

Queer Guides: Constructing Agency in LGBTQ* Youth

Abstract

In line with the conference's focus on activism and empathy, this paper aims to consider the way in which queer guides influence and construct the agency and identity of young adults; queer guides being nonfictional texts which give advice on how to function as a member of the LGBTQ* community. The prominence of agency in queer guides is very obviously present, possibly indicating that queer guides have identified agency as being or difficult to achieve or achieved differently for LGBTQ* individuals than their heteronormative peers. There has been little research done on queer guides and how they influence the agency of LGBTQ* youth in the field of young adult literature, which is surprising when taking into account the number of youth who could possibly benefit from these texts.

Specifically, this paper will be considering the influences of Juno Dawson's *This Book is Gay* and Ashley Mardell's *The ABCs of LGBT+* on LGBTQ* youth. These guides give advice on such topics as determining identity, coming out, homophobia/transphobia and bullying, and more. Because of the unpacking that each of these themes deserves, it is difficult to discuss each of them in detail. Therefore, this paper will work within the frame of queer theory to examine the topics already mentioned in the context of the queer guide. These texts may prepare young adults to have critical conversations about their identity and to advocate for themselves, overall increasing their agency.