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THE IMPACT OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE, AUTONOMY, AND COMPETENCE ON 7TH-12TH GRADE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS TEXT SELECTION

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THE IMPACT OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE, AUTONOMY, AND COMPETENCE
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ABSTRACT

THE IMPACT OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE, AUTONOMY, AND COMPETENCE ON 7TH-12TH GRADE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS TEXT SELECTION

Julianna V. Lux

This explanatory sequential mixed methods study sought to understand the influences of teaching experience on perceptions of autonomy and competence on 7th through 12th grade English language arts teachers' text selection decisions through a survey and interviews. The findings of this explanatory sequential design survey study could affirm practices of those teachers utilizing diverse texts in the classroom, encourage those lacking confidence in aligning nontraditional texts with their state's standards, and remind administrators of teachers' need for autonomy in the classroom. While no statistically significant difference was found on the autonomy and competence subscale scores based on teaching experience, the findings from this study further explain the obstacles teachers face when making choices for their students and their classrooms. Teachers exhibiting low perceived competence often faced limited opportunities to select texts for their students, while teachers exhibiting high perceived competence were more confident in their abilities to select texts. Teachers exhibiting low perceived autonomy shared issues of micromanagement, mandatory co-planning, censorship issues, budget constraints and lack of administrative support; teachers with high perceived autonomy shared they received administrative support and opportunities to select preferred texts and texts based on the needs of students.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my Mom and Dad who instilled in me a love for learning, teaching, and reading.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

For the past 50 years, the most commonly taught titles in middle and high school have remained the same (Applebee, 1989; Stallworth et al., 2006; Stotsky, et al., 2011). Most students read Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* or *Julius Caesar* or *Macbeth*, George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, F. Scott's Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, and Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. These texts culturally and experientially represent a shrinking percentage of the students who read them, yet teachers continue to assign these books because they are classics, well-loved by the teachers, or exist on district- or standards-supplied lists (Stallworth et al., 2006; Watkins & Ostenson, 2015). These titles have become tradition and essential expected reading every year. Instead of delving deep into the text, some students may surreptitiously consult SparkNotes before class or just do not read the books at all (Kittle, 2013; Scholastic, 2017).

Background

According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 2019), in 2019 66% of United States' 8th grade students scored below the proficiency level in reading. With the exception of Asian and Asian Pacific Islanders, students of minority scored an average 7% lower than White students. Black students scored an average of 10% lower than White students. It goes without saying that this is a problem that needs to be addressed, especially as we begin to understand the impact the pandemic has had on academic progress. Teachers also face changing demographics in their classrooms.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2020b), just within the last 20 years, the percentage of White students has decreased from 61% to 47% while the percentage of Hispanic students has increased from 16% to 27%.

With over two-thirds of the United States' eighth grade students reading below the proficiency level (NAEP, 2019) and the increasing diversity of the classrooms (2020b), English teachers, policy makers, and administrators need to be considering how best to reach these students. Many children are not reading often in school or at home (Scholastic, 2015, 2017), which contributes to the decline in reading proficiency (Allington, 2014). Researchers suggest educators should be selecting diverse texts to increase reading engagement and motivation to read (e.g., Guthrie et al., 2013; Klauda & Guthrie, 2014; Merga, 2014; Merga & Moon, 2016; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). Effective types of reading, regardless of academic purpose, actively engage the student in reading and discussions about the text, whether with classmates, friends, family, or anyone else who may have read the same text (Colwell et al., 2018; Ivey & Johnston, 2013). Connecting real world experiences with the texts they are reading aids students' comprehension and discussion of those texts; if students lack the interest or real-world knowledge to make those connections, the comprehension is hindered (Moley et al., 2011).

With nine out of ten adolescents ages 12 to 17 claiming they are more likely to finish a book they pick out themselves, and seven out of ten adolescents ages 12 to 17 claiming they would read more if they could find books they like (Scholastic, 2015), teachers need to consider more effective ways of reaching the students. Research shows that regardless of purpose, the most effective reading occurs when students choose to

read and choose what they read (e.g., Barry, 2013; Colwell et al., 2018; Hickman, 1977; Ivey & Johnston, 2013; Merga, 2014; Merga & Moon, 2016; Souto-Manning et al., 2018; Whitten et al., 2016).

Just because students are assigned to read books in their English language arts (ELA) classroom does not mean they will (Scholastic, 2017). Students are more likely to read when given an abundance of options and encouraged to read what they want as opposed to whole-class texts (Ivey & Johnston, 2013; Merga, 2014; Merga & Moon, 2016; Scholastic, 2017). Classroom practices can assist culturally diverse students by creating a classroom setting that is more culturally familiar, thus eliminating one aspect of intimidation in the educational process (Li, 2011; Tatum, 2013). To engage students in meaningful interactions with texts to strengthen their literacy skills and strategies, research suggests teachers need to provide appropriate texts and learning opportunities showcasing different cultures and providing opportunities for students to embrace cultural diversity and agency in the classroom (e.g., Alvermann, 2011; Li, 2011; Perry & Stallworth, 2013). By taking an active interest and role in reading and learning, many students are more likely to continue reading and to seek their own understandings from the books they read (Scholastic, 2017; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). If these students discover books relative to their own social and cultural experiences, values, and beliefs, perhaps they will be more likely to continue reading past the influences of a classroom teacher (Perry & Stallworth, 2013; Scholastic, 2017; Souto-Manning et al., 2018).

A Brief History of the English Language Arts Curriculum

When uniform literature lists were first developed for schools in the mid- to late-19th century to help prepare students for college entrance, higher education students were

predominantly white (Applebee, 1974; U. S. Department of Education, 2020). These lists did not change much during the next century, even with policies resulting from Brown v. Board of Education striving to achieve equality in all elements of education (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). During the 1990s, an increasing number of states developed English language arts standards and standardized tests numerous times during students' first through twelfth grade years (Hurst, 2003). These standards and assessments were not uniform in verbiage and expectations across the nation, and many states aligned textbooks with these new standards (Hurst, 2003).

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in the early 2000s shifted text instruction to excerpts geared towards test preparation as standardized tests were used to measure academic achievement and growth and help schools obtain federal funding (Dillon, 2003). Pre-packaged curriculum and scripted curricula with little freedom for teachers to select diverse and multicultural texts were the norm (Allington & Pearson, 2011; Ortlieb & Cheek, 2020).

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS), widely adopted in the early 2010s to replace NCLB-era standards and establish equitable expectations nationwide, provided teachers with text lists continuing the exclusiveness and lack of diversity evident in text lists from the previous 100 years (Boyd, 2013; Connors & Shepard, 2012; Schieble, 2014). Since the implementation of the CCSS, researchers, scholars, and national education organizations alike have criticized the exemplar lists for their lack of diversity and appeal to current students (Boyd, 2013; International Literacy Association [ILA], 2018; NCTE, 2015, 2018a, 2018b; Schieble, 2014).

Even with the increased diversity of the United States population, schools still reference these lists, whether intentionally or unintentionally by following tradition (Connors & Shepard, 2012; Stallworth et al., 2006; Stotsky et al., 2010), when developing curriculum and making classroom instruction decisions. Many students are being assigned texts with little relevance in their lives, and historically, teachers have very little say in the texts they choose (Connors & Shepard, 2012; Schieble, 2014).

Statement of the Problem

Many students learn best when provided with appropriate texts and learning opportunities to showcase different cultures and allow them to embrace cultural diversity and agency in the classroom (Alvermann, 2011; Li, 2011). Some studies exist that focus on veteran teachers' perceptions of students' reading motivation rather than their purpose in the selection of texts and the teacher's perceived autonomy and competence in those decisions (e.g., Sweet et al., 1996; Taboada Barber & Buehl, 2012). Some studies have focused on teachers' perceptions of autonomy as related to their satisfaction in their job (e.g., Archbald & Porter, 1994; Boote, 2006) or as supported by specific leadership skills (Eyal & Roth, 2011). Some studies have focused on the influences of policies, such as No Child Left Behind or Common Core State Standards, on the text selection process (Stallworth et al., 2006; Watkins & Ostenson, 2015). However, as teachers need the support, opportunity, and knowledge to match texts to their students, multiple factors need to be examined to understand teachers' perceptions of the text selection process. Therefore, this study seeks to fill a gap in the literature in understanding how the perceived influences of autonomy, competence, and relatedness on text selection processes for veteran and new English language arts teachers.

Theoretical Framework

Self-determination theory (SDT) contends the constructs of autonomy, relatedness, and competence, while sometimes working independent of each other, must all be supported and present to result in intrinsic motivation to improve, change, or learn (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Relatedness is not in contradiction with autonomy; it should not be confused with independence or individualism. Instead, SDT aligns the two together. High levels of perceived autonomy within a classroom or work environment leads to the desire to do well and connect and collaborate with others in those environments (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Without confidence in ability, the desire to repeat actions will not occur.

When teachers are required to use specific resources and lists for classroom curriculum, they lack the autonomy to ensure that curriculum aligns with the needs of their students (Allington, 2002; Connors & Shepard, 2012). However, even when granted the autonomy to make curriculum decisions for their students, some may lack the competence to know which texts may best meet their students' academic needs and require support in the forms of professional development or other resources (Allington, 2002). Those lacking in autonomy are less likely to consider the needs of their students or attempt to make connections with their students, hindering decisions on text selections for their students. According to Allington's (2002) studies of exemplary elementary teachers, exemplary teachers have the perceived autonomy to select appropriate materials for their individual students as opposed to implementing a pre-packaged curriculum. Exemplary elementary teachers strive to connect with their students through conversation and personalized instruction (Allington, 2002). Ultimately, Allington found, exemplary teaching is not one-size-fits-all and requires flexibility on the part of the teacher.

This study sought to examine through the lens of SDT the extent to which ELA teachers were being granted the freedoms and opportunities to foster relationships with their students in order to create personalized instruction and select appropriate texts to meet their students' cultural and academic needs.

Significance of the Study

In recent years, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), International Literacy Association (ILA), the Assembly for Literature for Adolescents of NCTE (ALAN), and others have become increasingly vocal about the need for diverse texts in the classroom (Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of NCTE, 2019; ILA, 2018; NCTE, 2015, 2018a, 2018b). This call for diverse texts is not new. NCTE called for diversity in texts in their resolutions in the 1970s (NCTE 1971, 1972), and NCTE and the International Reading Association (IRA) continued the call for more diversity, inclusion, and representation in their *Standards for the English Language Arts* (Erickson, 1996).

This study sought to understand the perceived influences on teachers' decisions for texts for the English language arts (ELA) curriculum in light of the shift to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS; and equivalent state-level standards for those states that did not adopt CCSS) and the NCTE's (2015, 2018b) and ILA's (2018) call for more diverse texts. This study could affirm practices of those teachers utilizing diverse texts in the classroom, encourage those lacking confidence in aligning nontraditional texts with their state's standards, and remind administrators of teachers' need for autonomy in the classroom. Additionally, if low levels of perceived autonomy lead to decreased diversity in text selection decisions, teachers can advocate for more autonomy

to ensure the academic and cultural needs of their students are met (ILA, 2019). Administrators can encourage independence in decision making and provide extra support for teachers needing assistance feeling competent or connecting with their students (Eyal & Roth, 2011; ILA, 2019; Watkins & Ostenson, 2015).

Further studies could be conducted to examine students' motivation to read and academic achievement as influenced by any reported text selections and curriculum decisions. This study could be replicated across the region or nationally to begin filling gaps in how perceptions of teacher autonomy in text selection decisions are influenced since the new standards and the calls from NCTE and ILA (; ILA, 2018, 2019; NCTE, 2015, 2018b).

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

Quantitative Research Questions

1. *Research Question 1*: What is the relationship between teaching experience and teachers' perceptions of autonomy in making text selection decisions for 7th through 12th grade ELA courses?

2. *Research Question 2*: What is the relationship between teaching experience and teachers' expressed levels of competence in making text selection decisions for 7th through 12th grade ELA courses?

Mixed Methods Research Question

3. *Research Question 3*: How do the views of the interviewed 7th through 12th grade ELA teachers help to explain the perceived influences of levels of self-determination on the text selection process?

Conceptual Definitions of Terms

English Language Arts (ELA)

English language arts (ELA) refers to the course teaching Kindergarten through 12th grade students to read, write, and speak (Applebee, 1974; Christenbury, 2010; Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2021). The prescribed curriculum depends greatly on the current political and world climate and the academic needs outlined by the colleges (Applebee, 1974; Christenbury, 2010).

Literary Canon

Literary canon is the term traditionally used to denote classic literature identified by Harvard, Yale, and other colleges in the late 19th century to achieve a uniform list of texts for reading before college entrance exams (Applebee, 1974, 1993; Christenbury, 2010, Schieble, 2014). The majority of texts in the literary canon are written by white male authors primarily before the 1900s (Applebee, 1996). Shakespeare, Milton, and Hawthorne are just a few examples of names found in this early list (Applebee, 1974, 1993, 1996).

Summary

This chapter briefly discussed how teachers' perceptions of self-determination can influence text selection decisions for the ELA classroom. Low levels of perceived autonomy and competence lead to less motivation to make connections or complete the job well (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The following chapter will present a review of the literature related to the history of selecting texts for the ELA classroom, teacher perceptions of the selection process, and the impact of text selection on reading motivation in students.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Many students are not excited to read the literature assigned to them in class, and often do not read texts even when required (Kittle, 2013; Scholastic, 2017). Research shows students are more likely to read and seek their own understanding of books by being given an abundance of options and encouraged to read what they choose, especially if they find a book they enjoy (Ivey & Johnston, 2013; Merga, 2014; Merga & Moon, 2016; Scholastic, 2017; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). Aligning books with students' social and cultural lives, values, and beliefs, could increase the likelihood of their continuing to read (Pitcher et al., 2007). By providing access to diverse libraries at school, teachers can increase the likelihood of their finding a book and choosing to read (Scholastic, 2017; Souto-Manning et al., 2018). However, one concern among many teachers is allowing students to choose their own texts for classroom instruction as those selected could lack literary merit (Applebee, 1992, 1993; Christ & Sharma, 2018; Stallworth et al., 2006). Because of this, many teachers choose texts recommended by a number of lists published by various entities during the past 130 years (Applebee, 1974; 1993). Historically, teachers are given a false sense of autonomy and their competence is regularly called into question, all while trying to connect with and engage students (Smaller, 2015).

Theoretical Framework

Self-determination theory (SDT) examines motivation as driven by three principles: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000). The intrinsic desire to connect with others, make personal decisions, and demonstrate one's knowledge is what drives intrinsic motivation. When any of those

needs are not met, or when the opposite opportunity is presented, intrinsic motivation is stifled, resulting in minimized growth or less than optimal performance (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

This theory has sometimes been used to measure and define students' levels of motivation. Sweet and colleagues' (1996) mixed methods study, grounded in SDT, measured teachers' perceptions of student reading engagement and motivation. The researchers found through the fulfillment of aiding students' desires to feel confident in their reading abilities, giving students choice and opportunities for decisions, and relating texts to their lives and practices, teachers can cultivate intrinsic reading motivation in their students (Sweet et al., 1996). As confidence builds in a classroom, so will confidence build in each student (Deci & Ryan, 2000). However, as motivation is what inherently drives all choices made by humans, considering English language arts (ELA) teachers' text selection decisions through the lens of the self-determination theory could prove insightful.

Autonomy

Autonomy has been defined as the opportunity to make decisions without external influences, control, or reward. Someone with high levels of autonomy will act based on internal desires to succeed or intrinsic values associated with the decisions (Roth et al., 2007; Ryan & Deci, 2000). In contrast, someone with low levels of autonomy will begrudgingly follow through with demands, sometimes shirking responsibilities, cutting corners, and failing to complete the task (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Perceived autonomy can be encouraged through exacting less control. A teacher providing choice and voice to the students are more likely to see students who complete required tasks as opposed to those

who require compliance (Ivey & Johnston, 2013; Merga, 2014; Merga & Moon, 2016; Scholastic, 2017; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). When teachers feel they have the discretion, opportunities, and administrative support to choose what they teach in the classroom, job satisfaction increases (Archbald & Porter, 1994; Boote, 2006).

Feelings of autonomy can be inherent in the secondary ELA (grades 7 through 12) classroom, especially in the higher grades where the list of texts can be lengthy and provide more flexibility (Watkins & Ostenson, 2015). Unfortunately, autonomy is often limited by schools' reliance on set lists, such as the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) exemplar list (Connors & Shepard, 2012; Watkins & Ostenson, 2015), typically lacking in diversity and relatability (Schieble, 2014). In an ELA setting, one element of control often exhibited is the requirement for all students to read the same texts regardless of ability or interest (Allington, 2002). When students are not granted choice and voice in the classroom and on instruction, the perceived teacher's control hinders their progress and decreases the intrinsic motivation to perform well (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Sweet & Guthrie, 1994; Sweet et al., 1996). Similarly, when teachers are not granted the autonomy and instead are pressured to align their instruction with others in their department or district, this perceived control tends to result in transferring this element of control onto the students (Allington, 2002; Eyal & Roth, 2011; Roth et al., 2007).

Competence

Competence has been defined as the feeling of self-efficacy or capability to complete a task knowledgeably and competently (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Someone with high perceptions of competence is confident in their ability to make the right decisions for themselves and for others. Receiving positive feedback, encouragement, and support

from others increases the drive to improve and learn more; whereas negative feedback, discouragement, and lack of support decreases the drive and results in passive compliance. Teachers who feel confident in their ability to identify literature appropriate for their students and use that literature to teach the appropriate skills could be more likely to include texts that deviate from tradition (Christ & Sharma, 2018; Gay, 2002).

Relatedness

Relatedness refers to the connection a person will feel with others, whether it is a child with a parent, students with their teacher, or teachers with their principal (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This connectedness to others leads to the adoption of values and interests and increases the intrinsic motivation to act on those values and interests independent of others. Relatedness also refers to the desire to act on those values and interests in an effort to connect with others for different purposes, be it academic, cultural, or social (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Sweet et al., 1996).

A teacher who personally loves to read and helps students find books they would want to read is acting on their desire to relate to the students on a literary level (Tatum, 2006). Without building relationships with the students, teachers cannot begin to identify those texts that will encourage them to read and become critical thinkers (Pitcher et al., 2007; Scholastic, 2017; Souto-Manning et al., 2018; Tatum, 2006; Unrau et al., 2015).

A Condensed History of Influences on Text Selection for the ELA Curriculum

Teachers' struggles to select texts for classrooms is nothing new (Applebee, 1974; Stallworth et al., 2006; Watkins & Ostenson, 2011). The process is influenced by many external and internal forces:

- Unfamiliarity with and lack of confidence teaching newer and culturally relevant texts (Applebee 1992, 1993; Christ & Sharma, 2018; Stallworth et al., 2006)

- Questions of literary merit when considering texts not commonly taught (Applebee 1992, 1993; Christ & Sharma, 2018; Stallworth et al., 2006; Stotsky, 2010)

- Concern for stakeholder or administrative response to deviations from commonly taught texts (Applebee 1992, 1993; Smith et al., 2018)

- Lack of funding or resources (Stallworth et al., 2006; Watkins & Ostenson, 2015)

- Personal preferences for traditional texts (Stallworth et al., 2006)

- Censorship concerns (Smith et al., 2018; Stallworth et al., 2006)

- Lack of time (Smith et al., 2018; Stallworth et al., 2006)

- Specific texts must be taught (Stallworth et al., 2006)

Each of these reasons aligns directly with one or more construct of SDT. As previously stated, teachers who have the competence in selecting texts that align with their students' cultural and academic needs, the autonomy to freely select texts without constraints of lists or mandates, and opportunity to build relationships with their students will be more likely to include texts not traditionally assigned in the classroom (Allington, 2002; Christ & Sharma, 2018). However, teachers do not always have this freedom in the classroom.

Early Text Selection (Late 1800s): Academia's Influence

The first list of suggested texts for English language arts instruction was first created in 1894. The National Conference in Uniform Entrance Requirements in English approved the Uniform List, which was divided texts into two sections—texts read for appreciation and texts read for literary analysis—and added English as a required course

for all four years of high school (Applebee, 1974). This list was closely tied to college

entrance exams and consisted of titles primarily published prior to 1850 (Applebee, 1974,

1989, 1993; Christenbury, 2010). At this time, Yale developed its own list, selecting from

writers of the 19th century, but then conscribed to the Uniform List (Applebee, 1974).

Generally, teachers were expected to cover works by primarily white male authors, such

as William Shakespeare, Sir Walter Scott, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Charles Dickens,

Nathaniel Hawthorne, Samuel Coleridge, and Washington Irving.

Because the college entrance examination was closely tied to the Uniform List,

high schools were bound to teach the texts, whether they wanted to or not (Applebee,

1974; Christenbury, 2010). Many of the more commonly taught works were short poems

and excerpts, as opposed to the longer works taught in the mid-20th century and later (see

Appendix A). However, the college entrance exams often referenced the longer works of

Shakespeare, Sir Walter Scott, James Fenimore Cooper, Charles Dickens, Nathaniel

Hawthorne, among others (Applebee, 1974).

Discontent with the list led to the formation of the National Council of Teachers

of English (NCTE) in 1911. The teachers that formed NCTE asserted students could not

be adequately taught through reading the same books across the class. NCTE conducted a

survey in 1913 of 307 schools and found the majority of literature curriculum was

determined by the Uniform List and subsequently attempted to provide schools with a

better alternative, providing a 16-page list for teachers and students in 1913 before

expanding the list to 64 pages in 1923 (Applebee, 1974; Christenbury, 2010). These lists

provided teachers with a variety of literary works, such as Jane Austen's *Pride and*

Prejudice and *Little Women*, which were not found on the Uniform List (Applebee, 1974).

College entrance exams shifted in 1916 to provide students with two options: the traditional exam covering texts from the Uniform List or a comprehensive exam on which the student demonstrated a broad reading and appreciation of literature. However, despite NCTE's efforts and the changes, some schools continued to use the Uniform List to inform curriculum decisions (Applebee, 1974). Because teachers were allowed to choose only from a prescribed list, teachers experienced controlled autonomy in their efforts to meet the needs of their students (Archbald & Porter, 1994; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Early 1900s: Meeting the Students' and Country's Needs

With the development of vocational education as extensions of the school program in the early 1900s, academia's concern for the lack of literary merit in texts deepened, a concern expressed often throughout the entire 20th century into the 21st century (Applebee 1992, 1993; Christ & Sharma, 2018; Stallworth et al., 2006). However, Hosic's *Reorganization of English in Secondary Schools* (1917) and National Education Association's *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education* (1918) both expressed a need to prepare students for life as opposed to college advising teachers to choose texts based on students' interests as opposed to literary merit (Applebee, 1974).

Prominent American psychologist and educator G. Stanley Hall suggested myths and legends, such as those of King Arthur, Tristan and Isolde, Beowulf, and Robin Hood as exemplary texts for adolescents (Applebee, 1974). Hall's suggestions demonstrated a shift to introducing students to texts more relatable to children of their age, maturity, and interests as opposed to texts typically enjoyed by adults (Applebee, 1974, 1993).

Exhibiting a new level of autonomy, many teachers carried this shift even further to introduce more recent texts, such as the dime novel, newspapers, and magazines with the hopes students would eventually shift to the classics. However, NCTE expressed concern with this shift, as these texts were not written to the standards of the works on the Uniform List and championed by academia. (Applebee, 1974).

Struggling to Meet the Needs of Black Students. At this time, only one-eighth to one-fourth of the amount spent on schools for white students was spent on schools for Black students, limiting teachers to hand-me-down, tattered, outdated textbooks obtained from white public schools (Anderson, 2010; Johnson, 1936). These texts related experiences unrelated to the lives of the children expected to read them and often misrepresented Black history or completely omitted it (Harris, 1992; Johnson, 1936). Johnson (1936) recommended the use of culturally relevant texts to support the cultural and academic growth of students and provide with relatable experiences and cultural pride. Through the groundwork of Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Carter G. Woodson, African American publications and curriculums were created to enhance the learning experiences of Black students. However, the minimal funding still led to additional inequities limiting the literacy opportunities of Black students (Harris, 1992; Woodson, 2020).

Additionally, the teachers in the Black schools were often white or, if Black, lacked the training needed to enhance the learning opportunities for their students (Harris, 1992; Woodson, 2020). These teachers struggled with the confidence and, many times, ability to relate to their students (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Sweet et al., 1996). They also

lacked the autonomy and resources to select texts relative to the students in their classrooms (Harris, 1992; Woodson, 2020).

The lack of representative texts was not for lack of trying. A number of anthologies sought to gather historically accurate voices and literature of the Black perspective and culture, but minimal funding of the schools continued to exacerbate the inequitable resources (Harris, 1992). Through a series of studies exposing the "deleterious effects [of segregated education] on African-American students" and the landmark case Brown v. Board of Education (1954), the integration of schools slowly began (Harris, 1992, p. 283).

Choosing Texts to Promote American Ideals. Aside from a push from NCTE to teach American ideals and patriotism through literature during the 1910s and 1940s, teacher's controlled autonomy to select texts appropriate for their students remained prevalent until the 1930s (Applebee, 1974, 1993; Smaller, 2015; Van Til, 1976). For some students, especially immigrants and Blacks, this meant unlearning the culture of their parents to meet the expectations of the educational norms (Mead, 1950; Smaller, 2015). These teachers experienced a lack of relatedness to their students, whether intentional or controlled, leading them to select texts misrepresenting and harming their students (Harris, 1992; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Mid-1900s: The Influences of Censorship, Academia, and Civil Rights

In the 1950s, even though teachers wanted to encourage students to read openly and widely, they often avoided controversial texts for fear of repercussions as a result of the McCarthyism or were discouraged from reading children's literature in the classroom as that could diminish the child's desire to read outside of class (Goodman, 2011). These

constraints limited the teachers' abilities to select texts for their students despite their attempts to design classroom instruction around experiences that would encourage students to understand their own world through the characters and texts they read (Applebee, 1974; Goodman, 2011). Teachers added some contemporary young adult literature texts, such as *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1950) and *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951), both coming-of-age novels, but many literary works were censored for political, sexual, or immoral positions (Applebee, 1974). Many teachers, when challenged on a text, would remove the book instead of fighting to keep it in the curriculum (Applebee, 1974; Cremin, 2011), demonstrating diminished self-perceived competence and increased controlled autonomy (Archbald & Porter, 1994; Ryan & Deci, 2000). However, some educators found the list of challenged books to be great recommendations for high school juniors and seniors (Applebee, 1974).

Political and moral censorship concerns remained through the 1960s and 1970s Civil Rights movement and anti-war protests (Applebee, 1974). NCTE's "The Students' Right to Read," officially published for the first time in 1981 with numerous updates up through 2018, provided teachers with arguments to support the literary values of a text and the professional judgment granted to teachers for selecting the text, enabling the teacher to argue for the inclusion of questionable excerpts when taken in conjunction with the whole meaning of the text (NCTE, 2018a). NCTE attempted to help teachers gain the competence to put relatable books in the hands of the students.

Academia's Influence Returns. The introduction of the Advanced Placement program and exams in 1955 and 1956 led to a revival of rigor in high school English courses with increased emphasis on textual analysis and literary criticism (Applebee,

1974). This shift refocused upper-level courses to specific texts selected by the College Board, mostly found on the previous list (Applebee, 1974; White, 2015). At the same time, the general English curriculum was restructured, reinstating previous values and traditions reminiscent of early 20th century instruction, with recommendations of specific types of texts and authors, most coming from the earlier list (Applebee, 1974; Goodman, 2011).

The Influence of Desegregation. With the desegregation of public schools in the 1950s and 1960s, teachers began recognizing the lack of equality and appropriateness of texts being used in the classroom (Applebee, 1974, 1993; Harris, 1992; NCTE, 2020). Slaughter's (1969, as cited in Harris, 1992) research of African-American students' in the Head Start program identified a correlation between teacher incompetence, lack of relatable texts, and inequitable funding and low literacy scores. Teachers were not prepared or supported in their efforts to meet the needs of all students, especially Black and immigrant students (Harris, 1992).

As early as the 1970s, NCTE began issuing position statements emphasizing the need for teachers to include literature written by racial and ethnic minorities of America (NCTE, 1971, 1972, 2020). This emphasis extended to a resolution seeking publishers to include these works on their lists and in their anthologies (NCTE, 1986, 2020). Increased diversity in the classroom called for teachers' autonomy to select diverse texts to enhance the literacy opportunities of all students (Harris, 1992). Larrick (1965), former president of the International Reading Association, emphasized the need for all students to feel accurately represented in the books they read in the classroom. However, the books

included in the ELA curriculum stereotyped, misrepresented, or omitted Blacks and their culture (Larrick, 1965; Mead, 1950).

Influences of Policies. The 1960s also ushered in the development of course standards, setting aside the focus on what to read and instructing teachers in how to read, including questions readers should ask about the form, rhetoric, meaning, and value of a text (Applebee, 1974). With the implementation of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 and Title I and II, the government set aside funds to provision schools and libraries with materials to close the achievement gap between students attending rural schools and suburban schools (Jeffrey, 1978).

Late-20th Century: Student-Focused Text Selection

A brief respite in controlled autonomy occurred by the 1970s, when teachers and policymakers began readily acknowledging and using students' interests and needs when considering texts for the classroom, recognizing reading for enjoyment was important in addition to reading for development (Applebee, 1974, 1993; NCTE, 1971, 1972). The mid-1970s and 1980s marked a focus on skills-based instruction and competency testing (Applebee, 1993; Van Til, 1976). This push, while grounded outside of the educational realm, led to a revision of curriculum and texts used in the English language arts classroom, with the rejection of a definitive list to use for instruction (Applebee, 1993). However, the texts most commonly taught, such as *Romeo and Juliet* or *The Great Gatsby*, did not relate to the students in the classroom and ultimately rejected the recommendations of NCTE (1971, 1972) for diversity in texts. Because of the high levels of perceived autonomy and revalued competence in teachers, scripted programs were discontinued (Goodman, 2011). At the same time, NCTE formed the Assembly on

Literature for Adolescents of NCTE (ALAN) in 1973 and subsequently began advocating for the inclusion of more adolescent literature in the classroom (Christenbury, 2010).

By the end of the 1980s, teachers were leaving basal readers in the closets and placing children's books and young adult literature on the shelves for the students to read (Goodman, 2011). NCTE (1987) continued to encourage teachers to engage students in studies of multicultural literature in ways that would make meaning of their own lives. This encouragement was echoed by Irving Howe (1991), American literary critic, who argued literature instruction should blend contrasting views, exposing students to both authors traditionally read and the women and Black authors who had been long-overlooked would provide opportunities for analysis, debate, and enjoyment. He stressed the importance of including authors who had withstood the test of time, because omitting them would exclude literature from authors representative of the students in the classroom. Instead, he objected, multicultural studies courses to that point tended to segregate students by grouping the students and providing them with aligning literatures as opposed to exposing them to a wide variety of cultures and authors. His intent was to engage students in open discussions and encourage questioning and thinking of the students' personal understandings of the world (Howe, 1991). Teachers needed the autonomy to select texts diminishing stereotypes and improving dialogue.

Applebee's (1993) series of four interrelated studies of curriculum, content, and teacher preparation sought to understand the whats, hows, and whys of ELA curriculum in the 1980s. Applebee found schools using anthologies tended to be underfunded, poorer urban schools while schools teaching a diverse range of texts tended to be wealthier, suburban schools. Applebee's (1989) national survey of public, independent, Catholic,

and urban public schools found the texts taught in the classroom had changed little in the previous 50 years. Of the ten most popular titles taught in grades 9 through 12, only Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* varied from the traditional white male authorship and was also the most recently published. Only four of the top ten titles taught—*Of Mice and Men*, *Lord of the Flies*, *The Great Gatsby*, and *To Kill a Mockingbird*—were written in the 20th century, and none fully represented the increasingly diverse demographics of the classroom.

Late-20th Century into Early-21st Century: The Influence of ELA Standards

During the 1990s, an increasing number of states independently developed English language arts standards and standardized tests for students' first through twelfth grade years (Hurst, 2003). Because the National Commission on Excellence in Education's (1983) *A Nation at Risk* had destroyed confidence in the public education system, and in turn teachers' perceived competence, government-designed policies forced teachers to transition classroom instruction and texts quickly to transmission models, eliminating the student-centered curriculum models and relationship building (Goodman, 2011; Hurst, 2003). To receive funding from the government, states had to comply with this guidance and establish high-stakes tests to measure teacher and student performance (Goodman, 2011). Because teachers' competence was called into question, their levels of autonomy diminished.

Despite the external pressure, some exemplary teachers found ways to maintain high levels of self-determination. Allington's (2002) study, focusing on effective reading teachers during the late 1990s and early 2000s, identified best practices that would result in higher student literacy scores, and these practices often eschewed the pre-packaged

curriculum adopted by many schools. These teachers, exercising autonomy and demonstrating competence and a desire to relate to their students, gave students texts on their reading level and based on their interests, increasing the students' opportunities for reading success. They modeled reading strategies of good readers, encouraging students to transfer these strategies to the books they independently read and then discuss this with other students and adults (Allington, 2002). Gabriel et al. (2011) repeated this study and stressed to administrators the need to grant teachers autonomy to identify and fulfill the needs of students without excessive oversight. Exemplary teachers whose administrators provided professional development opportunities specializing in presenting strategies to help students as opposed to specific content or curriculum packages expressed higher levels of autonomy and feelings of competence.

The Influence of No Child Left Behind. However, these best practices were not widely adopted, especially when the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) replaced the ESEA in an attempt to provide equity in education for all students, regardless of socioeconomic status or ethnicity (Allington & Pearson, 2011; Dillon, 2003). Because the NCLB continued to use standardized tests used to measure academic achievement and growth, classroom instruction shifted towards meeting those accountability standards. Educators focused on high stakes testing and meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) as a means of obtaining funds and regaining the public's confidence in education (Allington & Pearson, 2011). When students fail to meet AYP, teachers were blamed (Dillon, 2003). Therefore, instead of following best practices grounded in research (Allington, 2002), teachers began using excerpts of texts and assigning tasks geared toward preparing students for high-stakes testing (Hurst, 2003; Moley et al., 2011).

Students did not read for meaning or engage in deep discussions about the texts; instead, students were drilled in decoding and fluency (Allington & Pearson, 2011). The increased focus on standards and high stakes testing minimized the perception and actuality of autonomy in the classroom (Allington & Pearson, 2011; Smaller, 2015). Scripted curricula was prevalent, leading toward more accountability on the teacher to meet curricular expectations by certain days during the school year (Allington & Pearson, 2011; Smaller, 2015). Taking the time to build relationships and meet the students' personal and cultural needs was eschewed for the packaged curricula geared towards achieving testing success (Allington & Pearson, 2011; Dillon, 2003)

Two studies conducted during the time of NCLB found when students were assigned full texts, they read mostly the same titles as their counterparts 20-50 years before (Stallworth et al., 2006; Stotsky, 2010). In Alabama, Stallworth et al.'s (2006) discovered the majority of the works taught were those traditionally taught—such as *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *The Great Gatsby, Romeo and Juliet*—and primarily works written prior to 1960. Newer teachers tended to add a few multicultural titles, such as *Things Fall Apart*, *A Raisin in the Sun*, or *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, but the addition of these texts were not commonplace. Teachers expressed censorship concerns; lack of resources, expertise, and time; and requirements of abiding by existing curricula as reasons why they did not incorporate more diverse texts into their curriculum. Stallworth et al. (2006) recommended teachers begin reading more diverse texts to become more comfortable in making the changes to the curricula. They also suggested teachers should develop rationales for each title and ask parents to read along to encourage growth in perspectives of the stakeholders.

Stotsky et al.'s (2010) national survey study of over 400 ELA teachers examined the book-length works taught in public schools in grades 9 through 11 and the approaches teachers use to make text selection decisions. Stotsky et al. (2010) found teachers make text selection decisions with some influence from their department, the school curriculum, or student choice; however, the data shared does not delineate the extent to which those factors may influence independent decisions as participants could select more than one influence on text selection decisions. This study discovered teachers were beginning to deviate from the traditionally-taught texts of the last half century, with the traditional texts being taught by less than 50% of the respondents; however, Stotsky et al. criticized the lack of rigor and uniformity occurring around the texts teachers did select. The researchers attributed the decline in students' reading proficiency to the use of young adult texts.

The 21st Century: The Influence of Common Core State Standards

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) English Language Arts (ELA) standards, adopted by most states and United States territories by 2012, increased the focus on non-fiction and complex texts and instructed ELA teachers to select texts based on readability, knowledge and task demands, motivation and purpose, and social and cultural background knowledge needs (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010; Schieble, 2014). However, the federal government's heavy influence on policy, established during the era of NCLB and high stakes testing, and classroom practice is still prevalent with federal funding being tied to adoption of the standards (Goodman, 2011).

Often classroom behavior—instructional strategies, teacher attitude, student

behavior—changes because of the weight placed on high stakes testing (Coburn et al.,

2011; Delaney et al., 2016; Smaller, 2015). When curriculum is mandated as a result of a

downward swing of test scores, teachers and students are reluctant to jump on board

(Coburn et al., 2011; Delaney et al., 2016; Taylor et al., 2011). Instructional policy based

on research can positively influence a teacher's classroom strategies, but the policy

cannot be completely unfamiliar or overly ambitious. The closer the policy is to what is

already being done in the classroom, the more likely a teacher will be to implementing

the policy, either completely or by choosing to assimilate the new strategies and

curriculum into what is already taking place in their classrooms (Coburn et al., 2011;

Taylor et al., 2011). With the increased rigor of CCSS and similar state standards,

teachers need the autonomy to meet the students where they are, to collaborate with other

teachers to find effective instructional strategies, and to continue examining the research

for what works (Watkins & Ostenson, 2015). Perceived teacher autonomy is low in

regards to decisions made about course materials because of the requirement to achieve

well on high stakes testing (Delaney et al., 2016).

The CCSS's List of Text Exemplars. The CCSS included a list of text

exemplars by grade band as examples of complex texts teachers could use to meet the

prescribed standards. Schieble's (2014) critical analysis, grounded in previous research

and critical theories established by researchers Gee and Tatum, examined the CCSS

exemplar lists for its inclusiveness of diverse texts and discovered the majority of the

authors were white (85%) and male (81%) and written before 1990 (99%). With

increasingly diverse classrooms, these texts do not provide opportunities for students to

critically engage with texts in accordance with CCSS and other revised state standards. In order to achieve equity, Schieble argued, more attention needs to be given to diverse texts in cooperation with exemplar texts based on local contexts and students' needs. Aligning with Stallworth et al. (2006), Connors and Shepard (2012) argued young adult literature can meet the text complexity and critical thinking standards presented in CCSS. They encouraged teachers to approach young adult literature through various lenses, such as social class, gender criticism, genre criticism, and other literary theories. By reading young adult literature, as opposed to canonical texts with adult protagonists, students could engage in critical discussions related to characters of their own age (Connors & Shepard, 2012).

Numerous national education organizations also have criticized the lists accompanying these standards for their lack of diversity, appeal to current students, and relevance to their lives (ILA, 2018; NCTE, 2015, 2018b). In the past five years, NCTE issued three statements advocating for more diversity in children's and young adult literature (NCTE 2015, 2018a, 2018b), emphasizing a lack of diversity in school curriculum deprives everyone, not just those who are underrepresented in curriculum literature (NCTE, 2020). NCTE also stressed the need to present images and literature of the United States in a balanced and unbiased frame to avoid misrepresentation and the perpetuation of biases and stereotypes.

NCTE's (2020) "Position Statement on Indigenous Peoples and People of Color (IPOC) in English and Language Arts Materials" emphasizes a lack of diversity in school curriculum deprives everyone, not just those who are underrepresented in curriculum literature. This statement stresses the need to present images and literature of the United

States in a balanced and unbiased frame to avoid misrepresentation and the perpetuation of biases and stereotypes (NCTE, 2020) and echoes the call from the 2018 revision of "The Students' Right to Read." To best serve the diverse community, schools should establish committees to generate up-to-date lists of literature representing the diversity of the school (NCTE, 2018b).

The influence of CCSS, the exemplar text list, and district expectations is evident in Watkins and Ostenson's (2015) mixed methods survey study of 339 public school grades 7-12 ELA teachers in a Mountain West state to understand the factors influencing teachers' text selection decisions. Over 60% of the teachers perceive a lot of autonomy when it comes to decision making for their classes. The teachers also indicated that text selection decisions were most often made or influenced by the department or the district. Watkins and Ostenson found the purpose for the text and curriculum applicability significantly influenced text selections. Respondents also mentioned text readability and quality influenced their decisions. In consideration of the CCSS exemplar text lists, over half of the respondents indicated they would be using at least one text from the list and replacing up to one-fourth of their current texts with texts from the list. When deciding to change from texts previously taught, respondents expressed budgetary constraints as a major challenge. While some aspects of student interest was addressed in this survey, such as incorporating culturally relevant texts and matching texts to students' needs, this survey did not explicitly question teachers regarding the influence of student interest on text selection decisions.

Why Text Selection is Important

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 79% of public elementary and secondary school educators are White (NCES, 2020a); however, as of 2017, 48% of the public school students are White, 15% are Black, 27% are Hispanic, 5% are Asian, and 4% are of two or more races (NCES, 2020b). Being culturally aware and respectful of differences and literary contributions is only the beginning of teachers being capable of selecting texts that accurately represent and celebrate the students in their classroom (Gay, 2002). Sometimes teachers choose not to deviate from traditional lists due to lack of confidence in selecting texts appropriate for their students (Christ & Sharma, 2018; Gay, 2002).

Numerous researchers (e.g., Klauda & Guthrie, 2014; Merga & Moon, 2016; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997) have found motivation and engagement are at the top of the list of factors impacting reading achievement and desire to succeed academically. Lack of interest in the texts is one of the reasons for struggling readers' low motivation and engagement during class instruction (Klauda & Guthrie, 2014; Pennington, 2017). As such, a current emphasis is to select materials based on students' interests and provide a wide selection of texts from which to choose (Ortlieb & Cheeks, 2020; Stotsky et al., 2010). Instead of the rote memorization, call and response, and choral readings from the 20th century, literature instruction should be engaging with opportunities for discussions and interactions with other students (Ortlieb & Cheeks, 2020).

Kaufman et al.'s (2018) update of a 2016 survey study of 1,089 kindergarten through grade 12 ELA teachers explored the influences of state standards' and the teachers' beliefs on classroom instruction decisions for selected complex, grade-level

texts. Elementary teachers (grades kindergarten through grade 5) responded that 77% select texts for students based on their reading levels, 39% use abridged or adapted texts to assist struggling readers, and 30% assign complex texts for whole-class instruction. Secondary teachers (grades 6 through 12) responded that 45% select texts for students based on their reading levels, 45% use abridged or adapted texts to assist struggling readers, and 48% assign complex texts for whole-class instruction. In regards to how best to align reading instruction approaches with standards, 75% of elementary teachers and 54% of secondary teachers focus on reading skills and strategies before applying those skills to any specific text as opposed to 16% of elementary teachers and 25% of secondary teachers who organize skills and strategies instruction around specific texts. Kaufman et al. (2018) concluded more guidance needs to be given from states and school districts regarding how to best align practices with standards to ensure students are learning to read complex, grade-level texts.

Many students would read more if they could find the right book, but the right book does not always mean the book is selected by a teacher. In fact, compulsory reading of academic texts and lack of choice often quells the desire to read (e.g., Ivey & Johnston, 2013; Kim et al., 2017; Merga, 2014; Merga & Moon, 2016; Protacio, 2017; Scholastic, 2017). Providing students with choice and purpose and building a strong sense of agency regarding texts is crucial to increasing engagement, which is possibly more important than the instruction of reading strategies (Ivey & Johnston, 2013; Protacio, 2017). Unfortunately, a major impediment to reading engagement is student mistrust based on past experiences (Unrau et al., 2015). Therefore, teachers need to engage in more relationship building before instruction. Once relationships are built, teachers can find

texts and materials in line with the students' reading abilities and interests (Kim et al., 2017; Protacio & Jang, 2016).

Summary

Historically, English language arts began as a course to study the appreciation of literature, albeit from the perspective of learning writing and discourse rather than becoming lifelong readers (Applebee, 1974). If teachers wanted their students to be accepted into college, they needed to cover specific texts from the Uniform List, which consisted of texts primarily written prior to 1850 with few contemporary texts. This list, or some slight variation of it, has withstood time, with many teachers today continuing to teach those early texts. Very few new, contemporary texts have made it into textbooks and classrooms.

When teachers, in an attempt to relate literature to their students, introduce more contemporary texts, such as young adult literature, staunch supporters of the literary canon express their concern for their lack of literary merit. Budgetary constraints, censorship, and lack of support have all hindered teachers attempting to select texts specifically for the students in their classroom. With the introduction of high stakes testing in the late 1990s and early 2000s, teachers needed to focus instruction on passing tests as opposed to establishing a love for reading. Textbooks and recommended texts still did not align with the diverse demographics of the classrooms. The Common Core State Standards and accompanying text exemplars still lack the diversity many competent teachers and national organizations recognize students need for engagement. With reading proficiency on the decline, teachers need the autonomy to address students' needs individually and with texts aligning with their personal interests. However, they are not

always granted this autonomy. Sometimes their ability to make those decisions is called into question. Sometimes they do not understand the cultural needs of the students.

      This study sought to understand teachers' perceived levels of self-determination and current influences of the text selection process. The next chapter will detail the research design proposed for this study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this mixed methods survey study was to examine what the impact of self-determination perceptions and teacher experience on teachers' text selection decisions in 7th through 12th grade English language arts (ELA) classrooms. According to Baumann and Bason (2011), survey studies are conducted as a matter of efficiently requesting information from the individuals central to the study. For this study, I gathered quantitative data using a researcher-designed questionnaire, adapted from Archibald and Porter's (1994) questionnaire (see Appendix B for permission), with Likert-scale and qualitative data through open-ended questionnaire items and semi-structured interview questions (see Appendices C and D), with additional questions created after analyzing the quantitative data (Creswell, 2015).

This survey study sought to address the following questions:

1. *Research Question 1*: What is the relationship between teaching experience and teachers' perceptions of autonomy in making text selection decisions for 7th through 12th grade ELA courses?

2. *Research Question 2*: What is the relationship between teaching experience and teachers' expressed levels of competence in making text selection decisions for 7th through 12th grade ELA courses?

3. *Research Question 3*: How do the views of the interviewed 7th through 12th grade ELA teachers help to explain the perceived influences of levels of self-determination on the text selection process?

The Research Design

This study used an explanatory sequential mixed methods design to examine what influences teachers' text selection decisions for classroom instruction. The explanatory sequential mixed methods design seeks to understand a problem first through the quantitative data and then explain the findings through qualitative data (Creswell, 2015). To discover how teachers' perceived levels of self-determination influence their text selection decisions, we must first discover their perceived levels of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in the classroom. Only after establishing their perceived levels of self-determination can we begin to explore what contributes to these perceptions.

I asked survey participants to complete a questionnaire with Likert-scale questions measuring perceived levels of self-determination, nominal scale questions for demographic purposes and levels of experience, and optional open-ended questions to address any additional information they may wish to share (see Appendix C). I created semi-structured interview questions before data analysis revolving around interview participants' feelings, opinions, knowledge, and experience (Lichtman, 2013). Based on the quantitative data analysis and identification of trends revolving around the relationships between experience and autonomy and experience and competence or any "confusing, contradictory, or unusual survey responses" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 222), I designed some additional interview questions (see Appendix D). I selected interview participants based on reported levels of experience, perceived level of autonomy, and perceived level of competence (explicated further below). I initially

analyzed quantitative and qualitative data separately and then triangulated the data, looking for similarities and incongruences.

Participants

The population for this study consisted of approximately a potential pool of more than 30,000 7th through 12th grade ELA teachers who voluntarily responded to a request to complete a survey posted in four private Facebook groups for middle and high school ELA teachers. I selected these groups because of their large number of members, regular activity by members posting and responding, and variety of recommendations of resources and texts. Teachers in these groups share resources, lessons, ideas, and support for teaching ELA. Based on a cursory glance, members of these groups speak English; teach in public, private, and charter schools; live primarily in the United States and Canada, with some living internationally; and represent a range of experience and expertise. As the focal point of my research revolved around the experiences of teachers with the lists created in the United States and bound by state standards, I only analyzed survey data for teachers in the United States. I obtained permission to post the survey online from the founders or moderators of the groups prior to posting (See Appendix E for sample permission emails and sample recruitment posts). I offered a $20 Amazon electronic gift card as an incentive and received 224 complete and 128 incomplete responses.

Ethical and Privacy Safeguards

All survey participants who agreed to the interview completed a form through Qualtrics, digitally signing their consent to be interviewed, recorded, and responses, to include direct quotes, used in this study. I confirmed these agreements during the

36

interviews and then recorded using Cisco Webex. After each interview, I downloaded the

recording, saved it to an external hard drive, and password protected it.

Additionally, I created pseudonyms for each interview profile for the quotes used

in Chapter 4. I omitted any schools the interview participants may have mentioned from

the transcript and excluded from the findings. I included only states and regions to help

identify a general location where the interview participant teaches as teaching

requirements and community values can differ depending on the state or region.

Quantitative Sample

My target sample for this study was to collect data from at least 300 responses in

order to reach 80% power. I encouraged participation in the survey by offering a drawing

for five $20 Amazon e-gift cards. Survey participants could add their email address if

they would like to be entered in the drawing, and I removed their personal information

from the dataset before analysis. Survey participants could also enter their personal

information to be contacted for the qualitative interview phase of the study. The survey

was to remain live for three weeks after the initial post to the first private Facebook group

with a reminder being posted on day 14. However, after the first post to one private

Facebook group did not result in many responses, I obtained permission from three

additional private Facebook groups with similar demographics and professional purpose

to the first. I also requested they share the survey with colleagues, family, and friends

who are also teachers. In total, the survey remained open 41 days. I closed the survey

after no one accessed the survey for a week.

I collected a total of 224 completed surveys. After examining the data, I removed

34 responses for missing quantitative data directly related to the research questions,

teaching in an international setting, or leaving items blank, creating a survey sample size

of 190 (N =190). A target survey subsample size of 40, which was 1 less than the smallest

survey subsample group, was obtained for each survey subsample group—0 to 5 years of

experience, 6 to 15 years of experience, and 16 and more years of experience—through a

stratified random sample method using *IBM SPSS Statistics 27 for Windows and Mac*.

Qualitative Sample

To be able to explain the influence of teaching experience on autonomy and

competence, I recruited a purposive sample of 12 interview participants for qualitative

interviews after analyzing the quantitative data (Huck, 2012). Participants in the

interview received a $20 Amazon e-gift card.

At the beginning of the qualitative phase, I grouped all survey responses

indicating willingness to be interviewed into three independent subsamples based on their

years of experience teaching: 1 to 5 years (n = 19), 6 to 15 years (n = 33), and 16+ years

(n = 49). Each independent interview subsample was then grouped again according to the

following criteria: perceived level of autonomy (high/low) and perceived level of

competence (high/low). Figure 1 illustrates the process. I sorted perceived autonomy

scores and perceived competence scores in ascending order and identified the 4 lowest

and 4 highest from each interview subsample and category for contact. Then I emailed a

total of 49 survey participants, as one email returned invalid. I selected the first survey

participant to respond in each category for an interview. If I did not receive a response, I

sent follow-up emails to encourage participation. Only 12 survey participants of 49

agreed to participate in the interviews; 5 survey participants indicated they were no

longer interested in participating in the interview phase and 32 survey participants did not respond.

Figure 1

Purposive Sampling for Qualitative Interviews
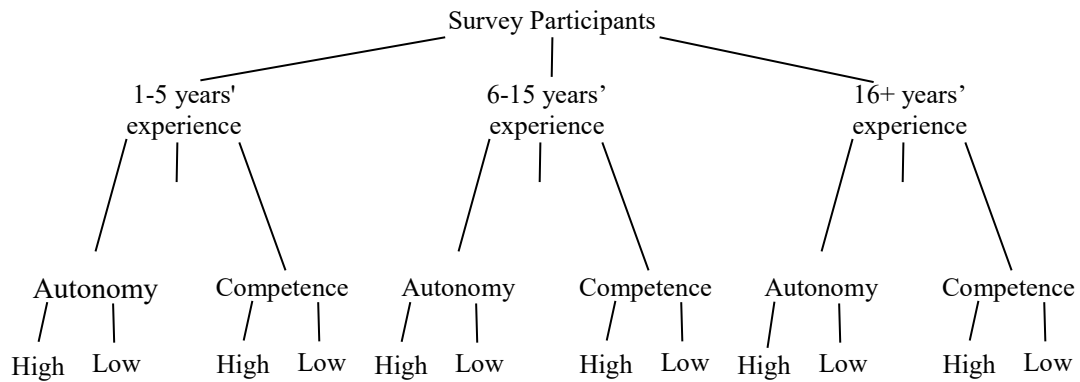
Instrumentation

Quantitative Instrumentation

For this study, I gathered quantitative data using a researcher-designed questionnaire with 20 6-point scale questions, 32 5-point Likert-scale questions, 5 optional open-ended questions, and 10 categorical questions (see Appendix C). To create the survey, I used Qualtrics, with safeguards established to avoid multiple submissions and to prevent indexing and accessing openly through internet searches.

The survey was divided into seven sections: I - Influences, II - Making Decisions, III - Agree/Disagree Statements, IV - Optional Open-Ended Questions, V - Professional Education and Experience, VI - Demographic Information, and VII - Contact Information (optional).

Sections I and II. Sections I and II (see Figure 2) are adapted from Archbald and Porter's (1994) survey measuring perceived levels of autonomy regarding curricular

decisions in mathematics and social studies classrooms. See Appendix B for permission to adapt the survey for this study.

Figure 2

Sections I and II

Section I: Influences
Rate the level of influence each of the following has on the selection of texts for your classroom based on the following scale: *0 - No influence, 1 - Minimal influence, 2 - Little influence, 3 - Some influence, 4 - Considerable influence, 5 - Major influence*

1. State curriculum guidelines	0 1 2 3 4 5
2. District curriculum guidelines	0 1 2 3 4 5
3. School administrators' decisions and guidance	0 1 2 3 4 5
4. Departmental decisions and guidance	0 1 2 3 4 5
5. Other teachers' decisions and guidance	0 1 2 3 4 5
6. State tests	0 1 2 3 4 5
7. District tests	0 1 2 3 4 5
8. School department common assessments	0 1 2 3 4 5
9. The main course textbook	0 1 2 3 4 5
10. My own beliefs about what texts should be used	0 1 2 3 4 5
11. My own knowledge of texts	0 1 2 3 4 5
12. What my students are capable of understanding	0 1 2 3 4 5
13. What my students need for future courses and work	0 1 2 3 4 5
14. The cultural needs of my students	0 1 2 3 4 5
15. The school's budget for books	0 1 2 3 4 5

Optional Response: Is there any answer you gave for a question in this section you feel needs more explanation?

Section II: Making Decisions
Rate how much control you feel you have in your classroom over each of the following areas in your planning and teaching on the following scale:. *0 - No control, 1 - Minimal control, 2 - -Little control, 3 - Some control, 4 - Considerable control, 5 - Major control*

16. Selecting textbooks	0 1 2 3 4 5
17. Selecting instructional materials	0 1 2 3 4 5
18. Selecting content, topics, and skills	0 1 2 3 4 5
19. Selecting teaching techniques	0 1 2 3 4 5
20. Creating assessments	0 1 2 3 4 5

Optional Response: Is there any answer you gave for a question in this section you feel needs more explanation?

Items 1 through 9 and 15 through 20 measure teachers' perceived levels of autonomy on the selection of texts and materials for classroom instruction. Items 10 through 13 measure teachers' perceived levels of competence in the selection of texts for classroom instruction. Item 14 measures the teachers' perceived level of relatedness to students in the selection of texts for classroom instruction.

These 20 items are measured on a 6-point scale with 0 representing no influence or no control and 6 representing major influence or major control. I recoded items 1 through 9 and item 15 to reflect and correctly score negatively worded items. "No influence" became 6 points and "Major influence" became 1 point.

Section III. Survey participants responded to 32 researcher-designed statements in Section III, measured on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 representing Strongly Disagree and 5 representing Strongly Agree. A response of 3 represents a neutral or not applicable response.

Items to Measure High Levels of Perceived Autonomy. I used the following 3 5-point items to measure teachers' perceived levels of autonomy. A 5 indicates a high level of perceived autonomy, and a 1 indicates a low level of perceived autonomy.

- Item 44 – Culturally relevant texts are not incorporated into my school's curriculum, but I incorporate it into my teaching.
- Item 51 – I choose to teach the same texts each year.
- Item 52 – I am content with the level of control I have over what is taught in my classroom.

Items to Measure Low Levels of Perceived Autonomy. I used the following 10 items to measure teachers' perceived levels of autonomy. A 1 indicates a high level of

perceived autonomy, and a 5 indicates a low level of perceived autonomy. I recoded these items to reflect and correctly score negatively worded items.

- Item 37 – My district requires me to teach specific texts.
- Item 38 – My school administration requires me to teach specific texts.
- Item 39 – My department/team requires me to teach specific texts.
- Item 40 – I am expected to teach the same texts as other teachers in my grade level.
- Item 45 – I have been discouraged from using culturally relevant texts in my classroom by colleagues.
- Item 46 – I have been discouraged from using culturally relevant texts in my classroom by administration or the district.
- Item 47 – I have been discouraged from using culturally relevant texts in my classroom by parents.
- Item 48 – I refrain from choosing certain books for my students due to censorship concerns.
- Item 49 – I am expected to select texts for my students based on a specific list.
- Item 50 – I must teach the same texts each year.

Items to Measure Levels of Perceived Competence. I used the following item to measure teachers' perceived levels of competence. A 5 would indicate a high level of perceived competence, and a 1 would indicate a low level of perceived competence.

- Item 29 – I have the right training to meet the academic needs of my students.

I originally intended the following item to measure teachers' perceived levels of competence; however, the Cronbach's alpha for the subscale improved after removing these items. I moved this item to be examined with the other text opinion questions.

- Item 30 – I have the right training to meet the cultural needs of my students.

I originally intended the following item to measure teachers' perceived levels of competence and the expert group agreed; however, I ran a Cronbach's alpha with this item in both the competence and relatedness subscales, and the competence subscale Cronbach's alpha improved after removing this item, but the Cronbach's alpha for the relatedness scale decreased after removing this item.

- Item 34 – I am capable of selecting culturally diverse texts for classroom instruction.

Items to Measure Relatedness. I used the following 6 items to measure teachers' connections to students and their interests.

- Item 22 – A student's background contributes to my text selection decisions.
- Item 23 – I have a significant influence on my students' achievement.
- Item 24 – Providing my students access to culturally diverse texts is important.
- Item 25 – Giving my students time to read independently in class is important.
- Item 33 – Selecting texts that reflect my students' cultural backgrounds is important.

- Item 34 – I am capable of selecting culturally diverse texts for classroom instruction.

The Cronbach's alpha for the relatedness subscale improved after removing these 3 items, which I originally intended to measure teachers' perceived levels of relatedness. I moved these items to be examined with the other text opinion questions.

- Item 41 – My students can easily read the texts assigned to them.

- Item 42 – My students enjoy reading the texts assigned to them.

- Item 43 – Culturally relevant texts are incorporated into my school's curriculum.

Items to Identify Opinions on Text Selection. I used the following 12 items to identify teachers' opinions regarding how texts are selected and included in their classrooms.

- Item 21 - Reading published articles and research studies contributes to my text selection decisions.

- Item 26 - I would like to give my students more time to read independently in class. I recoded this item to reflect and correctly score negatively worded items.

- Item 27 - Reading classic texts is important for my students.

- Item 28 - Reading young adult literature is important for my students.

- Item 30 – I have the right training to meet the cultural needs of my students.

- Item 31 - I enjoy reading classic texts.

- Item 32 - I enjoy reading young adult literature.

- Item 35 - My students read the same text at the same time.

- Item 36 - My students have opportunities to read texts other students are not reading.

- Item 41 – My students can easily read the texts assigned to them.

- Item 42 – My students enjoy reading the texts assigned to them.

- Item 43 – Culturally relevant texts are incorporated into my school's curriculum.

Section IV. In addition to optional open-ended questions asked at the end of each section that allowed survey participants to expound on scaled answers, I asked them these four optional open-ended questions to discover the types and titles of works regularly taught in 7th through 12th grade ELA classrooms.

- Item 53 – Which major text(s) do you regularly teach?

- Item 54 – Which text(s) would you like to read with your students but feel you can't? Feel free to explain why.

- Item 55 – How do you teach long works in the classroom? (i.e., every student reading the same text, literature circles, independent reading)

- Item 56 – Which text(s) will you always teach your students? Why?

Section V. I used items 57 through 66 in section V to obtain information on the education and professional experiences of the respondents. One purpose of this study was to discern the influence of competence on the text selection process, so I used responses to item 61 "How many years have you been teaching?" to create independent subsamples for the qualitative phase and for quantitative analysis. I used the remaining 9 questions during descriptive analyses to describe the types of schools, education level, and

experience the teachers have collectively. Aside from item 61, survey participants could opt to not answer these questions and still be included in data analysis.

Section VI. Items 67 through 69 in Section VI asked survey participants demographic information. They could opt to not include this information and still be included in data analysis.

Section VII. The three yes/no questions in Section VII have no bearing on the analysis of the quantitative data in this study. Respondents could provide their email address if they wished to be included in the drawing, asked to participate in the qualitative interview, or contacted when the study is published.

Qualitative Instrumentation

I gathered qualitative data through 12 virtual interviews, lasting an average of 28 minutes, during which I asked semi-structured interview questions. I designed some questions before data collection, but added additional questions after quantitative data analysis as the purpose of the interview was to elicit responses to further explain the results of the quantitative phase (Creswell, 2015; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Lichtman, 2013). Appendix D lists the questions asked during the qualitative phase. These questions revolved around the interview participants' knowledge, opinions, feelings, and experiences regarding the text selection process (Lichtman, 2013).

Content Validity: Expert Panel

A questionnaire's content validity can be established through the review of the instrument by a panel of experts (Huck, 2012). Validity of an instrument is important to ascertain the accuracy of the instrument in measuring the designated constructs. For this

study, I asked a panel of five literacy experts to review the questionnaire. I provided each expert with the conceptual definitions of each construct and the questionnaire:

1. Perceived autonomy: the perceived freedom to control decisions, actions, and curriculum in the classroom. Synonyms: freedom, choice, personal control

2. Perceived relatedness: perceived connection a person will feel with others, whether it is a child with a parent, students with their teacher, or teachers with their principal. Synonyms: connection, relatability, relationships.

3. Perceived competence: perceived knowledge necessary to adequately meet the cultural and academic needs of students. Synonyms: knowledge, ability, confidence

4. Text preferences and opinions: personal opinions and preferences regarding the texts the respondent personally reads and thinks students should read.

I then asked them to assign each item to a construct as well as provide feedback on clarity and irrelevant items. After they had completed the task, I spoke with the experts individually about certain items to clarify responses. As a result of the expert group's responses, I did not remove any items from the instrument but flagged the following items to examine closer during data analysis for the purpose of determining their alignment with their corresponding constructs:

- Item 21 — Reading published articles and research studies contributes to my text selection decisions. The panel disagreed on whether this item measured autonomy, competence, or text preferences and opinions. Cronbach's alpha confirmed this item did not belong in any of the self-determination subscales.

- Item 24 — Providing my students access to culturally diverse texts is important. The panel was split on whether this item measured relatedness or text preferences and opinions. Cronbach's alpha confirmed this item belonged in the relatedness subscale.
- Item 35 — My students read the same text at the same time. The panel was split on whether this item measured text opinions, autonomy, relatedness, or competence. Cronbach's alpha confirmed this item did not belong in any of the self-determination subscales.
- Item 36 — My students have opportunities to read texts other students are not reading. The panel was split on whether this item measured text preferences, autonomy, or relatedness. Cronbach's alpha confirmed this item did not belong in any of the self-determination subscales.
- Item 41 — My students can easily read the texts assigned to them. The panel was split on whether this measured relatedness or competence. When spoken to directly, those who assigned this item to competence admitted they had read this statement with students' competence in mind instead of teachers. Cronbach's alpha confirmed this item did not belong in any of the self-determination subscales.
- Item 48 — I refrain from choosing certain books for my students due to censorship concerns. The panel was split on whether this item measured text preferences or autonomy. Cronbach's alpha confirmed this item belonged in the autonomy subscale.

Pilot Testing

I conducted a pilot test with six English teachers to measure completion time expectations and identify any confusing or problematic statements (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I selected the pilot testing participants, who are teachers in the English department where I teach, based on convenience. I asked pilot testing participants to time how long it took them to respond to the questions and to review the questions a second time for clarification purposes. The survey took an average of 15 minutes to complete; no items were identified as being problematic. I made no revisions to the instrument before publicly posting the instrument in the first private Facebook group.

Data Collection

Phase One: Quantitative Phase

I posted the questionnaire to the first private Facebook group on a Thursday at 2 p.m., a time identified by social media advertising company Buffer as being potentially more effective at receiving responses (Read, 2021). After 5 days, because I had received only 99 responses submissions and had a goal of 300 submissions, I contacted additional private middle school and high school ELA teacher Facebook groups to increase publicity and obtain additional responses. These groups were similar to the original Facebook group but considerably smaller. I made the additional posts in the private Facebook groups and to my friends and colleagues on Facebook. The questionnaire remained open 41 days and gathered 224 complete responses. I notified winners of the phase one drawing e-gift cards within one week of closing the questionnaire.

To ensure no duplicate submissions occurred, I set up the survey through Qualtrics to only accept one submission per IP address and email address. Prior to

analyzing data, I examined submissions for duplicate responses by examining email address similarities and response similarities. I identified no duplicates. I used *IBM SPSS Statistics 27 for Windows and Mac* to conduct quantitative analyses and uploaded categorical and qualitative data from the survey to *MaxQDA 2020* for coding and qualitative analysis purposes.

Quantitative Research Questions. The quantitative phase of this study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. *Research Question 1 (RQ1):* What is the relationship between teaching experience and teachers' perceptions of autonomy in making text selection decisions for 7th through 12th grade ELA courses?

2. *Research Question 2 (RQ2)* What is the relationship between teaching experience and teachers' expressed levels of competence in making text selection decisions for 7th through 12th grade ELA courses?

Variables. The independent variable for RQ1 was teaching experience; the dependent variable was teachers' perceived levels of autonomy. The independent variable for RQ2 was teaching experience; the dependent variable was teachers' expressed levels of competence.

Teacher Experience. Teaching experience was operationally defined as the number of years a teacher has taught in the classroom at the time of completing the survey. I used responses to Item 61, which measured teacher experience, to create independent subsamples. Respondents to the survey could indicate teaching experience of 0 to 5 years, 6 to 15 years or 16 or more years. I also used teaching experience to extend the inferential analysis for RQ1 and RQ2.

Text Selection Process. The text selection process was operationally defined as what factors inform text selection decisions. Some ways teachers may choose texts are through state-, district-, or school-generated lists; in conjunction with teachers in the department or district; or independently from any external influences. Teachers may also be required to choose texts based on the adopted curriculum. I used scaled text selection items to address RQ1 and RQ2. I used open-ended, opinion-based text selection questions, and interview questions to address RQ3.

Teachers' Perceived Levels of Autonomy. Teachers' perceived levels of autonomy was operationally defined as the perceived freedom to control decisions, actions, and curriculum in the classroom. I used items measuring teachers' perceived levels of autonomy to address RQ1.

Teachers' Perceived Levels of Competence. Teachers' perceived levels of competence was operationally defined as the perceived knowledge necessary to adequately meet the cultural and academic needs of students. I used scaled items measuring teachers' perceived levels of competence to address RQ2.

Teachers' Perceived Levels of Relatedness. Teachers' perceived levels of relatedness was operationally defined as the perceived relatedness to students and what that means to adequately meet the cultural and academic needs of students. I used scaled items measuring teachers' perceived levels of relatedness to enhance the discussion and triangulation of data for the mixed methods analysis.

Analytic Plan

I ran descriptive and inferential analysis for the entire population and for independent subsamples using *IBM SPSS Statistics 27 for Windows and Mac.* I used

MAXQDA 2020 and handwritten notes to code open-ended questions for triangulation and integration.

Cleaning the Data. Before running descriptive and inferential analyses, I cleaned the data. I only downloaded fully submitted responses from Qualtrics for a total of 224 responses. After each response received an ID Response number, I removed identifying information, such as IP Addresses and email addresses, from the data set for remaining analyses. I excluded responses with international locations or the location response left blank, and missing responses for questions measuring autonomy or competence. The usable dataset consisted of 190 responses ($N = 190$).

Recoding negatively worded items. I recoded the 23 negatively worded items to align with those items measuring high autonomy.

1 – 5 Strongly Agree

2 – 4 Somewhat Agree

3 – 3 Neither Agree Nor Disagree

4 – 2 Somewhat Disagree//

5 – 1 Strongly Disagree

1 – 6 No Influence

2 – 5 Minimal Influence

3 – 4 Little Influence

4 – 3 Some Influence

5 – 2 Considerable Influence

6 – 1 Major Influence

Descriptive Analyses. I ran descriptive analyses for the following categorical variables: gender, self-identified ethnicity, age, level of education, teaching experience, grade levels taught, and location.

Inferential Analyses. Respondents answered 20 items on a 6-point scale and 32 items on a 5-point scale. I omitted 12 of the 52 items from the inferential analyses as they did not directly relate to the constructs of self-determination. I examined these 12 items and the open-ended questions at the beginning of the qualitative phase of the study. The remaining 40 items were grouped according to the constructs they measured: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The autonomy subscale consisted of 28 items, the competence subscale consisted of 5 items, and the relatedness subscale consisted of 7 items.

Normal Distribution. Preliminary analyses revealed that the data were not normally distributed. The overall subscale was normally distributed (skewness = -.325; kurtosis = -.348), and the autonomy subscale was normally distributed (skewness = -.120; kurtosis = -.709). However, the competence subscale was not normally distributed (skewness = -1.514; kurtosis = 2.784), and the relatedness subscale was not normally distributed (skewness = -1.679; kurtosis = 5.484). A Shapiro-Wilk normality test indicated that the subscales did not follow a normal distribution (overall = .017, autonomy = .007, competence = .000, relatedness = .000, p = 0.05). Because parametric testing requires a normal distribution, nonparametric test (Kruskal-Wallis) was conducted to address the research questions.

Internal Validity. I used a Cronbach's alpha to "evaluate internal consistency" for the whole survey and then each subscale (Huck, 2012, p. 74). I ran a Cronbach's alpha on the entire survey and the individual subscales. The Cronbach's alpha was good at .867 for the 40 overall survey items measuring self-determination, good at .875 for the 27

autonomy subscale items, good at .800 for the 5 competence items, and acceptable at .743 for the 7 relatedness subscale items.

Various inferential tests were run to determine effect size and correlation of the independent variables—teacher experience—on the dependent variables of perceived levels of autonomy and perceived levels of competence.

Outliers. Because I chose to conduct nonparametric analyses due to not having a normal distribution, I chose to retain my outliers. This allowed me to retain these cases for further analysis.

Research Question 1. To address RQ1, I ran a Kruskal-Wallis one-way ANOVA of ranks to compare the independent variable teaching experience and the dependent variable autonomy (Huck, 2012). The Kruskal-Wallis test is a nonparametric statistical test comparable to the one-way between subjects ANOVA. Because the Kruskal-Wallis test revealed a significant difference between the levels of teaching experience and perceived levels of autonomy, I ran a Mann-Whitney post hoc analyses to determine which groups demonstrate strength in statistically significant differences. The Mann-Whitney U test discerns the location of statistical significance between two independent variables as opposed to the three analyzed with the Kruskal-Wallis test (Huck, 2012).

Research Question 2. To address RQ2, I ran a Kruskal-Wallis one-way ANOVA of ranks to compare the independent variable teaching experience and the dependent variable competence (Huck, 2012). Because the Kruskal-Wallis test revealed a significant difference between the levels of teaching experience and perceived levels of competence, I ran a Mann-Whitney post hoc analyses to determine which groups demonstrate strength in statistically significant differences.

Phase Two: Qualitative Phase

I conducted the semi-structured interviews after cleaning and analyzing the quantitative data. I selected interview participants based on the criteria detailed above and notified them via email to schedule a virtual interview using Cisco Webex. I arranged a total of 12 interviews. All interview participants for the qualitative phase received the e-gift cards via email after the interview was completed. I recorded the interviews through Cisco Webex and uploaded them to MaxQDA for transcription, coding, and analyses purposes.

Mixed Methods Research Question. The qualitative phase of this study sought to answer the following research question:

1. *Research Question 3 (RQ3):* How do the views of the interviewed 7th through 12th grade ELA teachers help to explain the perceived influences of levels of self-determination on the text selection process?

Variables. Variables used for consideration in qualitative analysis are teacher experience, text selection process, and teachers' perceived levels of autonomy and competence.

Teacher Experience. Teaching experience was operationally defined as the number of years a teacher has taught in the classroom at the time of completing the survey. I used teaching experience for triangulation and integration of quantitative and qualitative data for RQ3.

Text Selection Process. The text selection process was operationally defined as what factors inform text selection decisions. I used text selection process for triangulation and integration of quantitative and qualitative data for RQ3. Some ways teachers may

choose texts are through state-, district-, or school-generated lists; in conjunction with teachers in the department or district; or independently from any external influences. Teachers may also be required to choose texts based on the adopted curriculum.

Teachers' Perceived Levels of Autonomy. Teachers' perceived levels of autonomy was operationally defined as the perceived freedom to control decisions, actions, and curriculum in the classroom. I used teachers' perceived levels of autonomy for triangulation and integration of quantitative and qualitative data for RQ3.

Teachers' Perceived Levels of Competence. Teachers' perceived levels of competence was operationally defined as the perceived knowledge necessary to adequately meet the cultural and academic needs of students. I used teachers' perceived levels of competence for triangulation and integration of quantitative and qualitative data for RQ3.

Variables. RQ3 was qualitative and did not have variables, per se; however, for the purpose of data triangulation during the final analysis phase of this study, I analyzed responses according to their survey and interview subsample groups and their perceived levels of autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

Semi-Structured Interview Question Design. Based on the results of the quantitative data analysis, I designed additional open-ended questions, some prior to the interviews and others during the interviews, to obtain qualitative data that could help explain specific findings from the questionnaire (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For example, some survey participants' open-ended responses mentioned unfamiliar terminology, such as chunking as a tool to teach texts and reading strategies, and I needed further explanation.

When requesting interview participants, I anticipated interviews ranging between 15 and 30 minutes; however, I allowed the participant to guide the length of the interview, and the average length of interview was 28 minutes. Some interviews lasted as few as 12 minutes and as long as 72 minutes. Six of the twelve interviews lasted between 20 and 30 minutes. The shortest interview, lasting twelve and a half minutes, was with a teacher with 0 to 5 years of experience and low perceptions of autonomy. This was our second scheduled interview, as she had accidentally slept through the first after an exhausting day of professional development and working in her classroom. Because of this, we kept her interview quick. One other interview with a teacher with 0 to 5 years of experience lasted less 19 minutes because he was limited on time and had already requested we conduct the interview in writing; out of respect for his time, we kept the interview short. Two other interviews, both with teachers with more than 16 years of experience, lasted less than 20 minutes: the first, at 14 minutes, because it was my very first interview and the second, at just under 20 minutes, because of a bad storm in the area. In all four cases, the interviewed teachers indicated I could contact them for more information. The second longest interviews, at 50 minutes, was with a teacher with more than 16 years of experience who has had an abundance of experience with the textbook selection process as well as the text selection process and discussed both in length with me. The longest interview, which lasted 72 minutes, was with a teacher of 6 to 15 years of experience at multiple types of schools and with many types of educational experience. These disparities affected my data by minimizing the amount of interview data I had available for teachers with 0 to 5 years of experience; despite the short amount of time interviewing, however, they did answer all of the questions completely.

At the conclusion of all of the interviews and a few rounds of coding, I sent an optional open-ended question survey to those interview participants who granted permission for a follow-up to obtain answers for the following questions, which were not included in every interview. Interview participants could opt out of any question we already discussed during the interview. Eight of the twelve interview participants responded to the request for more information.

- How have your opinions regarding the way you are allowed to choose texts for the classroom changed since the beginning of the school year?

- What is the technology access like for students in your school district? How does this impact the text selection process?

- Are you able to include independent reading in your classroom instruction? What does that look like? How are students able to access the texts they read?

- Ultimately, who makes the final say on the works you read in the classroom?

- To what extent does funding and the school budget impact the texts your students read?

- To what extent are you allowed to include multicultural and diverse texts in your classroom instruction?

- Do you have anything else that you would like to share about the text selection process?

Qualitative Analyses

To address RQ3, I uploaded the data from the open-ended questions and the interviews to *MAXQDA 2020* and transcribed the interviews before the coding process

began. As "coding is a cyclical act" (Saldaña, 2015, p. 3), I analyzed the interviews through multiple cycles.

During-Interview Coding. According to Saldaña, (2015), coding can be gathered heuristically and in the moment, allowing the interviewer to identify links to other interviews or data. As the qualitative phase for this study was not fully structured (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Lichtman, 2013), I identified certain codes and followed those threads to obtain a full understanding of an aspect of the quantitative data not fully explored yet. I kept handwritten notes of in-the-moment code identification or significant moments to aid with the subsequent cycles. In both the handwritten notes and the online data, I found and marked significant moments or statements, and recorded an explanation of the statements' significance prior to first cycle coding for later analysis. To ensure interview participants' privacy, I did not include personal information on the handwritten. I identified some significant in-the-moment codes from the interviews—such as co-planning, the need for approval, money or budget concerns, and micromanagement—and used these to create the open-ended follow-up survey sent after the conclusion of the second cycle coding.

First Cycle Coding. First cycle coding occurred after each interview, with categorical codes primarily focusing on autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Lichtman, 2013; Saldaña, 2015; Williams & Moser, 2019). During first cycle coding, I chunked and coded anything from a word to a full page for the three constructs. As my typical annotation process when reading nonfiction texts, such as a speech or article, is to mark the text for the basic gist, my first cycle primarily consisted of descriptive coding, which focused on summarizing different chunks of the data (Lichtman, 2013; Saldaña,

2015). I also marked the data for links to the constructs of autonomy, relatedness, and competence. I did not spend much time considering what was being said about these constructs other than an initial identification of high or low perceptions for each construct and the basic gist of the chunked data. As additional interviews occurred, I created additional codes for the second and any subsequent cycles, as the goal was to find patterns in the codes and how they connected to the theoretical constructs (Elliott, 2018; Saldaña, 2015). After the first cycle coding, I developed the additional codes of censorship, diverse texts, and independent reading.

Second Cycle Coding. Just as the first read-through of any literary piece will not reveal all major ideas to a reader, the first read-through of an interview will not be sufficient for the first cycle (Saldaña, 2015). After all the interviews are complete, I revisited every interview again and coded for the additional codes identified after the beginning of the phase, recoded miscoded chunks of text, and drew links to other interviews (Saldaña, 2015; Williams & Moser, 2019). During this cycle, if an interview participant agreed, I reached out to verify appropriate coding of chunks of information (Lichtman, 2013; Saldaña, 2015). For example, I wanted to be sure to properly code high and low perceived levels of the constructs, but some responses were unclear, ambiguous, or confused by responses made at another point in the interview or when compared to the quantitative data. To ensure I did not misrepresent the data, I engaged in "member checking" by reaching out to interview participants for verification of information and conclusions (Saldaña, 2015, p. 35).

Additionally, during the second (and subsequent) cycle coding, I coded whole interviews for the independent variable of teaching experience. I also analyzed the data

for any additional patterns that emerged contributing to text selection decisions and self-determination.

Post-Coding and Writing. After exhausting the coding cycles and ensuring data was appropriately coded, I wrote brief summaries of each participant's interviews. Then I examined the data coded for each construct to begin formatting an outline of the subcategories falling under each construct as presented by each level of teaching experience (Saldaña, 2015). This was helpful in cross-referencing the data and writing about the qualitative phase.

Mixed Methods Data Integration

Upon completion of the qualitative data analysis, integration of the data occurred using the qualitative findings to explain the results of the quantitative findings (Creswell, 2015; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). According to Creswell (2015), integration can occur at three points during a study: data collection, data analysis, and the results section of the analysis. In an explanatory sequential design, integration "occurs when the results of the qualitative data are used to explain the results of the quantitative data" (Creswell, 2015, p. 83). As the sample sizes for the two phases were vastly different, a direct comparison of the results did not occur. Instead, the qualitative data supplemented and expanded upon the quantitative data, with the qualitative data expounding on how perceptions of self-determination could influence the extent to which teachers' make text selection decisions for the students in their own classrooms.

External Validity and Reliability Issues

I used members of multiple online forums for middle and high school ELA teachers to create the sample for this study. As not every English teacher in the United

States are members of these groups, the results of this study cannot be generalized to all English teachers. Additionally, the sample for this study does not accurately represent the demographics of English teachers in the United States. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 81.6% of ELA teachers are White, 6.9% are Black, 7.1% are Hispanic, 2.4% are two or more races, 1.7% are Asian, 0.1% are Pacific Islander, and 0.2% are American Indian/Alaska Native; however, the respondents to this survey were 94.2% White, 2.6%, two or more races, 1.1% Hispanic or Latino, 0.5% Asian or Pacific Islander, and 0% Black. Caution should be taken in generalizing the data as those who seek out these forums already display a level of self-determination and desire to succeed with their work.

Summary

In this chapter I explained the explanatory sequential research design for this mixed methods survey study. I first gathered the quantitative data by posting a questionnaire to a private online Facebook group with a membership consisting of over 15,000 English teachers. After the data from this first phase is analyzed, I conducted qualitative interviews to gather data to explain the findings of the first phase. I then integrated and triangulated the data after coding and analyzing the qualitative data.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

In Chapter 1, I detailed the purpose, research questions, and significance of this study. In Chapter 2, I discussed the evolution of English language arts text selections and the text selection process. I also addressed the impact perceptions of self-determination can have on classroom decisions. Few mixed methods studies have been conducted addressing the text selection process in conjunction with perceptions of autonomy and competence. Chapter 3 described the exploratory sequential mixed methods design used to examine the influence of teachers' perceptions of self-determination on their text selection decisions and explained how the quantitative survey data and qualitative interview and open-ended question data would be analyzed and integrated. The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of teachers' perceived autonomy and competence on the text selection decision process for their classrooms. This chapter will present the findings associated with the purpose of this study. The findings will address the following research questions:

1. *Research Question 1*: What is the relationship between teaching experience and teachers' perceptions of autonomy in making text selection decisions for 7th through 12th grade ELA courses?

2. *Research Question 2*: What is the relationship between teaching experience and teachers' expressed levels of competence in making text selection decisions for 7th through 12th grade ELA courses?

3. *Research Question 3*: How do the views of the interviewed 7th through 12th

   grade ELA teachers help to explain the perceived influences of levels of self-

   determination on the text selection process?

Quantitative Findings

I publicly posted the 7th through 12th Grade English Language Arts Text Selection

Process survey in numerous English teacher forums on Facebook for 42 days and

received 224 responses. From the initial 224 responses, I could use 190 responses after

omitting those entries for respondents who teach in international settings, left the location

blank, and did not answer all quantitative items.

Descriptive Results

I ran descriptive analyses were run on each survey subsample for the following

categorical variables: gender, self-identified ethnicity, age, level of education, teaching

experience, grade levels taught, location, and types and locations of schools (see Tables 1

– 4, Figure 3). Almost 94% of the survey participants identified as female. Age was close

to evenly disturbed across the four age groups. Notably, 80.5% of teachers with 0 to 5

years of experience were 20-30 years old, 55.5% of teachers with 6 to 15 years of

experience were 31-40 years old, and over 90% of teachers with 16 or more years of

experience were older than 40. Newer teachers are beginning their careers with

bachelor's degrees, while many teachers are getting master's degrees as they continue

their career. Of the 190 participants, 149 teach in the public schools, 26 teach in private

schools, and 14 teach in charter schools. 74 survey participants teach in the southern

states, 57 in midwestern states, 32 in northeastern states, and 27 in western states. Alaska,

Hawaii, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Rhode Island, South Dakota, and Washington

were not represented among the survey participants, which, among other areas of

concern, could have an impact on the generalizability of the results.

Table 1

Survey Participant Demographics

		f_o (%)		
		0-5 years	6-15 years	16+ years
Gender	Male	1 (2.4)	1 (1.5)	1 (1.2)
	Female	35 (85.4)	66 (97.1)	78 (96.3)
	Non-binary/third gender	5 (12.2)	0 (0)	1 (1.2)
	Missing	0 (0)	1 (1.5)	1 (1.2)
	Total	41	68	81
Ethnicity	Asian or Pacific Islander	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1.2)
	Hispanic or Latino	2 (4.9)	0 (0)	0 (0)
	White or Caucasian	39 (95.1)	67 (98.5)	73 (90.1)
	Multiracial or Biracial	0 (0)	0 (0)	5 (6.2)
	Missing	0 (0)	1 (1.5)	2 (2.5)
	Total	41	68	81
Age	20-30	33 (80.5)	5 (7)	0 (0)
	31-40	4 (9.8)	37 (55.5)	4 (5)
	41-50	2 (4.9)	17 (25)	36 (44.4)
	51+	2 (4.9)	8 (12)	40 (49.4)
	Missing	0 (0)	1 (1.5)	1 (1.2)
	Total	0	68	81

N = 190

Table 2

Experience and Expertise

		f_o (%)		
		0-5 years	6-15 years	16+ years
Highest Level of Education	Bachelor's degree	31 (75.6)	24 (35.3)	17 (21.0)
	Specialist degree	0 (0)	2 (2.9)	1 (1.2)
	Master's degree	10 (24.4)	38 (55.9)	62 (76.5)
	Doctoral degree	0 (0)	4 (5.9)	1 (1.2)
	Total	41	68	81
Area of Degree	English	8 (19.5)	18 (26.5)	16 (19.8)
	Literature	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (2.5)
	Education	22 (53.7)	27 (39.7)	43 (53.1)
	Other*	11 (26.8)	22 (32.4)	19 (23.5)
	Literacy	0 (0)	1 (1.5)	1 (1.2)
	Total	41	68	81

Note. Other areas of degrees include English education, curriculum and instruction, social work, special education, administration, TESOL, reading, psychology, counseling, communication, theater, and art history.

Table 3

School Information

		f_o (%)		
		0-5 years	6-15 years	16+ years
Locations of Schools	Urban	5 (12.2)	5 (7.4)	4 (4.9)
	Suburban	5 (12.2)	7 (10.3)	21 (25.9)
	Rural	3 (7.3)	17 (25)	11 (13.6)
	Missing	55 (68.3)	39 (57.3)	45 (55.6)
	Total	41	68	81
Current School Type	Public	37 (90.2)	49 (72.1)	63 (77.8)
	Private	3 (7.3)	7 (10.3)	16 (19.8)
	Charter	1 (2.4)	13 (19.1)	0 (0)
	Missing	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (2.4)
	Total	190	69*	81
Grade Levels Taught	7th Grade	17	48	55
	8th Grade	27	47	55
	9th Grade	24	34	45
	10th Grade	19	31	46
	11th Grade	13	31	56
	12th Grade	12	27	53
	N = 190			

Note. 1 response checked both public and charter

Table 4

Participant Locations

State	Entire Sample		0-5 years	6-15 years	16+ years
	f_o	%	f_o	f_o	f_o
AL	3	1.6		1	2
AR	1	0.5		1	
AZ	4	2.1	2	2	
CA	13	6.8	1	4	8
CO	3	1.6	1		2
CT	2	1.1	1		1
DE	2	1.1	1	1	
FL	7	3.7	2	1	4
GA	7	3.7	3	1	3
IA	2	1.1			2
ID	1	0.5			1
IL	7	3.7		3	4
IN	3	1.6	1	1	1
KS	6	3.2	1	2	3
KY	3	1.6	1	1	1
LA	4	2.1	1	1	2
MA	2	1.1			2
MD	2	1.1	1		1
ME	1	0.5			1
MI	7	3.7	2	4	1
MN	6	3.2	1	3	2
MO	6	3.2	1	3	2
MS	1	0.5			1
NC	4	2.1		2	2
NH	1	0.5			1
NJ	6	3.2	2	2	2
NM	1	0.5		1	
NV	1	0.5			1
NY	8	4.2	2	2	4
OH	16	8.4	6	2	8
OK	8	4.2	1	5	2
OR	2	1.1	1		1
PA	12	6.3	4	5	3
SC	8	4.2	1	6	1

TN	1	0.5		1	
TX	22	11.6	2	13	7
UT	1	0.5			1
WI	4	2.1	1		3
WV	1	0.5	1		
WY	1	0.5			1
Total	190	100.0	41	68	81

Figure 3

Regional Distribution of Survey Participants
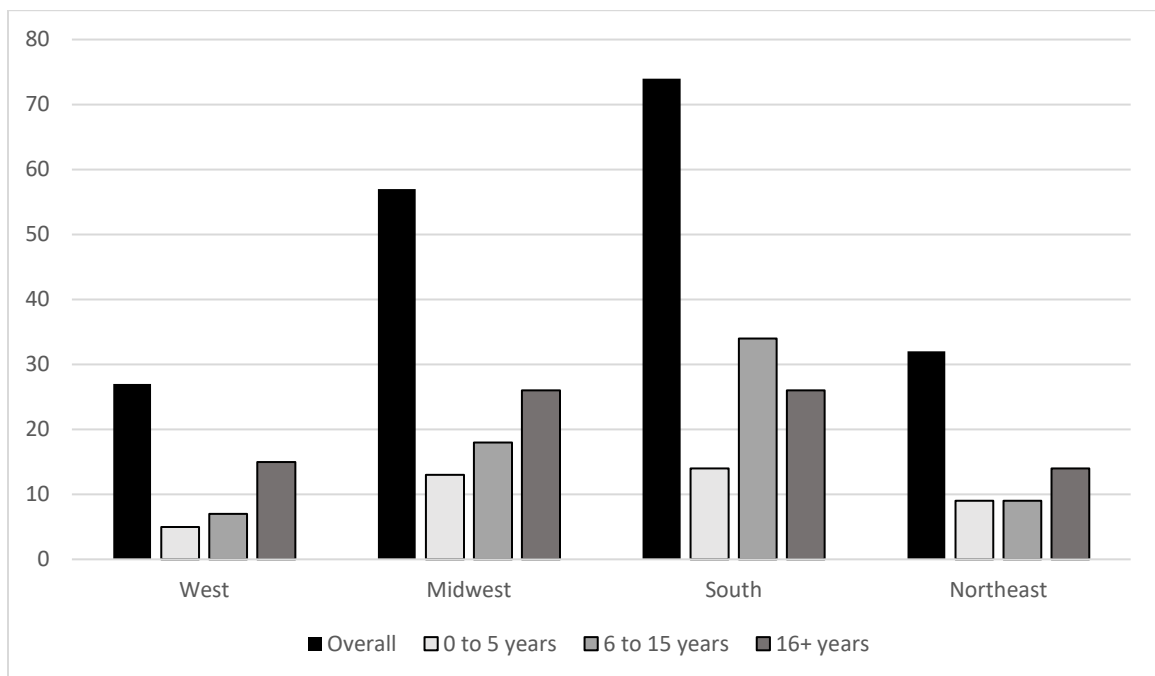
Cronbach's Alpha

I used Cronbach's alpha to assess internal consistency for the overall scales and construct subscales (see Appendix F). While the Cronbach's alpha for the overall 52-item survey was .858, which demonstrates good internal consistency, I removed the 12 items related to text opinions, which increased the Cronbach's alpha to .867. The Cronbach's alpha based on 27 items measuring autonomy was .875, which demonstrates good internal consistency. The Cronbach's Alpha based on the 5 items measuring competence

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was .8, which is good. The Cronbach's Alpha based on the 7 items measuring relatability was .743, which is still acceptable.

Inferential Analyses

After creating the subscales, I obtained a target sample size of 40 for each survey subsample through a stratified random sample method using *IBM SPSS Statistics 27 for Windows and Mac*. As both the nonparametric tests run did not require normal distributions, I did not remove outliers.

Descriptive Statistics. I ran descriptive statistics on distribution of scores for each of the randomized survey subsamples (*n*=40) with regards to the autonomy and competence subscales. The mean autonomy score of teachers with 0 to 5 years of experience was 93.1500 (median = 96, mode = 81, *SD* = 17.89650), 6 to 10 years of experience was 101.3000 (median = 102, mode = 93, *SD* = 17.95036), and 16 or more years of experience was 98.2500 (median = 97, mode = 76, *SD* = 17.65445). The mean competence score of teachers with 0 to 5 years of experience was 24.3750 (median = 26, mode = 28, *SD* = 4.44157), 6 to 15 years of experience was 24.1250 (median = 24, mode = 24, *SD* = 2.39858), and 16 or more years of experience was 24.8250 (median = 25, mode = 25 *SD* = 3.96709).

Spearman's Rho Correlation Coefficient. A Spearman's rho bivariate correlation was used to determine the strength of the relationship between the independent variable teaching experience and the dependent variables autonomy and competence. According to Urdan (2017), Spearman's rho is appropriate to use when at least one of the variables is not continuous. According to Cohen (1988), a small correlation occurs at *r* = .10 to .29. The correlation between teaching experience and

autonomy was not significant (r_s = .086, p = .352, N = 120), nor was the correlation

between teaching experience and competence (r_s = -.010, p = .918, N = 120). I conclude

no direct relationships occurs between teaching experience and the constructs of

autonomy and competence.

      Kruskal-Wallis One-Way ANOVA of Ranks. To address RQ1 and RQ2, I ran a

Kruskal-Wallis one-way ANOVA of ranks to compare the independent variable teaching

experience and the dependent variables autonomy and competence. The Kruskal-Wallis

test is a nonparametric between groups statistical test comparable to the one-way between

subjects ANOVA (Huck, 2012; Pallant, 2016). Where the ANOVA examines the mean

scores in a normal distribution, the Kruskal-Wallis ranks the scores to create a normalized

distribution before comparing the scores between groups. A comparison of the autonomy

scores between groups with a Kruskal-Wallis one-way analysis of variance by ranks

revealed no significant differences, $H(2)$ = 3.389, p = .184. The comparison of the

competence scores also revealed no significant differences, $H(2)$ = 4.319, p = .115 (see

Table 5). In both cases, I retained the null hypothesis because the Kruskal-Wallis test

determined the mean ranks of the groups are too similar.

Table 5

Results of the Kruskal-Wallis Test of Autonomy and Competence Subscales Related to Teaching Experience

	Teaching Experience	n	Mean Rank	X^2	p
Autonomy Subscale	0 to 5 years	40	53.31		
	6 to 15 years	40	67.61	3.389	.184
	16 plus years	40	60.58		
	Total	120			
Competence Subscale	0 to 5 years	40	65.53		
	6 to 15 years	40	51.25	4.319	.115
	16 plus years	40	67.93		
	Total	120			

$p > .05$

I also ran Kruskal-Wallis tests on all survey items. Eleven of the items showed highly statistically significant differences between the levels of teaching and the individual items (see Table 6). Items 16, 44, and 49 are measuring autonomy; item 11 is measuring competence; items 24, 33, and 34 are measuring relatability; and 32, 35, 36, and 41 are measuring text opinions. To determine where the statistically significant difference occurred, I conducted a post-hoc Mann-Whitney U analysis to those individual items (Huck, 2012; Pallant, 2016)..

Table 6

Results of the Kruskal-Wallis Test of Survey Items Related to Teaching Experience

	Teaching Experience	*n*	Mean Rank	X^2	*p*
Item 11 – Influences – My own knowledge of the text	0 to 5 years	40	63.39		
	6 to 15 years	40	50.19	6.431	0.040*
	16 plus years	40	67.93		
	Total	120			
Item 16 – Control – Selecting Textbooks	0 to 5 years	40	54.75		
	6 to 15 years	40	53.3	8.676	0.013*
	16 plus years	40	73.45		
	Total	120			
Item 24 – Providing my students access to culturally diverse texts is important.	0 to 5 years	40	70.61		
	6 to 15 years	40	59.73	10.272	.006*
	16 plus years	40	51.16		
	Total	120			
Item 32 – I enjoy reading young adult literature.	0 to 5 years	40	54.19		
	6 to 15 years	40	65.86	15.007	0.001*
	16 plus years	40	61.45		
	Total	120			
Item 33 – Selecting texts that reflect my students' cultural backgrounds is important.	0 to 5 years	40	71.22		
	6 to 15 years	40	62.61	14.207	0.001*
	16 plus years	40	47.66		
	Total	120			
Item 34 – I am capable of selecting culturally diverse texts for classroom instruction.	0 to 5 years	40	70.93		
	6 to 15 years	40	54.54	6.919	0.031*
	16 plus years	40	56.04		
	Total	120			
	0 to 5 years	40	38.45		
	6 to 15 years	40	66.81	28.767	0.000*

Item 35 – My students read the same text at the same time.	16 plus years	40	76.24	
	Total	120		
Item 36 – My students have opportunities to read texts other students are not reading.	0 to 5 years	40	43.73	
	6 to 15 years	40	69.30	16.011	0.000*
	16 plus years	40	68.47	
	Total	120		
Item 41 – My students can easily read the texts assigned to them	0 to 5 years	40	67.79	
	6 to 15 years	40	67.05	12.490	0.002*
	16 plus years	40	46.66	
	Total	120		
Item 44 – Culturally relevant texts are not included in my curriculum, but I incorporate them…	0 to 5 years	40	76.76	
	6 to 15 years	40	48.18	15.446	<.001*
	16 plus years	40	56.56	
	Total	120		
Item 49 – I am expected to select texts for my students based on a specific list.	0 to 5 years	40	55.96	
	6 to 15 years	40	73.63	9.284	0.010
	16 plus years	40	51.91	
	Total	120		

*p.<.05, p >.05

Mann-Whitney U. The Mann-Whitney U test examines pair of groups for

statistically significant differences. A Bonferroni adjustment is applied to the alpha levels

to control for Type I errors (Pallant, 2016). Bonferroni adjustment divides the alpha level

of .05 by the number of groups being compared to create a stricter alpha level for

analysis. I used a post-hoc Mann Whitney U tests with a Bonferonni-adjusted alpha level

of .017 (.05/3) to compare all pairs of teaching groups in relation to the 8 survey items to

help find out at which teaching experience level the difference occurs (see Table 7).

Effect size was also calculated using the formula $r = z / \sqrt{n}$ (Cohen, 1992; Pallant, 2016).

According to Cohen (1992), an effect size of 0.1 is small, 0.3 is medium, and 0.5 is large.

Table 7

Results of the post-hoc Mann-Whitney U

Item	Teaching Experience (Mdn.)			post-hoc Mann-Whitney U*			
	0-5 years	6-15 years	16+ years	U	z	p	r
Item 11 – Influences – My own knowledge of the text.		5	5	549.5	-2.618	0.009	0.29
Item 16 – Control – Selecting Textbooks.		3	4	522.5	-2.727	0.006	0.31
Item 24 – Providing my students access to culturally diverse texts is important.	5		5	546.5	-3.164	0.002	0.35
Item 32 – I enjoy reading young adult literature.	5	5		602	-2.622	0.009	0.29
	5		4.5	478	-3.856	<.001	0.43
Item 33 – Selecting texts that reflect my students' cultural backgrounds is important.	5		4	478	-3.642	<.001	0.41
Item 34 – I am capable of selecting culturally diverse texts for classroom instruction.	5	4		573	-2.51	0.012	0.28
Item 35 – My students read the same text at the same time.	1	2		394	-4.268	<.001	0.48
	1		3	323.5	-4.82	<.001	0.54
Item 36 – My students have opportunities to read texts other students are not reading.	4	4.5		450	-3.56	<.001	0.39
	4		5	479	-3.25	0.001	0.36
Item 41 – My students can easily read the texts assigned to them.	4		3	527.5	-2.931	0.003	0.33
		4	3	519	-2.98	0.003	0.33
	4	3		431	-3.682	<.001	0.42
Item 44 – Culturally relevant texts are not included in my curriculum, but I incorporate them…	4		3	518.5	-2.838	.005	0.32
Item 49 – I am expected to select texts for my students based on a specific list.		4	2	508	-2.894	.004	0.32

*$p < .017$ (.05/3), $n = 40$

Research Question 1. RQ1 sought to explain the difference in scores between teaching experience subgroups and perceived levels of autonomy. Based on the results of the Kruskal-Wallis test, perceived levels of autonomy at the scale level were not significantly different based on teaching experience. However, the results of the Mann-Whitney U test indicated that at the individual item level for Item 16, different perceptions of autonomy and control over course textbooks occurred between the teachers with 6 to 15 years of experience and 16 and more years of experience ($p = .006$, $r = 0.30$). For this item, the median score of 3 indicated "little control" while the median score of 4 indicated "some control." A statistically significant difference between the two groups' perceived control of selecting textbooks could mean teachers with greater experience are more likely to be selected for textbook adoption committees or have been around long enough to experience text adoption. Additionally, the perceived control could stem from expectations to rely on the textbook for curriculum guidance (Archbald & Porter, 1994).

The results of the Mann-Whitney U test also indicated that at the individual item level for Item 44, a statistically significant difference with medium effect size existed between teachers with 0 to 5 years of experience and the other two experience groups regarding the inclusion of culturally relevant texts, even when not explicitly included in the curriculum ($p = <.001$, $r = 0.42$; $p = .005$, $r = 0.32$). For this item, the median score of 4 indicated more teachers with 0 to 5 years of experience selected "Somewhat Agree" while those with more experience indicated they 3 - "Neither agree nor disagree." Newer teachers were more likely to include culturally relevant texts than more experienced teachers.

The results of the Mann-Whitney U test also indicated that at the individual item level for Item 49, a statistically significant difference with medium effect size existed between teachers with 6 to 15 years of experience and teachers with 16 or more years of experience regarding the expectation to select from a list ($p = .004$, $r = 0.32$). For this item, the median score of 4 indicated more teachers with 6 to 15 years of experience "Somewhat disagree" and have more freedom to select texts without the influence of a list. However, those with 16 or more years of experience indicated they "somewhat agree" with this statement and must consult a list for text selections. Teachers with some experience were more likely to have the freedom to eschew text lists than teachers with more experience.

While item 35, which pertains to whole class text instruction, did not align with the autonomy subscale, interpretation of this item could align with autonomy. The results of the Mann-Whitney U test for Item 35 indicated a statistically significant difference with a large effect size existed between teachers with 0 to 5 years of experience and the other two experience groups when considering whole class texts as a teaching strategy ($p = <.001$, $r = 0.48$; $p = <.001$, $r = 0.54$). For this item, a median score of 1 indicated teachers with 0 to 5 years of experience "Strongly agree" with the statement that their students read the same text at the same time. Less experienced teachers may be more likely to use whole class instruction because they perceive that is what is expected of them; similarly, the lack of perceived autonomy could lead less experienced teachers to eschew independent reading opportunities or instruction that gives students text selection choices (Boote, 2006; Watkins & Ostenson, 2015).

Aside from these few points at the item level, no statistically significant difference or relationship is discernible when considering teaching experience and perceptions of autonomy. These variables alone are not enough to explain perception levels of autonomy.

Research Question 2. RQ2 sought to explain the difference in scores between teaching experience subgroups and perceived levels of competence. Based on the results of the Kruskal-Wallis test, perceived levels of competence were not significantly different based on teaching experience. Between the teachers with 6 to 15 years of experience and the teachers with more than 16 years of experience, a statistically significant difference with medium effect size occurred at the individual item level for Item 11 regarding teachers' personal knowledge of texts ($p = .009$, $r = 0.29$). For this item, the median score of 5 indicated teachers were considerably influenced by their own personal knowledge of texts. Teachers with more than 16 years of experience indicate higher levels of perceived competence in text selection than those with 6 to 15 years of experience. This could mean teachers with more experience feel more competent selecting texts for the classroom because they know more about the texts. However, this could also indicate teachers with more experience are more likely to choose the more "traditional" texts because they know more about them and do not want to choose texts that are new to them (Applebee 1992, 1993; Christ & Sharma, 2018; Stallworth et al., 2006).

Additional Quantitative Findings. Additionally, a Mann-Whitney U test on Item 32 indicated that a statistically significant difference with medium effect size occurred regarding the enjoyment of young adult literature between teachers with 0 to 5 years of

experience and the other two survey subsamples ($p = .009$, $r = 0.29$; $p < .001$, $r = 0.43$).

For this item, the median score of 5 indicated more teachers selected "Strongly Agree."

As many newer teachers are younger, they are closer to the intended audience of young

adult literature and appear to be more likely to read young adult literature. This could also

contribute to their desire to include and ability to select texts culturally relevant to their

students, as demonstrated with the Mann-Whitney U for Items 33 and 34. A statistically

significant difference in the perceived ability to select culturally diverse texts for

classroom instruction occurred between teachers with 0 to 5 years of experience and 6 to

15 years of experience. This difference in perceived competence could stem back to the

teachers with 6 to 15 years of experience's lessened interest in reading young adult

literature.

On item 36, which considered students simultaneously reading different texts, a

statistically significant difference occurred between teachers with 0 to 5 years of

experience and the other two teaching levels. A Mann-Whitney U test on Item 36

indicated that a statistically significant difference occurred between teachers with 0 to 5

years of experience and the other two survey subsamples ($p < .001$, $r = 0.39$; $p = .001$, $r = 0.36$). On this item, which did not align with either the autonomy or competence scale, a

5 indicated they strongly agreed with the statement. At least 13% of the variability in the

ranks is accounted for by teaching experience, which is a medium to large effect size.

More experienced teachers indicated they are more likely to give opportunities to read

texts different from their classmates.

Culturally Relevant Texts. An important aspect of relatedness, and in turn self-

determination, is being able to connect to those with who we interact on a daily basis

(Ryan & Deci, 2000; Sweet et al., 1996). Surveyed teachers identified having access to culturally relevant texts as important to their students.

The results of the Mann-Whitney U test also indicated that at the individual item level for Item 24, a statistically significant difference with medium effect size existed between teachers with 0 to 5 years of experience and teachers with 16 or more years of experience regarding the importance of providing students access to culturally diverse texts ($p = .002$, $r = 0.35$). For this item, the median score of 5 indicated teachers "strongly agree" with the statement. Ninety percent of teachers with 0 to 5 years of experience stated they "strongly agree" ($n = 40$), while 57.5% teachers with 16 or more years of experience stated they "strongly agree" ($n = 40$). Twelve percent of the variability can be explained by teaching experience.

The results of the Mann-Whitney U test indicated that at the individual item level for Item 33, which asked about the importance of selecting texts reflecting the cultural background of students, a statistically significant difference with medium effect size existed between teachers with 0 to 5 years of experience and teachers with 16 or more years of experience ($p < .001$, $r = 0.41$). Seventeen percent of the variability can be explained by teaching experience. For this item, the median score of 5 indicated teachers "strongly agree" with the statement.

The results of the Mann-Whitney U test also indicated that at the individual item level for Item 34, a statistically significant difference with medium effect size existed between teachers with 0 to 5 years of experience and teachers with 16 or more years of experience regarding the ability of selecting culturally diverse texts for their students ($p = .012$, $r = 0.28$).

Mixed Methods Findings

Getting to Know the Interview Participants

Due to low response rate on the interview requests, the construct categories I had selected for the interview participants did not perfectly represent the purposive sample I set out to create. Table 8 shows the qualitative phase participants and demographic information.

Table 8

Interview Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Years of Experience	Location	Gender	Overall Score	Perceived Levels of Autonomy Score	Perceived Levels of Competence Score	Perceived Levels of Relatability Score
	Lower Range			108	61	9	13
	Mean			158.23	98.75	24.64	31.74
	Higher Range			197	134	29	36
Glen	0-5	NY	M	123	69	18	34
Peggy	0-5	NY	F	144	77	29	34
Elizabeth	0-5	IL	F	150	91	25	29
Brigitte	0-5	FL	F	166	102	28	33
Yvonne	6-15	FL	F	131	90	11	28
Rory	6-15	MO	F	147	92	21	30
Donnie	6-15	AL	F	179	121	21	34
Elaine	6-15	TX	F	197	134	26	33
Kate	16+	SC	F	133	69	27	33
Jane	16+	CA	F	178	127	21	26
Deborah	16+	PA	F	188	122	29	35
Ashleigh	16+	IA	F	163	96	29	34

0 to 5 Years of Experience. "Peggy" is a 31 to 40 year old female with a Master's degree in English Education for 7th through 12th grade. She has taught the last four years at a Mid-Atlantic suburban private religious school. At the time of the interview, she was switching to a new job in a public school because of her experience at the private school. Peggy's main reason for becoming a teacher was to help students understand the connections between literature and their lives and the real world. One of Peggy's high school teachers had connected a history lesson to bullying, and she realized this was what she wanted to do. She wants to help students with their personal issues and connecting her teaching to other classes they are taking.

"Brigitte" is a 21 to 30 year old female with a bachelor's degree in education. She teaches middle school advanced language arts in the Southeastern United States. She has taught in both public and charter middle schools for the past four years and shared her experiences from both with me during our interview. During her first few years, she taught at a public school with a STEM academy, but last December, Brigitte got a job at a sports-centered charter school. While not all instruction at the charter school revolves around sports, the expectation is for all lessons to be active and involved. Brigitte's excitement for her position and the materials she would be able to use was evident in her posture and tone of voice.

"Elizabeth" is a 20 to 30 year old female with a master's degree in education, which she completed between submitting her survey and participating in the interview. She originally planned to go into publishing, but transferred to education after a professor recommendation. She has been teaching for two years at a private high school serving underprivileged students in a major Midwest United States city. Ninety-six percent of her

students are black and four percent are Latinx. They have a 100% graduation rate and a 100% college acceptance rate. From the outside looking in, whatever this school is doing is working.

"Glen" is a 21 to 30 year old male with a bachelor's degree in education. He has been teaching for four years at two different schools in a Mid-Atlantic state. He spent his first two years teaching 6th and 10th grade in an urban public school and the last two years teaching 9th and 12th grade in a suburban public school. His most recent position has him teaching at a school that has recently been placed on an accountability list for test scores, attendance, and a number of other factors.

6 to 15 Years of Experience. "Rory" is a 31 to 40 year old female with a master's degree in administration. She has been teaching 6th through 8th grade English language arts at a small rural school in the Midwestern United States for thirteen years. Her love for reading as a child led her to become an English teacher with the hopes of sharing that passion with her students. She has witnessed a decrease in motivation to read among her students over the last five years and attributes this decrease to the increase of and access to technology in and out of the classroom.

"Donnie" is a 31 to 40 year old female with a master's degree in education. She has been teaching at a small rural public school in the Southeast United States. During her first three years, she taught 6th through 8th grade ELA, but she decided she wanted to teach high school. Her original plan was to be a band director, but then decided she did not want to perform and switched to ELA because she loved to read and write. For the last five years, she has taught 9th through 12th grade ELA. Her current school serves about 400 pre-Kindergarten through 12th grade students.

"Yvonne" is a 41 to 50 year old female who has been teaching in a Title I suburban Southeastern United States public school district for the past 10 years. Her degrees in history, business education, and principal leadership with endorsements in ESOL and reading have given her the opportunity to teach many types of classes; however, she currently teaching 9th through 12th grade English, yearbook, and journalism. The district in which she teaches is the largest in her state and spans a large area, creating an extremely diverse set of schools, with the needs and demographics being quite unique depending on the location. One school is located near an affluent neighborhood and reflects the wealth and demographics of the area, while another school is near a migrant population, and her school serves primarily low income families.

"Elaine" is a 41 to 50 year old female with a master's degree in literacy and teaching endorsements in literacy and ESOL. She has been teaching 11 years, with 9 of those years teaching ELA at a Southwest United States at a medium-sized urban public high school. After college, she spent some time as a computer programmer before becoming an educator. Elaine began her teaching career as a computer teacher before finishing her master's in English and becoming an English teacher. Her interest in history, which she originally considered teaching after loving it so much during school, influences the lens through which she presents the texts her students read.

16+ Years of Experience. "Kate" is a 41 to 50 year old female with a master's degree in education. She has taught 8th grade ELA in a suburban public school in the Southeast United States for the past 7 years. She taught the first 13 years of her teaching career in a rural school district in a different southeastern state where the demographics differed greatly from her current school district, which has posed some challenges and

opportunities for her to learn and grow as a teacher. She realized that she had to "unlearn a lot of things" and be willing "to have a very open and honest relationship with" her students.

"Ashleigh" is a 41 to 50 year old female with a master's degree in instructional design and technology and a teaching endorsement in ESOL. She has been teaching for 24 years at a small Midwest United States independent school serving about 200 preschool through 12th grade students. During her time there, she has taught 7th through 12th, although more recently her focus has been 9th through 12th grade. Her love for theater is what first brought her into the classroom, but she has since expanded to speech and ELA with many of her current classes being ELA.

"Jane" is a 41 to 50 year old female with a bachelor's degree in English. She has taught 9th through 12th grade ELA, AP language, and creative writing at a suburban high school in the western United States for the past 19 years, with her most recent courses being AP language, 11th grade ELA, and creative writing. Her desire to be a teacher stems back to her childhood, television teachers, and her mother's encouragement to always give back to the community. Teaching is her way of giving back.

"Deborah" is a 41 to 50 year old female with a master's degree in reading. She has taught 18 years at a Mid-Atlantic United States school district. The first ten years of her career, she taught special education, but the last eight years have focused on reading instruction, all at the high school level. When she first began teaching, she was using the district-provided scripted program. However, she found Reading Apprenticeship and pitched the program to her special education supervisor, who told her to pilot the program at her school. From that point forward, she has used Reading Apprenticeship and the

tenets of Reading Apprenticeship with her students, encouraging them to read and think critically about the texts they read.

Autonomy

Quantitative data did not demonstrate a statistically significant difference among levels of perceived autonomy based on teaching experience. While the teachers interviewed with 6 to 15 years of experience appear to have higher autonomy scores, twelve survey participants scored lower than Yvonne on the autonomy scale when sorting scores for all United States survey participants. Similarly, eight of the teachers with 0 to 5 years of experience scored higher than 102 on the autonomy scale. These survey participants either selected not to be interviewed or did not respond to requests for interviews.

Interviewed teachers exhibiting low levels of perceived autonomy mentioned concerns with micromanagement, mandatory co-planning, censorship issues, and lack of administrative support. Conversely, interviewed teachers exhibiting high levels of perceived autonomy mentioned freedom to select texts they wanted to read and high administrative support. Both levels expressed budgetary concerns as a limiting factor of perceived autonomy only in that the text options are constrained by the current department holdings.

Low Autonomy among Interviewed Teachers with 0 to 5 Years of Experience. Both Peggy and Glen discussed low perceptions of autonomy. Peggy's experience at a private religious school left her feeling micromanaged and unsupported. She explained she could not freely select the texts for her classes and was required, in most cases, to teach what the curriculum team—consisting of a curriculum advisor, the

principal, and the guidance counselor—told her to teach. Being granted some input into the decisions and process would have helped Peggy enjoy the process and experience better, but she had to obtain "permission for everything." Both Glen's previous and current schools allow for limited autonomy, although his current school allows for some freedoms his first did not. At his first school, the administration was "very strict" and everyone needed to "work in lockstep by unit," similar in concept to the co-planning concept Peggy described. Glen said that the teachers would talk about the cornerstone text, which was the required text the supervisor had selected, and they would discuss how they would teach the cornerstone text, but deviation could not occur. In the 6th grade class, especially, the focus was on state test preparation. In his new school, they are provided with a list from which to select texts for instruction and given some latitude on how to teach the texts, but the perception of autonomy is still low. Both Glen and Peggy experienced the low autonomy Boote (2006) suggests new teachers should have, with administration expecting inexperienced teachers follow prescribed curriculum or the lessons of experienced teachers until competence is demonstrated. However, this dissatisfaction with their limited autonomy led both to seek new positions that granted them input into the decisions they made for their students (Eyal & Roth, 2010; Roth et al., 2007).

An additional level of micromanagement occurred at the parent level for Peggy, with parents "[dictating] a lot of what was done in the classroom." If a parent did not approve of the texts taught, they could bring their concerns to the administration and have the book pulled from class instruction. Peggy shared an instance in which a parent complained a character died, and "he assumed that [the character] went to hell." Because

this parent "made a big deal," the rest of the class was not able to read the novel, an experience researchers have found to be a problem before (Stallworth et al., 2006).

Low Autonomy among Interviewed Teachers with 6 to 15 Years of Experience. Both Rory and Yvonne score low on perceived autonomy relative to the other two participants interviewed; however, they do have some autonomy in the classroom. When it comes to selecting the texts for her classroom, Rory must choose the texts from a list of texts that have "worked through the test of time." A literacy specialist vetted this list and removed texts not on the students' grade levels despite the content being appropriate for the grade level. Both attempt to provide non-traditional texts, such as graphic novels and young adult texts, for their students, but like researchers have found teachers have experienced before (Applebee 1992, 1993; Christ & Sharma, 2018; Stallworth et al., 2006; Stotsky, 2010), including these texts as the main texts is not an option.

Co-planning, which requires teachers of similar courses to plan classroom instruction together, was also an attributor to low perceived autonomy for both Rory and Yvonne, although Rory is granted some latitude. In Yvonne's district, co-planning means the "everybody [who teaches on the same level] teaches the same thing." When observations occur, common planning must be evident. The teachers at Rory's school must teach the same texts for the longer works, but the shorter works can be different as long as they are selected from the list. She says she and the other teachers make these selections based on what they believe the students will be most interested in. Anything new they want to bring to the table must be approved by the principal; however, the principal often tells them to "stick to the list" because those are what have worked. The

principal does support student choice with independent reading and encourages the teachers to embed 20 to 30 minutes of independent reading each day. However, she indicated in the survey that she is only "somewhat" content with the level of autonomy, especially given other teachers' "major influence" and administration's "considerable influence" on the text selection decisions.

Strict state standards and mandates also contribute to low perceived autonomy (Applebee 1992, 1993; Dierking & Fox, 2013; Smith et al., 2018; Watkins & Ostenson, 2015). Yvonne's state recently revamped their standards and changed the levels at which certain texts are taught and mandated a certain percentage of texts be taught from the state provided list. These texts are traditionally canonical with very few contemporary texts. Accommodations are not granted for those students reading below grade level. Any supplemental materials must be on grade level, submitted with accompanying questions and tasks, and approved through the administration before use. Yvonne has worked around these obstacles by sharing young adult literature, graphic novels, and novel spin-offs with some of her students for reading outside of class; however, this strategy only works with those students who are willing and want to read outside of class time, which she admits is not common.

Low Autonomy among Interviewed Teachers with 16+ Years of Experience. Low perceptions of autonomy are discouraging (Boote, 2006; Eyal & Roth, 2010; Roth et al., 2007). When Jane first began working for her district, she was more restricted in the texts she could use, and teachers were required to teach the same texts as the others for the same course. They were also discouraged from reading novels with the students. She recalls some instances in which she got in trouble because she taught them novels or used

canonical texts the other teachers were not using. However, now the expectations and requirements are different and using a variety of texts is easier.

Low autonomy can also stem from lack of resources and the need to abide by mandated curricula (Stallworth et al., 2006). While Deborah expresses a higher perception of autonomy, she admits many teachers in her school experience these same limitations. Deborah says her school likes to pretend they are getting input from the teachers regarding texts and resources, but the input is rarely regarded in purchases made for classroom instruction. The novels the English teachers use have not changed in "eons" despite requests and suggestions from the teachers. Instead, programs were purchased and the teachers were told they "need to follow this with fidelity." Likewise, Kate often does not have the autonomy to choose her texts freely. Instead, longer texts for her students must be selected from a district-approved list, which is in need of updating since many of the texts have been constants at her school for at least 20 years, and even though some latitude is granted for shorter works, Kate's autonomy is stifled as the district decides on about half of their reading selections and the other half are decided based on standardized curriculum.

Kate thinks an ideal text selection process would include administration, both at the school and district level, "backing up a professional educator's opinion about why [a] work is important." Parent opposition to texts is a major concern when considering texts for the classroom. Kate wants more freedom to choose texts representing her students as her students' demographics are not represented in the texts she is asked to teach and she believes students should "see themselves reflected in the works [they] read." Because she does not have this freedom, though, she works very hard to modernize the "dusty old 200

year old" classics through nonfiction selections and discussions of the universal themes. Kate wants her students to always question why of a text and consider the value of the text through different lenses.

High Autonomy among Interviewed Teachers with 0 to 5 Years of Experience. Both Brigitte and Elizabeth expressed high perceptions of autonomy among the newer teachers interviewed. Brigitte's sport-centered charter school grants teachers full autonomy in the creation and implementation of lessons, unlike at the public school where teachers are expected to follow a very specific curriculum with little deviation and supplementary materials. At her school, Elizabeth has been encouraged to use the available resources and not request anything new because of limited funds; however, she is not expected to teach specific texts. She chooses the texts she wants and uses them in various ways to teach the state standards.

Both Brigitte and Elizabeth appreciate having the autonomy to teach something other than the classics, as they want to present complex texts to which their students relate (Connors & Shepard, 2012). Brigitte regularly looks for newer young adult texts through blogs, Amazon, and her state's young readers award list. Because she has found through using the state curriculum, which used "dry" and "old" texts for instruction, in her previous position that "students just have zero desire to read," her goal is "to find stuff that is high interest." Brigitte is thankful to feel supported by her principal, who encourages her to look at the state's young readers award list. She expressed "[enjoying] being able to pick out texts versus having texts handed to [her]" and wishes "more teachers had the autonomy to choose the texts for their students because [she] thinks that

[teachers] would see a little more success in reading" with that sense of autonomy for reading selections.

Similarly, Elizabeth's current principal trusts her and her teaching strategies, so she gets to teach the books she wants to instead of the books she hates. Her first principal, who was only at the school for half of Elizabeth's first year, wanted her to teach the same texts as the other teachers of the same courses. This was discouraging to her at the time because she "knew [she] could teach other texts better than the ones the other sophomore teacher was teaching." Despite this initial discouragement, Elizabeth's perceptions of self-determination did not lessen, and she is using various discussion and writing strategies to reach the students with relatable texts.

High Autonomy among Interviewed Teachers with 6 to 15 Years of Experience. Similar to previous research, state standards, personal knowledge of the text, student interests, and community values impact teachers' text selection decisions (Stallworth et al., 2006; Watkins & Ostenson, 2015); however, within that somewhat limiting frame, options are endless. Sometimes the resources available and co-planning expectations can limit the perceptions of autonomy, but interviewed teachers Elaine and Donnie both remain positive about the level of freedom permitted them in regards to text selection.

Elaine's first description of the text selection process in her school could easily be perceived as teachers having low autonomy in the classroom as administration expects the teachers to meet and collaborate "everybody to be on the same page" although "maybe at a different pace or … in a different way." Ultimately, the autonomy, in other words, comes from how the teachers address the texts, the approach they take, as opposed

to what texts can be selected. When working as a team to select texts, Elaine admits frustration in the text selection process can stem from teachers not being open to trying different texts and compromising; sometimes the team works well together, but other times it does not. In Elaine's case, she is the only teacher responsible for at least one of her courses, so she just teaches "what [she] finds interesting at the time" as long as she addresses the standards for the course.

Despite responding in her survey that she only "somewhat agrees" to being happy about the level of autonomy, Donnie detailed in the interview a high level of autonomy with both the text selections and teaching strategies she chooses for classroom instruction. She is not obligated to use any specific textbook or text for her classroom; instead, Donnie is encouraged to choose texts that will help the students achieve success with the standards and skills they need. Her autonomy is limited by resources and funding, with many of the texts available to her being outdated, but just like Dierking and Fox (2013) found among some of their interviewed teachers, granting teachers some choice and voice in the decisions can result in higher perceptions of autonomy.

Occasionally parents express concern with some of Donnie's choices, such as Angie Thomas's *The Hate U Give*, and Donnie admits that "being in a rural, very conservative school" has an impact on her text selections. While her students might "benefit with more diverse texts" she must consider "the parents who would rather not have their students exposed to such material." Even with censorship concerns, those with high perceptions of autonomy are not discouraged or feel limited by what they can and cannot teach.

High Autonomy among Interviewed Teachers with 16+ Years of Experience.

Ashleigh explained that the text selection process in her district is very relaxed with an incredible amount of freedom and latitude to choose any texts the teachers deem fit and appropriate for the students they teach. Ashleigh does admit she would like to engage in more conversation with other teachers who have similar demographics and school environments, but she struggles to find groups with teachers from independent school districts. With that said, however, she does feel supported by her school and believes she has the resources and knowledge she needs to best serve the students who enter her classroom.

Just as Elaine's level of freedom partially stems from not having other teachers responsible for the same courses as she, Jane shares she has full autonomy of the texts and teaching strategies she can bring into the classroom for her creative writing and AP language courses. She is not restricted by a textbook or a specific list. However, in the course in which she shares responsibility with another teacher, they must use the same texts as the central focus for the unit. Beyond that one text that shapes the unit, teachers may choose what else they bring in for the students to read.

Where Elaine gets autonomy because she is not teaching the same courses as other teachers, Deborah believes she receives some autonomy because of her level of experience and competence. Because she has demonstrated to her administration her ability to achieve successful gains on reading scores with her students, they do not discourage her independent reading or question her when she recommends certain reading programs for the school to adopt.

Competence

Similar to the autonomy scale, quantitative data did not demonstrate a statistically significant difference among levels of perceived competence based on teaching experience. While the teachers interviewed with 16 or more years of experience appear to have higher competence scores, 5 survey participants scored lower than Jane on the competence scale when sorting scores for all United States survey participants. Research has shown text selection decisions can be influenced by familiarity and confidence in teaching newer and culturally relevant texts (Applebee 1992, 1993; Christ & Sharma, 2018; Stallworth et al., 2006) and the ability to find texts at the appropriate level and with relatable content (Stallworth et al., 2006; Watkins & Ostenson, 2015). Low competence among interviewed teachers often stemmed from having limited opportunities to make knowledgeable text selection decisions for their classrooms. High competence among interviewed teachers often stemmed from their confidence in selecting texts appropriate for the reading level and cultural needs of their students.

Low Competence among Interviewed Teachers with 0 to 5 Years of Experience. Much of what could be driving Glen's low perception of competence is his lack of experience in an environment granting him some autonomy. Since both schools required he teach what other teachers and the supervisor had selected, Glen had very little say in how he taught and few opportunities to strengthen his abilities. While his new school allows him latitude to select texts from a list, the list, according to Glen, is outdated and mostly canonical, and he admits he is often bored teaching some of these texts and understands why the students are, too, since they do not represent the students that he teaches. Like many teachers in previous studies (e.g., Smith et al., 2018;

Stallworth et al., 2006), he believes student interest should drive text selection. If he had full autonomy of his classroom, he would focus on identifying texts matching his students' interests and the skills they need to be successful. Establishing trust and maintaining relationships with students would help teachers decide on which texts to use. One way he begins to establish this trust and build the relationships is through the use of shorter texts past students have enjoyed. One of his main concerns with the text selection process is ensuring representation for all of his students because he feels the "need to make sure [he's] hitting all of [the] boxes to make sure that [he is] getting the students where they are, and if they're interested and making sure that [he's] not offending people or making sure that it's accessible for students." Given more experience and autonomy, Glen's perception of competence could increase.

Low Competence among Interviewed Teachers with 6 to 15 Years of Experience. Sometimes low competence stems from lack of opportunity to make independent text decisions (Christ & Sharma, 2018; Gay, 2002), as mentioned regarding Glen's low perceptions of competence. Rory has witnessed a decrease in motivation to read among her students over the last five years and attributes this decrease to the increase of and access to technology in and out of the classroom; however, she is not given the freedom to find texts appropriate for her students. Instead, she must choose the texts from a list of texts that have "worked through the test of time." The constant encouragement to "stick to the list" diminishes the desire to branch away from the traditional texts and find resources relatable to her students.

Similarly, Yvonne's lack of freedom limits her perceptions of competence. Yvonne talked extensively about her success with using graphic novels and

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nontraditional texts outside of class time as supplementary texts. However, she stressed she had to do this secretively because the use of these texts, although helpful to some of her students who struggle with the reading level of the required texts, is expressly frowned upon. Any supplemental materials must be on grade level, submitted with accompanying questions and tasks, and approved through the administration before use.

A common thread among those interviewed exhibiting low perceptions of competence is the desire to be able to select freely texts that represent their students' academic, cultural, and social needs. In an ideal teaching world, Yvonne says she would base text selection on what her students need and want to read. She would be able to read a book and decide it will work for her students, no matter their level. The book could be taught numerous ways to reach any student she needs to teach. Yvonne says what is most important to her when picks a text is being able to use the text to teach the skill, not the story. However, as evident by her "strongly disagree[ing]" with being happy with her level of autonomy and indicating that "everything that [they] teach outside of the curriculum map must be approved by administration," meaning limited diverse and multicultural texts, Yvonne is not working in an ideal world and feels she struggles to meet the needs of her students.

Low Competence among Interviewed Teachers with 16+ Years of Experience. Of those interviewed, Jane received the lowest perceived competence score; however, her score is only slightly lower than the mean competence score. Of her responses, her admission to not reading enough and having a shallow well from which to pull contributes most to perceived competence. When considering other teachers, Jane says some teachers have a tendency of sticking to the lists, which she avoids, or going

"off book" and choosing texts in the moment. This concerns her because some newer teachers "pick things in the moment because it's trendy or because they just read it and it was really good." She is more concerned with teaching what she knows well and is confident will work well to meet the standards and needs of the students.

High Competence among Interviewed Teachers with 0 to 5 Years of Experience. Both Brigitte and Peggy scored high on the perceived competence scale, while Elizabeth scored average for the overall sample. Brigitte expresses this competence through her attempt to find texts that are "off the beaten path" and connect to the students' interests, which she learns through a "book tasting survey." She is still cautious to avoid texts parents may find controversial, and uses her knowledge of the community's values and student needs to guide her text selections. Elizabeth stated she feels confident in her ability to find appropriate texts for her students. Elizabeth is confident she can defend any text she selects for her students as her masters' thesis focused on "the heterogeneous curriculum that is forced on high school students." She avoids teaching white authors as much as she can because those authors do not represent her students; however, she does include some texts by white authors because she personally enjoys them and loves them. While texts such as *The Great Gatsby* are included because she knows they need these texts to understand allusions they encounter, especially in college, her goal is to find texts that represent her students. Peggy, on the other hand, struggled to elucidate on her competence.

High Competence among Interviewed Teachers with 6 to 15 Years of Experience. Just as low autonomy sometimes leads to low competence, higher autonomy can lead to higher competence (Dierking & Fox, 2013). Being granted the freedom to

teach what and how they choose leads to teachers being more familiar with the texts they prefer to teach. Donnie is not obligated to use the textbooks with her students. Instead, her principal encourages the teachers to match the text to the standards in whatever way they see fit. She says "if [she] feels something outside [the] textbook works better, [she's] going to use it." To select texts for her classroom, she first looks at the standards and then considers which texts she's familiar with that aligns best with the standard. If she cannot identify something she knows, she asks around to her colleagues and online Facebook communities for text and lesson suggestions. The success of a specific text selection often depends on how well she knows her students and how much she knows the text herself, so she has certain texts, such as *Macbeth*, that she teaches each year because she knows it thoroughly and can teach it in many different ways.

Ultimately, when autonomy and competence work together, the higher perceptions stem from how the teachers address the texts, the approach they take, as opposed to what texts can be selected (Dierking & Fox, 2013). In Elaine's school, sometimes this ability to maneuver the texts freely is stifled by co-planning when teachers are not open to trying different texts and compromising despite having the autonomy to do so. For courses in which no co-planning is necessary, Elaine just teaches "what [she] finds interesting at the time" as long as she addresses the standards for the course.

High perceptions of competence leads to high levels of relatedness (Pitcher et al., 2007; Unrau et al., 2015). For example, Elaine feels strongly that she can select texts matching both her students and the standards. She admits that she does not "decide at the beginning of the year exactly what [she is] going to teach." Instead, she uses some texts

she knows most students have enjoyed in the past, and then adjusts her choices for the remainder of the semester as she gets to know the students in her classroom, especially for the course for which only she is responsible. The flexibility she is granted allows her to bring in supplementary texts that help the students view canonical British literature texts from a different character's perspective. This helps her address both the standards and maintain the students' attention. Elaine "[does not] want to teach something that [the students] are not going to respond to [or] that they are going to hate." They will not learn from a text they hate. She appreciates her district's text selection process that permits her to address the skills she needs by using the texts she wants; in return, she and the other teachers make the administration aware of their choices "as a courtesy."

High Competence among Interviewed Teachers with 16+ Years of Experience. Knowing the community's values and students' needs and feeling confident in the ability to select texts that fit those values or needs demonstrate high levels of perceived competence (Smith et al., 2018; Watkins & Ostenson, 2015). Ashleigh **says** parents and administration rarely question the decisions and choices she make, so she "really [appreciates] the freedom" she is granted to make informed choices about her students. While the teachers do not come together to discuss what texts they plan to teach, per se, they do check in with each other to ensure students are not reading books during multiple years. While some of what she teaches would be considered "tradition," she does research, consult, and read to determine what is being recommended by experts and other teachers. She blends her curriculum with classics and new texts, choosing to focus on themes and connections. She wants her students to be able to make text to text and text, text to self, and text to world connections. Ashleigh does admit she would like

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to engage in more conversation with other teachers who have similar demographics and school environments, but she struggles to find groups with teachers from independent school districts. With that said, however, she does feel supported by her school and believes she has the resources and knowledge she needs to best serve the students who enter her classroom.

In an ideal world, Deborah would have diverse books that represent her students in many different ways. She says that the "world is not a one size fits all kind of thing" and looks at the increasingly diverse classes of students walking through her door as a reason to avoid the "whitewashed" text selections her school wants them to read. Deborah prefers to use student interests and backgrounds to inform her text selections in the classroom. Unfortunately, while her administration has not discouraged her from placing diverse texts in her classroom, at least one of her colleagues has questioned certain diverse texts that did not align with the colleague's values. Deborah enjoys being able to encourage her students and discussing the books they are reading.

Deborah, Ashleigh, and Jane all expressed confidence in their abilities as teachers. Jane said her confidence in her teaching experiences and ability to be passionate about or excite students for reading the texts she chooses helps her motivate her students and achieve success in the classroom. Deborah's passion for reading and promoting texts her students enjoy reading has led to the students engaging in discussions about texts in the hallway with other teachers and students. Ashleigh's high perceptions of competence have led to her pursuit of texts beyond the traditional canon and ways to encourage students to read while also exposing them to the classics.

Mixed Methods Triangulation

Survey participants responded to seven open-ended questions in addition to the twelve scaled survey questions that addressed text selection opinions. The data from these questions were summarized and then triangulated with the interviews to develop a better understanding of the text selection process.

Text Selection Process

Just as Deborah, Kate, Elaine, Yvonne, Rory, and Glen voiced in the interviews, surveyed teachers voiced in the open-ended responses that they wish they could have more autonomy in the text selection process. According to the results of Item 49, surveyed teachers with 6 to 15 years of experience ($n = 68$) expressed more autonomy in the classroom, with 22.1% of the surveyed teachers indicating they were expected to select texts for students based on a specific list ("Strongly Agree" and "Somewhat Agree," combined), while 35.3% indicated they do not ("Strongly Disagree"). However, both surveyed teachers with 0 to 5 years of experience ($n = 41$) and surveyed teachers with 16 or more years of experience ($n = 81$) indicate they are expected to teach from a specific list (39.1% and 41.9%, respectively). More research needs to be conducted into just how many are required to teach the same as others in the department, district, or state. However, as these six interviewed teachers have indicated, stifling the autonomy of ELA teachers' text selection opportunities diminishes their opportunities for demonstrating their own competence and encouraging students to become better readers (Coburn et al., 2011; Delaney et al., 2016; Taylor et al., 2011). Rigid stipulations on text selections and teaching strategies minimize perceptions of self-determination and feelings of discontent (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Major Texts Taught in the Classroom

As teachers are often required to select texts from a specific list provided by the school, the texts lists need to be examined (Stallworth et al., 2006; Stotsky, 2010). Yvonne, Glen, Rory, and Kate mentioned the lists are somewhat out-of-date and need updating to better represent the changed demographics of their school. However, as presented by Brigitte, Elizabeth, Ashleigh, and Deborah, autonomy in the classroom lends toward making informed decisions on text selections that could better represent the students in the classroom. While all three levels of experience acknowledge the importance of students' reading classic texts, according to Item 29, 63.2% of surveyed teachers with 6 to 15 years of experience ($n =68$) "Somewhat Agree" or "Strongly Agree" as opposed to 55.5% of surveyed teachers with 16 or more years of experience ($n = 81$) and 56.1% of surveyed teachers with 0 to 5 years of experience ($n = 41$). On the other hand, 77.8% of surveyed teachers with 16 or more years of experience indicated reading young adult literature was important for students, as opposed to 92.6% of surveyed teachers with 6 to 15 years of experience and 97.6% of surveyed teachers with 0 to 5 years of experience. Jane even noted that she preferred to teach the texts with which she is most familiar, and these tend to be the classics.

Of the texts taught in the classroom, 80 of the 156 titles are written by White male authors and 50 of the 156 are written by non-White authors (see Appendix G). Forty-eight of the 156 titles were published since 2000. Of the top 10 texts read in grades 7-12, 7 are written by White male authors and 3 are written by White female authors. The 10 most commonly taught authors are Charles Dickens (2), Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (2), C.

S. Lewis (2), Lois Lowry (2), Toni Morrison (3), Walter Dean Myers (3), George Orwell (2), Jason Reynolds (3), William Shakespeare (8), and John Steinbeck (2).

While some surveyed teachers believe text selections should be re-evaluated each year to determine what will best benefit and interest the students (4 responses), others say they have certain texts they will always read. Respondents provided numerous reasons for reading the same texts each year, including enduring themes, real world connections and history, theme and characters resonating with students, cultural relevance, coverage of standards, young adult connections, exposure to classics, and coverage of protected classes (see Appendix H).

Cultural Diversity in Texts

An important aspect of relatedness is being able to connect to those who one interacts with on a daily basis (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Sweet et al., 1996). ELA teachers can use culturally relevant texts and young adult novels as a means of relatedness and encouraging critical thinking (Pitcher et al., 2007; Scholastic, 2017; Souto-Manning et al., 2018; Tatum, 2006; Unrau et al., 2015). Of the interviewed teachers, 8 of them expressed the desire to choose texts that better reflect the students they teach. However, because half of them lack the autonomy to select texts for their classroom, the representation does not occur.

Culturally relevant texts are being incorporated into some of the classrooms (Item 24). Of the surveyed teachers with 0 to 5 years of experience, 61% responded affirmatively; surveyed teachers with 6 to 15 years of experience, 57.3% responded affirmatively; and surveyed teachers with 16 or more years of experience, 69.1% responded affirmatively. Some slight contradictions seem to have occurred because

73.2% of the surveyed teachers with 0 to 5 years of experience, 41.1% of the surveyed teachers of with 6 to 15 years of experience, and 46.9% of the surveyed teachers with 16 or more years of experience responded that they add culturally relevant texts to their classroom because the curriculum does not include it (Item 30).

Teachers are sometimes pressured to avoid adding culturally relevant texts to their classroom (Goodman, 2011; Stallworth et al., 2006), but surveyed teachers with 0 to 5 years of experience express more pressure from colleagues (Item 45), districts (Item 46), and parents (Item 47; 31.7%, 22%, and 43.9%, respectively). Surveyed teachers with 6 to 15 years of experience express pressure from colleagues (29.5%) and parents (39.7%), but little from the district (10.3%). Surveyed teachers with 16 or more years of experience express minimal pressure, with the most coming from parents (19.7%), and then the district and colleagues (12.3% and 11.1%, respectively).

Despite the pressures, the overwhelming majority express confidence in the ability to select culturally relevant texts for and meet the cultural needs of their students.

Censorship

Sometimes teachers avoid teaching texts because of concerns for stakeholder or administrative responses to the inclusion of various texts (Applebee 1992, 1993; Smith et al., 2018; Stallworth et al., 2006). Of the 191 open-ended survey responses, 73 responded they cannot teach certain texts for a variety of reasons. The most common reasons for not being able to teach a text is because of explicit language (7 responses), portraying diversity or race-related (10 responses), limited budget (5 responses), passages related to sexual acts (5 responses), LGBTQIA content (7 responses), conservative districts (5 responses), parent complaints (16 responses), the use of derogatory terms (2 responses),

coverage of suicide (2 responses), personal preference to avoid texts with curse words and derogatory terms (1 response), pre-determined curriculum decisions (6 responses), state legislation (1 response), lack of time to add more diverse texts (4 responses), too contemporary or young adult (8 responses). Both surveyed teachers with 0 to 5 years of experience and 16 and more years of experience indicated they refrain from choosing certain books due to censorship concerns (51.2% and 46.9%, respectively); however, on 27.9% of surveyed teachers with 6 to 15 years of experience indicate censoring is a concern for them (Item 48).

The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas (10 responses) is commonly censored in the classroom for having explicit language, parents objecting to the movie adaptation, and portrayal of diversity or race relations. *Dear Martin* by Nic Stone (3 responses) is commonly censored for being too diverse and explicit language. *Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie (2 responses) is commonly censored for the "masturbation scene." *Just Mercy* (4 responses) by Bryan Stevenson is commonly censored due to the current political climate. *Ghost Boys* by Jewell Parker Rhodes (2 responses) is commonly censored due to contemporary issues and race relations.

Other texts mentioned once as being not permitted in the classroom for one reason or another are *All American Boys* by Brendan Kiely and Jason Reynolds, *Everything I Never Told You* by Celeste Ng, *The Devil in the White City* by Erik Larson, *Glass Castle* by Jeannette Walls, *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson, *Night* by Elie Wiesel, *Fences* by August Wilson, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain, *1984* by George Orwell, *Nickel Boys* by Colson Whitehead, *Color Purple* by Alice Walker, *Long Way Down* or almost anything by Jason Reynolds, *And Then There Were None* by Agatha

Christie, *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* by Benjamin Alire
Sáenz, *Beloved* and *Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison, *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family
and Culture in Crisis* by J. D. Vance, *The Purple Hibiscus* by Chimamanda Ngozi
Adichie, *Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *In the Time of the Butterflies* by
Julia Alvarez, *Children of Blood and Bone* by Tomi Adeyemi, *Hamilton* by Lin Manuel
Miranda, *Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini, *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison, *Handmaid's
Tale* by Margaret Atwood, *I am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* by Erika Sánchez,
graphic novels,

Some respondents mentioned getting around censorship concerns by offering
diverse and commonly censored texts through book clubs, literature circles, and
classroom libraries, a suggestion voiced in previous research (e.g., Watkins & Ostenson,
2015). Others mentioned providing choice with signed parent's permission forms.

Independent Reading

Research has demonstrated the importance of independent reading on academic
success (e.g., Guthrie et al., 2013; Ivey & Johnston, 2013; Whitten et al., 2016). All of
the participants interviewed acknowledged the importance of having independent reading
opportunities in the classroom. Yvonne indicated she do not have the time or the freedom
to implement independent reading in their classes, which could explain that 90.2% of 0 to
5 years, 92.7% of 6 to 15 years, and 86.5% of 16 or more years indicated they would like
to give their students more time to read independently (Item 26). On the other hand,
Deborah, Rory and Elaine are encouraged by their schools to develop and embed
independent reading programs into the daily schedule, whether the program is through
the ELA or reading course, which could help to explain that almost 90% of the surveyed

teachers with 6 to 15 years of experience and the surveyed teachers with 16 and more years of experience indicated their students have opportunities to read books others are not (Item 36), as opposed to only 53.7% of the surveyed teachers with 0 to 5 years of experience teachers.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

I wish more teachers had the autonomy to choose the text *for* their students

because I think we would see more success in reading if teachers had the autonomy to do

that.

—"Brigitte"

This study sought to examine through the lens of self-determination theory (SDT)

the influence of teachers' perceived autonomy and competence on the text selection

process. SDT contends people will exhibit the intrinsic desire to create, innovate, and to

grow if perceptions of autonomy, competence, and relatedness are high; conversely, with

low perceptions of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, people are discouraged,

passive, and compliant (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This chapter will first address the findings

relating to the two quantitative research questions, which examined the relationship

between teaching experience and perceptions of autonomy and competence, followed by

the findings and discussion of the mixed methods research question, which looked to

explain some of the quantitative findings with qualitative data from the interviews and

surveys.

Summary of Quantitative Results

Research Question 1

What is the relationship between teaching experience and teachers' perceptions of

autonomy in making text selection decisions for 7th through 12th grade ELA courses?

The purpose of this study was to determine a correlation between teaching experience and ELA teachers' perceptions of autonomy during the text selection process. New teachers' perceived autonomy should be lower than those of more experienced teachers' perceptions as they are still learning what works through collaboration with their mentors and feedback from their administration (Boote, 2006). However, the results of the Spearman's rho correlation and Kruskal-Wallis one way ANOVA of ranks found no statistically significant difference in perceptions of teachers 0 to 5, 6 to 15, and 16 and more years of experience when considering the autonomy scale. In fact, most surveyed teachers indicated they either "strongly agree" or "somewhat agree" (75.8%, $N = 190$) with being content with their level of control in the classroom. The surveyed teachers demonstrated comparable levels of perceived autonomy regardless of levels of experience (75.6%, $n = 41$; 76.47%, $n = 68$; 75.3%, $n = 81$, respectively), indicating perceived autonomy stems from factors external to the levels of experience.

At the individual item level, influences of perceived autonomy occurred regarding selecting textbooks, the inclusion of culturally relevant texts, the expectation to select texts from a list, and the use of whole-class text instruction. Teachers with 16 or more years of experience indicated they have "some control" over textbook selection while teachers with 6 to 15 years of experience indicated they have "little control" over textbook selection. Teachers with 0 to 5 years of experience indicated they are more likely to include culturally relevant texts despite the curriculum not including them. Additionally, teachers with 0 to 5 years of experience indicated they are more likely to engage in whole-class text instruction than the other two experience groups.

Previous research has explored reasons pertaining to autonomy are administration and parent discouragement to deviate from text lists (Applebee 1992, 1993; Smith et al., 2018; Watkins & Ostenson, 2015), censorship concerns (Smith et al., 2018; Stallworth et al., 2006), and co-planning (Stallworth et al., 2006). These concerns continue to influence teachers' selection of texts, regardless of teaching experience (34%, 41%, 42%, respectively). This data alone is inconclusive and is explored in more detail with the mixed methods research question discussion below.

Research Question 2

What is the relationship between teaching experience and teachers' expressed levels of competence in making text selection decisions for 7th through 12th grade ELA courses?

Another purpose of this study was to determine a correlation between teaching experience and ELA teachers' perceptions of competence during the text selection process. Presumably, with experience comes knowledge and increased competence. We expect experienced teachers to feel confident in their abilities to engage and meet the needs of their students (Boote, 2006). However, like the results for autonomy, the results of the Spearman's rho correlation and Kruskal-Wallis one way ANOVA of ranks found no statistically significant difference in perceptions of teachers 0 to 5, 6 to 15, and 16 and more years of experience when considering the competence scale. Teachers demonstrated comparable levels of perceived competence regardless of levels of experience, indicating perceived competence stems from factors external to the levels of experience.

Research shows one major factor influencing perceived competence regarding text selection is unfamiliarity with and lack of confidence teaching newer and culturally

relevant texts (Applebee 1992, 1993; Christ & Sharma, 2018; Stallworth et al., 2006). Almost half of the surveyed teachers (40%) indicated their knowledge of texts is a major factor in text selection. A Mann-Whitney U test showed a statistically significant difference between teachers with more than 16 years of experience (49%) and teachers with 6 to 15 years of experience (25%). This data alone is inconclusive and discussed in more detail in the mixed methods discussion below.

Summary of Mixed Methods Results

Research Question 3

How do the views of the interviewed 7th through 12th grade ELA teachers help to explain the perceived influences of levels of self-determination on the text selection process?

Autonomy. Autonomy in the education sector has been defined as a teacher having opportunities to make decisions about curriculum, texts, teaching strategies, and classroom decisions without external influences, control or reward (Archbald & Porter, 1994; Boote, 2006; Dierking & Fox, 2013). ELA teachers with high perceptions of autonomy choose texts for their classrooms based on their own personal preferences, the academic needs of their students, and the cultural needs of their students. They do not rely on prescribed lists, other teachers, curriculum guides, or administrative instruction to make these decisions.

Among the teachers surveyed, regardless of teaching experience, high perceptions of autonomy were accompanied by affirmations of being allowed to choose texts independently of their department and colleagues, having the ability to select culturally relevant texts representing their students' backgrounds, and fewer influences by external

factors. Interviewed teachers Brigitte, Elizabeth, and Elaine all expressed excitement with their opportunities to choose the texts and teaching strategies to meet the needs of their students. Similarly, surveyed teachers with high perceptions of autonomy, regardless of teaching experience, indicated high levels of content in the amount of control they have over their classroom. They indicated they are not limited by district mandates to teach a specific set of texts; if they teach the same books each year, it is by choice. The opportunity to exercise choice and receive encouragement and support from their colleagues strengthened their perceptions of autonomy and increased their contentment, just as found in previous research (e.g., Dierking & Fox, 2013; Gabriel et al., 2011).

On the other hand, previous research has found ELA teachers with low perceptions of autonomy must answer to state mandates, administrative guidelines, co-planning alignment, parent expectations, and prescribed lists (e.g., Allington, 02002; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Sweet & Guthrie, 1994; Sweet et al., 1996). Interviewed teachers from all levels with low perceptions of autonomy all expressed discontent with the obstacles they faced. The need to continuously gain "permission for everything," according to interview participant Peggy, can be discouraging and hinder early teachers' gain in confidence and experiential knowledge. Likewise, Glen's school's expectation that he align his instruction with colleagues teaching the same level, discouraged him to seek supplementary texts fitting with his students. He wanted to include texts his students would find relatable, but between censorship issues and co-planning expectations, he limited these external selections. Sometimes the more experienced teachers, such as Yvonne and Rory, find ways around the restrictions, such as promoting texts outside of

instructional time; however, they are discouraged by the lack of autonomy to include those same texts in the classroom and the micromanaging that occurs.

Discontent can also occur when administration mandates certain books be removed from the classroom without discussion with the teachers or discourage the use of texts teachers deem appropriate for their students' cultural or academic needs (e.g., Smith et al., 2018; Stallworth et al., 2006). Three of the surveyed teachers responded, who all scored higher than the mean for the autonomy subscale, indicated texts had been removed from their curriculum at the district and administration level. Sometimes, as interview participant Deborah points out, administration asks for the input of teachers when considering the list and then disregards the input when making purchases for the curriculum. Teachers' lack of voice and support leads to decreased job satisfaction (Archbald & Porter, 1994; Boote, 2006).

Additionally, state-, district-, school- and department-level expectations to teach from specific lists discourages teachers and diminishes their passion to teach (e.g., Delaney et al., 2016; Stallworth et al., 2006). Over one-third of the surveyed teachers (34%, $N = 190$) indicated they were required to teach from a specific list. Interview participants Jane, Yvonne, Deborah, Kate, and Rory all indicated they are limited to selections provided on a list. In many cases, as Deborah, Rory, and Yvonne mentioned, these texts have been taught for many years with little deviation. Many requests to teach another text are met with replies to "stick to the list," as Yvonne indicated. Sometimes low perceptions of autonomy are alleviated somewhat by partial freedom to supplement required texts with titles selected by the teacher, as interviewed participant Rory indicated he is able to do.

Additionally, previous research has found teachers with low autonomy express less content with their situation at work, and will sometimes seek other opportunities to increase their perceived autonomy (Allington, 2002; Archbald & Porter, 1994; Boote, 2006; Eyal & Roth, 2011; Roth et al., 2007). Interviewed teachers Brigitte and Peggy both sought new teaching opportunities because they felt micromanaged and controlled with previous administration. One surveyed teacher indicated she is choosing to retire after more 30 years in the classroom because her administration has begun limiting the text selection process due to the current political climate surrounding critical race theory and the government. Another surveyed teacher indicated that with less than 5 years of experience, she wishes her "opinion, cultural need, and student opinion had more influence" and she feels she "[has] to follow school books and department choice." Both the surveyed and interviewed teachers indicated stakeholders' failure to acknowledge teachers' professional experience and knowledge relating to the needs of students leads to low perceptions of autonomy (Allington & Pearson, 2011; Delaney et al., 2011) and eventually discontent (Allington & Pearson, 2011).

Teachers need the support of administration, parents, and colleagues to select the texts they believe their students need to be successful. Without this support, perceptions of autonomy and job satisfaction diminish. Sometimes when that happens, teachers leave to find better situations elsewhere, whether as an educator or other kind of work. With this support, teachers feel confident in their ability to impact student success and encourage the academic and cultural growth of their students.

Competence. Competence is the feeling of self-efficacy or capability to complete a task knowledgeably and competently (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Within the ELA classroom,

someone with high perceptions of autonomy will choose texts fitting the academic and cultural needs of their students. When teachers feel more confident in their abilities, the literature they select is more likely to include texts that deviate from canon or traditional texts (Christ & Sharma, 2018; Gay, 2002).

Research shows one major factor influencing perceived competence regarding text selection is unfamiliarity with and lack of confidence teaching newer and culturally relevant texts (Applebee 1992, 1993; Christ & Sharma, 2018; Stallworth et al., 2006). Almost half of the surveyed teachers (40%, $N = 190$) indicated their knowledge of texts is a major factor in text selection. This data alone is inconclusive as the decreased perception of confidence in their knowledge of texts could indicate a lack of knowledge of newer young adult literature or culturally relevant texts, as interview participant Jane mentioned; a lack of confidence teaching canonical texts in a way relatable to students, as interview participant Brigitte noted; or a confidence in connecting canonical texts to newer texts, as Ashleigh and Kate explained they do.

Lowered perceptions of competence can also be contributed to decreased abilities to make personal text selections as opposed to using prescribed curricula (Gabriel et al., 2011). Because teachers are required to cover specific texts in a specific way, and sometimes with only minimal deviations, perceptions of competence are diminished as the teachers do not feel trusted to adjust the material to the needs of the students, as interviewed teacher Yvonne said about the curriculum expectations in her district. The public schools near interviewed teacher Brigitte's charter school must teach a specific curriculum with little deviation or supplementary materials; her excitement with her job at a school that encourages deviation from the normal texts and creativity in classroom

strategies was evident through her posture and tone of voice. Likewise, Elizabeth, who teaches at a private school with an extremely diverse student body, loves that she has been encouraged to choose any text to ensure she meets the standards with her students. Her principal trusts Elizabeth and her teaching strategies, so she gets to teach the texts she loves instead of those she just tolerates.

Additional Findings: Potential Limits to Teachers' Self-Determination. A common thread among the interviewed teachers and the open-ended questions was that teachers want to be encouraged and supported in their decision making to increase perceptions of competence. Mistakes are inevitable, but just like students, teachers will not grow without making mistakes. Teachers with higher perceived levels of competence are more likely to deviate from traditional texts and feel confident in their abilities to select culturally relevant texts (Dierking & Fox, 2013). Sometimes teachers feel competent and want to relate to their students, but they lack the autonomy to add texts and teaching strategies they deem most appropriate (Stallworth et al., 2006). As they indicated in the interviews and surveys, the teachers with low autonomy felt micromanaged, limited by the resources their schools can afford, restricted by expectations to be on the same page as other teachers, censored by parents and districts, or discouraged by colleague influences.

Micromanaging Administration. Certain administrative styles tend to be heavy on the micromanagement and control of instructional technique and materials (e.g., Archbald & Porter, 1994; Eyal & Roth, 2010). Dictating what teachers are expected to include, not include, or do with their students minimizes the desire to do anything but what is mandated, even if deviations are for the betterment of the student. Similarly,

parent mandates can diminish the desire to include culturally relevant texts or teaching strategies for fear of being called to the principal's office. Administrators need to consider the adverse effects micromanaging has on teacher efficacy and student success.

Budgetary Constraints. While budgetary constraints are not always controllable as sometimes a school's budget is based on the economic prosperities of the community, budget constraints still can contribute to teachers' perceptions of self-determination and influence text selection decisions (e.g., Stallworth et al., 2006; Watkins & Ostenson, 2015). Over half the teachers surveyed (53%) indicated the budget is a considerable to major influence on their text selection decisions. Some of the teachers interviewed and surveyed indicated their school would purchase materials for the classroom with no regard for the needs of or input from the teachers. Instead of updating materials, identical textbooks or curriculum materials would be purchased. Principals and administrators in charge of the budget should listen to and follow teacher input to avoid wasting money on resources teachers do not want to use.

Co-Planning. Requiring teachers to align their instruction and texts with other teachers ignores the diverse cultures of each individual classroom (Boote, 2006; Watkins & Ostenson, 2015). The needs of one classroom, even one of students in the same grade level receiving similar scores on a standardized test may not be identical in cultural and social backgrounds, and in turn, may need different textual supports. If Elizabeth, who teaches classes with no White students, were to be expected to teach the exact same texts as Donnie, who teaches classes with primarily White students from a rural background, one class's cultural and social needs would not be met. Co-planning minimizes opportunities for supporting individual students with different texts or teaching strategies.

While some co-planning situations creates support for inexperienced teachers, others create a source of frustration when compromise does not occur during the text selection process.

    Differing Opinions on the Inclusion of Diverse Texts. The overwhelming majority of all surveyed teachers (91%) indicated they enjoy reading young adult literature (with a response of "strongly agree" or "agree"), and only slightly less (87%) indicated reading young adult literature is important for their students. In contrast, while 77% of surveyed teachers indicated they enjoy reading classics, only 58% indicated reading classic literature is important for their students. Teachers believe selecting culturally reflective texts for their students is important (89%), and most believe they are able to select these texts appropriately (92%). Policymakers should listen to teachers' input regarding updating suggested and supplementary texts to ensure the needs of students are met (NCTE 2018b, 2020).

    Despite the push to incorporate more diverse texts and deviate from the literary canon (NCTE, 2017, 2018b), some teachers prefer to teach what they know, which at times tends to be the traditional canonical texts (Stallworth et al., 2006). Some surveyed teachers expressed lower perceptions of competence in finding texts to fit those needs. Likewise, some surveyed and interviewed teachers preferred to maintain the canon in the classroom and choose to eschew young adult literature or culturally relevant texts. Interviewed participant Jane indicated in her survey responses that she does not enjoy reading young adult literature, and she "somewhat disagrees" with reading young adult literature being important for her students. She also voiced a concern that less experienced teachers select newer books because they are "trendy or because they just

read it and it was really good." I cannot conclude that all surveyed teachers indicating they do not find young adult literature important for their students are unable to select texts for their students. Instead, I recommend teachers and administrators invest in the help of the community and teacher expertise to identify appropriate texts for all cultural and social backgrounds of students within the district (NCTE, 2017, 2018b). This removes the burden of reading an abundance of young adult literature just to find the few texts that may be used in the classroom for instruction.

Practical Implications

The purpose of this mixed methods survey study was to examine the impact perceptions of self-determination, specifically perceptions of autonomy and competence, and teacher experience have on teachers' text selection decisions in 7th through 12th grade English language arts (ELA) classrooms. I suggest with the increased diversity of students and ever-changing dynamics of the classroom, teachers need to be granted the autonomy to teach texts representative of their students instead of a mandated text or list of texts to follow.

Classrooms should be viewed as their own contexts with diverse dynamics among unique individuals who bring their own set of struggles, talents, needs, and interests. To successfully reach each student, a one-size-fits-all mentality must be eschewed (Gay, 2004; Ivey & Johnston, 2013; Merga & Moon, 2016). The strategies, lessons, and books teachers choose for one student or class may not work for another student or class and vice versa. A teacher's passion and intent on teaching a book from the literary canon, when positioned in a way aligning with needs of students, may produce more effective learning than someone who is teaching it just because the text is on the list and just as

effectively in a way as someone who seeks out a non-canon text to address the needs of students (Unrau et al., 2015).

When teachers receive mandates to use specific curricula, texts, and materials, their passion for teaching is stifled; likewise, confidence in their ability to meet their students' needs wanes. As is evident by the events of the past two years, times change, students change, the world changes. Many of the teachers in this study desire the texts to change, but they are meeting resistance and discouragement from people who are not working directly with the students to know what is needed to ensure student success.

When the survey for this study was posted, schools had just concluded the first full pandemic school year. Some of the interviewed teachers had indicated their sources were limited because of budget concerns during this time or technology constraints if they were hybrid or fully remote learning. When the interviews for this study were conducted in the summer of 2021, teachers and school districts were under fire by conservative and right-wing groups over the inclusion of critical race theory in kindergarten through 12th grade classrooms (Sawchuk, 2021). For English teachers, this could mean decreased autonomy during the text selection process as their districts and communities began discouraging the use of any text mentioning race, racism, or racial inequities.

Before both of these events, neither of which were fully explored in this study, NCTE, ILA, and numerous other advocacy groups were calling for the inclusion of diverse and culturally relevant texts in the class room (NCTE, 2015, 2018a, 2018b; ILA, 2018; ALAN, 2019). This study sheds light on some of the obstacles teachers still face in

responding to these calls, both at the administrative and community levels. This study also reveals the efforts many teachers are making to find texts representing their students.

Limitations and Delimitations

The results of this study represent the perceptions of teachers who are members of four private Facebook groups. The teachers' participation in these groups are voluntary, which already indicates a level of intrinsic motivation to meet the engagement needs of their students. To some extent, these teachers naturally may already have some level of perceived autonomy as they are asking for suggestions regarding how to teach specific texts (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Numerous posts in these groups indicate freedom to teach diverse texts such as *I am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* by Erika Sánchez or Bryan Stevenson's *Just Mercy.* However, their need to teach certain texts traditionally taught, such as *To Kill a Mockingbird, Romeo and Juliet, Julius Caesar,* or *The Crucible*, does indicate they or their school may align their curriculum with some predetermined list.

Additionally, the results of this study represent a small fraction of 7th through 12th grade ELA teachers in the United States in the Spring of 2021. According to the NCES (2020a), in the 2017-2018 school year, approximately 169,000 ELA teachers worked in the 9th through 12th grade setting. Of these teachers, 23.2% were male and 6.9% were Black. Of the 190 teachers who responded to this survey study, only 1.5% were male and 0% were Black. Likewise, all interviewed teachers were White, and only one interviewed teacher was male. Teachers of other genders and ethnic identities may have differing perceptions, experiences, and opinions when compared to those in this study.

These private Facebook groups are open to anyone who teaches middle and high school English language arts. The group is not exclusive to the United States. While I did not limit participation or the opportunity to win the electronic gift card to only those teachers in the United States, I only included the data from teachers in the United States in the results. All international responses and responses omitting location or other pertinent data ($n = 34$) were removed from the dataset prior to data analysis.

I conducted this study in the midst of the COVID pandemic, which required many teachers to revamp the way they addressed texts with their students because of distance and hybrid learning requirements. A few of the interviewed teachers indicated they were limited in their text choices due to technology and budget constraints experienced within their districts. This external factor could skew the results as many teachers, regardless of experience, were just doing their best to help their students with what they had available to them. These limitations could have impacted perceptions of autonomy and competence not addressed through the survey or interview.

Recommendations for Future Research

Findings from this study can be extended through a more comprehensive and representative sample of ELA teachers. Include focus groups and interviews from more participants to elucidate on the variables impacting teachers' perceptions of self-determination from this more comprehensive group. This study could include questions addressing the influence of pandemic protocols and reactions to the critical race theory debate on perceived self-determination regarding text selection decisions.

A similar study of ELA could be conducted with teachers who have recently left the profession or moved to a different school to determine the relationship between low perceptions of self-determination and the decision to leave.

A case study could be conducted focusing on an ELA teacher or small group of ELA teachers with high perceptions of autonomy and their process to select diverse and culturally relevant texts.

A content analysis could be conducted of current state or district's curriculum expectations for inclusive and culturally relevant texts representative of the state's or district's demographics. Likewise, a content analysis could be conducted of college-level required English courses and texts college professors expect their students to have read for inclusive and culturally relevant texts.

A study could be conducted with administration, literacy coaches, and curriculum advisors to find out their perceptions of the role of self-determination in the text selection and curricular decision making process.

Finally, a study can be conducted a longitudinal study examining the relationship between ELA teachers' perceived levels of self-determination and their students' perceived levels of self-determination. This study could further examine the impact these levels of self-determination can have on student achievement by adding assessment variables.

APPENDIX A

Commonly Taught Book Length Titles

Source	Location of Survey	10 most commonly taught titles
Stallworth, et al. (2006)	Alabama	*The Scarlet Letter* *The Great Gatsby* *To Kill a Mockingbird* *Julius Caesar* *The Crucible* *Macbeth* *Romeo and Juliet* *Wuthering Heights* *A Raisin in the Sun* *Lord of the Flies* *Our Town* *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*
Applebee (1993)	National	*Romeo and Juliet* *Macbeth* *Huckleberry Finn* *Julius Caesar* *To Kill a Mockingbird* *Scarlet Letter* *Of Mice and Men* *Hamlet* *Great Gatsby* *Lord of the Flies*
Anderson (1963, as cited in Applebee, 1989)	National	*Macbeth* *Julius Caesar* *Our Town* *Red Badge of Courage* *Great Expectations* *Tale of Two Cities* *Hamlet* *Scarlet Letter* *Huckleberry Finn* *Romeo and Juliet*

APPENDIX B

Permission to Adapt Archbald and Porter's Survey

Doug Archbald archbald@udel.edu
Andy Porter andyp@upenn.edu

May 12, 2021

Dear Dr. Doug Archbald and Dr. Andy Porter,

I am completing a doctoral degree in Literacy at St. John's University in Queens, New York. In compliance with the degree's requirements, I am conducting a dissertation study entitled "The Influence of Teachers' Perceptions of Autonomy and Student Needs on Text Selection in the 7th - 12th Grade English Language Arts Classroom." I would like your permission to use and adapt the questionnaire you developed in the following study:

Archbald, D.A., & Porter, A.C. (1994). Curriculum control and teachers' perceptions of autonomy and satisfaction. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 16*(1), 21-39. https://doi.org/10.2307/1164381

I have attached a copy of the survey adapted from your original instrument to be used for the purposes of this study. You will notice I am only adapting 16 of the 23 items for the survey; these statements and format were the best fit for the purpose of measuring the influences on text selection. The survey consists of an additional 56 items to measure English language arts teachers' perceptions of relatedness and competence.

The requested permission extends to any future revisions and editions of dissertation, including non-exclusive world rights in all languages, and to the publication of my dissertation. These rights in no way restrict republication of the material in any other form by you or by others authorized by you. Your signing of this letter will also confirm that you own or your company owns the copyright to the above-described material.

If these arrangements meet with your approval, please sign this letter where indicated below and return it to me at julianna.lux18@my.stjohns.edu. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Julianna V. Lux

PERMISSION GRANTED FOR THE USE REQUESTED ABOVE:

X *Doug Archbald*

Dr. Douglas Archbald

7th through 12th Grade English Language Arts Text Selection Process Survey

Consent for Participation

You have been invited to take part in a research study to learn more about teachers' text selection process in the 7th through 12th grade English classes. This study is being conducted by Julianna Lux at St. John's University in fulfillment of the requirements for the PhD in Literacy program.

If you agree to participate in this study you will be asked to complete this survey on your own attitudes and experiences. Participation in this study is voluntary and anonymous. You may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without penalty. To ensure the most accurate information, you are encouraged to respond to all items on the survey. If you do not want to respond to a particular item on the survey, you may leave it blank. Participation in this study will take approximately twenty minutes.

There are no known risks associated with your participation in this research beyond those of everyday life. Although you will receive no direct benefits, this research may help the researcher understand public school teachers' attitudes and decisions for text selection, which may improve instruction and policy decisions in the future. Confidentiality of your research records will be strictly maintained by ensuring that your identity will not become known or linked with any information provided. Survey responses will not include any information that could directly link you to your responses. All data will be securely stored and made available only to the research team. If you do choose to provide your email address for the drawing of one of five $20 Amazon e-gift cards or to volunteer for an interview, that information will be removed from the responses once contact has been made.

If there is anything about the study or your participation that is unclear or that you do not understand, if you have questions or wish to report a research-related problem, you may contact Julianna Lux at julianna.lux18@my.stjohns.edu or XXX-XXX-XXXX. For questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the University's Institutional Review Board, St. John's University, Dr. Raymond DiGiuseppe, Chair digiuser@stjohns.edu 718-990-1955 or Marie Nitopi, IRB Coordinator, nitopim@stjohns.edu 718-990-1440.

Thank you for taking the time to participate in the study and share your experiences.

ELECTRONIC CONSENT: Please select your choice below. You may print a copy of this consent form for your records. Clicking on the "Agree" button indicates that

- You have read the above information
- You voluntarily agree to participate
- You are 18 years of age or older

All responses are anonymous unless you choose to provide your contact information at the end of the survey for the drawing and/or volunteering to be contacted for an interview, which will be conducted virtually.

Part I: Influences

Rate the level of influence each of the following has on the selection of texts for your classroom based on the following scale: *0 - No influence, 1 - Minimal influence, 2 - Little influence, 3 - Some influence, 4 - Considerable influence, 5 - Major influence*

1. State curriculum guidelines	0 1 2 3 4 5
2. District curriculum guidelines	0 1 2 3 4 5
3. School administrators' decisions and guidance	0 1 2 3 4 5
4. Departmental decisions and guidance	0 1 2 3 4 5
5. Other teachers' decisions and guidance	0 1 2 3 4 5
6. State tests	0 1 2 3 4 5
7. District tests	0 1 2 3 4 5
8. School department common assessments	0 1 2 3 4 5
9. The main course textbook	0 1 2 3 4 5
10. My own beliefs about what texts should be used	0 1 2 3 4 5
11. My own knowledge of texts	0 1 2 3 4 5
12. What my students are capable of understanding	0 1 2 3 4 5
13. What my students need for future courses and work	0 1 2 3 4 5
14. The cultural needs of my students	0 1 2 3 4 5
15. The school's budget for books	0 1 2 3 4 5
Optional Response: Is there any answer you gave for a question in this section you feel needs more explanation?	

Part II: Making Decisions

Rate how much control you feel you have in your classroom over each of the following areas in your planning and teaching on the following scale:. *0 - No control, 1 - Minimal control, 2 - -Little control, 3 - Some control, 4 - Considerable control, 5 - Major control*

16. Selecting textbooks	0 1 2 3 4 5
17. Selecting instructional materials	0 1 2 3 4 5
18. Selecting content, topics, and skills	0 1 2 3 4 5
19. Selecting teaching techniques	0 1 2 3 4 5
20. Creating assessments	0 1 2 3 4 5

Optional Response: Is there any answer you gave for a question in this section you feel needs more explanation?

Part III: Agree/Disagree Statements

Please rate how strong you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. *1 - Strongly Disagree, 3 - Neutral/Not applicable, 5 - Strongly Agree*

21. Reading published articles and research studies contributes to my text selection decisions.	1 2 3 4 5
22. A student's background contributes to my text selection decisions.	1 2 3 4 5
23. I have a significant influence on my students' achievement.	1 2 3 4 5
24. Providing my students access to culturally diverse texts is important.	1 2 3 4 5
25. Giving my students time to read independently in class is important.	1 2 3 4 5
26. I would like to give my students more time to read independently in class.	1 2 3 4 5
27. Reading classic texts is important for my students.	1 2 3 4 5
28. Reading young adult literature is important for my students.	1 2 3 4 5
29. I have the right training to meet the academic needs of my students.	1 2 3 4 5
30. I have the right training to meet the cultural needs of my students.	1 2 3 4 5
31. I enjoy reading classic texts.	1 2 3 4 5
32. I enjoy reading young adult literature.	1 2 3 4 5
33. Selecting texts that reflect my students' cultural backgrounds is important.	1 2 3 4 5

34. I am capable of selecting culturally diverse texts for classroom instruction.	1	2	3	4	5
35. My students read the same text at the same time.	1	2	3	4	5
36. My students have opportunities to read texts other students are not reading.	1	2	3	4	5
37. My district requires me to teach specific texts.	1	2	3	4	5
38. My school administration requires me to teach specific texts.	1	2	3	4	5
39. My department/team requires me to teach specific texts.	1	2	3	4	5
40. I am expected to teach the same texts as other teachers in my grade level.	1	2	3	4	5
41. My students can easily read the texts assigned to them.	1	2	3	4	5
42. My students enjoy reading the texts assigned to them.	1	2	3	4	5
43. Culturally relevant texts are incorporated into my school's curriculum.	1	2	3	4	5
44. Culturally relevant texts are not incorporated into my school's curriculum, but I incorporate it into my teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
45. I have been discouraged from using culturally relevant texts in my classroom by colleagues.	1	2	3	4	5
46. I have been discouraged from using culturally relevant texts in my classroom by administration or the district.	1	2	3	4	5
47. I have been discouraged from using culturally relevant texts in my classroom by parents.	1	2	3	4	5
48. I refrain from choosing certain books for my students due to censorship concerns.	1	2	3	4	5
49. I am expected to select texts for my students based on a specific list.	1	2	3	4	5
50. I must teach the same texts each year.	1	2	3	4	5
51. I choose to teach the same texts each year.	1	2	3	4	5
52. I am content with the level of control I have over what is taught in my classroom.	1	2	3	4	5

Optional Response: Is there any answer you gave for a question in this section you feel needs more explanation?

Part IV: **Optional Open-Ended Questions**

While the answers to these questions are helpful, please do not feel obligated to answer them. You will not hurt your chances for the gift card drawing by not answering them.

53. Which major text(s) do you regularly teach?

54. Which text(s) would you like to read with your students but feel you can't? Feel free to explain why.

55. How do you teach long works in the classroom? (i.e., every student reading the same text, literature circles, independent reading)

56. Which text(s) will you always teach your students? Why?

Part V: Professional Education and Experience

57. What is your highest level of education?	a. Bachelor's degree b. Specialist's degree c. Master's degree d. Doctoral degree
58. In what area is that degree?	a. Englishb. Literaturec. Educationd. Literacye. Other
59. Do you hold any special endorsements/degrees?	a. Gifted/Talented b. ESOL c. Literacy coaching d. Project Based Learning e. Other
60. How many years have you been teaching?	a. 0-5 years b. 6-15 years c. 16 or more years

61. What grade level(s) have you taught during your career as a teacher? (Choose all that apply.)	1. 7th grade 2. 8th grade 3. 9th grade 4. 10th grade 5. 11th grade 6. 12th grade
63. Where do you teach? (Please be specific with city and state. If outside of the United States, please specify which country.)	
64. At what types of schools/districts have you taught? (Choose all that apply)	Public School Private School Charter School International Urban Suburban Rural Other
64. At what types of schools/districts do you teach? (Choose all that apply)	Public School Private School Charter School International Urban Suburban Rural Other
65. What professional organizations are you a member of? (Choose all that apply).	NCTE ALAN ILA State English teacher's organization State literacy teacher's organization Other

	NCTE ALAN ILA State English teacher's organization State literacy teacher's organization Other
66. Which conferences have you attended?	

Part VI: Demographic Information

The following information is optional, but responses are appreciated.

67. What gender do you identify as?	a. Male b. Female c. Non-binary / third gender d. Prefer not to say
68. What is your age?	a. 20-30 b. 31-40 c. 41-50 d. 51+
69. Please specify your ethnicity.	a. Asian or Pacific Islander b. Black or African American c. Hispanic or Latino d. Native American or Alaskan American e. White or Caucasian f. Multiracial or Biracial g. A race/ ethnicity not listed here

Part VII: Contact Information

The following information is optional.

71. Would you like to be entered in a drawing for 1 of 5 $20 Amazon e-gift cards for completing this survey?	a. Yes b. No
72. Would you be willing to participate in virtual interviews to further discuss your responses to this survey? You will be entered in a second drawing for 1 of 15 $20 Amazon e-gift cards.	a. Yes b. No
73. Would you like to be notified when this dissertation study has been published? If you answered yes to any of the questions above, please enter an accurate email address.	a. Yes b. No
Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your response is greatly appreciated!	

APPENDIX D

Qualitative: Semi-structured Interview Protocol

Opening statement: Thank you so much for agreeing to be interviewed. I am recording today's meeting to assist me in gathering accurate data for this study. This recording will not be viewed by anyone other than the research team. Do you consent to being recorded? (Pause.) Thank you.

Getting to Know the Participant:
1. Can you please tell me a little bit about your teaching experience?
2. Why did you decide to become a teacher?

The following questions are the questions asked of all interview participants:

1. Describe the text selection process for teachers in your district or school.
2. How do you decide which texts to use in the classroom? Describe the process for me.
3. What is your opinion regarding the text selection process for teachers in your district or school?
4. In an ideal world, what would inform text selections for your classroom?
5. How do you feel about your ability to make text selection decisions for your students?
6. What positive and/or negative experiences have you had with the text selection process?
7. What strategies do you use to encourage your students to read texts for your class?

The following questions were asked to some interview participants during the interview and all interview participants in a follow-up digital survey:
1. How have your opinions regarding the way you are allowed to choose texts for the classroom changed since the beginning of the school year?
2. What is the technology access like for students in your school district? How does this impact the text selection process?
3. Are you able to include independent reading in your classroom instruction? What does that look like? How are students able to access the texts they read?
4. Ultimately, who makes the final say on the works you read in the classroom?
5. To what extent does funding and the school budget impact the texts your students read?
6. To what extent are you allowed to include multicultural and diverse texts in your classroom instruction?
7. Do you have anything else that you would like to share about the text selection process?

Generic Permission to Survey Facebook Group Members

Dear Facebook Group Moderator,

Hello! My name is Julianna Lux, and I am a doctoral candidate in the online PhD in Literacy program at St. John's University in Queens, NY. I teach English I and II at a conservative suburban school district in upstate South Carolina. My daily goal is to instill a love of reading in my students.

I joined your Facebook group *name* earlier this year and have been overwhelmed by both the support and positivity expressed by the members in this group. I have seen suggestions and lessons posted on everything from classic literature (such as *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *The Great Gatsby*) to young adult literature (such as *The Hate U Give* and *Touching Spirit Bear*). I would really like to pick their brains about their perspectives on the text selection process for their classrooms. Which brings me to the reason why I am reaching out to you.

My proposed study seeks to understand what influences teachers to select specific texts for use in their classrooms (i.e., available resources, department/district/state expectations, tradition, student interest, etc.) as well as an overview of the titles typically being taught in the 7th-12th grade English language arts (ELA) classrooms.

The study will be conducted in two phases: 1) voluntary survey for initial quantitative data and 2) voluntary interviews (conducted via Google Meet). Participants in each phase will be entered into a drawing for one of five $20 Amazon e-gift cards (personal information for this drawing will be stored separate from the survey data). I am hoping for around 200 to 300 participants total for the survey and 10 to 15 participants for the interview. Interviews would be conducted over the summer break at the convenience of the participants.

I would appreciate your support by allowing me to advertise this study in your Facebook group in the hopes of building a national sample for this survey.

Hello fellow teachers! I would like to invite you to take part in a research study to learn more about teachers' text selection process in the 7th through 12th grade English Language Arts classes. I am conducting this study at St. John's University in fulfillment of the requirements for the PhD in Literacy program. This survey should take approximately 15-20 minutes of your time. This survey will remain open until XX-XX-XX.

As a token of appreciation for participating in this survey, you will be entered in a drawing for 1 of 5 $20 Amazon e-gift cards. Odds of winning will depend on the number of responses received.

Survey Link: https://stjohnssoe.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_dpBQyAMrlOAbqlw

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Julianna Lux
julianna.lux18@my.stjohns.edu (SJU account)
luxjv@spart6.org (work account)
864-497-6011 (personal cell)

APPENDIX F

Construct Subscales

		Point Scale	Overall Scale	Subscale
Item 1	Part I: Influences - State curriculum guidelines	6	Overall	Autonomy
Item 2	Part I: Influences - District curriculum guidelines	6	Overall	Autonomy
Item 3	Part I: Influences - School administrators' decisions and guidance	6	Overall	Autonomy
Item 4	Part I: Influences - Departmental decisions and guidance	6	Overall	Autonomy
Item 5	Part I: Influences - Other teachers' decisions and guidance	6	Overall	Autonomy
Item 6	Part I: Influences - State tests	6	Overall	Autonomy
Item 7	Part I: Influences - District tests	6	Overall	Autonomy
Item 8	Part I: Influences - School department common assessments	6	Overall	Autonomy
Item 9	Part I: Influences - The main course textbook	6	Overall	Autonomy
Item 10	Part I: Influences - My own beliefs about what texts should be used	6	Overall	Competence
Item 11	Part I: Influences - My own knowledge of texts	6	Overall	Competence
Item 12	Part I: Influences - What my students are capable of understanding	6	Overall	Competence
Item 13	Part I: Influences - What my students need for future courses and work	6	Overall	Competence
Item 14	Part I: Influences - The cultural needs of my students	6	Overall	Relatedness
Item 15	Part I: Influences - The school's budget for books	6	Overall	Autonomy
Item 16	Part II: Control - Selecting textbooks	6	Overall	Autonomy
Item 17	Part II: Control - Selecting instructional materials	6	Overall	Autonomy
Item 18	Part II: Control - Selecting content, topics, and skills	6	Overall	Autonomy
Item 19	Part II: Control - Selecting teaching techniques	6	Overall	Autonomy

Item 20	Part II: Control - Creating assessments	6	Overall	Autonomy
Item 21	Part III: Reading published articles and research studies contributes to my text selection decisions.	5		Opinion
Item 22	Part III: A student's background contributes to my text selection decisions.	5	Overall	Relatedness
Item 23	Part III: I have a significant influence on my students' achievement.	5	Overall	Relatedness
Item 24	Part III: Providing my students access to culturally diverse texts is important.	5	Overall	Relatedness
Item 25	Part III: Giving my students time to read independently in class is important	5	Overall	Relatedness
Item 26	Part III: I would like to give my students more time to read independently in class.	5		Text Opinions
Item 27	Part III: Reading classic texts is important for my students.	5		Text Opinions
Item 28	Part III: Reading young adult literature is important for my students.	5		Text Opinions
Item 29	Part III: I have the right training to meet the academic needs of my students.	5	Overall	Competence
Item 30	Part III: I have the right training to meet the cultural needs of my students.	5		Opinion
Item 31	Part III: I enjoy reading classic texts.	5		Text Opinions
Item 32	Part III: I enjoy reading young adult literature.	5		Text Opinions
Item 33	Part III: Selecting texts that reflect my students' cultural backgrounds is important	5	Overall	Relatedness
Item 34	Part III: I am capable of selecting culturally diverse texts for classroom instruction.	5	Overall	Relatedness
Item 35	Part III: My students read the same text at the same time.	5		Text Opinions
Item 36	Part III: My students have opportunities to read texts other students are not reading.	5		Text Opinions
Item 37	Part III: My district requires me to teach specific texts.	5	Overall	Autonomy
Item 38	Part III: My school administration requires me to teach specific texts.	5	Overall	Autonomy

Item 39	Part III: My department/team requires me to teach specific texts.	5	Overall	Autonomy
Item 40	Part III: I am expected to teach the same texts as other teachers in my grade level.	5	Overall	Autonomy
Item 41	Part III: My students can easily read the texts assigned to them.	5		Text Opinions
Item 42	Part III: My students enjoy reading the texts assigned to them.	5		Text Opinions
Item 43	Part III: Culturally relevant texts are incorporated into my school's curriculum.	5		Text Opinions
Item 44	Part III: Culturally relevant texts are not incorporated into my school's curriculum, but I incorporate it into my teaching.	5	Overall	Autonomy
Item 45	Part III: I have been discouraged from using culturally relevant texts in my classroom by colleagues.	5	Overall	Autonomy
Item 46	Part III: I have been discouraged from using culturally relevant texts in my classroom by administration or the district.	5	Overall	Autonomy
Item 47	Part III: I have been discouraged from using culturally relevant texts in my classroom by parents.	5	Overall	Autonomy
Item 48	Part III: I refrain from choosing certain books for my students due to censorship concerns.	5	Overall	Autonomy
Item 49	Part III: I am expected to select texts for my students based on a specific list.	5	Overall	Autonomy
Item 50	Part III: I must teach the same texts each year.	5	Overall	Autonomy
Item 51	Part III: I choose to teach the same texts each year.	5	Overall	Autonomy
Item 52	Part III: I am content with the level of control I have over what is taught in my classroom.	5	Overall	Autonomy

APPENDIX G

Major Texts Taught in the Classroom (Survey Results)

Title	Author	Publication Date	0-5 years	6-15 years	16+ years	Total
Great Gatsby, The	Fitzgerald, F. Scott	1925	6	15	21	42
Romeo and Juliet	Shakespeare, William	1597	8	8	11	27
To Kill a Mockingbird	Lee, Harper**	1960	5	9	12	26
Crucible, The	Miller, Arthur	1953	2	9	13	24
Of Mice and Men	Steinbeck, John	1937	2	6	8	16
Night	Wiesel, Elie	1956	7	4	3	14
Giver, The	Lowry, Lois*	1993	1	6	6	13
Odyssey, The	Homer		5	5	3	13
Outsiders, The	Hinton, S. E.*	1967	3	5	5	13
Macbeth	Shakespeare, William	1606	1	4	7	12
Lord of the Flies	Golding, William	1954	3	3	4	10
Hamlet	Shakespeare, William	1611	2	1	6	9
Animal Farm	Orwell, George	1945		3	5	8
Beowulf		8th-11th century	2	3	3	8
Raisin in the Sun, A	Hansberry, Lorraine**	1959		2	6	8
Things They Carried, The	O'Brien, Tim	1990	3	3	2	8
Fahrenheit 451	Bradbury, Ray	1953	2	2	3	7
Shakespeare			2	3	2	7
Their Eyes Were Watching God	Hurston, Zora Neale**	1937	1	2	4	7
Catcher in the Rye	Salinger, J. D.	1951		3	3	6
Diary of a Young Girl	Frank, Anne*	1947	2	2	2	6
Just Mercy	Stevenson, Bryan**	2014	1		5	6
Scarlet Letter	Hawthorne, Nathaniel	1850		2	4	6
1984	Orwell, George	1949		1	4	5

Title	Author	Year				
Julius Caesar	Shakespeare, William	1599		3	2	5
Pride and Prejudice	Austen, Jane*	1813		2	3	5
Christmas Carol, A	Dickens, Charles	1843		3	1	4
Frankenstein	Shelley, Mary*	1818		3	1	4
Hobbit, The	Tolkien, J. R. R.	1937		1	3	4
Hunger Games	Collins, Suzanne*	2008	1		3	4
Old Man and the Sea, The	Hemingway, Ernest	1952			4	4
Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry	Taylor, Mildred D.**	1976		1	3	4
Adventures of Tom Sawyer, The	Twain, Mark	1876		1	2	3
Canterbury Tales	Chaucer, Geoffrey	1387-1400		2	1	3
Color Purple, The	Walker, Alice**	1982		1	2	3
Freak the Mighty	Philbrick, Rodman	1993	1		2	3
Handmaid's Tale, The	Atwood, Margaret*	1985		1	2	3
House on Mango Street, The	Cisneros, Sandra**	1983	2		1	3
Kite Runner	Hosseini, Khaled**	2003	1		2	3
Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass	Douglass, Frederick**	1845	1		2	3
Nickel Boys, The	Whitehead, Colson**	2019			3	3
Othello	Shakespeare, William	1603	1		2	3
Stargirl	Spinelli, Jerry	2000	2		1	3
Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, The	Twain, Mark	1884		1	1	2
And Then There Were None	Christie, Agatha*	1939		1	1	2
Anthem	Rand, Ayn*	1938			2	2
Bad Boy	Myers, Walter Dean**	2001	1		1	2

Beloved	Morrison, Toni**	1987		2	2
Brave New World	Huxley, Aldous	1932	1	1	2
Color of Water	McBride, James**	1995		2	2
Flowers for Algernon	Keyes, Daniel	1959	1	1	2
Glass Castle, The	Walls, Jeannette*	2005	1	1	2
In Cold Blood	Capote, Truman	1965	1	1	2
Invisibile Man	Ellison, Ralph**	1952		2	2
Life of Pi	Martel, Yann**	2001	1	1	2
Long Walk to Water, A	Park, Linda Sue**	2010		2	2
Number the Stars	Lowry, Lois*	1989	1	1	2
Pearl, The	Steinbeck, John	1947		2	2
Pilgrims Progress	Bunyan, John	1678		2	2
Separate Peace, A	Knowles, John	1959	1	1	2
Streetcar Named Desire	Williams, Tennessee	1947		2	2
True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle	Avi	1990		2	2
Twelve Angry Men	Rose, Reginald	1964	1	1	2
Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian, The	Alexie, Sherman**	2007		1	1
All American Boys	Kiely, Brendan and Jason Reynolds**	2015		1	1
American Born Chinese	Yang, Gene Luen**	2006	1		1
As I Lay Dying	Faulkner, William	1930		1	1
Ashes of Roses	Auch, Mary Jane*	2002		1	1
Awakening	Chopin, Kate*	1899		1	1
Backlash	Littman, Sarah Darer*	2015	1		1
Bluest Eye, The	Morrison, Toni**	1970	1		1
Book Thief	Zusak, Markus	2005		1	1
Born a Crime	Noah, Trevor**	2016		1	1

Title	Author	Year				
Boy in the Striped Pajamas	Boyne, John	2006		1		1
Brave Little Toaster, The	Disch, Thomas M.	1980			1	1
Bread Givers	Yezierska, Anzia**	1925			1	1
Bronx Masquerade	Grimes, Nikki**	2002		1		1
Bronze Bow, The	Speare, Elizabeth George*	1961		1		1
Call It Courage	Sperry, Armstrong	1940			1	1
Call of the Wild, The	London, Jack	1903			1	1
Charles Dickens					1	1
Clean Getaway	Stone, Nic**	2020	1			1
Dragonwings	Yep, Laurence**	1975			1	1
Ella Minnow Pea	Dunn, Mark	2001		1		1
Fallen Angels	Myers, Walter Dean**	1988			1	1
Fortune's Bones	Nelson, Marilyn	2004			1	1
Freedom Walkers	Freedman, Russell	2006			1	1
Friday Night Lights	Bissinger, Buzz	1990		1		1
Fuzzy Mud	Sachar, Louis	2015			1	1
Ghost Boys	Rhodes, Jewell Parker**	2018		1		1
Glass Menagerie	Williams, Tennessee	1944		1		1
God's Smuggler	van der Bijl, Andrew, John Sherrill, and Elizabeth Sherrill	1964		1		1
Great Expectations	Dickens, Charles	1861			1	1
Gulliver's Travels	Swift, Jonathan	1726			1	1
Harriet Tubman's biography	not enough information given				1	1
Hatchet	Paulsen, Gary	1986		1		1

Heart of Darkness	Conrad, Joseph	1899		1	1
Hiding Place, The	ten Boom, Corrie**	1971	1		1
Hoot	Hiassen, Carl	2002		1	1
Hound of the Baskerville	Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan	1902		1	1
I am Malala	Yousafzai, Malala and Christina Lamb**	2013	1		1
Importance of Being Earnest	Wilde, Oscar	1895	1		1
Inside Out and Back Again	Thanhhà Lại**	2011	1		1
Into the Wild	Krakauer, Jon	1996	1		1
Johnny Tremain	Forbes, Esther*	1943	1		1
Kafka on the Shore	Murakami, Haruki**	2002		1	1
Lesson Before Dying, A	Gaines, Ernest J.**	1993	1		1
Long Way Down	Reynolds, Jason**	2017		1	1
Long Way Gone, A	Beah, Ishmael**	2007		1	1
Magician's Nephew, The	Lewis, C. S.	1955	1		1
Memory Boy	Weaver, Will	2001	1		1
Merchant of Venice	Shakespeare, William	1600		1	1
Mexican Whiteboy	de la Peña,, Matt**	2008	1		1
Midsummer Night's Dream, A	Shakespeare, William	1600	1		1
Monster	Myers, Walter Dean**	1999	1		1
Within Reach: My Everest Story	Galvin, Jack and Mark Pfetzer	1998		1	1
Night Flying Woman	Broker, Ignatia**	1983	1		1
Night to Remember, A	Lord, Walter	1955	1		1
Northern Light, A	Donnelly, Jennifer*	2003		1	1

Title	Author	Year				
Novio Boy	Soto, Gary	1997			1	1
Oedipus Rex	Sophocles	429 BC			1	1
One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest	Kasey, Ken	1962	1			1
Outliers	Gladwell, Malcolm**	2008			1	1
Pact, The	Davis, Sampson, George Jenkins, Rameck Hunt, and Lisa Frazier Page**	2002			1	1
Pay It Forward	Hyde, Catherine Ryan*	1999		1		1
Peace Like a River	Enger, Leif	2001		1		1
Poet X	Acevedo, Elizabeth**	2018			1	1
President Has Been Shot: The Assassination of John F. Kennedy, The	Swanson, James L.	2013			1	1
Purple Hibiscus	Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi**	2003			1	1
Refugee	Gratz, Alan	2017	1			1
Road, The	McCarthy, Cormac	2006	1			1
Running Out of Time	Haddix, Margaret Peterson*	1995			1	1
Screwtape Letters	Lewis, C. S.	1942			1	1
Sherlock Holmes	Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan			1		1
Silas Marner	Eliot, George*	1861			1	1
Sing, Unburied, Sing	Ward, Jesmyn**	2017	1			1
Slaughterhouse Five	Vonnegut, Kurt	1969			1	1
Song of Solomon	Morrison, Toni**	1977	1			1
Speak	Anderson, Laurie Halse*	1999		1		1

Title	Author	Year				
Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You: A Remix of the National Award-winning Stamped from the Beginning	Kendi, Ibram X. and Jason Reynolds**	2020		1		1
Starship Troopers	Heinlein, Robert H.	1959	1			1
Taming of the Shrew, The	Shakespeare, William	1594	1			1
The Hate U Give	Thomas, Angie**	2017	1			1
They Called Us the Enemey	Takei, George, Justin Eisinger, and Steve Scott**	2019		1		1
Thing About Jellyfish	Benjamin, Ali*	2015	1			1
Things Fall Apart	Achebe, Chinua**	1958		1		1
Tuesdays with Morrie	Albom, Mitch	1997		1		1
Unbroken	Hillenbrand, Laura*	2010		1		1
Walk Two Moons	Creech, Sharon*	1994			1	1
Watsons Go to Birmingham, The	Curtis, Christopher Paul**	1963			1	1
We Beat the Street	Hunt, Rameck, George Jenkins, Sampson Davis, and Sharon M. Draper**	2005		1		1
Where the Red Fern Grows	Rawls, Wilson	1961			1	1
Woman Warrior	Kingston, Maxine Hong**	1976			1	1
Wrinkle in Time, A	L'Engle Madeleine*	1962		1		1
Wuthering Heights	Bronte, Emily*	1847		1		1
Total Participants Responding			33	50	70	153

*Non-White Male Authors

**Non-White Authors

APPENDIX H

Reasons Surveyed Teachers will Always Teach Certain Texts

Title	Author	Number of Responses	Reasons Provided
Great Gatsby, The	Fitzgerald, F. Scott	14	Exposure to classics; enduring themes; addresses many standards; required text
To Kill a Mockingbird	Lee, Harper	8	Theme resonates with students; Cover intersectionalities of protected classes; Enduring themes; cultural importance
Romeo and Juliet	Shakespeare	7	Exposure to classics; personal favorite; required text
Odyssey, The	Homer	5	Exposure to classics
Crucible, The	Miller, Arthur	4	Real world connections and history
Outsiders, The	Hinton, S. E.	3	Students love it
Color Purple, The	Walker, Alice	2	Enduring themes; Thought-provoking
Diary of a Young Girl	Frank, Anne	2	Real world connections and history
Flowers for Algernon	Keyes, Daniel	2	Valuable lessons; Enduring themes
Giver, The	Lowry, Lois	2	Addresses many standards; personal favorite
Hamlet	Shakespeare	2	Addresses many standards; personal favorite
Lord of the Flies	Golding, William	2	Required text; personal favorite

Macbeth	Shakespeare	2	Exposure to classics
Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass	Douglass, Frederick	2	Cultural relevance; historical perspective
Of Mice and Men	Steinbeck, John	2	Cover intersectionalities of protected classes; Enduring themes
Raisin in the Sun, A	Hansberry, Lorraine	2	Enduring Themes
Their Eyes Were Watching God	Hurston, Zora Neale	2	Cover intersectionalities of protected classes; Enduring themes
1984	Orwell, George	1	Enduring Themes
Alchemist, The	Coelho, Paulo	1	Enduring Themes
Animal Farm	Orwell, George	1	Real world connections and history
Ashes of Roses	Auch, Mary Jane	1	Theme and characters resonate with students
Bad Boy	Myers, Walter Dean	1	Cultural relevance
Beloved	Morrison, Toni	1	Real world connections and history; enduring themes
Beowulf		1	No reason given
Bluest Eye, The	Morrison, Toni	1	Theme resonates with students
Canterbury Tales	Chaucer, Geoffrey	1	No reason given
Fahrenheit 451	Bradbury, Ray	1	Addresses many standards

Title	Author		Reason
Frankenstein	Shelley, Mary	1	Personal favorite
Ghost	Reynolds, Jason	1	Young adult connection and representation
Glass Castle, The	Walls, Jeannette	1	Theme resonates with students
Handmaid's Tale, A	Atwood, Margaret	1	Personal favorite
Hatchet	Paulsen, Gary	1	Enduring Themes
Kite Runner, The	Hosseini, Khaled	1	Exposure to cultures
Merchant of Venice	Shakespeare	1	Enduring Themes
Monster	Myers, Walter Dean	1	Cultural relevance
Night	Wiesel, Elie	1	Enduring Themes
Number the Stars	Lowry, Lois	1	No reason given
Peace Like a River	Enger, Leif	1	Personal favorite
Pilgrims Progress	Bunyan, John	1	Addresses many standards
Pride and Prejudice	Austen, Jane	1	Personal favorite
Princess Bride	Goldman, William	1	Addresses many standards
Purple Hibiscus	Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi	1	Theme and characters resonate with students
Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry	Taylor, Mildred	1	Cultural relevance
Screwtape Letters, The	Lewis, C. S.	1	Cultural relevance

Things They Carry, The	O'Brien, Tim	1	No reason given
Tree Grows in Brooklyn	Smith, Betty	1	Personal favorite
Tuesdays with Morrie	Albom, Mitch	1	Builds relationships
Wuthering Heights	Bronte, Emily	1	No reason given

n = 79

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