

**GENDER, CURRICULUM AND YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE IN
PUERTO RICO: A CONTENT AND CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

A Dissertation presented
to the Department of Graduate Studies
of the School of Education
University of Puerto Rico
Río Piedras Campus
As a partial fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Doctor in Education

By

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Dedication

To my kids Rodrigo and Álvaro,

Without knowing, you have accompanied me, throughout the most important parts of my career. We have grown and learned from each other. With your love, you have demonstrated me that it is possible to practice gender perspective in every setting of our lives.

Acknowledgements

Thinking about the process of completing this degree, brings me back to the Audre Lorde's quote, "There is no thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives." Even with all the difficulties experienced, I have been lucky to have the support of amazing human beings who have helped me overcome every challenge during these pandemic years. First, I want to thank Dr. Kevin Carroll, who has patiently guided me towards the process of completing my dissertation. Also, I want to recognize Dr. Loida Martínez and Dr. Elsie Candelaria who inspired me to continue researching on gender and literature. I want to express my gratitude towards Dr. Lis Cruz who provided me the tools to manage my time effectively, and Dr. Jorge Cruz whose expertise in writing I will forever appreciate.

To family, my mom Lourdes, my dad, Rigo, and my brother Rigo Emmanuel; thanks for your love and support. I also want to recognize my husband Alexander for becoming the best team player I could ever have during these years. I also want to mention my appreciation for the girls who have always cheered me up when I needed the most, Lourdes, Luz Elena, Keyla, Margie and Mara, thanks for your love. My eternal gratitude to my dissertation committee, my professors, my family, and my friends who have taught me to struggle one battle at a time.

Abstract

This qualitative study implemented a Critical Discourse Analysis using the *PRDE English Program Gender Equity Manual* (2015). In addition, this study compared the narrative literature from PRDE's English 9th textbook *Inside: Language, Literacy and Content by National Geographic and Cengage Learning* (2014) (NG Texts) , and popular narrative literature that addresses gender issues (PN Texts) through a Content Analysis. While the three dimensions of the Critical Discourse Analysis had emergent categories that were analyzed, the Content Analysis presents pre-established categories that were used to analyze the narrative texts from the PRDE textbook and the popular narrative literature that addresses gender issues.

The *manual* was partially successful in addressing gender issues concerning women in the workplace and women's body image. The *manual* did not include, nor did it discuss how these issues could affect LGBTQIA students. Puerto Rico needs to adopt the term LGBTQIA inclusive in the educational discourse. The data analysis of the NG texts was straightforward, five texts included female, male, and neutral characters in the categories of names in titles and characters occupational roles. Yet, it showed 100% omission of non-binary gender constructions in the four categories. The PN texts showed inclusions of female, male, neutral, and non-binary construction in two categories: Character and firstness. Nevertheless,

PN texts did not include any non-binary gender constructions in the character's occupational roles and names in titles categories. The PN analyzed proved to be possible options to promote the discussion of gender issues in a critical manner. Revising the curriculum to include such publications and training teachers on how to use them is necessary to promote authentic inclusion for LGBTQIA students.

Resumen

Este estudio cualitativo implementó un análisis crítico del discurso utilizando el *Manual de Equidad de Género del Programa de Inglés del Departamento de Educación de Puerto Rico* (2015). Además, este estudio comparó la literatura narrativa del libro de texto de Inglés de 9no grado, *Inside: Language, Literacy and Content by National Geographic and Cengage Learning* (2014) (NG) del Departamento de Educación de Puerto Rico (DEPR) y la literatura narrativa popular que potencialmente aborda asuntos de género (PN) usando un análisis de contenido. Mientras que las tres dimensiones del análisis crítico del discurso fueron analizadas por categorías emergentes, el análisis de contenido fue analizado por categorías preestablecidas que se utilizaron para analizar los textos narrativos del libro de texto del DEPR (NG) y la literatura narrativa popular que potencialmente aborda asuntos de género (PN).

El *manual* fue parcialmente efectivo en el tratamiento de los asuntos de género relativos a las mujeres en el lugar de trabajo y la imagen corporal de las mujeres. El manual no incluyó, ni discutió cómo los asuntos de géneros podrían afectar a los estudiantes LGBTQIA. Puerto Rico necesita adoptar el término LGBTQIA inclusivo en el discurso educativo. El análisis de los datos de los textos NG fue muy claro en cuanto a inclusiones y omisiones, cinco textos incluyeron personajes femeninos, masculinos y neutrales en las categorías de nombres en títulos y roles ocupacionales de los personajes. Sin

embargo, mostró una omisión del 100% de construcciones de género no binarias en las cuatro categorías. Los textos PN mostraron inclusiones de construcción femenina, masculina, neutra y no binaria en dos categorías: personajes y primera referencia al género en la oración. Sin embargo, los textos PN no incluyeron ninguna construcción de género no binaria en las categorías de roles ocupacionales del personaje y los nombres en los títulos. Los textos PN analizados demostraron ser posibles opciones para promover la discusión de las asuntos de género de manera crítica. Es necesario revisar el currículo para incluir publicaciones que discutan asuntos de género y capacitar a los maestros sobre cómo promover la inclusión auténtica de los estudiantes LGBTQIA en las comunidades escolares.

Biography

Linnette Arroyo Ortiz was born in Ponce, Puerto Rico, and raised in Villalba, Puerto Rico. She completed her bachelor's degree in Secondary Education with Concentration in English at the Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico Ponce Campus, where she graduated from the Institutional Honor Program. In 2012, she completed her master's degree in TESOL at the University of Puerto Rico Río Piedras Campus. Currently, she is a doctoral Candidate in Curriculum and Teaching at the University of Puerto Rico Río Piedras Campus.

She has been an English teacher since 2008 in the Puerto Rico Department of Education; most of the time teaching middle school at José Julián Acosta Theater School in Old San Juan. She considers herself an eclectic teacher who loves art, literature, and technology. Besides, she has worked as Conversational English Professor, Content Developer, Professional Developer Coach, and Workshop Speaker. Her love for teaching and fair causes have led her to be Certified as Parent Advocate for students with special needs. She aspires to contribute to an inclusive educational system.

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CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

Developmental theorists such as Piaget (1936), Kohlberg (1958) and Erikson (1963) classified adolescents as those among the childhood and adulthood. Another way to conceptualize adolescents is as teenagers or young adults. According to Latham & Gross, (2014) “The Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) defines young adults as people ranging from 12 to 18 years of age” (p. 11). As an English teacher, in the middle schools of Puerto Rico, I have aimed to provide young adults with experiences that allow them to appreciate literature. Unfortunately, teaching students to appreciate literature involves a wide variety of challenges. Torres-Gonzalez (2017) mentioned “the usage of texts that are inadequate, uninteresting, or unattractive for students” as one of the many controversies over the effectiveness of the English Program in the public schools of Puerto Rico (translated from Torres González, 2017, p. 344). Other organizations such as the International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English have recognized the need of young adults to be exposed to “a wide variety of reading material that they (young adults) can and want to read” (Cart, 2008). The young adult literature, henceforth YAL, presented in Puerto Rico’s Department of Education (PRDE) curriculum are mostly texts such as Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Treasure Island*, and Jules Verne’s *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea*. Such texts are mostly traditional, classics

that were not written by or for people in the Caribbean. Furthermore, within traditional YAL, there is very little discussion of alternate conceptions of gender roles, a theme that guides this research.

Within the past decade, the concept of gender has been overtly discussed among stakeholders, religious, feminists and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual groups within Puerto Rican society. Each group addresses the concept according to their own ideologies, beliefs, attitudes, and agendas. When speaking about gender, a variety of fields converge, as theorist and molecular biologist Anne Fausto-Sterling has documented. In a critical analysis of the terms sex and gender, Fausto-Sterling (2000), established that the traditional differences among the concept gender and sex state that gender is more related with how each person identifies herself or himself, while sex is related to the biology of an individual, as exemplified by their anatomy. However, Fausto-Sterling criticizes this vision by affirming that “our beliefs about gender- not science- can define our sex” (p. 3). This research follows Fausto Sterling (2000) ideas. Although the author emphasizes on the pervasiveness on gender on everyday life, students are exposed to gender since the day they were born. Since students are exposed to gender from very early in their lives, it is important to provide opportunities for them to reflect and expand their ideas of gender. By selecting YAL narrative literature that challenge the canonical ideas of gender, students might be exposed to literature with alternate topics on

gender, thus the setting of formal education is an excellent venue to discuss gender issues. The discussion of gender is also present in the academic scenarios of Puerto Rico, yet it is dealt in a very general and traditional manner. When the PRDE's English curriculum does deal with texts related to gender issues, teachers and students are still subjected to the criteria and resources available to them.

Problem

When literature is evaluated in relation to the diverse constructions of gender, not every work of literature represents the multiple varieties available in real life. Children and YAL have been the favorite choices in ESL classrooms, Aparicio-García (2016) referred to many researchers who point out that gender bias is still prevalent in much of the literature used in the ESL classroom (Díaz-Aguado, 2009; Luengo, 2013 and Colomer, 2010). As a result, Vázquez-García (2005) argues that teachers should incorporate topics such as gender bias into reading practices in the ESL classroom. One of the difficulties to address when reading with students is recognizing that students might have been accustomed to mainstream texts and they may not be related with the diverse gender constructions presented in society.

As an English teacher in the middle schools of Puerto Rico, I have worked with the available texts and resources provided in the ESL curriculum of the public schools. The PRDE provides a series of textbooks

that serve as a guide to design and deliver the lessons. The textbooks selected during the 2018 academic year were from the National Geographic Learning, Inside Series. Stakeholders and administrators from PRDE have always emphasized that the texts provided are guide and tool to use in the ESL classroom. Through my informal analysis of the texts and resources suggested for teaching ESL in the middle school, I have witnessed little in terms of diversity of gender constructions represented in the documents provided PRDE. For instance, Sandra Cisneros' *House on Mango Street* stories is one of the texts that deals with gender in the National Geographic textbook. Although Sandra Cisneros is widely known as a writer dealing with feminist topics, the stories selected in the textbooks deal with educational, interpersonal and community issues concerning exclusively heterosexual women. Once more, it is evident that there is a great necessity to provide and increase reading experiences and materials that allow students to question pre-established conceptions of gender, so they might find ways to construct their own conceptions.

Gender issues have risen as a public problem long before June 26, 2015, when the decision of the U.S. Supreme Court declared unconstitutional the prohibition of marriage among people of the same sex in all the states of the nation, and their territories –including the jurisdiction of Puerto Rico (Cordero-Mercado, 2015). As well as in the United States, in the case of Puerto Rico, gender issues have been discussed

in multiple occasions. For instance, another moment when gender issues created an island wide debate, was during the declaration of the Law Number 22 from 2013, which prohibited discrimination for sexual orientation or gender identity in the employment (Ley N° 22, 2013).

Although, there have been protections in the laws to address women and the LGBTQIA community, social problems such as violence and discrimination are prevalent. Such issues were evident during 2016, when 168 women were the victims of rape after Hurricane Maria (Tighe & Gurley, 2018). Also, the Puerto Rican press reported that 48 women were murdered in Puerto Rico during 2021 (Observatorio de Equidad de Género Puerto Rico, 2021).

Certainly, these facts showed how the protections of the laws are not sufficient to control violence and discrimination against women in Puerto Rico. The same situation is prevalent among the transgender community in Puerto Rico. Rodríguez-Madera, Ramos Pibernus, Padilla and Varas-Díaz (2015), indicated that “44% of the transgender women reported levels of schooling minor of the twelve grade of high school and 59% were unemployed” (p. 22). In the case of the transgender women, new issues besides violence arise, such as poverty and access to education. These social problems demonstrate that the way gender issues have been addressed need to be changed.

Generally, it is said that education is the foundation of our society, so it is my belief that gender issues have to be addressed and brought into the

curriculum of educational institutions. A research study by Batchelor, Ramos & Neiswander (2008) pointed out that “when schools embrace a curriculum that is LGBTQ-inclusive; LGBTQ students said they were less likely to feel unsafe” (p. 1). In addition, they added that supporting a positive environment in schools is also beneficial for the school faculty. These studies open the door to focus on a curriculum that is inclusive to issues related to women and the LGBTQIA community.

The issues experienced by women and the LGBTQIA community in Puerto Rico are part of a reality in our school system. In addition, through mass media communications, it is more common to see the discussion of topic that address gender issues. Although, gender issues are a common topic in our society, it is not equally prevalent in the literature selected for our textbooks in the PRDE. Through my twelve years of experience, it is more common to find books with traditional conceptions of masculinity and femininity presented in textbooks, movies, class materials or even in the comments made by educators. In Puerto Rico it is a challenge to deviate from the traditional values because of our religion and culture. The majority of Puerto Ricans living in the island have some connection to Catholicism or Christianity. Even though other religions and beliefs are present, the fact that Christianity in general is prevalent and connects our people to traditional family values. Most of the time, those traditional families are conceptualized around the idea of the nuclear family which consists of a

father, a mother, and children. As society changes, the nuclear family composition changes as well. For this reason, it is relevant to give representations of the changes that families have been experiencing. The study of literature, in any language, has always been an instrumental tool to deal with current events in society as well to critically reflect on conflicting issues. Among the benefits of studying literature we can mention entertainment, to acquire vocabulary, and to learn about the structure of the different literary genres. For instance, Hall, Burns, & Edwards (2011) explained that “if the students understand that the first part of a narrative normally introduces the setting, important characters, and the central conflict, they will be prepared to [...] create meaning, formulate predictions, ask questions about the text, and connect to other texts” (p. 24).

Comprehension, predicting, asking, and making connections are all essential skills in the process of reading literature, yet it has been proven that allowing students to make questions about the literature studied is crucial. Lycke & Lucey (2018) used banned or censored texts to explore the discussion of controversial citizenship issues with students. They thought that “the preparation of critically thinking democratic citizens necessitates exposure to and discussion of topics about which disagreements exist” (Lycke & Lucey, 2018, p. 2).

By carefully selecting texts that create questioning of the conceptions of gender, students will be able to construct and reflect about their own

ideas of gender. In these cases, there is great need for the students to relate to the literature presented, yet their interaction must be dynamic and allow students to challenge what they are reading. For this reason, teachers have a great challenge and responsibility when choosing appropriate texts that promote the analysis of gender issues. Some of the stories that could allow students to unpack alternate conceptions of gender are Luis Negrón's *Junito*, Sandra Cisneros' *Woman Hollering Creek* and Anna-Marie McLemore's *Roja*. Cisneros's *Woman Hollering Creek* presents a situation in which a very young woman marries and becomes a victim of domestic violence. Negrón's *Junito* presents the prejudice of a father when he sensed that his son might be gay. McLemore's *Roja* presents a war in which queer characters fall in love. Cisneros', Negrón's and McLemore's represent issues concerning women, gay men, lesbian and queer characters. These stories are only examples of ways to deal with alternate gender constructions, and young adult literature can provide many other useful examples. There are still many taboos around gender issues that can be used as a justification to include these topics in educational fields. To create a more inclusive community, it is my opinion that Puerto Rican students need to be exposed to texts that question pre-established conceptions of gender issues; as well as use their critical thinking skills in favor of more diverse judgments.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is:

1. To evaluate PRDE *English Program Gender Equity Manual* in terms of gender issues related to the 9th grade English 9th curriculum by using critical discourse analysis.
2. To compare PRDE narrative literature used in 9th grade English with potential popular narrative literature that addresses gender issues by using content analysis.

Justification

Linguists such as James R. Martin (1992) and Michael Halliday (1999) have argued in favor of contextualizing language so it will be relatable to diverse social learning environments. Halliday, specifically, argued that he developed ways to relate the texts to social contexts. Educational researchers such as Berns and Erickson (2005) used contextual learning theory to prove that learners can work with new information if the facts are within their own frame of reference. This statement traditionally portrays reading as process where the reader focuses exclusively in the comprehension of the text (Hall, Burns & Edwards, 2011, p. 164). Although the previous definition has been overtly used, other theorists focused on the importance of a reader's response as the essential part that guarantees comprehension beyond merely decoding. Another perspective of reading is the transactional reading theory presented by Rosenblatt (2004) which argues that:

Every reading act is an event, or a transaction involving a particular reader and a particular pattern of signs, a text, and occurring at a particular time in a particular context . . . the reader and the text are two aspects of a total dynamic situation. The “meaning” does not reside ready-made “in” the text or “in” the reader but happens or comes into being during the transaction between reader and text. (p. 1369)

Due to the relationship among the reader and literature, it is important to understand and expand the notion that students construct their own knowledge from the transaction with the text and the themes and the message that each text portrays. This relationship among the reader and the text needs to help the students to relate and reflect to their own situations. Moreover, reading materials must appeal to the students’ identity for that transaction to be a meaningful one. Some of the topics that each material presents might be related to age, family, school, community, growing up, among others. Most of these topics are common to every human, but somehow there are topics which are more complex and difficult to interpret. Some of the topics pertaining to women and LGBTQIA community have been underrepresented or hidden. Lesser- Blumberg (2015), reported that gender bias in textbooks is an example of hidden curriculum that may constrain girls from realizing their full potential. Ramos Silva (2002) has established the difference among texts that represent traditional values of society, and the

books that challenge the norms and pre-established values; she denominates the second group as the 'resistance'. Although the concepts employed by Ramos Silva might be compatible with discourses of massive social mobilizations, it is a way to encourage the critical analysis of the narrative texts used in the classroom. Butler (1990) argued that "it becomes impossible to separate out "gender" from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained" (p. 6).

Gender is one of the most complex topics addressed in literature. Crisp and Hiller (2011) presented an analysis of the stereotypes about gender roles presented in the books that had won the "Caldecott Award," the top award for illustrated books, between 1938 and 2011. The analysis presented concepts of biological sex and gender in order to determine which concepts are represented in the illustrations and the text. Crisp and Hiller (2011) said that in the 1960's the feminist movement influenced the perceptions of sex and gender by making others understand that the social and ideological constructions of gender should not be merely biological.

Judith Butler (1990), as cited by Crisp and Hiller (2011), determined that gender is not a subject or a thing but, a verb or an action that is repeated until it becomes something natural. The analysis made by the researchers requires questioning the implicit messages about sex and gender beyond the biological aspect. Rosenblatt (1995) as cited by Crisp and Hiller (2011), indicated that it is necessary to observe and highlight the values that

are sometimes ignored. The researchers emphasized in the graphic representations of the ‘masculine’ and the ‘feminine’ concept in the books. The results demonstrated that focusing only in the illustrations was trusting merely the normative constructions and personal interpretations of what ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ concepts meant.

Furthermore, Crisp and Hiller’s study stated that observing the illustrations was only privileging the conception that ruled how a gender should be in opposition to what a gender represents for each person. The findings indicated that leaving the concept of gender to the interpretation of the reader represented allowing the reader to reach his or her own conclusions based exclusively on the culture that surrounds the person. The characters that were not identified by any gender or sexual characteristic were classified as ‘ungendered.’ The statistics showed that generally there are more male writers and illustrators than female. On the other hand, the representations of the characters in the book were mostly masculine (53% of the protagonists were male, versus 23% of the protagonists being female).

Research Questions

The research conducted in this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. How does PRDE *English Program Gender Equity Manual* address gender issues in the 9th grade curriculum?

2. How do narratives used in 9th grade English courses within PRDE compare with other popular narrative literature that addresses gender issues?

Definition of terms

1. ESL- the acquisition of English, where English is spoken natively or where English is used for education, government, or business within the country (Brown, 2007, p. 205).
2. Reading Transactional Theory- is an event, or a transaction involving a particular reader and a particular pattern of signs, a text, and occurring at a particular time in a particular context [. . .] the reader and the text are two aspects of a total dynamic situation (Rosenblatt, 2004).
3. Gender –Usually it is related with how each person identifies herself or himself, although this vision conceptualizes gender as a socially constructed issue, Fausto-Sterling (2000), follows Butler ideas by stating “that we look at the body as a system that simultaneously produces and is produced by social meanings, just as any biological organism always results from the combined and simultaneous actions of nature and nurture” (p. 23). By focusing on the idea that the body is connected to both the biological and social aspects, Butler and Fausto-Sterling conceptualize gender as intertwined with sex. By following these views, it not possible to separate gender from sex.

4. Sex- Traditionally, scholars conceptualize sex related to the biology of an individual, as exemplified by their anatomy. Still this view has been challenged by Fausto-Sterling, (2000, p. 3) who argued that “labeling someone a man or a woman is a social decision. We may use scientific knowledge to help us make the decision, but only our beliefs about gender—not science—can define our sex”. Fausto-Sterling’s conceptualization of sex tries to challenge dualistic visions of sex, as something exclusively related to biology and connects sex with other concepts such as gender and social constructions, which are related to how a people identify their sex. Yet, again by following these ideas, it is not possible to separate the conceptualization of sex from gender.
5. Young Adult Literature – literary works geared toward students ages 12-18 and written from their perspective (Hall, Burns & Edwards, 2011, p. 100)
6. Narrative- a fictional literature which structure normally includes “setting, important characters, and a central conflict”. (Hall, Burns & Edwards, 2011, p. 24)
7. Stereotype- assigns a rigid set of characteristics to all members of a group, denying individual attributes and differences. (Zittleman & Sadker, 2003).
8. Invisibility or omission- instances in which the identity or situations of specific people are not recognized or is left out either by accident or

with intention. In the case of this study, it consists of ignoring or leaving out women's issues and LGBTQIA people's situations. (Vadi-Fantauzzi, 2009).

9. Selectivity –arbitrarily limiting the representation and descriptions of people. For this study, it consists of limiting representation of women's issues and LGBTQIA people's situations (Vadi-Fantauzzi ,2009)
10. Inclusion or integration- including or representing people who are usually ignored by accident or with intention. For this research, it consists of including or representing women's and LGBTQIA's issues. (PRDE Gender Equity Manual, 2015)
11. LGBTQIA- this stands for Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, and Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual people (Womenslaw.org, 2018).
12. Expectations- “Identify what students are expected to master by the end of 12th grade while the grade level indicators identify what students are expected to master at a particular grade level” (Puerto Rico Core Standards, 2014, p.5).
13. Standards- “a written description of what students are expected to know and be able to do at a specific stage of their education” (English Curriculum framework, 2014, p. 33).
14. Theme- Refers to the inclusion of transversal themes in the curriculum. “Transversal themes are described by UNESCO (2013) as critical and innovative thinking, interpersonal and intrapersonal

skills, global citizenship, and physical and psychological health.” The PRDE has established culture and identity, ethic education, education for peace, environmental education, technology and education, and education for work as the transversal themes to be employed in the curriculum. (English Curriculum Framework, 2014, p.38)

15. Activity- is “technique implementation-which actually takes place in ta classroom to accomplish an immediate objective” (English Curriculum Framework, 2014, p.87)

16. Subjects- Refers specifically to the English course offered. (PRDE Gender Equity Manual, 2015)

17. Description- Details the nature of the lesson presented (PRDE Gender Equity, 2015)

18. Curricular Map- “support standards-based instruction and ensure horizontal and vertical articulation of the standards” (Puerto Rico Consolidated State Plan, 2017, p.20).

CHAPTER II- REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

This research evaluated PRDE's *English Program Gender Equity Manual* in terms of gender issues addressed in the English 9th grade narrative literature by using critical discourse analysis. It also compared PRDE English 9th grade narrative literature with other popular narrative literature that address gender issues by using content analysis. The narrative literature compared were from the five texts selected by PRDE textbooks Inside from *National Geographic, Level C* and five texts selected by the researcher. The questions that guided this research were:

1. How does PRDE *English Program Gender Equity Manual* address gender issues in the 9th grade curriculum?
2. How do narratives used in 9th grade English courses within the PRDE compare with other popular narrative literature that addresses gender issues?

This chapter discusses gender theories, curriculum and gender in Puerto Rico, narrative literature on gender issues, and evaluating gender bias in young adult literature.

Theoretical Framework

This study was grounded in gender theories, specifically feminism and queer theories. During the 1970's, the feminist movement was focused in the “perspective and needs of white, middle-class western women” (Butler-Wall, Cosier and Harper, 2016 p. 13). One of the responsible scholars to change the feminist movement was Gloria Jean Watkins, better known as bell hooks. She argues that:

Feminism is not simply a struggle to end male chauvinism or a movement to ensure that women will have equal rights with men; it is a commitment to eradicating the ideology of domination that permeates Western culture on various levels—sex, race, and class, to name a few—and a commitment to reorganizing society . . . so that the self-development of people can take precedence over imperialism, expansion, and material desires (Butler-Wall, Cosier and Harper, 2016, p. 13).

hooks' views concentrated on a different perspective of feminism, one that addressed issues found not only in one profile of women, but also in women of different races, classes, and ethnicities. This change in feminist views was coined as intersectionality. In 1989, Kimberlé Crenshaw filed a case against General Motors for discrimination. She tried to exemplify that women's right should be an intersectional matter. Crenshaw advocated for five African

American women who felt discriminated in their secretary positions. General Motors Company argued that since they employed African American, they were not committing racial discrimination. Although the company won the case, Crenshaw argued that only white women and African American men were hired. Thus, Crenshaw's case illustrates how intersectionality encompassed more than women's rights in terms of race and gender, but also other aspects such as age, culture, class, language, education, ethnicity, and culture.

Along with Crenshaw, other philosophers such as Judith Butler have been fundamental for intersectional feminism, as well as transgender rights. For this reason, Judith Butler has been considered central to feminism, queer theories, and gender studies in general. Butler (1997) was inspired by Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida to argue that "sexual identity is not something natural or given, but the result of discursive and theatrical practices of the gender; the gender itself is a cultural fiction, a performative effect of repeated acts, without an original or an essence" (Translated by author, p. 10). One example Butler presented to illustrate her conception of gender is drag, as it "shows the imitative structure of the genre" (Translated by author, p. 11). From the example of drag, the term performativity arose, and Butler (1997) clarifies that it is not the performance used in theatrical performances, but that it is "obligatory to repeat some rules that are before the subject, and that the subject cannot discard voluntarily" (Translated by author, p. 11). By

highlighting the relationship among the subject and the actions, Butler centered the nature of gender on the idea of social constructions. Even though, it is my belief that gender is socially constructed, it does not mean that biology is not a relevant aspect.

Specifically, Ann Fausto-Sterling (2000) used knowledge of biology to understand the complexities of human development in society. To illustrate the dualisms of sex and gender, Fausto-Sterling (2000) presented the case of Maria Patiño, who was a Spanish Olympic woman hurdler in 1988. Patiño was submitted to a sex test to certify her femininity, but she failed the test. As a result of the failed test Patiño was expelled from the Spanish Olympic team.

In order to solve the situation, Spanish officials advised her to hide the situation, yet Patiño decided to fight back. After, Patiño spent more than two years in medical consultations, she was found to have “androgen sensitivity” which meant that “she had a Y chromosome and her testes made plenty of testosterone, but her cells couldn’t detect this masculinizing hormone” (Fausto-Sterling, 2000, p. 2). Although her body never develop male characteristics, it produced estrogen, yet “because her body’s inability to respond to its testosterone, caused her breast to grow, her waist to narrow, and her hips to widen”. (Fausto-Sterling, 2000, p. 2). Since it was confirmed that Patiño was a woman, she fought to be reinstated in the Spanish Olympic Squad, and this event raised questions in the Olympic procedures to test

athletes' sex. Due to cases such as Patiño's, Fausto-Sterling (2000) states that "labeling someone a man or a woman is a social decision. We may use scientific knowledge to help us make the decision, but only our beliefs about gender—not science—can define our sex" (p. 3). From the ideas of Fausto-Sterling, it is reasonable to think that biology did not have to be in opposition to socially constructed identities. As Andre Lorde (1982) stressed "there is no such thing as a single-issue struggle, because we do not live single-issue lives" (Butler-Wall, Cosier and Harper, 2016 p. 30).

Precisely because gender is not a "single-issue struggle", it is important to use the knowledge produced by intersectional feminists in the curriculum in Puerto Rico. Intersectional feminism in Puerto Rico can be used to address the diverse population that attends to our educational system. In addition, it is a tool to give voice and representation to women and LGBTQIA students who have been hidden, underrepresented or omitted in the curriculum. From the intersectional feminist point of view, this study analyzed the different constructions of gender presented in the English 9th grade PRDE Young Adult literature. For this reason, it was also relevant to discuss how curriculum, literature and gender have been addressed in Puerto Rico. In addition, it was relevant to evaluate criteria to avoid gender bias in young adult literature.

Curriculum and Gender in Puerto Rico

Hall, Burns and Carr Edwards (2011) expressed that “teachers who want to change the curriculum policies, need to understand the challenges they are likely to face” (p. 185). In the case of Puerto Rico, there have been multiple changes in policies, which have directly impacted the nature of the school system itself. As an ESL teacher in Puerto Rico, I find it relevant to revisit the curricular changes in relation to gender issues. Torres González, et al., (2017), discussed the history of the education system in Puerto Rico since it was known Department of Public Instruction. Torres González and colleagues elaborated a book to comply with Puerto Rico Higher Education Council and it contained history, policy changes, curricular reforms, and professional reflections. The principal researcher of this book was Dr. Roamé Torres Gonzalez, who worked with Drs. Loida Martínez and Margarita R. Moscoso Álvarez as co researchers. Dr. Martínez documented the official curricular conception of the PRDE in Chapter 5 of the book. In terms of the teaching of English, this chapter presents tools to understand the changes that have impacted our program. When it comes to gender, it was essential to revisit policies that have been proposed, as well as reflections on how the policies can and should be improved. One of the findings of Martínez Ramos (2017) was the need to develop policies that address racism, socio-economic discrimination, as well as discrimination for gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity.

In order to revisit policies that have created changes in the Department of Education, Martínez Ramos (2017) focused on the years that followed the 1980's. During the 1980's all through the beginning of the 1990's there were several changes in the administration of the PRDE. To begin with, before 1990, the name of the agency was Department of Public Instruction of Puerto Rico which was changed to Puerto Rico Department of Education. In 1987, during the administration of then Secretary of Education, Awilda Aponte Roque, the document titled *Principles for curricular integration* was created by Dr. Angel Villarini and his collaborators (Martínez Ramos, 2017, p.167). Martínez Ramos (2017) expressed that the main focus of the document *Principles for curricular integration* were relevance, pertinence, moral development, and critical thinking (p.167). She also states that after 1987 plenty of professional development and academic organizations were dedicated to promoting critical thinking, and that it has been prevalent in many of the documents of the educational system (p.168). According to Martínez Ramos (2017), Villarini's work also impacted the way the educational system visualized critical thinking; since his document helped in the implementation of the document *Curriculum renewal project: Theoretical and methodological foundations*. The renewal in the curriculum included the implementation of the strategy exploration, conceptualization, and application as a methodological approach for lesson planning (p.168). From the Curriculum Renewal Project, humanistic and reconstructionist

philosophical visions were aligned to the implementation of the Organic Law of the Department of Education of Puerto Rico (Martínez Ramos, 2017, p.167). The transversal themes were cultural identity, civics and ethical education, peace education, environmental education, technology, and education, as well as education for the work environment. Different to countries such as Spain and Argentina, in Puerto Rico the transversal theme of gender equality was not included. Still, in the civics and ethical education theme, there were aspects of gender equality that were considered such as discrimination against women (Apple & Beyer, 1983).

Even though dealing with discrimination against women is crucial for the curriculum, there are certain omissions that the curriculum has when other aspects of gender equality are not addressed in the civics and ethical education transversal theme. The omissions might be related to violence against women, as well as discrimination and violence toward the LGBTQIA community in Puerto Rico. While I can argue about the omissions that the transversal theme presents, Moreno (1993) stated that the main purpose of the document was “to draw bridges between popular knowledge and scientific knowledge” and “influence the interdisciplinary integration of the curriculum” (Curriculum renewal project: theoretical and methodological foundations, 2003, p. 65). Despite the omissions in the discussion of gender mentioned before, since the 1970’s the discussion of the issue of women and education began in Puerto Rico with the help of the Women’s Advocate Office.

This agency presented the study of Yordán Molini (1976). Molini's study concentrated in five school texts that were analyzed in order to search for sexist representations. Another important study during the decade of the 1970's was *Machismo and Education* (1983) by Dr. Isabel Picó. Pico's book dealt with sexist manifestations in school texts as well as designing educational materials to address the issue. Both the works of Molini and Picó, were emblematic during the 1970's, and pointed to the existence of manifestations of sexism in school texts and developed recommendations (Martínez-Ramos, 2017).

For more than 100 years, women have struggled for their right to be treated equally; it might seem to be more than enough, yet women are still facing unfair treatment even after the year 2000. In 2006, government agencies reported a "new crisis of domestic violence" (Martínez-Ramos, et al., 2017, p. 262). This renewed attention to domestic violence led to Law 108, 2006. This law added a new function to the Secretary of the PRDE which was to coordinate with the Women's Advocate Office a curriculum to prevent gender equity and prevent domestic violence. The curriculum was supposed to be created for regular academic offerings and other educational modalities, yet it was not implemented in 2006. (Ley 108 de 2006). As a follow up to this law, two years later, the Secretary of Education signed Circular Letter 3, 2008-2009. This Letter focused on "exercising its social responsibility to promote human rights, maintains as a fundamental principle the search for

gender equity” (Translated by author, p. 1). In addition, this document was an attempt “at strengthening and institutionalizing the gender perspective in all academic disciplines, levels, initiatives and projects”. Moreover, the Circular letter 2-2008-2009, defines gender as

the set of behaviors, values and socially constructed relative power that the society differently assigns men and women, understands as a gender perspective the conceptual instrument that helps to understand that gender differences that should not be exclusively due to a sexual or biological determination, but to the social construction of human identities” (translated by author, p. 1).

This circular letter was closer to a gender equality perspective, and it was a source of controversial debate among different sectors of the island, including the religious sector and the then candidate for Governor of Puerto Rico, Luis Fortuño. Most of the public debates focused the discussion of the curricular letter around the idea of homosexuality, and it “coincided with the discussion of the concurrent resolution Senate 99 of 2007, where it was requested to raise the marriage between man and woman to constitutional rank” (Martínez Ramos, 2017). Project 99 of 2007 was not voted on by the senate and thus the initiative was lost. Furthermore, the discussion of marriage and the curricular letter were not followed up, particularly after Governor Fortuño was elected. Martínez Ramos (2017) continues the chronology of issues concerning curriculum and gender by recognizing that

there has been an “increase of women with access to education, even in non-traditional areas,” even with this progress, “the school curriculum maintains sexist bias” (p. 264).

It is important to note that after 2006, three curricular letters addressing gender were presented by the PRDE. The first letter was Curriculum Letter 3-2008-2009 which intended to incorporate gender perspective into the Puerto Rican educational system. The next letter was Curriculum Letter 19-2014-2015 which dealt with the integration of gender equity into the curriculum. Then, Curriculum Letter 24-2016-2017 protected trans students in the school system. The Curriculum Letter 24-2016-2016 was attempting to comply with Title IX, Federal Legislation, which bans sex-based discrimination in education towards gay and transgender students (Strauss, 2021). Although the changes in administration of the PRDE have impacted the implementation of these curriculum letters, it is important to highlight the amendment to Article 6 of Law 149 of 1999, which expresses that the Secretary of the PRDE is in charge of:

Establishing in coordination with the Women’s Advocate Office a teaching curriculum directed to promote gender equity and the prevention of domestic violence. Also, will have the obligation to implement the curriculum by means of the regular academic offerings, by integration to academic programs or other

educational modalities (Martínez Ramos, 2017, p. 261 translation by author).

In addition, the recently approved Educational Reform Law 85, 2018 states a similar responsibility of the Secretary of Education:

[...] en coordinación con la Oficina de la Procuradora de la Mujer un programa de enseñanza dirigido a promover la igualdad entre los seres humanos, el manejo de conflictos o control de ira y la prevención de la violencia doméstica (p. 32)

This issue identifies the real necessity of our system, which is to insist on changes on the curriculum that address the needs of women in current times.

Beyond searching for more opportunities for women to be educated, which is essential, it is vital to address the issue of gender violence toward women and the LGBTQIA community. Dávila-Mestey (2008) as cited in Martínez Ramos (2017) highlighted that:

other important nodes have to see with the participation of the school in the construction of masculinities and their relationship with the paradigm of education for work, as well as the evident invisibility of the issue of sexual orientation and gender identity in the equity and gender perspective discourse (p. 264).

Law 62 of 2017 was written to develop a pilot project of co-educational school models. The pilot project wanted to include families by promoting

strategies to distribute house chores equally, censoring, and gender-based violence, reject gender discrimination, and change stereotyped models as well as “respect differences and dialogue as a way to resolve conflicts” (Ley 62 de 2017). The implementation process was going to be coordinated by the PRDE secretary and the Women’s Advocate Office. The selected schools were at least ten (10) elementary schools “in the sectors where the highest rate of discrimination and gender-based violence has been recorded” (art. 4.).

It is relevant to review one of the most recent virtual journals on gender, titled “Gender and Equity”, sponsored by Fundación Alas a la Mujer, Inc. This virtual journal presents the voices of different experts who highlight the relevance of including gender perspective in diverse aspects of our society. Before presenting the arguments in favor of gender perspective, it is necessary to conceptualize gender perspective itself. Martínez Ramos (2021a) explains that “the term gender perspective is a conceptual tool, a way of seeing or analyzing that consists of observing the impact of gender on all human endeavor” (translated by author, p. 29). Furthermore, Martínez Ramos (2021a) conceptualizes gender perspective as a way to implement “a reflective practice, as well as the search for equitable and equal treatment in our relationships with learners” (translated by author, p. 30). Precisely because it is important to implement practices that promote equality among students, the discussion of gender perspective remains essential to contribute to a culture of peace and promote diversity in our educational system

(Martínez Ramos, 2021a and 2021b). Promoting gender perspective contributes to For instance, Rodríguez López (2021) argues that including “gender perspective in education is increasingly necessary to curb discrimination, prejudice, and violence, and to promote justice, equity and peace in coexistence for all individuals, families and communities” (translated by author, p. 6). Also, Rodríguez López (2021) states that gender perspective in education prepares students to recognize gender issues such as “manifestations of discrimination and sexism, including stereotypes, omissions and prejudices, in text content, illustrations, interactions and in materials as well as curricular activities” (translated by author, p. 7).

Another expert who argues in favor of including gender perspective in education was Colón González, (2021) who discusses transversality as a strategy to include gender across the curriculum. Colón González (2021) presents the concept of transversality defined by Montes-de-Oca-O'Reilly (2019) as “the processes that aim to make the gender perspective cross the entire system, structure and procedure” (translated by author, p. 20). As a teacher and researcher, I have observed how using transversality is one of the most effective strategies to address gender issues in the curriculum and tackling the standards and expectations as well. Transversality is also addressed by Martínez Ramos, (2021a) who states that “It is necessary that the incorporation of the gender perspective be carried out in a transversal

way, that is, in all school subjects, as well as in all schooling experiences” (translated by author, p. 30).

Certainly, transversality is a way to implement gender across the curriculum, still it is relevant to add the concept of intersectionality in order to expand the concept towards other issues in the school system. Peña Jordan (2021) recounts how black feminism started the struggles against oppression during 1974 in a statement signed by Combahee River Collective (translated by author, p. 14). The statement made in 1974 expressed that black feminists

“did not feel represented by the struggles of so-called white feminists and claimed that their life experience was different from that of white women, as well as that of black men, in a society that is simultaneously patriarchal, heterosexist, classist, and racist”

(Peña Jordan, 2021, translated by author, p. 14).

Peña Jordan (2021) presents other historical events where intersectionality took place such as the speech “ain’t I a woman” by the African American activist, Sojourner Truth and the case presented by Kimberlé Crenshaw against General Motors. By recounting the origins of intersectionality Peña Jordan (2021) is prioritizing the inclusion of the intersections of gender with race, class, age, neurodiversity, and immigration; since “it will also allow us to recognize that patriarchy works together and in synergy with other systems of power and oppression” (translated by author, p. 18)

Even though gender perspective might intersect with other social issues, it also has had many debates against it. One of the greatest disputes was presented by some religious sectors of our island. Some religious sectors have the idea that gender perspective is the enemy of Christian values. Luvis Núñez (2021) argues that “The pursuit of equity and justice are at the heart of the Christian faith” (translated by author, p. 23). In addition, Luvis Núñez, (2021) explains “that women did not have the right to educate ourselves, to fairly paid work, to vote, to acquire property, to inherit, to access leadership positions in society or in churches” (translated by author, p. 23). She adds that these issues were dealt from the gender perspective and have become values that the Christian faith still promotes. To justify her points, Luvis Núñez (2021) mentions biblical examples of women named Maala, Noa, Hogla, Milca and Tirsá, daughters of Zelofehad who were not allowed to inherit, and the controversy was solved by Moses in their favor.

Another debate around gender perspective has been the misconception of the term by labeling it “gender ideology”. Torres Vidal (2021), explained that

Gender ideology is a concept that has been created in order to stop and discredit and hinder efforts to achieve equity and justice that are achieved when analyzing, discussing, working, developing projects, creating inclusive public policies, expanding knowledge on all issues,

and society approaches closing the gaps that cause injustices”

(translated by author, p. 12).

While all these debates affect how many people envisioned gender perspective, the current governor Pedro Pierluisi has been trying to address gender-based violence by issuing Executive Order 2022-013 (Martínez-Ramos, 2021, translated by author, p. 27). Martínez-Ramos (2021) discusses how the recent executive order makes a statement in favor of gender perspective as it reads “[w]e are committed to establishing a process to develop a gender perspective curriculum that helps combat the causes that contribute to inequality, discrimination and violence" (p. 27, translated by author). Undoubtedly, these new policies facilitated the implementation of gender perspective in the school system, yet these policies must be integrated in the curriculum through the educators and the curricular materials.

As solutions to the invisibility of sexual orientation and gender, Ramos Silva (2002) studied gender schemes and the students’ interpretation of texts. She divided her study in three gender schemes. The first scheme was traditional. The second scheme was intermediate. The third scheme was liberalist. The areas of analysis that her study focused on were general concepts of gender, male chauvinism, and stereotypes. Ramos Silva stated that most of our understanding or construction of a text is mediated somehow by experiences or social context. The concepts that guide Ramos Silva’s study

were reading, literature and theories about gender. Ramos Silva quoted Idsa Alegria (2000) who “points out that in the specific case of Puerto Rico gender and women issues are addressed from different aspects such as reproductive health, violence, education and poverty, in addition to studies on masculinities” (Ramos Silva, 2002, p. 22, translated by author). The criteria used for the research was texts that subscribe gender notions from different perspectives, the complexity of the texts and the extension of the text. Ramos Silva selected texts that had gender as part of their ideological story, but also, they had to be appropriate for the reader and relatively short. Another discussion of this study was around the concepts of sex and gender. This research recaptured the idea used by other feminist theories which differentiate sex from gender, and it classifies sex as related to biology and gender with the diverse social constructions developed around the sexes. As Ramos Silva established her own vision of gender, she also highlighted her perspective on using non canonical texts in the classroom.

On one side, there are texts that are based on the imagery established by culture, which reproduce and legitimize traditional notions of gender. These texts transformed into voices and support the traditional categories. Against this type of generic inscription, other texts represent the resistance. This challenges the norm and gives voice to marginalized subjects. Many of the contemporary writing exemplifies those textual productions that, instead, of producing the

predominant general ideology, they deconstruct it as they resist and alter the traditional gender roles assigned by the norm. These texts are demystified and liberalist (Ramos Silva, 2002, p. 60 translated by author).

Classifying texts among canonical and alternative was indispensable to this research. Those texts that are considered canonical are evaluated in terms of the gender constructions presented. Meanwhile, the narrative literature that addresses gender issues will serve a tool to represent those areas of gender construction that were somehow hidden in the curriculum. This research concluded that the education, and the curriculum, are essential components in the implementation of educational practices that reinforce a change in paradigm.

Another research study in the area of gender was conducted by Vadi Fantauzzi (2009). His research focused on critical discourse analysis of the content of the textbooks of 12th grade Spanish courses and their implications for the curriculum. The purpose of this research was to analyze the way in which discourses are constructed in relation to the concept of gender perspective in the textbooks that PRDE recommended, particularly, in the light of the current statements of public policy of our island. The nature of the method is descriptive-analytic with a methodological design comprised of content analysis and critical discourse analysis. The methods allowed to study the social interaction when adopting a linguistic form and interpreting

the pedagogical discourse as a way of social practice. The results of the study established that the texts as pedagogical discourse contribute to consolidate and establish, primarily, the stereotyping of men as the center of power and control, the stereotyping of women as wife, mother and housekeeper and the segregation of feminist literature. The conclusion of the study showed that in the majority of the series used there had not been any progress made towards the development of gender perspective since the texts continued and perpetuated traditional gender perspectives and canonic approaches toward gender.

Vadi's research evaluated texts with canonical ideas about gender and confirmed that there still is a lot to do on the subject of gender issues. Vadi Fantauzzi (2009) referenced "the last report of PNUD (Programa de Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo) of 2003 which establishes that, still, discrimination against women is prevalent in all the countries (p. 4). This report confirms the need to eradicate gender inequalities in education. Another argument exposed in Vadi Fantauzzi (2009) was related to the use of textbooks in school. He considers that textbooks were a major influence in the students' learning. The researcher argued that textbooks were part of the authority because they are a component of the official curriculum. From this perspective, selecting texts should be a very meticulous task, since they should represent the different discourses present in the current society. In addition, it is important to discuss and analyze with gender perspective those

texts where discourses of oppression might be present. Furthermore, it is relevant to highlight Vadi Fantauzzi's point of view on gender perspective which argued that adopting gender perspective was taking a stand against those who are marginalized and can contribute to eradicate marginalization and oppression.

Narrative Literature on Gender Issues

In order to expand the narratives on gender, it was relevant to revise popular narrative literature that dealt with gender issues. Alonso-Feijoo (2013) reviewed an alternate text titled "My Princess Boy" which deals with issues of gender from a different perspective. Alonso-Feijoo (2013) proposed that education should update the concepts of family and insisted that all concepts of diverse families should be presented in children's literature and YAL. In addition, this text concentrated in presenting tools to open new family configurations to children. The target audience of this narrative was boys and their families. "My Princess Boy" presents how a family learned to accept a boy who had preferences for colors, toys, and clothing that were traditionally and mostly used by girls. In the narrative, the parents search for medical and psychological reasons for the boy's preferences, yet they did not find an answer. The parents changed their mind once the brother of "My Princess Boy" asked them to simply let him be happy. The author of "My Princess Boy" understood that her family situations should help other families to be more open to the acceptance of children that have different

preferences. This is an exemplary literary work that could be used in the English classroom to address gender issues. In this case, it does not necessarily deal with issues concerning the LGBTQIA community, but in how a boy discovered his sexuality. It is relevant to highlight that apart from the boy preferences, he embraced his personality without shame. The suggested narratives could be useful to the discussion of gender issues in the ESL classroom; however, it is relevant to reflect on the benefits that these types of narratives have.

Aparicio García (2016) carried out an action research study using children and juvenile literature that found significant differences among boys and girls and gender stereotypes. The results showed significant differences among the notions of boys and girls, as well as the existence of gender stereotypes that have been learned from a variety of resources. This study highlighted how YAL helped teens construct their own worlds, experiment with their self-identities, and know themselves better. Aparicio implemented a Critical Discourse Analysis on Ana Maria Machado's literary work. Machado's work was used from a gender perspective to practice an intervention plan with students in Zaragoza. Aparicio wanted to explore the influence of Young Adult literature used by the students. This research showed how popular native literature with gender perspective could be employed in a classroom. Aparicio García expressed that Children's and Young Adult Literature is "one of the cultural devices which greatly

influences the construction of gender identity from teenagers” (p.36). This study found “differences among the thoughts of boys and girls” (p.50). The scale that classifies readers in this study measures the types of readers according to the answers to a questionnaire. The results showed that girls are mostly classified passionate readers or good readers, while all boys have been classified as no readers. In terms of gender issues, the study showed that

most girls prioritize academic preparation and developing a career path; while the majority of boys considered more important to have a family, yet they pointed out that they would not start a family, without a job to take care of their kids (translated by author, p.50).

Aparicio Garcia (2016) concludes that “literature is one of the vehicles that transmit values”. (p.50).

Another study that documents the benefits of narratives texts dealing with gender issues was conducted by Batchelor, Ramos and Neiswander (2017). Their study was implemented through a group of preservice teachers. The teachers found that LGBTQIA themes are often neglected in many school curriculums, and they observed that a curriculum to include this population was not required in the United States at the moment they carried out their research. In addition, they used statistics from institutions such as the Gay, Lesbian, & Straight Education Network and others that demonstrated that LGBTQIA students were the targets of bullying in schools. They suggested

the implementation of literature on a variety of topics, as well as those that address the LGBTQIA students, so the curriculum will support a positive environment, not only among students but also among the teachers and staff. This study highlighted with facts the need of a curriculum that address all the spectrum of gender constructions in our society.

Considering how important it is to address diverse gender constructions in the literature, Malinda Lo (2019) researched LGBTQIA Young Adult literature publications from 2009 to 2019. The criteria used to include publications in the research were that the books have LGBTQIA main characters or a plot concerning LGBTQIA issues. Also, Lo concentrated her attention on mainstream American publishers such as Harper Collins, Penguin, Random House, and Scholastic, among others with the same profile. Lo encountered a 300% increase in books addressing LGBTQIA issues and a 522% increase in books addressing issues of queer girls. So, the percentage of queer girls grew rapidly, yet the greatest increase in queer girls' books did not surface until 2016. It was a sudden and sharp increase over 3 years. Lo observed that the genres that grew among LGBTQIA books were science fiction and fantasy, while contemporary novels decreased. Lo, concluded that:

Genre fiction often allows LGBTQ characters to have stories other than coming-out narratives, which still predominate in contemporary fiction. There's nothing wrong with coming-out stories; they're necessary and real, and they've also evolved over the last 10 years. But

I feel that it's important for queer characters to exist outside of sexual orientation narratives. We can be heroes, too. (p. 7)

Lo's study confirmed that there were published books available that included gender issues. Moreover, it shows that mainstream American publishers have paid attention to gender issues during the last decade. For this reason, it was relevant to evaluate the Young Adult literature available in the PRDE 9th grade English classroom.

Evaluating Gender Bias in Young Adult Literature

In order to choose a popular text with potential narrative literature that address gender issues in the ESL classroom, there must be criteria to guide the selection of narratives. It is well known that young adult literature is one of the preferred choices of ESL teachers. Latham & Gross (2014) stressed the fact that young adults are exposed to different resources. Some of the resources addressed are music, games, and movies, as well as social media. These resources are somehow related to the literature that the students are exposed to. In addition, Latham & Gross (2014) recognized that working with teens today "is likely to encounter immigrant teens; LGBTQIA teens and differently abled teens (p. 11)". Throughout the history of YAL, these texts problematized how literature was used, and they were divided according to gender when mentioning that dime novels were directed at boys, while domestic novels at girls. Also, Latham & Gross (2014) recognized that

after the implementation of the Common Core Standards, the nonfiction genre has grown in the last decade. This is a resource that allowed me to understand that there were many changes occurring in the YAL field, yet not all of them have been employed in the PRDE system, while others needed to be evaluated and revised.

In order to evaluate textbooks, Dominguez (2003) used discourse analysis on the book “New Interchange Introduction” by Richards (2000). The book series is recommended by many ESL School programs such as those in Toronto, Canada. Dominguez stated the importance of using appropriate and sensitive materials when teaching students from multicultural contexts. This paper discussed sexism in ESL/EFL textbooks by analyzing linguistic and non-linguistic aspects and treatment of sexism. The analysis consisted of counting word items such as male and female characters portrayed in stereotypical occupations; as well as evaluating images within the textbooks. Dominguez (2003) explained how Fairclough’s model was also used by Glasche (2000) who “studied images and visual representation to support written text and uses Fairclough’s model technique to analyze textbook images” (p. 7). The textbook evaluation was divided into three steps. The first step consisted of descriptions, the second step was interpretation, and the third step was explanation. The description was implemented by means of ten guide questions, while the interpretation was done by answering seven guided questions. Finally, the explanation process required for the researcher

to examine and interpret the data collected in the previous steps. The corpus of theories cited, as well as the methods employed will serve as a model to analyze literature from the PRDE, specifically those in English.

While Domínguez focused on the evaluation of a series of textbooks in Toronto, exclusively. Lesser-Blumberg (2015) extended the study of gender bias to textbooks from several countries. Lesser-Blumberg (2015) found that “the pace of improvement in gender bias in textbooks is more often slow” (p. 2). Lesser-Blumberg’s report stated how textbooks can become a barrier for females and for their right to equal education. Also, it mentioned that gender bias in textbooks were an example of “hidden curriculum that may constrain girls from realizing their full potential” (2015, p. 2). Lesser-Blumberg (2015) quoted Sadker & Zittleman, (2007) whose research report showed that “over 57,000,000 children 54% of them are girls still are unschooled, the data show that textbooks are used in 70-95% of classroom time results often being cited as limiting girls’ academic achievement and adult options” (p. 2) . Besides the biases presented in textbooks, Lesser-Blumberg report focused on the development of certain countries such as Chile, Georgia, Pakistan, Thailand, in terms on gender policies and education. The results contained in this report will serve to exemplify possible policy changes to employ in the curriculum of the English courses in PRDE. Besides the possibility of changing policies in PRDE, Lesser-Blumberg opens the door to other

organizations to expand the evaluation of textbooks in a more ambitious manner.

From another perspective, Vázquez-García (2013) focused on strategies and alternatives to deal with gender issues in the ESL classroom. She focused on how illustrated books can be used in English courses in early school. In addition, she stated that illustrated books can be useful to acquire both a native and a foreign language. The research problematizes how teachers think their lessons are 'neutral', yet they would not notice that many of the images in the illustrated books present males and females in stereotypical situations. This study was meaningful because it allowed for the realization that a 'neutral' curriculum is impossible to achieve, yet we can aspire to implement a more diverse one. Also, this study presented the possibility of using picture books differently.

Following Vázquez García's point of view, Garcia Surrallés (2013) developed a study of gender issues in narratives texts, but from the perspective of motherhood. Her article demonstrated the patterns or typologies of mothers found in Children's and YAL. It focused on stories from European writers within the last thirty years. The patterns revised were those of women that stay at home versus those that work outside the home, along with the archetype of the loving versus the terrible mother. Garcia Surrallés tried to create awareness on how the composition of the 21st century family has compelled teachers and writers to focus on diverse patterns.

Conceptualizing mothers is a topic that is not very commonly discussed in the curriculum, yet people make implicit judgements of mothers daily. As part of the discussions involved in the English curriculum, developing awareness of the different conceptualizations of motherhood might improve family relationships, as well as the students' perceptions of motherhood.

Certainly, the discussion of gender issues cannot be separated from education. For this reason, it becomes vital to understand that there have been multiple efforts from educators, scholars, activists, politicians, and other members of the community to stress the relevance of the discussion of gender in educational settings. Moreover, it has been discussed how written texts are essential resources to guide the curriculum, so it is important to evaluate and analyze the content and the quality of the materials used in the classrooms. Additionally, it is essential to analyze and evaluate how gender issues are addressed in the texts available in the curriculum. This study examined a sample of texts used in the 9th grade English PRDE curriculum to address gender issues and how they compare to popular narrative literature dealing with gender.

CHAPTER III-METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This research used Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to evaluate PRDE's *English Program Gender Equity Manual* in terms of gender issues addressed in 9th grade narrative literature. Then, it used Content Analysis (CA) to compare PRDE English 9th grade narrative literature with potential narrative literature that address gender issues. The narrative literature evaluated was included in PRDE textbooks currently used in 9th grade ESL English courses, namely *Inside* from National Geographic, Level C. The questions that guided this research were:

1. How does PRDE *English Program Gender Equity Manual* address gender issues in the 9th grade curriculum?
2. How do narratives used in 9th English courses within PRDE compare with other popular narrative literature that addresses gender issues?

The topics addressed were design, procedure, data collection methods, unit of study, and data analysis.

Design

This qualitative study concentrated on evaluation and analysis using Critical Discourse Analysis and Content Analysis for the analysis and evaluation of the PRDE *English Program Gender Equity Manual*, as well as to compare the English textbook used by PRDE in the teaching of English at the 9th grade level with other popular narrative literature that addressed gender as we outlined in the previous chapter. Unlike studies with human subjects, this research studied only published texts. These texts were broken up into two different categories which comprised the two phases of this research. The first phase was Critical Discourse Analysis. The second phase was Content Analysis. These two phases are now discussed in more detail.

The initial evaluation was done using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Discourse analysis, as is the case in many other disciplines, has been used for research in multiple manners; each based on different theoretical perspectives and needs. Stubbs (1983) uses one of the simplest definitions of discourse analysis which conceptualizes discourse as “language above the sentence or above the clause” (Jaworski & Coupland, 2006, p. 1). Fairclough (1997) and Wodak (1997; 2004) present Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as an interpretation of social practices which is related to how power, domain, and control are revealed in language. (Translated from Lucca & Berríos, 2009). Fairclough’s model was used to describe, interpret, and analyze the PRDE *English Program Gender Equity Manual*.

The empirical evidence of the first phase of this research study was collected using CDA. To conceptualize the elements of Discourse Analysis, it is relevant to examine basic concepts presented by James Paul Gee (1999) in his work “An Introduction to Discourse Analysis: Theory and Method”. As Gee decomposes the essential elements of Discourse Analysis, he argues that language is a vehicle to communicate information. In addition, he explained how language is constantly a political act by stating that when we communicate verbally or in texts, we employ the grammar of the language to express a certain perspective or views over how the world functions. Then, Gee discussed how our way of expressing language implicates making decisions over what is acceptable or what is not. The author summarized this by stating that “grammar simply does not allow us to speak or write from no perspective at all” (p. 4). Certainly, Gee is an excellent guide to conceptualize discourse analysis, and allowed the researcher to define perspectives on the study of gender and curriculum.

Janks (1997) summarized the most important theories and their strategies to develop a critical discourse analysis. When CDA is implemented in texts, it involves the way the text is positioning, the interests it serves, as well as the interests negated. This tool highlights the work of Fairclough (1989, 1995) in terms of the three dimensions of analysis. The first dimension is the object of analysis which includes verbal and visual texts. The second dimension is the process through which the object is produced and received

(writing/ speaking/designing and reading/listening/viewing) by human subjects. The third dimension is the socio-historical condition which governs these processes. These three dimensions are inter-related with text analysis (description), processing analysis (interpretation) and social analysis (explanation). This research tool was the data analysis strategy used to evaluate gender issues the PRDE *English Program Gender Equity Manual*.

In the second phase, content analysis was used to analyze the texts used in the 9th grade ESL courses. “Klaus Krippendorf (1990), stresses that content analysis is a technique designed to formulate, based on certain data, reproducible and valid inferences that can be applied to a context” (Vicente-Mariño, 2006, p. 6). In addition, Silverman (2006) stated that “content analysis is an accepted method of textual investigation” (p. 159). Checklists were used as a technique to analyze the content. In this research, CA was used as criteria to compare PRDE English 9th grade narrative literature with other popular narrative literature that addresses gender selected by this researcher. The narrative literature of the PRDE was from the book “Inside: Language, Literacy and Content, Level C” by National Geographic and Cengage Learning (2014).

Unit of Study

The unit of study used in this research was texts used in PRDE English 9th grade courses and it was done in two phases, first using CDA and

in the second phase using CA. The first phase used CDA to examine the PRDE *English Program Gender Equity Manual*. After completing phase one, which provided much needed context, phase two, which used CA was carried out. In phase two, CA was done on ten narrative texts. Five of the narrative texts were chosen from the 9th grade English textbook titled, *Inside: Language, Literacy and Content, Level C* by National Geographic Learning and Cengage Learning. The other five narrative texts were selected through a review of literature that looked for exemplary works that addressed gender issues, as well as for their potential to be comprehended by 9th grade English students in the PRDE.

The only text used during phase one was the *PRDE English Program Equity Manual* which had 71 pages and where program content is aligned to address gender equity from first through twelfth grade. For the purposes of this study, a CDA was done on the introductory pages to the document which also contained a section of definition of terms (pages 1 to 6). A CDA was also performed on pages 108 through 128 which contain five units from PRDE's 9th grade English curricular map that are aligned to topics on gender equity. The CDA focused on how this document was distributed, as well as the history and context of the written text. Particular attention was paid to information that was included, but also excluded from these texts, as well as other outside factors such as the dissemination of the text.

Brief background on the texts

This PRDE *English Program Gender Equity Manual* was published in December 2015, but since the Executive administration of Governor Alejandro García Padilla changed to the administration of Governor Ricardo Rosselló Nevarez the document was not circulated to all personnel of the Department of Education, and it was eliminated from the PRDE webpage once the Secretary Julia Keleher revoked Circular Letter 19-2014-2015. In my specific case, I received an email with the *Manual* and a brief orientation of the changes, yet there was not any other interaction regarding the usage of the *Manual* once the orientation ended. Also, I was not asked for evidence of the implementation process.

For phase two of the study, a CA was done which focused on gender related issues from a total of ten narrative texts. Half of the narrative texts was chosen from the National Geographic's textbook which was assigned to each school after August 2018. This specific series is assigned to the San Juan Region schools, and the distribution of other series to other regions of Puerto Rico was implemented by PRDE. The textbook has eight units which present an assigned theme, as well as skills aligned to the common core standards. The Puerto Rico common core standards were implemented in August 2014, four years before the assignment of the new textbook. Each unit has around six to eight texts with fiction and non-fiction material that vary in genre and format. Every text is accompanied by questions and after each

text, there are writing and grammar exercises. It has color illustrations and 727 pages. The narrative texts are distributed in different units.

The additional five narrative texts were literature selected by the researcher. A literature review was done by the researcher using a diversity of gender representations as well as texts that were at the reading comprehension level of second language learners in a 9th grade English class. The texts chosen were: *Women Hollering Creek* which was selected because it discusses women who were victims of domestic violence. *Junito*, which was selected because it addressed the process a parent who thinks that his son is gay. Three stories from the book *All Out: Secret Stories of Queer Teens throughout the Ages*. Even though, the book presented queer characters (as in the story *Roja*), other gender constructions were represented as well. For instance, the story *Molly's Lips* since it dealt with lesbian characters, and the story *Three Witches* that presented characters in a conversion therapy. The purpose of the selection was to compare the diverse gender issues addressed in the narrative popular literature used to teach gender issues with those presented in the PRDE 9th grade textbook.

Selected narrative texts from the National Geographic's textbook

1. *American Names* by Tony Johnston on page 16-27
2. *From the House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros on page 60-70
3. *Indian Summer* by Carmen T. Bernier-Grand on page 290-301
4. *Nadia the Willful* by Sue Alexander on page 390-400

5. *The Clever Old Woman*, folktale on page 472-473

Selected Popular texts with potential narrative literature that address gender issues

1. *Women Hollering Creek* from *Women Hollering Creek and Other Stories* by Sandra Cisneros
2. *Junito* from *Mundo Cruel* by Luis Negrón
- 3 *Roja* by Anna-Marie McLemore, from *All Out: The No-Longer Secret Stories of Queer Teens throughout the Ages*
4. *Molly's Lips* by Dahlia Adler, from *All Out: The No-Longer Secret Stories of Queer Teens throughout the Ages*
5. *Three Witches* by Tessa Gratton, from *All Out: The No-Longer Secret Stories of Queer Teens throughout the Ages*

Procedure

Data collection methods and instruments

The design of our study was divided into two phases. The first phase consisted of a CDA, and it was based on the dimensions established by Fairclough's model (1995). The process included transcribing the text, then they were interpreted and explained. Fairclough's tridimensional model was used to analyze the texts in terms of gender issues addressed. Also, detailed descriptions of the PRDE *English Gender Equity Manual* were used. CDA explained the history and the context of the *Manual*. The CDA described how

the curriculum for 9th grade English addressed gender issues in each of the five units presented in the PRDE *Manual*. In addition, the CDA evaluated the texts materials suggested by the PRDE in the *Manual*, as well as the source where the texts were obtained. Since CDA usually deals with relations of power, it raised questions about:

- 1) Who is the *Manual* useful for?
- 2) Which interests do this *Manual* serve?
- 3) What are the implications of this *Manual* to the English 9th grade curriculum?

Based on Fairclough's CDA model, these questions were analyzed using text descriptions, process analysis (interpretation) and social analysis (explanation).

The second phase consisted of making a content analysis of the written text. Content analysis was useful to examine the gender constructions presented in the narrative texts. Also, this method focused on elements of narrative literature such as characters, character traits, and plot. The CA was implemented by means of Instrument # 1 which is a checklist (see Appendix 1). Domínguez (2003), highlighted the effectiveness of using checklists when she explained that "there are mechanical procedures, which may be used to evaluate sexism in EFL, and ESL textbooks based on their linguistic and non-linguistic components" (p. 6). Instrument #1 is a checklist

created by this researcher. It used four categories suggested by Dominguez (2003). The checklist was submitted to a panel of experts in the subject of study. The content categories analyzed in this instrument were characters, names in titles, firstness, and characters' occupational roles. The panel of experts approved the checklist and they recommended adding a summary of each text to the checklist. The category character was carried out through detailed descriptions of the characters, including names, appearance, and interactions with other characters. The category names in titles referred to what names or gender references the title has. The firstness category referred to the order of mention of each gender in a sentence. In this research, I counted the first noun or pronoun reference that appeared in a sentence. The four categories were counted in terms of frequency of gender constructions. The gender constructions counted were male, female, neutral, and non-binary. Neutral characters were classified as such if there was no gender marker in the narration. For example, neutral was used for instances without specific gender references such as collective nouns, plural pronouns, or even common nouns such as teacher, doctor, person, parent, child. Non-binary was used for identities outside the male and female classification. People such as transgender, gender fluid, without gender, with two genders, or with unspecified gender were classified as non-binary. Gender fluid are people whose gender varies over time. After each count, a short summary of the setting and plot was included in the content analysis. The content analysis

was useful to evaluate the omissions or inclusions found in ESL young adult narrative literature employed in the 9th grade schools of Puerto Rico Department of Education. The checklist was used with the five selections taken from the textbook, as well as with the five popular narrative literature selected by this researcher.

Data Analysis

There are plenty of ways to analyze discourse. Pedro Santander documented the process that can be used for discourse analysis. Santander (2011) suggested a structured process to manage an inductive discourse analysis. Since an inductive analysis is guided by general objectives and research questions, Santander (2011) suggested analyzing the data through the emergence of categories. In addition, he suggested confronting the texts with the categories that will be emerging; as a result, the knowledge obtained will be conceptualized with the categories. Then, the data and the texts revised should be connected to the questions and objectives; the data must facilitate the achievement of the objectives. "The discourse analysis (DA) parts from the idea that written and oral language is not the exclusive method to represent the communication" (Santander, 2011, 214), this is what differentiates the DA from the linguistic analysis of texts. Santander discussed that there is not an absolute way to analyze the texts but authors such as Norman Fairclough (1992) proposed a tridimensional model that might be useful to illustrate a structured process to analyze textbooks. In this

research the emergence of categories was used as a data analysis strategy for the Critical Discourse Analysis of the *Puerto Rico Department of Education English Program Gender Equity Manual*, while the process for the Content Analysis (CA) used pre-established categories. The categories pre-established for the CA were adjusted from Domínguez's (2003) analysis which consisted of counting word items such as male and female characters portrayed in stereotypical occupations. Following some of Domínguez guidelines, this research established the categories as characters, names in titles, firstness and characters' occupational roles.

In the data analysis, the *PRDE English Program Gender Equity Manual* was evaluated, and then the content of the texts selected was analyzed. For the CDA, Fairclough's tridimensional model was used but in a different order. Since the *PRDE English Program Gender Equity Manual* has a social and political background, it was important to begin by analyzing the context behind the *Manual* itself. Thus, the context of the *Manual* was developed first, which was consistent with Fairclough's third dimension that deals with socio-historical processes. The CDA allows the researcher to contextualize the socio-historical processes to make critical interpretations of the text. The text was analyzed by describing the document physically, discussing the messages of the Women's Advocate Office and the PRDE Secretary, and discussing the five curricular units from the 9th grade. Text analysis is generally Fairclough's first dimension, but in our case, it was

analyzed after the context. Finally, an interpretation of the text was done which was consistent with Fairclough's processing analysis. In this study, the interpretation contained the categories that emerged from the contextual and textual analysis.

For the content analysis, a summary of the texts selected was used, then detailing the findings, and finally discussing inclusions and omissions. The findings were divided into categories, and each category was discussed in PRDE's National Geographic texts, as well as in the popular texts with potential narrative literature that addressed gender issues. The categories were characters, names in titles, firstness and characters' occupational roles. Graphs were included for each of the findings. After the findings, the inclusions and omissions were discussed in each of the texts and categories mentioned before. In the appendixes, a chart was presented summarizing the inclusions and omissions in the texts selected, divided by the four categories used, that is, characters, names in titles, firstness and occupation.

Table 1-

Summary of alignment between research questions, data collection and analysis method

Questions	Research Method	Resource used
1. How does PRDE <i>English Program Gender Equity Manual</i> address gender issues in the 9th grade curriculum?	Critical Discourse Analysis	• PRDE <i>English Program Gender Equity Manual</i>
2. How do narratives used in 9th English courses within PRDE compare with other popular narrative literature that addresses gender issues?	Content analysis	• Checklists • National Geographic: Inside Series for Grade 9 • Popular texts on narrative literature that addresses gender issues

CHAPTER IV- FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter presents the implementation of the analysis of gender roles in young adult literature. The purpose of this chapter is to:

1. use critical discourse analysis to evaluate the *English Program Gender Equity Manual* published by PRDE in terms of gender issues related to the 9th grade English curriculum.
2. compare PRDE narrative literature used in 9th grade English with popular narrative literature that addresses gender issues using content analysis.

In the critical discourse analysis (CDA), the *PRDE English Program Gender Equity Manual* was evaluated. The CDA used Fairclough's tridimensional model, but in a different order. Typically, Fairclough's model presents three dimensions, the first is the text analysis, the second is the interpretation, and the third is the explanation of sociopolitical processes. In this research, we adjusted the order of the model by first explaining the sociopolitical process. The sociopolitical explanation was labeled as context. Since the PRDE *English Program Gender Equity Manual* has a social and political background, it was important to discuss the explanation first in order to place the document in context. The second step of the CDA was text analysis which discussed and described the messages of the Women's Advocate Office and the PRDE Secretary, as well as the five curricular units

from the 9th grade. Text analysis is generally Fairclough's first dimension, but in our case, it was analyzed after the context. The third step of the CDA was the interpretation of the text which was consistent with Fairclough's processing analysis. In this study, the interpretation contained the categories that emerged from the contextual and textual analysis. While the three dimensions of the CDA had emergent categories that were analyzed, the Content Analysis presents pre-established categories that were used to analyze the narrative texts from the PRDE textbook and the popular narrative literature that addresses gender issues.

CDA of Puerto Rico Department of Education English Program Gender Equity Manual

Historical Context

Martínez Ramos (In press) discusses the discourses that have developed against gender perspective. The author identifies the term “gender ideology” as the way anti-gender groups have tried to repeal gender perspective. Pope John Paul II and Cardinal Ratzinger [...] are singled out as originating policies from the Vatican that kick off the anti-gender crusade that has swept the world. Martínez Ramos (In press) explains that in the case of Puerto Rico, the issue of gender was publicly discussed during the campaign for general elections in 2008, and she highlights a message from

the president of the Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico who expressed acceptance to the concept of gender equity, while expressing disagreement with the concept of gender perspective (Martínez Ramos, In press). After the general elections of 2008, the new governor Luis Fortuño repealed Circular Letter 3-2008-2009. Then, during the administration of Alejandro García Padilla there was increase of claims from feminists' groups in favor of incorporating gender equity and gender perspective in the government's public policy (Martínez Ramos, 2022, p.17). In a response to the claims made by feminist's group Senator Mari Tere González from Popular Party, Senate Bill 484 was presented to address gender violence and violence towards women.

Although, the Senate Bill 484 was not approved, in 2015 “the Secretary of Education Rafael Román approved Circular Letter 19-2014-2015” and “Circular Letter 3-2008-2009 was reformulated” (p.18). Circular Letter 19-2014-2015 was the Public Policy to include gender equity in the curriculum of the PRDE, while Circular Letter 3-2008-2009 integrated gender perspective as a transversal theme. Around the time of the approval of these curricular letters there were groups who presented opposition to the implementation of the *PRDE Gender Equity Manual*. Martínez Ramos (In press) argues how several groups were opposed to the inclusion “of sexual education materials that from their perspective were reprehensible”. At the time of writing, these

groups continue their animosity toward similar curricular and legislative initiatives.

Amidst the controversies mentioned before, the *English Program Gender Equity Manual* was published in December 2015, by the PRDE under the administration of Secretary of Education Rafael Román. The aforementioned Secretary of Education was appointed by then Governor, Alejandro García Padilla. Between 2014 and 2016 the government of the island of Puerto Rico experienced bankruptcy and increased taxes. These events lead to the approval in the United States Senate of the Puerto Rico Oversight Management and Economic Stability Act (*PROMESA*) in 2016, which imposed a fiscal board that is still supervising the island's finances.

While this social and economic turmoil seemed to be unrelated to the PRDE, it affected the agency severely. According to Gillespie (2015), Puerto Rico experienced the first failure to pay the debt during August 2015. Although, Governor García Padilla announced his intentions to figure out a plan; “a group of 34 hedge funds [...] funded a report by three economist that calls for Puerto Rico to close some schools, reduce university subsidies and fire teachers, so it can pay back its debt” (Gillespie, 2015). The results of said report showed that “the island's population declined by 212,000 people [...] – while- the total government spending jumped up 29% over the same time” (Gillespie, 2015). In response to the issues mentioned before, the PRDE made attempts to make several changes in their policies. One of the policies that

the PRDE tried to establish was the Decennial plan. On April 16, 2013, Project 1032 (authored by Jaime Perelló, president of the House of Representatives) was presented. This project intended “to carry on main changes into the educational system, such as the implantation of the Montessori model in Primary School or the depoliticization of the education [SIC]” (López, 2015, p. 66). In addition, this plan tried to avoid the political changes that affected the agency every time a government administration changed. Although this plan was initially approved by Puerto Rico’s House of Representatives, the Puerto Rican Senate approved it with modifications. As a result of the changes, the House of Representatives did not approve the project.

Another attempt to make changes to PRDE policies was directed toward standardized testing. “Tu meta cuenta” was a campaign used by the PRDE to promote the new standardized tests named “Medición y Evaluación para la Transformación Académica” (META), as part of the academic evaluation of the student. The new changes proposed that any student who does not show progress on their standardized test average would have to take extended lessons in the summer. Also, the policy proposed a scholarship incentive to students. The scholarship was based on the number of subjects approved with advanced scores. Those students who approved three subjects with advanced scores would get the scholarship. In addition, those students who approved two subjects with advanced scores and one subject with

proficient score would also qualify for the scholarship. Another alternative to qualify for the scholarship was for Eleventh grade students to score 3,000 points or more on the University Admission and Assessment Test (PEAU for its acronym in Spanish). Besides the scholarship, students who qualified could apply for their graduation certification and move on to postsecondary studies. According to Quiles (2015), these changes addressed the claims of educators and communities, who questioned the validity of the standardized tests. Rafael Román justified the changes by saying that many students had better scores in the University admissions tests because it affected their future decisions. The project started as a pilot, and it was expected to become official in 2018. However, in April of 2017, the new Secretary of Education, Julia Keleher announced that the standardized tests would not be part of students' final grade, at the same time emphasizing the importance of using them to measure the academic progress of students. The policies referred before were discussed during the administration of the Secretary Rafael Román, who was also the secretary who oversaw the design of the *Puerto Rico Department of Education Gender Equity Manual*. These policies represented an effort to enact educational and social reforms.

Despite numerous attempted changes and reviews to public education in Puerto Rico over the past ten years, one of the more significant curricular changes has revolved around gender and its inclusion in the curriculum. Gender issues was an issue that Governor García Padilla's administration

decided to address. Similar to President Barack Obama, who also made several changes to make sure women and LGBTQ communities were treated equally, Governor García Padilla worked to implement several changes to improve education regarding topics of gender in Puerto Rican schools. Puerto Rico Law 22 of 2013 enumerated policies approved by the Obama administration to abolish discrimination against LGBTQ people. One federal regulation was to ensure access to housing to people “regardless sexual orientation or gender identity” (Ley No° 22, 2013). Another policy mentioned in Law 22 of 2013 was a memorandum on hospitals visitations which consisted of “prohibiting hospitals participating in the Medicare and Medicaid programs from discriminating with respect to patient visitation rights, inter alia, based on sexual orientation and gender identity” (translated by author, p. 8). In addition, Law 22 of 2013 itself deals with the prevention of unequal treatment based on sex or gender orientation in public or private employment in Puerto Rico. Besides the federal and local laws mentioned before, on June 26, 2015, a decision by the United States Supreme Court declared unconstitutional the prohibition of marriage among people of the same sex in all the states of the nation –including Puerto Rico (Cordero-Mercado, 2015). Under these social and legal change climates, the gender equity *Manual* surfaced in Curriculum Letter (CC) 19 (2014-2015). This document stated that “Public policy on gender equity and its integration into the curriculum of the Puerto Rico Department of Education as an instrument


to promote the dignity of the human being and the equality of all before the law.” The goal of CC 19 (2014-2015) was to strengthen and institutionalize gender equity in all academic disciplines, levels, initiatives, and projects of the PRDE.

CDA of Puerto Rico Department of Education English Program Gender Equity

Text analysis

Cover and introductory pages

The *Puerto Rico Department of Education English Program Gender Equity Manual* is 181 pages in length and is framed by a cover page that presents boys and girls wearing casual clothing and school backpacks. In addition, the cover page presents the map of Puerto Rico filled with pictures of people dressed in the uniforms typically used in different occupations such as a chef, physician, teacher, mechanic, pilot, and engineer. The only image that could perhaps be interpreted differently was that of the engineer who was wearing a business-like suit, shirt and tie accompanied by a safety hat. What was interesting about the initial image on the front page of this document was that in terms of the gender distribution, the teacher and chef are female. The pilot, engineers and mechanics are male, while the physicians in the image are comprised of four males and three females. In the case of the students, there are three males and three females. Also, the logo

of the agency stands in the right corner with the Spanish acronym “DE” which means “Departamento de Educación”. The dominant colors are yellow and green. In the bottom left corner, there are two symbols which represent the male and female gender. These symbols have an equal symbol in the middle; the symbols were presented as follows: . These symbols internationally mean that men and women are equal.

After the cover page, this *Manual* has a presentation page, a public notice, and a message from PRDE’s Secretary, as well as a message from the Women’s Advocate Office. Under the public notice the PRDE clarifies that the Spanish terms “maestro, director, estudiante” and any other will be used in masculine gender but refer to both genders. The terms “teacher, principal, supervisor and student” include the masculine and the feminine gender in English, yet in Spanish it does not include the feminine gender. Another relevant detail regarding language usage in this *Manual* was that the messages from the Secretary of Education and the Women’s Advocate Office were written in Spanish, while all the other sections of the *Manual* were written in English. When the Manuals of other subjects were observed, the messages from the Secretary and the Women’s Advocate Office were the same for the 15 manuals designed. The message from PRDE’s Secretary mentions challenges that Puerto Rican society has endured. Rafael Román mentions political, economic, cultural, and social challenges. Furthermore, Román emphasized social issues as being the most critical challenges,

including violence as one of the major social concerns. Following the Secretary's message, the message from the Women's Advocate Office, Wanda Vázquez Garced, expressed the need to address "the gaps among girls and boys" (translated by author, p. VI.). In addition, she stated that these gaps "highlight among girls' inequalities, discrimination, and disparity in human rights" (translated by author, pg. VI).

After the messages from these government officials, the document presents the editors and writers who presumably worked on the creation of the document who include: PRDE's Secretary, various PRDE sub-secretaries, the English program director, as well as the Women's Advocate Office . Additionally, these pages present the English Program Committee which included: School facilitators and English teachers. In addition, the document published a validation committee that included: members of the Women's Advocate Office, University Professors, and a member of a non-governmental organization. The *Manual* has a Table of Contents, a section that includes definition of terms, an introduction, and recommendations. After these introductory pages, the *Manual* presents the curriculum material which is divided by grades ranging from first to twelfth grade. As was discussed in Chapter III, for the purpose of this research we focused the analysis on the 9th grade section of the *Manual*.

CDA of 9th grade Section of the Manual

The 9th grade section contains a total of 20 pages. These pages are subdivided according to the PRDE curriculum maps units. These subsections are:

- 9.1 Genres overview, elements of fiction
- 9.2 Communicating my ideas
- 9.3 Communicating about our world through informational texts
- 9.4 It's a matter of opinion
- 9.5 Making connections

Each subsection contains: Title, subject, grade, unit, standards, thematic activities, theme and subjects, description, purpose, objective, procedure, and materials. It is interesting to note that this *Manual* uses the word “subject” in 2 different contexts; one to indicate the class subject such as English, and another to indicate the transversal theme used. Also, the word “theme” is used to determine the skills. Moreover, the words “purpose” and “objective” are both used, and from my own experiences as a PRDE teacher, I can attest to the fact that PRDE planning encourages the use of objectives over purposes. Even though, the *Manual* presents some discrepancies in terms of planning, most of the discourse used in the *Manual* is familiar to PRDE teachers.

9.1 Genres overview, elements of fiction

This unit's title explicitly says that the students will be working with genres and elements of fiction, yet there are no expectations mentioned on reading. The objective of the unit stated that "After discussing the elements of fiction and the short stories, the students will write a fictional narrative short story using a guideline" (p. 108). The 'activities theme' said that they will work with elements of fiction, and the purpose states that the students will "Identify elements of fiction in the short stories" (p. 108). While the expectations mentioned are related to listening, writing, and speaking, the lack of a reading expectation might cause confusion for a teacher in the implementation process. Since unit 9.1 requires teachers to tackle reading and elements of fiction, the unit does not provide the tools for a proper justification of the skill. The absence of expectations concerning reading might create a situation when teachers design their lessons, since there is no harmony among the activities and the justified skills. One possible remedy to this would have been to add an expectation in the reading area such as expectation 9.R.2L which states that the students will "Determine a theme or main idea of a literary text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot" (Puerto Rico Department of Education, 2014, p. 57).

Adding said explanation is necessary, since the students will have to produce a story based on the reaction to a short text given. The description

states that the students will write a story based on the text *The Nervous Plane Pilot Woman*. This text reads "Check the landing gear! We're about to crash, yelled the pilot to her copilot as she anxiously adjusted the throttle of the plane" (p. 108). In the initial activities, the *Manual* states that the teacher will be in charge of guiding the class in identifying the elements of fiction. Also, the initial activity asks students to detail and define the elements of fiction. The students will be using a chart with all the elements of fiction mentioned to create their own fictional narrative short story. At this point, the lesson concentrated on producing narrative stories, and that might be the reason why it did not include expectations on reading; yet the inclusion of those expectations is needed in this case. In the setting section, there is a list of "historical time setting" which mentions "manner of speech, jargon, slang clothing, vehicles, money, tools, names, custom manners, food and drink" (p. 109). The setting list does not provide examples or a procedure to explain those terms to the students. Definitions such as jargon, slang and manners of speech may work as a reference for the educator, but it is unlikely to be as meaningful to the students.

The closing section asks students to: Revise, illustrate the story, and discuss the work with the teacher individually. Then, the activity requires students to analyze and explain the stereotypes used through the story. Finally, the activity suggests a new approach to avoid gender stereotypes. The closing activity presented the word stereotypes for the first time in this

unit. While defining, the elements of fiction might be a good strategy to allow the students to write a story creatively; the strategy did not appear to be enough to meet the purpose of the gender *Manual* itself. Furthermore, the strategy of using a short text such as The Nervous Plane Pilot Woman is not accurate enough, since the *Manual* had to provide space for the text to be discussed in order for the students to have a context of the message that it was trying to convey. The example of section 9.1 demonstrated the use of a short text to promote the writing of narratives. However, other than a potentially catchy title, discussions of gender and gender roles in the workplace were treated as an afterthought.

Perhaps another way to approach this activity could have been to start with a discussion of stereotypes which runs parallel to the text, so the students can discuss the number of women working as pilots nowadays. In addition, the absence of a synthesis of the elements of fiction in the *Manual* could have provided for the discussion of issues related to stereotyping and gender roles. Another alternative could have included the use of a one-page text to monitor the elements of fiction but said text could also allow for the discussion of stereotypes; thus, providing room for students to interact with the teacher in defining and providing examples of what stereotypes were. This seemed essential, yet it was a forgotten aspect of this unit. These steps would have allowed space in the unit to write a story without stereotypes as the closing activity suggested.

9.2 Communicating my ideas

The expectations presented in this unit were related to listening, speaking, writing, reading and language. The activities' theme featured "Personal Narrative and Memoir" (p. 115), yet throughout the unit there was no activity that referenced those specific themes. The title *Personal Narrative on: The other sex is...opinions and feelings concerning the opposite sex* is mentioned. This specific title seemed to be related to the activities given to the student, yet no section dedicated to the personal narrative aspect appeared in the lesson. The purpose of the activity was to "identify the elements of personal narrative and explore preconceptions, attitudes and anxieties concerning the 'opposite' " (p. 115). The objective explained that "[a]fter discussing their feeling and opinion about the opposite sex the students will write a three-paragraph essay and present verbally to the class" (p. 115). In the initial activities, the students are supposed to have a discussion using guide questions geared towards identifying similarities and differences among themselves and their classmates. The students are supposed to consider their answers to the questions to write an essay. The development activity said, "the students will begin to work with the worksheet of the guidelines given [...] Each student reads his/her paper to the class" (p. 115). Although the initial activities do mention writing an essay, the development activity referred to guidelines contained in a worksheet, but no worksheet was attached to the unit lesson. Also, as part of

the development of the activities, the students are asked to read their essays and the rest of the class is supposed to respond orally or in writing. The activity suggests the teacher to encourage the students to discuss their agreements and disagreements, but all conversations should be kept positive. The responses are supposed to be discussed in class, and the students should reflect on the similarities and differences when discussing the topic with the whole class.

In the closing activities, the teacher is supposed to guide the discussion around positive statements on the topic of gender, yet the discussion should be directed towards male and the female gender constructions, so the students must limit their answers to those guidelines. The activities in this unit had issues with the organization and the conceptualization of gender. The way in which the discussion of sex and gender originated from the binary construct of “the opposite sex” might seem as if the purpose of the discussion is to exclude non-binary gender constructions. In addition, the language of this activity is directed to segregate according to stereotypical characteristics of what certain gender should be. Moreover, there was considerable weakness in the organization of the materials, the missing worksheets, and the mention of unrelated worksheets, which makes the unit difficult to follow. A major challenge was that the title refers to “personal narratives and memoir” yet there is total absent of exemplary texts in that area, which is necessary so the lesson models what is expected for the

students to produce in the activities. In the materials section, it explained that the students' writing samples were the materials, but it did not provide a model. The lesson did have questions, but the instructions seemed long. Also, the unit referred to an absent worksheet and a story elements worksheet that was also absent and unrelated to the primary objective of the unit. To present the materials more effectively, it would have been helpful to use a chart to organize the activities chronologically. Also, the chart could have included a time frame for each activity.

Regarding the discussion and elements of sex and gender, nothing in this activity was really about how individuals have personally made sense of people from different gender. The fact that the concept of 'opposite sex' is reinforced is a clear misconception of the issues of sex and gender, while segregating people's characteristics in stereotypical manners. Teachers or administrators really need to evaluate the discussion of sex and gender issues, as the narratives might create even more misconceptions and stereotypes regarding sex and gender issues. Moreover, this topic presented sex and gender solely in terms of male and female; this did not give room for the discussion of sex and gender from the non-binary perspective. Once more, unit 9.2 omitted the very real issues faced by non-binary students. So, these activities seem to reinforce stereotypical situations where non-binary students might find themselves unable to fit within the constructions of gender presented in the class activities.

9.3 Communicating about our world through informational texts

The expectations for this unit were related to the standards of speaking, reading, writing, and language. The activities' theme said, "What differences does a word make?" and "Analyzing Gender and Race Language Bias" (p. 117). The theme was also related to gender and race bias vocabulary. The subjects were "English, Career Awareness, Health and Life Skills" (p. 117). The description detailed that the teacher had to assign students the task of creating new words. This activity required the students to identify language that was gender or race biased. The activity detailed that the students must work to create language that was bias free. The purpose was to "identify language that is gender or race biased and create bias free words" (p. 117). The objective was to "Provided a short reading selection the student will identify gender" (p. 117) (sic).

In the initial activities, the students are required to read a worksheet on Gender Language with the title covered up. Then, the activity required that the students debate whether they agreed or disagreed with the information provided. The developmental activity directs the students towards a guided discussion on the language mistakes found. The next activity required that students create lists that reflected ways to change the vocabulary to gender and race neutral words. Next, the activity suggest that the groups of students prepared vocabulary flashcards about unbiased words. After the procedure section, there was a reading selection titled *Gender*

Language: What difference does a name make? This selection discussed the job vocabulary in relation to gender. Also, it introduced the argument saying, “For many years certain jobs were only performed by one gender, but as times have changed and more women enter the work force jobs once reserved for certain genders have changed” (p. 118). The selection stated that “[l]anguage has had to change to reflect the change of the workforce,” yet words related to gender were binary or done in terms of “men and women” which reflected the binary gender view. The text concluded by stating, “[w]e need to reinforce positive gender recognition in the work place, both in traditional and non-traditional jobs” (p. 118). Besides the fact that more women started in jobs that were once reserved for men; men have also started to enter positions once reserved primarily for women. The changes in the way jobs were once perceived was beneficial to note since they provide diverse career opportunities and allow students to visualize career paths from a more equitable angle.

After the discussion on the text on gender, the *Manual* provided a list with the names of 20 job related vocabulary to determine if they are gender neutral or not. The words are presented in two lists. The first list was labeled “Words related to jobs” and the following words appeared in four columns: foreman, repairman, fisherman, congressman, manpower, housewife, weatherman, mailman, policeman, sportsmanship, anchorman, man made,

meter maid, cleaning lady, men working, journeyman, freshman, manhole, landlord, and tomboy

The second list was also titled: Words related to jobs and had the subheading “Words and Phrases.” This list was organized in two columns and the words included were: Dear Sir, “You guys,” Bachelor’s Degree, Illegitimate child, stewardess, white lie, manmade, woman’s intuition, layman, heroine, tomboy, policeman, draftsman, manhole, old wives’ tale, housewife, suffragette, congressman, mankind, landlord, chairman, black lie, sportsmanship, lady luck, cleaning lady, man and wife, workman’s compensation, waitress, macho male nurse, legal alien, minority.

Although many of these words are used by some people, many of the words included on the list are not used in the same way in our context, or just not used at all. Words such as “manhole” are rather uncommon. While the use of uncommon words could be used to study the morphology of English words, using morphological angle analysis was not one of the stated goals of the unit. If the objective of this lesson unit were revised, it could be used to have students identify language that was gender or race biased. The unit stated that students would identify biased words in reading selection. Yet, when the reading selection was examined, the biased words were grouped in a chart. The structure of the lesson had already determined the words students should identify with the use of a chart. Although this structure might help the teacher when presenting the words and to check the students’

work at the end of the analysis, it should be made clear to the teacher that the list should be used at the end, after a proper analysis was conducted. While I understand that most words used in this activity were intended to have students analyze them and create new meanings, some of the words (i.e. “manpower”) do not correspond to job vocabulary, which could make the activity confusing to students.

In the closing of Unit 9.3, the activity states that the students should compare their flashcards and discuss the results of each of their flashcards. They also are supposed to reflect on the judgement of their peers when creating new words. The teacher is supposed to “ask students if they know the connotations behind each term [...] –and- if they can come up with ideas of where the term originated and how it has changed” (p. 119). The materials used were obtained from the Alaska Department of Education webpage. The activity guides students towards using the list of words given to question gender issues, but I consider that this list was outdated. The teachers and students implementing this unit could have benefited greatly from a more localized list of words, where a similar analysis could have taken place. Doing so would allow students to use more commonly used words and increase the chances that they will use such verbiage in the future. Also, these words in the list were not representative of the common vocabulary used for job listings in the Puerto Rican context. If the intention was to analyze job-

related vocabulary in terms of gender issues, the words chosen would be more meaningful to students if they were more local.

9.4 It's a matter of opinion

The expectations for this unit were related to the listening, writing, and language standards. The activity's theme was *Men's work or Women's work? Identifying and analyzing traditional gender roles in the workplace*. The theme was "[e]valuating the effectiveness of persuasive styles" (p. 120). The subjects were English, Career Awareness, Math, Health and Life Skills. The students used an attached occupation checklist to pair up jobs to gender, as well as "to write an essay to persuade others to avoid gender stereotyping in the workplace" (p. 120). Also, "this activity will be the discovery and discussion of persistent gender stereotyping, with its wage and status implication, in terms of career opportunities" (p. 120). The purpose of the unit was to "persuade others to avoid gender stereotyping in the workplace" (p. 120). The objective was to "use occupation and career readiness vocabulary without difficulty" (p. 120).

The initial activities ask the students to use a checklist to read about the occupations and identify careers/jobs unknown to them. First, the students are supposed to match the jobs they associated to male, female, or both genders. Second, the activity requires the students to answer questions on their preferences of each occupation. The questions are directed to give reasons for their occupational choices. Third, the students are supposed to

research occupations in small group discussions, or any alternate group discussion method selected by the teacher. In the development, the students are supposed to answer the following questions:

Which group “male” or “female” had the largest number? Which jobs require working with people? Which group had the larger number? Which job have the most “status,” and, of those, how many are designated “males” and how many “females”? Which jobs offer the most salary potential, and, of those, how many are designated “males” and how many “females? This will require research to complete. Which jobs require the most/least amount of education, and those how many are designated “males and how many “females? Will also require research (p.121).

These questions were designed to generate discussions regarding gender issues, particularly in the workplace.

In the closing activity, the teacher is supposed to assess the students’ tasks and then “the students will write a persuasive essay on gender equity in the workforce” (p. 121). This unit suggested activities for Math Connections, as well as research. The materials used were extracted from *Manual* developed by the Alaska Department of Education. In this case, the occupations checklist was more pertinent and had a better design than the list from the previous unit.

The activities associated with unit 9.4 compelled students to think about stereotyping careers according to gender constructions. However, the *Manual* could have done a better job in presenting a more meaningful activity. Puerto Rican students should definitely know that jobs should not be stereotyped according to gender, but there are other discussions that teachers need to promote in the classrooms. For instance, there is still a lot to discuss in relation to the pay by gender gap, the low number of women in positions of power, LGBTQIA access to equitable job opportunities, as well as family and medical leave for parents in the workplace. These topics impact all members of society, but particularly those who have historically been disenfranchised, namely women and the LGBTQIA community. Teachers need to have access to structured instructional materials that allow them to guide pertinent discussions with sensitivity and respect. Unfortunately, Unit 9.4 did not provide these.

9.5 Making connections

In this unit, the expectations were related to the listening, reading, writing and language standards. The activity's theme was, "types of characters and how to characterize them" (p. 124). The theme was "developing critical and analytical thinking about literary characters". The subjects are, "[c]areer awareness, English, Health and Life Skills" (p. 124). The description detailed how the topics of characterization and avoiding gender stereotyping were to be presented to the students. The purpose of this

unit was to “Persuade others to avoid gender stereotyping in the workplace” (p. 124). The objective specified how the students should discuss and define characterization, gender stereotypes and avoiding stereotypes. Also, the objective specified that the students were to distinguish which female action heroes were presented using stereotypical images. Before the procedure there was a note that stated:

The heroine (*sic*) of this lesson is for students to articulate what qualities they enjoy or admire in a female action hero, and why. The teacher should point out that it’s not ‘bad’ to enjoy such attributes but that it's important for students to be aware of the ways in which girls and women are (or are not) portrayed (p. 124).

This note appeared because the activity is designed for the students to watch sections of a television program that presented male and female action heroes.

The initial activities began by introducing characterization and five types of characters. The following activities stated that students should discuss books read in other English classes and reflected on the characters and the character’s types. The teacher is supposed to explain that the selected female action heroes were recent, since the focus of the lessons was the images of girls and women used in the selected TV programs. Once the six terms were defined, the next activity ask students to select a group and a character from the story. Afterwards, the activity explained that students are

supposed to write a paragraph about their ideas, as well as present their ideas to the class. In the development activities it explains that the blackboard should be split in two columns: one column for male action heroes and another column for female action heroes. The students are supposed to be asked to reflect on TV programs with action heroes; as well as listing them according to the columns in the board. The next activity details that the students should discuss their opinions about these programs and describe traits that make the action heroes female or male. Then, the activity requires the students to mention the qualities and reflect on similarities and differences between male and female superheroes. The suggested TV programs were Wonder Woman, Cat Woman or Electra. Before watching the programs, the students should be asked to reflect on the characteristics associated with girls and women, as well those associated with boys and men in the program. The activity that follows watching the programs, requires the students to answer seven questions concerning characteristics, stereotypes, and qualities. The questions are shown in the following:

Did you find that the characteristics of boys and men, and of girls and women, were stereotypical? Which of these characteristics might be limiting? How? Which of these characteristics might be positive? How? Do any of these characteristics accurately reflect the qualities of real girls and boys? What might happen if most children's programs portrayed boys and girls in a stereotypical manner? Do the

toy action figures of these superheroes counter these stereotypes, or reinforce them? If students have younger siblings who play with television action figures, do they create their own stories or stick with the plot lines of the program? (p.125).

The following activities requires the class to divide into small groups and the students are supposed to take on the role of producers of a cartoon program. The activity states that the role should be chosen based on positive traits of female or male cartoons. In addition, the activity requires the students to portray their characters non- stereotypically by drawing their heroes and sidekicks. The materials used were acquired from a webpage owned by the Toronto Board of Education. The next step was to read an article discussing gender and female action heroes. This article pinpointed topics such as representation, characterization, and stereotypes. After the article, five questions were provided that can be used to discuss the article. These questions were:

From Sailor Moon to the Legend of Korra: Female Action
Heroes Discussion

Questions:

1. According to the article, why have television producers traditionally been reluctant to create children's programs that

feature girls or women as superheroes? Do you think that they're right? Why or why not?

2. Stereotypes are common story-telling tools, but they can also be limiting. How can male and female stereotypes be limiting in terms of how the character the characters are described, what characters are able to do, and the stories that can be told?

3. How was Sailor Moon different from traditional North American cartoons? In what ways was she a non-stereotypical action hero, and in what ways was she a stereotypical female action hero?

4. According to the article, Korra is an example of female action hero who does not have very many stereotypically female characteristics. Can you think of any male action heroes who have few or no male characteristics? Do you think such a character would be successful? Why or why not?

5. In a short paragraph, respond to the following statement:

Television clearly makes an impression on kids today, whether it's in what they think they should look like, or the qualities they associate with women and men. The media are powerful tools that can either reinforce negative stereotypes or

present strong role models for young girls and boys today
(p.128).

When compared to the rest of the units for grade nine, the materials selected for this unit seem a lot more pertinent. The topics were related to entertainment, but complex enough to be discussed in a class. The time frame of two to three days established for the unit should be extended in order to discuss the topics appropriately.

Interpretation

Through the analysis of the five units published in the PRDE *English Program Gender Equity Manual*, the categories that emerged from this analysis were stereotypes, occupations, and gender inclusivity.

Stereotypes

This concept was discussed several times in the *Manual*, yet the *Manual* itself was not free of stereotypes. For example, the cover page, perhaps the most important in setting the tone for the document, uses images of professionals in what appeared to be the historical gender associated with said career. For example, the picture on the cover presented women stereotypically in caregiving occupational roles such as chef, teacher, and physicians. While some might argue that there was representation of women in science careers, these images depicted women physicians as the only career path in science for women. Furthermore, the images on the cover page

also stereotyped men by presenting them in jobs such as a pilot, a mechanic, and engineers. The implied message somehow limited men to pursue technical careers exclusively, and omitted men as possible caregivers. Another example of rampant stereotyping was the way the image on the cover page only presented the male and the female gender symbols and omitted non-binary gender constructions. The omission of non-binary gender constructions was prevalent throughout the entire *Manual* since the topic was simply not addressed.

Unit 9.1 tried to work on the concept of stereotypes by presenting a text where women appeared as airplane pilots; but the text had just a few lines and did not provide any room to conceptualize the term “stereotype” with students. The unit had a weakness within the strategy section since it allotted more time to defining the elements of the story than to the discussion of stereotypes itself. Another instance where stereotyping was discussed was in the unit 9.5. This was the first time where characters from pop culture were used in the entire 9th grade *Manual*, definitely a positive finding.

The exercise in Unit 9.5 allowed students to consider where stereotypes could have originated as they reflected on their own upbringing, this strategy can also connect well with themes such as self-esteem and bullying. Moreover, it discussed the portrayal of female characters as heroes, which is a common characteristic of contemporary young adult (YA) literature. For instance, it is said that characters such as “Wonder Woman

paved the way for countless other comic books, superheroines and remains a favorite among girls and women to this day (Robbins, n.d., p. 5).” In general, such portrayals were not common in the 9th grade curricular map. The article presented in the unit discussed female characters representations and stereotypes. As for the concept of stereotypes, there were two occasions where this *Manual* addressed the topic. It is good to keep in mind that this topic was not always presented in the curriculum, so the *Manual* made a good choice when they decided to discuss this concept.

Despite the focus on stereotyping that appeared in Unit 9.1 and 9.5, the constant representation of women and men in traditional jobs added to the relatively mundane and inauthentic activities and work in Unit 9.2 and 9.4 and worked to counteract the stated mission of the document which was to move away from stereotypes. For example, using vocabulary and content that was adopted from Alaska, in a sense sees Puerto Rican children, as being the same as kids in Alaska, despite major differences in their language, culture, climate, and educational experiences. The materials chosen must appeal to students’ interests and be pertinent to the reality of the environment in which they live. Another way in which this *Manual* failed to work with stereotypes effectively was when the concept of the ‘opposite sex’ was reinforced. In addition to these stereotypes, the fact that this *Manual* omitted non-binary gender constructions demonstrated that the *Manual* itself was biased and preferred the traditional stereotypes that it sought to

counteract. Undoubtedly, reinforcing dualistic views of sex and gender was opposite to the mission of avoiding stereotypes. Peña Jordán (2021) explained that “[s]uch binary opposition not only considers the masculine and its expressions as superior to the feminine, but also excludes, discriminates and pathologizes all people who do not comply with said norm or ‘regulatory ideal’ (p. 16).” The idea behind the creation of this *Manual* was to push against the established gender norms here in Puerto Rico; unfortunately, the way it worked this topic only served to reinforce traditional stereotypes.

Occupations

One of the other salient themes of the 9th grade chapter was its focus on careers or occupations. Like the focus on careers in the front cover of the *Manual*, this chapter discussed occupations in Units 9.1, 9.3 and 9.4. In unit 9.1 there was a text referring to a woman pilot. Although the idea of presenting a woman pilot broke stereotype patterns, the fact that the text was very short, may limit class discussions. Also, this text focused the discussion only on the idea of an occupation that had historically been reserved for men, while there were more issues that could have been discussed such as closing the gap between the salaries earned by women and those earned by men, as well as allowing non-binary people to occupy diverse careers.

Unit 9.3 presented a list of words that were stereotypically used to name occupations. This unit also presented a text which opened a forum for

the discussion of the titles used to refer to occupations in terms of gender. In the traditional curriculum this topic was not always presented; thus, its inclusion was a step toward gender fairness. Furthermore, the reading selection presented strong arguments in favor of making a difference through gender inclusive language. Nevertheless, the lesson used a selection and vocabulary related to gender neutral language in the workplace that still needed a lot of work to be truly inclusive since it presented gender only in binary terms.

Unit 9.4 discussed jobs that were historically associated with either men or women. Also, Unit 9.4 reassessed the topic of occupations and gender issues since the students had to match jobs with gender choices that appeared in a list. The topics of fair and equal wages and gender equity in the workforce for women and men was rarely addressed in the PRDE curriculum and it was a definite plus to have a unit that sought to unpack and describe these social issues. Furthermore, this unit, used vocabulary that is considerably more pertinent than the vocabulary used in the previous unit. The common denominator across all units in the 9th grade English portion of the document was the labeling of gender in binary terms. The omission in this document of other genders was particularly important, and particularly unfortunate, given that Madera, Ramos Pibernus, Padilla and Varas-Díaz's (2015) study found that "59% of transgender women were unemployed" (p. 22).

Gender inclusive language

From the very beginning, the Manual made it clear that it was addressing equality in dual terms (i.e. women and men). The inclusion in the cover page of the symbols $\boxed{\text{♂}=\text{♀}}$ made it clear that the document viewed equality solely in binary terms. Additionally, the message from the Women's Advocate Office used binary terms such as boys and girls. In Unit 9.2, the *Manual* employed binary terms in an activity where they asked students to label their thoughts and ideas according to among those corresponding to male or female. Finally, in the last unit the portrayal of female action heroes was an excellent choice, but once more they managed to omit non-binary gender in the discussion. The *Manual* did make an effort to present the plight of women in Puerto Rican society, and it included a discussion of how women were present in the workforce and the gaps in wages that were prevalent when comparing the salaries of men versus those of women in the same or equal positions. However, the analysis also showed that no materials or texts discussing domestic violence were included. This topic has been discussed in the curriculum, but due to the current increase in domestic violence cases in Puerto Rico, it bears repeating in almost every grade. The absence of discussions and content regarding domestic violence as well as individuals who do not fit on the male-female binary downplays the urgency of addressing these issues in the curriculum. Besides undermining their importance, it allows teachers and students to not address these issues, and

at the same time signals to students and teachers that these issues are not relevant.

Likewise, the *Manual* should consider addressing gender in non-binary terms. Batchelor, Ramos and Neiswander (2017), discussed the benefits of implementing an LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum. They argued that YA Literature is a vehicle to include issues concerning LGBTQ students. In their study, they quote Clark and Blackburn (2009), who stated that “Queer youth may not only feel disconnected from school, a place that may feel hateful and unwelcoming, but also from literacy, particularly conventional reading and writing” (p. 26). This study highlights the needs of helping LGBTQ students feel comfortable in the school environment, but also that the curriculum is pertinent to their reality and their families as well. Using curricular materials which represents the diverse student populations in our school systems is a matter of showing respect, pertinence, and representation.

Overall, this *Manual* is useful to introduce gender issues in Puerto Rican schools. Second, it serves the purpose of giving women voice and discussing equal treatment in the employment area. Nevertheless, the omission of discussions regarding domestic violence, as well as non-binary and LGBTQ people, is a major weakness for the curriculum. Despite with these omissions, the ninth-grade curriculum allows students to discuss gender issues that are too often left out of class discussion in English classrooms around the island.

Unfortunately, it is precisely the political changes, which did not allow the PRDE to make a greater campaign and promote the use of the *Manual* in the classrooms as teachers received no meaningful training after Gov. García Padilla left office. In fact, the following secretary Julia Keleher, who took charge of the PRDE under Ricardo Roselló's term, revoked Circular Letter 19-2014-2015 better known as the public policy on gender equity, as well as a section of Circular letter 16-2015-2016 which dealt with school uniforms. As Julia Keleher revoked the curriculum letters implemented by the previous administration, she approved Circular Letter 32-2016-2017. In terms of curricular implications, the *PRDE Gender Equity Manual* might be an adequate tool to start discussing the topics of gender, yet the texts and materials need to be revised and evaluated. As an educator, I recommend using the units 9.3, 9.4 and 9.5. As with any curriculum written for such a large audience, teachers will always have to adjust the materials and the strategies selected given their students' language proficiency, background knowledge and interest as well as some of the glaring weaknesses that these units present.

Precisely because the selection of reading materials was one of the most salient weaknesses of the 9th grade units, it is important, reexamine the textbooks that the PRDE uses in the 9th grade. For this reason, the following pages will be dedicated to a content analysis of five narrative texts from the 9th grade PRDE National Geographic Inside textbook. Then, I selected five

narrative texts that potentially discuss gender issues. Ultimately, I will compare the two sets of texts for a total of ten different texts aimed at young adult readers.

Content Analysis of Selected Narrative texts (CA)

The purpose of this CA was to formulate criteria to compare, with regards to addressing gender issues, PRDE's English 9th grade narrative literature (NG) with other popular texts not included in the traditional curriculum (PN). In this CA, a summary of each text is presented followed by the findings. In this phase, the findings were presented by discussing the categories in the checklist attached in Appendix 1. The content categories in the checklist were: characters, names, and titles, firstness and occupations. These categories were obtained from Domínguez (2013), which studied gender bias in textbooks. The characters were analyzed through detailed descriptions. The characters' occupational roles were analyzed by describing which occupations were mentioned assigned to each character in the texts. The category names in titles refers to what names or gender references the title had. Firstness refers to the order in which each gender references (names or pronouns) were presented in a sentence; this research specifically counted the first noun or pronoun that appeared in each sentence. The four categories were analyzed by description as well as by counting the frequency of gender constructions presented in each text. The gender constructions used where: Male, female, neutral, and non-binary. The CA was divided into two

processes or phases. The first process searched for the four categories previously mentioned (character, names in titles, firstness and occupations) in the ten texts studied. The second process examined the frequency of gender included and/or omitted in each of the four categories mentioned before. Lastly, a section of this chapter included a synthesis of the findings and a description as to how frequently and how adequate these texts discussed gender issues in 9th grade English classes in Puerto Rico's public schools.

Summary of texts

National Geographic's Inside for Grade 9 texts (NG) was assigned by PRDE to be used in schools within the San Juan Region. The eight units of the textbook presented various texts aligned to Puerto Rico's Common Core Standards. This CA included five narrative texts from different units. The first text analyzed was titled *The Clever Old Woman*. This story is a folktale that detailed the problems faced by young, ignorant chief who made the mistake of mistreating the elders of the village. The chief ordered old people to be "taken to the mountains and abandoned." A farmer decided to hide his clever mother in a cave. After the elders were abandoned, Lord Higa invaded and ask the villagers to complete three impossible tasks. The tasks were solved by the clever old woman who decided to reveal her hiding spot. The folktale has a moral lesson about respecting the knowledge of elders in the community.

The second text was Tony Johnston's *American Names*. This story is about Arturo, a Mexican boy who moved to United States and faced identity issues regarding his name. His new teacher wanted to change his Spanish name to Arthur. Arturo's friends, who were Hispanic, also faced the same name change request. Arturo's *Abuelita* represented a strong female figure who makes Arturo, and his friends, stand up and defend their heritage.

The third text was Sandra Cisneros' *From the House on Mango Street*. This story had a collection of vignettes related to Esperanza's neighborhood. These specific texts did not mention the name of the narrator and protagonist, who was Esperanza; but since these vignettes were taken from the book *The House on Mango Street*, if the original book is read, you can observe that the narrator of the book was Esperanza. The vignettes are *The House on Mango Street*, *Four Skinny Trees*, *A Smart Cookie*, *A House of my own* and *Mango says goodbye sometimes*. *The House on Mango Street* vignette discussed how Esperanza felt about moving and her new house. The author of *Four Skinny Trees* compared the nature of the trees with the narrator's personality. *A Smart cookie* presented the regrets of Esperanza's mother because she did not complete a professional career, even though she had the potential. At the same time, Esperanza's mother advised her to go to school and complete a career. On *A House of my own*. Esperanza described how she wants her house to be in the future. Besides, Esperanza made a point about wanting to own the house herself. On *Mango says goodbye*

sometimes, the narrator says that the house becomes “she”; specifically, she says “She does not hold me with both arms. She sets me free”.

The fourth text was titled *Indian Summer*. This is a story about Cristina, a Puerto Rican girl who moves to Connecticut. She was shy about using English because she thinks other students will make fun of her accent. While she was taking her classes, she met Kathy and Jeremy who helped her feel welcome in her new school.

The fifth text was titled *Nadia the Willful*. Nadia was known for her strong temper, which was only tamed by her beloved brother Hamed. Unfortunately, her brother died. Then, her dad Sheik Tarik forbid the people of her tribe to mention Hamed’s name. This situation did not allow Nadia to mourn and honor her brother. In the process, Nadia demonstrated her willfulness by facing her dad, Sheik Tarik. In the end, she discovered that her dad was only doing this to manage his sorrow. Finally, they talked and understood that honoring Hamed’s memory and speaking about his life was necessary to heal.

Potential narrative literature that addresses gender issues (PN) are those texts revised by the researcher to compare and contrast them with PRDE National Geographic Inside’s series 9. For this CA five popular texts were chosen that addressed gender issues. These texts were selected after a review of literature of exemplary YA Literature used to discuss gender in the ESL classrooms. The texts selected had authors from different nationalities

and all addressed gender issues. Luis Negrón, Sandra Cisneros, Anna-Marie McLemore, Dahlia Adler, and Tessa Gratton are writers with diverse perspectives and backgrounds which have tackled gender issues in their narratives.

Table 2- Narrative text selected for Content Analysis (CA)

National Geographic’s texts (NG)	Popular texts with potential narrative literature that address gender issues (PN).
1. <i>American Names</i> by Tony Johnston on page 16-27	1. <i>Women Hollering Creek</i> from <i>Women Hollering Creek and Other Stories</i> by Sandra Cisneros
2. <i>From the House on Mango Street</i> by Sandra Cisneros on page 60-70	2. <i>Junito</i> from <i>Mundo Cruel</i> by Luis Negrón
3. <i>Indian Summer</i> by Carmen T. Bernier-Grand on page 290-301	3 <i>Roja</i> by Anna-Marie McLemore, from <i>All Out: The No-Longer Secret Stories of Queer Teens throughout the Ages</i>
4. <i>Nadia the Willful</i> by Sue Alexander on page 390-400	4. <i>Molly’s Lips</i> by Dahlia Adler, from <i>All Out: The No-Longer Secret Stories of Queer Teens throughout the Ages</i>
5. <i>The Clever Old Woman</i> , folktale on page 472-473	5. <i>Three Witches</i> by Tessa Gratton, from <i>All Out: The No-Longer Secret Stories of Queer Teens throughout the Ages</i>

The first text was Luis Negrón’s *Junito* from the book *Mundo Cruel* which was published in 2010. *Junito* pictures the fears of a very misogynist man, who is afraid of what might happen to his son. It makes references to gay men by saying “they even kiss each other” (Negrón, 2010, p. 46). Also, the narrator says, “they belong to the other team” (p. 46), and “they even get

married and have kids and everything” (p. 48). Even though the word “guys” can be used to a group without gender distinction in this case, the story was translated from Spanish. The original Spanish version said “tipos” for the word guys. Tipos is a colloquial way in which people refer to men. Usually, it is used to refer to men that we are not related or closed to; some people might even use as a derogatory term to refer to a male that the person is not closely related to.

The second text was Ann-Marie McLemore’s *Roja* which was published in 2018 as part of the Anthology *All-out the No Longer Stories of Queer Teens throughout the ages*. This short story uses the language and style of a fairy tale. The setting is El Bajío, México, 1870. Looking at the background details of the setting, most of the situations presented in the story were based on historical fiction. The plot develops in 1864 Mexico during the ruling of the French empire. The main characters are Emilia and León, both with very interesting backgrounds. Emilia was known as Roja, a village girl with red hair, brown skin, short height, wide hipped, with powers she described as rage in the shape of poison. León, also known as El Lobo or Le Loup, had formerly belonged to the French military and his original girl’s name was given to him by his mom. He is described as having a “bound-down chest” that cloaks the fact that he is a boy whose body has the biological characteristics of a female (McLemore, 2018, p. 19). Roja wanted Deputy Oropeza to liberate León, who was considered a traitor to the French army

and a danger to the Mexican army. In addition, to the liberation of León, the conflict in the story also deals with issues of gender identity and body image. For instance, Roja expressed that:

To the men we might have looked like two boys one pressing his mouth to the others. Tonight, we would pull our shirts and trousers for each other, Leon would be a boy no matter the shape of his chest beneath his shirts. And I would let my hair fall from my grandfather's hat and be the girl I had always been to him (p. 27).

The third text was Sandra Cisneros' *Woman Hollering Creek* which was published in 1991 as part of the anthology titled *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories*. This short story is narrated in third person and is set close to the Mexican and Texan border. The characters are Cleófilas, Enriqueeta de León Hernández, Juan Pedro Martínez Sánchez and Don Serafín. It narrates the life of Cleófilas, a woman who married Juan Pedro and moved to what the narrator calls "el otro lado." At the beginning Cleófilas was not sure to marry Juan Pedro, yet her dad, Don Serafín convinced her by reminding her that "I am your father, I will never abandon you" (p. 43). With her father insistence and by reminding herself of her dead mother's love towards her family, she felt sure that marrying Juan Pedro was the best decision. In addition, Cleófilas imagined herself as the woman in the "telenovelas" she always watched. She imagined herself dressing up as the women in the "telenovelas"

and with her own house. Although Cleófilas hoped for a perfect life, unfortunately, her husband Juan Pedro turned out to be an abuser; so, she finds herself alone, in a difficult situation with a baby and a second pregnancy. In the end, Cleófilas was saved by a nurse who found a way to help her escape from her home.

The fourth text was Dahlia Adler's *Molly's Lips* which was published in 2018 as part of the anthology *All-out the No Longer Stories of Queer Teens throughout the ages*. Molly and Anabelle are best friends who loved Kurt Cobain. They lived in Seattle, Washington on April 10, 1994, the day Cobain's suicide was announced. In the beginning, Molly narrates how she was attracted to her friend Annabelle, yet she thought Annabelle did not feel the same. On the day of Kurt's death, they decided to attend the ceremony where Courtney Love read to Kurt's fans his last note. While Molly was accompanying Annabelle to the ceremony, Annabelle referred to a time when Kurt stood against homophobes, racists, and misogynists. During this conversation, Molly knew that Annabelle was also attracted to her, but Annabelle was afraid to express it.

The fifth text was Tessa Gratton's *Three witches* which was published in 2018 as part of the anthology *All-out the No Longer Stories of Queer Teens throughout the ages*. This story is set the Kingdom of Castile, in the year 1519. Violante Donoso was in a nun's convent since her brother thought that she needed to be cured. Violante had a relationship with a girl named Inés.

During Violante's stay in the convent she made claims that she was not a witch. While she was confined, nuns came to visit and give her food, and take care of her. Violante felt attracted to a very young nun in particular named Gracia Magdalena. Once, Violante told Gracia Magdalena that she considered her a temptation, and that the church was putting her at risk by allowing Gracia Magdalena to take care of her. The narrator then explains that Gracia Magdalena's mother died during the Inquisition waiting trial for reversion. In the end, Gracia Magdalena gave in to the "temptation" and kissed Violante. During the girls' kiss there was a nun watching them in secret, which lead the readers to question if the temptation was planned, as well as if the elder nun was actually a nun or a witch. In the context of this story, the concept of the witch was used for any woman who did not want to follow the church's order. For this reason, the concept of the witch is mentioned several times in the story.

Characters' Gender Constructions in NG and PN

This category analyzed characters by counting the rate of recurrence of characters found in each gender construction, as well as by describing the characters as presented in the texts selected. There were five texts analyzed from *National Geographic's Inside Series for Grade 9 texts (NG)* and five texts analyzed from *Popular texts with potential narrative literature that address gender issues (PN)*. *NG* texts were analyzed first, then *PN* texts and finally both group of texts were compared and contrasted.

Among the *NG* texts, three texts presented predominantly of neutral characters, and one presented predominantly female characters. One of the texts presented an equal amount of neutral and male characters. As can be observed in Figure 4.1, the text that had an equal amount of male and neutral characters was *Nadia the Willful*. In addition, Figure 4.1 shows that there were no non-binary characters in all five texts selected from DEPR's textbook. The CA of all five texts showed that there were 29 neutral characters, 23 female characters and 20 male characters. The CA also showed that the neutral gender had the highest number of characters; this fact supported the idea that the texts have been written to avoid gender related controversial issues in the curriculum. Although the majority of the characters were neutral, the *NG* texts presented more female characters as protagonists.

Figure 4.1

Characters' Gender Constructions: NG

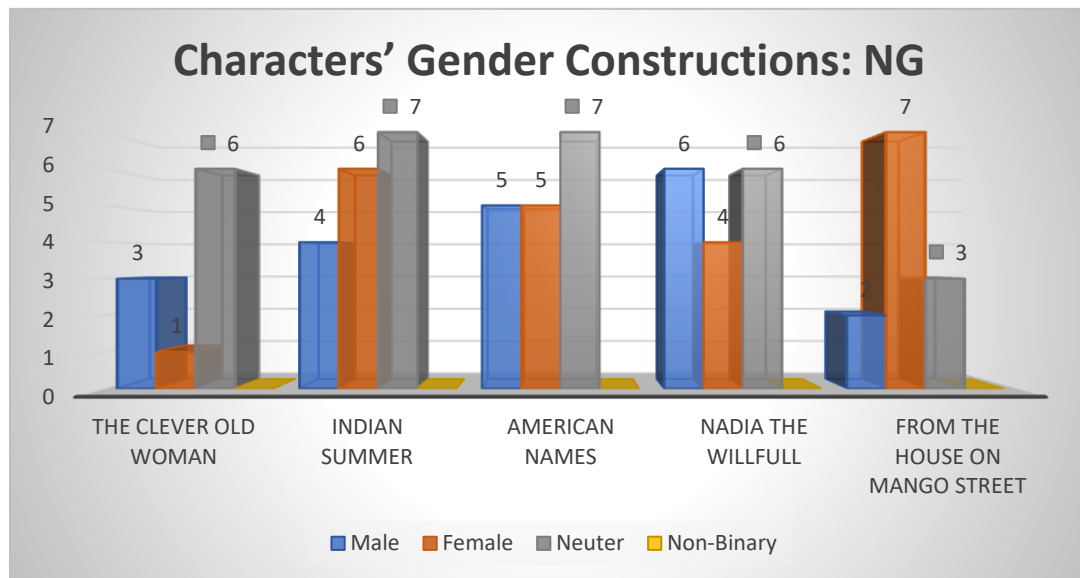


Figure 4.1 also shows that four out of the five *NG* stories had female protagonists. For instance, Nadia was the protagonist in *Nadia the Willful*. Nadia's father, the sheik, was the leader of her community. Nadia convinced her dad to allow her to grieve her brother by telling stories about her brother to the community. Even though, Nadia was strong, the final decision rested on her father's wishes, which means that she is subordinated to the power of her father. In the case of Nadia, we see a willful character whose power originates from her privileged relationship with the leader of the community. Another protagonist found in the *NG* texts appeared in the story *The Clever Old Woman*. The old woman saved the village by solving three impossible tasks. In this story, the old woman solved a situation that was presented to the chief of the village. In this story there is intersection among gender and age, since the story is presenting an old female protagonist. In these two

stories, the women show their leadership skills, but they are both shown as subservient to men in positions of power; thus, in the end it is the men who have the power to influence the decisions. In contrast to these two stories, we have Cristina, the protagonist of *Indian Summer*, a girl who succeeded by being herself. In this story, Cristina feels that speaking English might indicate her Puerto Rican descent, her fear was overcome as she met new friends who accepted her. Similarly, in *From the House on Mango Street*, Esperanza expresses her desires to pursue a career and become an independent woman. Although the intention of these two *NG* texts was to demonstrate that women can be strong and independent, they presented women in diverse positions of power. Some of the characters in *From the House of Mango Street* search for ways to exercise their own free will, yet other than the female protagonists such as in *Nadia the Willful* and *The Clever Old Woman* were not positions of power themselves.

Figure 4.2 indicates that three out of five *PN* texts showed more female characters, one presented more male characters, and one presented an equal amount of male and female characters. Figure 4.2 showed that the text with an equal amount of female and male characters was *Roja*. In addition, there were two texts that presented non-binary characters; those texts were *Junito* and *Roja*. In the five texts, there were 36 female characters, 31 male characters, 4 neutral characters and 2 non-binary characters.

Figure 4.2

Characters' Gender constructions: PN

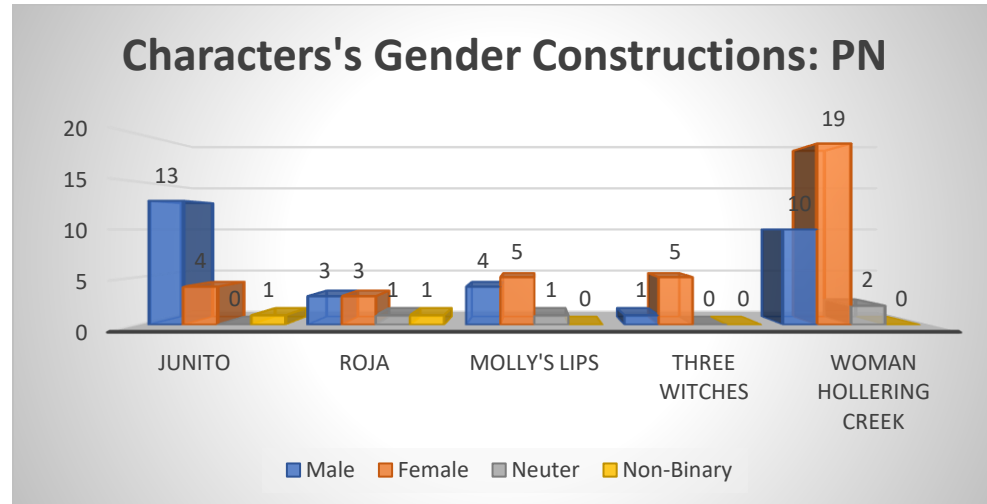


Figure 4.2 showed that female characters were predominant in *Woman Hollering Creek*, *Three Witches* and *Molly's Lips*. The protagonist in *Woman Hollering Creek* was Cleófilas Enriqueta De León Hernández. Cleófilas is a Mexican woman who moved to United States when she married Juan Pedro Martínez. In this story, Cleófilas is presented as a victim of domestic violence, and was saved by a nurse who found a way to help her escape from her home. The character of Cleófilas shows situations that also happen in real life. Even with an ending where Cleófilas escapes, it presents the issue of women feeling insecure in their own homes. The second female protagonist was Violante Donoso from *Three Witches*. Violante is a lesbian woman who was sent to a convent in Castille to go through what seems to be conversion therapy. While Violante is incarcerated, she was under the supervision and care of the nun Gracia Magdalena. In the end, Violante and Gracia Magdalena kissed, which

seemed to demonstrate a failure of the conversion therapy. This was the only story in the texts analyzed that presented the issue of conversion therapy.

The third female protagonist was Molly from the story *Molly's Lips*. While Molly accompanies her friend Annabelle to mourn the death of Kurt Cobain, she discovered that they both felt attraction for each other. If these three protagonists are compared, only Molly was placed in a position of power, since she was responsible for her own actions. In the case of Cleófilas and Violante, they were both examples of victims of violence. Using protagonists such as Molly was definitely effective to show that women can have control of their own circumstances. While Violante and Cleófilas were protagonists in situations of violence, they both found ways to change the circumstances they were facing. The fact that these *PN* texts problematized violence was a way to validate that these issues need to be addressed in our daily life.

The *PN* texts that presented non-binary characters were *Roja* and *Junito*. *Roja* presented León Bellamy also known as El Lobo who is a soldier from the French military. During the story, León falls in love with Roja, who cross-dressed in order to save León from the Mexican military. In the beginning, the story states “His mother, back in Alsace had christened him with a girl’s name” (McLemore, 2018, p. 13). Further on, he is described as “The chest he bound down” (McLemore, 2018, p. 19). The fact that León does

not fit in the male versus female binary raised question over his gender construction.

The second *PN* story that presented a non-binary character was *Junito*. This story presented non-binary characters as minor characters who were referred to as 'cross-dressers'. Although classifying non-binary people is not simple, the fact that these characters did not fit inside the male versus female binary lead this researcher to classify them as non-binary. In a real-life setting, it is the individual who decides which gender construction they identify themselves with. These two texts were deemed important to this research because they raised questions on how gender is traditionally perceived. For instance, *Roja* presented the love among two characters who would be traditionally perceived as male due to the clothes they wear, yet each character identifies differently. The story *Junito* presented a dad who is worried that his son is gay. The fact that the narrator in *Junito* presented a series of stereotypes related to the way gay men were perceived addressed gender construction bias in society. Problematizing issues such as non-binary gender constructions, cross-dressing, and gay men were usually not presented in the traditional curriculum; this stance made these issues invisible.

Names in titles

This category analyzed the gender constructions mentioned in the titles of the texts. The names in the titles of each text were analyzed as well

as classified according to the gender construction mentioned. The reason for examining names in titles was to determine the gender reference assigned to each title. Since the titles are one of the first things a reader sees in a text, names in titles usually anticipate details about the characters, the plot, or the setting. As mentioned before (see table 2), there were five texts selected from *National Geographic's Inside Series for Grade 9 (NG)*, as well as five *Popular texts with potential narrative literature that address gender issues (PN)*. First *NG* texts were analyzed, then *PN* texts. Finally, *NG* and *PN* texts are compared and contrasted. Figure 4.3 shows that three out of five *NG* texts presented neutral names in the titles, while two presented female names in the titles. Figure 4.3 also shows that there were zero male names in the titles and zero non binary names. Names in titles, made references to characters or situations presented in each story. In order to classify names in titles, the context of the story was used to determine the gender of each name in title.

Figure 4.3-

Names of titles: NG

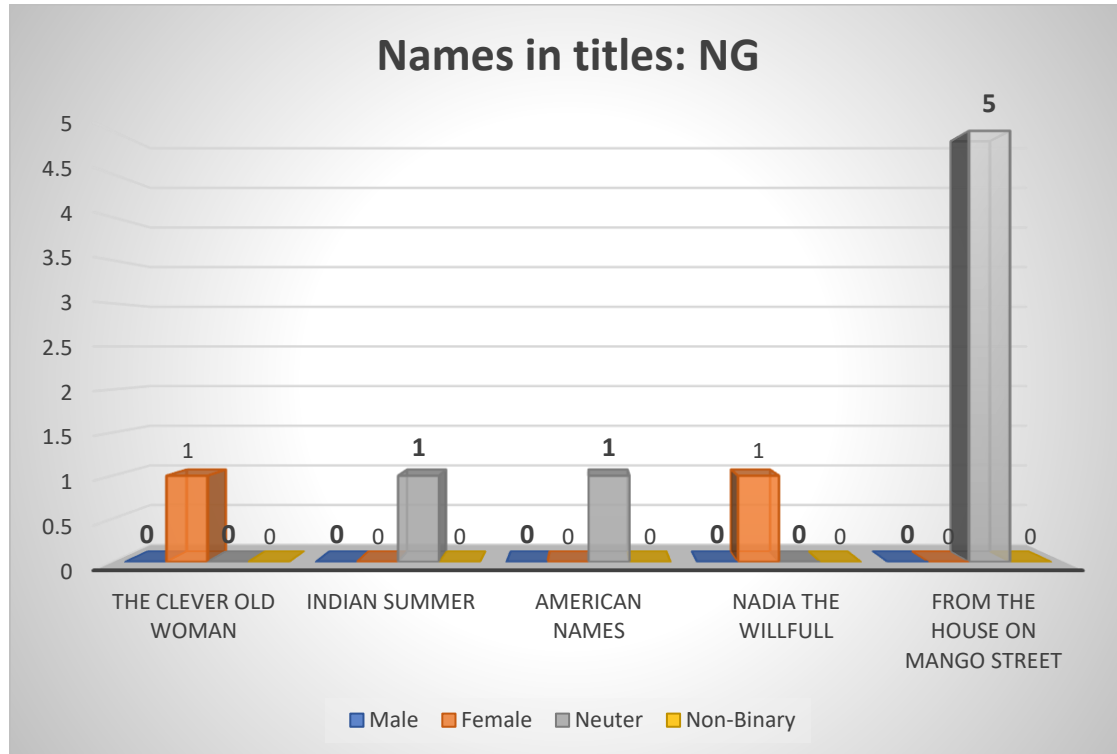


Figure 4.3 also shows that the *NG* texts had five neutral names in titles referring to two female protagonists, and one name referring to a male protagonist. The two female names in the titles both referred to the stories' female protagonists. The prevalence of references to female protagonists was a positive aspect, yet let's not forget that the female protagonists mentioned were not in positions of power. The female protagonists have initiative and were strong, but their power to change outcomes or get results hinged on male making decisions. Besides discussing what female names in titles represent, it was relevant to focus on what the absence of males and non-

binary names in titles means. The absence of male and non-binary names in titles might be easily overlooked, were it not because of the possibility that it is a sign of a prevailing issue within curriculum, in particular the avoidance of non-binary characterizations. Once more, it was observed that the *NG* texts studied did not lend themselves to discussing controversial issues, and as a result avoided presenting non-binary characters. At the same time, the outnumbering of female over male characters might give the impression that there was no sexism; however, as mentioned earlier, the female protagonists lacked power to make important decisions. Thus, while it appears that female characters were well represented, at the end they did appear as weak characters due to their lack of decision-making power, which essentially reaffirms the traditional stereotype.

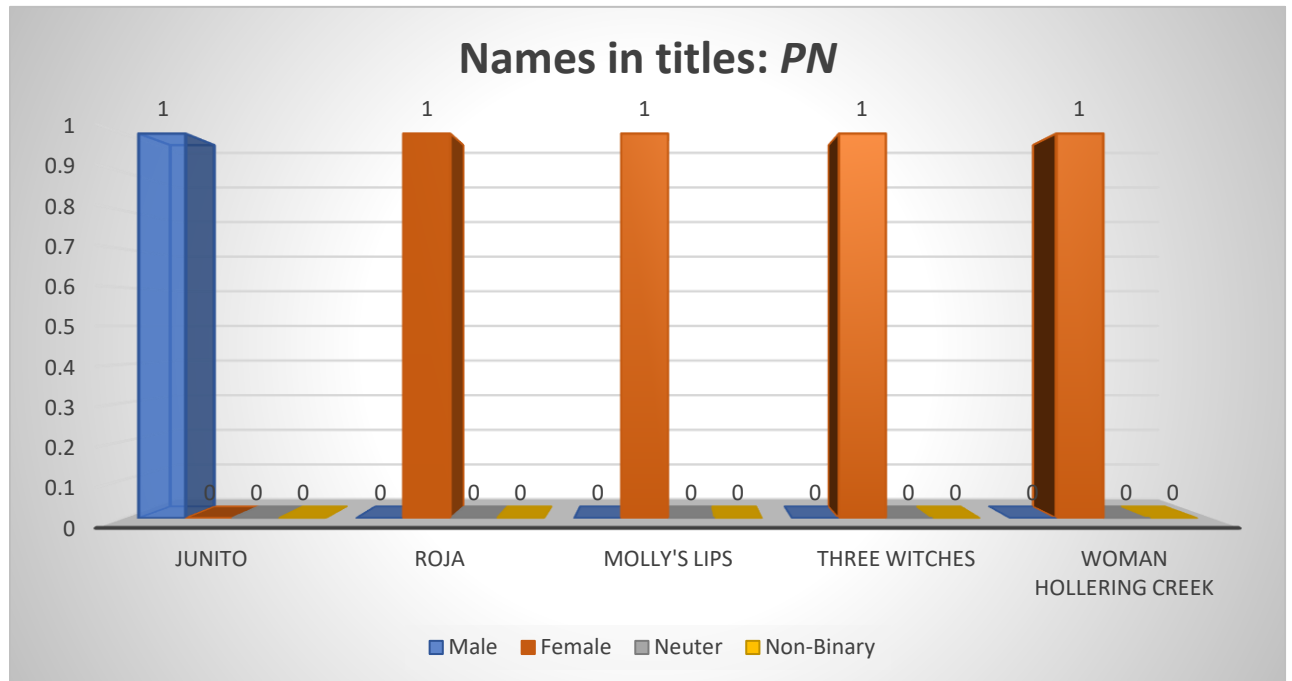
The *PN* texts data presented in Figure 4.4 showed that four presented more female names in the titles, and one presented more male names. Also, Figure 4.4 showed that there were zero neutral names in titles, and zero non-binary names in titles. The omission of non-binary names in titles points towards a void in the curriculum that needs to be addressed. The four names in titles referring to women showed that there was only one woman in a position of power, while the other three characters were in complex situations.

Molly was a character in position of power since she oversaw her own decisions. However, Roja was a girl who cross-dressed as a power tool; she

dressed as a man to save her lover, León Bellamy, from a Mexican military prison. *Woman Hollering Creek* was a symbolic title which referenced the topic of domestic violence presented in the story. The *Three Witches* title referred to the three female characters who are involved in a failed conversion therapy. On the other hand, the *PN* text with more male names es was *Junito*. Junito was the name of a character who was the addressee of an unknown character's argument. Although it might give the impression that Junito was in a position of power, the one that monopolizes the case was the unknown character. This unknown character decided to lecture Junito about leaving the island, so Junito can have a better life in the United States. In the middle of his lecture, the unknown character confessed that he was leaving the island because he suspected that his younger son was gay. So, he thought that moving to the United States would allow his son to live without the prejudice and discrimination felt at home. This character used sexist language to describe gay men which is not precisely an ideal role model.

Figure 4.4-

Names of titles: PN



Although these last four names in the titles mentioned before, referred to characters who were not in positions of power, the fact that the character problematizes complex situations, made them relevant to be analyzed in a school setting. Some of the complex situations discussed were domestic violence, conversion therapy and prejudice towards gay men. Once more, this category demonstrates the inclusion of gender issues that are not usually discussed in the textbooks provided by the PRDE in the English 9th grade curriculum.

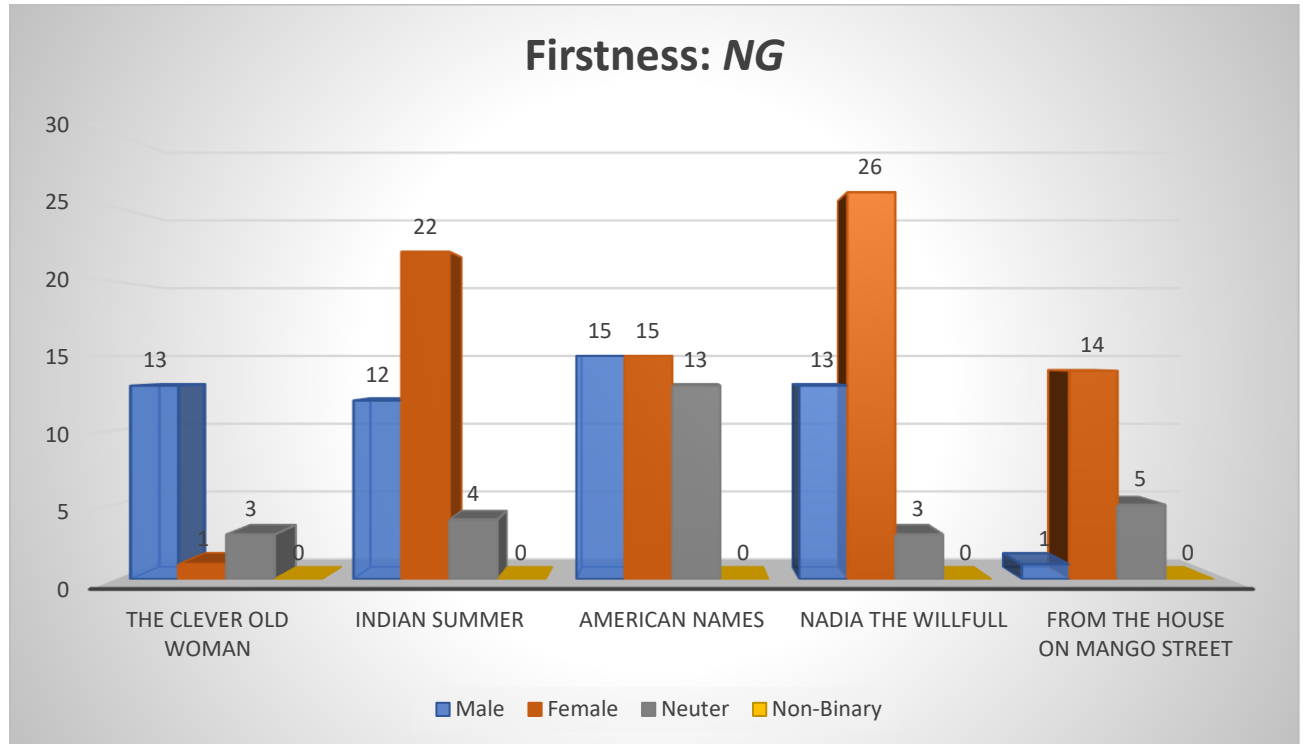
Firstness

This category analyzed firstness in five texts from *National Geographic's Inside Series for Grade 9 texts (NG)* and five *Popular texts with*

potential narrative literature that address gender issues (PN). Firstness referred to which noun or pronoun was mentioned first in a sentence. I looked at firstness throughout the texts because it showed which gender was given priority and voice when analyzing the texts' narrations and dialogues. Among the *NG* texts appearing in Figure 4. 7, three texts had more female firstness, while one had more cases of male firstness. From figure 4.3, it was observed that the text that presented equal frequency of male and female firstness was *American Names*. There was zero neutral firstness and zero non-binary firstness Figure 4.5. These texts favor the presence of females. The preponderance of female firstness showed the intention of *NG* texts to give women space and voice to participate. Another positive aspect was that neutral gender constructions were reduced when compared to the categories of characters and names in titles.

Figure 4.5-

Firstness: NG

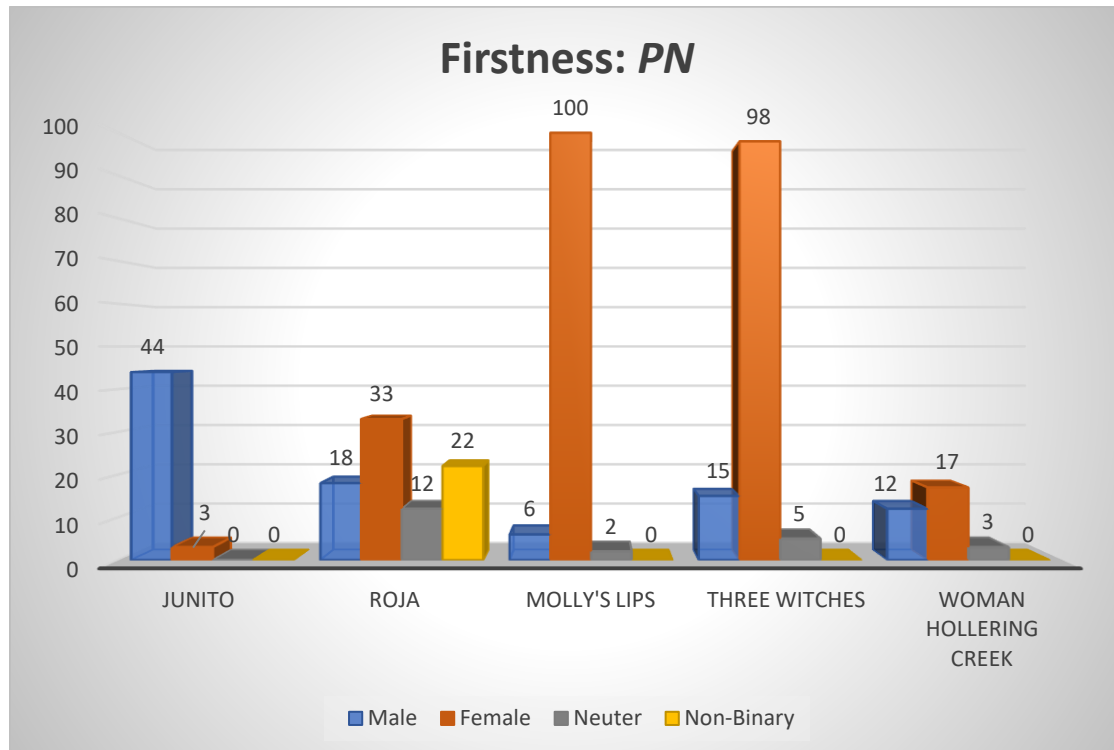


As shown in Figure 4.6 above, among the *PN* texts, four presented a preponderance of female firstness, while one text presented more male firstness. There was no presence of neutral firstness, while non-binary firstness was lower. One thing that both *PN* and *NG* texts have in common in this category was the presence and participation of female firstness in their texts. One great difference shown in Figure 4.6 was related to the non-binary gender construction. While *NG* texts had zero presence of non-binary gender, the *PN* texts presented low presence of non-binary gender. While the number of non-binary firstness was not predominant among the *PN* texts, they did

appear which was relevant when compared to the total absence of non-binary firstness among the *NG* texts.

Figure 4.6-

Firstness: PN



Both *NG* and *PN* texts recognized the participation and voice of women, yet the non-binary gender constructions did not receive the same treatment. It was important to have the presence of characters from different gender constructions to truly avoid bias, but it was relevant that each gender construction had some voice and representation.

Characters in Occupational roles

The characters in occupational roles category was analyzed in the five texts from *National Geographic's Inside Series for Grade 9 texts (NG)* and the five *Popular texts with potential narrative literature that address gender issues (PN)*. While Domínguez (2003) analyzed characters in occupational roles by counting word items such as male and female characters portrayed in stereotypical occupations; this research used this method with a slight variation. In this research, each occupation was counted and classified according to the way in which the story constructs characters' gender in occupational roles. In the case of characters that had a pronoun antecedent in the text, the pronoun was used to determine the gender marker of the character. Figure 4.7 shows the results of this analysis. Three NG texts had a preponderance of neutral characters in occupational roles, while two texts displayed a preponderance of male characters in occupational roles. Figure 4.7 also showed an absence of female and non-binary characters in occupational roles. The analysis of this category showed a marked prevalence of stereotypes. While there was mention of female characters in occupational roles, four of the five texts described at least one case of female characters in occupational roles. For instance, *The House on Mango Street*, presented one female as a nun. *American Names* presented one female as a teacher, as well as *Indian Summer* which presented one female as an Algebra teacher. *Nadia the Willful* had one mention of females weaving. Thus, the analysis showed

that the occupational roles presented for females could be summarized as nun, teacher, and weaver, all traditionally caregiving roles. These results were definitely alarming and incongruent with a curriculum that was said to seek equal job opportunities for all students. Beyond the fact that women were presented in limited and stereotypical roles, the total omission of non-binary people in occupational roles reaffirmed the need to include non-binary characters in the textbooks.

Figure 4.7-

Characters' Occupational roles: NG

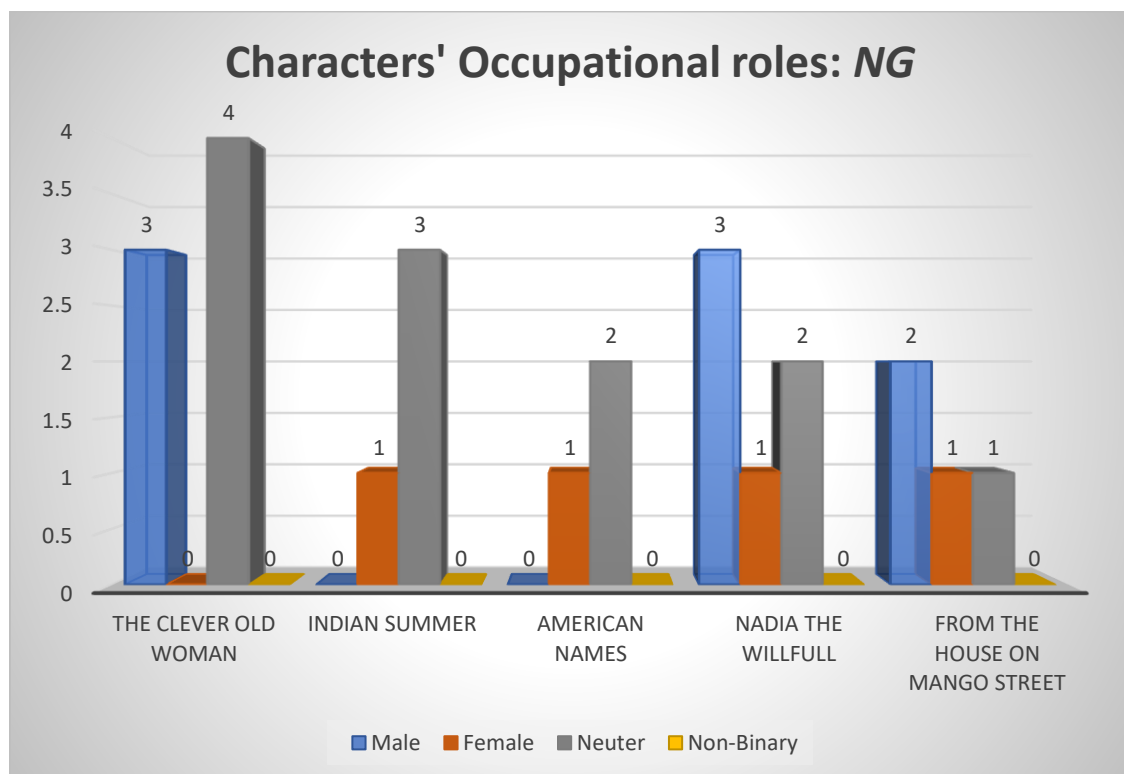
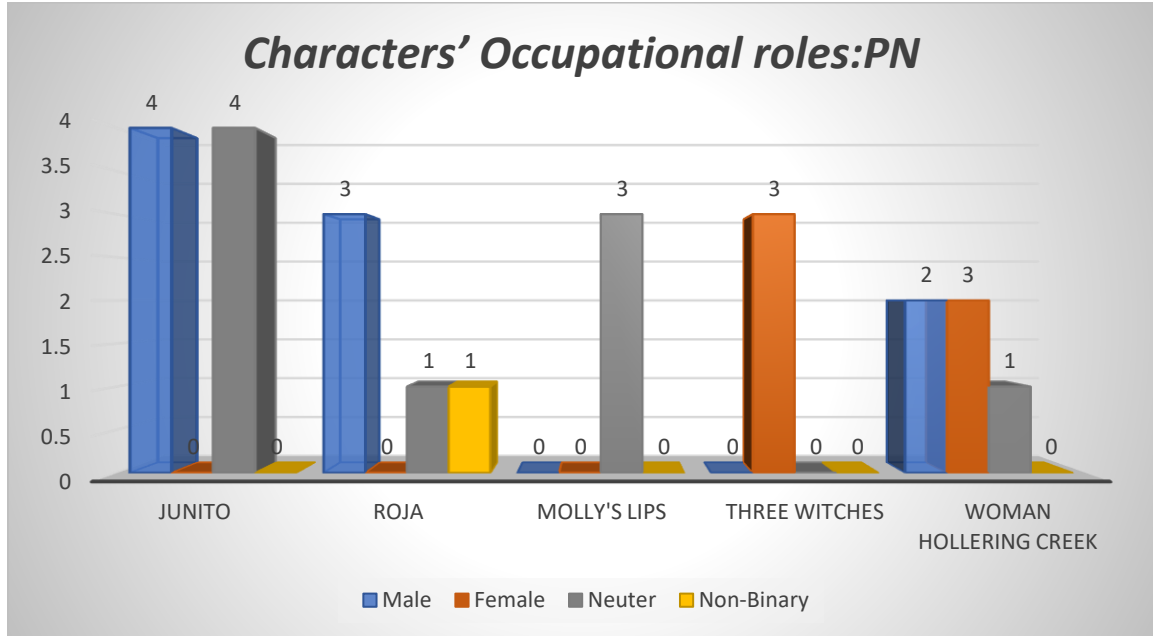


Figure 4.8 shows the analysis of *PN* texts. Only one text presented a prevalence of male characters in occupational roles, two texts presented

preponderance of female characters, while one text presented neutral characters in occupational roles. The story *Roja* had more male characters in occupational roles. The story *Molly's Lips* showed more neutral characters in occupational roles. The stories *Three Witches* and *Woman Hollering Creek* had more female characters in occupational roles. The story *Junito* presented equal numbers of neutral and male characters in occupational roles. In *Roja*, the males in occupational roles were deputy, senator, and governor. A comparison of Figure 4.8 and Figure 4.7 showed that there was representation of non-binary characters in occupational roles in Figure 4.8. Thus, the *PN* texts exhibited more diversity in the occupational gender roles. In addition, *PN* texts showed controversial characters whose circumstances and occupational roles showed diversity. For instance, the fact that the males in *Roja* were men in positions of leadership, justified Roja's decision to cross-dress when trying to save Leon. The non-binary character with an occupational role was León, a soldier. In this case, presenting León as a non-binary soldier was really controversial since the U.S. military historically excluded non-binary people from participating in the military. In 2018, after several court actions, non-binary people can join the military (Lambda Legal, 2018). Presenting a non-binary soldier, showed the text's intention to promote the discussion of controversial issues that included gender issues in the curriculum.

Figure 4.8-

Characters' Occupational roles: PN



Distinct from *Roja*, in *Woman Hollering Creek* female characters in occupational roles dominated, those occupations were laundromat attendant, housewife and nurse; the doctor was a male and the chiropractor was neutral. *PN* texts were not free of women in stereotypical roles; in *Three Witches*, the female held occupations were three nuns. As shown above, *PN* texts presented male characters as deputy, senator, governor, doctor, and chiropractor. Meanwhile, female characters were presented as nuns, housewife, laundromat attendant, and nurse. More diversity in the careers presented appeared in *PN* texts; yet there were serious issues regarding stereotypes (such as males dominating occupational roles of powers and females being considered for caregiving roles). Certainly, this was one

category that seemed to inadequately address gender issues in the young adult literature examined.

Chapter summary

This chapter presented the results of a critical discourse analysis and a content analysis relevant to the teaching of 9th grade English in Puerto Rico's public schools. The critical discourse analysis (CDA) addressed how gender issues were dealt with in PRDE's curriculum. The CDA discussed how PRDE's English Program Gender Equity Manual attempted to give within the English curriculum a stronger voice to women, as well as promoting equal of rights in the employment area. Yet, it omitted issues affecting LGBTQIA rights. The CDA also found that political changes did not allow this *Manual* to be implemented throughout the educational system, perhaps because the incoming administration had different views or different positions as can be seen in PRDE Circular Letter, 32 2016-2017, but the change in government did have an impact on the document's use in PRDE schools. One of the issues with the implementation was that although teachers did have access to the *Manual*, they did not receive training on how to incorporate the units into the curriculum. In addition, the CDA discussed how valuable some lessons might be to discuss gender, but also highlighted the urgency of revising the *Manual* that addressed gender issues. Some of the units mentioned texts that were not available in the actual classrooms. Moreover, there Manual lacked appropriate narrative texts, since the only narrative texts consisted of a

single line addressing a pilot woman. Besides the inappropriate materials 'selection, the manual omitted the discussions of domestic violence issues, and omitted non-binary and LGBTQIA people. These omissions represent gender bias that must be addressed, by reevaluating the texts selected in the curriculum. In order, to compare narrative texts that can be included in the curriculum, this researcher implemented a content analysis.

The content analysis compared PRDE's National Geographic's Inside Series for grade 9 texts with popular texts with potential narrative literature that addressed gender (*NG* and *PN* respectively). The texts from National Geographic's Inside included male, female, and neutral genders in three out of four of the categories examined. However, the texts from National Geographic omitted males from names in titles and non-binary constructions in the four categories studied. Certainly, omissions must be observed and analyzed when selecting texts to be taught in class.

The popular texts with potential narrative literature that addressed gender omitted males in names in titles and non-binary people in names in titles and occupations. Even though there is more representation of non-binary characters in these texts than in the texts from the PRDE's National Geographic, the fact that they did not include non-binary characters in occupations showed a gap in YA literature that should have been addressed. Findings from Rodríguez-Madera, Ramos Pibernus, Padilla and Varas-Díaz

(2015) stated that transgender women had access to education and poverty issues and the plight of this population needs place in our schools.

Chapter V- DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter includes a discussion of the findings presented in Chapter IV, as well as answers to the research questions that guided this research. The chapter included some of the pedagogical implications of this research, the project's limitations, and suggestions for further research. Using critical discourse analysis, this research sought to evaluate PRDE *English Program Gender Equity Manual* in terms of gender issues related to the English 9th grade curriculum. In addition to the discourse analysis, a content analysis of ten texts was carried out. Five of the texts were included within the current PRDE curriculum and the other five texts were selected by the researcher and are well known texts that deal with issues of gender. The chapter also discussed how the findings presented in Chapter IV align with previous studies related to curriculum and gender studies.

Discussion

This research design was supported by theories of gender; specifically, intersection of feminism, queer theories, and gender perspective. Education can and should be an agent of social change and thus schools, both public and private, play an important role in transforming society for the better. As Martínez Ramos (2021a) stated, “[a] transformation of the education system through the integration of the gender perspective has the responsibility and the social mandate to contribute to a culture of peace” (translation by author,

p. 28). Thus, creating a curriculum that included authentic materials and textbooks that promoted gender perspective must be a priority. As Vadi Fantauzzi (2009) argued textbooks used in the official curriculum essentially become the authority in a given school or district which then become part of the discourse of our society. Thus, if education wants to have lasting societal impact, it must expose students to texts that compel them to better understand the people and world around them. Doing so, will allow students to make sense of their own identities and question their own ideas about gender (McLemore, 2018).

As stated in Chapter IV, the purpose of PRDE's English Program Gender Equity *Manual* was to promote gender equity in the curriculum. However, the discourse analysis of the document showed it had serious limitations to the accomplishment of its stated purpose in units 9.2 and 9.4 of the 9th grade section. One of the limitations was related to the discussion of stereotypes; although Units 9.1 and 9.5 discussed stereotypes, Units 9.2 and 9.4 presented limited occupational roles for men and women. Furthermore, they presented women in caregiving roles and men in technical careers. Along with the flawed and unauthentic stereotypes presented, the lessons in the *Manual* needed to be more culturally and linguistically appropriate. Several of the resources used in Units 9.3 and 9.4 were taken from the Alaska Department of Education webpage. The fact that the resources were taken from a webpage from another state made the activities and the

vocabulary inauthentic. Harsono (2007) quotes the sixteen principles Tomlinson (1998) established for materials development. One of Tomlinson's principles highlights that "What is being taught should be perceived by learners as relevant and useful" (p. 3). The materials presented to students should appeal to their needs, their culture, and their interests.

These findings supported the conclusion that relevant research alternatives geared to the inclusion of gender perspective in the curriculum should be considered by PRDE, along with a review of the textbooks used in the 9th grade English curriculum. The curriculum and the textbooks need to address the diversity of the students in the educational system. In addition, it was found that it is important to recognize that the current curriculum and textbooks require more content that gives a voice to women and LGBTQIA students. These students have historically been hidden, underrepresented, or omitted. Batchelor, Ramos & Neiswander (2017) recognize the need to include LGBTQIA in textbooks by stating that "English teacher[s] should want their class discussions to be meaningful and illuminating, and if the literature cannot always be relatable, it should be relevant to their students" (p. 7).

Through critical discourse analysis (CDA) and content analysis (CA), this research unveiled several omissions and biases within the current PRDE English program curriculum, specifically in the 9th grade. The CDA analyzed PRDE *English Program Gender Equity Manual*, specifically in the ninth

grade. The categories that emerged from the CDA were stereotypes, gender inclusive language, and occupations. The CDA found that, although stereotypes were discussed in the *Manual*, they were mainly focused on employment and body image.

The *Manual* did have some redeeming characteristics. For example, it discussed stereotypes in a unit lesson that included portrayals of superheroes. Using pop-culture was a good strategy to address gender issues because it appealed to the students' interests. This activity also discussed the issue of girls' body image which was a refreshing inclusion in the curriculum because it served to introduce the discussion of students' self-concept. In addition, the *Manual* repeatedly mentioned the importance of seeing women and men as having equal rights and stressed the fact that they should be treated equally in their employment. The CDA also showed that the *Manual* addressed a woman's rights to have any career they desire. However, that same treatment was not granted to members of the LGBTQIA community despite the fact that this issue was being publicly discussed in several important forums at the time the *Manual* was prepared. Furthermore, in addition to essentially leaving out the LGBTQIA community, the lessons presented in the *Manual* were trite and lacking when unpacking the reasons behind women not receiving equal opportunities in Puerto Rican society (particularly when discussing jobs and careers). Designing, and including in the curriculum, new lessons that allow students to critically understand the

issues surrounding access and equity, particularly among women and other historically discriminated communities, was found to be a much needed change to the document.

As presented in the previous chapter, the 9th grade curriculum focused on stereotypes, particularly in the realm of employment and occupations. The discussion related to occupations dealt with the topics of fair wages, albeit from a descriptive perspective, and equality in the workforce. These were definitely important topics given the societal needs of Puerto Rico described in Chapter II of this research. Nevertheless, the complete omission of the LGBTQIA community in the discussion of employment equality and career rights was an oversight that weakened the accomplishment of the document's stated purpose.

Another downside to the *Manual* was its consistent labeling of individuals in binary terms (male/female). This perspective provided more evidence that the *Manual* was not designed to be LGBTQIA inclusive. This point was further evidenced in the emergent category of gender inclusive language where there was a complete omission of the LGBTQIA community. Moreover, as was mentioned in Chapter IV, the cover page showed only the symbols of the male and female genders and all the directives and background information considered in the *Manual* discussed gender in binary terms. Even the exercises included in the *Manual* served to further cement the female/male binary scope they were designed to promote. Especially when

they discussed gender roles and only presented the female/male options. The absence of LGBTQIA characters and topics was one of the elements that guided this research.

The content analysis (CA) began with a summary of the ten texts selected for the research. After the summaries were presented, the findings were presented according to the research categories. The narrative texts were studied in four categories: characters, names in titles, firstness, and occupations. These four categories were analyzed in terms of gender constructions, which were labeled as female, male, neutral, and non-binary. After counting the frequency of gender constructions, the second process was counting the inclusions and omissions present. One important finding that derived from the CA of the texts from PRDE's Inside National Geographic textbook for 9th grade was the total omission of the non-binary gender construction throughout the five texts analyzed. Unfortunately, the omission of non-binary gender issues has been found by this research to be a constant not only in PRDE's textbook but also in the curriculum.

The CA of the five texts selected from potential narrative literature found that these texts had 40% of their characters described as non-binary, and 20% had non-binary firstness. This means that these texts presented no omissions in the categories of characters and firstness. Although these numbers showed there was some representation of non-binary characters in these texts, two categories that did have omissions. The categories were

names in titles and occupations. These numbers clearly showed that non-binary constructions were also underrepresented in these texts. The constant omission of non-binary people in occupational roles was a great concern that arose from the data analysis. This constant was found, not only in the texts chosen by PRDE, but also in the popular texts with potential narrative literature that addressed gender issues. Lesser-Blumberg (2015) studied gender bias in textbooks of several countries and encountered that “the pace of improvement in gender bias in textbooks is more often slow” (p. 2). In tune with Lesser-Blumberg’s findings, this research’s CDA of PRDE’s *English Program Gender Equity Manual* showed there was some improvement in the handling and inclusion of gender issues that Puerto Rican women face. Yet, these changes to the curriculum were not exhaustive or inclusive of all members of society. One omission that was blatant in PRDE’s curriculum was the nonexistence of texts that discussed the issues that surround inequity and bias toward the LGBTQIA community; a community that has traditionally been left out of the formal curriculum in Puerto Rico.

Relationship between the findings and the research questions

Throughout this section, an alignment of the data and findings of this research to the two research questions that guided it is presented.

Research question 1: How does PRDE’s English Program Gender Equity Manual address gender issues in the 9th grade curriculum?

The PRDE *English Program Gender Equity Manual* was partially successful in addressing gender issues concerning women in the workplace and women's body image. A critical discourse analysis of the document showed that the curriculum did work to empower women to find a career path they like, regardless of historical tendencies in traditional fields.

The *Manual* addressed gender issues through discussions of stereotypes and societal trends that impose certain standards on the body image of women. Unfortunately, the document did not include, nor did it discuss how these issues could affect LGBTQIA students' needs; needs that may be similar or could be totally different from those found in the binary community. This finding made the need to include LGBTQIA students in curricular changes extremely urgent, not only in the texts and materials selected, but in curricular activities as well. These changes would be beneficial and serve to substantially reduce the current imbalance found in the curriculum and will eventually impact the Puerto Rican society as well. As Batchelor, Ramos & Neiswander (2008) pointed out "when schools embrace a curriculum that is LGBTQ-inclusive; LGBTQ students said they were less likely to feel unsafe" (p. 1). In Puerto Rico's case, the adoption of the term "LGBTQIA inclusive" in the educational discourse of PRDE seems highly advisable. The use of such a term in a revised *manual* would allow the long-protracted entrance of the LGBTQIA community into the formal curriculum and give them the representation and respect they deserve.

Research question 2: How do narratives used in 9th grade English courses within PRDE compare with other popular narrative literature that address gender issues?

When these two groups of texts were compared, it was interesting how straightforward the data analysis of the PRDE textbooks was. In terms of inclusions, the five texts selected included female, male, and neutral characters in the categories of names in titles and characters occupational roles. However, the content analysis showed 100% omission of non-binary constructions in the four categories selected. On the other hand, the popular texts with potential narrative literature that addressed gender issues showed inclusions of female, male, neutral, and non-binary construction in two categories: Character and firstness. Nevertheless, these texts did not include any non-binary gender constructions in the occupations and names in titles categories. It seems important to highlight that selecting quality texts that represent the diversity of gender constructions that classrooms can have not been a simple task. In addition, selecting books that address gender issues should not be done to merely comply with regulations. As educators we must remember Rosenblatt (2004) when she argued that reading was a transaction among the text and the reader. Thus, it is very important to consider students' needs and interests when selecting a text. There is not fail-safe method to select books that will address the issues of a diverse group of students but selecting a mixture of texts that may represent as many

members as possible of the communities found in a classroom is an attainable task. Educators have a great responsibility when they engage in the task of selecting texts; they should strive to highlight and incorporate texts with diverse gender representations and make sure these texts are available in the classrooms. Sometimes, teachers have classrooms full of textbooks and curricular materials, but the topics presented in them are not necessarily interesting or pertinent to the population of students they serve. PRDE must reflect upon the quality of the materials they provide because they are of paramount importance to teachers and students alike. Allowing teachers to participate in the text selection process can help ensure that these texts are adequate for the student population and the community.

Pedagogical implications

The curricular units presented in the *PRDE English Gender Equity Manual* may serve as a tool to implement gender issues across the entire school system, yet they need to be revised and evaluated. While the *Manual* opens the door to the inclusion of gender issues in the curriculum, when the *Manual* was approved there was no training for the teachers on how to use it. Later on, the secretary of Education Julia Keleher revoked Circular Letter 19-2014-2015, so the PRDE should reflect on the idea proposed by this *Manual* in order to propose and improve a new version that provides a better curricular design and quality literary texts. Besides proposing an improved version of the manual, the PRDE should use teachers that have implemented

the discussion of gender issues in their classrooms as training resources for other teachers. Selecting PRDE teachers for training on the implementation of gender perspective is also a possible way to impact more teachers within the system. If PRDE identifies teachers as resources, they can aid in the training of their peers. This strategy can also help create a community of learning within individual schools and even in whole districts.

In addition, PRDE needs to include LGBTQIA students in the *Manual*. Some of the issues discussed that impact women (and were a much-needed change to traditional discussions in the classroom), need to be expanded to include LGBTQIA students that are also a part of our communities. Schools need to be a safe and comfortable space for every student, and to do so, the curriculum needs to reflect the needs of LGBTQIA students as well. Hence, including Young Adult literature that addresses gender issues has diverse benefits that go well beyond the walls of the English classroom. While the main goal of the English class is to have students learn language skills, it also makes sense to make students feel they are a valuable part of the school. This is particularly crucial among LGBTQIA students who have historically been invisible in the curriculum.

Moreover, the alternative texts analyzed in this research were exemplary texts that can be used to discuss gender in the English 9th grade classrooms. These narrative texts include issues such as domestic violence, prejudice against gay people, representation of queer characters,

representation of lesbian characters, conversion therapy, and women seeking to be independent beings. The variety of topics concerning gender issues should be considered, since all the topics reflect issues that need to be addressed in our day to day. The PRDE has the responsibility to provide materials that appeal to the reality of every student, and in doing so they must find strategies to include alternative texts that address gender issues. Also, PRDE should open a platform that allows for the discussion of alternative texts that address gender issues. Teachers can feel comfortable to bring other texts concerning gender into their classrooms

Suggestions for further research

Besides analyzing gender issues in the textbooks and curriculum for the 9th grade, there are other research topics that might be related to this study. Textbooks are an important part of the curriculum, but there are other components in the educational process that can address gender issues. Teachers often deviate from the curriculum itself; this research did not study the interactions in the classrooms or the actual implementation of the *Manual*. For instance, it would be beneficial to study gender issues in textbooks in other grades. Also, textbooks and curricular material can be analyzed from the perspective of studies in masculinities. There is a corpus of studies in masculinities which can be applied to the PRDE textbooks and the curriculum. In addition to studying textbooks, research on students' perceptions of textbook that address gender issues could reveal data that will

allow other researchers insights into the selection and evaluation of textbooks and materials that can make the process more effective. Further studies on the discussion of gender in occupational roles that include LGBTQIA characters can help more open discussion of the issues that affect this particular community. This research found a gap in the discussion of occupational roles of LGBTQIA students; this is an area that still needs to be fully researched. Allowing students to envision non-binary characters in occupational positions might be away to change the ideas of non-binary people with a career path. Furthermore, action research with teachers interested in designing curricular units on the topic of gender issues would be particularly useful.

Limitations

This study focused on gender issues in textbooks from the English 9th grade curriculum of the Puerto Rico Department of Education. One limitation was related to the fact that the findings were typically relevant only to the unit of study selected. Another limitation of this research was that the results were limited to the 9th grade English textbook. Studies that replicate this research with other grade levels and subjects can provide more in-depth knowledge on the subject. In addition, the texts were studied from the binary versus non-binary perspective; other perspectives might show different results.

Conclusions

This study focused on analyzing gender issues as presented in the *PRDE English Program Gender Equity Manual for the 9th grade*, as well as comparing the narrative texts on *National Geographic's Inside Series for 9th grade* with Popular texts with potential narrative literature that address gender issues. The results showed that the *PRDE English Program Gender Equity Manual for the 9th grade* needed revision and inclusion of authentic materials. The *PRDE English Program Gender Equity Manual for the 9th grade* lacked authentic texts to be discussed with students within each lesson. Even though the internet is an excellent tool to obtain alternate works of literature to be discussed in the classrooms, the PRDE must consider having the suggested texts available in the classrooms. For this reason, I consider that the content analysis of texts available and popular texts that address gender issues, is an effective tool to face the need of quality materials in the PRDE English classrooms.

It also needed to include LGBTQIA characters in the reading selections provided to the 9th grade level. The complete absence of LGBTQIA characters was also prevalent in the *National Geographic's Inside Series for 9th grade*. The fact that the texts analyzed from PRDE National Geographic did not present non-binary gender constructions in any of the categories was a serious underrepresentation issue.

These omissions served to support the need to include Young Adult Literature that addresses gender issues in the 9th grade English curriculum. The potential narrative texts analyzed proved to be possible options to promote the discussion of gender issues in a critical manner. This research concluded that the curriculum needed to include texts and materials that address gender perspective, yet it also showed that there were viable options available. Writers such as Ann-Marie McLemore, Luis Negrón, Tessa Gratton, Dahlia Adler, and Sandra Cisneros have been actively publishing Young Adult Literature that addresses gender issues, revising the curriculum to include such publications and training teachers on how to use them seems to be highly advisable.

As I reflect on the finding this research, I feel hopeful that a brighter future is possible. Although, it is true that gender studies exist because there is a need to be met. It is also true, that there have been beneficial changes. In the case of women, it is important to highlight “until recently that women did not have the right to educate ourselves, to fairly paid work, to vote, to acquire property, to inherit, to access leadership positions in society or in churches” (Luis-Núñez, 2021, translated by author, p. 23). The fact that the United States approved same-sex marriage in June 26, 2015, can serve as an example of steps being taken to effect change. However, much work is still needed to eradicate gender-based violence, discrimination, and sexism. One alternative is the recently approved executive order 2021-013, created by the

Governor Pedro Pierluisi, which seeks to address gender violence on the island. Martínez Ramos (2021a) refers to this executive order and recognizes that the order expresses the need to implement gender perspectives in the PRDE. Regarding the implementation of the executive order, Martínez Ramos (2021a) stated that it “marks an important milestone in the agenda of human rights-based education aimed at promoting equity, peace, a culture of inclusion, justice and the development of democracy” (p. 28, translated by author). In addition, the United States Supreme Court’s ruling in June of 2021 extended the protections to the trans community so that they too, like everyone else in the US, are protected from being discriminated against based on their sex (Strauss, 2021). Solely, public policy is gaining traction and moving toward making a more equitable and just society; however educational institutions need to keep pace and adjust the curriculum and materials that they use to continue this progress. Every educator should be willing to help achieve equity, peace, and inclusion in their classrooms with the hope that it translates into societal change.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1-

Checklist-Content Analysis of written text

Revise the written text and focus on the frequency of the following criteria:

Gender constructions							
Criteria	Male	Female	Neutral	Non-Binary	Totals	Inclusions	Omissions
1. Characters							
2. Names in Titles							
3. Firstness							
4. Characters' Occupational Roles							
Totals							

Summary of the narrative text:

Appendix 2-

PRDE English 9th grade book list from curriculum map

1. UNIT 9.1-Genres overview
2. Natalie Babbitt (fictional narrative) -Tuck Everlasting
3. Gary Paulson (fiction)- Hatchet
4. Frances Burnett (fiction) -The Secret Garden
5. Norton Juster (fiction – fantasy) -The Phantom Tollbooth
6. Robert Munsch (fictional narrative) - The Paper Bag Princess
7. Chris Van Allsburg (fictional narrative)- Jumanji
8. Pam Munoz Ryan (fiction) - Becoming Naomi Leon
9. Jerry Spinelli (fiction) - Maniac Magee
10. Ken Mochizuki (personal narrative) - Baseball Saved Us
11. Cynthia Rylant (personal narrative) - But I'll Be Back Again
12. Sandra Cisneros (memoir) - The House on Mango Street
13. Libba Moore Gray (memoir) -My Mama Had a Dancing Heart
14. Joanna Cole (informational) - The Magic School Bus Series
15. Seymour Simon (informational)

16. Dan Elish (biography) - Jackie Robinson
17. Rosa Parks (autobiography) - Rosa Parks: My Story
18. Bruce Lansky (drama)- Temper, Temper
19. Timothy Tocher (drama) - Free Agent
20. Lewis Carrol (poetry) - Jabberwocky
21. E.E. Cummings (poetry)-Hist Wist

22. READ XL (Ninth grade) Textbook
23. Orson Welles page 122 (Play: Cause and Effect) -War of the Worlds
24. Phyllis Fair Cowell page 36 (Short Story: Cause and Effect)-
Masquerade
25. Mary Lou Brooks page 38 (Short Story: Analyze Plot)- The Fish Story
26. J.B. Stamper page 40 (Short Story: Analyze Plot)- The Jigsaw

Unit 9.2 –Communicating my Ideas

27. Memoirs
28. Ruby Bridges - Through My Eyes
29. Betsy Byers -The Moon and I
30. Sandra Cisneros -The House on Mango Street

31. Libba Moore Gray -My Mama Had a Dancing Heart
32. Donald Crews-Big Mama
33. Cynthia Rylant - My Grandmother's Hair
34. Cynthia Rylant - When I Was Young in the Mountains
35. Patricia Polacco- My Rotten Red Headed Older Brother
36. Personal Narrative
37. Patricia Polacco o Thundercake
38. Patricia Polacco o Some Birthday
39. Mem Fox- Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge
40. Julie Brinkloe - Fireflies!
41. Patricia Polacco - Aunt Chip and the Great Triple Creek Dam
42. Elizabeth Fitzgerald Howard - Aunt Flossie's Hats (and Crab Cakes
Later)
43. Ken Mochizuki -Baseball Saved Us
44. Patricia Polacco - The Bee Tree
45. Cynthia Rylant -But I'll Be Back Again
46. William Bircher - A Civil War Drummer Boy: Diary of William Bircher,
1861-1865
47. Jane O'Connor-Fancy Nancy
48. Tomie DePaola -Oliver Button is a Sissy
49. The Freedom Writers Diary: How a Teacher and 150 Teens Used
Writing to Change Themselves and the World Around Them

READ XL (Ninth grade) Textbook

- 50. page 76 -Finding Your Place in the Crowd
- 51. Angela Shelf Medearis page 81 - Nonconformist
- 52. Melba Patillo Beals page 190 - Warriors Don't Cry
- 53. Rodney L. Slater page 196 -When the Doors Opened at Central High
- 54. For Point of View Lesson:
- 55. Jon Scieszka -The True Story of the Three Little Pigs

UNIT 9.3. Communicating about our world through Informational texts

- 56. Joanna Cole - The Magic School Bus Series
- 57. Gail Gibbons - Stargazers
- 58. Margaret Wise Brown - The Important Book
- 59. Pam Muñoz Ryan- The Flag I Love
- 60. Seymour Simon - Sharks

READ XL (Ninth grade) Textbook

- 61. page 76 (Magazine Article: Problem and Solution) -“Finding Your Place in the Crowd”
- 62. Angela Shelf Medearis page 81 (Poetry: Problem and Solution) - “Nonconformist”
- 63. page 110 (Magazine Article: Problem and Solution) - “Fighting for My Future”

64. Portia Nelson page 116 (Poem: Problem and Solution) - “Autobiography in Five Short Chapters”
65. Melba Patillo Beals page 190 (Autobiography: Draw Conclusions) - from Warriors Don’t Cry
66. Rodney L. Slater page 196 (Newspaper Editorial: Draw Conclusions) - “When the Doors Opened at Central High”
67. young people page 324 (Essays and Poetry: Make Inferences) - Voices From What Are You? Essays and poetry

Unit 9.4- It’s a matter of opinion

68. Kaufman Karen Orloff - I Wanna Iguana
69. Doreen Cronin-Click Clack Moo: Cows That Type
70. Eve Bunting -Fly Away Home
71. Lois Grambling and Penny Hauffe - Can I Have a Tyrannosaurus Rex, Dad? Can I? Please!
72. Lois Grambling and H.B. Lewis-Can I Have a Stegosaurus Mom? Can I Please?
73. Steven Kellogg- Can I Keep Him?
74. Judith Viorst –Earrings
75. READ XL (Ninth grade) Textbook
76. page 20 (Nonfiction Article: Detail) -The Science Behind Extreme Sports
77. page 30 (A Science Activity: Detail) - Take the Balance Challenge

78. Gary Paulsen page 332 (Personal Narrative: Detail) - Cookie

79. Hugh B. Cave page 336 (Short Story: Detail) - Two Were Left

Unit 9.5 Making Connections

80. Frances Hodgson Burnett -The Secret Garden

81. Lemony Snicket - Series of Unfortunate Events

82. J.K. Rowling - Harry Potter

83. L. Frank Baum -The Wizard of Oz

84. Katherine Paterson -The Bridge to Terabithia

85. C.S. Lewis- The Chronicles of Narnia

86. Beverly Cleary - Dear Mr. Henshaw

87. Jean Craighead George -My Side of the Mountain

READ XL (Ninth grade) Textbook:

88. Phyllis Fair Cowell page 36 (Short Story: Cause and Effect)-

Masquerade

89. Mary Lou Brooks page 38 (Short Story: Cause and Effect) -The Fish

Story

90. Walter Dean Myers page 64 (Novel: Analyze Character) -From Slam!

Unit 9.6 Figuratively Speaking

Poetry Collections:

91. V. Worth- All the Small Poems

92. L. Hughes - From Mother to Son

- 93. E. E. Cummings - Hist Wist
- 94. Lewis Carrol - Jabberwocky
- 95. N. Wood - Many Winters
- 96. R. Fletcher - Ordinary Things: Poems from a Walk in Early Spring
- 97. P. B. Janeczko (editor) - The Place My Words Are Looking For
- 98. Eloise Greenfield - Night on Neighborhood Street
- 99. Jack Prelutsky o Pizza, Pigs, and Poetry: How to Write a Poem

Dramatic Literature:

- 100. Penny Warner - Troop 13 to the Rescue
- 101. Jason Sanford - Rumpelstiltskin, Private Eye
- 102. V. McQuin - And So They Did
- 103. Timothy Tocher - Final Prep
- 104. Timothy Tocher - Free Agent
- 105. Penny Warner Bart's Black Gold
- 106. Bruce Lansky - Temper, Temper
- 107. Bruce Lansky - Liza and the Lost Letter
- 108. Bruce Lansky - The Royal Joust

READ XL (Ninth grade) Textbook:

- 109. Angela Shelf Medearis page 81 (Poetry: Problem and Solution) -
"Nonconformist"
- 110. Yolen and Heidi Elisabet Yolen-Stemple

111. page 202 (Short Story: Cause and Effect) - “Opening Act”
112. Jewel page 210 (Poetry/ Lyrics: Cause and Effect) - “A Song and Poem”
113. Page 324 (Essays and Poetry: Make Inferences) - “Voices from What You Are?”

Appendix 3-

Inclusions and Omissions

Inclusions		
Categories	Texts	
	National Geographic's Inside Series for Grade 9 texts	Popular texts with potential narrative literature that address gender issues
<i>Characters</i>	100% male 100% female 40% neutral	100% male 100% female 40% neutral 40% non-binary
<i>Names in titles</i>	40% female 60% neutral	40% female 60% neutral
<i>Firstness</i>	100% male 100% female 100% neutral	100% male 100% female 60% neutral 20% non-binary
<i>Occupations</i>	60% male 80% female 100% neutral	60% male 40% female 60% neutral
Omissions		
Categories	Texts	
	National Geographic's Inside Series for Grade 9 texts	Popular texts with potential narrative literature that address gender issues
<i>Characters</i>	100% non-binary	No omissions
<i>Names in titles</i>	100% male 100% non-binary	100% non-binary 100% neutral
<i>Firstness</i>	100% non-binary	No omissions
<i>Occupations</i>	100% non-binary	100% non-binary