often discrepancies in the reading levels suggested

by Fountas and Pinnell, Scholastic, and Leveled It compared to my parallel matching. I wondered if this discrepancy was due to the fact that the leveling on these applications might be based more on the *content* of the story rather than its *text characteristics*. A general summary of my findings can be found in Appendix E, but in order to consider the implication of mismatched and/or inconsistent reading levels, I explore here the discrepancies that surfaced in three of the recommended books. The first example, *10 000 Dresses*, (Ewert, 2008), was leveled at the grade six range within the Fountas and Pinnell leveled book application. However, when I conducted a parallel matching approach in which I used Fountas and Pinnell's text characteristics, my analysis revealed that the text features of this book were at the end of Grade 3 reading level. As described in Table 6.1, the sentence length, the dialogue and vocabulary used in the story appeared to be corresponding with grade three rather than Grade 6 levels. In addition, its Lexile level indicated that it was within the mid-grade two level, another indicator that suggested that this book may have been mis-levelled on the Fountas and Pinnell application.

Table 6.1

Comparison of Parallel Matching Assessment to Fountas and Pinnell, 10 000 Dresses (2008)

My parallel matching assessment Level P, end of Grade 3 range	Fountas and Pinnell Level W, Grade 6 six range
<p><i>10 000 Dresses</i>, (Ewert, 2008)</p> <p>I assess that there are an average 9.0 words/sentence.</p> <p>Fountas and Pinnell text characteristics for level P:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word length 9.0 words/sentence • Varied sentence length, with some sentences fifteen to twenty words • Complex dialogue • Divided dialogue 	<p><i>10 000 Dresses</i>, (Ewert, 2008)</p> <p>Level It has a Lexile of 540 or mid-grade two according to the Reading A-Z Level Correlation Chart</p> <p>Fountas and Pinnell text characteristics for level W:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average sentence length: 13.6 words/sentence • Sophisticated subject matter • Many sentences with fifteen to twenty or more words • Mostly familiar vocabulary

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly familiar vocabulary with a few difficult words: staircase, Valentine, crystals, clinked, millions, blossoms, honeysuckle • Straightforward story with clear problem and resolution • Third person narrative • Words to signal passage of time • Little or no character development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turning point in the story • First person narrative
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King and King (De Haan & Nijland, 2002) was another story that was assessed at a Grade 6 level by the Fountas and Pinnell Application. However, my parallel matching revealed that this book fell within the beginning of Grade 2 level. Level It Application assigned it a Lexile level of 540, which is approximately within the mid-Grade 2 range. The vocabulary, number of words per sentence and the straightforward narrative type of story with a problem solved at the end matched, in my opinion, text characteristics associated more closely to a mid-Grade 2 ~~two~~ story. As mentioned by Fountas and Pinnell’s text characteristics associated to grade six texts, I did not interpret *King and King*’s story as presenting “sophisticated subject matter”.

Table 6.2

Table Comparing Parallel Matching Assessment to Fountas and Pinnell, *King and King* (2002)

My parallel matching assessment Level J, end of Grade 2 range	Fountas and Pinnell Level W, Grade 6 range
<p><i>King and King</i> (De Haan & Nijland, 2002) The story had an average 10.2 words/sentence.</p> <p>Fountas and Pinnell text characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level J: beginning grade two (10.2 words/sentence) • Varied number of lines of print on each page • New sentence starting after ending punctuation within lines • Narrative with problem and solution 	<p><i>King and King</i> (De Haan & Nijland, 2002)</p> <p>Fountas and Pinnell text characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total word count 659 • Average sentence length: 13.6 • Sophisticated subject matter • Many sentences with fifteen to twenty or more words • Mostly familiar vocabulary • Turning point in the story • First person narrative

Another interesting example was *And Tango Makes Three/ Avec Tango, nous voilà trois!* (Richardson, & Parnell. 2005, 2013). According to Level It Application, *And Tango Makes Three* story had a Lexile of 520, which corresponds to a mid-Grade 2 level as per the Learning A-Z Correlation Chart (Learning A-Z, 2018, Level Correlation Chart). Fountas and Pinnell and Scholastic leveled this book at a beginning Grade 4 level. In contrast, my parallel analysis helped me conclude that this book was within the end of Grade 3 level, which matched the recommended reading level indicated for *Avec Tango, nous voilà trois!* in the Livres Ouverts' website. Once again, I saw some discrepancies among the leveling applications and the Lexile level used for this book.

Table 6.3

A Comparison of Parallel Matching Assessment to Fountas and Pinnell, (Richardson, J., Parnell, P. 2005), And Tango Makes Three (2005), (Richardson, J., Parnell, P. 2013) Et Avec Tango, Nous Voila Trois!

My parallel matching assessment Level P- End Grade 3	Livres Ouverts Grade 3 range	My parallel matching assessment Level P- End Grade 3	Level It 520 Lexile Scholastic, guided reading level Q (Beginning Grade 4) Fountas and Pinnell, level Q (Beginning Grade 4)
<i>Et avec Tango, nous voilà trois!</i> (Richardson, J., Parnell, P. 2013) Same assessment results as per the English version; Level P- End Grade 3	<i>Et avec Tango, nous voilà trois!</i> (Richardson, J., Parnell, P. 2013)	<i>And Tango Makes Three</i> (Richardson, J., Parnell, P. 2005) I assessed that there are, on average, 10.2 words/sentence. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Varied sentence length, 10- 20 words 	<i>And Tango Makes Three</i> (Richardson, J., Parnell, P. 2005) Level It application provides a Lexile of 520 which according to Reading A-Z Level Correlation Chart falls

I assessed that there were on average 11.1 words/sentence.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many complex sentences • Straightforward story with clear problem and resolution • Third person narrative • Words to signal passage of time (“every year”, p.6, “every night” p.10, “every morning” p.11, “one day” p.14 • Little or no character development 	<p>at level K or mid- grade two.</p> <p>Fountas and Pinnell Text Characteristics, Level Q</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average sentence length: 9.4 words/sentence • Most sentences ten to twenty words • Character development • Turning point in the story
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Consequently, there are several implications that these findings have for teachers, librarians, and reading clinicians because many teachers seek guidance from Fountas and Pinnell, Scholastic, and Level It applications to level their classroom libraries. First, I have demonstrated through this research that relying solely on a Lexile level or a reading level provided by an application can be inaccurate at times. Therefore, teachers, librarians, and reading clinicians should be equipped to use supplemental tools in conjunction with the levels suggested by applications to conduct their own parallel matches to determine accuracy. This more triangulated approach to determining reading levels would help teachers, librarians, and reading clinicians to make informed decisions when they level books. Using both text characteristics and deciding whether the content is mature or sophisticated will encourage teachers, librarians, and reading clinicians to think critically on how they level LGBTQ+ or any other types of children’s literature.

Another important implication emerged when I began to ask critical question about *why* some of the LGBTQ+ books analyzed in this research project were inaccurately leveled. Did the mentioned applications consider the content for some of the LGBTQ+ books to be “too

sophisticated” in terms of subject matter for students to read independently? Would the exact same plot line with a change to all gender conforming characters or placing the characters in the context of all heterosexual relationship be deemed “too sophisticated”? If the reading level was determined by the LGBTQ+ content, was this done with the intention that they would provide teachers with literature that would upset fewer parents (see discussion in Chapter 1, p. 8)?

Although this study did not directly compare reading levels of heterosexual families, the findings about the inconsistent leveling of LGBTQ+ books appeared suspect as a form of censorship to ensure the content in these books was only presented to older students. This connects back to the literature that I discussed in Chapter 2 around ideas of censorship (Drabble, 2004; Gross, 2014; Pearlman, 2016; Thompson & Lehr, 2008) in children’s literature.

My findings also provided evidence of another form of potential censorship appearing within the practice of creating/including pedagogical cards for some of the French books as seen in *Marius*, and *Le secret d’Ugolin*. These pedagogical cards were created to be used as an adult accompaniment to the book in order to generate and guide discussions with children on topics that might not be straightforward or understandable by them, such as those related to LGBTQ+ topics. This practice, done only by Stéphanie from the DREF, was not used by the English interviewees. In my opinion the implication of these cards is that they may consciously or unconsciously, intentionally or unintentionally red flag LGBTQ+ literature for students and staff working with young students. Because of these cards, librarians, teachers, reading clinicians, or parents may see this literature as something to be read with caution and to be treated differently from literature that is heterosexual in nature. Therefore, the cards may act as a red flag to teachers because the literature may be viewed as too difficult to understand without adult support.

In addition to having difficulties finding accurate reading levels for the recommended books, I also noticed that there were differences in how LGBTQ+ topics were discussed in books originally written in French compared to those that were originally written in English. These differences will be explored in the next section.

Implication 2: Portrayal of LGBTQ+ families differed between the English and French books

I originally set out to explore “which members of the LGBTQ+ community, aside from those who identified as being bisexual, were being neglected and what other kinds of loving relationships and families were being omitted” (Chapter 2, p. 43). LGBTQ+ children’s literature is used as a vehicle that promotes the acceptance of societal changes and moral values, as discussed in Chapter 2. Most of the books that I analysed in this research project were published from early 2000 to 2016, with the exception of *One Dad, Two Dads, Brown Dad, Blue Dads* (Valentine, 1994). When I compared this same twenty-five-year time frame to the social movements and passing of legislation in favour of queer rights in North America, United Kingdom, and France (the regions where the books on my recommended list were written and published), I found that not surprisingly there was a connection between the social changes and the appearance of the children’s literature. Some of the change in legislation during this time were: 1) the amendment of Bill C-33 to add sexual orientation to the Canadian Human Rights Act (1996); 2) the legislation of same-sex marriage in Canada (2005), France (2013), the United Kingdom (2014), and the United States of America (2015); and 3) the amendment of Bill C-16 in 2017, which protects Canadians from discrimination on the basis of gender identity and gender expression (Library of Congress, 2017, September 11, para 1). My analysis supports that idea that societal support given to these various legislations encouraged authors and publishing

companies to create and publish LGBTQ+ children's books that both advocated for and showed their support for queer rights. However, the public discourse and journey towards the legislation differed in each of the regions mentioned above. An unanticipated finding from my study was that there were some cultural and discourse differences between the English and French books. I believe that this is most noticeable through my critical analysis of how the reality of queer people was portrayed differently in French stories than in English.

One of the ways in which the French and English books differed came from the more overt references in the French books to how same-sex parents are not able to conceive children the "natural" or "biological" way. Statements such as these were made in *Marius* (Alaoui & Poulin, 2001) and *La princesse qui n'aimait pas les princes* (Haquet-Brière, 2010), two books published in France. I wondered if these statements, which are not found in a parallel way in the English books, somehow represented a discourse that persisted towards same-sex families in France at the time of their publication. This kind of discourse could have been used to justify intolerance of non-heterosexual families, because these messages may be used to imply that same-sex families are unnatural because of the parents' inability to conceive children the "natural way".

Overall, the French literature in this study seemed to portray life realities for queer people much less idealistically than in the English literature. In all of the English stories, the endings were always happy, whereas in the French stories, hardships were talked about as a matter of fact. For example, in the *La princesse qui n'aimait pas les princes* (Haquet-Brière, 2010) the narrator of the story told the reader that she and her wife had to move to another country in order to live happily ever after. In *Deux garçons et un secret* (Poulin, 2016) the boys had to keep their love a secret from their parents in order to be happy. My book analysis suggests that this

difference affects English readers the most. English children's literature presents readers with a utopian world because the stories reflect how the authors wish society would be or become, rather than what the reality is for many queer people. As mentioned in Taylor et al's research (2016), the realities for queer students are frequently challenged by classmates and adults in supervisory positions, because inclusive LGBTQ+ education attitudes and policies do not exist in many schools. This has the result of making many teachers uncomfortable and unwilling to discuss LGBTQ+ issues and topics with their students. Therefore, for many queer students or their families, their lived experiences contrast those that are portrayed in the English children's literature that I examined.

As the accepted social changes of our time eventually appeared in children's literature, I saw the portrayal for some members of the queer communities to be represented differently in the French literature compared to the English literature. As my research also focused on finding out which members of the LGBTQ+ community, aside from those who identified as being bisexual, were being neglected, I discussed in the next section my findings regarding what the publishing companies had published thus far, and what implications these have for the queer community and readers.

Implication 3: Publishers currently publish more homonormative narratives and omit certain members of the queer community

Ultimately, publishers control the kinds of LGBTQ+ books that are made available to the public and this has implications for which members of the LGBTQ+ community are being neglected as well as what other kinds of loving relationships and families are being omitted in children's literature. To be fair to the publishers, they cannot publish books that have not been written. So, although there are current gaps and omissions in the literature, which I am about to

explore in greater detail, I must be cautious. I am not able to conclude from the scope of my research study whether these gaps and omissions exist because alternative stories have been written, but publishers don't think there is a market for them, or whether these kinds of stories have not yet been written or reached the hands of the publishers. So, although it is not clear why these books have not been published, my book analysis showed that only same-sex families were represented in the literature. The implication of this for teachers, librarians, and reading clinicians is that it limits their scope in finding an LGBTQ+ literature that portrays queer parents other than those who are gay men and lesbians. The literature lacks representation of parents who fall elsewhere under the queer spectrum, such as transgender, non-binary, intersex, two-spirit, bisexual, or asexual.

Publishing companies have started to produce stories about children who were transgender and gender non-conforming, but none of the recommended stories represented children who were intersex, two-spirit, bisexual, or asexual. The implications of this lack of representation are threefold. First, there is a limit within the diversity of LGBTQ+ children's literature teachers, librarians, and reading clinicians can read to primary students. Second, it silences the lives of students who identify as queer in ways that are other than gay or lesbian, which results in them not being acknowledged and heard in the contemporary literature. Third, it takes away readers' opportunities to learn about other members of the queer community.

Finally, I learned through the analysis of the recommended stories that a lot the LGBTQ+ literature reinforces already known and established family stereotypes. All fourteen books in the diversity and gay/lesbian sections represented same-sex families that mimicked those that were heterosexual in nature, because their behaviours reinforced homonormative values. As Lester (2014) says, homonormativity happens when "nonthreatening queers are those who seem most

like people mainstream Western society considers normal: people who conform to expected gender roles, who have a vested interest in parenting, and who are White and upper middle class” (Lester, 2014, p.245). A closer look at the fourteen books reveal that many of the stories portrayed white-middle class families with children who lived with their two parents. The parents had a monogamous relationship and they had clear, often stereotypical, gender roles. They went about their business of raising their children. They had good incomes that supported our consumerism economy. The parents’ family lifestyle blended with those of their heterosexual neighbours and consequently, they were part of the mainstream norms. This narrow view of queer families has at least two implications. First, it limits teachers, librarians, reading clinicians, and students’ opportunities to use literature to learn about other ways of being as queer families. Second, it once more silences other members of the queer community who do not fit the white-middle class mould such as queer people of colour, with disabilities, non-binary gender identities, of lower-class statuses and queer people without children. Consequently, students are limited by having children’s literature that lacks representation of other queer parents with diverse socio-economic and ethnicity backgrounds. For some of our students, whose queer parents differ from those portrayed in the literature, they will be less able to identify to the literature that is being presented to them and may wonder why the ways they “do family” and the way they experience loving relationships never make it to the page.

Suggestions for Future Research

From my research study, many findings and implications emerged, which are: (1) Reading levels for the current LGBTQ+ K-3 literature were often mismatched, because few of the books were to be found within the applications used in this study, and those that were already leveled appeared to be ranked at a much higher reading level than their intended audience. (2)

The portrayal of queer families differed between the English and French literature in some thought-provoking ways because the French literature portrayed several less positive societal attitudes towards the acceptance of LGBTQ+ rights such as gay marriages, adoptions and conceptions of children. (3) publishers seemed more comfortable publishing homonormative narratives of white-middle class monogamous relationships with children than those that could represent a wider scope of the queer community. Consequently, from these implications I see potential for further research and development of resources for teachers, librarians, parents, and reading clinicians to address some of the issues raised in this study.

First, I recognize the important and timely need for creating, publishing, and distributing a teacher-friendly annotated list or guide of LGBTQ+ children's literature for students who are in Kindergarten to Grade 3. Drawing upon the analysis of recommended books that I have undertaken in Chapter Five, this critical, annotated LGBTQ+ children's literature list would provide teachers, librarians, and reading clinicians a valuable tool for determining what literature can be used with primary students in the province of Manitoba. This annotated list, which could be published as a small publication to be distributed to schools, the resource centres involved in this research, and/or offered online through the Manitoba Education website, could serve several purposes. It could be used to help diversify the reading materials available to students, staff, and school families. It could have a section with prompts for possible classroom discussion topics or links to possible curricular outcomes. Or, it could be a useful guide for teachers, reading clinicians, and librarians to add to school and classroom libraries.

To extend the scope of this annotated list, it would be important to research current LGBTQ+ children's literature to see if stories that represent First Nation families and two-spirit people have been written for primary students. As our First Nation people's population is

growing in the province of Manitoba and in the rest of Canada, there is a need to have literature that represents queer First Nation people and their families, so that they too can have literature that they can identify to. As the literature review demonstrated (see Chapter 2), children's identification to text is crucial in their identity development and motivation to read. Therefore, the importance in having literature that represents LGBTQ+ First Nation People and families would not only destabilize homonormativity in the contemporary literature, but it would validate their voices and presence in our society, and thus reinforce the diversity in Canada's population. This validation of First Nation People in contemporary LGBTQ+ literature also supports the reconciliation process of having settler and First Nations peoples learn more about Indigenous knowledges and ways of being.

Secondly, I see the importance in working collaboratively with the publishing companies, Fountas and Pinnell, Scholastic, and Level It application agencies to ensure that contemporary LGBTQ+ children's literature is part of their databases. Including this literature in their databases would ensure that the mentioned books are assigned reading levels and it would make them accessible to the public at large as well as teachers, librarians, and reading clinicians. However, as I learned using a parallel matching approach, to ensure less disputable reading levels given to the contemporary LGBTQ+ literature, it would be important to have a cohort of primary students read the recommended books to ensure accuracy in the findings. I also think that it would be important to seek out any existing LGBTQ+ children's literature geared towards Kindergarten students, or levels A-C in the Fountas and Pinnell leveling system, because none of the organizations suggested any.

Third, I believe there is potential to conduct a study similar to mine in different parts of the world to expand our understandings of how other members and families in the queer

community are represented in contemporary, global literature. There is a lack of representation in the diversity in terms of cultural, ethnic, or religious backgrounds of other queer people portrayed in the contemporary literature made available to the five organizations in this study. This lack in diversity of queer people and families provides a narrow view to the reader and the society at large of who LGBTQ+ people really are in a diverse multicultural society. These kinds of research studies could serve several purposes aside from combating homonormativity. First, researchers conducting these studies in other settings may help find literature that depicts other members and families in the queer community that is lacking from my list of recommended books. Second, if these other research studies also demonstrated that these books do not exist, it could prompt other researchers in the field of education to interview members from the queer community who are parents/caregivers of children and bring their stories to the attention of authors and publishing companies in hopes that more diverse representations of LGBTQ+ people and families get published.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I hope findings from this research project will invite and persuade many more teachers, librarians, and reading clinicians to seek out the use of queer literature with primary students. Just like any parents who have children, my family is part of the world's community. Families and members of my community should therefore be acknowledged and celebrated in children's literature just like any other families that we read to and with our children and students.

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Appendix A Interview Guide

Manitoba Resource Learning Centre, The Manitoba Education Library, The Winnipeg Public Library, The Rainbow Resource Centre, la Direction des Ressources Éducatives Française, and The Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre

Pseudonym: _____ Date: _____

Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

Duration of Interview: _____ Minutes: _____

Hello and thank you for agreeing to talk to me today. My name is Philippe Morin-Fournier and I am here today to talk about your selection of books for use in schools with students from kindergarten to grade three on LGBTQ+ people and families.

Review the letter of informed of consent form section by section with accompanying explanation. A reminder that this interview will be audio-recorded and that for this interview to pursue, a consent signature of the participant is needed. The interviewee will be made aware that they have the right not to answer questions that he/she is not comfortable with and that he/she may stop this interview at any time without penalty.

During our time together, which will be about one hour, I will ask you some questions and you can answer those questions. There is no right or wrong answer to any of these questions. I am just interested in your opinion.

Do you have any questions?

Let's start by having you tell me about your current position within this organization.

Context & Position

1. What is your position in this organization?
2. How many people does this organization service annually?
3. Does your organization have purchasing policies and/or mandates that reflect diverse members of the society? Tell me about the policies you have in place... this will be more open.
4. In what ways is your process for selecting and purchasing books influenced by school division policies or priorities?
5. What do you know about Bill 18?
6. Do you believe the selection and purchase of educational materials has changed in any ways because of the implementation of Bill 18? If so, what are the changes? If not, why do you think there has been no change?

I understand that you are involved in the selection and purchasing of books for the Manitoba Learning Resource Centre, the Manitoba Education Library, the Winnipeg Public Library, the Rainbow Resource Centre, la Direction des Ressources Éducatives Française, and the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre. The focus for this research project is to inquire more about the selection and the purchasing process your organization uses when purchasing LGBTQ+ children's books for early years students (Kindergarten to Grade Three).

Books in General

1. Where do you purchase your books? (Catalogues, online, meeting with publishers/vendors)?
2. Who do you go to get advice or refine your book selection if you do not find what you are looking for?
3. How do you know what the public wants to read? Who do you consult with to find out what their interests and needs are for their programs? Why?

LGBTQ+ Literature

4. What books does your organization have that address LGBTQ+ people and their families for primary students (Kindergarten to Grade 3)?
5. What criteria do you use when you purchase books that reflect societal diversity? Are these criteria the same for the selection of LGBTQ+ books?
6. Who develops these criteria and why are these criteria important to you?
7. What Canadian authors of LGBTQ+ books are represented in your book collection?
8. Do you think the LGBTQ+ children's books being used in schools are written at a level that students in primary grades (Kindergarten- Grade Three) could read independently? What do you do to determine the reading level of these books?
9. What types of LGBTQ+ families do these books represent the most? What family types are not represented? Why do you think some family types are underrepresented in children's literature?
10. Which sexual orientation and gender identity are most reflected in your collection? Why is that?
11. I am interested in the demand for LGBTQ+ books by different groups. In your opinion, would you say the demand for these books is high, moderate, or low by (a) teachers working in public schools, (b) teachers working in private schools, and (c) parents homeschooling their children, (d) teacher/parent's personal interest?
12. Have requests for such books increased, decreased, or stayed the about the same over the last five years? How might you explain these trends?
13. Do parents and teachers make requests for you to purchase specific titles of books to supplement your collection? If yes, which ones do they want you to purchase and why?

14. From your collection of books, which are the five most borrowed/purchased LGBTQ+ books?
15. What LGBTQ+ themes are the most and the least prevalent in these five books? Why do you think these themes get most attention?

We have talked a lot about books representing LGBTQ+ people and families for use with primary level students. Let's review what you have said to make sure that I fully understand what you have told me. Is there anything else you want to say about this topic that we have not have already talked about? Thank you for your help with my research.

Appendix B

Name of the book: Organization(s) who recommended this book:		
What is the reading level of this book? (Student independent reading by student/teacher-student reading) Member from the organization's leveling recommendations: Fountas and Pinnell Application: Publisher's leveling recommendations: Parallel Matching:		
Gee's (2011) Building Task	Text	Visuals/Illustrations
Significance: "How is the speaker of writer [artist] trying to give significance to things?" (Gee, 2011, p. 102) <i>Who are the protagonists?</i> <i>What are the messages the reader is getting from this book?</i>		
Practices (Activities): "What practices (activities) are relevant in this context? How are they being enacted?" (Gee, 2011, p. 102) <i>What is the story about?</i>		
Identities: What identities are depicted and relevant in this context? (Gee, 2011, p. 102) <i>Which sexual orientations are being included or omitted?</i> <i>Which gender identities are being portrayed?</i>		
Relationships: Which relationships are shown as being relevant in this context? How are they		

<p>being enacted? (Gee, 2011, p. 102) <i>What kinds of kinships are being shown?</i></p>		
<p>Politics: What social goods are relevant and how are they distributed among the characters? (Gee, 2011, p. 102) <i>Which values are being promoted in the story (homonormative)?</i></p>		
<p>Connections: What are the relevant connections and disconnections between things/visuals and characters? (Gee, 2011, p. 102) <i>How are the narratives shaping children's views about LGBTQ+ people and families?</i></p>		
<p>Signs systems and knowledge: What language and visuals are relevant in this context? How are they used and privileged or disprivileged? (Gee, 2011, p. 102) <i>Do the language and visuals promote allyship and inclusivity?</i></p>		

Appendix C



Appendix D

Position	Role	Collection	Accessibility	Society	characteristics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Librarian • Consultant • Volunteer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase • Recommend • Teachers • public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undeveloped • Satisfactory • Gender identity • Gender non-conforming • Bisexuality • Asexuality • Transgender • Gay marriage • Same-sex families • Most checkouts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal /friends' recommendations • Market driven • Vendors/publishers • Journals • Online • Recommendations • Affordability • Bookstores 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in societal attitude • Increasing last 4-5 years • Most checkouts • Bill 18 • School policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of content • Authentic • Non-stereotypical • Affirming • Vocabulary in sync • Canadian perspectives • 32 pages • Sentence structures

Appendix E, Summary Finding Chart

Book Titles	Publisher Leveling	Fountas and Pinnell	My Parallel Matching	Scholastic	Book Depository	Level It	Livres Ouverts	Renaud-Bray Bookstore
1. It's Okay To be Different	NA	I (end of grade 1)	I (End Grade One)	NA	0-5 years old	NA	X	X
2. Boy Who Cried Fabulous	3-7 years old	NA	K (Mid-Grade Two)	NA	0-5 years old	NA	X	X
3. The Great Big Book of Families	NA	NA	K (Mid-Grade Two)	NA	05 years old	NA	X	X
4. One Dad, Two Dads, Blue Dad, Brown Dad	NA	NA	I (End Grade One)	NA	NA	NA	X	X
5. King & King	5-9 years old	W (end of grade six)	P (End Grade Three)	0-5 years old	NA	NA	X	X
6. Marius	NA	X	P (End Grade Three)	X	X	X	Grade 3	NA
7. Mom & Mum Are Getting Married	5-8 years old, M (end of grade two)	NA	M (End Grade Two)	NA	NA	NA	X	X
8. Jean a deux mamans	2-4 years old	X	H (End Grade One)	X	X	X	NA	0-2 years old
9. And Tango Makes Three	2-5 years old	NA	P (End Grade Three)	Q (Beg. Grade 4)	NA	Lexile 520 Mid-Grade 2 (K)	X	X
10. Et avec Tango nous voilà trois	X	X	P (End Grade Three)	X	X	X	Grade 3	2-7 years old
11. In Our Mothers' House	6-8 years old	NA	R (Mid-Grade Four)	NA	0-5 years old	Lexile 750 End Grade 3 (P)	X	X
12. La princesse qui n'aimait pas les princes	X	X	T (Beg. Grade Five)	X	X	X	X	5-9 years old

13. A Tale of Two Mommies	4-8 years old	NA	I (End Grade One)	NA	6-8 years old	NA	X	X
14. Jason et la tortue	X	X	N (Beg. Grade Three)	X	X	X	Grade 4	NA
15. A Family Is a Family Is a Family	K-2	NA	M (End Grade Two)	NA	6-8 years old	Lexile 500 Beg to Mid-Grade 2 (J-K)	X	X
16. Deux garçons et un secret	X	X	L (Mid-Grade Two)	X	X	X	Grade 3	NA
17. Le secret d'Ugolin	4 years old & up	X	R (Mid-Grade Four)	X	X	X	NA	NA
18. 10 000 Dresses	NA	W (Beg. Grade six)	P (End Grade Three)	NA	0-5 years old	Lexile 540 Mid-Two (K)	X	X
19. Red: A Crayon Story	NA	NA	L (Mid-Grade Two)	NA	0-5 years old	NA	X	X
20. My Princess Boy	NA	NA	I (End Grade One)	NA	0-5 years old	NA	X	X
21. Be Yourself	NA	NA	I (End Grade One)	NA	NA	NA	X	X
22. Boris Brindamour et la robe orange	X	X	P (End Grade Three)	X	X	X	Grade 3	2-7 years old