

SECONDARY EDUCATORS' EXPERIENCES WITH AND PERSPECTIVES ABOUT  
USING MULTICULTURAL AND POPULAR CULTURE TEXTS WITH  
CULTURALLY DIVERSE STUDENTS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS  
CLASSROOM

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
to the faculty of the  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SPECIALTIES  
of  
THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
at  
ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY  
New York

by

Jessica Hernandez Fletcher

Submitted Date March 22, 2022

Approved Date May 17, 2022

---

Jessica Hernandez Fletcher

---

Lisa Bajor, Ph.D.

**© Copyright by Jessica Hernandez Fletcher 2022**

**All Rights Reserved**

## **ABSTRACT**

# **SECONDARY EDUCATORS' EXPERIENCES WITH AND PERSPECTIVES ABOUT USING MULTICULTURAL AND POPULAR CULTURE TEXTS WITH CULTURALLY DIVERSE STUDENTS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSROOM**

Jessica Hernandez Fletcher

This study explored three English Language Arts educators' experiences with and perspectives about using multicultural and popular culture texts with culturally diverse learners in a South Texas high school. Concurrent with projections for an increase in the enrollment of Hispanic students within the nation's public schools, educational organizations at the national level have highlighted issues related to diversity and equity, as well as access to varied textual experiences that capitalize on and expand student perspectives, lived experiences, and 21<sup>st</sup> century literacy skills. These issues become particularly salient as extended understandings of culture and diversity reframe discussions about approaches for facilitating equitable, asset-based learning opportunities for all students, even as viewpoints about the positioning of diverse texts in schools remains a divisive topic among various stakeholders. Amid this climate of educational discourse, multicultural and popular culture texts emerge as relevant to the conversation, thereby pointing to questions about how educators use and position these broadly defined texts within today's classrooms. In particular, since adolescence remains an important time for identity formation and engagement with various literacy practices, the population

for this inquiry included three practicing educators serving adolescent learners enrolled in grades nine through 12. Through using a narrative inquiry approach and qualitative methods, this study revealed the presence of four main themes in the data. Key findings included commentary related to the following: the presence of state, district, and school-level demands, challenges, requirements, and supports; issues of access, belongingness, and appropriateness in text usage and the challenging, cautionary, and beneficial aspects associated with incorporating a diversity of textual materials; the dynamic relationships, influences, and connections that occur within and are cultivated between the world, its diversity of cultures, individuals, and texts; and how the text functions to broaden students' access to global perspectives, diverse ways of knowing, and literacy-based skills, while also validating students' identities and preparing them for a world beyond the classroom. Through learning about educators' experiences and perspectives, this study strived to lend further understanding to the topic and uncover insights about the possibilities, challenges, and limitations of inviting multicultural and popular culture texts into the classroom.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my maternal grandmother, Genoveva Ramos Ibanez, and my paternal grandmother, Laura Canales Hernandez. Although Genoveva and Laura are both no longer with us, I remain inspired by their unparalleled kindness, warmth, strength, resilience, and care for others. I am grateful for my treasured memories of Genoveva and Laura speaking with sprinkles of Spanish and gifting me little lovingly chosen toys that unexpectedly brightened my day. And I will always find humor in my dad's anecdote about how his mother unknowingly discarded his cherished first edition comic books, which were proudly procured from a local store and bicycled back to a modest ranch style home just steps away from a dormant football stadium awaiting Friday night visitors.

I thought a lot about Genoveva and Laura while writing this paper, as it generated personal reflections about the role of gender in education and within a society that has traditionally been dominated by a White English-speaking male gaze. Separated by less than thirty miles, both women grew up during a markedly different time, when educational opportunities for women (and in particular, Hispanic women) were less accessible for many, or even completely and woefully out of reach. My lifetime adoration of Genoveva and Laura - alongside my awareness of the challenges they endured and the perseverance they embodied - motivates me to become a champion for literacy education and equity for all, particularly populations who have previously been (or continue to be) marginalized or denied equitable educational access. I ensured that Genoveva and Laura were subtly present within this paper, even as they remain ever-present in mind and heart.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am immensely grateful for the ongoing support of many individuals as I completed this work. My husband Garrett provided unending encouragement throughout each phase of this research, while my son Finley and pup Charlie uplifted me with countless hours of lighthearted diversion. I am similarly thankful for the limitless support of Momo, Popo, Jul, and Laurie, who collectively cheered me on as I worked on this paper.

I also thank my dissertation committee, Dr. Kyle Cook and Dr. Kristin Anderson, for offering their expertise and so graciously reviewing my work. My most heartfelt appreciation further extends to Dr. Lisa Bajor, who provided immeasurable contributions and support for this study. Dr. Bajor strengthened my understanding of research and sparked my interest in and excitement for qualitative research methods. Dr. Bajor exemplifies the most superlative qualities of an educator, and I am tremendously grateful for her incomparable mentorship and guidance.

I am likewise thankful for the support of my professors and the Literacy program directors who worked at St. John's during my time as a student. Dr. Evan Ortlieb, Dr. Joe Rumenapp, and Dr. Ekaterina Midgette always pointed me in the right direction as I completed this program. Notably, Dr. Rumenapp's book study and Dr. Midgette's writing group greatly facilitated my academic growth. Similarly, I thank my peers, who supplied a source of community as I completed my coursework and this study. I particularly recognize the friendship and support of Lupita-Maria and Sheila, who always provided laughter and a shared sense of purpose that enriched my time as a student.

This study would not be possible without the valuable feedback of my colleague who reviewed the initial interview questions, as well as the remarkable support and partnership of the participating schools. I am indescribably thankful for the principals and superintendents who provided me with the opportunity to conduct this research with their educators. Moreover, I am indebted to the awe-inspiring contributions of the three participants, whose insightful words filled this research with vibrancy and optimism. I thank the three participants for this amazing collaboration and am both energized and encouraged by their admirable dedication to promoting literacy learning among our nation's youth.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION .....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iii
LIST OF TABLES .....	xv
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .....	1
Background .....	1
Statement of the Problem .....	2
Significance of the Study .....	7
Purpose of the Study .....	8
Research Questions .....	10
Definitions of Terms .....	10
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW .....	13
Historical and Conceptual Background.....	13
Overview of Culturally Responsive / Relevant Teaching.....	18
New Definitions of Literacy and Literate Identities.....	21
Theoretical Frameworks and Perspectives .....	23
Multiliteracies and Expanded Understandings of Text .....	23
Critical Literacies and Pedagogies .....	26
Multicultural Texts .....	27
Defining Multicultural Literature / Multicultural Texts.....	27
Approaches to Multicultural Education .....	30
Preservice and Practicing Educator Perspectives and Experiences.....	32
Using Multicultural Texts in the Classroom .....	41
Multiple Perspectives and Textual Connections .....	42



Student Interest and Engagement .....	46
Popular Culture Texts .....	49
Defining Popular Culture and Popular Culture Texts .....	49
Approaches to Teaching Popular Culture .....	52
Preservice and Practicing Educator Perspectives and Experiences.....	55
Using Popular Culture Texts in the Classroom .....	61
Critical Discussions, Engagement, and Interest .....	61
Scaffolding and Partnership with Canonical Texts .....	67
Gaps in the Research and Rationale for the Study .....	72
CHAPTER 3: METHODS AND PROCEDURES .....	74
The Research Paradigm.....	74
The Research Design.....	74
Population and Participants' School .....	75
IRB Approval .....	77
Participants and Sampling .....	77
Instruments .....	79
The Interview Guide and Piloting Procedure .....	80
Research Procedures .....	81
Data Analysis .....	85
Transcribing and Reflecting on the Interviews .....	85
Coding and Organizing the Data .....	88
Categorizing and Theming the Data.....	90
Restorying and Narrativizing the Data.....	91
Positionality Statement.....	92

Validity and Credibility.....	95
Internal Validity .....	95
Theoretical Validity.....	96
Interpretive Validity .....	96
Credibility.....	97
External Validity and Transferability.....	97
Rigor.....	98
Potential Research Bias .....	98
Ethical Considerations.....	99
Presenting the Findings .....	99
Summary .....	101
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS .....	102
Meet Michael.....	106
Veteran Teacher, Grade Level Leader .....	106
“The freedom to do what I need to do” .....	108
“Like trying to get Karen to put a mask on” .....	111
“It’s almost an entity in and of itself” .....	113
“We all know the old dead White guys – they’re good, they’re safe” .....	115
“I need to be super careful” .....	117
“Ssso livid, and ssso angry” .....	120
“Why are we reading this?” .....	120
“They really do have a purpose in the classroom” .....	122
“Where’s the beef?” .....	123
“Kind of like ... Furbies back in the ... 2000s” .....	124

“Miss, you’ve gotta watch this anime” .....	125
“This Harry Potter kid’s the bomb!” .....	126
“Man its full of stuff, it’s too big” .....	128
“Wait, what, this is real?” .....	129
“What’s the one takeaway you get from it?” .....	130
“He made the class really uncomfortable” .....	133
“They want to hit the ground running” .....	134
“It does make your audience think” .....	135
“You need to be part of it” .....	138
“Oh no ma’am, it’s <i>lechuza</i> ” .....	139
“Gender is a culture” .....	141
“Look at how the woman is dressed” .....	142
“They kind of giggle at first” .....	145
“It helps with literacy” .....	146
“Song lyrics are super easy to do that with” .....	148
“Dealer’s choice.” .....	150
“Multicultural texts they ... they do a lot” .....	152
“Broccoli is the cousin of pizza” .....	156
“They aren’t likely to forget the word” .....	157
“Like tying your shoe” .....	158
Meet April .....	159
“Communication Master,” English Enthusiast.....	159
“They’re doing as much as they can”.....	161
“They want ... the students to learn the skills” .....	163

“The current and modern thinking” .....	165
“This is a very...touch and go thing” .....	166
“I want these students to feel included in our society” .....	169
“I still love my Edgar Allan Poe” .....	172
“Just try something different” .....	174
“I could see that engagement” .....	177
“Learn the skills, but yet now they make more connections” .....	179
“That is where I see...the improve[d] connection” .....	182
“Bridge ‘em by using the emojis that they love” .....	184
“They really responded well to that” .....	187
“They’re more about the pictures and visualizing” .....	188
“Drama it all out” .....	189
“What it means to be a distraction” .....	191
“This [is] not some stuffy old man’s writing” .....	193
“Now pop culture is multicultural” .....	196
“Pop culture right now ... that’s their life” .....	198
“Provide them with the room and let them decorate it” .....	202
“That was me. But it’s not me.” .....	204
“Stop making me think” .....	207
“Perspective can...change within one person” .....	209
“It helps them build their understanding of the world around them” .....	210
“We’re not here to tell students what to think” .....	212
“Apply those skills to the more current world around them” .....	213
“There is more to the world out there” .....	215

Meet Guinevere .....	216
Hospitality Maven, “Trying to figure out my own style” .....	216
“I just know that the system is broken” .....	218
“I would have to get ... approved” .....	222
“It has its place” .....	225
“I want to include as much ... as possible” .....	227
“I would choose an appropriate one” .....	229
“It made me want to do more” .....	230
“What do you think is happening in this?” .....	232
“That’s literacy, that’s reading ... that’s exploring things” .....	233
“I could see a crossover between English, history, and math” .....	234
“Their eyes lit up a little bit” .....	235
“Almost a ... totally different culture nowadays” .....	237
“See how it ... resonates with them” .....	238
“Access to all of it” .....	239
“It will help them feel more comfort” .....	242
“Give them shoes that fit them” .....	244
“They relate to me” .....	246
“A bridge between them” .....	247
“Trying to be open-minded” .....	248
“A different way ... of us holding the world” .....	251
“It’s part of who we are as Americans” .....	252
“I wish that I had a better cultural upbringing” .....	253
“You’re all melting pot” .....	255

“Information about the good and the bad” .....	256
“Let them have sushi” .....	257
“The real-world examples” .....	259
“I can see them laughing a little bit” .....	260
“Trying to train their brains” .....	262
“Expand their knowledge of how to revise” .....	264
“They could create these people” .....	266
“They might find a new way to write” .....	267
“The better human[s] we can be” .....	268
“Know better where you are going” .....	269
“We’re all ... on our own paths” .....	270
Thematic Analysis .....	272
The Educator, Past and Present .....	272
Theme 1: Navigating and Thriving Within the Culture of Schooling.....	274
Multilevel Teaching Requirements .....	275
Supportive School Climate.....	276
Theme 2: Prioritizing Diverse and Traditional Textual Experiences, Despite the Obstacles, Concerns, and Uncertainties .....	279
Availability and Access.....	280
Inclusion, Exclusion, and the Space Between .....	282
Textual Heterogeneity and Versatility .....	285
Theme 3: Embracing the Connections and Experiences that Link Society, Humanity, and Text.....	290
Acknowledging and Uniting the Generational and Experiential Divide.....	291

Connecting and Responding.....	296
Theme 4: Empowering Students with Lifelong Literacy Skills and Preparing for a World Beyond the Classroom .....	304
Developing Students’ ELA and Literacy Skills .....	305
Looking Beyond the Classroom and Toward the Future .....	313
“Opening Up the World to Students”.....	318
Supplemental Document Analysis .....	329
Summary .....	331
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS .....	333
Overview of the Study.....	333
Organization of the Chapter .....	336
Discussion of Findings .....	337
Revisiting the Research Questions .....	337
Theme 1: Navigating and Thriving within the Culture of Schooling.....	340
Accountability and Testing Demands .....	340
Schoolwide Supports and Teacher Autonomy .....	342
Theme 2: Prioritizing Diverse and Traditional Textual Experiences, Despite the Obstacles, Concerns, and Uncertainties .....	346
Access and Availability of Texts .....	346
Including and Excluding Texts .....	349
Heterogeneous and Versatile Texts .....	351
Theme 3: Embracing the Connections and Experiences that Link Society, Humanity, and Text.....	354
Diverse Student Identities .....	354

Popular Culture Influences Amid Generational and Experiential Differences .....	357
Relating to Students .....	360
Interacting with and Making Connections to Relatable Texts .....	362
Textual Engagement and Comfort with Texts .....	364
Theme 4: Empowering Students with Lifelong Literacy Skills and Preparing for a World Beyond the Classroom .....	368
Prioritizing ELA and Literacy Skills and Proficiencies .....	368
Facilitating Skills Transfer .....	373
Encouraging Student Agency .....	375
Seeing Reflections of the Self and Others in the Text .....	377
Gaining Exposure to a World Beyond the Classroom and Local Community .....	382
Connections to Theoretical Frameworks.....	385
Critical Literacies and Pedagogies .....	386
A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies.....	391
Implications for Practice .....	396
Partnering Text Genres in the Curriculum .....	396
Crafting Rationales to Support Text Choice .....	398
Learning About Students' Identities and Interests .....	400
Adopting a Critical Approach to Text Selection and Literacy Learning .....	404
Positioning Students as Producers and Consumers of Diverse Texts .....	405
Implications for Policy .....	406
Providing Support Through Professional Development Sessions (PDs) .....	407
Establishing a Culture of Mentorship and Collaboration.....	409
Limitations .....	412



Directions for Future Research.....	413
Concluding Thoughts .....	416
APPENDIX A .....	419
APPENDIX B .....	420
APPENDIX C .....	421
APPENDIX D .....	422
APPENDIX E.....	423
APPENDIX F .....	424
APPENDIX G .....	428
APPENDIX H .....	431
APPENDIX I.....	432
APPENDIX J.....	434
REFERENCES .....	444

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Enrollment by Minority & Socioeconomic Status (U.S. News, 2022).....	77
Table 2 Overview of Interview Sessions .....	83
Table 3 Overview of Coding, Categorizing, and Theming Process .....	86
Table 4 Participant Profiles.....	102
Table 5 Themes with Corresponding Categories.....	273
Table 6 The Educator, Past and Present.....	274
Table 7 Theme 1 with Categories .....	275
Table 8 Theme 1, Category 1: Multilevel Teaching Requirements.....	276
Table 9 Theme 1, Category 2: Supportive School Climate .....	277
Table 10 Theme 2 with Categories .....	280
Table 11 Theme 2, Category 1: Availability and Access .....	280
Table 12 Theme 2, Category 2: Inclusion, Exclusion, and the Space Between .....	282
Table 13 Theme 2, Category 3: Textual Heterogeneity and Versatility .....	283
Table 14 Theme 3 with Categories .....	292
Table 15 Theme 3, Category 1: Acknowledging and Uniting the Generational and Experiential Divide .....	296
Table 16 Theme 3, Category 2: Connecting and Responding .....	300
Table 17 Theme 4 with Categories .....	305
Table 18 Theme 4, Category 1: Developing Students' ELA and Literacy Skills.....	307
Table 19 Theme 4, Category 2: Looking Beyond the Classroom and Toward the Future .....	308
Table 20 Theme 4, Category 3: "Opening Up the World to Students" .....	310
Table 21 Supplemental Document Coding .....	330

Table 22 Implications for Practice and Policy .....	403
---	-----

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### Background

Today's educators and students find themselves enmeshed in a society defined by a pluralism of individual and collective identities, where literacy and textual exploration occur between and within various modalities, text genres, and authorial perspectives. Modern-day youth in particular represent a multitude of cultural, ethnic, racial, and linguistic affiliations (Oakes & Lipton, 2007), and partake in a variety of literacy practices within a range of school, home, and community-based contexts (Kirkland & Hull, 2011; Pahl & Burnett, 2013; Pahl & Rowsell, 2005). Consequently, learners of all ages arrive at school with a multifaceted hybridity of literacies and cultural identities (González, 2005; Irizarry, 2007; Li, 2011), as well as funds of knowledge procured from their homes and communities (Moll et al., 1992; Moll & Greenberg, 1990; Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992). These realities exist in partnership with a constantly evolving literacy landscape (Coiro et al., 2008; Leu, 2000; Leu et al., 2013) and expanded conceptualizations of how we define a text (Alvermann, 2011; Dalton & Proctor, 2008; Hagood, 2008; Kress, 2003; Moje et al., 2011). Considerations such as these lead to questions regarding how educators have provided educational experiences that integrate diverse texts and textual practices that both reflect and extend beyond students' lived experiences and multilayered, multicultural identities. Within this conversation, multicultural and popular culture texts emerge as genres imbued with possibilities for inclusion in the classroom, yet this potential may remain entirely or partially untapped within an educational climate dominated by standardized tests, measures of accountability, and adherence to text types that have traditionally characterized the

schooling experience. Added to these concerns is the reality that educators may experience a lack of preparation for working with diverse student populations (Lewis et al., 1999; Li, 2011; Wake & Modla, 2008), despite increases in the racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity present in American schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Decisions pertaining to text selection and utilization may be further complicated by issues such as prior pedagogical training and professional development; individual preferences and dispositions; access to materials and technologies; variable levels of within-school support; text censorship; and local and district-wide curricular demands (Morrell, 2004; Stallworth et al., 2006). Amid these and other complexities related to teaching and curriculum, the consequential role of the text in literacy learning holds implications for advancing transformative, inclusive pedagogies and classroom experiences that uplift students, validate their communities, and invite the innumerable global perspectives that permeate and enrich our increasingly interconnected society.

### **Statement of the Problem**

At the national level, evidence exists that educational organizations and literacy professionals are increasingly recognizing the necessity of capitalizing on student diversity in the classroom and implementing teaching practices that acknowledge students' everyday literacy practices and cultural identities. For instance, updated recommendations from the National Council of Teachers of English's (NCTE) *Framework for 21st Century Curriculum and Assessment* (2013) imply that students bring a wealth of experiences, perspectives, and cultural backgrounds to the classroom. The NCTE framework also highlights the role of 21st century literacy practices, tools, and texts as integral to modern-day curricula, pedagogical practices, and assessment

approaches. Similarly, the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS; National Governors Association for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010) currently adopted in 41 states (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2022) invite students to cultivate cultural understandings and engage with both classic and modern works reflecting a myriad of cultures. In addition to emphasizing the importance of incorporating varied cultural perspectives into the curriculum, the CCLS speaks to a need for learning opportunities that feature multimodal texts and varied text genres, which extends possibilities for using both multicultural and popular culture texts in the classroom. Similar to recommendations offered by the NCTE and CCLS, the International Literacy Association (ILA; formerly the International Reading Association) advances the use of print and digital texts for learning (International Literacy Association, 2019). The 2010 ILA standards revision also includes the role of diversity in literacy learning, which was recently modified to “diversity and equity,” a broader classification acknowledging the wide range of student backgrounds, identities, and lived experiences present in today’s classrooms (International Literacy Association, 2018).

The importance of literacy learning within an expanded view of diversity and equity is reflected in survey results obtained from the ILA’s 2020 report, *What’s Hot in Literacy*, an annual publication that gains insights about important topics in literacy based on feedback from individuals teaching or working in the education sector around the world. Based on data from 1,443 survey respondents, findings on the 2020 report indicate that 40% of responses selected “Increasing equity and opportunity for all learners” as a Top 5 Topic. Moreover, 54% of participants suggested that this topic requires additional attention, thereby positioning issues of equity and opportunity in the top spot for this

segment of the survey and highlighting its centrality in future discussions about promoting literacy outcomes for all learners. Equally salient is the finding that 36% of educators cited “Providing access to high-quality, diverse books and content” as a critical Top 5 Topic, with 42% indicating that additional attention should be allocated to this area. Survey responses also indicated that top topics included teaching critical literacy and textual analysis skills (26%), emphasizing culturally responsive approaches (24%), using literacy to promote social justice (16%), and digital literacies (14%). The noted interest in these areas and strong emphasis on access, equity, opportunity, and diversity in reading materials suggest that these issues remain consequential to both students and educators working in various capacities across different geographic locales.

At a more localized level, Texas schools continue to implement state-specific curriculum standards known as the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS; Texas Education Agency, 2022). The unveiling of a revised set of English Language Arts and Reading standards for planned implementation in high schools during the 2020-2021 school year (Texas Education Agency, 2022) suggests opportunities for broadening students’ access to and interactions with a multiplicity of texts, including those that represent contemporary, 21<sup>st</sup> century text genres. Similar to the guidance offered by the CCLS (National Governors Association for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010), the TEKS for English Language Arts and Reading at the high school level highlight the role of diverse, multimodal, and digital texts, as well as the centrality of multiple genres during instruction (lead4ward, 2020; Texas Education Agency, 2022). Although the TEA standards acknowledge the importance of expanded textual encounters, references to cultural diversity and multiple perspectives are less

explicit, and perhaps embedded in the promotion of “meaningful and respectful discourse” (lead4ward, 2020, pp. 3, 8, 13, 18; Texas Education Agency, 2022) as a cornerstone of communication.

This emphasis on an expanded view of text appears to coexist alongside culturally responsive frameworks that strive to offer relevant and meaningful learning experiences that resonate with and affirm students’ out-of-school experiences and cultural affiliations (e.g., Gay, 2000, 2002; Ladson-Billings 1995a, 1995b, 2009, 2014; Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014). Multicultural and popular culture texts could complement culturally responsive approaches if they fit within a curriculum that validates and builds upon students’ cultural resources, identities, and ways of knowing, and if educators are able to capitalize on the educational possibilities afforded by these materials. Texts such as these might also function as mirrors and windows (Bishop, 1990; Gates & Mark, 2006) through which students are able to view and relate to aspects of their own identities, while also gaining cultural understandings of individuals and groups with lived experiences and realities that differ from their own (Morrell & Morrell, 2012).

Despite these possibilities, across many of the nation’s schools, the role of multicultural and popular culture text genres in the classroom may remain unacknowledged, poorly understood, or limited in scope. They may exist as tangential to a mandated curriculum and subservient to curricular approaches that do not fully explore the manifold affordances of incorporating diverse text types. These considerations are magnified by a political climate where local and state decision-makers and community members have suggested that some texts featuring culturally diverse characters and perspectives are unfit for the classroom (Hixenbaugh, 2022). These efforts have resulted



in a selection of multicultural and young adult books – many of which arguably hold literary and educational merit - being questioned and even banned from libraries and classrooms in some districts across Texas (Hixenbaugh, 2022). Added to these concerns, when diverse texts are implemented, educators may position them in ways that do not fully illuminate their potential, thereby leading to missed opportunities for extending, complementing, and enlivening the curriculum. Concerns about preparation to assess the appropriateness of text selections and a dearth of time needed to determine the acceptability of text options could act as further deterrents, particularly as educators face decisions about including multicultural texts into the curriculum (Landt, 2006).

Another possible challenge facing educators includes a lack of access to materials that capture students' diverse identities, including requirements to follow mandated curricular materials with limited representation of the students who comprise the classroom. To illustrate this point, an examination of the demographic make-up of authors and characters presented in 1,200 texts used in curricula and booklists in New York City public schools across the 3-K to eighth grade spectrum found limited evidence of diversity (NYC Coalition for Educational Justice, 2020). Among schools serving a younger adolescent demographic, the sparse representation on non-White authors and LGBTQ characters in particular raise concerns about the extent to which student identities are reflected in the curriculum (NYC Coalition for Educational Justice, 2020). This glimpse into the curricula and reading materials of the nation's largest school district (New York City Department of Education, 2019) raises concerns about textual diversity and access across the nation's schools. It also points to universal questions about how the individual teacher imbues learning opportunities with texts that promote an expanded

view of cultural diversity and that connect to students' identities and out-of-school experiences within a school climate of curricular mandates and preconfigured booklists.

### **Significance of the Study**

Considering recommendations from the NCTE, the CCLS, the ILA, and the TEKS state standards, as well as educator feedback regarding the importance of equity and diverse reading materials to literacy learning, it is arguable that research inquiries connected to these areas are both timely and necessary in order to further inform policy, practice, and individual understanding. As today's students find themselves learning within a politically divisive climate where issues of educational equity, textual challenge, access, and opportunity remain at the forefront, discussions aimed at improving the quality of education for all learners and best practices for meeting the needs of culturally diverse, 21st century learners will likely continue to generate interest among those in the educational community and the general public. Learning about educator perspectives regarding the use and positioning of multicultural and popular culture texts and hearing about their experiences in the classroom offers an entryway into further understanding the centrality of the text as it pertains to teaching and learning. Further, hearing firsthand about educators' previous and current multicultural and popular culture text use lends insight into possibilities for examining the linkages that connect texts to identity and literacy practices and for informing the ever-evolving possibilities of text production and consumption that exist for current and future generations. By approaching this endeavor through a critical lens, this research also acknowledged the role of mediating influences related to the structural, institutional, and historical backdrop of the American schooling system as it interacts with educators' societally and culturally mediated experiences.

## Purpose of the Study

With the aforementioned goals in mind, the purpose of this study was to explore high school English Language Arts educators' perspectives about and experiences with using multicultural and popular culture texts with culturally diverse adolescent learners attending school in rural South Texas. A secondary purpose included considering what these perspectives and experiences revealed about the role of multicultural and popular culture texts in pedagogical practice and for promoting literacy learning. The terms *multicultural literature* / *multicultural texts* were defined as literature featuring individuals "from diverse cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic and religious backgrounds, who have been marginalized, and are considered outside of the mainstream of society (Salas, Lucido, & Canales, 2001)" (Morrell & Morrell, 2012, p. 11), as well as "books that reflect the racial, ethnic, and social diversity of our society; especially books about the experiences and perspectives of culturally diverse populations under-represented in school curricula (Bishop 1997; Gunn et al., 2012/2013)" (Peterson et al., 2015, p. 42). Although the term *multicultural literature* is used across much of the literature, the term *text* rather than *literature* was more readily adopted for this inquiry so as not to limit the inclusion of additional multicultural text forms that extend beyond the traditional notion of print literature (for instance, a film or graphic novel featuring multicultural, diverse characters may be considered a *multicultural text* for the purposes of this study, with potential overlap as a popular culture text). The term *popular culture texts* was broadly defined as both print and non-print texts representing a variety of modes, including (yet not limited to) videos, music lyrics, movies, anime, comics, YA books, hypermedia texts (such as those accessed via the Internet), trading cards, manga, game texts, zine texts

(Hagood et al., 2010; Xu et al., 2005), and graphic novels (Frey & Fisher, 2004). Despite this extensive list, the malleable and evolving nature of popular culture suggested that additional text types, text forms, and genres may fit into this fluid definition as well.

Moreover, as this study coincided with the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, unprecedented shifts to online learning platforms across the nation's schools necessitated the use of a broadened definition of classroom in reference to K-12 learning spaces. The use of the term *classroom* in this study acknowledged both the traditional physical classroom space, as well as classroom spaces that facilitated distance learning occurring in technologically equipped, virtual platforms. This expanded conceptualization addressed the mandated adoption of online learning for countless teachers and students at various points throughout the pandemic, while also ensuring that educators were able to draw upon their full range of educational experiences as they pertained to the research.

Although the current study presented opportunities for exploration with educators in various geographic locales, the selection of schools situated in South Texas offered a promising venue for examining how multicultural and popular culture texts were positioned in a rural context that boasts a distinctly rich cultural heritage and a predominantly Hispanic populace. The focal population of high school English Language Arts educators was selected due to the positioning of these grade levels within the adolescent age spectrum and because focusing on a specific discipline allowed for thematic comparisons among teachers working with a similarly aged population in analogous subject-level contexts. A sample of educators working with upper grade level students did not intend to diminish the rich prospects for inquiry in other grade levels and disciplines, but rather aimed to lend focus to the research and optimize cross-subject

points of comparison within the small scope of the study. This demographic appeared relevant because adolescence is a consequential time for identity development (Ormrod, 2011; Tatum, 2006), including the negotiation of identity both in and outside of the classroom (Moje & Dillon, 2006). Further, students at the secondary level may experience increased access to and interest in the range of media and alternate texts that increasingly characterize and inform the “multiple literacies” (Alvermann et al., 2006, p. ix) abundant in their lives. Conducting the study with teachers of adolescents was additionally justified when considering the burgeoning of interest in the sociocultural dimensions of adolescent literacies over the past thirty years, thereby helping to reframe discourses about adolescents from deficit and at-risk categories to acknowledging youth as a diverse group that cultivates a variety of dynamic literacy and textual practices (Vasudevan & Campano, 2009).

### **Research Questions**

The two focal research questions guiding the study included the following:

1. What are the experiences and perspectives of English Language Arts educators with using multicultural and popular culture texts in culturally diverse secondary classrooms located in South Texas?
2. What do educators’ experiences and perspectives reveal about the role of multicultural and popular culture texts in pedagogical practice and for promoting literacy learning with culturally diverse learners?

### **Definitions of Terms**

The following terms clarify aspects of this research:

**Adolescent** – an individual between the approximate ages of 10 and 19 (World Health Organization, 2014); approximately the age of students in grades four through 12.

**Classroom** – “a place where classes meet” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.), including both physical and virtual spaces.

**Culture** – “the multiple components of one’s identity, including but not limited to: race, economic background, gender, language, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, and ability” (New York State Education Department, 2019, p. 11); “shared beliefs, values, and customs of a group or society” (Howe & Lisi, 2020, p. 402); also, “the body of intellectual and imaginative work in which human thought and experience are recorded” (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2005, p. 287).

**Diversity** – differences between individuals and groups based on race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status (SES), gender, language, sexual orientation, ability, and /or religion (Howe & Lisi, 2020); its goal is “to recognize, embrace, and celebrate the world’s variety of languages, cultures, and peoples” (Padilla, 2005, p. 252).

**Multicultural** - “can be narrowly defined to mean ethnicity and race (culture). The term has also been more broadly defined to encompass issues of racism, sexism (gender), classism (socio-economic status), ableism (physical abilities), ageism (age), heterosexism (sexual orientation), religious intolerance (values/morals), xenophobia (fear of strangers and different cultures), and linguicism (language/culture) (National Association for Multicultural Education, 2003)” (Holland & Mongillo, 2016, p. 17).

**Multicultural education** – a discipline and educational area of study “whose major aim is to create equal educational opportunities for students from diverse racial, ethnic, social-class, and cultural groups” (Banks & Banks, 2001, p. xi).

**Multicultural texts / multicultural literature** –texts featuring individuals “from diverse cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic and religious backgrounds, who have been marginalized, and are considered outside of the mainstream of society (Salas, Lucido, & Canales, 2001)” (Morrell & Morrell, 2012, p. 11); also, “books that reflect the racial, ethnic, and social diversity of our society; especially books about the experiences and perspectives of culturally diverse populations under-represented in school curricula (Bishop 1997; Gunn et al., 2012/2013)” (Peterson et al., 2015, p. 42); although not always used interchangeably, the terms “text” and “literature” will be used in this inquiry to allow for the inclusion of multicultural texts extending beyond traditional print books and literary genres.

**Popular culture** – “popular culture as a field of study is relatively ill defined” (Alvermann, 2011, p. 545); in an educational context, it may refer to forms of expression that include popular texts, “things” reflective of a “consumer culture” or “low culture” (Marshall & Sensoy, 2011, p. 3), and “a place for creating new forms of expression as well as a vehicle for critique” (Marshall & Sensoy, 2011, p. 3).

**Popular culture texts** - print and non-print texts representing a variety of modes, such as (but not limited to) videos, music lyrics, movies, anime, manga, comics, YA books, hypermedia / Internet texts, trading cards, game texts, and zine texts (Hagood et al., 2010; Xu et al., 2005); also, as a genre categorically similar to comics, graphic novels (Brozo et al., 2014) may be considered a popular culture text (Frey & Fisher, 2004).

**Text** – a broadly conceptualized form of communication (Kress, 2003) that may include various print, non-print, multimodal, and digital representational modes (Alvermann, 2011; Hagood et al., 2010; Moje et al., 2011; Walsh, 2006).

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Historical and Conceptual Background

In tandem with educator interest in ensuring textual diversity and recognition of the need for an additional focus on issues pertaining to equity and opportunity (International Literacy Association, 2020), today's educational landscape offers promise toward advancing issues of access and representation in literacy education. However, situating a discussion about the inclusion of diverse textual materials and appreciation for the wealth of experiences embodied in today's youth requires an acknowledgement that culturally and linguistically diverse students historically endured years of inequitable schooling opportunities and a lack of representation in curricular materials. Although the 1974 Equal Educational Opportunities Act sought to prohibit segregationist agendas and ensure equitable education for all students, cultural deficit views touting the cultural inferiority of minoritized populations continued to permeate society (Ovando & Combs, 2018). In addition to delegitimizing the experiences and backgrounds of students with diverse cultural and linguistic traditions, deficit approaches suggested that diverse populations lacked the resources procured by their White counterparts (Howe & Lisi, 2020). These perspectives also advanced notions of the cultural superiority of White students and families, while disregarding the systemic effects of poverty on student achievement (Song & Pyon, 2008). In the classroom, cultural deficit views often translated into the privileging of a Eurocentric curriculum, with little value assigned to appreciating or incorporating cultural and linguistic diversity into the schooling experience (Padilla, 2005). The historical lack of representation of culturally diverse individuals in texts is documented in Larrick's (1965) analysis of literature available in



the mid- 20th century, when millions of non-White youths encountered a majority of books that “either omit[ed] them entirely or scarcely mention[ed] them” (p. 63). Larrick (1965) suggested that a cooperative approach to societal advancement hinged on moving away from the “gentle doses of racism” (p. 63) that were peppered throughout many texts of the time. In addition to a noted lack of diversity in publications and the consequent messages this dearth of voice conveyed, Mexican American students in particular often attended segregated schools, where deculturization practices sought to eliminate the use of the home language and devalue students’ manifold markers of cultural identity (Spring, 1997, as cited in Moll, 2001; Spring, 2022). These efforts attempted to subjugate the cultural and linguistic resources present in schools, with detrimental implications for the internalization of negative ideologies and self-perceptions of inferiority (Moll, 2001).

Throughout much of the 1970s, the nation’s schools were often characterized by pedagogies utilizing transmissive learning approaches, with skills-based reading tests and standardized basal texts anchoring instruction (Pearson, 2002). As a response to unjust forms of schooling, during this time period, Freire’s (1970) work on critical pedagogies surfaced, rejecting educational approaches aimed at reproducing the status quo and deemphasizing critical thinking skills. This line of thinking serves to challenge the use of texts that neglect diverse perspectives in favor of Eurocentric viewpoints and schooling practices that perpetuate an “implicit or hidden curriculum” reinforcing the norms and belief systems associated with dominant groups and cultures (Hollins, 2008). The goals of an *implicit curriculum* – namely, to reinforce social structures, transmit the values of the dominant culture, and exclude knowledge from non-dominant cultural groups (Hollins, 2008) – arguably limit the educational experiences of all students by denying

the life experiences and knowledge forms valued by all members of the classroom community, while also removing possibilities for strengthening and enhancing students' exposure to and understanding of their own and other cultural perspectives.

Following political movements of the 1960s and 1970s that sought to secure equitable civil rights and dismantle systems of oppression, an increased focus surrounded issues related to building intercultural understandings and addressing injustices related to discrimination (Howe & Lisi, 2020). Aligned to these developments, multicultural literature emerged as a counterpoint to dominant cultural points of view and conservative ideologies (Cai, 2002), thereby inciting controversy and prompting questions of equity related to a “power struggle over the creation, production, distribution, and consumption” of such texts (Cai, 2002, p. xiv). As these tensions remained unresolved in the early 1980s, society witnessed a decrease in the amount “of books by and about people of color” (Gilton, 2007, p. 56), with some regarding multicultural texts for youth as an expired “fad” (p. 56). This time period also observed a “sudden drop in awards for multicultural literature” (Gates & Mark, 2006, p. 6), which marked a noticeable departure from the more plentiful accolades accrued during the preceding decade.

Concurrently, the educational terrain of the 1980s did not wholly uplift additional cultural voices in conversations related to literacy. For instance, the report *Becoming a Nation of Readers* (Anderson et al., 1985) aimed to provide broad guidance for reading instruction, yet seemingly overlooked sociocultural considerations in its recommendations. Although the report offered beneficial advice and pointed to the roles of background knowledge and out-of-school experiences in the reading process, it espoused a view of cultural activity that did not appear to fully embrace diverse

perspectives and experiences beyond those synonymous with the dominant culture. The report's suggestion that learners read texts reflective of "our cultural heritage" (p. 82) arguably directs readers to materials that offer a singular expression of culture, rather than a more nuanced and inclusive one. This advice calls to mind the notion of "cultural heritage literacy," which stressed the importance of canonical works and attempted to guard against "the potentially coarsening effects of popular culture and human existence" (Freebody & Freiberg, 2011, p. 437).

The mid-1980s also witnessed the first publication of the *Handbook of Reading Research* (Pearson et al., 1984), which, unlike its successors, did not allocate extensive discussions to the sociocultural dimensions of literacy, instead focusing on psychological components of reading (Siegel & Fernandez, 2000). Yet at the same time, research publications contributed influential ideas that reframed understandings of the value inherent in a diversity of literacy practices and cultural experiences (e.g., Au, 1980; Heath, 1983; Scribner & Cole, as cited in Unrau & Alvermann, 2013; Street, 1984). This time marked a shift from cognitive and behavioral lenses of reading to socioculturally informed perspectives that "sought to capture the shared understanding of the many rather than the private knowledge of the one" (Alexander & Fox, 2013, pp. 16-17).

Scholarship also began to pave the way for conceptualizing culturally relevant approaches, but it would not be until the mid-1990s that such perspectives would experience "a windfall moment" (Paris, 2012, p. 93). Definitions of multicultural literature likewise expanded during the 1990s, as this term grew to embody more nuanced and inclusive understandings of diversity and representation (Morrell & Morrell, 2012). Interest in popular culture's applicability to an educational context also surfaced around

this time, with Giroux and Simon (1989) linking popular culture to critical pedagogies and examining its relevance to the everyday experiences of the individual. Additional scholarly volumes published in the early 1990s spotlighted popular culture's intersection with societal perceptions of schooling (Farber et al., 1994) and examined the juncture between popular media, everyday experiences, education, and the cultivation of "a lifelong critical citizenship" (Schwoch et al., 1992, p. xiv). Texts such as these paved the way for contemporary discussions of popular culture's relationship to schooling, as reflected in Sourdout and Janak's (2017) assertion that "schools should utilize this powerful tool to teach students, using media content they are familiar with" (p. xiii).

Alongside increased scholarly interest and recognition within these areas, societal advances occurring in the 1990s and beyond included the proliferation of new technologies and media, which redefined and continue to reshape notions of literacy (Coiro et al., 2008; Leu et al., 2013). Amid this transition into the 21st century, scholars theorized about what "New Times" (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000a; Luke & Elkins, 1998; Millard, 2003) meant for literacy research and the way educators conceptualize the text. Moje et al. (2000) wrote about an interrelated triad of meaning-making, consisting of text, context, and learner, and predicted that these three elements would become "even more diverse, multiple, and shifting" (p. 165) than believed by fellow researchers - a prediction that the modern-day textual backdrop seems to confirm. Moving forward to today, understandings of reading proficiency now acknowledge literacy practices and varied text forms that transcend the limitations of traditional school-based textbooks (O'Brien et al., 2009). At the same time, shifting demographics in the representation of culturally and linguistically diverse students (Li, 2011; National Center for Education

Statistics, 2017) remain situated alongside an evolving educational discourse, with national standards and recommendations speaking to the role of diversity and equity in literacy education (International Literacy Association, 2018). Guidelines such as these promote the needs of diverse 21st century learners and imply the necessity of well-chosen and broadly defined texts, curricular materials, and academic experiences that capitalize on student experiences and backgrounds (International Literacy Association, 2019; National Council of Teachers of English, 2013; National Governors Association for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). At the state level, the inclusion of a range of text genres, including multimodal and diverse texts, within Texas's English curriculum standards (lead4ward, 2020; Texas Education Agency, 2022) opens possibilities for access to texts that are reflective of and relevant to students' lived experiences and identities, while also inviting research that delves into these areas.

### ***Overview of Culturally Responsive / Relevant Teaching***

Modern-day educators are tasked with providing learning experiences that are culturally sensitive, responsive to students' multifaceted identities, and facilitative of literacy learning in the classroom. In opposition to cultural deficit views that sought to marginalize the cultural experiences and affiliations of nondominant student populations (Howe & Lisi, 2020; Ovando & Combs, 2018; Padilla, 2005; Song & Pyon, 2008), culturally responsive instruction and related perspectives (e.g., Gay, 2000, 2002; Ladson-Billings 1995a, 1995b, 2009, 2014; Moll et al., 1992; Nieto, 2004; Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014) view diverse cultures and perspectives as additive to student learning.

With a basis in sociocultural theory (McIntyre, 2011), culturally responsive approaches affirm and integrate students' cultural identities in the classroom (Gay, 2000),

while also preparing students for participation in a multicultural society (Howe & Lisi, 2020). Whereas some definitions and applications of culturally responsive teaching undermine and misapply the intentions and components of this approach (Sleeter, 2011), cultivating a culturally responsive classroom entails a holistic, ongoing commitment to establishing linkages between home and school experiences, encouraging critical inquiry, and teaching to students' strengths (Gay, 2000). Gay's (2002) five elements of culturally responsive teaching further clarify this framework, and include: "developing a cultural diversity knowledge base" (p. 106), "designing culturally relevant curricula" (p. 108), "demonstrating cultural caring and building a learning community" (p. 109), "cross-cultural communications" (p. 110), and "cultural congruity in classroom instruction" (p. 112). These elements complement culturally responsive teaching's advocacy for "validating" (p. 29), "comprehensive" (p. 30), "multidimensional" (p. 31), "empowering" (p. 32), "transformative" (p. 33), and "emancipatory" (p. 35) teaching (Gay, 2000).

An equally influential perspective with a similar focus on teaching for social justice is found in Ladson-Billings's (1995a, 1995b, 2009) advancement of culturally relevant teaching. Educators with a culturally relevant disposition communicate high expectations and help students to develop cultural competence and critical consciousness (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b). Also imperative is a focus on academic achievement and instruction that prepares students for societal participation (Au, 2002). Although critiqued for a research base that mostly consists of smaller scale, qualitative case studies (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Byrd, 2016), these foundational ideas served as a basis for the development of culturally sustaining pedagogies (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014) and recent work linking culturally responsive education to the

cognitive and affective domains of learning (Hammond, 2020, as cited in Major, 2020). These collective perspectives coexist alongside expanded definitions of identity as including but also extending beyond race and ethnicity (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2014). Extended views of culture have also emerged in more recent years, thereby underscoring an understanding of culture as linked to identity and literacy (Moje et al., 2009; Rueda, 2011), and inclusive of “race, economic background, gender, language, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, and ability” (New York State Education Department, 2019, p. 11).

Also aligned to a culturally responsive approach is the integration of texts and resources that provide a voice to historically marginalized groups and their lived experiences in accurate ways (Gay, 1995). This point speaks to the necessity of recognizing and questioning textual materials that may overtly or tacitly trivialize, marginalize, or misrepresent the cultural groups they portray. In a chapter focused on the role of the mass media as it relates to multicultural education, Cortés (2001) discussed the media’s role in knowledge construction regarding culture, race, and ethnicity. Similar to Gay (1995), Cortés (2001) implied the importance of content that represents information with accuracy and without perpetuating erroneous stereotypes. Likewise, Buckingham (1998) pointed to the media’s ability to advance notions of hegemony and oppressive ideologies, thereby adding to arguments touting the necessity of critical media literacy skills for evaluative and analytical critique (Alvermann et al., 1999). These suggestions echo the assertion that critically analyzing depictions of ethnic groups in the media and popular culture remains central to enacting a culturally responsive teaching approach (Gay, 2002). A modernized version of cultural responsiveness might extend this focus from

ethnic groups to more expansive ideals of group membership, with the goal of applying a critical lens when encountering texts and media featuring one or more cultural groups.

### ***New Definitions of Literacy and Literate Identities***

A complete view of literacy integrates an awareness of the expansiveness of this term, including its relevance to discussions of culture, identity, and issues of access and equity. In contrast to earlier viewpoints positioning literacy from an autonomous, neutral perspective that overlooks culturally situated, socially mediated literacy practices (Street, 1984, 2003), inclusive conceptualizations of literacy emphasize the social, local, and global dynamics of literacy and acknowledge the contributions of varied print and non-print text types (Walsh, 2006) to literate activities. As indicated above, these shifts emerged in the late 1970s onwards through the following decade, when understandings of literacy became increasingly focused on literacy as social practices (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011; Larson & Marsh, 2006), with specific, observable literacy events that occur when using, reading, or composing texts (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011; Pahl & Rowsell, 2005).

Understanding identity as related to literate activities (Botzakis & Hall, 2011; Rowsell & Pahl, 2007), as socially mediated (Gallego & Hollingsworth, 2000; Gee, 2000, 2008; Moje et al., 2013) and as contextually dependent (Moje et al., 2009) further frame evolving views of literacy. From Gee's (2008) perspective, students' literate identities are reflective of primary and secondary Discourses acquired through interacting with others in the home and broader social settings. Moje et al. (2000) spoke more specifically about the interplay of student identity in tandem with the text and context, thereby pointing to how textual experiences in and out of school reflect, build upon, and nurture the diversity of students that comprise modern-day classrooms. Related to these ideas and proceeding



along the monetarily framed idea of *cultural capital* popularized by Bourdieu (1973, as cited in Obidah & Marsh, 2006) is Obidah and Marsh's (2006) discussion of African American adolescents' *literate currency*, which refers to the literate components of students' lives that enable them to construct meaning from the world around them. Converging forms of literate currency (including peer, home/community, school-based, and popular culture literacy) call for educators who value these resources and offer opportunities for integrating them during learning (Obidah & Marsh, 2006). Consistent with this viewpoint, the socioculturally informed notion of *funds of knowledge* (Moll & Greenberg, 1990; Moll et al., 1992; Rodriguez, 2013; Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992) is also applicable to a discussion of literate identities and the influential contributions of students' membership within cultural groups that include and extend beyond the home. By acknowledging students' funds of knowledge, educators recognize the value inherent in the cultural practices and knowledge-based resources that students gain from interactions and experiences within the home and community. As a related framework, *cultural modeling* (Lee, 2007) advances the idea that students' out-of-school practices are valid resources for learning. Lee acknowledged the influence of funds of knowledge on their work and explained that cultural modeling focuses more on youth practices, rather than communal and familial practices that position students as "*peripheral participants*" (p. 34; emphasis in original). These perspectives collectively suggest that the ways of knowing and cultural skill sets acquired in the home environment are integral to students' identities and hold implications for learning. Interactions with others and participation in scaffolded learning activities that cultivate a community of learners further enable sociocultural approaches to become realized in the classroom (Larson & Marsh, 2006).

Taken together, these perspectives highlight how identity, language, and culture emerge as complex, hybridized aspects of the individual. They also affirm the practices and experiential realities of diverse students, who acquire knowledge and literacies in a range of out-of-school contexts that transcend narrow and limiting ideas of culture (González, 2005; Irizarry, 2007). These ideas lend a starting point for thinking about how student identities, discourses, and multiple forms of literate currency relate to text consumption and production in both in and out of school contexts, while also pointing to the necessity of learning about how educational institutions and educators are positioned to nurture and capitalize on these resources.

### **Theoretical Frameworks and Perspectives**

Although additional theories may prove applicable to this study (e.g., reader response theory, sociocultural theory, social semiotics theory, New Literacy Studies), historical and conceptual considerations in partnership with the understandings of literacy underpinning this research informed the selection of two main theoretical frameworks that guide the present inquiry: multiliteracies and critical literacies and pedagogies.

#### ***Multiliteracies and Expanded Understandings of Text***

A central theoretical perspective relevant to the current discussion includes the New London Group's (1996) theory of multiliteracies, which affirms the use of multiple text types for learning, rejects narrow discourses of schooling, and adopts a forward-thinking vision of literacy education within a pluralistic society. A pedagogical approach based on multiliteracies advocates for an embodied, socially situated conception of the mind in relation to sociocultural contexts. The New London Group highlights the importance of minimizing disparities among students and ensuring that culturally and

linguistically diverse students, as well as those that identify with historically marginalized groups (including gender), gain access to educational opportunities. This approach is further framed by a three-part understanding of design, including *Available Design* (the semiotic and discourse-based resources and conventions for design), *Designing* (the procedural and transformative component of design), and *The Redesigned* (the newly created meaning that result from the act of designing). In a manual linking multiliteracies to pedagogical applications, Anstey and Bull (2006) indicated that a “multiliteracies curriculum” includes “opportunities to consume, produce, and transform knowledge about literacy and literate practices” (p. 56). Yet, a multiliteracies approach is not intended to conform to formulaic guidelines or scripts designed to guide implementation (Garcia et al., 2018). Rather, pedagogical practices should utilize students’ lived experiences and offer space for critical inquiry (Buelow, 2017; Chun, 2009), with a goal of improving access to learning and preparing students for active and informed participation in a global society (New London Group, 1996).

An expanded view of text fits into this position, as today’s learners interact with and negotiate meaning from various textual modes, technologies, and resources (Hagood et al., 2010; Lankshear & Knobel, 2011). This viewpoint therefore challenges definitions of literacy that primarily focus on skills-based, technical aspects of reading and writing (Freire & Machedo, 1987) and view meaning-making as occurring primarily with printed and written text. The New London Group (1996) pointed to an increasingly integrated and multimodal conception of text, with varied forms of media playing a central role in the textual milieu. They further distinguished between five types of multimodal meaning-making designs (audio, spatial, gestural, visual, and linguistic) with implications for

addressing the multilayered identities, cultures, and subcultures present in a classroom. This shift in defining what counts as text embraces a view of text as communication (Kress, 2003) and authenticates the use of various modes of representation in addition to both paper-based and digital platforms (Alvermann, 2011; Hagood et al., 2010; Moje et al., 2011; Walsh, 2006).

A more contemporary definition of text also addresses questions of authorship and audience, and confronts issues related to who maintains the power to disseminate their stories and have their voices heard. Moje et al. (2011) explained that texts are positioned as “tools or as commodities” (p. 455) with the ability to transmit and receive knowledge. In this sense, the school may function as a gatekeeper to whose literacy practices and textual artifacts are valued and prioritized, and which are marked as unacceptable or undeserving of representation in the curriculum (Botzakis & Hall, 2011). Also related to an expanded definition of text is an awareness that text use may contribute to shifts in identity on behalf of the text user (Hagood, 2008) and in how educators and the research community view the role of diverse text forms in the context of literacy instruction (McLean et al., 2009). These considerations relate to a discussion of multicultural and popular culture texts by suggesting that textual content may manifest in a variety of multimodal forms and genres that transcend conventional notions of school-based texts. Moreover, given that the term *multicultural literature* remains prevalent in describing print-based narratives with multicultural content, adopting the term *multicultural text* acknowledges the aforementioned descriptors while also allowing for added flexibility toward the goals underlying this study.

### *Critical Literacies and Pedagogies*

With its origins in the overarching theoretical perspective of structuralism (Unrau & Alvermann, 2013) and the work of Freire (1970, 1985), the advancement of a critical approach facilitates the confrontation of issues concerning power and hegemonic discourses within both institutionalized and societal contexts. It rejects the idea that literacy functions as a form of reproduction, where individuals are passive, empty vessels waiting to be filled with knowledge produced by others (Freire, 1970; Freire & Machado, 1987; Shor, 1992). In contrast, from a critical literacy perspective, literacy serves as a basis for promoting emancipation, social justice, social change, and empowerment (Freire, 1970; Freire & Machado, 1987; Morrell, 2004; Shor, 1992; Unrau & Alvermann, 2013). It offers possibilities for teaching students to question power dynamics (Smagorinsky, 2008), bridging in-and-out school literacies (McLean et al., 2009), and acknowledging that educational institutions are not neutral (Freire & Machado, 1987; Heath, 1983; Morrell, 2004; Shor, 1992). Critical literacies enable educators to enact transformative pedagogical practices that seek to develop and promote students' critical awareness through textual experiences (Millard, 2003), such as identifying how texts may privilege certain viewpoints above others (Alvermann, 2002). Approaching the role of the text, text-based practices, discourses, and literacy education from a critical lens centralizes the importance of issues related to textual access, power, and critique (Luke, 2000). Student-centered, participatory instructional approaches that prioritize critical thinking rather than transmissive modes of instruction and memorization (Alvermann, 2002) are also illustrative of this perspective. Since multicultural content and popular

culture texts may hold possibilities for textual analysis, critique, examining consequential topics, and promoting critical thinking skills, a critical lens is central to this undertaking.

## **Multicultural Texts**

### ***Defining Multicultural Literature / Multicultural Texts***

In tandem with positioning the idea of a text in broad and inclusive terms, an overview specific to multicultural literature and texts helps to frame the current inquiry. Cai (2002) conceptualized *multicultural literature* as embodying “a tripartite configuration: it is an aesthetic form of literary creation...a political weapon in the cultural war, and an educational tool to change people’s attitudes toward cultural diversity” (p. xv). The range of perspectives seeking to define multicultural literature speaks to its controversial standing within contested and politically charged dialogic spaces, with two main categories of definitions anchoring these discussions (Cai, 2002). The literary definition of multicultural literature upholds the idea that these texts represent either an explicit or implicit multicultural focus (Dasenbrock, 1987, as cited in Cai, 2002). From this perspective, an explicitly multicultural text revolves around the cultural negotiations and transactions that occur between characters in a multicultural setting, whereas an implicitly multicultural text centralizes its narrative in a particular cultural context and challenges a multicultural readership to extract meaning from a text that might prove more accessible to readers that share the author’s cultural experiences (Dasenbrock, 1987, as cited in Cai, 2002). In contrast, defining multicultural literature from a pedagogical perspective shifts the focus from a standalone text to a collective body of texts that advance a pluralism of textual and curricular experiences (Cai, 2002). The pedagogical definition therefore highlights the function and purpose of the text in an

educational setting, centralizing it as a means toward achieving a multiculturally-infused educational agenda. Consequently, nuanced understandings of what groups are included or excluded from the designation “multicultural” point to a history of discord regarding whether the term should apply to broad or narrow descriptions of culture, such as including only race, or extending to additional minoritized groups that do not conform to hegemonic cultural norms and ways of life (Cai, 2002). In addition to *multicultural* as encompassing race and ethnicity, Holland and Mongillo (2016) distinguished between additional understandings ascribed to the term, noting its application to issues related to gender, sexual orientation, xenophobia, class, age, ableism, values, morals, and linguisticism (National Association for Multicultural Education, 2003, as cited in Holland & Mongillo, 2016). When applied to the role of the text, an extended view of multiculturalism therefore accepts a plurality of textual content that remains unconstrained by narrower views of how to define a text as multicultural.

Also noteworthy is the question of genre in a multicultural text, which might potentially include subgenres related to fiction and nonfiction. For instance, Steiner et al. (2008) refer to multicultural literature as inclusive of both the “factual and fictional” (p. 88), a distinction that arguably opens possibilities for different genres to gain acceptance within the overarching classification of multicultural literature. Gilton (2007) also discussed multicultural histories and multicultural periodicals as types of multicultural resources, which offer examples of multiculturally informed text categories. Likewise, Gates and Mark (2006) authored book chapters exploring various genres of multicultural literature, including multicultural nonfiction, realistic fiction, historical fiction, and poetry, among others. A dynamic definition of a multicultural text is further exemplified

in Byker et al.'s (2018) work with 41 preservice elementary educators tasked with using technology and media to produce their own multicultural texts. By locally creating multicultural texts using globally connected technological platforms, the role of author and publisher shifts to the educator with firsthand knowledge about the consumers of the text, in contrast to an author who lacks a personal relationship to their intended audience. In this context, the notion of a multicultural text extends beyond traditionally published literary works, and instead invites elements of customization, varied text genres, and 21st century literacy skills.

While a more forward-thinking definition of multicultural text repositions and expands the role of author, it also calls to mind debates about whether a text is truly multicultural if the author does not share the cultural affiliation they write about. A traditional definition supplied by Young et al. (1995) suggested that multicultural literature "is literature by and about people belonging to the various self-identified ethnic, racial, religious and regional groups in this country" (p. 367). The use of "by and about" in this definition points to the need for a linkage to be present between the author's own cultural experiences and the topics and stories they tell, yet the cultural affiliation of an author sometimes does not match the cultural group depicted in the text (Gilton, 2007). Discussions around these issues evoke enduring questions about cultural authenticity in texts, including the role of authorial experience and whether the stories and experiences of a particular group can be accurately depicted by cultural outsiders in ways that resonate with readers (Short & Fox, 2003).



### *Approaches to Multicultural Education*

With the pedagogical definition of multicultural literature in mind, educators who incorporate multicultural texts into the curriculum equip and reimagine the classroom as a space for fulfilling the promises of multicultural education (Cai, 2002), which includes rejecting an assimilationist agenda that prioritizes a singular focus on mainstream cultural ideologies (Yoon et al., 2010). Multicultural education gained momentum amid a contentious discourse surrounding the perceived merits of infusing the classroom with ethnically and culturally diverse knowledge (Banks, 1993). Critiques aimed at these efforts included accusations of displacing and distorting the traditionally accepted curriculum (Nieto, 1995), as well as criticism from both ends of the political spectrum for advancing either an overtly political agenda or one that inadequately addressed societal problems (May, 1993, as cited in Dudley-Marling, 1997). Ware and Ware (1996) evoked the tensions between advocates of a multicultural approach to the curriculum and those who sought to uphold an exclusionary curriculum based on the dominant culture. The debates encircling the two oppositional standpoints led to questions of “what or whose knowledge is worthy of teaching” (pp. 1175-1176). Added to these tensions is the possible lack of consensus on how to define multicultural education. This point emerged in Fong and Hernandez Sheets’ (2004) small-scale qualitative study exploring the perspectives of two skilled kindergarten educators. Researchers identified the “lack of definition” (p. 12) as one of two “barriers to implementation” (p. 12), with one educator suggesting that this contributed to “fragmentation or dismissal in the field” (p. 12).

Despite this account of definitional uncertainty, the aims of multicultural education include advancing educational equity, upholding multiple perspectives,

maintaining high expectations for achievement, readying students for a global society, and rejecting intolerance and bias (Howe & Lisi, 2020), with an overarching focus on democratic principles consistent with Dewey's (1916) philosophical outlook.

Multicultural education aligns conceptually to critical pedagogies (Gay, 1995; Nieto, 1995; Nieto & Bode, 2018, as cited in Howe & Lisi, 2020), with the two ideologies committed to the advancement of equity, access, and a pluralistic society (Gay, 1995). Multicultural approaches also establish and build upon a foundation consistent with, yet categorically different from, the aims of culturally responsive teaching (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). Worth noting is that although the body of work on multiculturalism at times seems to emphasize ethnicity, its central ideas about teaching as a "multicultural encounter" (Banks & Banks, 1995, p. 157) hold implications for rejecting surface-level notions of culture and recognizing it as an expansive construct that includes "all the ways in which people live and think in the world" (Short & Fox, 2003, p. 6).

Lending further clarity to multicultural approaches, Nieto (2004) identified a model for multicultural education consisting of four progressive levels that speak to supporting diversity in a school setting, which include "tolerance; acceptance; respect; and affirmation, solidarity, and critique" (p. 384). These evolve from more surface-level approaches to respecting the perspectives and experiences of others and acknowledging the struggles, challenges, and critiques associated with adopting such a stance. In addition to Nieto's (2004) four levels, Nieto and Bode (2018, as cited in Howe & Lisi, 2020) provided seven distinguishing characteristics of multicultural education, specifying that it consists of antiracist education, offers context in the content areas, benefits every student, is fully incorporated into a school, promotes social justice, is a comprehensive process-

based approach, and that it embodies equity and critical pedagogies. Banks (1998, 2001) also outlined five dimensions of multicultural education: 1) content integration, 2) the knowledge construction process, 3) prejudice reduction, 4) equity pedagogy, and 5) an empowering school culture and social structure. The notion of content integration is further categorized into four approaches (the contributions approach, the additive approach, the transformation approach, and the social action approach), which range from more superficial applications to approaches with implications for considering themes and issues of cultural importance, teaching for social change, and encouraging active problem solving (Banks, 2001; Banks & Banks, 2001). The latter two approaches – the transformation approach and social action approach – reinforce the idea that diversity enhances the classroom experience (Banks & Banks, 1995) and coincide with 14 guidelines for content integration about various ethnic groups (Banks & Banks, 2001). Crucial to these recommendations is the idea that supplemental texts, including films, videos, and tradebooks, hold promise for learning about the experiences and perspectives of different groups (Banks & Banks, 2001) and for conceptualizing the role of both multicultural and popular culture texts in the classroom.

### ***Preservice and Practicing Educator Perspectives and Experiences***

In a study by Stallworth et al. (2006), quantitative and qualitative survey data found variances in teacher practice among 142 English Language Arts teachers representing 72 secondary schools in the state of Alabama. The central questions guiding the study consisted of learning about the most commonly used books in secondary public schools and the reasons why teachers either omitted or included multicultural literature in their teaching. Main themes found in the data included “traditional stability,” “the

evolving nature of ‘the classics,’” issues related to censorship, and additional obstacles (a scarcity of resources and a lack of availability of diverse texts, lack of expertise and knowledge, and constraints on instructional time). Worth noting is that less experienced teachers (one to five years of experience) listed multicultural titles with increased frequency, which could be attributed to teacher preparation with a multicultural focus. Other noteworthy findings included confusion about teaching multicultural texts, fear related to concerns about censorship, a lack of preparation among some teachers for discussing cultural perspectives, and not perceiving the relevance of integrating multicultural perspectives. Further, when asked to list titles of multicultural works, responses indicated titles written from a dominant perspective, rather than representing a multicultural point of view. Despite this, researchers also pointed to a move away from traditional, canonical texts, thereby echoing Bintz’s (2018) assertion that more recent canonical additions include authors representative of diverse backgrounds, such as Sandra Cisneros, Amy Tan, and Maya Angelou. Recommendations from Stallworth et al.’s work included reading new diverse titles, incorporating research, developing rationales for text use, inviting parents and community members into the discussion, adopting thematic approaches, expanding personal exposure to new experiences and ways of life, and finding alternate sources of funding to acquire multicultural materials.

As part of an overarching course aimed at strengthening anti-racist educational practices, Tatum’s (2007) professional development work assisted practicing educators with considering ways to become more self-reflective “agents of change” (p. 73), with an agenda of increasing school-wide inclusivity and supporting the educational experiences and identities of all students. The narrative recounting of Tatum’s initiative, which

occurred within a small school district located in the northeast, noted how participants completed activities such as writing reflective essays and analyzing omissions and stereotypes in curricular materials. Tatum noted that “several” teacher-developed action plans for school improvement included creating bibliographies and identifying a need to purchase additional multicultural texts. In particular, one teacher pointed to the dominance of a “one size fits all,” state-mandated curriculum, thereby suggesting the need for the integration of supplementary multicultural content. This observation echoes Stallworth et al.’s (2006) assertion that modern-day educators teach in a system replete with curricular mandates and inadequate sources of funding, which could pose roadblocks to acquiring and implementing a diverse variety of texts in the classroom.

Using a similar approach of narrative description to discuss working with preservice teachers, Willis (2003) detailed their progression as a teacher educator and examined how predominantly White students confronted issues of race and approached the teaching of multicultural literature. Adopting a reflective stance toward multicultural literature may offer an outlet for preservice teachers to analyze and critique assumptions made about the self and individuals with differing identities (Glenn, 2012). Willis’s (2003) self-reflective investigation employed a critical race theory lens and featured discussions related to students’ oral and written responses, with particular attention provided to two focal students. Goals anchoring Willis’s selection of multicultural novels for use with students included extending a dialogue about race and the positioning of these texts in the curriculum; helping students learn about and eventually teach about subcultures; and prompting them to question the accepted dominance of canonical literature. Willis discovered that the European American students expressed some fear in

response to teaching multicultural literature, such as not knowing enough to teach about different cultures and concerns about offending students from a particular culture if it was omitted from the curriculum. Willis also noted that conversations responding to texts appeared superficial, with commentary offering oversimplified understandings of culture.

A more recent qualitative study by Glenn (2012) focused on the use of multicultural young adult novels with 14 predominantly White preservice secondary English educators enrolled in an English methods course as part of a teacher education program located in the northeast. The two focal novels provided “counter-narratives” that involved characters in situations where dominant perspectives of race were upended. This young adult literature, which aligns to definitions associated with both multicultural literature and popular culture texts, was selected to enable participants to explore the possible realities of adolescents of color through interactions with fiction. The unit of study included discussions regarding culturally and linguistically responsive approaches, with attention to issues concerning race. Students were also tasked with designing culturally responsive lessons and constructing written responses to reflective prompts about the central texts. A grounded theory approach anchored data analysis and consisted of repeated readings and identifying patterns, codes, and categories, with a focus on student responses that indicated reflective commentary on topics related to race. Data revealed that participants expressed an empathetic sense of connectivity between cultures that invoked the shared nature of the human condition and brought forward universal notions of identity construction. Participants also imagined and connected to the conflicts experienced by the protagonists in the novels and considered the role of stereotypes and cultural assumptions in texts. Although some students questioned stereotypes and

illuminated their own biases, others responded in ways that communicated deficit mindsets and adherence to dominant perspectives. Participants also increased in self-awareness of their dominant racial positioning. Another salient observation included frustration from one student in response to the experiences conveyed in texts, which conflicted with their own ways of knowing. This inability to relate to the characters prompted Glenn to assert that normalizing a culture could impede the ability to empathize with others. Glenn noted that only focusing on universalities and commonalities might lead to an oversimplification of issues about race, thereby resulting in color blindness that invalidates human differences, upholds the cultural dominance of the majority, and contradicts the goals of multicultural education (Nieto, 2004).

Glenn's literature review highlighted the idea of critical self-examination and cited studies about how multicultural literature functioned as "a potential tool" (p. 329) to assist with preservice teachers' development. A similar area of focus emerged in a study by Suh and Hinton (2015) that explored how four teacher educators of color interacted with multicultural literature in a book club that spanned nine months, with a cumulative six hours spent participating in meetings. Researchers applied reader response and post-colonial theoretical lenses and used a self-study approach that contributed to professional development sessions. The self-study component prompted participants to take note of their "attitudes and beliefs associated with cultural texts" (p. 27). Triangulated sources for analysis included transcripts of discussions, forms outlining analyses of the text, and meeting notes, with grounded theory analytic techniques such as coding, rereading transcripts, and attending to key moments in the data where participants focused on their identity. Findings included the emergence of two categories that spoke to insider and

outsider positioning, as well as two “causal conditions” that included “cultural membership and personal responses to the text” (p. 30). Participants used positioning strategies during discussions, which included questioning, establishing cultural or textual connections, making intertextual comparisons, showing empathy, displaying knowledge of culture, and identifying how the text used literary devices. Worth noting is that personal connections to characters and a willingness to share cultural information arose when the participant was positioned as an insider, whereas outsider positioning was reflected in strategies such as questioning and linking new cultural information to the familiar culture. Strategies that included “detaching” of the self focused on analyzing aspects of the text without emphasizing personal connection or response. Study outcomes also showed how participants might approach teaching the text, including providing more information about the historical context of the text and using dialogue journals.

Another narratively presented study by Ketter and Lewis (2001) highlighted how beliefs about the purposes of multicultural texts offered by teachers, the researchers, and parents represented conflicting perspectives. Similar to Willis’s (2003) narrative, Ketter and Lewis (2001) observed hesitance and fear associated with teaching certain topics appearing in multicultural texts due to perceived inappropriateness for inclusion in school. Ketter and Lewis’s (2001) interviews with three focal participants evoked questions about what constitutes an appropriate multicultural text, with two main categories emerging: “teaching neutral texts” and “teaching universal themes” (p. 177). The first category included the belief that multicultural literature should not be political or controversial, and welcomed diverse representations that conformed to middle-class norms. The second theme pointed to a belief that multicultural literature should



emphasize universal, shared experiences and cultural commonalities, rather than differences. This theme similarly appeared in Glenn's (2012) study discussed above, where preservice educators reflected on the universality of the human condition when engaging with multicultural young adult literature. Also similar to Willis's (2003) analysis of surface-level discussions of texts and reminiscent of concerns expressed by Glenn (2012), Ketter and Lewis (2001) described how one teacher's superficial reading of a multicultural text focused on human universals rather than interrogating the more critical message conveyed in the text. Differentiating this study from others is the perspective of parents, one of whom expressed concern about using books where African American youth are portrayed in victimized ways after the son felt discomfort and a sense of alienation in response to the use of a particular text. This parent's commentary pointed to the importance of context when teaching multicultural texts, while a second parent contributed the belief that positive representations of African American professionals should be included. Despite differing perspectives, researchers viewed multicultural works from a critical lens that acknowledged issues of systemic inequalities and issues such as oppression, with implications for teaching to historical and sociopolitical topics. They also noted that "conflicting purposes" (p. 180) for multicultural literature were indicative of larger questions about the aims of education.

Related to the research context of Ketter and Lewis's (2001) work, another publication by Lewis and Ketter (2008) revealed educator perspectives related to youth identities and multicultural young adult literature. Using an ethnographic approach, data analyzed for this article was gathered during a voluntary book discussion group facilitated by the two researchers and regularly attended by five middle school educators

working in a rural Midwestern community. A close analysis of segments of transcribed data from four years of data collection revealed the presence of two themes: “universalizing adolescence” and “constructing adolescents as ‘other’” (p. 294). An example of the first theme, universalizing adolescence, emerged during discussions of a text featuring the imprisonment of an adolescent African American male protagonist. When one educator expressed that race may have contributed to a protagonist’s plight, another participant overlooked these implications, thereby viewing the character’s experience as representative of any adolescent in the same situation. In contrast, researchers noted that participants demonstrated a more critical reading of another multicultural text and displayed an awareness of the many identities negotiated by adolescents. Evidence related to the second theme included an educator’s statements that appeared to distinguish between their own students and the characters portrayed in the text. This commentary positioned marginalized adolescents as “other,” particularly within an understanding of how power relations function to privilege some groups over others. Additional insights from this study included the perception that a multicultural text featuring references to gang culture might not be acceptable for inclusion in the classroom, as well as difficulties among educators with comprehending the urban vernacular used in this text. Lewis and Ketter indicated that as discussions progressed, the content of participant contributions evolved to include an additional emphasis on “the structural and systemic conditions that shaped the characters’ lives” (p. 303), with talk aimed at considering how to bring these understandings into the classroom. This study speaks to the possible uses of a collaborative forum for exploring multicultural literature,

and also highlights the importance of examining the assumptions and ideologies that underlie text selection, interpretation, and the conceptualization of youth identities.

Haddix and Price-Dennis (2013) also adopted a critical stance when describing two case studies taken from a larger qualitative inquiry. Researchers applied a participant observation approach consisting of the collection and analysis of field notes, transcribed recordings, unstructured interviews, and participant artifacts. The first case focused on graduate-level preservice teachers' experiences interacting with urban fiction in an adolescent literature course, with *urban fiction* referring to novels that represent the challenges of inner-city life and the experiences of African American characters living within a marginalized environment (Morris, 2007, as cited in Haddix & Price-Dennis, 2013). Study authors positioned urban fiction as fitting alongside multicultural texts, but also indicated overlap with popular culture texts. They chose to use "challenging" texts within this genre, with the goals of questioning what texts are appropriate for the classroom and what texts students might read outside of school. Students reflected on three questions related to the meaning of and stereotypes associated with the term "urban," the role of young adult literature and non-canonical works in the English classroom, and how the selected texts represented reality for students. Course activities included examining assumptions and ideologies, considering what types of literature should be taught in the secondary classroom, and blogging. Participants displayed some resistance in response to focal texts and difficulty making connections to their content and characters. Two main findings emerged, including how one novel sparked questions pertaining to the use of nonstandard English and the observation that participants more closely scrutinized the use of mature topics when they appeared in urban fiction.

Tensions about whether the urban texts perpetuated or challenged stereotypes arose, as well as concern about the use of nonstandard dialect in urban fiction story.

The second case detailed in Haddix and Price-Dennis's (2013) study featured a student's use of lessons and strategies that integrated issues of equity. The student taught a sixth-grade class reading and writing skills alongside critical text readings. The case study student observed that students held beliefs about immigrants consistent with partisan viewpoints and influences from popular culture, thus calling to mind Cortés's (2001) position about the media's influence on knowledge dissemination. Multicultural texts (including visual texts) were selected to help students acquire multicultural perspectives. Lessons included multicultural text sets with a selection of genres, including popular culture (Xu et al., 2005). Through various activities and opportunities for peer discussion, students examined current events and topics related to immigration, marginalization, discourses of power, representation of diverse groups, and language. Implementing lessons based on critical inquiry enabled the focal student to enact pedagogies that were impactful and conformed to state standards. Across the two cases, the selection of multicultural and urban texts introduced contexts beyond the school and offered alternatives to an official curriculum. Confronting consequential issues and the potential for creating change through literature also emerged across cases.

### ***Using Multicultural Texts in the Classroom***

Qualitative studies showing how educators have incorporated multicultural texts into the classroom reveal how these textual resources provide exposure to multiple perspectives, enable students to make meaning from and personal connections to texts, and assist students with learning about themselves and empathizing with others. The

important role of student discussions and textual critique are highlighted, and join observations of interest, enjoyment, and engagement that also appear in the literature. However, these points are not without challenge, as some findings point to difficulty with making connections to multicultural content (Glazier & Seo, 2005; Louie, 2005).

### **Multiple Perspectives and Textual Connections.**

Kim's (2014) qualitative and interpretive study used participant-observation and thick description to examine how six Korean and Korean American high school students constructed meaning from interacting with young adult Korean American novels. Guided by transactional theory and culturally relevant and responsive pedagogies, goals of the study included understanding how the focal population read, interpreted, and responded to this genre of literature, with a focus on enabling educator and parental understanding about these textually grounded experiences. Three participating students were classified as "early study abroad" students, and the remaining three were referred to as "second-generation" students. The researcher and six students participated in student-led book club sessions during weekends. Over the duration of four months, Kim retrieved data through interviews, the analysis of response journals, and handwritten notes. In addition to cultural relevance found in focal texts, they also highlighted themes such as racial injustice and discrimination. Data analysis led to the identification of three main themes: "empowerment and transformation," "broadening perspectives," and "engaged reading and engaged resistance." Kim pointed to the growth of individual students, observing increased self-awareness, student empowerment, personal connections to the literature, culture as a resource for learning, and student growth in response to issues of equity, racism, and justice. Although additional cultural perspectives were not interwoven into

this study, it offers implications for considering how culturally relevant texts could facilitate discussion and critical inquiry into meaningful and consequential topics.

Another study by Louie (2005) investigated high school students' empathetic responses to literary characters appearing in a novella with communist China as the setting. Similar to Kim's (2014) study, Louie (2005) used a theoretical backdrop of reader response theory and acknowledged an understanding that cultural practices and experiences facilitate meaning making. Students received information pertaining to the historical, cultural, political, and social implications surrounding the text and participated in activities such as interactive lectures, analyzing propaganda, and viewing a related film. The use of propaganda and film in this context offered multiple textual avenues for student meaning making, as well as overlap with popular culture. A dual methodology of observational case study and participant observation anchored the study and facilitated the analysis of responses from 25 senior-level student participants attending a one-semester world issues course. Participants were predominantly Caucasian, with two students identifying as Hispanic. Data sources included field notes, videotaped lessons, analysis of student work, and interviews, which were transcribed, coded, and categorized for analysis. Louie determined that five categories of empathy emerged during various points of the study, with observations of students asking questions and demonstrating understandings of characters' lives and positionalities. These perspectives spoke to many students' abilities to view realities that extended beyond their own immediate setting and lived experiences. Although some divergent student responses to the text were noted and one student displayed a disengaged reaction to the curricular unit, students communicated their favorable perceptions about the value of their learning experience. Louie's work

signaled how empathetic responses and connections to multicultural texts may emerge throughout a well-planned, discussion-oriented, and contextually rich unit of study.

Expanded cultural understandings and connections to multicultural texts also appeared in Glazier and Seo's (2005) qualitative inquiry into one teacher's implementation of a six-week unit featuring a text based on the Native American Kiowa tribe and culture. Similar to the use of film mentioned in Louie's (2005) work above, Glazier and Seo (2005) observed the use of a documentary film as a supplemental text to the focal narrative, print-based text used in this study, which occurred in a ninth-grade classroom located in a diverse suburban high school. Also similar to preceding studies, transactional reader response theory provided a theoretical lens for this work. Glazier and Seo used ethnographic and sociolinguistic methods in conjunction with case studies of two focal students. Data collection and analysis consisted of audio and videotaped classroom events, conversations between students, transcribing data, interviewing case study students, and identifying a timeline highlighting seven segments with student utterances. Glazier and Seo discovered that multicultural texts, classroom talk, and making connections facilitated students' ability to understand and respect cultures and perspectives that differed from their own. Moreover, students displayed a willingness to share their thoughts through talk and seemed to feel comfortable when partaking in class discussions. Students shared their own cultures, while also observing how peers offered differing interpretations in response to the topic. The teacher's emphasis on text-to-self connections and use of multi-leveling questioning strategies also facilitated the sharing of student feelings and personal narratives. Analysis of conversational segments demonstrated that personal connections were often made by students with cultural

affiliations that did not represent the dominant culture. Observations also suggested that the classroom teacher's discourse sometimes privileged some student cultures over others and seemed to exclude the dominant culture. Glazier and Seo also noted that students from dominant cultural backgrounds may experience some difficulty viewing themselves within and connecting to a multicultural text, with possible feelings of unease about critical issues that could challenge or disrupt the privileged perspectives of some students. For example, a European American student expressed difficulty seeing themselves represented in the multicultural content, in contrast to a Central American student, who displayed several personal connections to the text. This observation highlights possible differences in receptivity to making textual connections that students may encounter and possibilities for resistance from students from the cultural majority. Collectively, this study speaks to possibilities for exposure to multiple perspectives and points of view that expand students' understandings of themselves and their position in relation to individuals and groups with differing backgrounds and experiences.

In the same qualitative tradition as the methods outlined above, Morrell and Morrell (2012) provided brief vignettes illustrating student experiences with multicultural literature and pointed to the value inherent in student perspectives and experiences when interacting with texts. This includes viewing texts as a place for questioning and critique. For example, with the teacher's support, middle school students were able to question textual omissions and stereotypes, which helped to empower students through critical readings of texts. Another vignette detailing student-produced presentations showed how elder family members could be used as a resource for high school students to learn about issues such as immigration, cultural transmission, and education. Used alongside a focal



text concerning issues of identity represented in a multicultural text about a Hispanic male protagonist, the contributions of family members helped students identify with this central character. Further, the use of oral histories functioned as complimentary yet equally significant texts that built upon students' cultural identities and demonstrated that diverse perspectives and stories were valuable additions to learning. Examples such as these illustrate how "students not only need access to diverse texts, but a set of reading skills that allow them to bring multiple cultural and critical perspectives to any texts they read" (p. 10).

### **Student Interest and Engagement.**

Thein et al. (2011) examined the complexities associated with using literature circles during discussions of multicultural texts, finding that student interactions within discussions provided a productive means of textual engagement. Similar to aforementioned study designs, a qualitative participant-observation methodology framed the study and consisted of the analysis of student utterances during discussions featuring multicultural texts. Discussion productivity comprised one analytic segment, with the other focusing on discussion content. Four tenth-grade students participated in 12 discussions, where the majority of talk focused on the text, including commentary aimed at making meaning from the situations and characters portrayed in the text. Participants also displayed engagement and interest when listening to peers and generating questions in response to issues presented in the text, with minimal researcher input. One critique of student responses included a lack of critical analysis, particularly when discussing the theme of social class. This was possibly influenced by minimal teacher scaffolding that may have challenged students and extended the level of critical discourse. This point

coincides with previously described findings from Morrell and Morrell (2012), where teacher support contributed to students' ability to engage in the critical analysis and evaluation of a text. This also calls forth questions of whether student interest and engagement are sufficient without the critical discourse required to advance student thinking and understanding of consequential topics and issues.

Earlier work by Bean et al. (1999) also indicated that using multicultural literature with a diverse group of freshman-level English students facilitated enthusiasm and a sense of connection in literacy activities. Two classes of students located in different geographical regions (Hawaii and the Southwest) participated in the study, which aimed to explore the characteristics displayed in student writing in response to a multicultural young adult novel. Aligned to the preceding literature, Bean et al. implemented their study using a reader response lens, but also added engagement perspective as a guiding theoretical framework. Researchers employed a qualitative participant-observation methodology that consisted of reflective journals entries, collecting field notes, and reviewing student research papers and reader response journals. Data analysis including reading, rereading, and coding journals and triangulating categories. In addition to indicating that students displayed enthusiasm for content, student discussions and responses also revealed a strong level of textual interpretation. A noteworthy feature of the study included online discussions where students agreed or disagreed with their peers, which enabled students to engage in academic discourse regarding the novel. Given the context of this study as occurring over twenty years ago and considering its implementation at the nascence of the internet's availability, the use of online discussions provides a forward-looking means of promoting student interaction. However,

technological access in the study at the two schools appeared inequitable, leading to questions about the impact of these differences.

Unlike the methods employed by other literature reviewed in this section, Dressel (2005) used pre and post unit surveys in a study focused on identifying what students learned during a multicultural unit and describing the instructional goals that anchored the unit. Participants included the classroom teacher and 123 predominantly White, middle-class middle school students attending school in a midwestern suburb. The development of the unit of study hinged on three goals: that students would enjoy and understand novels, that they would be introduced to the “norms and values” (p. 753) of another cultural group, and that students would develop an enhanced understanding of themselves and their own cultural values. Toward these aims, students participated in book club activities, used book club organizers as a scaffold for instruction, and wrote in dialogue journals. They also presented group projects on important themes with the option to use varied text formats, such as puppets, newspapers, and comics. Materials reviewed for analysis included students’ written responses, behaviors, and survey responses. Two categories of finding emerged in the data: personal response and cultural understanding. Findings included increased positive dispositions toward reading and involvement in stories, with two-thirds experiencing what it would be like to live as a member of a nondominant group. Students also appeared to recognize characters’ worldviews. However, post-survey results suggested that students “didn’t increase in their understanding of others” (p. 756), with over half of students indicating that they did not consider non-White individuals similar to their own positions as Americans. In addition to an inclination to view non-White groups as the “other,” students displayed

scant evidence that they better understood their own cultures, and accepted depictions of characters without question. Dressel's study questioned whether establishing a goal of student enjoyment suffices as a main goal of using multicultural texts, particularly since this singular aim may overlook the critical analysis or social critique that aligns to critical pedagogies and culturally relevant approaches. Moreover, it led to recommendations for focusing on cultural strengths, avoiding negative stereotypes, building curricular units around critical literacy, supporting students while also challenging them, and using additional types of popular culture texts (including film, video, and websites).

### **Popular Culture Texts**

#### ***Defining Popular Culture and Popular Culture Texts***

Similar to the variability seen when identifying the attributes of multicultural texts, scholars suggest that assigning a solid, unwavering definition to the term *popular culture* remains a challenging, if not impossible, task, particularly as its definition remains contextually bound (Storey, 2012) and conceptually complex. Popular culture has been likened to “an *empty* conceptual category, one that can be filled in a wide variety of often conflicting ways, depending on the context of use” (Storey, 2012, p. 1; emphasis in original). This definitional ambiguity resurfaced in Alvermann and Xu's (2003) declaration that “trying to define *popular culture* is like nailing gelatin to a wall” (p. 146; emphasis in original). Fiske (1995) further noted that popular culture remains “an elusive concept” that “cannot be located in its texts or in its readers” (p.45).

Adding to these complexities is popular culture's existence as a dynamic presence in the collective human experience, with artifacts that are produced in and reflective of a particular time period and a specific societal context. As popular culture changes, the

popular of yesteryear remains accessible and subject to scrutiny years after its reception (Yang, 2020), including content that portrays offensive, stereotypical, or otherwise contentious material. Such observations might lead to questions of censorship and appropriateness for current and subsequent generations of consumers, while perhaps functioning as a reminder of the past and offering evidence of societal progress (Harris, 2020). Relics of popular culture reverberate with diverse groups of people across time and space and are subject to being redefined and repositioned in a globally changing society. As journalist Jeff Yang (2020) pointed out, “popular culture is a living entity, constantly being commented on and referenced.” This statement speaks to the ubiquity of popular culture texts and their ever-present role in everyday life.

In further explicating an understanding of popular culture, Storey (2012) described six categorical and widely interpretable definitions. The first explanation positions popular culture as culture that is well received by the people; yet, determining how to distinguish between culture and its popular counterpart may prove difficult, even with quantitative measures. Another definition juxtaposes popular culture with high culture. In this view, high culture reflects the cultural practices and artifacts of the elite, whereas popular culture exists as a subordinate counterpart to the loftier and aspirational cultural embodiments of the upper class. A related perspective positions popular culture as the culture of the masses. This distinction is often equated with American culture and emphasizes popular culture as widely accessible, prone to manipulating consumers, and “hopelessly commercial” (p. 8). Alongside this definition, popular culture’s positioning within a commercialized, commodity-driven culture calls upon issues of power, passivity, and resistance (Fiske, 1995). The notion of power also emerges when considering popular

culture through a hegemony theory lens, which situates it “as a terrain of ideological struggle between dominant and subordinated classes” (Storey, 2012, p. 10). Yet another way to conceptualize popular culture includes likening it to folk culture, described as “a culture of the people and for the people” (p. 9). Although Storey critiques this view for discounting the commercial attributes of popular culture, the current media landscape emboldened by technologies and social media platforms perhaps offers a more compelling argument for viewing popular culture as arising from the everyday people.

Taken together, Storey’s (2012) classifications resonate with discussions about popular culture’s role in text production and consumption. In conceptualizing a definition of popular culture that shows its relevance to students’ in- and out-of-school experiences, textual practices, and pedagogy, Hagood et al. (2010) distinguished between three ways to view popular culture: as *mass culture*, described as “for the people”; *folk culture*, reflecting the culture “of the people”; or *everyday culture*, which exemplifies popular culture as “for and of the people” (p. 9). Mass culture assumes that readers accept messages conveyed in a text without critical examination and equates popular culture to pleasure. The second category, folk culture, makes assumptions about texts lacking an assigned meaning from their producers. In this view, the audience’s text use overrides any textual meanings assigned by the author. (Worth noting is that folk culture in this context differs slightly from Storey’s description, which combines “for the people” and “of the people” under the folk culture umbrella.) Hagood et al.’s (2010) third category, everyday culture, captures these two components and upholds the role of the audience and the text producer, with increased possibilities for meaning making. It recognizes popular culture’s importance in daily life, but also specifies that tensions may exist

between the intentional, assigned meanings in a text and the audience's construction of meaning that arises when consuming texts. This negotiation of meaning, termed production-in-use, illustrates that both audience and producer possess shared ownership of textual meaning. This category speaks to the critique that popular culture "is consumed with brain-numbed and brain-numbing passivity" (Storey, 2012, p. 8), and repositions consumers as active thinkers with agency to construct their own meanings from texts. Overall, Hagood et al.'s (2010) framing of popular culture as an inevitable and ubiquitous presence in everyday life in tandem with understandings of the social nature of literacy practices offer insights into how these materials could prove useful in a classroom.

### ***Approaches to Teaching Popular Culture***

Although a clear-cut definition of popular culture remains difficult to fully capture (Alvermann, 2011; Alvermann & Xu, 2003; Fiske, 1995) and represents a range of interpretive possibilities (Storey, 2012), an understanding of popular culture as comprising the everyday experiences and literacies of individuals paved the way for subsequent attentiveness to and research in its applicability to schooling and literacy learning (Alvermann, 2011). Scholarly work identified models and approaches for incorporating popular culture in the classroom and also established linkages between popular culture texts and critical pedagogies. For instance, Alvermann et al. (1999) specify four approaches that educators use when teaching popular culture texts and critical media literacy: considering popular culture as detrimental, using an analytical perspective that positions students as passive recipients under the teacher's guiding influence, viewing popular culture as a source of pleasure that dismisses possibilities for critical engagement, and a balanced approach merging perspectives of popular culture as

a source of pleasure and critical analysis. Xu et al. (2005) enumerate the uses of popular culture along a similar continuum, explaining that educator's positions on the integration of popular culture are categorized as follows: banning its use, using it for critical analysis without an emphasis on enjoyment, celebrating popular culture without viewing it as a potential source of critique, and blending the second and third approaches to recognize popular culture as enjoyable and offering possibilities for engagement with consequential topics. Consistent with the blended approaches espoused above, Marsh and Millard (2000) contended that educators who use popular culture should display an awareness of popular culture's utility as enjoyable and also view it from an analytic disposition.

Marsh (2008, as cited in Hagood et al., 2010) further conceptualized four intersecting models denoting possibilities for the instructional implementation of popular culture texts in school-based settings. The first model, *the utilitarian model*, views popular culture as a means of making school content relevant and accessible to students. The second, *the cultural capital model*, acknowledges the links between popular culture and student experiences, with educators displaying an amenability to using popular culture materials that might otherwise be prohibited or overlooked as containing educational value. The third model, *the critical model*, aligns to a critical literacy perspective and seeks to assist students with developing their critical awareness skills. This model synthesizes components of the previously described models and emphasizes the analysis and critical questionings of texts. The final model, *the recontextualized model*, infuses elements from all three previously outlined models and strives to facilitate knowledge construction and students' abilities to transform popular culture texts.



Similarly, Morrell (2004) provided recommendations for educators planning to incorporate popular culture into the curriculum. This discussion pointed to the importance of understanding the attributes that make popular culture attractive to youth and cautioned against dismissing popular culture due to perceptions about the portrayal of issues with vulgarity or violence, particularly since these are similar to some of the themes advanced in canonical works. Concerns such as these echo the discomfort raised by preservice teachers in Haddix and Price-Dennis's (2013) study featuring urban fiction, where the graphic nature of content was called into question. Morrell's (2004) work also encourages educators to refrain from making judgements on popular culture materials. This point alludes to the first approaches described above (Alvermann et al., 1999; Xu et al., 2005), where popular culture is viewed as problematic or unworthy of school inclusion. This sentiment appears across some of the literature, with the educational worthiness of popular culture called into question and variations in opinion existing among educators (Alvermann, 2011). Additional accusations against popular culture have positioned it as "fads," "easy reads," or "inappropriate" (Beers, 2010, p. ix), with claims that it devalues the literacy curriculum (Callens, 2017) and does not have a place in school (Hall, 2003; Millard, 2003). Aligned to these perspectives, youth culture in general has been viewed as "dangerous" and "morally corrupting" (Luke, 1997, p. 19), with genres such as zines and teen romance or young adult novels considered by some educators and parents as "subliterature" (Finders, 1996, p. 84), the inferior counterparts to legitimate literature (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Despite this critique, young adult literature, with its alignment to popular culture texts and potential to coexist as multicultural (e.g., Glenn, 2012; Haddix & Price-Dennis, 2013), may offer benefits to adolescent readers,

such as encouraging purposeful reading; learning about social responsibility through thematic, inquiry driven learning experiences (Wolk, 2009); and exploring universal themes common to the human experience (Hipple, 2000; Monseu & Salvner, 2000).

In further support of using popular culture texts, Page (2012) noted that evidence does not exist that popular culture is detrimental, a position supported by the perspective that well-selected popular culture texts could help educators to promote literacy learning (Alvermann & Xu, 2003; Xu et al., 2005), critical engagement (Alvermann & Xu, 2003; Hagood et al., 2010; Morrell, 2004; Page, 2012; Shipp, 2017; Xu et al., 2005), motivation (Hagood et al., 2010; Marsh, 2006; Morrell, 2004), and alignment with curricular standards (Hagood et al., 2010; Xu et al., 2005).

### ***Preservice and Practicing Educator Perspectives and Experiences***

Across the spectrum of grade levels, studies have contributed to an understanding of preservice and practicing educator perspectives regarding popular culture's role in the classroom. For instance, Batchelor (2019) narratively detailed how a critical literacy framework guided the implementation of a course focused on young adult literature and media. Similar to literature described above featuring texts categorized as young adult (Glenn, 2012; Haddix & Price-Dennis, 2013) and multicultural text sets (Haddix & Price-Dennis, 2013), Batchelor's preservice teachers created linked text sets exemplifying a topic of choice related to themes of social justice that may be excluded from a typical school curriculum. A main goal of this inquiry included encouraging preservice teachers to reflect on their own implicit biases and offer an alternate means of teaching texts. Topics represented in text sets highlighted issues with current and critical implications, including Black Lives Matter, mental health, and rape culture. Within each of these text

sets, teacher candidates selected a variety of print and nonprint textual mediums, including young adult literature, a graphic novel, videos, images, symbolism and imagery from book jackets, adult novels, music videos, and campaign ads. They then critiqued their selections to examine the content that was omitted or privileged, and to consider the role of bias that may have been manifested in their selections. Critiques included noticing that more marginalized individuals could have been represented in the Black Lives Matter text set, suggesting that additional perspectives would have enhanced the rape culture text set, and noticing that characters in the mental health text set did not represent a diverse group of characters, but rather only included White, middle- to upper-class representation. An implication of this work includes the idea that confronting controversial topics that are prevalent in both in and out-of-school contexts could provide an outlet for student discussion, broaden perspectives, and dispel hesitance about topics due to perceived controversy. It also showed how experiences with developing linked text sets comprised of multiple genres and formats held possibilities for igniting conversations about significant topics not often associated with school curricula.

Lee (2012) also used a qualitative approach consisting of a constant comparative method of grounded theory to learn about the perspectives of 20 preservice educators preparing to work in early childhood education. A secondary goal included identifying possible explanations for perceptions based on participants' experiences in classrooms and in their teacher education program. Responses were obtained through semi-structured interviews with participants and additional follow-up methods, such as emails and phone calls. Lee grouped results into three subsections, focusing on what participants were taught, experiences in classrooms, and hesitance to use popular culture in the classroom.

Findings from the first section included noting students' insecurity and lack of knowledge about using popular culture, as well as low confidence and a perceived lack of time to prepare for using popular culture. A sense of frustration was also noted in regard to placement classrooms preventing the use of popular culture, with popular culture functioning as a time filler or for disciplining or rewarding students, rather than for academic purposes. Additional findings pertained to reluctance to use popular culture texts and materials, and illuminated issues of individual differences, equity, and concern for materials that addressed all students' interests and cognitive abilities; worries about integrating controversial materials; a lack of understanding on how to differentiate using popular culture; uncertainty about parent perceptions about using popular culture materials; and a belief that using popular culture should be decided by families instead of teachers. This analysis pointed to the possible impact of preservice teachers' experiences in placement classrooms where popular culture lacked value as a potential asset for literacy learning. The study also suggested that students' lack of awareness on scholarly work may have influenced their perspectives.

Petrone's (2013) discussion of popular culture as integral to literacy teacher education resonates with Lee's (2012) article and advocates for approaches to assisting preservice educators with developing a favorable disposition toward popular culture materials. Recommendations included introducing preservice teachers to academic scholarship and various perspectives from popular culture studies through readings and discussions, promoting interactions with youth through ethnography and case studies (possibly as part of a practicum requirement), designating K-12 students as experts in popular culture who share their expertise as guest speakers, and providing opportunities

for coursework dedicated to the theoretical and practical aspects of analyzing popular culture texts. Although challenges may arise from these or similar undertakings, Petrone asserted that literacy educators should approach popular culture with an inquisitive mindset, and teacher candidates may benefit from self-examination of their perceptions about popular culture as it pertains to teaching, literacy learning, and student engagement. Anecdotal evidence from Petrone's experiences suggested that three categories of responses typified preservice teacher perspectives. Some students easily visualize possibilities for popular culture as a valid resource for literacy learning, whereas others are ambivalent about popular culture or trivialize its potential uses. A third segment convey disapproval about using popular culture, indicating that it could waste students' time or dilute the curriculum. Similar to Lee (2012), Petrone (2013) noted that students appeared concerned about using controversial popular culture materials, yet also observed that concerns such as this led to worthwhile discussions examining issues of legitimacy among classroom materials, the literary canon, censorship, evaluating materials for classroom use, and pedagogical decision making. Concerns related to misappropriating students' youth-focused cultural practices also surfaced across discussions, with Petrone suggesting that these concerns could instigate conversations about in- and out-of-school literacies and student identities. Yet another theme across Petrone's observations included concerns that popular culture could displace other materials, which again led to discussions about literacy and textuality.

Similar to the focal population in Lee's (2012) study, Dickie and Shuker's (2014) study also focused on educators working with younger students. This New Zealand-based inquiry examined primary educators' perspectives about using popular culture funds of

knowledge into the curriculum. Worth noting is that Dickie and Shuker integrated Moll et al.'s (1992) theoretical conception of funds of knowledge into their work, which emphasizes the significant role of the culturally and socially mediated knowledge that students acquire in out-of-school contexts and how these forms of cultural capital connect to integrating popular culture into the classroom (Hall, 2003). A two-phase data collection approach included mail surveys sent to primary grades educators teaching at 154 schools and qualitative case studies with observations and structured interviews with four teachers. Findings pointed to beliefs linking popular culture to motivation and suggesting that it belonged in the curriculum, which are consistent with theoretical positions supporting popular culture's use in the classroom (e.g., Alvermann & Xu, 2003; Hagood et al., 2010; Marsh, 2006; Morrell, 2004). However, some responses suggested a need for protection from popular culture, which speaks to concerns about popular culture as inappropriate for or possibly detrimental to student learning (Alvermann et al., 1999).

Additional studies have utilized survey data to gain insights into educator perceptions of and experiences with using popular culture in an educational setting. At the collegiate level, studies by Peacock et al. (2016) and Rets (2016) offered information about the perceived utility of popular culture for learning. Using a cross-sectional survey methodology, Peacock et al. (2016) sought to learn about the attitudes and utilization of popular culture among faculty members teaching at a mid-size university. Data included 212 responses to survey items provided using a 5-point Likert scale. Researchers ran descriptive and inferential analyses using ANOVA with post-hoc tests and independent t-tests to examine results. Salient findings included the belief that using popular culture could function as a tool for critical thinking and participant confidence in using popular

culture, although groups differed among the disciplines taught. In response to study findings, Peacock et al. developed six guidelines for teaching with popular culture in college, anchored by the mnemonic DEBATE. These guidelines included: “define popular culture for your audience,” “expectations are clear,” “be authentic,” “access the right materials,” “tailor to your discipline/course,” and “enhance skills” (p. 611). Peacock et al. noted that training efforts for instructors of the content areas may also be beneficial.

Similarly, Rets’s (2016) study examined perceptions of popular culture use among 50 college level educators working in Russia and Turkey. Percentages and narrative description were used to convey results. Although many respondents pointed to the usefulness of popular culture, nearly three-quarters indicated unfavorable perceptions. Furthermore, despite the noted potential of popular culture to be used for critical inquiry, 72% of respondents did not believe that popular culture promotes critical thinking, particularly in comparison to options perceived as more culturally desirable. This perspective contrasted the notion of popular culture as part of everyday culture (Hagood et al., 2010) and alluded to early definitions of popular culture as reflective of a lowly standard of culture, in comparison to the elitist, sophisticated connotations traditionally associated with high culture (Delaney, 2007). Lankshear (1997) suggested that hierarchical notions of popular versus high culture point to issues of power, where high status functions as a coveted display of the social group in asserting that its meanings are valuable. This point hearkens to issues of power in literacy, where emancipatory models (such as critical literacies and pedagogies) seek to challenge dominant forms of knowledge and the illusion that a singular way of knowing should prevail among others.

### ***Using Popular Culture Texts in the Classroom***

Similar to research examined in relation to multicultural texts in the classroom, studies focused on using popular culture texts for educational purposes also point to the role of student discussions and their potential utility as a tool for critical inquiry, as well as possibilities for popular culture texts as a way of facilitating student engagement and capitalizing on student interests. Another notable, overlapping theme presented in the literature includes the use of popular culture as a scaffold, particularly when used alongside canonical works that have traditionally characterized the English curriculum.

#### **Critical Discussions, Engagement, and Interest.**

Garland (2012) focused on student discussions and examined classroom conversations occurring within a high school class called “Literature in the Media.” In this context, the classroom teacher viewed popular culture texts as supportive of literacy learning and considered film as transferable to engaging with more traditional text genres. Garland suggested that students could “read” popular culture texts in ways similar to reading traditional literature often associated with English classrooms. Student interactions and analysis of the three literacy events (featuring a focus on film-related vocabulary, analyzing the visual details of a images, and interpreting films) revealed that skills and conversations were similar when discussing print and film texts. Garland noted the relevance of film and its ease of engagement, as well as its ability to promote critical literacy and address interdisciplinary standards. Recommendations included embracing expanded views of literacy and acknowledging varied text types in the classroom.

Bowmer and Curwood (2016) qualitatively sought to explore how popular culture promoted relevance, enjoyment, and the students’ ability to “remix” textual content.



Researchers used a socioculturally influenced case study approach over the course of a nine-week unit of study. Findings indicated that ninth-grade students experienced a sense of empowerment through remixing activities where popular culture facilitated understanding and connections to Romantic poetry. Bowmer and Curwood also noted increases in perceptions of student autonomy and observed task engagement and student enjoyment. They further noted that popular culture may add meaning and relevance to English lessons, while coexisting with traditional texts, yet also cautioned that educators should address their subjectivities when identifying popular culture materials for inclusion. This suggestion echoes recommendations from Morrell (2004), who pointed to the importance of text selection and wrote that teachers are often not experts in the arena of popular culture. Morrell advised educators to position students as knowledgeable resources who can provide insights into texts that could be useful in the classroom.

Another qualitative study by Hall (2012) focused on how 52 sixth-grade adolescent students in two middle schools spontaneously used popular culture during small group discussions that occurred when interacting with social studies texts. Informed by reader response theory and an understanding of students' funds of knowledge as additive to learning, Hall's inquiry pointed to the central role of popular culture in adolescent's lives. Data analysis of student discussions occurring alongside reading and applying comprehension strategies showed that 78% of small group discussions featured references to popular culture, with nearly a quarter of discussion time attributed to these references. Discussions also highlighted that popular culture emerged in three ways: when applying comprehension strategies (25% of instances), when offering textual evidence (41% of instances), and as a means of silencing

classmates (34% of instances). Although data pointed to the centrality of popular culture and its apparent value, Hall's study underscored questions regarding the reliability and validity of information obtained and cited from popular culture texts. For instance, students did not interrogate the authenticity of peer responses that referenced popular culture and demonstrated less reliance on social studies texts to retrieve information. Another problematic observation included how some students used popular culture to dismiss alternate perspectives that conflicted with their own. Based on these outcomes, Hall suggested that critical media literacy skills, guided instruction, and well-planned learning experiences may help to advance the productive use of popular culture texts.

Similar to Hall's (2012) observations related to the prevalent influence of popular culture in peer-to-peer discussions, Tuzel and Hobbs's (2017) case study of a collaborative, six-week American and Turkish "intercultural learning experience" (p. 64) illustrated how popular culture emerged in the context of adolescent students' online interactions using social media. Goals anchoring this study included strengthening student confidence when interacting with peers on social media and fostering an understanding of other cultures and peers living in another country (the United States and Turkey). The initiative also aimed to deepen students' critical thinking skills in relation to popular culture and the media. Participants consisted of 84 middle school students attending either an American or Turkish school and educators representing the two schools, which were located in Northern California and Western Turkey. Researchers used data from a combination of qualitative methods to learn about participants' experiences with and outcomes from the social media activity, including observations, video, participant interviews, student artifacts, and document analysis. During the first of

four lessons within the curriculum, students were encouraged to share information using a variety of self-selected formats (such as photos, writing, or videos) about their own cultures with their peers. Despite challenges related to language and time differences, students at both schools used resources such as videos and media links to communicate with each other. Findings from an analysis of this lesson revealed that over two-thirds of student interactions and postings featured elements of media and popular culture, with commonalities in interest displayed among students from both countries. This “common ground” (p. 68) pointed to the widespread appeal of popular culture influences among students with varied cultural experiences living in two geographically and culturally distinct locations. However, an imbalance in the origin of popular culture texts also surfaced, as American popular culture’s dominance in student interactions contributed to feelings of discontent among Turkish students who observed that pop culture references from their own country and culture were sparsely recognized by their American peers. An equally noteworthy finding included educator perceptions of popular culture. Whereas the American teacher indicated satisfaction with student interactions, Turkish educators appeared disappointed that students allocated discussion time to popular culture topics, rather than more traditional elements of Turkish culture and heritage. Acknowledging the apparent “love-hate relationship” (p. 71) among educators and popular culture and media, authors intimated that teacher reflection on perceptions related to the pedagogical applications of popular culture, media, and technological resources may be beneficial when using social media as a platform for building cultural understanding.

As part of a larger case study, Lefstein and Snell (2011) conducted a linguistic ethnographic analysis of a fifth-grade lesson featuring the television show “X Factor.”

Varied analytic techniques suggested some evidence of student engagement as students provided evaluative feedback about writing to a peer. Although engaged in the task, researchers indicated that several student voices were dominant, with distractions impeding more in-depth, meaningful learning opportunities. These observations pointed to the intricacies associated with discourse genre mixing, while also speaking to the necessity of positioning popular culture within well-designed and purposeful lessons. Researchers pointed out that the focal classroom episode occurred without planning, in a spontaneous way that extended based on students' favorable response. Further, the use of a television show to anchor the lesson speaks to the prevalence and influence of this medium (Berry & Asamen, 2001; Luke, 1997) and offers a reminder that television and media function, to some extent, as an omnipresent source of communication. As society continues to gain access to streaming and digital media, Luke's (1997) claim that television embodies the role of "mass social educator" (p. 25) remains salient.

Grater and Johnson's (2013) action research in an eighth-grade classroom similarly pointed to the role of student interest, engagement, and connecting to lessons when interacting with popular culture. Data consisting of researcher notes, videos of lessons, and interviews with students indicated the prevalence of students' off-task behavior. In response to these observations, Johnson sought to improve student learning and engagement by revising the curriculum to embody components of cultural relevance, which included the use of popular culture. Modifications included adding culturally relevant songs, using rap music to analyze theme, and response-oriented activities. The authors noted that the use of video and song led to increased student engagement and a

high level of focus, with a comparably higher rate of students completing assignments. Additional improvements appeared in student writing, self-efficacy, and comprehension.

Observations related to student interest and the strong influence of the media were also noted in Chandler-Olcott and Mahar's (2003) qualitative analysis of two female students' uses of fanfiction writing. According to Jenkins (2006), fanfiction constructed by peer communities and feedback from peer composers may offer implications for student writing, similar to educational scaffolding or a traditional apprenticeship. Using a multiliteracies framework, Chandler-Olcott and Mahar showed how anime influenced two middle school students' fanfiction compositions. Observations and conversations with students occurred during study hall, thereby suggesting that students' activity occurred in the context of an informal classroom space. Researchers indicated that the students perceived writing fanfiction as enjoyable, with benefits such as the cultivation of peer relationships and outreach to in-person and online audiences. The focal students also placed high importance on their fanfiction writing and believed it to be better quality than formal school writing assignments, perhaps explaining why students did not share this work with their teachers. Analysis of students' writing using three tenets of multiliteracies – multimodality, intertextuality, and hybridity – showed how these elements were present in the students' texts. Researchers recommended viewing fanfiction and other texts embraced by students as tools to learn about more about and appreciate students' literate identities and proficiencies, which aligns to Alvermann and Hagood's (2000b) discussion of "fandom" and the potential benefits of inviting materials reflective of students' interests and identities into the classroom. Chandler-Olcott and Mahar's (2003) work also implies that fanfiction inspired by popular texts and genres

may allow youth to shift from popular culture consumers to composers, publishers, and evaluators of peer-produced works in online or offline spaces (Jenkins, 2006).

Unlike the preceding research and aligned to the cautionary implications of utilizing popular culture from a passive rather than critical stance, an earlier study focusing on the consumption of teen magazines by adolescent females (Finders, 1996) highlighted how young readers appeared to accept, rather than question, the information presented in texts marketed to this demographic. Observations and student commentary regarding the content and presentation of teen magazines showed how these materials exerted an authoritative influence on participants' ideologies and their perceived social status. Despite the challenges inherent in reassigning youth texts for use in a classroom and essentially "co-opting" literacy practices that otherwise denote student affiliations with youth culture (Au & Raphael, 2000, p. 174), Finders (1996) indicated that these resources may offer possibilities for curricular inclusion. Finders pointed to the need for interrogating mass-produced materials and the messages they convey, thereby transitioning "vulnerable readers" (p. 85) into empowered higher-level thinkers, capable of partaking in critical discussions and examining the messages embedded in texts. Although this work provides a less recent account of popular culture text use among adolescent students, its takeaways remain relevant in a society that demands skills in critically analyzing and evaluating texts and content presented in a variety of formats.

### **Scaffolding and Partnership with Canonical Texts.**

Contrary to concerns that popular culture texts may displace canonical works, popular culture may function as a scaffold to content and curricular objectives and enable students to access background knowledge and construct meaning when engaging with

academic content and literary texts (Page, 2012). For example, highly influential work by Lee (2007) demonstrated how cultural modeling and cultural data sets offered pathways to literacy learning among youth attending school in Chicago. Cultural data sets consisting of familiar genres of popular culture texts, such as film, music, and television, were interwoven into English lessons in order to connect students' cultural knowledge and everyday out-of-school interests to canonical texts. In this context, establishing linkages and connections between students' daily lives and academic content served to validate students' lived experiences and perspectives, while also aligning to youth practices and a student-centered conceptualization of funds of knowledge (Orellana et al., 2011). Lee (2007) detailed how a symbolism unit featured rap lyrics and videos alongside literary works. Lee also observed how students drew on their prior knowledge of popular culture during a class discussion focused on making meaning from music lyrics, and how a whole-group discussion provided a forum for students to analyze and question aspects of a short film, including author's purpose. In one vignette, students' prior knowledge about popular culture repositioned them as experts during a class discussion, with their understandings of content surpassing that of their teacher's. Overall, cultural data sets facilitated engagement and participation in analytical discussions, promoted text comprehension and reasoning skills, and extended possibilities for transferring these skills to new situations. In addition to acting as a scaffold to students' learning, popular culture in this context also pointed to possibilities for fostering student motivation and metacognitive skills (Orellana et al., 2011).

In another well-cited study featuring the incorporation of popular music as a means toward literacy learning, Morrell and Duncan-Andrade (2002) qualitatively

described how Hip-hop texts were positioned in an urban senior-level classroom as a familiar “scaffold” (p. 90) within a unit of study on English poetry. Unit objectives included supporting students with analytically and critically interacting with texts, bolstering student motivation, fostering writing skills (poetic and expository), helping student to gain a critical lens for evaluating popular culture, and legitimizing Hip-hop alongside other poetic genres. Researchers also spoke to the merit of skills transfer to other interactions with canonical works. Performance tasks and varied literacy activities included group work, student presentations, peer critiques, writing a critical essay on an individually chosen song, and writing original poetry exploring meaningful, self-selected issues. Taken together, these culturally relevant activities promoted learning and engagement, while also affirming student identities and valuing their lived experiences.

Closely related to the preceding studies, a study by Stairs (2007) underscores the centrality of music to students’ lives and speaks to the ways that music has traditionally been regarded as a medium synonymous with youth culture (Roberts & Christenson, 2001). During a culturally responsive lesson featuring poetry and the Harlem Renaissance, Stairs (2007) observed that popular music was used to initiate discussions, capture student interest and engagement, and facilitate literacy learning in a ninth-grade classroom in a Boston school that predominantly served African American and Latino students. The lesson, taught by two undergraduate student teachers, featured rap lyrics to teach figurative language and incorporated jazz and blues songs when learning about the poet Langston Hughes. Several focal themes, including discrimination, racism, and prejudice, were addressed, with students partaking in collaborative, discussion-oriented,



and individual learning activities. Student participants used prior experiences when working and offered overall positive feedback on the lesson.

Similarly, Buelow's (2017) critical participatory action research study revealed how sixth-grade students' popular culture funds of knowledge functioned as a scaffold or "entryway" (p. 15) leading to academic learning and increased motivation. Buelow framed the inquiry using third space as a theoretical lens and employed a constant comparative method utilizing codes, categories, and themes. The curriculum integrated collaborative activities within two units of study that capitalized on students' interest in and expertise with media, music, magazines, and video games. The identification of three overarching themes emerged in the data: "learning with them and from them," "situated literacies," and "surviving and thriving" (p. 10). Observations demonstrated how students positioned themselves as experts through the use of popular culture and applied a critical stance when interacting with texts, such as interrogating stereotypes about gender. Examples of student activity included analyzing aspects of video games as a genre to create video game proposals based on traditional novels and developing multimodal "cinemoems" comprised of words, images, and background music that conveyed the tone of a poem. Worth noting is that 91% of students achieved or surpassed expectations on reading in the state exam following the use of popular culture in the curriculum. In addition to highlighting how popular culture was productively used with middle school students, Buelow's work also points to how educators are able to adopt a reflective stance regarding their practice in order to ensure that content remains relevant and connective to students' interests and experiences. Moreover, this study provides an example of how popular culture may fit alongside curricular standards, thereby exemplifying Hagood et

al.'s (2010) assertion that "[c]onnecting standards to students' lives is paramount for their academic success" (p. 27).

Another article by Visco (2019) resonates with Buelow's (2017) use of popular culture to scaffold student learning by integrating relevant content and genres. Inspired by observations suggesting a need for increased student engagement in the high school classroom, Visco implemented pedagogies designed to make traditional texts more accessible by drawing upon students' interest and everyday lives. Visco described three broad areas with implications for pedagogical practice: "pop culture pairings" (p. 85), "musical connections" (p. 86), and "multimodal assignments" (p. 88). Visco's overview of popular culture pairings reinforced possibilities for thematically selecting and pairing popular culture texts with canonical texts and showed how popular culture texts supplemented instruction related to literary analysis. For instance, students examined segments of popular film that featured thematic elements appearing in curricular texts in order to develop skills in areas such as rhetorical analysis and the examination of fictional characters. Thematically and conceptually aligned songs also complemented traditional texts, thereby facilitating students' connections to content. The final area of exploration, multimodal assignments, addressed the importance of offering students options for choosing among varied modalities to show understanding. Choices for student-created texts ranged across a spectrum of text production, including but not limited to options for creating models, brochures, or advertisements; utilizing technology to design a PowerPoint; producing a short film; or creating and designing a musical CD. This facet of assessment is noted as an alternative to more traditional testing formats. In addition to highlighting popular culture's potential for helping adolescent students to make

connections to classical works, Visco's observations and instructional recommendations offer a customizable framework for the inclusion of popular culture in the classroom.

### **Gaps in the Research and Rationale for the Study**

The literature reviewed above provides an overview of theory and research related to the overarching topics of multicultural and popular culture texts, with a specific focus on educator perspectives and the educational applicability of these resources in promoting literacy learning and engaging students in textual practices that connect to their diverse identities and cultural affiliations. Although a majority of study designs utilized qualitative approaches and were smaller scope in design, lacking from this collection were narrative inquiries into the experiences and perspectives of educators. A qualitative narrative inquiry approach appears well-suited to addressing this methodological gap and exploring questions aligned to those identified in this review.

Both younger and older students are featured in the above research, although priority is placed at the secondary level. While possibilities to examine educator perspectives and experiences exist across the spectrum of grade levels, the adolescent's positioning as an intermediary between child and adult and the extant literature on adolescent literacies positioned this population as ideal for the current study. In addition, several studies offered the perspectives of preservice teachers, rather than educators with full time classroom experience (Batchelor, 2019; Glenn, 2012; Haddix & Price-Dennis, 2013; Lee, 2012; Petrone, 2013; Willis, 2003). Of the studies highlighting practicing educator perspectives across the grade levels (Dickie & Shuker, 2014; Ketter & Lewis, 2001; Lewis & Ketter, 2008; Peacock et al., 2016; Rets, 2016; Stallworth et al., 2006; Suh & Hinton, 2015; Tatum, 2007; Tuzel & Hobbs, 2017), none centered on educators

working in rural South Texas, thereby suggesting that learning from this underrepresented population may be additive to the literature. Also noteworthy is that studies examining the use of multicultural and popular culture texts often focused on one domain versus the other, although instances of overlap were noted (e.g., Dressel, 2005; Glazier & Seo, 2005; Glenn, 2012; Haddix & Price-Dennis, 2013; Lewis & Ketter, 2008; Louie, 2005). A rationale for exploring educator perspectives about and experiences with both multicultural and popular culture texts in a collective endeavor includes the wide array of texts that categorically meet criteria for inclusion as either one or both text types, similar yet distinct possibilities for students' educational engagement and literacy learning, and comparable challenges that may be applicable to these genres.

Scholarly recommendations for research applicable to this focal area include continuing to learn about text use by both teachers and students (Moje et al., 2011); gaining additional clarity about ways to use popular culture for instructional purposes (Cartledge et al., 2015); understanding how educators utilize popular culture and how students enact the roles of producer and consumer (Hagood, 2008); examining how teachers incorporate content and overcome challenges to integration (Banks, 2001); and learning about how to productively use media as a multicultural teaching tool (Cortés, 2001). Considerations such as these suggest that this exploratory study aligns to the lines of inquiry established on these topics. Further, learning from practicing educators suggests progress in addressing the tensions that exist between theory and practice by revealing how multicultural and popular culture texts have been featured in the secondary classroom, and to what end they have functioned as educational tools, resources for literacy learning, and materials that relate to and capitalize on students' lived experiences.

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODS AND PROCEDURES**

### **The Research Paradigm**

Throughout the study, I sought to establish and maintain a collaborative relationship with study participants, which included upholding and prioritizing the principles of respect, fairness, and trust during all interactions. At the forefront of my research was also the understanding that differing perspectives, points of view, and subjective realities would inevitably emerge. This understanding aligns to the qualitative stance that acknowledges the existence of multiple realities and utilizes inductive methods of inquiry. For this reason, I situated this work within both constructivist and transformative paradigms. A constructivist perspective lends focus to individual participants while acknowledging the existence of multiple meanings alongside sociohistorical, culturally mediated perspectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A critical paradigm based on the ontological perspective of historical realism (Scotland, 2012) also informed the development of this study. This stance aligns to a transformative worldview (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Mertens, 2005) that acknowledges multiple realities (Mertens, 2005), yet adopts the viewpoint that reality is influenced by one or more sets of values, including those that are cultural, political, social, and/or ethnic (Scotland, 2012).

### **The Research Design**

Since the goal of this work focused on learning about educators' perspectives about and experiences with using multicultural and popular culture texts, I selected a qualitative narrative inquiry approach. Ambert et al. (1995) explained that "qualitative research seeks depth rather than breadth" (p. 880), a distinction that is suited to research that focuses on the individual. In a justification of the relevance of narrative as a means

toward exploring the world around us, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) asserted that experience occurs in a narrative fashion, and narrative inquiry assists with understanding those experiences. By viewing the individual as an embodiment of story and experience, narrative inquiry positions the lived stories of people as central to gaining insight into research questions (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The notion of a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space conceptualizes the temporal, situational, personal, and social dimensions of inquiry and the researcher's positioning in the study (Clandinin & Caine, 2008; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). When used in the context of educational research, narrative inquiry offers a way to gain detailed, rich portrayals of the storied lives of educators, students, and other members of the educational community (Huber et al., 2013). This methodology invites researchers to hear the voices of individuals who may have been previously overlooked (Montero & Washington, 2011), including the complex identities, group memberships, and dynamic collections of experiential knowledge that lend shape to the stories they tell. The two-fold representation of voice offered by both researcher and participant further explicates this approach (Kim, 2016; Lichtman, 2013). Learning about experiences through first-person storytelling facilitates the researcher's interpretation and the construction of meaning, with a goal of restorying a narrative that captures the essence of the individual voice (Lichtman, 2013) and offers detailed insights into the research inquiry.

### **Population and Participants' School**

The focal population for my study consisted of English Language Arts teachers working in rural South Texas high schools. Inclusion criteria for participation included teaching ninth, tenth, eleventh, and/or twelfth grade English Language Arts at an

approved school site. Rural schools located in South Texas were selected for recruitment for this study due to familiarity (I was raised in the geographic vicinity), the demographic makeup of students (who are culturally diverse and predominantly Hispanic), and the population's underrepresentation in the academic literature.

The most recent public school enrollment data by race and ethnicity for the state of Texas (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018) indicated that 52.4% of elementary and secondary students identified as Hispanic, compared with 27.9% White, 12.6% Black, 4.4% Asian, 0.1% Pacific Islander, 0.4% American Indian/Alaska Native, and 2.3% two or more races. This data reveals that Hispanic students enrolled in a Texas school accounted for roughly double the nationwide percentage of Hispanic students enrolled in public schools (26.7%).

The three participants in this study all worked at Ramos-Canales High School. Ramos-Canales High School is located in a South Texas county that enrolls a majority of students who identify as Hispanic (Texas Education Agency, 2020), which exceeds the statewide percentage distribution for this group. According to the most recent school-wide information obtained from U. S. News (2022; see Table 1), the total student enrollment for Ramos-Canales High School is 387 students, with 99% categorized as “minority” and 72% of students classified as “economically disadvantaged.” The majority Hispanic population of the school conforms to national and global perceptions of cultural diversity, while variances in socioeconomic background and individual attributes represent additional indicators of student diversity that were well-suited to the aims of the present study.

**Table 1***Enrollment by Minority and Socioeconomic Status (U.S. News, 2022)*

<b>School Pseudonym</b>	<b>Total Student Enrollment</b>	<b>Percentage Students Categorized as “Minority”</b>	<b>Percentage Students Categorized as “Economically Disadvantaged”</b>
<b>Ramos-Canales High School</b>	387	99%	72%

**IRB Approval**

I gained IRB approval to recruit from three South Texas high schools, which included Ramos-Canales High School. During my initial communication with superintendents and principals at the schools, I outlined the aims and purposes of the study, participants’ roles, research procedures, and ethical considerations. I explained that the study would be permitted to commence pending approval from the St. John’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). Following the attainment of written consent for partnership in this study and the submission of requisite materials required by the IRB, approval was granted to move forward with this research (see Appendix A).

**Participants and Sampling**

Lichtman (2013) indicated that determining sample size in qualitative research is less rigid than sampling for quantitative research, as qualitative inquiries seek to “describe and interpret rather than to generalize” (p. 193). I invited educators teaching in the English departments at the approved school sites to participate in this study, thereby offering me access to a pool of individuals with a breadth of experiential backgrounds. My initial recruitment approach included remotely contacting possible participants via



email correspondence using email addresses provided by each school's principal. I organized all email addresses into an excel spreadsheet that also served as an organizational tool for maintaining records of outreach and interactions. The recruitment email provided an overview of the study and encouraged interested educators to reach out to me using the contact information provided (see Appendix B). Two educators from Ramos-Canales High School, Michael and April, responded to the email invitation and returned signed consent forms for participation (all names are represented using pseudonyms that were selected alongside each participant). To bolster participation, I utilized two additional recruitment methods, including snowball sampling and my attendance at virtual staff meetings. I also gained approval for a fourth recruitment method consisting of the distribution of a video invitation to possible participants, which would be used if the previous two attempts at recruitment were unsuccessful (see Appendix C for the video invitation script). The snowball sampling method entailed emailing participants to notify them that they could share information about the study with other English educators (see Appendix D). I clarified that participants were under no obligation to share information with their peers and were invited to do so at their discretion. Following the distribution of the snowball sampling email request, I emailed the three school principals to request attendance at a virtual meeting (see Appendix E). This option was added to my recruitment approach to add a layer of personalization to my attempts at recruitment. The face-to-face setting of a virtual, real-time space suggested possibilities for introducing myself, explaining the aims of the study, and answering any questions posed by interested educators. During my virtual meeting with Ramos-Canales, I met Guinevere, who expressed interest in participating. Upon receiving

Guinevere's signed consent form, my advisor indicated that the three educators from Ramos-Canales High School were sufficient to comprise my sample of participants.

### **Instruments**

Qualitative researchers often employ the use of unstandardized data collection instruments and rely upon the analysis of words to gain a deeper understanding of the questions under investigation (Miles et al., 2020). Consistent with these hallmarks of qualitative inquiry (Miles et al., 2020), I developed a semi-structured interview guide designed for one-to-one interviewing to serve as the primary data collection instrument for my study. During question development, I referenced recommendations for guided, semi-structured interviewing (Lichtman, 2013) and included the flexibility to incorporate additional questions and follow-up probes as needed (Kim, 2016; Mack et al., 2005). Merriam's (1998) description of an interview structure continuum assisted question development for the interview guide. From this perspective, semi-structured interviews are situated as equidistant between more highly structured and unstructured, informal interview approaches. This middle positioning of the semi-structured approach appeared ideal for obtaining predetermined information, while also offering less constraints in responding to authentic and unanticipated shifts in the conversation (Merriam, 1998). This method ensures that essential topics are covered, yet also recognizes that conversations could diverge in unforeseen directions that yield rich and complementary data, thereby building upon the focal areas of exploration.

Along these lines, Kim (2016) explained that while general questions serve to guide a semi-structured interview, questions should remain "flexible enough to expand the scope of the interview, as they allow you to ask different but relevant questions

depending on the interviewee's responses" (pp. 163-164). This guidance aligns to the difficulty associated with fully anticipating and planning for how each interview session will unfold (Mitman Colker, n.d.). By listening attentively to participant responses (Kim, 2016; Seidman, 1998), I incorporated follow-up questions to clarify unclear or underdeveloped responses. Questions that extended beyond the interview guide encouraged participants to share additional in-depth aspects of their experiences and perspectives, while also establishing a conversational, participant-focused quality to the interview sessions.

### ***The Interview Guide and Piloting Procedure***

The interview guide consisted of two sections: one with questions relevant to multicultural texts and the second pertaining to popular culture texts (see Appendix F). A question that merged the two subtopics was also provided, as well as general questions asking participants to tell a bit about themselves. During initial instrument development, I included 15 questions per section, with the expectation that additional questions and conversational pathways would emerge during the natural progression of the interview process. I added broad, open-ended "grand tour" questions (Lichtman, 2013) in order to lend focus to the interview process while simultaneously maintaining an openness to digressing in varied pathways based on participant responses. I also included concrete example questions focusing on personal stories and comparison or contrast questions that request the voicing of meaningful comparisons to a situation (Lichtman, 2013). A final point of reference for question development included the questioning categories advanced by Strauss et al. (1981, as cited in Merriam, 1998). Strauss et al.'s question types distinguish between *hypothetical questions*, which ask how the participant might respond

to an alternate situation; *devil's advocate questions*, aimed at the respondent considering a differing viewpoint; *ideal positioning questions*, which request description of an idealized situation; and *interpretive questions*, which seek a reaction to an interpretation of what has previously been stated. In order to reduce researcher bias, I abstained from developing questions that projected my own perspective (Merriam, 1998). I also avoided including multiple questions in one and questions that could elicit a singular yes or no response, instead favoring an approach that was more open-ended and encouraging of elaboration (Merriam, 1998; Mertens, 2005).

Prior to interviewing participants, I piloted the questions as a means of perfecting the interview instrument (Sampson, 2004, as cited in Marshall & Rossman, 2006). A former colleague with several years of secondary teaching experience and familiarity with the topic agreed to embody the role of peer reviewer. During our virtual meeting, the peer reviewer provided their reactions to each question and offered critical feedback for improvement (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The piloting process confirmed that the content of the questions would be well-suited to the aims of the study and the participant-centered goals of narrative inquiry. Following this productive discussion, I considered the peer reviewer's recommendations and expanded or modified several questions on the interview guide (see Appendix F).

### **Research Procedures**

Following approval from the IRB, I informally piloted the interview questions and followed sampling procedures for obtaining participants as outlined above. Once participants provided me with their signed electronic consent forms (see Appendix G), I ensured the safekeeping of each form in a designated file folder located on my password-

protected laptop computer, where they will be kept for a minimum of three years. Upon receiving informed consent, I scheduled a brief introductory phone conversation with each participant. During this time, I extended my gratitude for their interest in participating, and reviewed key components of the research project, such as the goals of the research, the voluntary nature of their participation, and expectations for time commitments related to participation in interview sessions. I also discussed the flexibility of interview sessions, explaining that we could speak on the phone or in a virtual meeting space such as Skype, Microsoft Teams, Facebook Messenger, Zoom, or Webex, depending on the participant's preference. In order to maintain further flexibility with scheduling, I expressed a willingness to meet at any time that best suited the participants' availability, and for as many sessions as needed to accommodate their schedules. Within this discussion, I communicated the options of a predetermined interview schedule or a more organic approach to scheduling, which would allow for the natural progression of each conversational exchange with subsequent interview sessions scheduled as needed. It remained important for me to emphasize participant choice and flexibility, as I recognize and applaud the many roles and responsibilities that educators encounter on a daily basis.

After confirming each interview session via an email exchange with participants, we held our sessions either on the phone or in a virtual Zoom meeting room. Interviews with Michael and Guinevere occurred over the phone, whereas sessions with April included both phone conversations and virtual meetings. The total number of interview sessions varied by participant. I met with Michael for two sessions, April for four sessions, and Guinevere for eight sessions. The total amount of time spent in interview sessions approximated four hours of conversational time per participant (see Table 2).

**Table 2***Overview of Interview Sessions*

<b>Participant (Pseudonym)</b>	<b>Number of Interview Sessions</b>	<b>Approximate Duration of Cumulative Interview Sessions</b>	<b>Interview Platform (Phone or Zoom)</b>	<b>Length of Transcripts (Single-Spaced, with Double-Spacing to differentiate between speakers; 12-point Times New Roman Font)</b>
<b>Michael</b>	2	4 hours	Phone	70 pages
<b>April</b>	4	3:45 hours	Phone & Zoom	50 pages
<b>Guinevere</b>	8	4:15 hours	Phone	58 pages

At the beginning of each interview, I ensured that participant responses would be captured by using a combination of phone and external device audio recordings. Once I confirmed that the participant was ready to begin, I read from an interview script that was designed to lend structure to the interview process, ease participants' comfort levels, review issues related to informed consent, and check for understanding (see Appendix F). At the beginning of each interview session, I also read aloud the operationalized definition of the text genres explored in the study, as well as a general definition of the terms *classroom* and *text* as they are used in the context of the study. Even though each participant received an electronic word document with these definitions (see Appendix H), reviewing each term offered me an opportunity to address any confusion or ambiguity, answer any questions, and assess for understanding before proceeding with the interview questions. While preset explanations of terminology were provided, participant voice and individual points of view remained integral to this research.

Therefore, I communicated to each participant that they were both welcomed and encouraged to bring forward their own definitional understandings of key terms.

Once each interview was underway, I referred to participants using their agreed upon pseudonym. When stating interview questions, I focused on using clear language, with clarifying prompts and follow-up questions as needed, and restatements of the question upon request. I also assured participants that they would have ample time to construct and supply their responses, which sometimes resulted in lengthier pauses. During each interview session, it became essential that I position myself in the role of focused listener, with the participant situated as “a narrator with narrative thinking” (Kim, 2016, p. 165). Kim (2016) conveys the importance of listening during an interview, writing that “[t]he narrative inquirer’s job is to listen with attentive care and ask necessary questions that will further inspire the telling of stories” (p. 165). As such, I adopted the goal of listening to both the spoken and unspoken subtleties of the participant’s voice. To assist my listening, I jotted notes of information in a field journal during each interview session, while paying optimal attention to participants and indicating respect for and attention to their contributions. At the culmination of each session, I thanked each participant for their time and participation, and we scheduled our subsequent session if needed.

As a supplement to collecting interview data, I also requested access to instructional materials in order to enrich findings from the interview sessions, with the understanding that tangible materials may offer additional insights into educators’ classroom experiences. I asked each participant to provide me with access to electronic versions of teacher-created materials (such as lesson plans, worksheets, rubrics, smart

board files, etc.). Of the three participants, one educator provided me with instructional materials, which were anonymized to preserve privacy and confidentiality. These documents were stored in a designated desktop folder on my password-protected computer. Arising organically during our interview sessions, I learned about the names of published texts that were relevant to each participant's experiences and perspectives. To supplement my understanding of these materials (particularly when writing participant narratives), I took steps such as searching for information online, retrieving online or printed texts, and reviewing segments of text. Identifying these references allowed me to describe plot summaries, characters, and text formats within the narratives, which added context for the reader (see Appendix I for a listing of published texts appearing in participant narratives). I also informed all three participants that student work would not be included for analysis, as the study design prohibits the use of student-created artifacts.

## **Data Analysis**

### ***Transcribing and Reflecting on the Interviews***

To help guide the data analysis process (see Table 3), I referenced Creswell's (2007) recommended procedures for analyzing and representing data for narrative research. The spiraling, recursive steps include data managing, reading / memoing, describing, classifying, interpreting, and representing/visualizing. In order to manage the data, recorded interviews were electronically transcribed by hand into Word documents and saved as files with uniform naming conventions for ease of retrieval. Each transcript was single-spaced in a 12-point Times New Roman font, with double-spacing used when shifting between speakers, and formatted with one-inch margins. As a header for each transcript, I included the participant's pseudonym, the numbered interview session, and



the date of the interview. During the transcription process, I noted both the words spoken and the particularities of participants' utterances, including words denoting thinking or hesitation (such as "um" or "uh") to fully capitalize on the nuances of the conversation. I also indicated areas of participant pauses and notes about tone where applicable in order to facilitate more informed interpretations about participants' responses.

**Table 3**

*Overview of Coding, Categorizing, and Theming Process*

<b>Steps in Data Analysis Process</b>	<b>Description</b>
<i>Transcription</i>	Electronically transcribed participant responses from audio to written text
<i>First round coding</i>	Applied "splitter" approach with naming conventions guided by Descriptive, Initial, In Vivo, Process, and Values coding schemes (Saldana, 2008); wrote analytic memos
<i>Second round coding</i>	Applied "lumper" approach to refine codes assigned during first round coding (Saldana, 2008); organized each code into a separate document in order to maintain an ongoing list of second round codes; added brief notes; wrote analytic memos
<i>Organized the codes</i>	Transferred codes to an Excel spreadsheet; noted frequencies for each code to indicate more and less commonly applied naming conventions
<i>Cleaned the codes</i>	Organized conceptually similar codes into 48 coding groups to facilitate combining, omitting, and renaming the codes as needed
<i>Operationalized the codes</i>	Identified a brief descriptor for each refined code and selected two segments of transcript to illustrate application of the code
<i>Created codebook</i>	Organized all refined codes, descriptors, and exemplar segments into a finalized list for reference
<i>Recoded transcripts</i>	Applied newly refined code names to the dataset
<i>Grouped similarly coded data segments</i>	Organized text segments from the dataset into an Excel spreadsheet created for each refined code
<i>Coded supplemental instructional documents</i>	Applied Descriptive codes with corresponding descriptors to each document
<i>Categorized the codes</i>	Organized conceptually similar codes into categories; identified category names and wrote corresponding descriptors
<i>Themed the categories</i>	Organized conceptually similar categories into themes; identified theme names and wrote corresponding descriptors

Concurrent with and following the transcription of interviews, I read through the data more than once and wrote analytic memos that encouraged a deeper engagement with the data (Birks et al., 2008). Analytic memoing, which consists of the researcher's written thoughts, reflections, and ideas about the research, served as a technique for articulating my perspectives, subjectivities, and assumptions; maintaining productivity; describing data; analyzing the deeper meanings and interpretations underlying the data; and documenting the steps comprising the continually evolving status of the research (Birks et al., 2008). The practice of writing analytic memos helped to promote my critical engagement with the data and various areas of the study (Saldaña, 2009), and it also assisted me with the ongoing, recursive coding process (Rogers, 2018; Saldaña, 2009). In addition to analytic memos, I maintained an electronic document consisting of field notes, which included a record of occurrences and observations gleaned during interactions with participants. Alongside analytic memos, field notes enabled me to capture and document important details that emerged during my interactions with participants. As a means of record keeping, I also created an Excel spreadsheet to function as a contact log that assisted me with keeping track of my encounters with participants, including date of contact and any actions taken or noteworthy outcomes.

Throughout the process of transcribing, I gained an in-depth familiarity with each participant. As I listened to each participant articulate their responses, I intuited not only what was said, but how it was said – how tone, pauses, repetitions, and more contributed to the particularities of the participant's statements. Engaging in this process, I learned what Riessman (2008) meant when writing that “transcription is deeply interpretive” (p. 29), with segments of talk that could be transcribed in different ways based on the

researcher. Once I constructed each transcript to include a linear, line-by-line account of the interviews, I attempted to make meaning from participant responses by “getting a sense of the whole database” (Creswell, 2007, p. 150). This consisted of reading and rereading through segments of data to derive a deeper sense of the overarching ideas presented in the interviews. Upon reengaging with some segments of transcribed text, I discovered how statements and stories that at first appeared either unrelated or thinly linked to the topic actually revealed rich insights that facilitated new, unexpected analytic connections to the data. The concept of “flirtation” with the data (Kim, 2016) began to crystallize during these interactions. As Kim explains, “Flirting with data is an attempt to analyze and interpret the research data to exploit the idea of surprise and curiosity” (p. 188). Approaching the dataset from this mindset allowed me to remain open to the unknown pathways of exploration that the data would ultimately lead me towards.

### ***Coding and Organizing the Data***

I coded each transcript in a Word document, using a three-tier graphic organizer, with the data on the left column and space for codes on the two right-sided columns. When applying the finalized set of refined codes, I used the “Comments” function in Word to highlight the relevant part of text and apply each code. The process of coding offered me an entryway into making sense of the data and unpacking the meanings conveyed by each participant. As I engaged in this iterative coding process, I relied upon my interpretive decision-making abilities in selecting words and phrases that expressed and described attributes emerging in the data (Rogers, 2018).

To facilitate the first round of inductive coding, I used several types of coding approaches, including initial coding, process coding, in vivo coding, and values coding

(Saldaña, 2009). I selected these approaches because I felt they would help me to uncover insights in the data and ultimately to answer my research questions. I initially used the “splitter” method and coded line-by-line in order to gain a more fine-tuned idea of the information that was presented in the raw data (Saldaña, 2009). During this first coding attempt, I remained aware that many of my codes were provisional and a starting point for later inspection and refinement. This “cyclical act” (Saldaña, 2009, p. 8) of coding continued after I applied my first codes to each transcript. I went through each participant’s transcript again to revisit each code to determine whether each code was precise and “essence-capturing” (Saldaña, 2008, p. 8). At this stage, I shifted to a “lumper” approach that focused on larger segments of texts, rather than individual lines (Saldaña, 2008). The process of refining the provisional codes allowed me to revisit my initial thought processes about the data and carefully consider whether my first coding attempts fully conveyed what the participant was saying. While I felt that some of my initial codes were sufficient, many needed to be reworked in order to provide more precise, inclusive, or succinct language. Therefore, I reworded some codes, omitted others, and kept some that appeared to work well. The list of preliminary codes was pasted into a separate Word document so that I could keep track of the codes and reference them throughout the process. Concurrent with this part of coding, I color-coded segments of the transcript to discern between text segments that were relevant to the research questions and others that were not as applicable to the aims of the study. I also color-coded segments that portrayed aspects of the participant’s personal background and teaching experience, as well as attributes of their student populations.

As a final stage to my inductive coding process, I developed an Excel spreadsheet to facilitate the omission of unnecessary or redundant codes and the renaming of codes as needed (Lichtman, 2013). In the Excel spreadsheet, I grouped the 217 preliminary codes into groups consisting of semantically similar codes to help me clean the codes and ascertain the best naming conventions for each code. Using the search function in Word, I also manually retrieved frequency counts for each code to reveal how often each one appeared in the data cumulatively. I identified 48 coding groups, which were transformed into 48 refined codes. I assigned a short descriptor to each refined code in order to operationalize my understanding of the code's meaning and selected sample excerpts from the transcripts to illustrate the kind of content assigned to each code. This information functioned as a codebook (see Appendix J), defined by Saldaña (2008) as “a compilation of the codes, their content descriptions, and a brief data example” (p. 21). After I completed these steps and applied the newly refined codes to each transcript, I grouped similarly coded segments of data by participant as a way to more easily view and retrieve these segments when writing the narratives. To supplement the coded interview data, I also applied descriptive codes to the three instructional documents I received from Michael. I compiled the 11 supplemental codes into a separate Excel worksheet, along with a descriptor of what each code entailed.

### ***Categorizing and Theming the Data***

As I continued to organize and make sense of the data, my analytical focus shifted toward the next stage in data analysis: categorizing the codes. Saldaña (2008) described categories as “families” (p. 8) of codes that “look” and “feel” similar (p. 8). To facilitate this process, I again relied upon an Excel worksheet as an organizational tool to group

together codes with complementary attributes. I identified 11 categories, with one category standing alone as a participant attribute category, and the 10 additional categories that related to the focal questions of the study. I grouped the 10 categories into four broad themes, again using color coding and Excel worksheets to lend organization to the process. According to Saldaña (2008), “A theme is an *outcome* of coding, categorization, and analytic reflection” (p. 13; emphasis in original). Drawing on this explanation, I worked to ensure that each theme encapsulated the ideas presented in the sublayers of code and category. I also continued to prioritize “analytic reflection” (Saldaña, 2008, p. 13) by creating analytic memos and short notes in order to capture my thoughts and impressions about the stories and perspectives that each participant shared.

### ***Restorying and Narrativizing the Data***

Consistent with Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) description of a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002) developed a restorying approach based on this framework that relies upon three components: interaction, continuity, and situation. This three-dimensional space structural approach guided my restorying process by offering a framework for considering the essential elements that would strengthen the participant narratives. This included maneuvering through unconstrained moments across time and space, with an emphasis on participants’ experiences, points of view, feelings, reactions, and reflections in relation to varied situations, contexts, and interactions with others. In contrast to an alternative approach based on a problem-solution narrative structure, the three-dimensional space approach centralizes experience and the negotiation of meaning in order to achieve a less predictable, yet equally purposeful narrative sequence (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002).

To accomplish the task of constructing each narrative, I again relied upon the organizational affordances of Excel. For each participant, I created a spreadsheet consisting of data segments grouped vertically by codes and horizontally by category, with similarly themed categories juxtaposed alongside one another. Throughout the writing process, I relied upon this organizational tool to ensure that the participant's story reflected the expansive experiences and perspectives that were shared during our time together. To further ensure fidelity to the participants' words, I frequently revisited transcripts and worked to ensure that the stories I wrote faithfully communicated the spoken and unspoken meanings underlying the data.

### **Positionality Statement**

Approaching my research questions from a qualitative disposition means that I brought my own lenses of perception, subjectivities, experiences, and interpretations into the study. I aim to remain transparent in disclosing aspects of my own identity and positioning within this work. I am a Hispanic woman who grew up in a South Texas town located in the geographical vicinity of Ramos-Canales High School. Although the Spanish language surrounded my upbringing, I often hesitate when asked if I am a proficient speaker, unsure of how to explain the complexities of a language withheld from full inclusion in the home, yet omnipresent in my culture and the rural backdrop of my hometown. Before I was born, I unknowingly accompanied my mother into an elementary school classroom enlivened by engaging literacy activities, colorful bulletin boards, and rows of well-loved books. Later as a student in the Texas education system, I walked through hallways similar to the ones frequented by the participants in this study. Yet I've also spent two decades living away from South Texas, surrounded by the

cultural heterogeneity one finds in novel settings - an urban midwestern city connected by elevated trains and vibrant neighborhoods, a northeastern borough where “аптека” means “pharmacy,” an overcrowded New York City public school where a library masquerades as an English classroom, and prestigious universities where affluence drips from golden-flecked fountains of educational promise and lingering inequities.

As a secondary marker of identity, I am also a Millennial, coming of age during the moment in history when dial-up Internet and clunky brick-like cell phones characterized technological innovation and mass communication. Growing up during this time period, engaging with popular culture meant watching Saturday morning cartoons; spending weekends reading about the exploits of Betty and Veronica and The Baby-Sitters Club in paperbacks purchased at the local Wal-Mart; gleefully squishing goombas and sprinting across perilous cliffs while searching for Princess Peach; and memorizing delightful song lyrics from square-shaped booklets accompanying compact discs of Disney movie soundtracks. As popular culture permeated my environment, I concurrently absorbed messages of representation in the media I consumed and the books I read, therefore intuiting the unsubtle signals of a society that seemed steeped in whiteness and assimilation to dominant cultural norms.

My strong connection to South Texas in juxtaposition with my subsequent time away from this formative homeland uniquely position me within the context of this study. On one hand, my experiences provide an insider perspective to the South Texas culture and the demands of working as an educator in a public-school setting. Yet my removal from this area and lack of experience as a Texas educator also position me as an outsider peering in. At the same time, a lifetime of popular culture influences situates me



alongside a collective body of individuals with similar experiences – I watched the same television shows as kids two time zones away; I begged for the same Nintendo games that another kid pined for halfway across the world. And today, living across the country from the first school I attended, I find myself bound to the residents of the South Texas area where I grew up, united in our mutual use of communicative forms of technology, newfound forms of popular culture, and various text types and genres.

Hellawell (2006) discussed the notion of insider – outsider positioning in qualitative research, distinguishing between the insider’s familiarity with the community being studied, and the outsider’s lack of “a priori” (p. 484) knowledge of the individuals and locales involved in a research inquiry. These ideas reflect the characteristics of emic and etic approaches in the context of a qualitative study. The emic approach is applied when the researcher cultivates “*an insider’s view*” (Patton, 2002, p. 268, emphasis in original), whereas an etic perspective refers to “the viewpoint of an outsider” (Lichtman, 2013, p. 151). Merriam (1998) likewise differentiated between the “insider’s perspective” (p. 6) and the “outsider’s view” (p. 7), subsequently noting that qualitative inquiry places the researcher as “*the primary instrument for data collection and analysis*” (p. 7, emphasis in original), a role seemingly suited for the examination of how perspective and positionality contribute to and influence a research study. Although the idea of insider versus outsider appears to suggest a rigid, either-or dichotomy, the two positions are not mutually exclusive. As Hellawell (2006) explained, “There may be some elements of insiderness on some dimensions of your research and some elements of outsidersness on other dimensions” (p. 490). Reinforcing these ideas, Olive (2014) spoke to a “tension between the two extremes,” asserting that “a solely emic perspective is impossible to

achieve” due to the unavoidable presence of the researcher’s own “past experiences, ideas, and perspectives,” as well as the “myriad sublevels” that comprise a more nuanced understanding of culture.

With these understandings in mind, I recognize my placement on the “insider-outsider continua” (Hellawell, 2006, p. 492) and acknowledge how my background and life experiences situate me as “occupying double positions” (Hamdan, 2009) within the space of this research inquiry. Although I maintain a close relationship with the cultural ambiance of South Texas and the experience of working as a public-school educator, I also find myself located outside the everyday, culturally infused norms of living in the geographical area of study and educating students who are immersed in a globalized and technologically abundant environment of constant communication. This awareness shapes my understanding of how both the emic and etic perspectives contribute to this work, and I strive to embrace a reflective, contemplative, and mindful stance toward negotiating my placement within the spectrum of researcher positionality.

## **Validity and Credibility**

### ***Internal Validity***

Data triangulation consisting of more than one data source (Johnson, 1997; Mathison, 1988) is one way that I ensured the internal validity of this study. Although triangulation strategies are often associated with seeking convergent outcomes, triangulation also enabled me to identify areas of inconsistency and contradiction in the data (Mathison, 1988). The use of multiple interview questions, more than one interview session with participants, and instructional documents as a supplemental data source offer possibilities for justifiable interpretations and conclusions about the data (Johnson, 1997).

### ***Theoretical Validity***

A strategy for increasing the theoretical validity of interpretive findings includes theory triangulation, which entails the use of more than one theoretical perspective when constructing interpretations from the data (Johnson, 1997). As I analyzed and discussed the implications of the findings from this study, I focused on two main theoretical lenses: a theory of multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996) and critical literacies and pedagogies (Freire, 1970; Luke, 2000; Morrell, 2004). The theoretical validity of this study is thus strengthened by using these theoretical perspectives to consider and interpret the meanings embedded in the participants' stories.

### ***Interpretive Validity***

In order to strengthen the internal validity of the study, I sought to establish trustworthiness and credibility. My requests for participants to review their narrative drafts reflected the strategy of member checking, which ensures the truthful and fair representation of participants' experiences in qualitative research (Terrell, 2016). The process of member checking (also synonymous with the terms "participant feedback" and "informant feedback"; Johnson, 1997; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007) entailed providing participants with an electronic draft of their narrativized stories and requesting feedback about any potential inaccuracies. Out of the three participants, one responded to my invitation to review the narrative. By engaging in this step, I sought to ensure that the drafts provided an honest portrayal of the information and insights shared by participants (Terrell, 2016). This component of the study complements the narrative inquiry methodology, which encourages a collaborative relationship between researcher and participant (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). Another

method of ensuring strong interpretive validity included the use of low inference descriptors in the form of verbatim dialogue (Johnson, 1997), which was abundantly interwoven into each narrative to tell stories filled with nuance and attentive detail.

### ***Credibility***

Credibility in qualitative research includes accurately portraying the multiple realities of study participants (Krefting, 1991). The use of member checking, which requested that participants review information reflected in the written narratives, strengthens the credibility of the study (Creswell & Miller, 2000). In a discussion of trustworthiness in qualitative inquiry, Guba (1981) described member checking as “the single most important action inquirers can take, for it goes to the heart of the credibility criterion” (p. 85). Additional features of the study design that address questions of credibility include the use of a piloting procedure with a peer reviewer to refine interview questions, establishing a collaborative relationship with participants, and conveying participants’ narratives using thick, detailed description (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

### ***External Validity and Transferability***

If approaching the concept of external validity from the quantitative standpoint of drawing inferences that extend to other populations and settings (Vellutino & Schatschneider, 2011), the generalizability of this study might encounter critique due to its small scope and a singular focus on educators working in within one particular geographic area and one specific school sites. Instead of the positivistic notion of generalizability, my study aimed to achieve transferability, a research goal that functions as the qualitative version of external validity (Tierney & Clemens, 2011). Transferability occurs through the use of rich description (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007; Tierney &

Clemens, 2011) and may prove beneficial to other researchers working in similar domains (Tierney & Clemens, 2011). Descriptively rendered studies occurring in naturalistic contexts also allow for points of comparison (Krefting 1991) and remove the task of transferability from the researcher to the consumer of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, as cited in Krefting, 1991). With these perspectives in mind, this narrative inquiry promotes transferability through using thick description of participant stories and interpreting their multiple realities.

### ***Rigor***

Merriam (1998) described reliability as the replicability of research findings, a goal that may elude social sciences researchers due to the dynamic nature of human behavior and experience, as well as the adherence to multiple, rather than a singular, conception of reality. Although qualitative inquiries typically do not focus on issues of reliability, ensuring that the research process maintains rigor provides a close approximation (Merriam, 2009, as cited in Syed & Nelson, 2015). I worked to ensure the rigor of this study by collaboratively interacting with participants, triangulating data, interpreting participant responses, and offering thick description (Syed & Nelson, 2015). While I recognize and embrace that this work proceeds from a position of subjectivity, the findings and interpretations I present are consistent with the data (Merriam, 1998).

### ***Potential Research Bias***

A reflexive stance in qualitative research acknowledges that the researcher's own background and frames of reference are inextricable from the research process (Krefting, 1991). Throughout the study, I acknowledged the importance of researcher reflexivity, including the ways that my own interpretive lenses, personal biases, subjectivities, and

role in the research were entwined with both the narrative restorying and the meaning derived from this undertaking (Johnson, 1997; Lichtman, 2013). Maintaining a reflexive stance illuminated my self-awareness about my own biases, while also functioning as a strategy to improve the validity of this qualitative inquiry (Johnson, 1997). The practice of writing analytic memos throughout all phases of the research also assisted my reflexive approach to the study (Saldaña, 2009).

### **Ethical Considerations**

Before working with each participant, I outlined the participant's role in the study and obtained signed informed consent forms. I notified all participants of their rights to privacy, discussed procedural aspects of the study that enforced these rights (such as using pseudonyms and omitting identifiers from the data), and explained the minimal risk associated with participation. I emphasized that participants' identifying information, such as names or school affiliation, would not appear in any written version of the study, including the dissertation or any manuscript submitted for publication thereafter. I also shared possible benefits of participation, including the possibility for advancing current understandings of the topic and contributing to educational research.

### **Presenting the Findings**

Participants' stories and my interpretations of the data are narratively presented in the following chapter. To construct each narrative, I referenced the suggestions extended by Ollerenshaw and Creswell's (2002) three-dimensional space approach. Using this framework, I attended to the personal, social, temporal, and situational aspects of participants' experiences when constructing each narrative. To bring each story to life and strengthen the credibility of each account, I incorporated thick description and

verbatim dialogue alongside interpretive statements. Additionally, I used a first-person writing style to provide a personalized quality to the research and as a technique for engaging the reader in the narrative (Lichtman, 2013). The seventh edition of APA style (American Psychological Association, 2020) recommends using first-person to maintain clarity when reporting research and communicating viewpoints. I also used gender-neutral pronouns in reference to participants. I adopted this approach because participants were not asked to explicitly state their gender identities in conjunction with self-identified pronouns. The APA manual suggests that the use of pronouns “requires specificity and care” (p. 140), and gender-neutral pronouns should be used when a self-identified pronoun is “not known” (p. 140). Although I utilized gender-neutral pronouns in reference to participants, instances of verbatim commentary were not modified to gender-neutral pronouns, since these reflected participants’ words and interpretations. In addition, I did not ask participants to self-identify their race and ethnicity. Instead, I inquired about cultural and linguistic background in an open-ended way, thereby inviting participants to share as much information as they felt comfortable providing. Following the presentation of each story, I offer a synthesizing discussion of the themes and salient findings that are threaded within the individual experiences of each participant. Accompanying this discussion are tables that outline the meanings associated with each code. I also incorporated tables to visually display the relationships among codes, categories, and themes. The concluding chapter of this study reveals how the study findings connect to the extant literature and theoretical frameworks that informed the development of this study. It further addresses implications of this work and directions for future research.

## Summary

This study explored secondary English Language Arts educators' perspectives about and experiences with multicultural and popular culture texts. By narrativizing the lived experiences and points of view of each educator, I aimed to offer insight into the two broadly defined and potentially overlapping categories of text. Through illuminating the experiences of South Texas educators who teach a predominantly Hispanic student population, this research strives to lend a unique perspective that might not otherwise be captured in a different setting. To achieve the overall aims of this study, I recruited participants at three school sites using approved recruitment methods; piloted the interview guide with a trusted, experienced educator; worked collaboratively with each participant; transcribed and analyzed data using a recursive, inductive process of coding, recoding, categorizing, and theming; presented results narratively, using thick description and ample examples of participant dialogue; interpreted findings in relation to relevant literature and theoretical perspectives; and embodied a reflexive stance as both insider and outsider to the focal population. At all phases of the study, I remained attentive to ethical considerations and prioritized the validity, trustworthiness, and credibility of this work. The next chapter provides the three narrativized portrayals of participants' perspectives and experiences, followed by a thematic analysis of the data.



## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

In this chapter, I present three narrativized portraits of the South Texas high school educators who graciously agreed to partner with me for this inquiry (see Table 4 for participant profiles). Within each narrative, I aimed to convey the multilayered, compelling lived experiences and perspectives of each educator as a way to gain insight into the focal questions guiding this study, which included the following: 1) What are the experiences and perspectives of English Language Arts educators with using multicultural and popular culture texts in culturally diverse secondary classrooms located in South Texas?; and 2) What do educators' experiences and perspectives reveal about the role of multicultural and popular culture texts in pedagogical practice and for promoting literacy learning with culturally diverse learners?

**Table 4**

*Participant Profiles*

<b>Participant (Pseudonym)</b>	<b>Level of Educational Attainment</b>	<b>Approximate Years of Teaching Experience</b>	<b>Courses Taught</b>	<b>Generational Affiliation</b>
<b>Michael</b>	Bachelor's & Master's	> 10	English 2	Generation X
<b>April</b>	Bachelor's & Master's	> 4	English 1, 2	Xennial
<b>Guinevere</b>	Bachelor's	> 1	Creative Writing (Precursor to English 1), College Prep	Millennial

As a means of telling the participants' stories in an organized and meaningful way, each narrative begins with a participant introduction, followed by stories that align to the four broad themes identified in the data. To achieve a unified flow to the stories and a sense of coherence, I developed each narrative by referencing segments of categorized data and grouping together conceptually similar segments. Throughout each narrative, I opted for a conversational, non-academic, occasionally shifting writing style that merged participant vignettes, verbatim commentary, and interpretation. Narrativized scenes consisting of key anecdotes were also included to invite the reader into participants' stories. By incorporating intermittent scenes recreated from the data, I strived to "show" and "not tell" (Fitzgerald & Noblit, 1999, p. 175) the reader about noteworthy moments and remembrances recounted by participants. This approach reflects Fitzgerald and Noblit's narrative technique of crafting "tale[s]" of classroom scenes that functioned as "narrative reconstructions of events that are supported by data" (p. 134). Alvermann (2000) pointed out that this method of "[s]howing" data to the reader constitutes the use of a "narrative device" (pp. 127-128) with possibilities for communicating with audiences in "new ways" (p. 127). Riessman (2008) likewise spoke to the idea of reconstructing stories, explaining that "[j]ust as interview participants tell stories, investigators construct stories from their data" (p. 4). Riessman further described narratives as multileveled, inclusive of participant stories "which are themselves interpretive" and the researcher's own "interpretive accounts" of the data (p. 6).

As I sought to write accessible and vivid accounts of participant experiences, I remained aware of the possibilities, challenges, and limitations afforded by narrative reconstruction and interpretation. My own reflexivity became a cornerstone of this

undertaking, supplying an ongoing reminder that my own lenses of experience and personal biases existed as inseparable from the restorying process and the meanings I ascribed to the data (Johnson, 1997; Lichtman, 2013). Alongside maintaining a reflexive approach, I chose to intersperse my own interpretive and reflective musings within the three narratives, thereby imbuing each story with the symbiotic duality of voice that so often emerges in the context of narrative inquiry (Kim, 2016). This entailed determining when and how to purposefully “interrupt” (Alvermann, 2000, p. 134) the narrative with my own thoughts, comments, and contemplations. The infrequent presence of my own brief commentary in each narrative functions like an “aside” (Alvermann, 2000, p. 127), where I communicate my thoughts to the audience like a sideways whisper unnoticed by the participant. Also defined as “a digression” (Soukhanov, 1996, p. 108, as cited in Alvermann, 2000, p. 127), asides are another narrative device for enriching the written narrative and communicating with the reader (Alvermann, 2000).

Through the recursive process of writing and rewriting the narratives, I encountered constant reminders of the immense responsibility of my task, which Kim (2016) likened to a “midwife” who works “to mediate stories into being” (p. 119). Mindful of this role, I recognized the distinctiveness of each participant’s voice, yet also observed the commonalities that linked the contextually situated stories and socially mediated perspectives of each participant. To show the divergent and complimentary experiences and perspectives that separate and unify participants, I provided a synthesizing thematic analysis section. The thematic analysis section highlights areas where participant responses converge and diverge within a discussion of the categories and themes that lend insight to the questions guiding this study. Positioning participant

responses in dialogue with one another for the purposes of analysis and comparison approximates Riessman's (2008) description of "a comparative approach" (p. 193) that entails "interpretation of the similarities and differences among participants' stories" (p. 193). Unlike the individual narratives, the thematic analysis section adopts a more academic tone that situates participant responses in dialogic proximity with one another - kindred in many ways and politely distinct in others - thus reflecting the interconnectedness of experience and variety of responses that materialized in the data.

As a precursor to writing this section, I experienced both a sense of humility in my role of interpreter and a "feeling of happy coincidence" (Hermanns, 2004, p. 212) in the mutual benefit extended by the interview process. As I listened to and learned from each participant, my inquisitive stance welcomed each educator to openly share personal viewpoints, feelings, observations, and experiences in a convivial, participant-focused setting. Although not physically present alongside each participant, the constraints of geography proved inconsequential as we developed a rapport and gained comfort with the virtual interview process. Similar to the uniqueness of each participant, each interview situation offered a discrete experience that distinguished it from the others. For instance, the in-person experience of visiting a classroom or venturing into a public meeting space was simulated during my Zoom conversations with April, as I observed the familiar ambiance of fluorescent lighting blanketing the classroom, or the momentary presence of hurried vehicles zipping across a driver's side window. When speaking with Michael, I intuited a lively home, vibrant with the relaxation and tranquility of a summertime spent away from the ticking clock of the classroom. And each time I spoke with Guinevere after a frazzled workday's end, we travelled across sparsely populated Texas roadways,

conversing until the faint, rhythmic clicking of an eager turn signal suggested that our current session would soon come to an unavoidable end.

Teaching in a rural South Texas town flecked with sepia-toned brush country and enlivened by the occasional sighting of a meandering pack of javelinas, Michael, April, and Guinevere all embody a commitment to their school and their students, with each educator offering a distinctive perspective and describing thought-provoking experiences in response to my questions. The narrativized portrayals of each participant's voice are presented below, followed by an analysis of key themes interwoven throughout the data.

### **Meet Michael**

#### ***Veteran Teacher, Grade-Level Leader***

You absolutely have to be born a teacher in order to want to teach. I mean, you ask all the teachers you talk to, just send out a email, 'hey what did you play when you were a little kid?' Ninety-nine percent of 'em say 'school.' I played school all the time. The rabbit was the bad kid.

These early experiences translated into Michael's completion of a degree in education, with a major in English and minor in reading, as well as a master's degree in writing studies. But before Michael's thriving career as a South Texas educator began over ten years ago, they lived in Washington, D.C. as a child and also resided in Germany. "As much as I've done in my life, I really do like seeing how other cultures are," they explained. This affinity for learning from other cultural traditions made an appearance when Michael was just a small child. "When I was little-little, and we're talking uh probably about two years old, my parents lived in Washington D.C. and they had a housekeeper who spoke Bengali," Michael recalled. "I picked up the language ... my

mom kind of had a meltdown because I was asking for bread and water and she didn't understand," they continued, laughing. Michael later acquired some Spanish in high school but panicked when thrust into substituting for a Spanish class. Michael recalled thinking, "I haven't done this since 1982!"

A permanent teaching position later arose in a floundering school district embroiled in a state-run position of control.

Think of having an IRS auditor with you every moment of the day, and if you want to buy a pack of gum, you have to ask him, 'Can I buy this 25-cent pack of gum?' And he can tell you yes or no.... It was really rough.

These realities shattered Michael's expectations of the teaching job. "I was thrilled to have a job...and so the very first faculty meeting I was so excited, I'm like, yes, I get to go to one!" A teaching position at a middle school located "literally right down the road" from Michael's house followed, but the position proved short-lived. "I worked at the middle school to remember how much I loved teaching," Michael explained. "At the end of the first year, I'm like yes, I still love teaching, but I do not love middle school." A similar sentiment emerged when Michael substituted at a middle school while still in college. "I really shouda had a stun gun, cause, wow," Michael laughed, conveying the overwhelming impact of that experience.

Although Michael's early years in the classroom were characterized at least in part by a sense of upheaval and transition, they now lead the Ramos-Canales English department and notably earned a prestigious Teacher of the Year award from the district. As Michael stewards their students toward excellence, they also recognize that opportunities for learning and growing remain plentiful. "As much as I know in my ten

years, I still have a lot more to learn,” Michael admitted, explaining that a reflective approach toward teaching continues to anchor their work:

And this all comes with at the end of the day, with my own self-reflection. You know, did I do enough, did I ask enough questions.... you get better over time and then you realize you’re not good enough and then you have to kinda take a huge playbook look at it, keep five pages out of five thousand, throw the rest away and start anew.

***“The freedom to do what I need to do”***

As a high school educator, Michael has worked with a wide range of students, including English Language Learners and students receiving special education services. Michael anticipated that their upcoming courses would include “regular English 2, which is sophomores [and] pre-AP English 2.” In addition to working with these populations, Michael anticipated that they would proctor English courses for a local university.

Michael prioritizes incorporating a range of textual resources with their students, noting that they will find “any way that I can bring literacy in.” Travelling back to Michael’s beginnings as an educator, their ability to use a variety of texts proved more constrained. As a preservice educator, Michael felt the limitations of not being able to make their own choices about the curriculum, recounting the “structured” nature of this formative role, which included creating scripted lessons and adhering to instructional mandates. “I would have to teach what the teacher of record wanted me to teach, I really didn’t have a lot of say so in the things that I wanted to do because I was only there for a semester.” In this capacity, Michael’s curricular choices required approval as a prerequisite to implementation.

Before I could teach uh *Animal Farm*, I had to talk to my mentor teacher and my university partner to make sure that this was an appropriate novel, and why did I want to teach this novel, so it wasn't that they wouldn't let me do it, it was that I had to justify...why I wanted to do it.

Following the transition to their own classroom, Michael encountered more autonomy, yet clung to the familiarity of the textbook, a memory they described as unfortunate. "I kinda stuck to my textbook, so whatever was in the textbook is what I used." Michael now finds themselves in a position of increased curricular flexibility that both includes and extends beyond the consoling companionship of the textbook. This freedom allows Michael to utilize both multicultural and popular culture texts alongside a variety of other text types, including traditional literature and appropriately leveled informational texts retrieved through online sources. "Now that I am in the classroom and you know I'm teacher of record, I can pretty much choose what to teach um where I get the resources, and things of that nature." At times, Michael has even Googled different texts so that they can avoid "beating a dead horse" by using the same predictable texts each year. And when they do opt to incorporate a text selected from the course textbook, Michael knows that the textbook provides multiple diverse offerings and additional support for struggling readers – facts they are aware of because they helped to pick the newly adopted textbook. "Well, when we adopted the textbook this year, um I was pretty much told, pick a good one, I'm like...are you serious? And they're like, yes, pick a good one, this is gonna to be for eight years." Michael and a colleague gladly accepted this consequential task, viewing "different presentations" and reviewing the available options before selecting a digital textbook that "starts off with Dr. King's *Letter*



*from a Birmingham Jail*” – a selection that Michael holds in high regard due to its messages of confronting injustices and its ability to “[show students] that these leaders are human.” Michael noted that this is “really great because of the rhetoric, but [the textbook] doesn’t have uh the *I Have a Dream* speech.” For students requiring more support when reading texts such as these, Michael pointed out that the new program offers various reading levels of the same text, as well as audio accompaniments. Additional features of the newly acquired textbook appealed to Michael and a colleague, including how it utilizes elements of pop culture to entice readers. “The way they introduce the different uh texts and articles and such is kinda like a movie trailer, so the textbook is using pop culture.”

In addition to feeling that the “district was very supportive” with the textbook selection process, Michael emphasized that Ramos-Canales fosters a culture of support that welcomes the element of teacher choice, especially as Michael encounters expanded options of texts to choose from. “I’m finding that the texts are becoming more diverse,” they observed. Oftentimes, including one of these texts requires that Michael “just give [administrators] a heads up” before proceeding with a lesson. “It’s rare I’m told no, you can’t do that,” they revealed. “I really do get the freedom to do what I need to do in the district.” Michael added that the principal’s background teaching English enables the understanding of “a lot of what ... the English department goes through.” Michael continued,

If I go and tell him, hello sir, I got ... I found this article, I really wanna you know use this article, and he’s good with it... so he gives us a lot of leeway, now that doesn’t [mean] that he won’t tell us, mm no not this time, but pretty

much as long as we can back it up with data and facts, we can use it.

Although ensconced within a supportive school climate, Michael acknowledged that there may be some disconnect between administrators and the textual content educators teach. “I don’t really think that the administration has an actual understanding of what a multicultural text is because they haven’t been in the classroom in you know, five, ten, fifteen years, or they’ve never been in the classroom,” Michael expressed, referring to administrators such as literacy coaches, curriculum directors, superintendents, and professional development providers.

They use that term very genuine or general and very broad and they don’t really actually say well, you know February is African American month, you have to do you know xyz number of stories related to African Americans, um but they do say, you know if you’re going to be looking at uh Martin Luther King’s *Letter From a Birmingham Jail*, maybe you want to look at something that Amy Tan has written, or maybe you want to look at something that Gary Soto has written.

Michael’s view that administrators would offer very general guidance on how to incorporate multicultural texts suggests a level of autonomy in this area. “I think they leave it up to the teachers in the room to take what they say and implement it to the best of their ability,” Michael observed.

***“Like trying to get Karen to put a mask on”***

Michael also believes that it is the individual teacher’s task to determine how to approach instruction and integrate diverse texts. “It’s really up to the teacher and how the teacher wants to bring it into the classroom and expose his or her students to a multicultural text or authors or genres or what have you.” As an example, Michael talked

about retrieving resources online to supplement the use of multicultural texts. “I just actually googled questions for *The Joy Luck Club*,” they admitted, laughing. But Michael’s perspective about teacher autonomy would not deter them from “try[ing] to find a common ground” and sharing pedagogical approaches with colleagues. Looking forward to a possible scenario where a colleague might require assistance with using multicultural or popular culture resources, Michael would willingly volunteer their expertise by modeling strategies and providing “more structured guidance” for text use. “I would tell him, you know what? Find somebody to watch your class on this day and come in here and you know you’ll see me use it,” they offered. “I’m gonna want to hear how she’s going to implement certain things and you know hey you might want to use this to help you.” Michael further elaborated on this notion of support, suggesting that perhaps a professional development session might prepare educators to utilize popular culture texts in their teaching. Envisioning this possibility, Michael described approaching the principal with this request.

I might say something to the principal like hey ... you know [the teacher] down in the history hall doesn’t really you know like using pop culture, is there a way maybe that you could get the service center to come down and ... show him how it works?

Despite this inclination toward offering their own supportive assistance and suggesting outside resources, Michael acknowledged that other educators might experience discomfort with the thematic content of a multicultural text or could even simply prefer to “stick to the old dead White guys.” Considering factors such as these led Michael to concede that they would be unable to influence the curricular choices of other educators.

“In the end, ultimately that’s their classroom, and they you know they are doing what they think is best for their students,” Michael stated. “Um and if the service center you know can’t do that, then ... it’s kinda like well I really can’t, there’s nothing more I can do.” Referencing “Mr. Jake” (also known as “Jake from State Farm,” the fictional advertising personality), Michael declared, “It just really falls on Mr. Jake to, to either retire or come up to ...using everything to help his kids.” And in a nod to the currently polarized political climate stoked by the pandemic, Michael equated an obstinate refusal to use diverse texts to individuals who denounce following guidance on mask-wearing.

If I have a colleague who is just so resistant to [using multicultural or popular culture texts], then you know nothing I can say is gonna make him change his mind, it’s like trying to get Karen to put a mask on – it’s not gonna happen.

***“It’s almost an entity in and of itself”***

In contrast to the sense of pedagogical independence implied by these perspectives, Michael revealed that mandates imposed by the state remain a constant presence in their day-to-day teaching. “If I could get rid of the ... test I would have much more time,” Michael expressed, laughing. “Unfortunately, right now as it is I kind of have to gear every lesson that I do ... so that the student has that opportunity to be successful and pass [the state test],” they explained. Preparing students for the inevitable end-of-year assessment has often loomed over Michael’s curriculum, which routinely requires about two months on test prep. “I was just so focused on the kids have to get the question right they have to get the answer right,” Michael conveyed, further elaborating on the persistent pressures imposed by the test. The constant presence of the approaching assessment pushes Michael to correlate lessons to standards, yet even this known fact

includes a degree of uncertainty, particularly when new state standards are unveiled.

“My only big fear, and this is every time that we in English has to get new [standards], is that the test changes.” What Michael does know with certainty is that 100% of the standards— known as the TEKS - must be addressed before testing begins in April.

From January to the end of March I’ve got to hit the other 30 or so - 30 percent – and then I have to go back and I have to get the TEKs that the kids weren’t really strong in ...and then we take the test, and then we go into a novel study.

In order to successfully navigate the test, students are tasked with constructing a persuasive essay based on a topic that calls upon their own experiences. Michael has not yet used multicultural texts to develop students’ skills for this aim, and instead relies upon online news articles that span a wide range of topics and interests. But Michael remains open to the possibility. “I mean these... topics are so general that it would be hard to tie it into a ... multicultural text, I mean I ... haven’t figured out how to do that yet, and I really do need to try,” Michael laughed. “It’s almost an entity in and of itself.”

Even though Michael suggested that multicultural texts do not lend themselves to preparing students for the test, Michael does see their compatibility with the new state standards. “These [standards] are actually designed more for the interaction of the pop culture, the multicultural,” they explained. “It gives me more room to be able to pull in more outside resources.” And while this flexibility opens pathways for considering how to best include various textual materials, Michael remains unconvinced that the standards are sufficient, and foresees more changes on their horizon. “They still have a ways to go.”

***“We all know the old dead White guys - they’re good, they’re safe”***

“Multicultural texts do... educate people. Pop culture they help with the education process,” Michael told me with an air of certainty. This favorable attitude toward diverse texts contributes to Michael’s negotiations between using classical literature alongside texts that transport students beyond the conventional materials that have traditionally dominated the English curricula. “I don’t want to go too too far in it because then I’m getting away from the classical literature thing, such as uh Edgar Allan Poe, um William Faulkner, uh Maya Angelou, um Gary Soto,” Michael explained, notably defining Maya Angelou and Gary Soto as mainstays of English learning. “I kind of try to keep that balance.” This perspective was further illuminated when Michael declared that “you can’t teach in high school and expect to just teach the old dead White guy stuff.” Yet, Michael also pointed to a lack of preparation for preservice teachers, stating that “there really isn’t too much in the way of uh multicultural diversity for secondary English majors.” Elaborating further, Michael posited that although a scarcity of preparation disadvantages future teachers, “maybe in ten years it will be a required course.” Michael’s experiences also led to the conclusion that the long-established texts of the English canon are often perceived as a safer option.

Multicultural texts, while they are becoming more prevalent, you have ...you have districts and teachers that would really rather stick to the canon of the old dead White guy because hey, we all know the old dead White guys - they’re good, they’re safe.

The prevalent influence of the “old dead White guys” emerged throughout my discussion with Michael, as they cited authors such as Edgar Allen Poe and three literary

Williams - William Faulkner, William Golding, and William Shakespeare (unequivocally one of the most well-known of the “dead White guys” in our contemporary culture).

Speaking about Edgar Allen Poe, Michael suggested that Poe’s ties to the southern gothic literary genre “could have been” perceived as popular culture. Michael further noted that this work has “become a staple” for over a century and relies on “very unsettling themes.” Reflecting on experiences teaching Shakespeare, Michael discussed how they have facilitated student learning of often complex literary and plot elements while proctoring at the nearby university. In this context, Michael provided clarity on the main concepts embedded in the text, particularly as they could “see all the blank faces” on this group of students. Exuding the well-versed certainty of a seasoned English educator, Michael elaborated on this role:

Not only am I the babysitter for the official college days, but I’m also the person to explain to the kids, hey look... Othello is actually Shakespeare’s uh representation of duality and man good versus evil and you know builds from there.

Although Shakespeare’s embodiment of the quintessential “dead White guy” permeated our discussion, Michael shared their observations about how Shakespeare’s work influences popular culture and holds implications for student learning. Pointing to popular movies based on Shakespeare’s works, such as *Ten Things I Hate about You*, *O*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, Michael noted that these films are often set “in modern times,” and “you can literally pull the play apart based on the movie” – which they believe helps to facilitate students’ understanding. “And the kids through these popular cultural uh movies and song lyrics and such, [pause] hey that’s what Shakespeare is saying,”

Michael enthused, with the cadence of realizing an “ah-ha” moment. Moreover, when using texts such as these, “if the teacher just takes a few minutes, he or she can really start pulling it together.”

Speaking with Michael, I learned that the traditional, classic text remains a prevalent occupant in their ongoing teaching experience, yet out of the classroom they also thoroughly enjoy engaging with the printed and audio formats of multicultural texts, such as *The Good Earth* by Pearl Buck (“oh my god, this is phenomenal,” Michael thought upon first encountering this text). Consistent with this perspective, Michael remains receptive to including a variety of textual genres and resources in the classroom, including those that are multimodal. And even though literature by the “dead White guys” might be perceived as safer, Michael noted that “people feel safer with pop culture than they do with multicultural,” a mindset that they view as flawed. “It- really should be that people should try to become safer with the multicultural because you get eh a better viewpoint of how America was and still is to a degree with relation to gender, sex, race, religion,” Michael explained. “You could actually spend an entire grading period just doing uh multicultural texts and be able to hit the fiction, the nonfiction, the poetry, the drama, the informational texts just based solely on um authors of color.”

***“I need to be super careful”***

Despite recognizing that possibilities such as these exist, Michael does not believe that just any arbitrarily chosen text is necessarily appropriate for the classroom. Rather, texts should be purposefully chosen, appropriate for the student population and their age range, and suitable for the desired learning targets of a lesson. This also applies to popular culture.



Using pop culture texts just like any other text you... you need to pick and choose what you want your students to take away from that particular lesson. Um if that particular... pop culture text is building on the lesson, then...great. If it's if you're putting it up there just to fill space, then ...you're not doing your students or yourself any kind of you know any kind of good.

At the same time, Michael knows that the texts they use should push students' critical thinking and understanding of controversial topics, yet the content should remain appropriate and not too precarious for classroom exploration. For instance, Michael described a time when a class discussion shifted to "talking about the evolution of the homosexual couple" when students asked about gay characters in a comic book, and Michael expertly guided the discussion. In situations such as this, Michael recognizes their students' engagement with the topic and welcomes the ensuing conversation, while remaining aware that "you're on [thin] ice and you really have to be super careful." Even when using a more classical text with students, such as Faulkner's short story *A Rose for Emily*, Michael remains aware of maintaining a cautious approach to the subject matter. "That one I need to be super careful (laughs) at the end... cause Faulkner leaves it open to did she actually sleep *with* Homer or did she *sleep* with Homer?" Michael told me, emphasizing the words "with" and "sleep" to reveal two differing textual interpretations. As another example, Michael talked about the Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, whose wide range of acclaimed works notably include (among many others) an influential TED talk titled *The Danger of a Single Story* and a text that tackles issues surrounding feminism. "You have to be careful because Adichie is, is a very strong feminist," Michael explained. "While I'm I absolutely love her, there...are some excerpts

from her book ... that I wouldn't dare bring into my classroom, only because there's a huge level of ... adult context." Michael expanded further on this cautionary perspective:

I don't exclude [any texts], however I can orchestrate and lead the discussion where it stays away from the more uh riskier topics... but again, I wouldn't have done that in my first year of teaching or in my second year of teaching (laughs) but now I'm going into my eleventh year of teaching... and [if] a question does come up you know I will, I'm up front with the kids, I will tell them plainly, but I'm very careful about the verbiage and the vernacular that I use for these questions.

And while Michael sees strong value in integrating powerful female voices into the curriculum, they also pointed to the potential pushback these decisions might provoke, even noting that some educators might abstain from female writers altogether. "We don't want to bring in a woman author because [gasps] she's talking about gender bias, oh my god we can't do that cause now that's not allowed," Michael declared, in a voice thick with sarcasm. But at the same time, Michael validated the feeling of responsibility in ensuring that students remain "protected" when encountering potentially controversial topics, such as those that may arise with issues related to gender.

Gender discrimination is really something that's going on right now um you know ... they don't get to see much of it in a high school setting because we-educators and the adults in the building really do work to ... keep the kids protected.

***“Sso livid, and sso angry”***

One particularly impactful experience that exemplified these fragile, subjective boundaries occurred when Michael taught Goethe’s *Faust*, a more classical offering that fits within a traditional high school curriculum. During the second year that Michael featured this story within class instruction, they encountered a misunderstanding that left an indelible impression on a cautious approach to text use. This episode entangled Michael and the principal in a heated confrontation with an incensed parent, who furiously started “ripping the principal apart.” Yet, the first year Michael used the text, everything was fine – “I didn’t have any issues.” Michael continued:

Um, the second time I did it, the daughter didn’t adequately explain it well to her father... and she’s jumping all over me, and I told her you know what, let me email the father, let me explain to the father you know everything that’s going on, and I did, and he was sso livid, and sso angry.

Recounting the episode, Michael’s emphasis of the word “so” communicated the extent of the father’s intense displeasure. “He said not only was I a disgrace to the teaching profession, I was a disgrace to the community, how dare I do that?” Michael continued, adding to the sense of distress and escalation that characterized this encounter. “And I’m like, okay, I took my licks so ... we’re done,” Michael declared. “So I’m (laughs) I’m gonna wait until she...she’ll be graduating in two years, no, she’ll be graduating next year, so I’ll bring *Faust* back in two years (laughs).”

***“Why are we reading this?”***

On another occasion, Michael felt placed in the “dangerous thin ice area” when teaching the short story *The Lottery*, another staple of the English curriculum. While the

role of gender discrimination stands out as a prominent area of exploration within this story (thus meriting class discussions in this area), Michael became “a little nervous” when the decision to teach the text was unexpectedly questioned by a tenth-grade student.

“Why are we reading this?” inquired the student.

“Because you’re here, you need to understand that this is no longer a patriarchal society, where you have a husband, you have a wife, you have two kids,” Michael replied, addressing not only the inquiring student, but also the entire class. “You now you have matriarchal societies, you even also have people that don’t want to have children.”

“That got my student talking about gender inequality,” Michael recalled. Yet, the lesson “was the only time” that Michael felt “a little nervous.” They continued:

But I could see that [the student] didn’t have enough information to actually expand on her thoughts, so I didn’t, I didn’t elaborate on ... much about you know gender inequality in American society so it kind of it kinda died down.

These episodes offer reasons why Michael continues to “be really super careful” while simultaneously taking solace in the principal’s efforts at supporting the school staff.

Michael took note that the principal appeared “appreciative” for being informed about the discussion regarding gender. For Michael, this support remains key. As they look ahead to what might happen in the future, Michael mused that “he can field these conversations from very angry parents who decide that they don’t want to talk to me, they would rather talk to the principal.”

***“They really do have a purpose in the classroom”***

The role of teaching experience also emerged as Michael talked with me about using popular culture texts with their students, a practice that Michael noted “shouldn’t be discounted” by today’s educators.

All the pop culture texts, they really do have a have a purpose in the classroom, it’s just that you should have more than you know five teaching years under your belt before you really start to get into that arena.

And while these texts “do have a place,” Michael lacks sufficient time to bring in this content with regularity. “I just wish I had ... the ability to bring them in and teach them because I don’t. I don’t have the time to teach the kids anything about *Harry Potter*,” they supplied, offering an example of a popular text. When Michael does incorporate popular culture, the focus is on supporting student learning with familiar and appropriate texts or references considered to be “grade appropriate,” especially for struggling students. “There’s a lot of times that they don’t understand the literature that we’re reading,” Michael acknowledged. “And so... if I am talking about ... heroes, and how heroes have to you stand up for themselves and go against the bad guys, a lot of times I’ll bring in Hulk versus Loki,” Michael recounted, referencing characters from the Avengers comics and movies. Employing an animated delivery with alternating voices and onomatopoeia, Michael described some of the characters that might make an appearance in the classroom. “Loki’s standing there and he’s like, *blah blah blah, I’m a god* ... and Hulk grabs him and he’s like *blam blam blam blam*, and Loki’s on the ground going, *uhhhhh*, and Hulk walks out going, *puny god*.” Departing from their energetic description of these characters, Michael once again spoke in their teacher voice. “[Students]

understand that because they've seen it," Michael explained, underscoring how characters like Loki and Hulk – once reserved for comic books bins and big budget movie outings - might belong in the classroom.

***“Where’s the beef?”***

Michael’s references to familiar popular culture icons within the classroom align to their perspectives about how these cultural relics seep into our everyday discourse. And while some elements of popular culture are here today and gone tomorrow, Michael believes that “the popular culture texts have been around far longer and are more accepted than the... multicultural texts are.” They attribute this to the observation that references to popular culture appear “in everyday talk.” But sometimes the popular culture reference of yesteryear appears in a different context that is years removed from its origins. This happened to Michael when using the phrase *where’s the beef?* with their students. “There’s a lot of time that a kid will give me a paper and I’ll go *where’s the beef?* ... and I’ve made an ‘80s reference to Wendy’s when they were you know when grandma’s goin’ *where’s the beef?*” Michael stated, as a hazy recollection of an ad campaign featuring a dissatisfied elderly woman surfaced in my memory.

I can say *where’s the beef* and you know everybody’s like what’s *where’s the beef*...and then I tell [my students] and they’re like oooh so it kinda has to do with the red sauce that they took out of the beef, and I’m like yeah. Don’t know how they got to there.

Although students expressed some confusion about the phrase *where’s the beef* (once ubiquitous during the heyday of its 1980s advertising campaigns), Michael explained that “people are familiar with the pop cultural references.” And Michael is likewise familiar

with popular culture that today's youth may gravitate towards, as Michael is a consumer of video games, anime, young adult literature (which sometimes evokes an emotional investment), and television shows reminiscent of the young adult novel. "[One] show was actually geared for ...you know the, the Millennial kids, and so I thought well let me watch it, it wa'nt that bad... I actually enjoyed watching the show," Michael revealed, adding that their students often get "so invested" in the characters that appear in these shows. (But Michael gets "invested" too – this notably occurred when "read[ing] the Divergent series" and when reading *Animal Farm*.) Among Michael's pop culture pastimes, they also pointed to an enjoyment of watching movies – except when they heartlessly trick the viewer into developing an emotional connection with a dog that dies later in the film. "So [my husband and I are] sitting there, we're watching it, spoiler alert, the dog dies ... it tore me up, and so I'm sittin there and I'm just like ... (sniffs) don't ever do this to me again," Michael recalled with perceptible sorrow. During another time, when viewing a film based on a bestselling young adult novel, Michael expressed how they cried throughout the movie – but so did everyone else sitting nearby in the dimly lit movie theatre. "And we're sittin' there and I'm like, (sniffs) and I hear my son, and he's like (sniff) and then I hear the big, huge football player behind me going (long inhale, sniff)." In moments like this, Michael acknowledges the commonality that exists between themselves and others. "And so that just takes me out of the teacher authority role into, I'm a normal person. You know, I watch movies, I cry, I love popcorn."

***"Kind of like ... Furbies back in the ... 2000s"***

In the instances recounted above, Michael conveyed their own interactions with popular culture. Despite initially demonstrating newness to the phrase "popular culture

texts” (“it does sound fascinating, so I hope it does develop into something”), Michael continued to draw on personal experiences when articulating a definition of popular culture. When offering this perspective, Michael also included a nod to the teacher’s role in uncovering a deeper meaning behind a popular culture artifact.

Popular culture [is] kind of flash in the pan fad, kind of like ... Furbies back in the ... 2000s when McDonald’s had their Furbies and they kind of died out, popular culture texts kind of fall along the same lines, except ... when the teacher really examines how the text is tied to either the local culture, uh is tied to an author of a particular culture, or has really far-reaching applications into uh other cultures.

As we talked more about what popular culture means and what it entails, Michael recalled a cable-network show that focused on nostalgic memories of the ‘80s, citing examples such as the California Raisins and the Rubik’s cube as emblematic of that time period. Alongside these examples, Michael revealed how their popular culture frames of awareness sometimes collide with those of their students’. During one class session, one of Michael’s students proudly displayed a pair of sneakers that Michael recognized from decades before. “I’m like dude I was around when [those shoes] came out. Hush,” they said jokingly. And on another occasion, when excited students talked about a revival of a groundbreaking musical from the ‘70s, Michael responded to their enthusiasm: “I’m like guys, I was at the movie theatre when it first came out,” they recalled.

***“Miss, you’ve gotta watch this anime”***

In situations such as these, Michael’s students have reacted with surprise and interest upon finding themselves privy to any information that positions their teacher in an out-of-school context. “Throughout the course of the year ... a-anytime I give them



any kind of information about myself they're just like, oh my god," Michael recounted. During one class session, Michael divulged that watching anime is enjoyable, because "I love the genre and I don't actually have to think about what I'm watching." Michael's students seized onto this information, wanting to know more. "I did tell a couple of kids that, and by the end of the day all of the kids were like, miss, you've gotta watch this anime," they said, impersonating a student by using a slightly altered voice. "Oh my god, and they relate to me more because I'm watching what they're watching, and so," Michael sighed before continuing, "it helps ... and then again it can actually shoot you in the foot." To exemplify this point, Michael told me about one student's unrelentingly questions about Michael's video gaming hobby.

"How many dragon[s] ... do you have?"

*How many this? How many that?* The questions kept coming.

"Sweetie I'm playing it just to play, I'm not playing it for life or death," Michael told the eager student.

Laughing, Michael remembered that the student "got angry" when they backed away from answering the onslaught of questions.

"Well fine, I don't wanna talk to you anyway," the student pouted.

"I'm like, okay," Michael recalled, ending the anecdote. "So," Michael paused. "It helps, but it can hurt too."

***"This Harry Potter kid's the bomb!"***

Expanding on the idea of students relating to the text, Michael pointed to *Harry Potter* as an example of a relatable text that is also a "good [piece] of pop culture to read" (and of course, we all know *Harry Potter* - a story that some characterize within the

terrain of young adult novel, and most could hardly dispute the Potterian presence in popular culture). “Kids can relate to *Harry Potter*,” Michael asserted, pointing to how the series resonates with many of the universal experiences of adolescence. But for one student, relating to *Harry Potter* was more about connecting with the titular character’s home life. To sketch this vignette, Michael took me further back to their substituting days in a nearby town, recalling how they observed the influence of *Harry Potter* on this particular student. “Whoo, I had a kid who was really rough, and this was back when *Harry Potter* was coming out,” Michael began. “And he was just – I, I didn’t, I didn’t know how to reach him.”

Approaching the student, Michael said, “Look...read a book, you can escape.”

“I don’t want to escape,” replied the student.

“If it take[s] you out, it takes you out of your problems for a little while,” Michael prodded.

“And you know,” Michael told me, toggling the temporal distance between then and now, “we moved on, and then I saw him ...about three weeks later, coming down the hall with a *Harry Potter* book.”

“Is that for you or your sister?” Michael asked the student.

“Miss, this Harry Potter kid’s the bomb!”

“You’re reading it?”

“I love it, but don’t tell nobody,” the student responded, an air of the conspiratorial punctuating this admission.

Pulling me back to the present, Michael told me more about the student’s connection with the text.

He related to *Harry Potter* because like Harry Potter, he didn't have parents, he didn't have a mom, his mom wasn't around, his dad wasn't around, he was living with an aunt and an uncle that he really didn't like, so he could relate to what Harry Potter was doing, so he, he eventually did read all of the series.

As Michael sees it, students might even find inspiration in the pages of a text that features a relatable protagonist. "If we're reading about a kid who takes [a] chance, then maybe a kid in my classroom can go, oh hey, I can take that chance." And while Michael admits that "not every [kid] is gonna relate to the *Harry Potter* series," the texts they incorporate into in their current classroom are relevant to students' lives.

Most of my general ed kids can relate to a family member being in jail...or um doing *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*. They may not relate to World War II, but they do relate to a kid being lonely and all he wants to do is play with somebody.

***"Man it's full of stuff, it's too big"***

Although Michael "lost track" of the student who secretly delighted in the world of *Harry Potter*, they continue to ensure that students interact with texts and learning activities where the content is relatable, thereby allowing students to look forward to reading. "If its relatable to ... a kid, they're gonna want to read it, and as educators we've got to find... that element that is relatable," Michael asserted. To underscore this point, Michael talked about their "submarine kids," the students who seem fully equipped to hide beneath the dark ocean waves, only to peek out with curious timidity on the rare, unexpected occasion. These students "come up to see where I'm at, but then they go back under," Michael observed. One notable exception to this behavior occurs when Michael uses a text that captures the submarine student's interest and attention.

“How many of you are readers, of books?” Michael asked, the new school year still awakening an understanding of the students sitting in the classroom.

“No, ain’t got time for that,” replied one student.

“Do you read a text?”

“Yeah, its short.”

“Why don’t you read a book?” Michael pressed, still treading the unexplored waters of getting to know the students.

“Man it’s full of stuff, it’s too big,” the student replied dismissively.

Yet, this same student and others with similar feelings about reading often change their tone when reading a text perceived as meaningful. “And then when...when they’re actually reading a text, and they can make a connection, then they want to read more and more and more,” Michael observed.

***“Wait, what, this is real?”***

One multicultural young adult selection that accomplishes this task is *No Choirboy: Murder, Violence, and Teenagers on Death Row*, a contemporary nonfiction portrayal of teenagers who must grapple with a death row sentencing. Using powerful first-person accounts, the text presents students with a revealing viewpoint about life for the individuals portrayed in the text.

Michael stood in front of the class, ready to tell them about the new text they would be reading. “It’s about five kids, five sixteen, fifteen-year-olds who are arrested, tried for murder, on death row,” Michael synopsized. “One of ‘em did not survive.”

“Wait, what, this is real?” one of the students asked, with what could be interpreted as either dubiousness or incredulity.

“Yes, this real,” Michael told the student with indisputable certainty. The gravity of the topic filled the classroom air, and students delved into the text.

The lesson continued and the minutes ticked by. As the class period came to a close, Michael informed the class that reading time was over.

“You have to stop reading,” Michael announced.

“Uh, I’m not done!” proclaimed a student, with a chorus of others echoing this concern.

“You can read tomorrow, I promise.”

“You swear?” asked one student, unsure of whether the teacher was just saying that to momentarily appease the class.

“I do every day, but yes you can read this tomorrow,” Michael reassured the class.

Reflecting on this episode and similar moments, Michael shared that some students “get angry” when told to momentarily stop reading a book like *No Choirboy*.

“When you know I have one of my submarine kids actually get angry because the bell rang and he has to go and he can’t read anymore, I think that that says everything about literature,” Michael reflected.

And while the main char- while the ... individuals in [*No Choirboy*] are African American, we ... our own Hispanic men, who have family members that are in the correctional facilities, they, I mean, they relate to these novels so well.

***“What’s the one takeaway you get from it?”***

For Michael’s students, the ability to relate to a text and make connections was found not only when reading *No Choirboy*, but also during lessons that featured the fiction text *Monster*, another acclaimed young adult drama that chronicles the realities of

a Black teenager who must navigate the criminal justice system while contending with a trial for murder. To effectively portray the protagonist's story, *Monster* shifts between formats such as a screenplay and diary entries. Michael and a colleague “switch off” between teaching *Monster* and *No Choirboy*. Michael observed that within the curriculum, “this novel... really touches a nerve,” particularly with students who share snippets of the life circumstances and experiences that are captured in the text.

About three years ago was the first year that I did *Monster*, and I had a lot of a lot of the tough boys in the class, who were actually the most vocal about the text, and you know they ... kind of wanted to rush through things so they could get into it, and you know, they would have their own conversations about, hey my *tio*, he's in prison for this and this, aw man, did you hear about the murders?

I envisioned Michael's students chattering in the classroom, the threads of isolated Spanish words attaching themselves to an otherwise English language conversation. “My *tio* missed my birthday, he's missed all of my birthdays, and I write him as often as I can he doesn't write back, I miss my *tio*, or my dad, or my mom.” For Michael, offering students an opportunity to interact with this kind of text allows them to relate to the content in a personal way, and also encourages the type of dialogue that is valued in Michael's classroom. “These young men, they get shut down every time they turn around, and so I want them to be able to have a space where they can have these conversations,” Michael added. “They do have a voice, and they can use it.” Their students seem to thrive upon finding that sense of companionship within a text they connect with. “In a lot of ways they're not alone, even though I tell them guys, you're

not alone, this is going on across America.” And sometimes it takes putting that “book in front of them” for students to realize, “Oh hey! This is everywhere!”

In addition to encouraging student dialogue, Michael’s students are also tasked with showing how they relate to novels like *Monster*, using more structured ways of displaying these understandings. On one occasion, Michael’s students showed their responses to the text using visual depictions.

I had them ... draw out a scene from *Monster*, and then you know I gave them just very general questions, you know why did you pick this scene? ...How do you relate to the character in this scene?... What is, what is the one takeaway you got from you know hearing the character?

But some of Michael’s students feel reticent to partake in these kinds of activities. “And you know a lot of times, these young men, they don’t want to write because they’re afraid other people will see it.” This hesitancy seemingly dissipates upon Michael’s words of reassurance.

Michael stood in front of the room, surveying the students. “I’m the only one that’s gonna to see it. Nobody else is going to look at this unless you tell me, miss, they can look at it,” Michael told the class, aiming these comments at the kids that needed to hear this.

“You promise?”

“Have I ever lied to you?”

“And this is where the rapport comes in,” Michael attested. “Because if they don’t trust me from day one, then I’m not gonna ... be able to get them to give me what they’ve written.”

***“He made the class really uncomfortable”***

Although the subject matter in these novels move students towards content that some other text selections avoid, Michael noted that students “really do like the ... more uncomfortable novels.” This quality even helps with making the text “a relatable item” to their readers. Multicultural texts in particular have a way of “[making] the kids uncomfortable.” And Michael believes that this is a positive quality. “[It’s] a good thing, because as much as I want them to learn, I also want them to understand that being uncomfortable, you have to be able to think your way out of it.”

But there have been times when the “uncomfortable” text has created an uneasy stir within Michael’s classroom. Michael told me about a tense encounter that occurred when reading an article about actor and activist George Takei’s experiences in a Japanese internment camp.

“Well they deserved it,” remarked one student.

This casual declaration hung in the air for a moment, until Michael asked, “How did they deserve it?”

“Well, they shouldn’t have done anything.”

“They’re born in America, they’re American citizens that we locked up because we can’t, we ... had to put a face on it,” Michael replied, stunned that this comment seeped into the lesson.

The other students in the class looked at Michael, unaware of what to do or what to say. The discomfort was palpable.

Gazing at the students, Michael said, “We’re not here to make racist remarks about something that is in history. I’m just here to let you see an actual person who was



in these camps.” Then Michael addressed the student who made the offending remark. “Please keep your comments, while they are valid, they are negative, and you’re making everybody else uncomfortable.”

The student looked directly at Michael.

“One more word,” Michael warned, “and you’re going to have to have this conversation with the principal.”

Michael’s recollection of that day communicated the deep sense of unease that found its way into a lesson. Sighing, Michael said,

He made the class really uncomfortable...and so I mean, you know the negative side [of using the multicultural is] that it really could bring up some racist issues that a student may not be aware that they have, or that they’re going to use that particular time as a platform to continue their racist ... uh rhetoric.

Reflecting on the impact of that moment, Michael acknowledged that in their role, they are able to “shut it down,” but Michael prefers not to be in that position. “I just ... really hate having to shut it down like that, because its ... almost as if telling that student, you know what? You’re a racist and that’s wrong. That’s not my job.”

***“They want to hit the ground running”***

Telling me more about text use in the classroom, Michael pointed to the role of student interest, noting that “if it’s something that captures their interest immediately, they will want to devour everything having to do with whatever it was that made them go, ooh, I like that.” For Michael’s students, oftentimes a captivating overview of the text and a teenage protagonist generate this level of interest and enthusiasm.

When I’m introducing a multicultural text...I tend to give em, you know this text

is about ... so and so and the issues that they're having, and I kind of leave it at that, and then I'll give them a little information about the author, and then you know the kids will read through the first chapter, and that's when it piques their interest, because especially when it's a text about a teenager, that they kind of hit the ground running, they don't want to take you know five, ten chapters to build it up, they want to hit the ground running, and get out as much as they can.

Michael appreciates that this quality is also apparent in the new, recently selected textbook program, as each reading is prefaced with a video introduction that is "kinda like a movie trailer." Michael noted that in this way, the new textbook embodies the characteristics of "a pop culture type of book" that succeeds at drawing students into the material, even with topics that might be more difficult to teach. "So the textbook is using pop culture...to get kids interested in reading about you know civil rights which can be very dry and no disrespect to the civil rights but there's a lot of history to it," Michael said. "Ugh, I'm not a fan of history...I love it, but you know ah, then the kids ... fifteen, sixteen-year-olds that are sitting there going really? I don't care about history. So they get the kids interested in it."

***"It does make your audience think"***

Even though Michael admitted to a dislike of history, they see the relevance of the past in the modern day, and values the lessons afforded by this knowledge. "I don't like to exclude text simply because that's excluding a part of ... the world's history," Michael explained. "As a society [we] have to... accept the fact that American history is ugly. It's nasty, it's brutal," they stated. "And in being able to use the multicultural text, that gives us an understanding of yes, it is ugly, yes it is brutal, now we need to make sure that our

elected officials,” Michael paused, seemingly gathering thoughts, “aren’t like the people in the text. You know we have to look for somebody that’s open-minded.”

This awareness became more apparent as Michael talked about exposing their students to texts and learning experiences that depict real-world events and issues, those that prompt students to make connections, while also looking “beyond their front door” and outside the small town they call home. “These texts ... can give kids avenues of thought, it can also give them avenues of ... unfulfilled dreams,” Michael posited, pointing to how exposure to the text could inspire students to consider future pathways they might have previously discounted or not known about. By using a balanced amount of diverse texts with students, Michael also finds that more and more options exist that “are wanting to ... give the kids a broader example” of these what life is like in various contexts. Access to new ideas could even help students to find a “healthy way” to address difficult topics and “introduce [a] conversation” that might otherwise be tough to begin.

Michael views this miscellany of texts and content to be reflective of “society itself.” Expounding on this idea, Michael pointed to the partnered development of texts and society. “Literature and the evolution of our societies kind of grow up together, so that now you know we ... are now embracing a lot of different things that we didn’t do say ... twenty years ago.” Delving further into these ideas, Michael explained:

“Now in high school... you have kids who have one, two children, and now you have transgender kids ... bisexual kids ... homosexual kids ... and you have heterosexual kids in the classroom, and so that is also being reflected on what we see on tv and in the movies... so I think ... the way society is evolving is a direct

correlation to how the ... textbooks for the English classroom are evolving. Similarly, Michael noted that popular culture texts “are a better gauge of ... society itself, because they can... they can bring out a segment of ... thought processes that are getting negative attention.” To illustrate this point, Michael offered examples to show how television shows and commercials confront current events and tackle controversial topics that resonate with and challenge the public and political discourse of the time. For instance, Michael noted how the television show *Maude* addressed topics related to reproductive rights at around the time that the Supreme Court deliberated upon this issue; likewise, the more recent sitcom *The Conners* grappled with the aftermath of opioid addiction. And a contemporary popular commercial represented how “love knows no boundaries” by offering imagery including interracial and LGBTQ love – visual statements “that could be perceived as uncomfortable.” Yet, Michael contends that exposure to popular culture items such as these prompt audience to acknowledge and consider timely societal issues. Looking ahead to the future, they can even envision a commercial such as the one cited as appropriate for the classroom, telling me that although each student is growing up in a small town, “[students] have very definitive ideas about what love is.” After following the requisite steps of gaining principal approval, Michael would use this type of “visual medium” to advance students’ inferencing skills. They would also remain mindful of students’ comfort with the visual text, allowing students to step out if they indicated uneasiness with the content. To support any students who might opt not to watch the video, Michael would respond by offering “the gist of the conversation” and issuing an alternative assignment to select a favorite show in order to examine nontraditional representations of love. Collectively,

Michael's examples highlight popular culture's ability to capture the happenings of society in ways that are socially relevant, relatable, potentially uncomfortable for some, and universally thought-provoking. "Depending on the venue that pop culture's being utilized in, it can work for you, or it can work against you, but it does make your audience think," Michael mused.

***"You need to be part of it"***

Michael's goal of exposing students to a plethora of perspectives and texts remains particularly salient, as students are growing up in "small town USA," in an environment where almost everyone seems to know everyone. Although several larger cities dot the heterogeneous Texas terrain - each offering unique but unified experiences and attributes – Michael acknowledged that many of their students scarcely venture beyond their local surroundings, and most tend to stay close to home following graduation. "A majority of 'em haven't even been to the town that I live, um which is literally ten minutes down the road," Michael observed. And so Michael doesn't shy away from confronting issues that are happening across the country, including the impassioned protests of Black Lives Matter and the ongoing, decades-old conversations about gender-based inequalities.

Expanding on these points, Michael envisioned how a future lesson could meld Black Lives Matter with readings by the illustrious paragon of civil rights, Dr. Martin Luther King.

Let's say, um, take Black Lives Matter, okay...we're going to go into school and Black Lives Matter is still going to be happening, um so I may put, I may have them read uh [*Letter*] *from a Birmingham Jail*, and I may have them compare

Dr. King's letters from nineteen sixtttee... two, I think? To today's Black Lives Matters, how are issues the same, how are they different, what could we do differently to prevent another Black life death.

Michael's statements led me to the images, sounds, pain, and hope of the nationwide protests we witnessed that summer, the collective confrontation of our nation's history and present-day realities, catapulted by the irrevocably imprinted murder of George Floyd. "I mean I do try to show them, hey, this is what's going on outside of the city limits, you need to be part of it," Michael continued, "because you're part of the country, you're part of the human race." This sense of urgency likewise resounds within Dr. King's text, whose words urged listeners to "stand up ... stand up for these premises" - a call to activism that resonates with the present day.

***"Oh no ma'am, it's lechuza."***

Throughout our discussion, I learned more about how Michael values expanding students' perspectives through interactions with texts that highlight multicultural voices and experiences. "I think the multicultural text, it ... gives you know students in South Texas the ability to see a kid who lives on a reservation and how he's a teenager just like they are but his troubles are much different and yet the same." Elaborating on this point of view, Michael spoke to the goal of providing students with "a diverse overview of not just ... literature but ... different people in in the world." This is one reason why Michael does not "see any problems" with incorporating multicultural texts into the classroom. "Not only does it give you know students in South Texas an opportunity to see the bigger picture, um it also gives them an opportunity to see ...how other people judge an owl. Like, down here, *lechuza*." Looking back at another classroom exchange etched in

memory, Michael again invited me into their sphere of experience while recounting the events that occurred after adding a new decoration to the classroom. “I love owls,” Michael noted, “so I actually ... traced one on my wall.” This seemingly innocuous gesture provoked an unanticipated response from one student.

Michael’s student gazed at the tracing of the owl, alarmed at what they saw.

“Nah miss, you can’t put that up there, that that’s a bad thing,” cautioned the student, continuing to stare at the tracing.

Michael wasn’t expecting that response – after all, Michael owned about fifty representations of owls in the home, and never once did the owls seem frightening. Nonplussed, Michael replied, “But it’s an owl.”

“Oh no ma’am, it’s *lechuza*.”

As I listened to Michael describe this exchange, I recalled my own fear of the *lechuza* as a child, the creepy dread when one was heard in the distance (or worse, outside the window). This mythical shape-shifting harbinger of calamities was quite the ominous sight, especially when driving down a darkened, isolated South Texas highway. “Navajo culture sees owls as bad omens, but yet the ancient Greeks saw owls as uh Athena,” Michael noted, “and that was their symbol of wisdom.” Michael views this episode as illustrative of why students should encounter multiple perspectives – one culture’s likeable animal could be another culture’s menacing foe. “It really does give them an insight beyond what they know to go hmm, that’s interesting,” Michael remarked. And at the same time, learning about different cultures and experiences enables students to “draw on their experiences based on ... what they see.”

***“Gender is a culture”***

Michael continued to tell me more about their perspective on using diverse texts, noting that “multicultural uh text needs to be able to be understood by all cultures.” And at the same time, access to a multiplicity of cultural voices, experiences, and issues encountered through the text provides students with pathways to learn about the world around them. “These texts give a glimpse into what else is going on in the world,” Michael stated, including insights into the injustices that are perpetuated against individuals with ties to different ethnic, racial, and cultural affiliations. “They give a glimpse into how injustices are not just done on African Americans, they’re done on Native Americans, they’re done on Chinese Americans.” Whereas gender might be overlooked when discussing culture, Michael also pointed out that “gender is a culture that is now becoming more aware in ... uh everyday people, so this this text has to be able to be understood across the board.”

On a recent occasion in Michael’s classroom, as students were tasked with reading an informational article, one of the students (an athlete, just like several others in the class – “we’ll call her Jane”) sparked a conversation about pay discrepancies between the genders.

Exasperated with the reading, “Jane” exclaimed, “This sucks!”

Taking note of this outburst, Michael approached Jane. “Jane what’s the matter?” Michael inquired.

“The women’s soccer team, they don’t get paid what men get paid!” Jane replied in a voice tinged with a mixture of disbelief and annoyance.



“Well honey, that’s because in sports unfortunately men, men still are perceived as the athletes regardless of their skill level.”

“But these women, they’ve, they’ve won these championships and they get paid pennies!” Jane stated with indignation.

“Sweetie, it... all goes back to when a woman is born her job is to marry, and have a child, and keep the house, and not worry about you know, how much money her husband makes,” Michael replied, enumerating the stereotypical roles assigned to the female gender. “And that’s kind of a hang up today...and the only way it can change is by you voting.”

“And so the English lesson went from reading the newspaper to gender discrimination to voting,” Michael summarized, again rejoining me in the present. After describing how they embraced this opportunity to discuss a real-world issue with Jane – ignited by reading a text that indirectly touched on these issues - Michael ended the anecdote on a humorous note. “And I was actually getting observed and ... my assistant principal went, is this an everyday thing? I went, not always but kinda so... Um, my students keep me on my toes,” they remarked, laughing.

***“Look at how the woman is dressed”***

Michael’s recognition of issues related to gender arose again when discussing a possible future instructional unit. Although Michael expressed the vulnerabilities of approaching the “dangerous thin ice area” when the classroom discourse shifted to gender discrimination, and despite an acknowledgement that such topics may require a “really super careful” approach, Michael shared a vision about how these issues might reemerge in the classroom. “I actually think I would ... have the course based in uh gender, in

order to be able to utilize the multicultural text better,” Michael stated. “I would have to do it based on gender instead of just a particular uh genre in the multicultural text because there’s more on women suffering than there is on men suffering.” Michael foresees a possible unit incorporating texts by authors such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Maya Angelou, Amy Tan, and Kate Chopin. “Um... it would be focused mainly [on] how women are mistreated, abused, and used by either men or a town um I would be able to use Adichie’s [book],” Michael explained, again referencing Adichie’s influential work. “If she and ... a male were out at dinner and she pays with her credit card, the waiter would bring the credit card back to the man, not to the woman.” Michael continued:

Um you also have uh *The Joy Luck Club* ... and some of these women would go through some really harsh and brutal realities.... So um also Maya Angelou’s *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, where she writes about her own sexual assault, and how she had to deal with it because in the south, African American women, in the ‘50s and the ‘60s, were routinely assaulted ... um ... *Desiree’s [Baby]*, a piece of fiction, tied to this foundling on the plains, they didn’t know whether she was White or Black or what, she married a prominent White man, and he somehow found out that she was supposedly African American, so he got rid of her and her son, but come to find out he was the one who was African American.

Michael also suggested that gender discrimination lends itself to analyzing the messages embedded in texts, such as those found in magazines and advertisements, the omnipresent influences in our modern cultural milieu. To illustrate how this looked in their prior experiences, Michael invited me to partake in another teaching moment that occurred over two years ago when teaching a curriculum from a program affiliated with a

prominent Texas university. “We were looking at uh gender bias,” Michael recalled. “So the... second semester was all about uh gender discrimination, uh gender inequality, things like that.”

Michael knew that the students needed extra support to understand topics surrounding gender, so they selected commercials from YouTube, confident that these resources would accomplish the aims of the lesson.

“Let’s watch this commercial,” Michael announced. “[And] look at how the woman is dressed.”

The students sat and watched, their interests heightened – after all, they loved their movie days, and Michael loved the learning that ensued whenever students watched movies. (And while a commercial wasn’t exactly the same thing, it *was* incorporating a visual medium....)

“So what is this ... advertiser saying about ... the woman in the commercial?” Michael prompted.

“Sex sells.”

Michael’s hands clapped together in the staccato manner of a realized epiphany, affirming this interpretation. “Gender, right there,” Michael proclaimed.

“Look at the man, ladies,” Michael encouraged, supporting further engagement with the advertiser’s messaging.

“Miss he’s cut,” noted a student, referring to the man’s well-defined physique.

“What does that say about the man?” Michael coaxed, seeking to extend the students’ analysis.

Reverting back to the present, Michael considered the outcomes of that lesson. “So you know pulling these things out, the kids were able actually to understand ... gender discrimination is really something that’s going on right now.” And even though Michael acknowledged that “they don’t get to see much of it in a high school setting,” this encounter and the “little fishing line” that was extended to students allowed them to confront an issue that continues to permeate popular culture and contemporary society.

***“They kind of giggle at first”***

Expanding on the important role of advertising in consumer culture, Michael described additional ways of capitalizing on the educational possibilities of media texts.

This works for me so I’m not sure if it would work for anybody else but um we, if it’s a commercial we’ll watch the commercial all the way through and then we’ll discuss some of the things we saw....and then we’ll go back through it again and I’ll stop it at key points and we’ll discuss this. And so by the time we do the third run-through, the kids are now starting to look at it with a critical eye.

Michael likened this approach to doing a “close reading,” where students are able to gain access to the “big picture” while also making connections to other texts. In this way, Michael believes that pop culture can be “really effective.”

But Michael does not limit their students to interacting with video commercials – they also incorporate ads found in magazines into lessons.

So like with magazines, when ... I do nonfiction texts, specifically informational texts, like how-to and recipes and things like that, I will have the kids find [an] ad in a magazine and we will look at it for uh gender discrimination, gender bias.

As Michael spoke, I recalled my own encounters with magazine ads as a teenager growing up in the '90s – the glossy photos, the persuasive commentary, the seemingly unattainable materialism contained in those pages. “They kind of giggle at first,” Michael told me, “but when they start focusing in on, well you know it’s an Old Spice ad but the guy’s topless, and he’s got you know an 8-pack and he’s on this big horse.” Seeing such a spectacle then generates questions among Michael’s students, such as “why is he on the horse?” And according to Michael, this is when the students “start taking the ad apart.” Telling me more, Michael described how their students interrogated the notion of gender bias looking at magazine ads.

I mean they looked at the color, they looked at you know where was the girl looking up at, was she looking at the guy ... how is the guy [positioned], I mean the kids really got into you know the various aspects of the, the magazine ad.

As Michael witnessed how students responded to the lesson, anchored by a multimodal text encountered in daily life, Michael felt delighted and “super happy.” Reflecting further on the implications of that day, they remarked, “So I mean you know giving them the ... freedom to do that with just a couple of guiding questions... I really was pleasantly surprised with how well that lesson went.”

***“It helps with literacy”***

In addition to developing students’ analytical skills when interacting with advertisements, Michael also sees value in using other popular culture texts, such as comics, videos, and music lyrics, to enhance students’ literacy skills. “If I’m looking at inferencing, making a connection between two different pieces of text... say eh an article and a comic strip,” Michael paused for a moment before continuing.

Well let's see how they, aside from the fact that one's an article and one's a comic strip, what is the article written on...okay, what is the comic showing you, what is it telling you, what kind of things are you seeing in it.

Michael suggested that this might be useful as "a paired passage," which is when their students "have to look at two different ... types of information, answer questions on each one and then answer questions on both of them." Comics are particularly advantageous for Michael's struggling students, and they appreciate the additional support extended by the visual medium. But moderation remains key. "It's like giving IKEA instructions, once they've done it one time they don't wanna do it over and over and over again," Michael explained.

Yet if Michael were to implement a future lesson drawing on popular culture genres, they noted that they "would probably pick a political cartoon" as a multimodal text to show students the components of persuasion. "What is the cartoonist saying in the caption ... who did he draw ... why did he emphasize one thing or one of the cartoon characters and not on another," Michael would prompt, urging the students to discuss both the literal and implicit features of the cartoon. To achieve these aims, Michael suggested that a political cartoon displaying images of a famous politician with exaggerated features might fit the bill (a suggestion that calls to mind my own introduction to political debates). "It helps with literacy because it's another way of showing that a persuasive argument just isn't on paper. It's not just in a magazine article. It is a cartoon." Citing an additional example of how Snoopy and the Red Baron represent "historical propaganda," Michael mused that the political cartoon "does help them understand" the link between persuasion and propaganda, which "takes us into today."

Offering another example of developing students' literacy skills through diverse textual encounters, Michael told me about using video clips of the *Lone Ranger* and *Gunsmoke* – two classical artifacts of pop culture – to teach students how to identify the traits of a hero in a text.

I would pull up an old *Lone Ranger* clip and they would see the Lone Ranger in the white hat. And we could find the hero. And then I would move ahead to *Gunsmoke* and we would see a, two dark-hatted gentlemen and one was the villain, one was not.

“Which one's the villain?” Michael inquired.

“Well they both have black hats,” observed one student.

“Miss, they're both the villains,” supplied another.

“Mm mm,” Michael sounded, signaling the incorrectness of the student's interpretation. “Here's where you're starting to see the development of the anti-hero.”

“And then that's when I bring them into uh, *Constantine* and *Pitch Black*,” Michael recounted, referring to additional characters of comic and film that define the “quintessential anti-hero.” They continued, “So I mean to go from the *Lone Ranger* to *Pitch Black* in you know one lesson is, it's pretty awesome when the kids start thinking, oh wow.”

***“Song lyrics are super easy to do that with”***

Michael told me more about how popular culture could facilitate student understanding and the acquisition of skills associated with English Language Arts. Focusing on thematic and conceptual information, Michael shared views on how popular culture texts may prove beneficial.

[They] take these, these very difficult theme and very difficult concepts ... and they present them in a way to ... where ... the student who may have no knowledge of that concept can start to relate to it, and when a kid can relate to what they're reading and what they're doing they're more likely to be successful.

Yet, Michael also issued a caution about using these materials. "On that same note, if you have a kid who understands these concepts ... the pop culture text could actually turn them off and get them to shut down," they attested, speaking to the complexities of maintaining balance with their choice of curricular materials. Despite this potential difficulty, Michael described how popular culture was interwoven into an interdisciplinary lesson alongside the school's history teacher. "I also will use song lyrics in conjunction with uh a teacher in history, so if the world history they're looking at uh Bloody Sunday then I would bring in U2's 'Sunday Bloody Sunday,'" Michael told me, referring to a popular song from the early 1980s. "And we would discuss you know well he's saying this in his lyrics, but what is he actually, really saying? And so um a lot of times I'm doing ...cross curriculum teaching when I do actually use lyrics."

This element of textual analysis also emerged when Michael scaffolded students' understanding of the symbolic "albatross" that hovers in the lines of the classic Coleridge poem *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. In this context, music lyrics also functioned to help students draw connections to their own experiences.

I'll bring in a song by [the rock band] Bastille and I will have them listen to it and I will give them questions like ... why is he talking about an albatross around your neck? Where in you know, where does an albatross appear in literature? So um ... I do kind of feed them how to word these questions when they're



searching for it, but I also have them looking ... at themselves and how when they've had an albatross around their neck which has them looking inward and then looking outward to how it all became so um... song lyrics are super easy to do that with.

***“Dealer’s choice.”***

Similar to analyzing a more traditional text for meaning, Michael suggested that the analysis of song lyrics entails contending with questions such as, “what is the songwriter actually saying, what’s being implied, what’s being inferred.” These analytic possibilities align with Michael’s use of music lyrics to teach poetry – a genre that they disclosed is their least favorite. (“[I’m] not supposed to hate it, but I’m sorry, poetry I’ve never been a fan of it, I’ve never wanted to go to a poetry slam, I’ve never bought a book of poetry unless it was for a class,” Michael admitted in a candid aside.) “Well if we look at say a... music lyric, um a lot of times for poetry I will use lyrics to bring in the different elements for that particular genre,” they told me. “And our kids have a huge issue with inferencing down here, because ... they don’t want to look any deeper.” To promote a “deeper” engagement with uncovering textual meanings, Michael offered me a window into what this looks like in their teaching.

Michael selected the ten songs they thought would work best. Then, focusing on just the lyrics and omitting the stanzas and refrains, Michael cut the lyrics into strips, so that they looked like mini versions of the larger sentence strips you might find in an elementary school, adorning the classroom bulletin board. Michael took a small bag and mixed ‘em up, readying them for the poetry lesson about to begin.

“Pull out twenty strips,” Michael directed the class, handing the bag to the student sitting closest to her. The bag circulated from student to student, as each reached in and plucked out the requisite number of disconnected song lyrics.

“Alright now, give me the stanzas,” Michael told the class.

“Is it four stanzas of five or five stanzas?” asked a student.

“Dealer’s choice.”

The students rearranged their lyrics, engrossed in the creation of their own unique, remixed poetic creations.

Taking a cue that students were almost finished with the task, Michael announced, “Now, once you’re done give it to somebody else and you take their poem.”

The students swapped poems, ready to partake in the next step of the lesson.

“They’re now having to look at different song lyrics that have now become somebody else’s poem,” Michael explained to me, revealing the analytic component of the lesson that accompanied students’ roles as producers of new texts. As students analyzed the poems line by line, they focused on questions such as, “is there a connotation... what’s the attitude, is there a shift in where anywhere in there, does the title still mean the same - now that you’ve read it through... and then what’s the theme.” Reflecting further on this approach, Michael noted, “And you know the kids who made the poem have already decided well it’s gonna mean this and you know it’s gonna do that.”

Back in the classroom, Michael observed how students constructed meaning from their peers’ poems and overheard students describing their interpretations.

“Well... because you put this line in this line here, think I saw a shift and I think it means ...”

“Yeah that’s pretty good,” remarked another student, listening to the peer commentary.

“No, you’re not anywhere close,” stated another student to a classmate, unimpressed by the insufficient analysis given to the ensemble of repurposed lyrics.

“That’s the only time I really do like poetry,” Michael admitted, their words again filling the present space. “Is when we’re not actually reading.” And in a lesson such as this one, or even when informally debating the meanings behind other popular songs with their students (such as a semi-ambiguous “stalker song” that sometimes plays on the radio), Michael appreciates how songs encourage the disentangling of meaning. “The students, they can’t just take the song lyric at face value, they need to look beyond the lyrics,” they emphasized. In doing so, Michael aspires for their students to achieve that “deeper meaning for ... what we’re doing, what the author is actually trying to say.”

***“Multicultural texts they ... they do a lot”***

In addition to Michael’s examples of how popular culture texts complement their English class, I also learned about how the multicultural fits into a standards-based curriculum that prioritizes the informational and the narrative, while promoting English skills such as comparing, contrasting, describing incidents, and partaking in academic discussions. For instance, Michael partnered *The Joy Luck Club* alongside an expository article from an online website geared toward students. “What I will generally do is assign a prereading story so that my kids can get ready for the actual novel that we are going to be doing,” Michael explained. By exploring the historical context underlying the

novel and building background knowledge, “they understood why the families were fleeing China because of the really uh Communist dictator, so we use these [articles] to get the kids to, to have some sort of understanding.” When teaching *The Joy Luck Club*, Michael also relies upon discussion questions, which are oftentimes anchored by a dialectical journal. “Dialectical journals are beautiful things, I love those things,” Michael enthused, briefly mentioning how this tool had been used to enhance students’ engagement when reading *Frankenstein* and exploring societal views and character traits related to the question, “what makes a monster?” To illustrate the uses of this resource, Michael shared an example dialectical journal template with me. Reviewing Michael’s resource, I noted how the dialectical journal offers scaffolded support and a model response, alongside prompting for students to create their own journal responses. An emphasis on literary elements, analysis and evaluation of the text, and using citations are all embedded within the resource. As we spoke, Michael offered further clarity on how applying dialectical journals in their teaching:

It gets the kids to uh to pull quotes from a text and ... they kind of have to explain it, and then they kind of have to explore how it either ties with character development or how it ties to ... one of the scenes that we’re focusing on, um you know it just it gives the students the ability to you know start seeing how a character grows ... or I can tie it back to a specific question.

Michael’s use of the dialectical journal complements their approach to discussions, which combine whole and small group conversational opportunities with scaffolding questions that propel students toward “a whole different line of thought.” They make sure that students’ questions are answered, while positioning students as facilitators of the

discussion. In these scenarios, Michael's class explores the text to tease out understandings, such as those related to aspects of character – and as a result, “we have a really good, healthy discussion.”

While *The Joy Luck Club* lends itself to these text-based and structured response-oriented activities, Michael likewise reiterated the significance of the story behind Amy Tan's work – the focus on identity, culture, family, and gender that weaves together the narrative.

I like to do *The Joy Luck Club* because my students are really receptive to the fact that you've got very strong mothers and then you have daughters who are, while they're grown, they're still trying to find their own identities because they can't be Asian, they can't be Chinese, and they can't be 'merican, but ...they've got their feet in two different worlds....As for teaching, it allows me the ability to let the students take the lead on how they want to learn some of the themes and some of the main ideas.

When focusing on the main idea in a text such as *The Joy Luck Club*, Michael also likes to use a strategy called “54321,” which “ties into the Bloom's Taxonomy” and offers multiple scaffolded supports within a visually enhanced graphic organizer. For instance, students might be prompted to generate questions, make connections, display their prior knowledge, cite texts, and critique the text. This resource also appears customizable and applicable to a range of texts. For Michael, the strengths of such a supportive framework cannot be overstated.

It really does help for... not necessarily literacy but for understanding you know that all of these things work together so that you can actually get to the main idea of you know what you need to be looking at and things like that.

And since the narrative in Amy Tan's novel is so richly developed, Michael views it as an opportune text for developing students' abilities to compare and contrast key moments in the story. "I would have them describe an incident with the mother and then an incident with the daughter, and then I would have them contrast you know the two incidences." But then Michael would also add an experiential layer to the activity, asking students to compare and contrast their own lives with events and moments that epitomized their own mothers' upbringings. In fact, Michael has used this with their students, and spoke about the directions guiding this activity. "Go ask mom how things were when she was growing up and then look at how things are with you growing up. What are the similarities between the fictional text and real life."

In more general terms, Michael values how multicultural texts have a way of getting their students to open up - a priority for a class that aims to include "a discussion component and a writing component." Michael explained:

I really do appreciate the fact that I will have kids that haven't said anything other than yeah all year long to actually give me this well thought out and articulate answer about you know why are they being mean to the Indian kid? ...Well cause they're White. Well, that's not right. ... What do you mean? And then that allows for the discussion to really blossom and grow. So um multicultural texts they ...they do a lot.

***“Broccoli is the cousin of pizza”***

Within our discussion about multicultural and popular culture texts, Michael offered additional insights into how they support the literacy development of a range of learners. For example, Michael holds a favorable perspective about employing graphic novels as a companion to their struggling readers. “When I have a student who has issues reading, I’ll find the graphic novel of that novel, so they you know they’re interested in it too, it’s just in a different venue.” While Michael finds that printed texts are often effective for their general population students, special education students often benefit from auditory texts. “I will specifically look for ... if there’s an online version that it can be read to,” Michael stated.

It really just depends on who ... I’m specifically teaching because ... a lot of our student population do have learning comprehension [difficulties] but they can understand a conversation, so it’s easier for them to be part of the classroom.

The newly selected textbook also lends these supports to struggling readers.

While we’re reading you know [*Letter*] *from a Birmingham Jail*, it’ll pop up another screen and the wording will be at their level....so, they’re included in the discussion at their level and their understanding will increase, because a lot of times they are very verbal...and so this textbook will also it also has the capability of reading the stories and the text to them, usually in the author’s voice, which is phenomenal.

And when implementing English lessons, Michael asserted that “the teacher can’t just sit back and go, alright read the text y’all, those are the questions, go” – rather, attention to making the content accessible takes precedence. Sometimes Michael even finds that the

content needs to be presented in a clever way in order to facilitate student learning and the belief that the skill can be accomplished.

While they can inference they, once you give it uh a real name, they automatically go oh I can't do that, so we kind of have to tell them that broccoli is the cousin of pizza and it tastes just as good as pizza, without actually telling them it's broccoli and it's really good for them.

***“They aren’t likely to forget the word”***

Michael also shared that vocabulary development holds a high priority in the classroom, particularly as a way to further immerse students in understanding the theme of a text. Rather than having students copying definitions from a dictionary – “you don’t learn that way” – Michael prefers more interactive ways of exploring the associations and nuances of word meanings.

I will you know write a word on the board, and I will have the kids just you know I call it word vomit...if you see blue up on the board what's it make you think of? ... I'm like, well why did you... come up with that word? And that word ties into the theme that I want them to look at for the novel.

Another way that Michael connects their students to vocabulary learning is through incorporating visual representations into the lesson. Notably, a Frayer Model graphic organizer helps Michael's special education and general population students to solidify their understandings of new words, as it provides quadrants for students to uncover, analyze, and visually depict the meanings of newly encountered words and concepts. Speaking about the possibilities afforded by this resource, Michael explained, “I can ask them to draw a picture, I can ask them to ... find three emojis that represent that



word...when they've got ownership of vocabulary ... they aren't likely to forget the word."

***"Like tying your shoe"***

Speaking with Michael, I gained insight into their identity as an experienced educator, one who remains keenly attuned to their students' needs, interests, and out-of-school experiences. The harmonious balance of textual resources and assorted literacy-based learning opportunities that characterize Michael's teaching ethos resounded throughout our time together, as they spoke confidently about the role that multicultural, popular culture, and traditional texts hold in the classroom and in their own life. In addition to showcasing an appreciation for textual variety that positions their students' identities and needs at the forefront of their instructional priorities, Michael's strong willingness to help others emerged time and again, as did their commitment to flourishing within the boundaries of an oftentimes demanding public school system, assuaged by a locally supportive district. The values Michael shared are further exemplified by an awareness of the cultural backdrop and societal realities surrounding themselves and their students, as well as dedication to preparing their students to become active, independent thinkers. "My job is to ... allow the kids the ability to see and make up their minds," Michael told me.

And even though Michael's years of teaching experience position them as a leader and exemplar of excellence in the school community, they maintain a reflective stance to teaching. "I routinely go okay, did my lesson work, what didn't work," Michael revealed. "The thing that I need to work on is just giving the kids enough information so that they can run with that informational football instead of me doing all the running."

Anchoring this goal are Michael's effective classroom management skills (honed over the years from the time they began as a preservice teacher) and the "ability to ... present the lesson in a way that the kids could understand." This has moved Michael towards finding additional ways to empower students for their current and future success. "You know [in the past] it was more along the lines of, they've got to do the test," Michael explained. "And now it's more along the lines of, okay, what kind of ... what kind of tools can I use that the kids can put in *their* toolbox." The student-centered learning environment of Michael's classroom, in tandem with ample textual materials – including multicultural and popular culture texts - help to fulfill this aim.

It just goes back to using other resources to ensure that the student learns the concept so that ... when they learn the concept then he can apply it to any skill they're doing, like tying your shoe, if you know how to tie a tennis shoe that comes up to your ankles, then you can tie a high top...you can ... if you know the skill then you can apply to anything.

## **Meet April**

### ***"Communication Master," English Enthusiast***

"My passion has always been English and literature and cultures," April said. "So when I went back and got my degree, that's what I focused on."

This ardent appreciation for classical literature and diverse cultures contributed to April's educational journey from student of English, journalism, and theatre to English educator with a master's degree in communications. "When I was studying English, I was a person that you know I did read novels, I read eighteenth century novels, I read Shakespeare ... I read the usual things that we would teach our high schoolers." But

before drawing upon these literary experiences in the classroom, April first spent “about fifteen years” working in journalism and business while living in a lively, storied South Texas border city. Reminiscing about this time, April noted that “it was like ... culturally shocking ... and it was only 60 miles away. But the culture was different.... it’s different, it’s on the border. Which means that it’s in its own little bubble. Of Mexican culture.” In a nod to the complexity of culture, April noted (with some incredulity) the seeming contradiction of being close to their home, yet culturally distant from their surroundings. “And so I actually went through culture shock. Culture shock. As a Hispanic, as a Mexican heritage, and I went through culture shock just going to a border city.” Yet April maintained an “open-minded” approach toward learning from the people and experiences that were encountered in these new surroundings. In time, April “got very interwoven with the culture” of their new home, befriending a coworker who eased the transition. “She mostly spoke Spanish and I mostly spoke English with a little spattering of Tex-Mex, not Spanish, Tex-Mex,” April clarified, pointing to the distinctness underlying the two languages. “So we had this cultural exchange .... I spoke to her in Spanish, she spoke to me in English.” Over the years, April also “picked up a little bit” of Japanese and Korean, in addition to studying Italian. Dabbling in a variety of languages aligns to April’s self-professed appreciation for various cultures and “current” culture. April even credits popular culture with being “a more recent driving force” behind their educational pursuits. “I am one person that loves culture in itself,” they told me. “I’m in love with culture. I love learning about any and every culture...of the world. And even within regions.”

As an employee at a large, internationally known electronics company located in the border city, April's job responsibilities called upon these qualities and set the stage for their later work as an educator. "I have actually been in teaching for a while, just in a different area," April remarked, pointer to their work in customer service and as an auditor. Working in these capacities, April did not yet envision a future in the classroom. "I did not want to go into teaching, but I understood why teaching was so important." Nurturing this awareness was April's living situation with a roommate of eight years, who worked as a science educator. Alongside their roommate, April found themselves "interwoven with an educational group" that perhaps foretold of a forthcoming transition into substituting and full-time teaching in the "small town" where they "grew up."

"When I got the position at [Ramos-Canales High School] ... it was as an English teacher and I was so happy with that," April recalled. Looking ahead to their flourishing future with the school district – one that also includes contributing to the school's social media outreach efforts – April conveyed a commitment to continuing to develop their teaching skills, even as a seasoned educator with several years of public-school experience. "I want to ... learn how I can be more, a more effective teacher. To teach the skills."

***"They're doing as much as they can"***

April teaches freshman English, including a pre-AP class. They also work with sophomores, but noted that this assignment does not include teaching the pre-AP sophomore class. "My focus is on the early learners," April explained. Within their classes, April teaches a student population with a "large range" of skill sets and ability levels, including students identified as gifted and talented (GT), students who are achieving below grade level, and students with 504 plans.

Speaking with April, I learned that they value using a range of texts with students. “I wanted to bring in more texts,” April asserted. “And so ... that’s where I’m moving towards.” Telling me about the textual autonomy they are granted in their current position, I learned that the administration at April’s school provides flexibility with text choice and plays a supportive role in decisions about including multiple text types in the classroom. “So they’re usually pretty like you know what, just tell us and they support us,” they explained. “They’re very open to how it is that we teach ... our students.” And in particular, “they’re very open for our classrooms to be teaching ... cultural texts.” One of the most impactful opportunities for choosing texts occurred when administrators selected April and a colleague to choose the new book program for the English department. “That was ... a great support in letting the teachers choose their books,” April told me. After considering the available options, April discovered a textbook that featured sufficient amounts of multicultural content (an observation that they’re “quite impressed” with). “The good thing is they allowed us to choose our own book this year, and we really appreciate that, because it allowed us to pick a book that gives us access to more cultural texts,” April stated, indicating satisfaction with the school’s encouragement and support. “I mean they’ve ... supported us ... so much in allowing us to choose our own book program,” they added. “I don’t know if there is an actual particular thing that ... [administrators] can do in order to support us in um incorporating more cultural texts because they do seem to have given us leeway in choosing our text.”

The level of support extended by administrators includes not only the use of multicultural texts, but popular culture texts as well. Oftentimes April will just provide a “heads up” in order to integrate popular culture into a lesson. “They’re usually very

supportive, uh so long as um we're giving them a heads up," April remarked. "We kind of learned ... how to give heads up before we touch a certain subject in reference to popular culture but they're very open to the way we use popular culture." April also gives "a heads up" any time "there's going to be a controversial issue" in a text they're planning to use. This open line of communication extends to April's transparency about popular culture references that appear in lessons. "I have mentioned to my administration about using references from TikTok, talking about songs and things like that ... they're very used to us talking about uh movies, current movies." Expanding further on this supportive stance, April stated, "they're doing as much as they can.... to help us."

***"They want ... the students to learn the skills"***

Although a culture of support permeates April's teaching experiences and approach to text use ("my school definitely supports ... the idea of multicultural texts"), they acknowledged the ubiquitous presence of state-level instructional and assessment requirements at their district. "They are on us all the time in wanting us to teach questions ... that our students can answer correctly for their test in order to raise our scores and our accountability," April explained, pointing to an overarching emphasis on "how many students pass the test." This "pressure" is enforced by the district, but imposed by the state. "It's not really our district's fault." Recognizing the tensions inherent in reconciling curricular flexibility and student learning with testing demands, April suggested that while accountability is necessary, "there's kind of like a give and take" regarding student learning and testing demands. "I would have to say they were about fifty percent. They want ... the students to learn the skills, but they want them to answer the test." This means that April must "teach specific skills" so that students gain

proficiency at answering the types of questions appearing on the test. And even though April is mandated to cover “certain skills” that adhere to the “restructured” state standards and prepare students for the test, they implied that there are limitations to relying solely upon traditional texts to accomplish these aims.

As I said [the state education agency] requires us to teach certain skills...but by usually falling back on texts that are (sigh) you know ... the staves the classics, it kind of doesn't give us the information that we need in understanding the students and the connections that they now make.

Fortunately, April thinks that the curriculum has “improved” overall and views the newly introduced state standards as more fluid, with room for inviting a variety of text genres into skill instruction. “It's skill and it's not something that you can actually, actively do with a specific text, but that you can do across many different genres, many different type of ... mediums,” April told me. The “updated” standards now offer avenues for partnering multicultural content within standards-based lessons. “[They] allow us to incorporate the skills and understanding multi cultures. Many cultures.” This flexibility suggests another layer of autonomy for April – the ability to select multicultural texts to work in tandem with standards. Amid laughter about how they momentarily lost their train of thought, April expanded on the relationship between standards and the text.

[The standards] can work much better with our new ... access to multicultural text. They definitely ... increased ... what we perceive the students should have, what kind of skills they have, they focus more on ... the why, rather than the just recreating.

***“The current and modern thinking”***

Alongside these observations, April’s awareness of their students helps to guide their approach to skills development in lessons. “The way we teach [the skills] is usually based on the students here themselves,” April disclosed, their words pointing to a compatibility between addressing state-mandated skills while simultaneously remaining responsive to the student population. April also implied that the new book program could facilitate efforts to reach their students, as it offers “access to the current and modern thinking and ... the different type of text.” While searching for the ideal textbook to adopt, April took note that the textbook companies “changed up the normal text,” opting to present more inclusive materials. “And we specifically chose a program that had a wide range of multicultural text access,” they explained. As an example, April mentioned that a text about a transgender protagonist would fit right into the new textbook – an observation that speaks to both the diversity of the textbook and the diversity April sees in their own students. “Now you’re gonna see a text about a girl or a boy who is transgender...you know and it was this idea because I could see my students, I ... understand they’re not who I was when I was growing up,” April asserted, their words conveying a responsive awareness about the students that frequent their classroom.

Although April values the inclusive stance and “modern thinking” that characterize the new textbook program, they also indicated that sometimes “current” texts might generate some controversy with students and parents that ultimately makes its way to administrators. “I’ve seen several different issues with other teachers bringing in ... new current um examples of ... literature and things like that where um a student might reply back ... to parents and then it gets to our administration,” they recounted. In



addition to this cautionary point, April told me about the importance of ensuring that texts are appropriate for the age range of the student population, including while using more “current” texts. “You don’t want to go too far away from the age group that you’re teaching.” Consequently, “[students] will start to not really have a connection ... which means they lose focus and they don’t want to read it, they say it’s boring.”

As an educator who values collaboration and has “sent ... things” to support a colleague’s use of popular culture, April shared additional thoughts about how to approach other educators who are less inclined to view nontraditional, “current” texts as resources for learning. April pointed to how they are “a very open-minded person” who would listen to the colleague’s “point of view” about the perceived appropriateness of popular culture texts in the classroom. In this imaginary yet possible scenario, April might tell a colleague about the things that have “worked” for them, while also emphasizing that their goal is not to impose their own ideas on others. “I’m not here to convert you.... I’m just here to show you what has been working for me. Whether you decide to use it or not is up to you,” April might say in a diplomatic and nonjudgmental tone. “To each their own.” Concluding these thoughts, they added, “I’d just like to use that moment as ... a teachable moment. For me and or ... the other person.”

***“This is a very ... touch and go thing”***

April also discussed the challenging aspects of access to instructional materials that focus on multicultural and popular culture texts. In contrast to the plentiful resources that exist for established texts of the traditional English canon, April has experienced some difficulty “get[ting] materials” for “newer” texts that extend beyond the ones historically found in an English classroom. “There is a lot of materials out there available

for the *Cask of Amontillado*, *The Most Dangerous Game* ... things that you can use in order to teach the students the processes of English,” April explained. “When it comes to newer text, which that’s what multicultural text is, unfortunately... because um, it’s not used as much, you have to go and create a lot of the processes yourself.” Listing additional examples of traditional American literary fare, such as *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *The Masque of the Red Death*, and *The Yellow Wallpaper*, April asserted that “all of that stuff is out there.” This commentary called to mind my own ease with finding instructional materials and exemplar lessons for Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* - one Google search could populate site upon site of useful options with numerous pedagogical possibilities. Telling me more about the abundance of information available for pairing skills with “the old text,” April similarly noted a dearth of “current resources” that could support using popular culture. For example, there might not be “many...resources available” for a task such as analyzing the characters in a movie, or using the format of a “screenplay,” rather than a traditional novel. “That’s one of the big issues with pop culture, and not having references or resources,” they declared. “They’re not built into our lesson, and that’s why I think it’s a major hiccup with our students.”

In April’s view, this insufficient access to guidance and materials poses a “major problem” for English teachers who strive to incorporate diverse texts in addition to “the usual classics.”

[There is not information about] what to teach students and the impact of what ... allowing them to either choose ... or what kind of new stories are available or new texts are available in order to better incorporate education into their lives.

To add further clarification to their ideas, April told me about how some stories might have “actual models” of how to provide instruction and ask questions about the story. “It’s more helpful definitely for teachers that are not used to teaching it or thinking that quickly uh, about making those connections,” April explained. And when looking to the future, April considers how “resources” such as these might assist them with including diverse texts into the classroom. “How can I build my lesson around that exact material or that ... song. Or that movie, you know whatever it is.”

April also shared their belief that more studies are needed to inform teaching with multicultural texts. “We usually fall back on um definitive studies that have been made about how children learn,” April expressed in a matter-of-fact way, offering insight into the role of research in their teaching. While they are “not certain” that this is “a completely negative” concern, April does lament how “there [are] no positive studies” about using multicultural materials that they “can draw on.”

I’m kind of like, this is a very... touch and go thing. Trying to figure out what works, what ... can I incorporate, so it’s for me since there is no background information or no studies that I can fall back on it makes it difficult for me to make certain that this could work for ... the students.

Even though considerations about access and instructional guidance might present hurdles toward textual inclusion, April adopts a resourceful approach to teaching. They will “rely on things” that they find, often creating curricular materials designed to reach the students. “I do uh, usually create handouts and ... different um assignments that also go with the text,” April described, pointing to how this approach was used alongside *Monster*, a text “about an African American boy in ... prison.” As another way to

retrieve resources, April told me about a website comprised of educators who can sell or purchase instructional materials. “You have to rely on a lot of other teachers that have been bringing those current um mediums into the classrooms,” they told me. April explained this website “is where you could find those teacher materials that teachers have created and ... now be able to use them with the current pop, pop cultural texts.” When April opted to use resources from this forum, they retrieved inspiration for “one or two of [her] projects,” including an “escape room” lesson based on the works of Edgar Allen Poe – an activity that offered a new take on otherwise traditional English materials.

***“I want these students to feel included in our society”***

In addition to learning about April’s current industriousness with procuring textual resources, they also told me about the influential literary experiences that contributed to their outlook on textual diversity – experiences that April believes “opened up [their] eyes into the idea of diverse texts.” For instance, April explored “a woman’s idea of who she was” in the context of literature and while reading texts such as the American short story *The Yellow Wallpaper* (“love it because it’s a woman’s point of view”) and poems that “talked about gender” (“so interesting”). April also told me about the seemingly transformative experience of taking a university course that viewed 18<sup>th</sup> century literature through a queer theory lens. “This was a beautiful class,” they recalled, their affinity for the course almost tangible. “When I got into the class on queer theory in 18th century literature, it was introduced to me as multicultural,” April explained. “So from that time on I have thought of multicultural text as being outside of normal society.” As an outcome of partaking in this formative course, April recognized that they needed to

include diverse texts for their own students. “It made me, when I started teaching, think about the multicultural ... impact that our students need, they need this diverseness.”

As April reflected further on their background alongside the notion of textual access and multicultural texts, they recalled how texts featuring diverse genres and topics were difficult to come by when they were in school. As a result, “I learned on my own instead of having the teacher providing [a] window to culture.” Offering an example of the kind of texts they “could never really get access to” despite being “actually quite prevalent,” April cited multicultural LGBTQ literature, which includes texts that feature characters, issues, and themes that reflect and resonate with the LGBTQ community. Looking back on their time as a university student, April remembered learning about how these texts existed. “I had a professor ... whose wife actually wrote LGBTQ literature ... two female lovers falling in love um, which is romance,” they recalled, with laughter paired alongside a tone suggesting surprise at this revelation. Telling me more about this experience, April continued, “I didn’t know that existed... I didn’t know that there are writers out there that are putting their own spin on different things ... but incorporating their own cultures within it.” A similar realization of welcoming surprise occurred as April interacted with TikTok, where they discovered texts featuring transgender characters. “And seeing TikTok all of a sudden I’m like, there’s books on ... transgender men and women? Like when did that happen? And apparently, it’s been out for a long, long time.”

Alongside these revelations are April’s own observations about the multi-dimensional identities of the students they teach, which includes students who identify as LGBTQ. “My population of ... students that are um LGBTQ has definitely increased in

the sense that they actually come out much younger, now,” they expressed. “I definitely know within each grade level that ... I’m interacting with at the high school so that’s four grade levels, that there [are] at least two to three individuals that are ... identify as gay or lesbian.” April has also taught students who identify as “non-binary or gender fluid,” although they have not worked with a transgender student. Given this diversity, April embraces the idea of using texts that are inclusive of all the learners that walk through the classroom doors. This task seems to be supported by an evolving world that is “more open to hearing about [the LGBTQ community]” than the one April grew up in - a not long-ago time when there was “hardly any talk about [the] ... LGBTQ community.”

And now, the society has become more open, more open-minded to hearing information on that and so when I get to look for texts that ... [are] inclusive so that my student population feels included, that’s why I would choose to get more of those texts. I want these students to feel included in our society, even with the restrictions that ... [are] currently going on right now.

At the same time, April believes that integrating inclusive LGBTQ texts into the curriculum will enable students to make connections and “want to learn” the skills that are prioritized in the English classroom. “And so I want to be able to include them in what they see in literature. So that they can make that connection and then want to learn the skill to interpret what it is that they’re reading.” Partnered with this idea is April’s suggestion that LGBTQ texts hold promise as resources for encouraging “conversations” among their students, who have in the past identified as LGBTQ, non-binary, and gender-fluid. Despite the gains in societal acceptance and open-mindedness April pointed to,

they also mentioned that issues of equality continue to persist. “And ... this is why I would ... want to include more of it so that these conversations can happen more.”

***“I still love my Edgar Allan Poe”***

Along with April’s eye-opening moments of textual discovery and their ongoing awareness of a diverse student population (who is coming of age within a “society [that] recognizes a whole lot more than what it used to”), they also told me about the observation that “not enough people ... know about” the “new ... texts [that are] out there.” Regarding popular culture texts, April stated that “not enough has been integrated.” Moreover, April suggested that multicultural texts – those that include “texts of young adults” and feature “marginalized ... societies” and cultures, as well as individuals and groups perceived as “outside of ... the normal society” - are “not usually in the education system.” As a specific example of a text that meets these criteria, April mentioned the novel *Esperanza Rising*, a young adult work of historical fiction (sprinkled with an occasional appearance of Spanish words and phrases) that tells the culturally rich story of a young Hispanic child whose life is abruptly uprooted following their father’s death (a “beautiful short story” by April’s estimation). April also pointed to *Bless Me Ultima*, another acclaimed exemplar of multicultural literature featuring the Hispanic culture. “It’s the same format of literature, just from another culture,” April explained. Although April expressed an openness to imbuing the curriculum with similarly diverse textual options (including those that “you won’t normally read because it’s not part of ... the usual texts”), texts authored by the “old dead White guys” remain a reliable and constant presence in their teaching.

In previous ... teaching years, um a lot of focus has been in ... looking at the ...

mainstream texts that literature classes have used before ... texts written by, the way we like to call them old dead White guys, old dead White guys. Which is because they are mostly White, male writers, and so those are the, the most common literature texts being used.

In their current practice, April continues to rely on the “White, male writers” when selecting texts to use with their students. “And so it is very true that I will, when I’m looking for a text for the students to be reading it ends up being that they’re items by um Ernest Hemingway, um Edgar Allan Poe,” they told me. “I do focus a lot on ... American writers and I’ll make a reference to William Shakespeare.” Despite this reliance on older, classic texts, April admits that there might be a disconnect between their students and these older texts. “But again, it’s always something that is much older than what they really care about, the students themselves.”

April’s readiness to introduce their students to classical literature speaks to their own enthusiasm for famed literary authors and works that have resonated with readers for decades (if not centuries). Speaking about the texts they treasure, April expressed, “I have my favorite texts, unfortunately they are mostly dead White guys.” One of April’s favorite authors is the “classic writer” Edgar Allan Poe, whose work reappears in April’s classroom each year. “One of the first texts I ever used was ... *The Cask of Amontillado*. It’s a beautiful text because even though it’s written by a ... dead White guy, it is set in Italy. So it brings culture in,” they stated, in a voice revealing the reverence they ascribe to Edgar Allen Poe’s work. The previous year, April also included Poe’s *The Fall of the House of Usher* into their teaching (“still dead White guys ‘cause I still love my Edgar Allan Poe”). Although April viewed this text as “really odd” because it dealt with the



topic of incest, they felt that it appealed to the students, who are “interested in knowing more about what love really is.”

As the recipient of an English degree that instilled an appreciation for the classics (and even offered “one whole class for Shakespeare”), April’s literary training meant that they “studied the traditional English texts” and read a lot of the “usual” books, such as Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis*, Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, and Salinger’s *The Catcher in the Rye*. By extension, April frequently picked the “usual” novels and plays to use with their students. “But when I first taught I used that same concept, I used those the usual novels. The usual plays.” Recollecting their early teaching days, April described how the “first text” they used was one by Poe. And because of this traditional approach to the high school curricula, April excluded popular culture “a little bit.” “It’s tradition to use specific type of literature uh to cover ... skills,” they explained, noting how text-related decisions are sometimes made “because of tradition.”

***“Just try something different”***

Although April believes that “the classics are great” and “beautiful,” they admitted that their students might not be as “interested” in some of the stories that comprise the classical canon. “I want to use classics because they to me they’re beautiful, but at the same time I realize my kids aren’t as interested in the idea of reading those stuffy old stories, they want to ... make their connection,” April remarked. As an intermediary between the traditional and the current, April sees value in reimagined versions of classical texts, and shared observations about modern popular culture texts that draw upon famed Shakespearean works. “I don’t know how many different ways Shakespeare has been rewritten,” they stated. “It continues to be rewritten over and over.

We've had movies based on it." April cited the movie *Ten Things I Hate About You* (a modernized story inspired by *The Taming of the Shrew*), describing it as "a reinvention of the same text" where "the information's there," but presented in a way that is "more relatable to students." For April, "a retelling of Shakespeare" set in the context of "a more modern story" might be one way for a reticent high school educator to add textual diversity to the classroom. "So... just try something different or just a little bit different," April would advise.

Another example of a Shakespearean tale with a fresh, modern spin is the fictional story *Romiette and Julio*. This young adult novel boasts a title that reveals its literary and thematic influences, but its storyline offers an original, multicultural take on the classic English play about young, star-crossed lovers. April views *Romiette and Julio* as a culturally inclusive text with manifold possibilities for their classroom. "Definitely one of the ones ... I'm looking at," they declared, adding that it "brings in that multicultural identity ... into the classroom." Envisioning how this text could be used as "one of the big novels that we read [in the fall]," April described what a future lesson integrating identity and culture might look like.

One of ... the lessons I would plan and this is on cultural identity is ... so they're pretty much used to the Hispanic culture. So they understand Julio....but what do they know about African American culture. So the idea would look into [that]. April's ideas build upon their predominantly Hispanic students' identities ("mostly Mexican-American heritage," with a smaller percentage of students who are biracial or White), as well as their exposure to the Black Lives Matter movement and "the African American culture." "They're being saturated right now with ... Black Lives Matter," they

stated. This observation resonated with my own awareness of our nation's long overdue confrontation with pivotal social justice issues and the persistent inequities that paved the way for these critical conversations to take centerstage. Weaving these elements together, April provided additional clarity on a future lesson, which would include a focus on both Hispanic and African American cultures. "So for me they would go look into both other Latin countries and ... other African influences to the African American uh cultural identity," April began. "And ... from there then applying, probably flipping them ... so you got Julio, he's a Hispanic male, what about changing Julio to Julia... and coming up with [an] alternate ending."

Offering more detail, April foresees how their lesson could infuse elements of the multimodal by integrating a musically informed component to analyzing character. Students would be tasked with creating "a playlist" for the characters, comprised of "choices of music" that reveal aspects of each character. "One of the other things that I like to do ... when reading the novel [is] think about... your... songs ... a playlist that would go be running in your head as you read it," April explained, as I visualized them speaking to a classroom brimming with attentive students. "So it creates kind of a movie feel to your novel. So, applying the different songs. So maybe you would go with um Romiette, you know she'd be listening to a lot of R&B ... or rap." In contrast, Julio's musical proclivities might venture more toward the musical revelries associated with Hispanic traditions. "And then you've got Julio," April continued, "who probably listens to some Bachatas ... and Tejano and things like that." As April considered how *Romiette and Julio* might lend itself to students "actually creating a playlist" (similar to a project for the novel *Monster*), they appeared satisfied with the possibilities inherent in

innovative ideas that seemed to exemplify advice about “try[ing] something different.”

“Actually I really like that idea, I think I am gonna do that one,” April told me, laughing.

***“I could see that engagement”***

The subjects of Shakespeare and music reemerged once again as April compared Shakespeare to contemporary rappers. “You know ... exactly what Shakespeare uses a lot of rappers use right now,” they declared. Along the same lines, April told me more about how they believe that rap and poetry share common characteristics.

I always refer back to rap as being a form of poetry because ... it (sigh) they use lyrics too and symbolism and they have ... stanzas, I mean it might not look like um the normal type of poetry that we see but they are broken up ... it’s about repetition, the same thing that you would see in literature.

Partnered with this perspective is April’s awareness of the influence that rap music has on their students’ everyday lives, which differs from the musical preferences that characterized their own upbringing. “We have a lot ... of students especially nowadays... like I grew up with a lot of Tejano, with a lot of rock, pop music,” they recalled. In contrast, “nowadays we do have a lot of students that ... relate a little bit more to rap.” To illustrate this point about the prevalence of popular music with today’s youth, April detailed a memorable moment from their substituting days, when they were assigned to work in an In School Suspension (ISS) classroom. Beginning their anecdote by telling me that there were “a couple of students [they weren’t] reaching at that time,” I learned about how rap music did allow April to forge a “connection” with one particular student.

Circulating the classroom, April noticed one student halfheartedly hunched over the desk, a literature assignment displayed atop the isolated desktop. April suspected that

the student was not fully engaging with the work. *He's not at all involved*, April thought, moving towards the student.

April's training in English literature materialized as they began talking, and the subject veered toward rap. "Rap is just a beautiful form of poetry," April told the student, this validating statement reflecting a belief about the synchronous elements binding rap to its poetic origins. And *all of a sudden* – the student's demeanor shifted, an energizing quality now filling the immediate classroom space.

April recognized that now the student seemed to be connecting, and suddenly a notebook appeared that was previously obscured from April's sight.

"Miss... read this... is this good?" the student inquired. April held the opened notebook, which had writing scrawled across the narrowly spaced horizontal blue lines.

Accepting the notebook, April called upon an English major's analytical lens and read the student's rap lyrics just like they were the lines of a poem.

Back in the present space, April shared that their connection to the student was facilitated by a focus on written ideas and by affirming rap as a genuine, kindred relative of traditional types of poetry. "I relate a lot to [poetry] as rap, because rap is a form of poetry," April said, noting that they aspire to include "a lot more ... rap and music" into future teaching. In this instance, "I was able to make that connection just to that fact that I recognize rap as a form of poetry." Continuing to reflect on the impact of that earlier teaching moment, April considered what the student might have been thinking as they welcomed and legitimized the work kept hidden in a notebook.

He got connected with me and the idea that oh my goodness like, she recognizes rap as being ... a form of literature, she's not downplaying my ideas like I can

write, it might not be ... in the normal sense in a literature class a poem but ...it still is, and she recognizes that.

Concluding this remembrance, April spoke to the student's "engagement" during their interaction. "I could see that engagement," April said. "And that was a beautiful thing."

***"Learn the skills, but yet now they make more connections"***

April revealed additional details about their commitment to using a variety of text formats and genres alongside the classics that remain a prominent fixture in the classroom. "So I love to bring in different texts that these kids ... make a connection to so that they can... want to learn the processes [of English and literacy]," April said. "And I've always said this about English. English classes, specifically, are there to teach you about the process, not the literature." Reflecting this mindset is April's openness to using nontraditional texts, including videos and "shorts," which are retrieved to develop students' literacy skills. "They have wonderful [video] shorts that show different understanding, different skills in ... English, making predictions ... looking at setting, characterization," they explained. Bolstering these approaches is April's access to the new textbook program, which presents material electronically and includes activities that build upon students' experiences with social media. "We wanted to move to virtual books ... uh electronic books," they said, mentioning that the selected program includes a student response format that "actually look[s] like Twitter," with a predetermined length that mimics the character limit of the popular social media site.

As April told me about embracing an assortment of texts, they also described the role of "current" informational texts in the classroom, such as news articles published by the Associated Press or The New York Times. April retrieves these materials from a

website that adjusts reading levels to make the same text accessible to variety of readers, including those that are reading at, below, or above grade level. This is yet another way April helps students “to apply the processes that we’ve been learning in English.” And while expository texts continue to remain a prevalent source of literacy learning for students, April reiterated a reliance on expanded textual options and the role of student interest, offering an additional rationale for this openness towards diverse “mediums”:

I’ll use [different] mediums because in our world we have a whole lot of information out there and different ... methods, it is no longer just about books, and short stories, and magazines, and newspapers, we got a whole internet full of way more (laughs) interesting things.

Offering a fuller picture of how they work to mindfully include relevant learning materials that reach their students, April compared their earlier experiences working at school to their current practice. As a substitute, April basically “watch[ed] over” the students, but as an “actual teacher” there is now a strong responsibility for the learning that ensues in the classroom – “these are my students.” In those earlier days before teaching in their own classroom, April took note of the resources other teachers used. “I would come into the classroom to assist student[s]... [the] teachers definitely had like, the normal handouts. And ... I will admit I (laughs) looked at them and I was bored,” April said, laughing. “I was like how, how are you going to get students to really want to learn when it’s the same old material, not new... so I found that what [these teachers] were covering wasn’t current enough.” These observations had an impact on April’s approach to text use. “And that definitely influenced me in quickly understanding that I needed to bring in what was going on right now when I was teaching.”

And as the years have passed, April's text use has likewise evolved. "My first year teaching I learned that [the students] were ... disconnected with literature, and I could see why," they remembered. In response to these observations, April sought ways to encourage the connections that seemed to be lacking. "I learned to conform more to my students, and so it has slowly progressed to including more and more ... materials and mediums that they're interested in," they stated. "I have seen that just in that short amount of time that I ... started teaching from year one and then four years later, I'm using completely different texts." As April told me more about their shifting approach to textual inclusion, they mentioned "the first reading" students completed when they entered the class during the present academic year – a choice that contrasted the first text they used as a first-year teacher, when Poe's work introduced students to the class. But this year, April selected an acclaimed prize-winning work by Eugenia Collier that was first published over fifty years ago in a magazine with a primarily Black audience. "[Students read] a short story called *Marigolds* by a ... female writer, African American, telling the story of the Great Depression," April recounted. When reading this story, April prompted students to visualize the narrative and "imagine a movie." "It's like taking that text and putting it in a different manner for them to be able to understand it better."

Looking back on their decision to incorporate *Marigolds*, April explained:

So already I've changed from looking at classical text and instead trying to find something that is more open to ... cultural differences in which they can see, in which they can relate to more. Yes it's still a little bit older text but it's definitely told in such a way that they're they can see oh, I'm not just going to read the normal type of stories that I would usually read in in English.



And since April's students don't all "love reading," April remains dedicated to relating to students and "build[ing] their skills" through using a variety of textual materials. "So I will bring in as many different mediums as I can to help them understand [the skills]," they declared. In April's classroom, an equally strong emphasis is also placed on helping students to "want to learn" and to make connections to the text:

It is very important that the students connect to the text, makes them want to learn more about what the is being covered in the text. And by combining it with pop culture ... the culture that they live in, that they're most involved in, that they care about they're now making a connection within actually looking at a text.

By adding "those newer forms of texts... those more culturally inclusive text[s]" into their teaching, April believes that their students "still learn the skills, but yet now they make more connections, more personal connections" to the texts and the content they are interacting with. With a resolute demeanor, April told me:

In order to get my students to want to learn about the skill and I have to pull up some comic book or some video or some TikTok or a podcast I will do it. And for that I have slowly progressed adding more different mediums. Even within the short amount of time I've been teaching.

***"That is where I see ... the improve[d] connection"***

Elaborating on the impact of relating to the text, April suggested that learning about different cultures could help students to identify personal connections to the text:

So if it's talking about the Arab world, you know ... how they ... treat religion and or women within that world and then drawing that conclusion to maybe I, I deserve a better treatment in my own world, not saying that that culture does

something bad, or does something good, but just being able to make that connection between themselves and whatever text they're reading.

Since April views this as a goal for students, they notice when students demonstrate difficulty making those sought-after connections. For example, April thought that students would connect to a story about a collegiate coach leading a “highly regarded” team, but the outcome of this lesson was not what April envisioned. Contrary to expectations, the kids seemed unfamiliar with the coach profiled in the text and appeared to find the selection “boring.” “Now you would normally think this athlete should interest them,” April recounted. “But for them ... they couldn't make the connection because they hadn't heard of her.” April highlighted this scenario of students' disengagement to show how using a multicultural text might instead facilitate connecting to the material.

I knew about that coach, but they could not connect with [the text]. So that for them seems boring ... there is no connection they made, so ... that's why having those multicultural texts... gives us a little chance to connect more with them.

In contrast to April's observations that students perceive “a lot of things” as uninteresting and “boring” (“why do I want to read it? I'm just reading the words”), April detailed how one student found a strong connection with the story *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*, a historical fiction novel (and film adaptation) that is set amid the atrocities of the Holocaust. “It's about of course a German boy and a Jewish boy interacting in a concentration camp,” April synopsised. “I had ... a student that he does not like to read, he does not like ... he's very hesitant in ... connecting with texts,” April began. “And ... for this one I would actually play a reading of [the text] and he would get so into it.” April observed the student's display of enthusiasm: “*Miss, but ... are we gonna start?*”

*Are we gonna go?”* the student would ask, an excited impatience quickening their voice. When April played the film version of the text, the student displayed a strong “connection with the movie and the characters.” Explaining their observations about the student’s attributes and the ability to connect to the story, April believes that “he saw himself in the character Bruno” and related to how Bruno often “[got] in trouble.” In addition to witnessing that the student could see reflections of the self in the characters, April also noticed increased engagement during these lessons. “And I definitely saw him ... pay attention more and respond more to our conversations about what was going on around the characters,” they stated. Concluding their anecdote, April added, “And that is where I see ... the improve[d] connection when it comes to the text and applying a multicultural idea to the text.”

***“Bridge ‘em by using the emojis that they love”***

Alongside April’s insights about making connections to the text while using a film to support their teaching, I also learned about how April uses current-day mainstays of youth culture within a Frayer model to assist students with unpacking the meanings of unfamiliar words. As April spoke about how adapting and integrating this tool into their teaching, I envisioned a generic Frayer model in my mind’s eye - I recalled how this multiuse graphic organizer functions as an adaptable tool for exploring word meanings and concepts, while also allowing students to present their understandings multimodally, in writing and drawing. Elaborating on the Frayer model’s basic format, April explained that it consists of “four quadrants with a center” that provide space for students to write sentences and identify “synonyms and antonyms.” “That’s a normal part of literacy.

Learning what the word is, being able to use it, and then finding words that are similar and opposite.”

But April added an extra layer to their “own type” of Frayer model, which included a “multicultural idea” that “uses one ... popular culture issue, which is the emoji.” “But what about the fourth quadrant? Well this is where I bring in the multicultural idea...in this case it’s a generational thing,” April told me. “I incorporated emojis [into the Frayer model], which is very much used between the Millennial and the Generation Z for communication.” Describing a rationale for adding emojis to the Frayer model, April explained, “What do my students enjoy better? Well ... when they text, they use the ... abbreviations ... especially in ... the Gen Z, they love their emojis... so, I decided, let me use that instead.” April recounted a classroom episode that exemplified how they used a modified Frayer model – a tool regarded as inclusive of a range of learners and applicable to students’ culturally mediated lived experiences.

April observed the students as they wrote sentences, retrieved definitions, and identified synonyms and antonyms for the vocabulary word “escort.” “Find three emojis that you can use that links to that word,” April reminded the class.

“Miss, there’s no emoji for this word,” one student declared, looking to April for guidance.

“Are you sure?” April inquired. “The idea is not the emoji that exactly means angry, like angry has an emoji,” April clarified. “You gotta think of the process of English. We have symbols. A symbol stands for something else. So think about an emoji as a standing for something else.”

As April continued to support their students with the task, the student again looked to April for guidance. “Could it be a police car?” asked the student.

“Tell me why,” April prompted, eager to hear the student describe a connection between the visual representation of a police car and word “escort.”

“Well, when you’re, you have like a procession, a police car escorts you somewhere,” explained the student.

“Yes...that’s exactly right,” April declared.

Another student stepped into the conversation, seemingly excited to volunteer another interpretation of the word. “The dancer,” the student offered.

“Well, what do you mean by the dancer?” April asked, urging the student to supply an explanation to support the response.

“Well a dancer has an escort,” the student said.

“Beautiful, that’s exactly what I mean.”

Bringing their anecdote to a close, April suggested that the students who made connections to the vocabulary word “escort” seemed to be drawing on their lived experiences. “You can see ... their ideas of their worlds, how it influenced their connection to the word escort.” Reflecting further on that lesson, April perceived the classroom encounter as successful at creating a “bridge” to students’ identities. “So I was able to cross the cultural identity of a Gen Z with ... you can say Gen X ... and bridge ‘em by using the emojis that they love,” they stated. “So ... that was one way I tried [to] use multicultural.”

***“They really responded well to that”***

Listening to April expound on their past, present, and future text use, I continued to understand more about how they strive to include a range of materials in their teaching. April told me about wanting to use more notable speeches, young adult novels, movies, and music into upcoming lessons. I also learned about how April has included the graphic novel *Persepolis* into their teaching, as well as their vision for using it in the future. “Definitely on my future list,” they told me. “*Persepolis* is about an Arab girl ... going back into Iran and telling her side of the story through a comic book.” The year before we spoke, April selected an excerpt to use with the class, and felt that “the students really took to it.” Explaining this observation, April spoke about how the visual depictions in *Persepolis* (which April deemed “a completely new type of multicultural text”) facilitated students’ understanding. “It was mostly ... short speech bubbles, which they didn’t have to be reading constantly like they do whole paragraphs of information and then a lot of it was just pictures because that’s what graphic novels are,” April explained, noting that these features helped students “visualize much better than reading words.”

Elaborating on that lesson, April described how students could “actually read the panels” and “[look] at the images,” which culminated in a project where the class developed podcasts to respond to the text. “Their response later on was actually a podcast so they would do a recording so we had a lesson that went from ... actually using a popular culture medium, which is comic book panels,” they stated. While some students “wrote out” their podcasts, April also challenged students to plan and record an audio

podcast to accompany the written version (an activity that garnered extra points for students who opted to take this extra step). April offered more detail:

[The students] looked at [*Persepolis*], looked at the setting, looked at the character, looked at the way they're characterized, what they're saying, and used all of the skills that we had been learning through the year, and then they created a response, personal response in podcast format. [pause]

As April looked back on that experience, they asserted with confidence that “[students] really responded well” to showing their understanding in an engaging way that offered an alternative to the common written response format. “I had wonderful response with that,” they reiterated. “They were actually really interested with the fact that they could say their response instead of just writing it.”

***“They’re more about the pictures and visualizing”***

Similar to the observations they made about the visual features common to the graphic novel, April also shared thoughts about how popular culture text types such as anime and manhwa use visuals to imbue the text with meaning. “There was another time that I mentioned manga and talking about how dialogue uh works with ... when [the characters are] saying something,” April recalled. “And I talked about how the speech bubbles look.” Within this conversation, April and their students discussed the function of the speech bubbles, such as their placement and how they relate to characters’ reactions. “So there you get to actually see ... [the] tone and mood of the... character that’s in the panel being influenced by someone that’s outside of the panel...or in their own speech bubble,” they explained. To emphasize the distinctions between the different types of speech bubbles, April “even had to illustrate it itself.” They showed students the

differences between the “regular speech bubble” (the ones “with the point” that indicate speech), the “inverted point” (used to show an “off panel” character’s dialogue), and “the speech bubbles with the little circles” (used to indicate the character’s internal thinking).

April also shared that they will “definitely always mention comic books” when teaching, particularly to assist special education students. “They’re more about the pictures and visualizing and they can visualize the comic book panels and then think yeah that’s true, these are like real events, except that this person has a magical power,” April told me, referring to the X-Men. “So it’s like they make that connection into their own lives, this could happen to me, I don’t have a magical power, but I can see that point of view.” And while this kind of multimodal material holds promise for supporting students’ abilities to “visualize” and see an alternate “point of view,” it also offers an entryway to interacting with “situations” akin to those encountered in everyday life and when perusing other texts. “X-Men [is] ... a form of ... the situations they deal with real life, racism, inequality, but that magical ... addition that it adds which a mutant ability,” they said. “These kids can learn to recognize that within other forms of written material.”

### ***“Drama it all out”***

April’s attentiveness to the visual features of the text and the role of visualization appeared consistent with their self-professed appreciation for visual mediums (“I would love to ... use a lot of visuals”), as well as their acknowledgment that many learners thrive when a visual accompaniment brings a text to life. “For me it’s more about [the] visual ... visual becomes easy to me, it doesn’t come easy to everybody,” they admitted. “And that’s what they need. They’re a lot of visual learners nowadays.” Pointing to the influence of social media (which has “saturated” their students’ lives), April believes that



their students would benefit from “more visuals” in the literacy classroom. “Seeing is believing. They no longer see in their mind’s eye. And that’s what we need more of. Applying more visuals to our text,” they proclaimed. But April clarified that they were not actually advocating for “pictures or things” – instead, in this context, they meant to suggest that students should engage in performative learning experiences – to “drama it all out.” To add clarity to this point, April told me about using readers’ theatre – an oral reading strategy where students embody the different roles in a text, while also practicing fluent, prosodic reading.

As an example of utilizing readers’ theatre with their own learners, April told me about using the play *Twelve Angry Men* – a more traditional offering that April considered to have a “multicultural part” because the story (told in both written and film formats) revolves around the murder trial of a Hispanic youth during an era rife with prejudices. “I loved the readers’ theatre because you had ...the student vocalizing what was being said. And then ... a reaction from another character, another student reading out ... the response,” they shared. “We each played a part.” When assigning roles, April made sure they meshed with some aspect of the student’s personality. “I did typecast them into a particular part so that they could see themselves in the character based on the character’s ... characteristics,” they explained, providing examples of a more argumentative personality versus one that is “more laid back.” April feels the approach of incorporating drama into the English classroom was successful because it allowed students to interact more with the text.

In English, it’s more about reading the material and ... when it comes to having a better impact on a student is actually incorporating those ideas from other

disciplines to be able to have a student more interactive with the text itself. For April, interacting multimodally with a text such as *Twelve Angry Men* is key, especially since a lot of times students experience some difficulty making connections to “the old plays.” “[These plays] are difficult for a lot of our younger readers. They don’t make connections anymore,” April lamented. “They don’t get into it.” April recalled how their own experiences performing a traditional play as a student facilitated understanding. “I remember first reading Tennessee Williams *The Glass Menagerie* ... when I actually played it and it was like, hard to follow unless I was performing it,” they remembered. April’s recollection called to mind my own interactions with similar plays, and how I first encountered (and puzzled over) newly discovered words and phrases while flipping through the softcover-clad pages of stories teeming with contextual unfamiliarity. Elaborating further on the use of *Twelve Angry Men*, April spoke to the importance of ensuring that their students make connections to the content and materials they interact with. “You have to find texts in which your students can make connections to,” they declared, adding that students appeared fully immersed and engaged when performing.

They really, and I mean really (laughs) got into it. And I played the movie for them. They recited the lines themselves cause they knew so much as they read, it stuck within them. And ... you could ... hear in the tone of their voice when they were into it, they really would go at it.

***“What it means to be a distraction”***

April’s insights about multimodal, performative texts also directed us toward the topic of social media and its important role in both April’s life and that of their students. “I’ve tried to incorporate the, the pop culture idea of items,” they told me. Equating

popular culture texts with social media (which they mentioned is “easy” to include, given their technological skills), April continued, “I mean a more recent example ... I brought in TikTok. TikTok is extremely popular right now with students of this age, uh 15, 14-year-olds.” The video-sharing app TikTok is so prevalent and popular with April’s students that they believe it holds possibilities for inclusion in lessons - but at the same time, April acknowledged that it could pose a “distraction” in their classroom. “Now as a teacher, I can see [popular culture’s] distraction,” they told me. Inviting me into a previous year’s freshmen class, April detailed how their students “weren’t paying attention” to a lesson as TikTok made an unexpected appearance.

April’s ninth grade students sat at their desks, appearing to listen as April lectured about the lesson du jour. There was a lot to get done that day, and April stood in front of the class, trying to impart the information the students needed.

But then April noticed subtle movements emanating from the sitting students – an almost imperceptible hand movement here, a slight body wiggle there.

*I’m here upfront giving a lecture trying ... to do things*, April thought. And yet there were the students, sneaking in tiny dance movements as imagined pop music coursed through their minds.

April could tell that students’ attention was minimal (at best), and swiftly detected their ruse. It was like the students were thinking about an energetic series of dance moves - *this step, this step, this step*. “Stop TikTok-ing,” April instructed in a voice firm and all-knowing, the mark of an observant and practiced educator.

Surprise filled the classroom, along with the unsettling realization that not only did the teacher know what was going on, but the teacher must have somehow *seen*

*TikTok*. But ...*wait a minute*, the kids seemed to think, if the teacher can recognize TikTok then maybe they have a TikTok account of their own!

I intuited some amusement as April laughingly expressed the certainty that their kids were practicing “the moves for a popular dance on TikTok.” “Literally ... I could see that go through their heads,” they recalled. April referred to these observations as “one of [her] favorite things” from the prior school year, declaring, “I knew what they were doing. And I literally would call them out on it and say, stop TikTok-ing. I actually made it into a verb.” April reflected further on the implications of student disengagement, and “what it means to be a distraction.”

They’re thinking about... the next post they’re going to make. The next TikTok they’re gonna make. The ... next, or let’s say anime. They’re bingeing at night, watching episode after episode. So that they’re not getting enough sleep. Uh or they’re rather doing that instead of doing homework.

Yet despite the possibilities for “distraction,” April spoke to the “beauty” that popular culture exudes and acknowledged its ability to capture students’ interest. “Could I use their influence, their beauty that I see personally to help me teach in the classroom? Definitely so. Because this is what our students are interested in.”

***“This [is] not some stuffy old man’s writing”***

While April’s anecdote illustrated one way that the widespread music and dance moves popularized on an app such as TikTok might pose a distraction in the classroom, they also suggested that TikTok holds promise for inclusion in literacy learning and English skills development. “I use a lot of ... TikTok ... and I do use that a lot now because that’s what our students are interested in,” they revealed. “I have used it in

multiple lessons in different methods and to show different skills that we use also in English.” Even though TikTok videos are only a minute long, April likened the shortened time frame to reading and analyzing a single segment of a printed text. “That’s like you reading a short paragraph and making interpretations within that paragraph about what it is that they’re using, symbolism, what type of figurative language,” they analogized. Expounding the merits of TikTok, April believes that including the popular app helps students “to make that connection to what they want to know about their own lives.”

Capitalizing on their students’ interests in this video-sharing platform, April told me about how they productively integrated it into classroom lessons. “We ended up looking at a song that was very popular in TikTok and how it was being used as the background music and how it influenced the mood of the person ... creating the TikTok.” As the lesson progressed, students delved into a more comprehensive analysis of the musical text. “And then we went into deeper looking at the lyrics and what are they really saying ... then we went into ... literary devices covering like metaphors and similes and symbolism,” they recounted. “We went pretty in depth,” April asserted, implying that students were supported with “slow steps.” Offering greater detail about the components of their lesson, April described how students viewed “the original music video” and “analyzed ... the creator’s mood.” “So here we tie in author’s purpose and ... the method that they used to create the message. And then interpreting what do you think he felt.”

April also told me about “a whole other lesson” that focused on imagery, symbolism, and making inferences. In this context, April aimed to instill an awareness of the production elements of the TikTok videos, as the class discussed their perceptions of movement and light in the videos and tried to determine whether the TikTok’s creator

was amateurish or a more seasoned video producer. “So here they’re making assumptions, making ... inferences, um educated ... conclusions about what they were seeing,” April expressed with enthusiasm, adding that students also dissected the components that comprise a TikTok video with an analytic lens similar to one used for interrogating informational texts.

We looked at the TikTok and what makes up a TikTok, where we have the likes, the comments... the shares, how many shares it has at the very bottom, the original music, was this an original voice that [the video producer] created themselves or are they using music from somebody else.

Laughing, April remarked that their lesson even incorporated a bit of research, as students talked about how they might “go look for further information on ... the creator ... if there was ... a creator for the music.”

Akin to these prior experiences using TikTok in the literacy classroom, April spoke excitedly about their ideas for another upcoming lesson they’re “hoping to develop” that focuses on “at least the concept of TikTok.” But unlike lessons where students analyzed a preconstructed text, April’s new idea incorporates a performative component and positions students as active text producers. Acknowledging the one-minute time frame allocated for each TikTok video, April explained that students would create a short performance to show their understandings of a selected character. And alongside discovering “a different way ... of expressing a character,” April pointed out that a future lesson would encourage students to incorporate dialogue and show how they relate to the character. Synopsizing their ideas, April described their future lesson. “So the lesson that I’m planning ... is actually for them to create a sixty second video

characterizing a character,” they told me. “Doing shorts of maybe ... specific dialogue that actually shows ... the character in those, like what are the key ... characteristics of that character that make that character up.”

As April shared more about TikTok’s impact on their students, they seemed to draw a comparison between students’ responses when using the familiar video sharing platform and their reactions when interacting with a staple of the English canon. “When I would mention TikTok ... I actually had a lot of participation with students because they’re like yeah this is something ... I look at,” they recounted. Speaking as though embodying a student’s perspective, April continued, “This [is] not some stuffy old man’s writing that I don’t even, like when is this happening again?”

***“Now pop culture is multicultural”***

As I gained further insights into April’s pedagogical approaches and perspectives, I learned more about their belief that popular culture holds a place within the classroom. “I definitely had that mindset since I started teaching that my kids need more ... pop culture in their learning,” they said, noting that their experiences with popular culture have “grown and grown” over the years. “[Popular culture texts] are opening minds ... to what’s available out in our world.” Added to this perspective is April’s view that, in some ways, interacting with popular culture texts provides an analogous experience to reading a more traditional printed type of text. “Going back to talking about [a] movie to show setting or ... talking about a character and the way that character influences the person that’s watching it ... that’s ... the same thing as the person reading a text,” April stated.

“You’re just reading it in a different way. You’re reading it on a visual instead of by words.” Similarly, April believes that a screenplay “is a novel itself, it’s just written in a different format. It is a play... but it may be something that they’re more [interested in].”

Along with these perspectives, April spoke about the blurred lines between text genres. For example, they talked to students about how comic books such as “Superman and Batman” could be considered works of “realistic fiction” or “magical realism.” “It’s more of the magical realism section of fiction in which they can portray ... what could happen in the real world with the one exception of a magical ... addition, which for Superman ... is ... superhero powers,” April clarified.

The notion of flexible text categorizations again emerged when April identified shared attributes of popular culture and the multicultural. April observed that “there is a melding more recently” between the two broadly defined categories. “So ... in past multicultural texts it’s all about the cultural influences that are given to a text in the sense that ... it’s giving you an idea of how indigenous Americans lived,” April explained. “But more recently you see ... because of the influence of social media the idea that pop culture is multicultural.” And in April’s “rural town,” popular culture offers access to “information” that might sometimes be more challenging to come by. April pointed to the app TikTok as one that “will literally show you what [an individual’s] culture is.” Describing the ease of locating and retrieving these culturally infused materials, they added that “just a cursory look” is sometimes all it takes for the content to “[pop] up” and become available for consumption. April indicated that the combination of exposure to cultural content and availability could lead students to become more open-minded about those with various cultural affiliations and backgrounds. “[It] allows our students to



become more open-minded ... to different cultures,” they expressed. “So with the idea of our world opening up because of social media, these skills ... and applying them to the new cultural text ... work so much better.”

Offering additional clarity to their collective observations and insights about the relationship between the popular and the multicultural, as well as the role of social media platforms as a ubiquitous conduit for the two, April continued, “I’m learning about ... how people dress in China. Uh the street fashion in China. I’m learning about the street fashion in Japan. Or I’m learning about ... how homes are built in Japan.” For April (who described herself as an “avid social media person” with an agile grasp of technology), popular social media apps can even expose “new things about history that we didn’t realize we were never taught,” such as learning about “the Juneteenth day.” April suggested that social media’s ability to impart and illuminate information about different cultures reveals a “melding” between the popular and the multicultural. “So I’m seeing that melding and it’s blurring the lines of what is ... pop culture, as opposed to multicultural, because now pop culture is multicultural.”

***“Pop culture right now ... that’s their life”***

Speaking further about the progress they see in today’s texts, April noted that “the teacher itself has to think on the fly” to accommodate the rapidly changing textual and informational landscape surrounding today’s students. “And I mean it’s everchanging so what is current now it’s like within two years its already old and the fast pace has not helped,” they remarked. “They’re being bombarded by information all the time, continuously and everchanging.” And although April suggested that popular culture texts are “kind of a little rarer” and not all texts might be useful in the classroom (“are there a

lot of things that I can throw out? Absolutely”), they believe that the text base is “always growing,” with increasing amounts of popular culture options.

So ... [pop culture texts are] always growing and teachers are always molding based on it. And using pop culture in teaching is the same as it was twenty years ago, it’s just now the pop culture has more, more mediums. To use. To integrate.

In tandem with a recognition that more plentiful and dynamic text offerings exist, April sees room in their teaching for including popular culture texts that fit into the curriculum. “Um, and so definitely the curriculum could ... work really well with pop culture if it is matched better. And that is definitely happening now. It is getting better,” they declared.

In yet another acknowledgement of the “everchanging” nature of texts and the world their students inhabit, April told me about how they use relevant and familiar popular culture references to make help students connect to the lesson. “I constantly talk about pop culture for my kids, to make [a] connection,” they stated. Sometimes April mentions popular culture in an unplanned, “off the cuff” kind of way. “I’ll see that the students are like well I don’t really understand this... [in] which case off the cuff I’ll be like, well think about this, and I’ll mention then a more current movie.” Other times, these references appear as a way to recapture students’ waning attention. “A lot of times though ... it’s kind of off the cuff that I have where I see my students aren’t paying ... attention, so it’s not written into my lesson plans,” they admitted, mentioning that “definitely more of em have been entering some of my recent lesson plans.” And April recognizes that the popular culture items that are relevant to students’ lived experiences can be used alongside classroom texts to lend support to students’ skills development and

the “connections” students are encouraged to make (April noted that these are the times when they have “run into popular culture texts”). April elaborated on these points:

Most of the time I’m actually referring back to texts themselves and popular culture texts because of my interactions with my students ...and trying to get them to connect more with the idea of literature .... the biggest issue with ... students and ... linking their skills in literature is to make connections, and for them popular culture is what else, what is happening for them in their own lives today and what they interact with.

To illustrate an example of popular culture emerging in the classroom, April discussed a “current lesson” that featured *St. Mary’s Home for Girls Raised by Wolves* (a young adult collection of short stories). During the lesson, April facilitated a discussion about movies to promote students’ understanding of the relationship between setting and character. “So here I go introducing understanding the skill [of identifying setting] that we learn for English but also using it in a reference to a movie. So I actually brought up a lot of the Marvel movies,” they revealed. “They’re really into the Marvel because that is movies of their generation.” Throughout their time teaching, April observed that their students “seem to respond fairly well with the movie references at any point.” Adding to this idea, April suggested that “they can see [the skill] more with the movie because that’s what they’re interested in.” Explaining more about reasons for opting to focus on Captain America for this particular lesson, April explained:

Captain America, he grew up in the forties ... that’s when he was mostly the first Avenger movie and then later on at the end of the movie and then consequent movies how he’s transplanted to modern era so now his morals are conflicting. So

I'm showing how the setting of the movie has impacted the character.

April discussed the success of this experience with one of their colleagues. "I had [a conversation] with [the colleague] about how I use Captain America in describing setting, you know she contributed to it," April remarked. Speaking in more general terms, April suggested that references to pop culture "[let] them make that connection ... show them that these skills that I teach them is something that they can use every day."

Expanding on this perspective, April suggested that references to additional types of "more current" texts help their students relate to the content. In contrast to referencing things like "Europe and ... Carnival and Venice" when teaching Poe, April has adapted their approach to prioritize making the content relatable and accessible to their students. Especially when it comes to using popular culture, April noted that they will "change [the] process of teaching a little differently," while continuing to prioritize the literacy skills students are expected to learn. "Now it's like when I talk to them and explain ... a skill and understanding I'm ... always mentioning social media, different types...more current books, things that they can relate to more." As an added benefit, April believes that popular culture references lend a "real world" component to students' learning. "I use a lot of references to movies, to TikTok ... so that the kids can see the use of the skill out in the real world and not just in literature." And in instances where popular culture appears as either a supplemental or central feature of a lesson, April feels that their students are empowered to "connect" and engage productively with material that interests them and holds a meaningful place in their everyday lives.

Like, so usually they're a lot more productive when I bring in ... pop culture into the lesson. Because they find the connection with that. It connects with them

more. And ... it feels to them like, oh ... she knows what I'm interested in. And for them pop culture right now...that's their life.

***“Provide them with the room and let them decorate it”***

Aligned to these ideas is April's keen awareness of the generational attributes that characterize their “Generation Z” students, and the prevalence of popular culture within students' lives. “I deal with a lot of Generation Z, and eventually the Alphas will be coming up, and their idea of popular culture is ... items that, things that they interact with more nowadays,” April told me. “When it comes to my freshmen...they're incoming, they're in a new environment with the high school, so I will usually try to incorporate some mode of ... pop culture, or culture of the young.” This might include “anything ... with social media, with music ... where they have more interaction themselves.” April values using these resources “because that's what the students are involved in.”

Elaborating on this point, April remarked, “They love their social media ... the things that are going on that are relevant to them.”

As a “Xennial” occupying the generational space “between Generation X and Millennial,” April recognizes the universal and “fun” aspects of popular culture, as well as its “effect on teachers themselves.” Explaining the latter idea, April mentioned that popular culture “influence[s]” teachers “just as much” as it does their students. “I'm extremely influenced by social media. It is an area of study that I'm doing anyway,” they told me, nodding to their masters work in communications. “Because I've seen how it affects our students...It's not just about the effect that it has on learning. Or the students. But the effect that it has on teaching. For the teacher.” Related to these points is April's recognition of the role popular culture plays in their own life. “I enjoy just as much as my

students do,” April enthused. “I love pop culture. I appreciate it. The work that goes into it, I appreciate.” April shared more about their popular culture preferences, referring to themselves as “a very visual person” and “an individual that actually enjoys popular culture items.” “I love watching movies ... but I also like reading ...and I like scrolling through TikTok, I love posting in Facebook,” April said, adding that they also read manga, manhwa, and anime. As April enumerated their popular culture pastimes, they implied an awareness of a common thread linking personal experiences with popular culture to those of students.’ “I... see ... the enjoyment that our students could have in it.”

Alongside these parallels, April also revealed insights about how their own upbringing contrasts with their students’ technology-infused way of life, and how their own interactions with popular culture were markedly different (“for me, popular culture could be ‘80s music”). “Their connections are different than what my connection was when I was a student... it’s all of the social media and the... electronic usage, it has wired their brains differently,” April expressed. “In my childhood I did not have any type of connection to the world wide web ... we did not grow up with computers, things like that,” they recalled, a statement reminding me of my own sparse interactions with the Internet as an adolescent (and the lengthy loudness of an unreliable dial-up connection). Even though Internet access was “limited” when April was younger, they suggested that subsequent access provided “an opening” to experience the plurality of cultures and the wider world beyond their immediate surroundings. “When I was a young adult, I had access to computers and internet and things like that so ... I became very broad when it came to understanding ... the type of culture out there,” they recounted.

Now as a present-day educator working with a new generation of tech-savvy students, April acknowledges that the kids in their classroom view a globalized, interconnected, and increasingly diverse world through a vastly different lens - “they don’t see the same world that I do.” Yet at the same time, April sees their students as “all individual,” with their own identities, ways of knowing, and interpretations of the world they live in. Some of their students are even “going through their own gender, or ... identity crises, and they want to know who they are truly.” Given this diversity of students, April considers multicultural texts as helping to bring out the uniqueness that resides in the classroom – and this is one reason why they emphatically believes that “we need them here.” “And that’s why it’s important for multicultural texts to be used, because we don’t have a single type of student. We have many different students with many different ideas,” April asserted. “Because our students are not one ... they’re not industrial, you cannot make them what, you know fit a certain mold.” To further clarify this viewpoint, April envisaged their students - collectively part of a specific generation of learners - as decorators, each an embodiment of a unique, individualized point of view. “What you need to do is provide them with the room and let them decorate it. Who they are,” they declared. “And ... every single student would decorate it (laughing) completely different, because they are individuals. And so, I think bringing multicultural texts into the classroom more ... would draw that out. And allow them to grow individually.”

***“That was me. But it’s not me.”***

Although April recognized the individuality inherent in each of their students, they also pointed to how a multicultural text could reveal the similarities that unite adolescents with differing cultural experiences and backgrounds. Telling me about a

possible future unit of study, April described why they would select the novel *I Am Malala* to incorporate into instruction. “My unit would definitely include ... novels written by young people ... that’s why we love *I Am Malala*,” April told me, referencing the much-admired memoir of Malala Yousafzai, who shared anecdotal experiences growing up in Pakistan amid ongoing political upheaval and oppressive forces that sought to diminish the educational prospects and liberties of Pakistani citizens, particularly females. April told me more about the text’s relevance to their students:

[Malala] was fifteen years old when she was writing that book with the writer because then you have these kids that you can say well this is not an old White guy (laughs) that’s writing this this is a girl that is just like you with the exception that she is from a poor country and ... is doing a lot of this work.

Although *I Am Malala* has not yet been featured in April’s classroom, Malala’s Nobel Peace Prize speech to the United Nations did appear in a lesson (the honor was conferred after Malala bravely overcame a horrific life-threatening attack and persevered as a fervent champion of equality and education for all individuals). Similar to April’s thoughts about *I Am Malala*, they suggested that Malala’s speech invited students to see themselves reflected in the text. “Um but the idea [is] that looking at those type of texts and showing our kids, look she’s fifteen, sixteen when she goes through this, she is you guys,” April stated matter-of-factly. “So ... it was like, that was me. But it’s not me.”

At the same time, Malala’s speech also “opened [students’] eyes” about how the taken for granted, everyday experience of schooling within a free society is not necessarily a guarantee in all parts of the world.

Showing them ... her... struggle, and her want to have education spread to girls.



They definitely didn't understand being that they live in the United States, and everybody gets ... an education ... no matter your gender. Uh and it opened their eyes into the idea that not everybody has this ability, and she was only fifteen.

As another example of students seeing aspects of themselves in a multicultural text that simultaneously integrates diverse perspectives and life experiences, April expanded on the use of the award-winning young adult novel *Monster*, which focuses on an African American teenager who must contend with an accusation of murder. "I believe he was a sixteen-year-old, African American, incarcerated ... waiting for a trial." Told using a screenplay format alongside the character's diary entries, *Monster* employs the perspective of the teenager, as well as "different perspectives from different people involved in that court case" to tell the story. "So you have these children that are, are used to watching movies, that ... don't usually see themselves in characters," April noted, speaking about their students. "I do believe that ... we need our students to have access to more, more diverse [texts] ... to be able to see themselves in the text."

But when reading *Monster*, April's students "saw this character as a child. Who they are, same age as them." In addition to sharing a similar age to the main character, April feels that their students could also relate to several of the challenges the character endured. "He was going through ... something that they feel they probably ... have seen in such a way in being .... stereotyped because that's what was happening to that character." Offering more nuance to the portrayals in *Monster*, April shared that the character appeared unaware of the avenues for self-advocacy within a complicated legal system. April expressed that their students could relate to being stereotyped themselves, thereby lending another layer of connection to the text. "He was being stereotyped

because he was African American. They were being stereotyped because they were teenagers or Hispanic,” April explained, drawing a parallel between their students and the character’s experiences. “So when we read that novel ... they really enjoyed the fact that they could ... connect with the character.”

And for April, multicultural texts such as these communicate that the students themselves are reflected in the stories they read. “Time to get that involved so that they can see I am more than just those dead White guys ... I am in current ... text and so ... that’s where I come from. Yeah,” April expressed, concluding their thoughts with a seemingly contemplative pause.

***“Stop making me think”***

In a similar fashion, April recounted how their students could relate to the perspective of Scout in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Harper Lee’s literary masterwork of fiction that continues to hold a permanent place in English classrooms. “For them they could ... see themselves in that child,” April mentioned, referring to the protagonist Scout, who narrates the novel through a child’s lens of innocent curiosity. As a pillar of traditional English learning, April believes that *To Kill a Mockingbird* remains relevant in the current day, particularly given the text’s emphasis on issues of racism. “It’s even more poignant now with the whole Black Lives Matter movement,” April asserted, noting that their students are familiar with videos of the protests. In addition to relevant themes, April also sees how the text helps to promote learning about “cultural inclusion” and diverse perspectives from individuals with differing cultural backgrounds. “I use [*To Kill a Mockingbird*] in order to ... show [students] the idea of cultural inclusion,” April explained, adding that the novel “helps them realize different perspectives.” To illustrate

this point, April invited me back into the classroom by detailing a memorable encounter with a student who displayed a strong reaction to the text. “So there was one student that she was really impacted with the idea of the teacher,” April began. “The teacher [in the story is] basically racially ... profiling another student.”

“I don’t like her. She’s very mean.” April’s student seemed indignant, upset by the portrayal of the classroom teacher in the novel. “She made an assumption,” the student declared.

April could sense the student’s frustration. “Okay, well let’s take this from another perspective,” April offered in a patient tone. “Let’s look at the teacher, she’s in a new place, she’s lived somewhere else ... she’s teaching a community that ... is set in its own ways.” Continuing to unpack the teacher’s positioning in a new area, April continued. “And she has no idea about, she is not culturally savvy to that location.”

Looking at the disapproving student, April asked, “How ... would you feel if you were put into an unknown location?”

“Well I wouldn’t know what to do,” the student admitted. “And I would feel embarrassed. And I would lash out.”

And then suddenly the student stopped speaking, and a moment of realization seemed to settle over her. “No miss ... I mean, I understand but now ... you’re making me not hate the teacher anymore!”

Revisiting that past moment, April attributed the student’s changed outlook to being able to “see that different perspective.” April regarded this observation as “important,” especially because they had experienced the culture shock of living in a geographically close yet culturally dissimilar environment as a university student in a

Texas border town. “And I want my, my students to be able to conform or mold or be flexible and be able to channel that idea [of different perspectives] ... from their text,” April added. “And so I use that moment to help them realize that there’s other point of views that they need to be open to.” Elaborating further on how “Mockingbird” inspires “teaching moments,” April added that it promotes empathy with the characters. “The teaching moments was for them yes to see the words but to see beyond the words and get ...make conclusions about what the other characters are going through.”

As April continued to look back on that lesson, they recalled that the student told them to “stop making me think” (a comment that evoked amused laughter from April and eventually became a “favorite saying” from students). “I don’t wanna think anymore, you’re hurting my head,” April declared, adopting the persona of the student.

And I’m like (laughing)...that’s what I’m here for. I want you to think for yourself. I want you to be you. And so that would be the ... always the most proudest moment is when I get ... a student of mine telling me that the reason why I could be better myself was the fact that you were making me think.

***“Perspective can ... change within one person”***

As April spoke more about prioritizing texts that show aspects of a character’s perspective, they revisited the graphic novel *Persepolis*, which features “the Arab world ... and Islam and even ... Iran.” In addition to telling me about the text’s multimodal features and highlighting how it was used in the podcast lesson, April implied that one of the standout features of *Persepolis* is how it invites students to hear the narrator’s perspective as an “educated female” who came of age within a distinctive

cultural backdrop. Of equal value is how the text demonstrates that perspectives are not immovable, but rather capable of shifting within the same person.

So ... the perspective of that she has within the experience was one being ... because she was educated in England. And then the way she grew up was a different perspective because that was tradition. And it showed the students that ... perspective can ... change within one person .... from time to time.

Between one moment of learning to another moment of learning.

In April's view, this realization holds implications for their students. "So it allows ... them to see that I could think one way in the beginning of class and change completely based on thinking of how I see the situation," they expressed.

***"It helps them build their understanding of the world around them"***

In addition to telling me about the collective attributes that position *Persepolis* as a "more completely diverse" text with varied pathways for textual inclusion, April also shared their thoughts about the need for published texts to illuminate multiple, diverse perspectives. "Our world needs to be more open with ... publishing with ... allowing students to, to see different perspectives from those texts," April told me, adding that the publishing world remains insufficient in its promotion of diverse literary texts ("a lot of these people are self-published"). "And I feel like mainstream literature don't bring this out to ... the public, as if they can't make their own decisions." Bridging issues of access with the perceived need for "more perspectives" to emerge within texts, April believes that publishers need to feature more multicultural authors reflecting diverse backgrounds and voices. "The biggest thing I do have is definitely that ... our larger publishing

companies really do need to open their doors more to more perspectives, more writers. Of, different cultural backgrounds.”

Complementing their beliefs about the role of publishers in lending voice to new text creators and consumers, April emphasized the importance of showing students the familiar and the unfamiliar by including texts that highlight “other cultures,” as well as those that showcase and reflect the students themselves. They indicated that multicultural texts are suited toward this aim, as students “can see themselves” in these texts; at the same time, the multicultural “opens them up into more cultures.” April continued:

I want to include texts that shows who they are in those texts, but I also want to be able to show other cultures, and so I love the fact that ... by using multicultural texts they can see other worlds, not just their own, so and then they can connect who they are with those other worlds.

April reiterated that seeing aspects of the self in a text could enhance students’ ability to learn about “the processes of English.” “Using ... a text in which they see themselves ... to learn the process, that is where you build on ... having them understand the English process,” they stated. Additionally, for April’s students – some of whom are “trying to learn to read but they’re speaking differently” – a text portraying their own cultural and linguistic experiences could validate the forms of literacy that typify their own lives. “I can see how multicultural texts allow them to see those societies they live in, and still be considered literature .... which shows them that what they’re saying ... is a form of literacy.” April revealed that they also “feel it’s important to bring in multicultural texts to broaden the idea of what is literacy.”

When you bring in multicultural texts, it helps them build their understanding of

the world around them ... and allows... the world around them to be considered literate, to be considered educated, because they are educated in their own way. April likewise expressed the belief that their students need to be exposed to a variety of perspectives that reflect a broadly defined conception of culture that includes religion and gender. "I love for our students to learn about different religions, different cultures, different ... regions within United States, uh different genders, uh different ideas ... and when I mean genders, not just the regular male female," they clarified, implying an affirmation of gender fluidity alongside more simplistic binary definitions of gender. April mentioned that they could foresee a future unit of study focusing on diversity, with "a text from different cultures" at the forefront of instruction.

At the same time, April acknowledged that for their community's "mostly Hispanic children," an "Anglo text" could be perceived as multicultural, extending a glimpse into cultural norms that differ from the familiar ways of life that students encounter daily. "I'm always thinking that [a multicultural text] is going to be a text that allows you to see into the life of ... a culture that you are not a part of," they shared, adding to their previous definitions. "Uh now this might ... sound odd ... but in the American educational system, there's a huge amount of Anglo text, and our students are not part of that culture, so even that to me actually is ... multicultural."

***"We're not here to tell students what to think"***

Throughout our discussion, April revealed an overarching goal of helping students to develop a sense of advocacy and autonomy, including the ability to think for themselves and make informed decisions. "I'm a firm believer in a person making their own decisions. Having agency. That's what I teach my students and that's what I expect

for myself.... and I hope that others do with me,” they proclaimed. “I’m teaching them the skills, and ...one of my big things is that they have ... a sense of agency ... yes they’re freshmen but they’re entering high school, it’s almost to adulthood.” Telling me more, April added, “I want them to be able to make their own decisions, so when I teach them, actually teach them, it’s because I want them to think for their own.”

For April, this task appears imperative, as they have observed how instances of “close-mindedness” continue to arise within in “our world today.” At the same time, April believes that the proliferation of “so much information” could impede students’ abilities to make expedient decisions, thereby resulting in students who “cannot make the decision on what is right or wrong.” April considers this overflow of information to be “the most negative thing ... pop culture has caused.” These reasons underscore April’s commitment to implementing texts and learning experiences that prepare students to become active thinkers and decision makers. “We’re not here to tell students what to think. We’re here to show them ... why it’s important, how to do it, and how to apply it to themselves to make their own decisions.” Accompanying these ideas is April’s recognition that their students’ decision-making skills can translate into selecting and engaging with diverse texts that reflect and represent individuals with diverse cultural affiliations. “That’s why I teach to have my, my students have self-advocacy. And make their own decisions.”

***“Apply those skills to the more current world around them”***

In addition to prioritizing the development of students’ decision-making skills, April asserted that they “would love” to gain additional insights into how using multicultural texts might help students acquire the “skills that they would later use in ...



the outside world.” Consistent with this emphasis on skills-based learning and making connections to the text, April also talked about the text’s applicability to daily life.

“When you make that connection then you’re able to have a, a student want to learn what is being said. Why it’s being said. And how can I apply that to life.” This forward-thinking pedagogical mindset aims to prepare April’s students to “pay attention” to the messages in a text and consider “how can I apply this in my life” by transferring the skills learned in the classroom to the everyday experiences encountered in today’s “current world.” In the context of speaking about the positive attributes of using multicultural texts (which they equated with “current texts”), April explained their position:

They can see themselves in ... more current texts that we use. And it allows them to make a connection to their small world and the larger world itself. And be able to later on after they leave high school be able to apply those skills to the more current world around them.

Similarly, April views the study of English literature and the supplemental use of popular culture texts as central to preparing students to transfer skills from the classroom into “the real world.” “That’s what I hope to get the kids to understand is that even though we are in an English class studying literature, when you go out in the real world, the world that you do live in that still matters,” April stated. “Those skills that we learned here in class can be used to for any of the ... outside materials that you would run into.”

As examples, April pointed to analyzing and interpreting rap lyrics or memes to ascertain “what they’re really want to say about society.” As another specific example of how literacy skills might transfer into new situations, April pointed to the act of watching a movie – an event that often prompts the viewer to generate predictions and inferences

while making sense of characters and the plot. “They’re constantly using those skills that I’m trying to teach them in literature,” they expressed, drawing yet another link between literacy skills and students’ daily lives. “That is what I am hoping to give them and so that’s why I ... try to bring in a lot more pop culture texts.”

***“There is more to the world out there”***

As I listened to April, I learned from their insights regarding pedagogical approaches and text use, as well as their perceptions about the “everchanging” panorama of textual offerings that surround the diverse student population they teach. I also discerned April’s identity as a practiced, dedicated, and resourceful educator who radiates a fervent appreciation for an extended array of textual experiences that include multicultural and popular texts. Within these discussions, April revealed how they creatively reimagine the role of the text within a student-centered classroom and aim to reinforce literacy and critical thinking skills – all while simultaneously acknowledging and building upon students’ interests and lived experiences. Also threaded throughout April’s commentary is an unwavering commitment to intermingling the traditional alongside the “current” modes and genres of text-based expression that remain both more accessible and still somewhat out of reach. “I’m glad to help in understanding how we can use more of the pop culture and multicultural texts within a classroom because of my experience and the fact that there’s hardly any resources for it,” they expressed.

As April gazes toward the future as an English educator tasked with developing students’ literacy skills in an era of rapid societal change - where today’s youth are “bombarded by information” every step of the way – they envision a classroom abounding with “more current and more recent texts” that work to facilitate students’

learning. “We ... have a lot of new authors, a lot of new ... texts out there,” April remarked. And while April’s efforts lead toward a pathway of more expansive textual inclusion (“we’re getting there”), they admit that some of this progress has been “slow happening.” “That’s mostly what I would change, is trying to include ... more recent texts,” they declared. “The inclusion of what they feel is ... their culture because their culture is ... things that are happening now.” April is similarly driven by a desire to show their students aspects of the world that are captured by diverse texts that include multicultural perspectives and popular culture influences that are interwoven with contemporary life.

So we should think about ... incorporating different cultural texts because it allows them to live in this more open world. This world that has a lot of information ... coming at them really quickly, and by keeping to the old classics ... it only keeps their mind from moving forward.

April further disclosed that they hope to share their own openness to various cultures with students. “Being open to so many different languages and cultures has allowed me to be an open-minded person I hope, and ... wanting to transfer this idea to my students, that there is more to the world out there.”

### **Meet Guinevere**

#### ***Hospitality Maven, “Trying to Figure Out My Own Style”***

“I am a first-year teacher,” Guinevere stated. “I’m going through the Texas teachers program right now... I guess I’m still considered in school kind of.”

Although newer to the teaching profession, Guinevere has worked as a substitute and recently “taught Chinese students English online” through a virtual school designed

to pair American educators with an international student population. The experience teaching online introduced Guinevere to working with students younger than their current high-school age students. “Those were young, I had everything from 4, 5 all the way up to 13.” This experience provided Guinevere with a firsthand entryway into the Chinese language and culture. “I can understand a little bit of Chinese now,” they explained. “And I mean I learned that some of the things that I thought were very Chinese are not.” Yet this was not the first time that Guinevere’s job led them to interact with people from around the world. Using their degree in hospitality, Guinevere previously worked in another state at one of the nation’s largest and most recognized theme parks.

It was almost a culture shock between a lot of the people that were there. I mean you have, and just from America, there were people from Georgia, Florida, New York, Texas, Ohio, and that’s just talking about my um apartment [building] ...we also had somebody from Korea.

Reflecting on their own background, Guinevere enumerated the multifaceted ancestral contributions of their family, including Irish, Scottish, German, Italian, “and a bunch of others” on their mother’s side. “We come from a very diverse background. As Americans,” Guinevere explained. “I see myself as American. And being American means I, we come from a melting pot....it makes my students laugh, but when I describe what I how I come from genetically, I’m a European mutt.” Elaborating further on the idea of intermingled backgrounds, Guinevere shared that their husband of over 18 years is Hispanic, but amusedly added that “he speaks less Spanish than I do.”

In addition to a background in hospitality, Guinevere noted that one of their specialties includes fiction writing, a pastime and skill they cultivate upon uncovering

coveted pockets of time to focus on developing their stories. Along the way, podcasts devoted to the writing craft have aided Guinevere's storytelling endeavors, providing "tips on writing" and additional support to persist toward their goals. "Sometimes it's as simple [as] building me up cause I'm starting to write," they explained. "Especially trying to write while also being a teacher." This statement captured Guinevere's dedication to negotiating the challenges and delights of entry into public school teaching, which seemed to mark a time of personal growth and "trying to figure out my own style." Also evident was Guinevere's attentiveness to the students they teach. "Students are going to give us back what we give them. A hundred-fold. But just like a tree... if we don't give them bits of everything, if we don't put something into that soil that that they are growing from, they, they will never understand," they declared.

***"I just know that the system is broken"***

In their role as a newly hired educator at Ramos-Canales High School, one of Guinevere's teaching assignments includes a creative writing course that focuses on helping struggling students to "bridge the gap" to English I. "These are students who are struggling with their English, and not like English language, but just uh in English class." The second course Guinevere facilitates aims to prepare students for college-level coursework and allows them to take college classes concurrent with enrollment in high school. In this capacity, students "can take more credits in the high school they're at."

A willingness to create learning experiences that feature a range of texts has characterized Guinevere's teaching ever since they first started working with younger learners and early adolescents at the online international school. In this context, Guinevere would focus on teaching "American culture" and "English translations of

Chinese,” as well as elements of Chinese cultural traditions. The online school provided most of the materials Guinevere needed for teaching, but they were also able to independently select and use texts deemed beneficial for students’ language and literacy development. This included “anything that I would pick up that I thought would be, make a good prop.” And when students excelled at lessons with a few minutes to spare, Guinevere encouraged an ongoing engagement with the written and spoken word, allowing students to show their books and reciprocally introducing them to some of the books from Guinevere’s own home. “If they managed to get through their lesson quickly cause they were thirty minute lessons... depending on their level ... I would have them read the book or ... I would read it to them,” Guinevere told me, noting that they often relied upon the use of children’s books from their daughter’s collection, including ones authored by Dr. Seuss. Telling me more, Guinevere implied that a Seussian text is ripe with cultural novelty when encountered by a student with a different frame of reference. “Dr. Seuss could be seen as multicultural to those students, because they’re not familiar with it,” they explained, adding that “everything I was showing them was ... essentially multicultural.”

In contrast to these earlier teaching experiences, Guinevere’s introductory year of full-time public-school teaching has exposed the pervasive presence of the state test, which oftentimes dictates the “limiting” curriculum. “I’m realizing ... that we are not able ... to teach children everything that they need to know. That (sigh) and this area is very that suffers because and I hate to say ... because of [the] standardized test,” Guinevere expressed, further suggesting that the tests are perceived as instruments of disdain that draw the ire of both teachers and students. “When you hear test, students hate

tests, hate those tests at least as much as teachers do. The teachers hate them pretty [inaudible] a lot,” they told me, light laughter punctuating this admission. The culture of testing Guinevere hinted at, in tandem with observations of a mutual contempt for the test itself, led me to consider my own beginnings as a student in the Texas education system – the spirited rallies of encouragement intended to drum up testing success, the incentives to maximize the school’s performance, the nerve-wracking ritual of making sure that the No. 2 pencils were sharpened and lined up like little golden-hued soldiers across a weathered, graffiti-scrawled desktop. Similar to my personal remembrances, Guinevere spoke to the “struggle” and stresses generated by the unrelenting requirements associated with testing, which mandate that they prepare students to construct an expository essay. “They stress students out and they stress teachers out, they hold everybody back. Because we have to teach to those standards.” Elaborating more on their perspective about the pedagogical constraints related to the test, Guinevere continued:

You can’t really go and play in those other areas you want to play in, like doing...your thing [inaudible] on Chinese uh poetry.... if you have a poetry unit you could pull that in a little bit but that really wouldn’t help you with the way that poetry is taught right now which pulls into your standardized test.

Which I find to be a shame. Because students can learn a lot.

Guinevere also believes that it might prove challenging for multicultural content to be integrated into the current testing framework. “I think that it’s hard to put ... things like multicultural besides what they do already, it would be difficult to put that into state testing,” they stated. Yet, Guinevere suggested that “[multicultural texts] would have to be pushed the way that a lot of state testing is already pushed” if the test were to integrate

more of a multicultural component. This would mark a departure from the types of texts appearing on the test. Based on Guinevere's observations, even though the test might include decontextualized stories "about different cultures," the more prominent focus remains on texts that are "barebones, very English, very American."

A similar sentiment also emerged as Guinevere told me about their belief that popular culture texts are "kind of in opposition" with the state standards and assessments.

I think that most people would say that [popular culture texts] are in opposition.

Um personally I think ... they are. Um I know that when I see texts

from [the tests] I see that they try to pull in a diverse ... amount of cultural

material ... I usually do not see any pop culture texts in there so this is why ... I

say they're kind of in opposition...

To clarify this point, Guinevere offered an example of how a comic strip would be unlikely to make an appearance on the state test. "I can see ... it being used as examples in other things but in standardized yeah it's a little bit harder," they stated.

Yet at the same time, Guinevere views standardized tests as "part of popular culture" due to their prevalence in daily life and their ability to generate complaints "on a regular basis." And compounding the demands of the test are also requirements enforced by the "rules of the school" and the administration, as well as "[the] things that that bring in the funding."

Maybe they need to find some other way of doing it, I'm no expert there, I just know that the system is broken. Because, especially in these in the times nowadays, we need to find a new way of testing our students because their culture is different than our culture.



***“I would have to get ... approved”***

Guinevere also shared the viewpoint that decisions about textual access are “very district to district... almost person to person... because everybody’s belief of their own path and their children’s path is different.” Within their own district, Guinevere emphasized that school policies appear to be “very conservative.” For instance, the school ensures that students are “well-groomed” and also works to “prevent certain things” such as tobacco and alcohol use. These examples transported me to my own memories as a Texas schoolchild, introduced to the nefarious perils of drug use through anti-drug educational initiatives like D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) and the trenchcoated, serious-faced hound McGruff (both a product of the “just say no” mantra that pervaded political discourse throughout the ‘80s). Pulling me back to our present conversational space, Guinevere suggested that this conservative approach trickles into the ability to include certain texts. “I mean [the school is] very conservative...but that’s the main reason that I would not expose [students] to something,” they admitted, noting that “inappropriate” topics or “foul language” would be frowned upon.

Despite these concerns, Guinevere indicated that the administration remains a source of support that provides an open door for considering requests about text use.

If it’s something that we don’t already have access to ... if it remotely is questionable, they want us to still bring it to them potentially and they will look at it and approve or deny it. But ... generally they encourage [us].

On one occasion, Guinevere selected a YouTube video about “how to put a ship in a bottle,” and noticed that the video had already received prior authorization for classroom

use. “I don’t remember the YouTube video it was,” they recalled with a slight laugh. “I know that it was approved by the school district because it ... popped up on the YouTube saying it was approved.” While this experience showed how some approvals might be unexpectedly easy to come by, Guinevere feels less certain that they would gain approval to use a text such as one that features the Marvel universe. “It’s just, I don’t think I would probably ever get approved to use Marvel ... like from the movies, uh but I could potentially use it.” If approved, Guinevere foresees how this type of text might be used to prompt students with inferential and literal questions, such as “why do you think this is happening... what color was this?”

Expanding on the topic of approval to incorporate various texts with students, Guinevere spoke about Janice E. Sullivan’s memoir *Cucumbers Have Thorns and Snakes Love Strawberries: How I Won*, which depicts the female African American author’s life experiences as a survivor who overcame overwhelming struggles and trauma associated with episodes of abuse. Pointing to the “emotional impact” of that text, Guinevere conveyed a sense of readiness to use the book in their classroom, provided that the administration would approve of their text selection.

It’s the themes of rape and um the things like that are very prevalent, but if I could get it approved, I would want to use it in the classroom. But then again I know that I would have to get ... approved...she wasn’t even the best writer I, I’ve ever seen, it’s just that she was able to emotionally ... grab me.

Even though Guinevere pointed to a few grammatical issues within this text (“[they] were nearly distracting”), their appreciation for the nonfiction story remained tangible (they even noted the book was purchased directly from the author). Moreover, Guinevere spoke

about the connection they felt to the story, and the empathy they experienced in relation to the author's tales of adversity and strength within a "different" cultural setting.

The culture that she lived in was so different from mine, yet I could also ... I could feel for her because she went through a lot...a woman and she wrote about it. But the ... culture was so, so different even though the themes and the topics were very relevant for today. And I remember it was, this was one of the books that made me cry. ... And when a book can actually catch me, hold me, and, and not let me go in that short a book as it was, cause it was maybe about a quarter of an inch thick, um it, it takes a lot for a book to really emotionally grab me.

As Guinevere described this powerful reaction to the text, I intuited how deeply the author's story resonated with her. Yet, Guinevere emphasized the need to gain approval if they were to use this text with their high school students, since it featured sensitive subject matter pertaining to the author's life story. "If I could be approved, I would love to use that," they declared.

With the appropriate approvals in place, an additional text that Guinevere has "always wanted to use" includes the historical fiction story *Memoirs of a Geisha* ("the book, not the movie," they quickly clarified), which follows the female protagonist's journey into a form of culturally accepted servitude in 1930s Japan. "I found that one fascinating," they said in a voice conveying admiration for the novel. Guinevere spoke about the text's focus on culture and gender, suggesting that this story continues to endure and "resonate" with its readers.

It's, because... no matter if they the ... these women were put at odds, but they were still women. They were still trying to they and when they were dealing

with ... the problems within their culture. And the changes. They still had the feelings ... and personally I think they resonate even today.

***“It has its place”***

Alongside displaying an awareness that approval is necessary for some texts to make their way into the classroom, Guinevere noted that educators must “be careful” about where they position popular culture texts within the classroom.

I think that pop culture that made, there’s a lot of potential but definitely... you have to be careful to put it in the right spot... you can’t just toss something random in there and then expect it to work ... but you should pay as much attention ... as you do with ... a novel.

Another cautionary area that Guinevere identified includes the representations of gender that permeate popular culture. “I accept all these different ... gender identities,” they asserted, but remains “very much a believer in ... your physical gender.” Yet, popular culture might portray gender in ways that advocate for a more wide-ranging view of this construct. “The highest popular culture right now, and it’s very popular to people to be trans, that those people who want them think its popular that they’re just doing it as part of a fad,” Guinevere told me, suggesting that students could end up “hurting themselves” by transitioning into a new gender identity.

Despite this area of concern, Guinevere feels that that popular culture “has its place” in education. “I definitely think that it has its place,” they declared with a resolute demeanor. “I think that put in the right spots [popular culture] would be immensely helpful.” And popular culture texts could even inspire the development of a standalone unit. “I think they could easily, there could almost be a unit on pop culture texts ... or it

could be a mini-unit interspersed in there, um or just added onto it.” Yet although Guinevere feels that diverse texts should be welcomed into the curriculum, they cautioned that educators should remain mindful of not using these texts in the wrong way. “It has its place but it also just as um other, other components of the classroom can be abused, it can be abused too.” Nonetheless, Guinevere reiterated their stance and indicated that popular culture texts hold potential for strengthening student understanding. “[Pop culture texts] have a very good, they have a place in, in learning.... they’re a, a large chunk of the bridge [that] would help students ... understand topics ... that they may not get right off the bat.”

Guinevere fervently conveyed the moments they realized that a nontraditional text might hold untapped possibilities for student learning. “I get more excited about them when I start dealing with them,” they enthused. “I interact with something on my um computer ... or one of my *Dungeons and Dragons* campaigns and suddenly I’m like oh my gosh, I could actually use this as part of teaching!” Yet Guinevere recognizes that they would need to be in the “right...subject” and would first need “a little more experience” as a teacher before implementing some of the popular culture materials they thinks might work with their students. And even without substantial experience, Guinevere confidently expressed a willingness to assist their colleagues with using multicultural and popular culture texts. “I would give them access to materials if possible ... but if they ... don’t want to learn this or ... if they are stuck on their opinion I will, I respect that,” they stated, communicating both their inclination to support other educators and an acknowledgement of the sometimes impenetrable boundaries that surround the individual teacher’s pedagogical approaches. In addition to providing

materials, Guinevere also conveyed an interest in offering “good examples” of texts that might speak to the students. “I would try to give [colleagues] good examples of things ... that they might not be exposed to themselves ... things that their students like,” they stated.

***“I want to include as much ... as possible”***

Within Guinevere’s current classroom, students have access to a variety of textual resources. “I’m very much a, a believer in...you give the students access,” they stated. “Well, my students ... they have access to any of the um books that I keep in my classroom. If they want to read it...they are more than welcome to.” Expanding further, Guinevere explained:

Access is a book [it’s] a bookcase that sits behind where my students sit, the bookcase has, it has things about history, it has things about American history that... that were real, um we don’t like that slavery happened, but it’s still a part of what happened in our history. Um we have ... access is (sigh) where certain things have to be limited for students yes, but still having them ... being able to reach for things that they want to learn... access is that internet should be a lot more accessible here in the States (laughs).

The idea of access reemerged when Guinevere told me about using websites to assist with their own teaching and lesson development. “I make sure that I use what tools I have,” they laughed. And whereas Guinevere accesses their own video resources through popular subscription streaming services, they are unable to tap into these visual materials during class time. “I would have to find something off of YouTube because I can’t provide them with those resources to watch, you know,” they stated, implying that

YouTube remains the preferable medium for consuming videos in the classroom (and admittedly, Guinevere also learns a lot from YouTube in their own spare time).

Consistent with Guinevere's prioritization of textual access, I discovered more about how they value including a variety of texts into their teaching. For instance, Guinevere knows that the school library carries texts featuring "different cultures," and they routinely access the "quite vast" assortment of "basic" nonfiction articles and more literary offerings available through kid-friendly online websites. Guinevere also relies upon texts featured in the newly purchased textbook program, which "has many cultures included in it." But even with this array of textual offerings, and despite their belief that multicultural texts are "intriguing," Guinevere admitted that they "[had not] had very much in the way of students actually interacting with... multicultural texts." Upon reiterating this response at different times during our discussion, Guinevere added, "I wish I had more." Looking ahead, Guinevere continues to see room for growth in the types of texts they use. "I want to include as much [of the multicultural] as possible," they admitted, adding that they feel "more willing to use something that's from another culture." To accomplish this goal, Guinevere aspires to select and incorporate more texts that represent various cultures and languages.

I would like to be able to use more texts that were taken from China, from Germany, from India and translated into English. I would like to be able to see both the, the other language and English because sometimes students still have to, they need to also see what it looks like ... in the original language even if they can't understand it.

***“I would choose an appropriate one”***

Guinevere also communicated an interest in infusing more popular culture into their teaching. Noting that they do not “have very many” examples of utilizing popular culture, Guinevere indicated that this is an area they would like to further explore. “I am trying to use more popular culture, I am really trying,” they expressed. “I definitely have ideas to put them into some of my lessons um more actively.” But as a caveat to including a variety of texts, Guinevere articulated that the texts they select must be appropriate for the classroom and student population. To clarify this point, they told me about how Tejano music might be featured in the classroom, provided that the selected text would be “appropriate” to use with students. “Tejano music [is] still a part of their culture... [but] some of the songs they’re singing aren’t appropriate in Spanish (laughs) ... obviously ... I would choose an appropriate one.” Consistent with Guinevere’s statements, I reflected on how Tejano music typifies the South Texas cultural experience - its widespread familiarity remains a constant presence for residents of the town where Guinevere teaches (and as the oftentimes accurate Wikipedia article for “Tejano music” [2021] states, “Tejano music was born in Texas”). And just like Guinevere’s concern about the appropriateness of Tejano music, I recalled how my own upbringing included off-key singalongs to catchy Spanish tunes, their unknown meanings obscured by an almost complete lack of linguistic proficiency. Echoing this memory, Guinevere chuckled about how their predominantly Hispanic students might know the lyrics to a Tejano song, but “none of ‘em understand what these words are” because “they speak minimal Spanish.” Laughing, they declared, “I probably know ... more Spanish than they do, and I don’t speak very much.”



***“It made me want to do more”***

Akin to their statements about using suitable Tejano music in the classroom, Guinevere displayed an openness to incorporating comics that fit within the boundaries of “appropriate” for adolescent learners. Yet worth noting is that Guinevere only recently became receptive to comics after previously dismissing the genre.

I used to look down on um comics myself until someone had me actually read one, uh and I realized ... that there’s more to them than just, the artwork is insanely wonderful usually, um the amount of creativity and the amount of storytelling within it is awesome.

Drawing on this newfound appreciation, Guinevere expressed that they wanted to try to “get access to maybe an old Spiderman comic or something similar that’s appropriate obviously.” Shortly thereafter, Guinevere found a text that fit their criteria for inclusion in the classroom. “I found a uh bit of a Spiderman comic that I found appropriate. And I mean there was nothing inappropriate in it,” they stated. “I actually used [the Spiderman comic] and I had a higher rate of turning in that day than I have for a lot of other [days],” Guinevere admitted, laughing. As Guinevere observed the class interacting with the Spiderman comic, they took note of how the students seemed to respond to the novelty of encountering a new type of classroom text that also offered an element of familiarity.

I got a better response with the Spiderman... they liked the fact that I used something different. Um I mean ... they still didn’t want to do the work, but (sigh) they liked the fact that it was something that they could (sigh) that they fell for, that they knew. Even though it’s ... probably something from my generation, they know Spiderman.

Inviting me for a brief glimpse into the classroom, Guinevere described the lesson featuring Spiderman.

Guinevere faced the class, a bit uncertain about how the lesson would play out. After all, a lot of students were really having difficulty with their classwork (hence Guinevere's twice-a-week tutoring sessions), and many of the students' grades were dismal, barely floating above the threshold for failing the course. (And in fact, Guinevere was beginning to *hate* how popular culture seemed to support pushback about grades.) They also knew that a lot of students could be a bit excitable, with a miniscule attention span that seemed to last less than a second. Perhaps using a text with visuals and dialogue bubbles could help some of the kids, Guinevere reasoned.

"I want you to find details," Guinevere instructed, holding up their copy of the page from the Spiderman comic. To illustrate what they meant, Guinevere provided some literal questions for students to consider. "Like... how many people does Spiderman say are in New York?" they inquired. "What is the other... location mentioned in here?"

As students started interacting with the text, Guinevere posed additional questions, prompting students to think about the word choices in the text and how they related to the imagery.

"According to this text, what do you think this word means?" they asked, pointing to a particular segment of the comic, its page bursting with action and dialogue.

Back in the present space, Guinevere explained that the text they selected included unfamiliar words that students might be able to figure out, because there was "enough content in this picture." They even realized that one of the words used in the text – "misanthrope" – was such an infrequently occurring word that they felt compelled

to look up its meaning. “I heard the word and on my brain went, what does this mean?” they told me, their words a testament to the unexpectedly elevated vocabulary that might sneak its way into a nonconventional text. Reflecting further on the outcomes of that lesson, Guinevere’s observation that their students reacted favorably to the comic (as indicated by the “higher rate” of work turned in and how they “liked” the text) instilled a desire to “do more.” Through laughter, they said, “It made me want to do more...it makes me want to ...go and ... get some more.”

***“What do you think is happening in this?”***

Looking ahead, Guinevere believes that a multimodal text such as a Spiderman comic holds similar possibilities to more traditional texts with permanent and established homes in the English classroom. For instance, they might create a “bigger assignment than just one page” and instead “have students read the whole thing.” Guinevere would then prompt students to “tell me the themes, tell me the details, tell me those main ideas.” They also mentioned that a book report might be a possible assignment to pair with a comic book. “I can see somebody doing a book report on a com- a Spiderman comic. Easily,” Guinevere said, pointing out that this kind of assignment would also need to include a focus on the action occurring in the pictures.

I would expect the same things that they would do for a book report...they would have to mention some of the action going on that isn’t just in the text because the pictures are also an integral part of it. But it’s because ... the pictures are showing the action that the words aren’t saying. Um it’s, they’re the pictures ...instead of a book or a text describing those actions, you’re seeing them. And ... you got things like ... *swoosh, bzz...* they’re trying to show a, something happening.

In addition to describing how their students might focus on textual details for a book report, Guinevere believes that popular culture characters and texts might help students develop their skills with identifying the key details that converge to tell a story. “I mean I honestly, I could see using ... (sigh) comics from Marvel characters, Disney characters, I mean actually for this particular format of lesson I could ... use almost anything. Just to help them,” Guinevere explained, offering an additional example about perceiving details about the character’s movement in a Flash comic. “But they see the details, they pull the details out ... so like I said, and what do you think is happening in this? ... which is inferring because they struggle with that one too,” they recounted.

***“That’s literacy, that’s reading ... that’s exploring things”***

Guinevere’s reference to Marvel resurfaced when they took me back further in time to earlier days spent working with the English learners at the virtual international school. Recalling that time, Guinevere learned that despite their unfamiliarity with some of the books the students showed, “so many ... of the kids that were fans of the Marvel universe.” Guinevere views this example as illustrative of popular culture’s fluid positioning within various cultures. “And so the Marvel universe has transcended that cultural boundary,” they observed. “It’s multicultural now. Because of the way the language, it’s the language it’s just been, it’s been translated. So it goes into both cultures now.”

As additional evidence of the blurred lines between the multicultural and the popular, Guinevere pointed to the video game franchise *Assassin’s Creed*, which welcomes players into historically based virtual worlds of stealthy agents and clandestine warriors. “Personally *Assassin’s Creed* is one of my favorite video game systems,” they

enthused. The first time Guinevere stepped into the game, they felt “impressed” – and since then, the game has solidified a position in their out-of-school life. But instead of viewing the game through a monochromatic lens, Guinevere implied that *Assassin’s Creed* also includes a semblance of the multicultural. They explained that the game’s creators “are incredibly talented” and reflect a variety of “multicultural...backgrounds, beliefs, religious, religious or otherwise.” This observation remained with Guinevere after they first saw the game. Elaborating on the textual elements that they feel are applicable to education, Guinevere pointed out that the game’s narrative occurs in multiple geographical and temporal locations, including Italy, Ancient Rome, and Ancient Egypt. This is one way that the game maintains a balance between “the science fiction part” and “quite a bit of science fact to make that very real.” Equally noteworthy for Guinevere is how the gaming series offers in-depth dives into an assortment of historical cultures, thereby positioning it as relevant to literacy learning and a possible pick for inclusion in the classroom.

I can see how somebody could use *Assassin’s Creed* in a say a history class...because there is so much, because if you really wanna ... explore it they have actual historical documents in there and ... that’s literacy, that’s reading...that’s exploring things that are real within a video game.

***“I could see a crossover between English, history, and math”***

Sharing further insights into their perspective, Guinevere also drew a connection between *Dungeons and Dragons* (D&D) and the history classroom. Even though Guinevere laughed that they’re “not a history teacher,” they spoke about the game’s applicability to social studies, noting that the setting occurs during the “Viking age.”

“[D&D will] be real good for a history class... you could have real things in there. Your characters could be dealing with these things that these other cultures potentially dealt with,” they explained. Coinciding with their commentary about *Assassin’s Creed*, Guinevere considers *Dungeons and Dragons* to be an exemplar of a game intertwined with both a multicultural component and a semblance of teamwork, where the player needs to be receptive to working alongside and valuing the perspectives embodied by different players. “In D&D you have multiple cultures, multiple races ... in a very real way, in this made-up world, whatever world your [Dungeon Master] is coming up with, you are having to work with these different cultures.” Laughing, they remarked that “[there’s] definitely a pop culture and a multiculture there.”

And while Guinevere intimated that they had not thoroughly conceptualized how this game might fit within a specific lesson (“some of it hasn’t been flushed out”), their commentary spoke to its perceived potential as a site for “bringing to light...seeing other cultures” and realizing “that prejudice exists.” From Guinevere’s perspective, this game even offers implications for a use in multiple subject areas. “D&D has a lot of potential. I could see a crossover between English, history, and math. All of them, and between the cultures, the pop culture ... and the dice rolls, the math.” Within this discussion of literacy-focused interdisciplinary possibilities, Guinevere suggested that this type of activity could be perceived as enjoyable and incorporate a prosocial component as well. “And they’re having fun. And they’re learning some good uh teamwork skills too.”

***“Their eyes lit up a little bit”***

Another contemporary game that Guinevere believes holds implications for learning is *Among Us*, a video game where players work in teams to isolate, identify, and

vote out a perpetrator with underhanded intentions. Guinevere suggested that they knew that an adaptation of *Among Us* had been used in the content areas. This activity featured “cards where ... certain people were the imposter and the things that they had to do, anything in it, they would have to answer a question. Those would be ...their tasks.” And despite having “no personal experience” with using *Among Us* for educational purposes, Guinevere “[could] see [a variation of it] being applied into English, easily.” And although Guinevere has not integrated the popular game into a lesson in their current classroom, they have referred to it, much to their students’ surprise.

The lesson that day was similar to every other one. And just like preceding days, a few students were acting a bit tricky, unintentionally conspicuous in their attempts to conceal a few tip-taps here, a couple of finger swipes there.

Observing this behavior, Guinevere learned how to recognize the telltale signs of these illicit transactions and became privy to every clandestine attempt at phone usage. And yet the kids knew the phones were not supposed to be out. So, Guinevere knew this was something to bring up to the class.

“You know what... I know when you’re on your phones,” Guinevere announced in a voice glistening with the satisfaction of a *gotcha* Scooby-Doo moment. “You guys are sitting there ... I know what you’re doing.”

As the students soaked in this revelation, Guinevere continued, “and I’m sorry, but your posture is *sus*.”

Recounting their use of the word “sus” in that context – slang for “suspect” in the fictional world of *Among Us* – Guinevere noted that their students appeared pleasantly surprised to learn that the teacher was familiar with the youthful jargon of a popular

multiplayer game. “It was like... their eyes lit up a little bit because a teacher’s, oh my god a teacher’s using ...the *Among Us* vocabulary,” Guinevere expressed.

***“Almost a ... totally different culture nowadays”***

Speaking with Guinevere, I discerned their affection for contemporary texts that epitomize the technological affordances of our modern culture. They likewise demonstrated an awareness of how today’s textual materials and popular culture reflect our everchanging society, one where a trend is here one moment, then it is on to “the next big thing.” “Everything changes,” they declared. “Things move fast nowadays. A lot faster than they used to.”

I mean that’s, that’s becoming part of popular culture. It’s, it means everything changes, and that you know if teaching is gonna keep up with these popular changes and in general, and this is I mean this is politics, this is English, this is math, this is everything, I mean ah, and yes teaching is we’re starting to catch up a little bit with the online stuff but some of the things are still ... far behind.

Alongside this perspective, Guinevere revealed that they view older texts as reflective of another culture, as these texts offer insights into an alternate historical reality removed from the present day. “If you think about ... the way it is now, there is even looking back at our history that is almost a ... totally different culture nowadays,” Guinevere told me. “It may have been a previous ... incarnation of our current culture but it was, it’s still, it’s very different.” To clarify their point, Guinevere told me about how the “very very dark” fictional short story *The Lottery* represents “the culture in those times [fifties or sixties].” Guinevere believes that there is merit in exposing students to a text such as *The Lottery*



because “it’ll help students understand that there are differences” between today and decades past.

***“See how it ... resonates with them.”***

In addition to the older text’s ability to transport its readers to another time, place, and cultural backdrop, Guinevere indicated that these texts remain capable of capturing today’s audiences, who are still able to make connections with the stories that typify more classical literary traditions. To develop this point, Guinevere noted that a text like *Romeo and Juliet* – a foundational Shakespearean work residing in many an English classroom – tells a “story that’s from ... another culture...old and across the sea.” Guinevere has observed that the play “resonates so much with people that they ... adapt it into other versions that will go ... into a different culture.” Citing the film versions of *Romeo and Juliet*, they mentioned that this story is “done in movie form multiple times ...in multiple cultures.” Applied to a classroom setting, Guinevere posited that a lesson could focus on pairing the original text with the film adaptation. Upon hearing this point, I recalled my own experience as a teenager in English class watching the Hollywood retelling of *Romeo and Juliet*, the undeniable entrancement of the movie’s edgy and opulent storytelling captivating me and my classmates. “[The students] could read textually ... the original *Romeo and Juliet* and then they could watch, I think it was in the nineties?,” Guinevere laughed. “That is one way that ... multicultural texts could be used because I mean you’re...it’s a direct comparison.” Developing this idea, Guinevere stated:

You have ... the story you have that core but being able to compare and highlight the differences and that can be ... really awesome ... and it's [an] experience, for students to be able to see these differences but have the same story behind it.

In addition to these ideas, they also view the movie and printed text versions of *Romeo and Juliet* as useful for a writing activity, where students would be prompted to work on a "screenwrite" related to the story. Summing up their ideas about comparing and contrasting, Guinevere added that students might perceive the movie viewing favorably and discover how they connect with the texts.

The students could compare the movie ... it could be a little bit of a treat and being able to watch the movie ... after they've read the play. And be able to see the differences. And they can highlight them. And see how it... resonates with them.

***"Access to all of it"***

My discussion with Guinevere offered even more insights into their perspectives as they shared thoughts about teaching poetry, a genre that "everybody relates to." "I'm not usually big on poetry," Guinevere admitted, noting that they've "never been much of [a] poet." "However, I would want to pull poetry from other cultures." Within this discussion, they displayed an appreciation for poetry that reflects varied cultures and languages. "A lot of times especially in the Asian cultures they do very, very visually beautiful poems. That part of the meaning is in ... what you see visually," they explained. If poems such as these were to make an appearance in the classroom, they might appear in both their original form and a translated version. During a lesson, Guinevere would

prioritize helping students to uncover the poems' meanings. "I want them to be able to understand what's going on ... in the poem that's from another culture."

In addition to valuing the rich aesthetics and layered meanings of the poetry previously described, Guinevere stated that they "would love to take [and use] Spanish poems." Again turning their attention toward Tejano music (and speaking with a hint of excitement), Guinevere continued, "And you know what, I could take ... there's one, there's one way that the students would understand ... better. Because music pulls into it.... oh that's all music is. It's a poem, made into a song." Illustrating this point, Guinevere talked about how a poetry-based unit of study might integrate Tejano music alongside Chinese songs.

If I was going to do a unit and I was going to try to do a unit on multicultural poems ... I would take Tejano music and I would probably take some Chinese songs as well. And then I would probably throw in one of the American ones just so we could have a, a cross comparison. Because you have... each song ... in writing. I would also ... have them listen to it, listen to each song, and I would try to have them be as similar as possible because they can see the similarities and the differences because they exist (laughs).

The link between music and poetry that Guinevere described hearkened back to an earlier time in Guinevere's career trajectory. Working as a substitute, they observed how a skillful English educator utilized music as poetry – an episode that appeared particularly influential for Guinevere.

The bell rang, students were settled into their seats, and Guinevere gazed at the teacher standing in the front of the room. The educator seemed to personify what

Guinevere visualized when they thought about an English teacher – the teacher was notably tall with well-fitting glasses and exuded an erudite quality that seemed like it belonged in the classroom.

Guinevere continued to watch, riveted, as the teacher read aloud the lyrics from a popular contemporary song, enlivened by the melodic words that were spoken.

Witnessing the teacher's unmistakable enthusiasm, Guinevere took note that the musical version of the song was not featured in the lesson – rather, the read aloud of lyrics, sans audio, took center stage.

Recounting that experience, Guinevere suggested that students were able to relate to the lyrics featured in that lesson. “It was something that the students could understand and it’s something that was definitely on their level.” In their own teaching, Guinevere envisions a similar emphasis on music lyrics - except they would include the music, and focus on “something very specific to the area” they teach in. “Like ... I could take Selena, I can take Selena’s music,” they stated, seemingly energized by this possibility. Guinevere believes that students “could relate” if they were to use a Tejano “love song.” “Not everybody knows who [Selena] is,” they quickly added. “Um, but down here she, she’s big.” (In fact, I *do* know who Selena is – my own reconstructed memories, vivid despite the passage of time, easily replay Selena’s fashion-forward profile turning to wave at *me* while performing atop a newly constructed stage, hundreds of admirers exhilarated by the unparalleled sights and rhythmic sounds of *La Reina de Tejano*.)

Guinevere further developed their ideas about how a Tejano song could be used alongside a pop song and a Chinese song to create a lesson where students compare the

three texts (although admittedly, they “would cringe” if using pop music that they are not a fan of). Guinevere outlined additional thoughts about this possible future lesson.

I do not know any Chinese songs off the top of my head but I have heard some, I would have to do more research, but I could compare the three and ... I could show them that these cultures, where on the outside they appear really different... they are very close in their um, in the way they work.

And since songs such as the frequently heard chart-toppers of Selena y Los Dinos are predominantly recorded in Spanish, and many of their high school students would likely be unacquainted with the Chinese language, Guinevere would include translations to assist students’ understanding when needed.

I would want them to see both ... the original, the translated, so they could understand physically what the words mean ... I would want for them to listen to it in the original form and ... I would want them to have access to all of it ... so they could experience it to the fullest extent.

***“It will help them feel more comfort”***

Expanding on their definition of a multicultural text, Guinevere stated, “I find them very interesting because it’s sorta culture. It’s another take on things.” To illustrate this perspective, Guinevere again shared observations from teaching at the online international school, where English language texts could provide a sense of cultural novelty. “I’m seeing somebody interact with another culture,” they said of their experiences watching students interact with English language books from their personal collection, ones that their daughter once read and Guinevere herself “loved” as a child. “They were always very interested when I would read them uh things ... but just little

kids' books that we have, things that we take for granted." Guinevere suggested that some of these books might create feelings of "nostalgia" for the teacher, while also invoking "a sense of wonder... cause [the students are] seeing it with ...new eyes."

Guinevere's recognition of the relationship between culture and language reemerged when they told me more about using both English and Spanish language texts to ensure students' access to the content while also bringing "comfort" to those students. In this way, Guinevere associated the idea of a multicultural text with a text's linguistic features. They view access to both a students' first and second language as particularly important for students who are in the process of acquiring English. "When you hear your own language it it's a way of bringing you comfort," they noted. Reflecting on a recent encounter with a Spanish speaking student in their current high school class, Guinevere believes that "two copies" of a specific book – one in English and one in Spanish – would prove beneficial for imbuing a sense of comfort alongside an understanding of the material.

I could see it as a comfort cause ... if he doesn't understand something  
I'm saying when we're here when we're looking over the books, I can  
show it to him in English, I can go to the same spot in the Spanish book and  
compare. And then if nothing else it could help him to it could bring comfort in  
the fact that he can understand what's going on.

For Guinevere (who admittedly snagged books in Spanish and German when the library was "clear[ing] out" some inventory), an ideal book to help their English learners would be a textbook featuring English and Spanish. "I can see it as a learning textbook that um

they have both there to help them ... it's a way ... [of] bringing comfort, cause when you're comfortable you're more likely to learn things better."

Expounding on this view, Guinevere suggested that educators who are not convinced about using multicultural and linguistically diverse materials in the classroom should consider what it might be like for a student who must navigate new cultural surroundings. "I would tell them ... (sigh) put yourself into another country mentally. Make, pretend you're a student." Developing the imaginary scenario further, Guinevere would tell them to ponder what it might feel like to experience the "narrow option" of seeing things in an unfamiliar language, while also negotiating the demands of an environment with little cultural understanding. "I would want them to try to understand that ... that's what people who come that when they are thrown into another culture... they feel very isolated," they empathized, their words imploring the imagined educators to contemplate the feelings and perspectives of newly arrived students – those who find themselves uncertain about life in a new cultural and linguistic environment. Guinevere explained that this kind of mindset might provide an additional way of extending "comfort" to students coping with the situations they described.

If we have even a little bit, even a sliver of their own culture it will help them feel more comfort.... and if [educators] can understand how people from other cultures might feel here then hopefully then they might consider and at least start reading up and start opening up their mind.

***"Give them shoes that fit them"***

Similar to their earlier remote teaching experiences, Guinevere remains attuned to students' interest and engagement levels in the high school classroom. But unlike the

time spent working with younger learners (where students were delighted to read a translated version of a book featuring Peppa Pig), Guinevere vocalized concerns about their adolescent students completing course requirements. “I mean it’s still not hard to pass the class, but they have to still do the work um I’m just pushing them to do more work,” they revealed. ‘It’s not just it’s that they don’t want to do work, it’s that they don’t want to come to class on the day, when um at the actual class time.” And although Guinevere experienced success using the Spiderman comic, ongoing challenges such as these prompt the consideration of additional ways to encourage student participation and interest in lessons. Guinevere “originally thought of TikTok” as a possible inspiration for a popular culture infused lesson, noting that they still “might try for it.” But they acknowledged that this kind of lesson might still prove challenging, despite TikTok’s relevancy to students’ lives. “That requires a lot of class participation, and I don’t always get a lot of class participation,” they told me, laughing.

My conversations with classes usually ends up being I feel like no more than three of the students talking to me uh in a class of 15 to 20 (laughs) um ... it’s not for me not trying to pull them out and trying to talk to them but they, yeah.

Telling me more about why TikTok might be appropriate for their students, Guinevere pointed to the “really short” video segments popularized on the widely used media sharing app.

There’s a reason TikTok is so popular... it’s because just, it’s because it resonates so universally with everybody that has this short attention span. Instead of trying to ... force them into what we, into our shoes, instead of having them wear their parents’ shoes, they’re we need to give them shoes that fit them.



***“They relate to me”***

In addition to sharing perspectives about prioritizing students’ learning needs and providing relatable content, Guinevere also offered their thoughts about relating to the students they teach. “I feel like with what’s in their worldview ...sometimes they realize that the teachers aren’t just somebody that is this dictator in a classroom. We’re humans, too,” they told me. “And we can actually relate to what they’re doing.” To underscore this point, Guinevere reiterated an affection for video games, a pastime that they spoke fondly of. “I love to game.... my whole life ... I love playing *Dungeons and Dragons*. I love playing *Assassin’s Creed*.” And although these facets of Guinevere appear to be entwined with who they are, their students often don’t expect these characteristics in their teacher. Guinevere recounted how some students have inquired about this.

*Do you like to play games?* They asked.

*Which ones do you play?*

“I dunno how many students are sorely surprised that they find out that I’m a gamer,” Guinevere joked. Yet at the same time, this shared affinity for gaming seems to have opened pathways toward relating to their students and encouraging an open door of communication.

The fact that I could relate to them on that uh level ... helps them to open up to me.... [pause] and the fact that I’m willing to listen, even the students who don’t really like me because I’ve had to write them up (laughs)... I guess because I am at the very earliest part of the Millennial (laughs)...that I that they relate to me.

***“A bridge between them”***

Alongside these comments, Guinevere mentioned that “access” to popular culture has increased in comparison to when they were young. Reflecting on the generational and societal influences central to their own upbringing, Guinevere shared that they “[were] born at the tail end of Atari” and “grew up with video games” (but their mom “absolutely despised them,” and held a similar disdain for the Internet). Continuing to compare their experiences with those of their students, Guinevere laughingly remarked that people from their generation “[know] what AOL is,” whereas students seem a bit clueless about the communicative tools that characterized the early Internet experience. “These new kids, they don’t know what [AOL] is anymore!” And even as Guinevere acknowledged that their students inhabit a “world” particular to their own generation and lived experiences, they also expressed a belief in the commonalities that exist between themselves and their students. “[The] culture ... really isn’t that different except that we accept more now,” they declared, reemphasizing the need to “remind the students that you’re human too.”

Speaking in broader terms about popular culture texts in general, Guinevere defined them as a “tool” with implications for classroom use and for promoting student understanding. “It’s... it’s another tool to help us to relate to and teach students,” they said. And if a colleague voiced a contrary opinion, Guinevere would be quick to urge a co-worker to “keep an open mind.” Guinevere continued:

This is what is in your students’ world right now. It is... and if you can relate what you’re teaching them to their worldview, and that’s drilled into our heads ... you have a higher chance of reaching them and them understanding what you’re trying to teach.

Guinevere equated this type of outreach to extending a “bridge” to students, one that welcomes them to learn in ways that are adapted to the generational particularities of today’s youth. Among their own students, Guinevere noted that “they’re on their computers all the time” and “a number of students ... like anime.” Consistent with observations such as these, Guinevere finds value in referencing snippets of popular culture while teaching. Movies, video games, anime, and videos found on streaming platforms are all fodder for inclusion in the classroom. “I do my best to reference those things ... daily,” they told me. Supplying a rationale for incorporating these references, Guinevere explained:

Because these are the things that my students see... this is what their world is becoming. And if you can’t put a bridge between the knowledge and what they see, you’re not gonna, then they’re gonna be like a little island... using what they know, using what they see is a bridge between them.

***“Trying to be open-minded”***

Alongside these perspectives, Guinevere told me about the importance of remaining open-minded – a quality that they consider significant for teaching, text use, and the daily interactions we all encounter in life. Prior to their progression as an increasingly open-minded educator, Guinevere struggled to embody this attribute during their earlier teaching experiences.

When I started teaching with [the online international school], I had a very narrow [mind] ... I was trying to be open-minded ... but it was very ... difficult to try to see things from their point of view sometimes because it’s a different culture.

One area of cultural difference that Guinevere noted was how their Chinese students' culture seemed "naturally very narrow-minded," with an inclination to view "themselves as superior." But as Guinevere got to know the online students, and as they viewed the books students displayed through the connected computer screens separated by multiple time zones, Guinevere began to recognize "that they were just like us." Describing this realization, they explained, "you kinda realize this... they're just the same as our kids... they just speak a different language ... they're culturally different." As time progressed and Guinevere focused on developing students' language and literacy skills, they observed that the online school offered a way to broaden students' perspectives. From their point of view, participating in the international school and partaking in a print-rich class were ways of "opening up the world to these students." At the same time, Guinevere recognized that these literacy-based experiences helped their international students to engage more deeply with the English language. "That could change their world ...[if] they understood English ... better," they said.

In their current high school classroom, Guinevere remains mindful of their students' lived experiences, and sees value in access to texts and experiences that broaden their students' perspectives and worldviews. Guinevere described their ideas:

If they only have access to a to a certain amount that means their worldview is very very narrow. They think they're right. That they're, they're literate in that small amount. It makes them very small. And it makes it so that they do not, that they're not capable of understanding things in the larger worldview.

As an interesting twist to this commentary, Guinevere and I spoke on the day of the Capitol insurrection - a day of unprecedented unrest and a defining moment for the

polarized political climate surrounding the 2020 election. “I guess a perfect example is actually something that happened today,” Guinevere stated, noting that they lean “on the more conservative side” of the political ideological spectrum. Following a sigh that seemed to echo my own feelings of outrage and dismay about the day’s history-making events, Guinevere continued:

I just think ... [rioters and supporters of the insurrection are] choosing to keep their worldview very narrow and not at least being open to other, other potential opinions. Um, other peoples’ um, other (sigh) ... other cultures.... they’re choosing to read the small sliver of things and saying that’s right....if you look at the tiny little sliver, you’re gonna get the wrong impression. You’re gonna get the majority of that little sliver.

Similar sentiments surfaced when Guinevere told me about their thoughts on integrating multicultural texts into the classroom. “If [students] are understanding, if they are literate in multiple cultures, then they won’t, then they will be better at accepting those other cultures,” they remarked. And while Guinevere advocates for including multicultural texts into the curriculum, they also acknowledged the likelihood that not all educators feel the same way. “I believe that everybody’s entitled to their own opinion,” they added, mentioning that they maintain “respect” for differing perspectives. As we continued to converse, Guinevere shared more thoughts related to the individualized nature of keeping an open mind about text selection.

I would implore [my colleagues] to be open-minded because they might learn something a little more. Um but (sigh) the only way that somebody’s mind is going to be opened to something new is if they choose to.... I mean no matter

how much you want somebody's mind to change, until they are ready [to] change...as the old saying goes, you can lead a horse to water but you can't make 'em drink.

***“A different way ... of us holding the world”***

Underlying these perspectives is Guinevere's awareness that the students they teach “live in a small town” far from the bigger, sprawling Texas cities the state is known for (many of which are recognized as popular vacation destinations, with names that are frequently scrawled across kitschy mugs and postcards). Speaking in broad terms, Guinevere explained that “not everybody's going to be able to go to a place where they have access to people from New York, from Korea, from China, it's just not possible.” This is one reason why Guinevere values texts that introduce and expose students to other cultural realities and ways of life.

If we can see in the small spin of a cultural text and if we can see that there, it would help us to understand .... a book is a small universe to be able to open your mind to more than just your own culture.

Related to these assertions is Guinevere's belief that authors are able to introduce students to new perspectives that were previously unconsidered. “I mean ... you might figure out your calling in life from something because an author told you about something in a different way than you were used to seeing,” they pointed out. To emphasize this idea, Guinevere likened a newly uncovered perspective to what might happen when viewing a painting with more than one interpretation. “If you, you know those trick paintings that ... if you look at it one way looking at it right side up it's a bird or a woman, if you turn it the other way ... it's something else?” they asked me. This

question brought to mind my own disbelief as a child when I viewed a seemingly plain photocopied drawing that morphed from a bonneted elderly woman, seen in profile with a downward gaze, into an ostensibly younger woman, the sculpted outline of a jawbone obscuring the entirety of the woman's face. "It's almost kinda like that, all ... the different cultures, the different ethnicities... all they are is a different way ... of us holding the world." Guinevere paused for a moment. "Yeah, I like that," they added, laughing.

***"It's part of who we are as Americans"***

Alongside thoughts regarding learning about and from different cultures, Guinevere told me about how their feelings on culturally and linguistically diverse texts have shifted over the years. Whereas now they are able to see "see multicultural texts' effect," as a schoolchild their initial beliefs were less inclusive. "[As a kid] it sounds like a simple silly thing but ... I may have understood better what was going on and why we needed that," Guinevere expressed. "I thought, we're Americans, we speak English, we don't need another anything... It took me many years to understand that. So ... multicultural anything... any text, it's part of who we are as Americans."

In tandem with Guinevere's beliefs about an overarching American identity, they continued to showcase a nuanced understanding of their students' cultural and linguistic upbringings. Similar to ideas about using Tejano music and Selena in the classroom, Guinevere would love for their "primarily Hispanic" students to see themselves reflected in the text. This would entail encountering "more Hispanic things from that are Hispanic culture and text that are from our area." Expanding on why they would "have those [kind of texts] put into our school," Guinevere explained:

Because it's one thing to see a culture somewhere across the world, but a culture that is parallel to where you live is, is an awesome experience for kids who live in a small town. A culture that they kind of see a little bit, because I mean most of them are Hispanic but most [of] them don't speak a lot of Spanish. So, so they don't know that part of, a lot of them don't know that part of their heritage.

***“I wish that I had a better cultural upbringing”***

Looking back again on their own upbringing, Guinevere recalled the early experiences that contributed to their realizations about cultural acceptance and tolerance toward others. “I’m very, very White,” Guinevere began. “My family considered itself upper-middle class. Even when we were um probably lower ... that’s just the way my family was. But they, they never really gave me much in the terms of other cultures.” Listening to Guinevere’s anecdote, we temporarily stepped away from their current role as teacher and into the time when Guinevere was a student. “I didn’t really realize what it was, and I didn’t realize I was doing it [at first],” they admitted.

Guinevere walked through the school hallway, gravitating toward the group of White girls talking and standing in a huddled cluster. Surveying the noisy, populated space beyond their White peers, Guinevere glanced surreptitiously at the Black and Hispanic girls standing just a few feet away. But Guinevere didn’t glance for too long or stare too hard; they didn’t make eye contact or start a conversation. Instead, like all the days before, Guinevere turned toward the circle of the familiar girls they felt safe with.

And yet – Guinevere was so *curious* about the handful of Black girls at the school. And they felt a similar sense of wonderment about the Hispanic girls that they



walked past each day. But it all felt so *taboo*, like it was wrong to start that conversation or show a shred of interest in the girls who weren't White.

Looking back on that time, Guinevere felt that their formative years were clouded by a "very narrow-minded" approach toward others. "In a sense, I was taught to be very classist and racist," they expressed with candor.

I wish that I had a better cultural upbringing cause then I, now I would understand things better than I do even as I do now. Because it's (sigh) when you grow up a certain way... it's definitely ... it's caused some of the problems we have in today, in today's society (sigh).

As another instance of the need for open-mindedness, Guinevere again reflected on the past, telling me about a more recent time as a young adult that occurred around the time that Guinevere converted religions, moving away from the traditions of Catholicism to embracing the teachings of Wicca. Guinevere alluded to "a lot of misunderstandings" that occurred between them and a peer following an evening get-together with friends.

Guinevere described that night as "very legal," with some dabbling in the rituals of the Wicca religion. And while everything seemed fine while interacting with friends, the aftermath of that gathering "turned into a monster" and "a big mess." Guinevere attributed the ensuing fallout from that night to a lack of open-mindedness from the families involved. And while at first glance these recollections seemed removed from the world of learning and textual engagement that characterize the high school classroom, Guinevere linked their example to the life skill of learning how to adopt an open-minded approach to others. "[With] more open-mindedness, more being able to know about more things, [the misunderstandings] may not have happened," Guinevere explained.

***“You’re all melting pot”***

Listening to Guinevere’s experiences, I learned that they see the necessity of adopting an inclusive approach to others, in addition to their receptiveness to using texts that feature a variety of cultures and languages. Guinevere told me that “we come from a very diverse background” and racial “differences are beautiful.” They also mentioned groups that embody “a whole ‘nother culture” or a “mini-culture,” such as individuals who are blind or receive special education services. “I mean why, why can’t we all just kind of look at everybody’s cultures and find the beauty in em,” they mused. At the same time, Guinevere believes that there are commonalities to the shared human experience. Explaining their perspective, Guinevere stated, “I don’t think we should be focusing on the fact that we’re all different countries. It’s, we’re one world. Different faces. But embrace the differences. Wonderful.” These observations are also apparent in texts that Guinevere has encountered, such as *Dragon Ball*, a popular franchise spanning several genres (manga, anime, and animated stories). “It ... showcases various cultures,” they told me. “It showcases ... different universes and it showcases their differences but it also showcases their similarities. And it shows that how people, how they should be working together.” As an example of how a team-oriented and open-minded approach appears in these texts, Guinevere pointed to a “friendly” character named Goku, who typifies and models acceptance. According to Guinevere, Goku “accepts everybody the way they are. As long as they don’t try to ... destroy ... his world.... that’s just the perfect example of being accepting. And accepting of multiple cultures.”

A related viewpoint emerged when Guinevere talked about the unified experience of living in the American “melting pot” – a concept that they believe defies the

sometimes staunch and combative designations of the two primary political parties. “One of the reasons why this country is so ... we can have so much diversity now is because this country is diverse, because ... we were built on a melting pot,” they told me. “We are melting pot is what we are, and we don’t even realize it ... you’re all melting pot, you’re all American,” they declared laughing, an imaginary group of attentive students soaking in the message. For Guinevere, this combination of sameness and difference blended together offers ongoing openings for learning about and accepting others. “[And] because America is a melting pot ... we have [an] opportunity as Americans to embrace a lot of cultures. Even cultures that are not our own. Because then we can learn.”

***“Information about the good and the bad”***

Delving deeper into their stance related to education and textual inclusion, Guinevere spoke about the importance of helping their students approach the world with “eyes wide open.”

So if I committed to include something I’m going to because I think that the best way ... for people to learn is to have their eyes open. I mean... if you narrow your eyes ... to slits you’re likely gonna run into a wall. But, if you have your eyes wide open you’re going to see that wall comin...

These beliefs were further illuminated when Guinevere told me about how today’s youth should be exposed to the realities and atrocities of the past. “I’ve noticed that a lot of people don’t like their, their kids knowing about like for example, stuff that happens in World War II. ... and the things that happened during the Civil War. And ... slavery and all that,” they told me, sighing before continuing. “I think that’s one of the reasons why so many people ... (sigh) ... by being closeminded, by not exposing them to

both the good and the bad... they're making it more likely for us to repeat those mistakes." In a brief departure from discussing these topics in reference to teaching and learning, Guinevere revealed that they remain mindful of these concerns in their own parenting, noting how they hope to communicate that "the world isn't just these wonderful pretty shades, there's dark, there's light, there's everything in between."

Yet at the same time, Guinevere voiced concern about "the bad" ideas and perspectives that might appear in multicultural texts. As an example of "the bad," Guinevere pointed to the "very socialist" ideologies associated with China. "I mean...you're still opening yourself up to not just the good ideas, but the bad," they declared. Guinevere similarly urged a cautious approach in balancing the positive attributes of popular culture with the potentially negative, suggesting that exposure to materials that only reflect "an extremely narrow point of view...could be extremely detrimental." To emphasize this point, Guinevere mentioned Nazi literature from World War II – "a very extreme example," they added, laughing. But even as they identified these concerns, Guinevere indicated that "students need to be aware" of the world around them and the lessons of the past – both components capable of appearing in both multicultural and popular culture texts. "When we don't give them the information about the good and the bad of our history, as humans... (sigh) we are denying them knowledge that they could use to make our future better."

***"Let them have sushi"***

As I continued to learn from Guinevere, they shared their perspective that multicultural texts "help open ... students' eyes... especially if [they're] written originally in another language." They also noted that multicultural texts offer a pathway

toward “learning about the ideas of other cultures” and “trying to see ... things differently.” Guinevere suggested that individuals of all ages could benefit from these lessons. “We need to be exposed, even as adults we need to be exposed,” they proclaimed. Coexisting alongside these statements is Guinevere’s belief that popular culture texts “improve” literacy learning, while also “[opening] peoples’ minds [and giving] them a glimpse into something else.” In tandem with highlighting these positive qualities, Guinevere thinks that educators should remain mindful of exposing students to texts that are age-appropriate and respectful of their developmental needs. This might entail using “a filter for a little bit, just like ... blinders on a horse and then you just kind of slowly move them away ... slowly opening up.” They elaborated on this viewpoint:

At least to some extent it should be censored until they can but ... they should be exposed to it in a bit of a filtered way (coughs) because they, so ... they know ... more general and as they get older ... it gets more specific and they could handle [it]. But in a general sense they should still be able to access it.

Thinking back to their time as a substitute, Guinevere shared an anecdote to further clarify their thoughts about exposure and access. “I was talking with some students, and they were (sigh) and they were very ignorant of a lot [of] things that happened during um in times in our history,” they lamented. “And I think that it was very sad because ... in our popular culture people reference that stuff.” Guinevere implied that texts and schooling provide those opportunities for students to encounter consequential topics and learn from the insights they provide.

I mean they don’t need to know the watered-down version or the uh made extreme version though the extremes did exist... they need to know ... because

even something in history is still a different culture.... if you don't know where we come from, you're doomed to repeat where we came from.

One student in particular sticks out in Guinevere's mind – a student that Guinevere described as biracial, with rich, dark-toned skin. Guinevere recalled that they felt “very sad” because the student did not seem to be familiar with World War II or the Civil War. “I mean it (sigh) I knew at least something about [these wars] when I was her age,” they told me, surmising that parental influence may have contributed to the observed lack of familiarity. This recollection coincided with Guinevere's statement that their students should “learn ... to take in knowledge and be able to digest it,” including knowledge about history and the many cultures that comprise the world. To illustrate this point of view, Guinevere offered an analogy between exposing students to new forms of knowledge and sampling a variety of cuisine. “The only way for them ... to learn about different foods is if they try them,” they told me. In contrast to an unchanging diet of “macaroni and cheese and chicken nuggets,” Guinevere proclaimed:

Let them have sushi, let them have ... turkey, let them have all these different things. It, it broadens their horizons ... and it'll help them to understand the world. They live in a world where it's a world culture. It's not an, a country culture as much anymore. Because of the Internet, we live in a world culture....  
(laughs).

***“The real-world examples”***

Within our discussion, Guinevere also acknowledged the prevalence of issues such as racism that continue to resurface in our societal discourse. Pointing to “the racism that I see nowadays,” Guinevere revealed that they see racism in an “opposite” way. “I

see it the opposite, to what people, people usually say. I'm seeing racism against Whites, when people are assuming that ... Whites are racist. I mean, that's racist," they told me. This is just one of the issues that Guinevere sees going on in the world today – and this aligns to the kinds of real-world learning that they and their school administrators perceive as critical for the classroom. "I mean they wanted us to do real-world stuff and a lot of the real-world stuff, the real-world examples that's um that's going to be pop culture. That's going to be all of the um multicultural texts." As a recent example, their students interacted with real-world topics after viewing the events at the Capitol, which generated "real conversation" among a student population that sometimes displays reticence to participate in class activities. Guinevere deduced that students appeared "more animated" during this discussion because it concerned "something that affects them." Telling me more, they stated that "if it's something that ... in their immediate affects them they are more likely ... to take part in it." These observations align to Guinevere's commitment to providing students with texts and learning experiences that students may perceive as meaningful to their own lives. "[That's] why I try to put things that they ... that's part of their world into whatever lesson I'm doing," they told me.

***"I can see them laughing a little bit"***

Alongside prioritizing texts that resonate with students, Guinevere offered additional examples of how they strive to incorporate English Language Arts skills into their teaching. Guinevere seemed energized by the possibility of using different texts for these aims, envisioning how future lessons might utilize a new or unfamiliar text consisting of "something that ... either they haven't seen or they know." This is where Guinevere thinks a popular culture text might be well-suited. Sketching out this vision,

Guinevere explained, “I don’t want them to just use their knowledge ... [they should] take it apart like ... why do you think Iron Man does this?” Noting the parallels between this example and Guinevere’s description of using Spiderman comics, I learned more about how they focus on helping their students to find details and make inferences in texts – skill sets that receive a lot of attention because many students “struggle with ... pulling details out of passages.” They referred to this area of instructional focus as “training their mind to pull those details out... and to see them to and try to understand.” This is why Guinevere will prompt their students “to pull out just these few facts” from the text – these are the “things that they could easily see.” On a weekly basis, Guinevere ensures that their class practices these skills, which they find to be adaptable to a range of text types. “I could put that into a YouTube video, that could be an article, that could be a comic book,” they told me, adding that they sometimes even incorporate pictures from The New York Times for additional practice. “They give a picture with no caption, they strip out the caption and they ask what’s going on in the picture,” they explained. “I’ll just grab a random article ... most of the time because these are things that they might see in their everyday life.”

As a similar way of developing students’ inferencing skills, Guinevere mentioned that they could “use almost anything,” such as “comics from Marvel characters” or “Disney characters.” As a more detailed example, Guinevere elaborated on how they might incorporate the popular book series *Dog Man*, which invites readers into a comic world revolving around a police officer who is half-dog, half-man (a “Mog,” as John Candy’s character in *Spaceballs* might argue). The series by Dav Pilkey indulges the reader in silly situations, haphazard villains, and juvenile jokes that prompt a chuckle or



two. Describing the books that live on their daughter's shelf (and countless other shelves, given the popularity of the books), Guinevere noted that "they're silly, they're cute, and I can easily remove the captions ... what the characters are saying." Although the books are "younger," Guinevere would use the images displaying "really cute little stories" as an inferencing tool and prompt students to explain "what do ... you think these characters are saying?" In a nod to the humor of the texts, Guinevere said, "I can see them laughing a little bit [to] themselves cause that's their culture." The charming features of this type of text also hold implications for increasing students' engagement. They added, "if I can get ... their attention somehow ... it would work."

***"Trying to train their brains"***

Telling me more about building students' inferencing skills, Guinevere described a recent class session that included an approved YouTube video featuring a bottle with a ship inside of it. They described the utility of the video as a medium for skill development and spoke to its transferability to other kinds of texts.

They needed to be able to find details ... even though it's a video making them find these details ... the video has them practice it because I'm also going to eventually make them ... find these details in a text.

Guinevere calls this being able to "pick apart" a text. "When I say pick apart I mean find details, um inferencing," they clarified. "I am trying to train their brains to find details and find main ideas. And if I can get them to inference that's where they really struggle."

With these goals at the forefront of their teaching, Guinevere told me about discovering a short, animated CGI video that they thought would work well for a lesson.

Told through images and music without dialogue, the video's story followed the journey of a "little stuffed bunny" with a ripped seam that found itself tossed out of a factory.

Once the students took their seats, Guinevere clicked the triangular "play" icon on the YouTube video (and thankfully the video could be used, and they hadn't encountered any issues with approval). The students watched as the distraught little bunny hopped away from a factory, forlorn and wounded, but nonetheless resilient.

A few minutes later, the fluorescent lighting reilluminated the dimmed classroom. Guinevere introduced students to a few questions about the short video, aware that all the answers appeared in the abbreviated narrative the students had just viewed.

"Okay, what are three places [the main character] went?" Guinevere asked, surveying the classroom for a response. Prompting students again, Guinevere asked, "Where was the [main character] born?" (Guinevere was sure to use the vernacular of the English classroom, asking students about the "main character" rather than "the bunny.")

Another question followed. "Know what, tell me what the main character is, and do it in complete sentences," they instructed. "You learned this in elementary school."

After looking back at that particular lesson, Guinevere punctuated their anecdote with an admission of feeling a bit "frustrated." "Know what, am I a little frustrated this week? Yes," they declared with a laugh. But Guinevere was quick to add that their class enjoyed the selected video, similar to the outcomes of their Spiderman lesson that also focused on detail-oriented questions. "The little CGI video, they liked that one too," Guinevere stated, drawing a comparison between the two popular culture text genres. Guinevere also relayed that they had been thinking about incorporating an extended version of the video lesson with a longer format movie. "I was gonna make them go

through the movie and... pick apart a movie. I'm talking full-length movie." Guinevere provided a rationale for this kind of multi-day lesson:

When they're watching a movie they don't, I'm trying to get them to do it a little bit more ... actually think about it and do it. Not just ... watch it passively. I want them to actively do it.

Elaborating on these ideas, Guinevere spoke to how actively engaging with a video text could set the stage for accomplishing the same task when reading other texts.

When I say pick apart I want them to be active when they're watching something because if they can be active when watching a movie ... it's not that big of a leap to actively read and do the same thing.

***“Expand their knowledge of how to revise”***

In addition to conceptualizing lessons based on “pick[ing] apart” the text, Guinevere also told me about how they foresee positioning their students as both active consumers and producers of their own texts. These ideas focus on fanfiction, a genre where the everyday fan uses fictional characters and worlds popularized in existing texts to reimagine new, imaginative texts. Although Guinevere hasn't partaken in the fanfiction community for “a few years,” they stated that people write fanfiction “for fun,” and told me about websites where writers are able to post anonymously and offer feedback and commentary on other submissions. “They're building characters ... and as much as some people don't like it, fanfiction's a part of our pop culture nowadays,” they expressed, adding that the students “could have so much fun with it.” Merging their own knowledge of fanfiction with students' interests, Guinevere explained their thoughts on several ways that fanfiction might appear in a unit of study or within individual lessons.

I could see them writing a short fanfiction about their favorite little pop culture ... just something pretty short... it doesn't even have to be a thousand words. But then, they could have fun with it. And learn how to do it in the process. ...And they could put it out there for more other people to see. Because they also get feedback from other people.

In addition to writing and publishing their own fanfiction stories, a second variation of a fanfiction lesson would prompt students to “search into their favorite pop culture” (such as *Harry Potter* or *Assassin's Creed*) to find a writing sample that could be revised and strengthened (and as a courtesy, Guinevere might even inform the authors about this activity). Alternatively, Guinevere might select the texts herself, basing their choices on texts with a clear need for editing and revision. Describing this approach, Guinevere said, “Another [way] I could do it is ... I pick out fanfictions ... that I read, I know the story is good ...but their uh punctuation, their spelling, is horrid....to the point where it impedes the story.” Students would then determine how to improve the fan-created stories. As yet another alternative, Guinevere described a comparative activity that would facilitate students' editing and revising skills. “You could have ... (sigh) um to find two different things by different authors, one that's very well written, very well revised. The story's good for fanfiction.” Laughing, they continued. “Um and then the other one the story's good, but the punctuation isn't so good.... [this would show] how much misspellings and punctuation errors can distract from a story.” Cumulatively, these possibilities reveal how students would be tasked with “either producing their own or showing how this person's could be better” – which would allow them to “[learn]...from each other.” Excited about possibilities such as these (which they could perhaps use during the next school year),

Guinevere stated, “An enterprising teacher could easily put their nose into the fanfiction community of something their students want to do ... and have ... an amazing lesson.”

Alongside offering these creatively conceptualized options, they provided further justification for these types of writing activities. “That’s using another culture. That’s using pop culture ... to expand their knowledge of how to revise and how revising does impact your work and how much it distracts.”

***“They could create these people”***

Guinevere also drew inspiration from the game *Dungeons and Dragons* (D&D) when talking about writing instruction. Shifting their focus from editing and revising, Guinevere shared their thoughts on using a standalone “one-shot” lesson based on creating characters and developing a story told through a character’s point of view. “You should write what happens ... from your character’s point of view,” they would encourage their students. Tapping into the character types from D&D, Guinevere provided game-specific examples of differing points of view that might emerge during this type of activity. “Because with the rogue who steals everything ... is going to see it differently than the barbarians who wants to hit, just hit all the enemies, just for example,” they mentioned with a laugh. Taking their ideas about writing a step further to include a research component, Guinevere continued, “I could have them imagine their ... characters’ culture, I mean if, especially if I use real cultures... they could research them, they could create these people.”

Providing an additional justification for a character-driven lesson using popular culture, Guinevere delved into their own experiences as a writer with firsthand knowledge of what character creation entails.

I mean when I'm creating characters a lot of times I am, I'm writing stories. I'm writing their backstory. I'm using tools that people create ... to play. But all what they're doing they're creating those characters. They are looking at plot, they are looking at um irony. These are all things that could be in an English lesson.

***“They might find a new way to write”***

As a complement to their discussion about using popular culture within writing lessons, Guinevere told me about how poetry representing “other cultures” might facilitate students’ writing development. “I can see ... showing your students ... the other cultures how they do it,” they said. “They might find a new way to write because they see the different um patterns and different um rhythms that ... maybe a Korean poem does ... versus what we do here in America.” Guinevere’s awareness of their students’ lived experiences also resurfaced as they talked more about promising writing activities. “I can assign them ... to write about something in their daily life but try to do it in in a style similar to another culture.”

As Guinevere shared these ideas, I recalled their perspectives about the analogous attributes of music lyrics and poetry – and how they spoke about comparing songs with distinctive cultural influences. In a similar fashion, Guinevere believes that using poetry with features characteristic of other cultures and linguistic traditions might offer the added benefit of allowing students to see “how they do it” and while also identifying the similarities and differences that connect and distinguish diverse poetic texts. “I mean if nothing else they can [understand] ... that there is a difference, and that even though there is a difference, they’re still very similar.” And students might even put their own innovative spin on writing a poem as they learn how to “combine” the features of a

different poetic traditions. “Because here in America we combine everything,” they said with a laugh. Added to that is Guinevere’s belief that the American culture readily receives new ideas and welcomes opportunities for creative remixing - “we embrace everything that’s brought to us and make it our own.”

***“The better human[s] we can be”***

Speaking with Guinevere, I learned that they view both multicultural and popular culture texts as capable of helping students to become “better human beings.” Guinevere explained what they meant by this phrase, telling me about how access to texts, exposure to the stories of others, the accumulation of knowledge, and even active engagement with a text might contribute to this coveted quality. I was first introduced to these ideas as Guinevere talked about their previous teaching experiences online. “If [students] can grow up ... having access to these other books, access to these languages, and access to this learning, and (sigh) ... it helps them um be better human beings,” they proclaimed. Offering more insight into these views, they told me that “the more knowledge that they have access to, the more that ... they can get their hands on, the better that they can make our world.”

The notion of becoming a “better” individual resurfaced as Guinevere connected their ideas to fiction and learning about the real and imaginary experiences of others.

And the more we know about other people’s paths, those that have come before us, fictional characters that are based off of things that might happen. The better...the better human[s] we can be and ... the better ... the more knowledge we have to be able to reach our goal and to be the best humans that we can be.

For Guinevere, these perspectives are not limited to a one text genre, but rather extended to include visual texts that the viewer would “actively watch.” I recalled that Guinevere spoke about “train[ing] their brain” to be actively engaged consumers of videos, and they explained how this skill relates to our betterment as individuals.

I said I’m gonna train their brain to [find details] not just ... with the text [but] with the movies ... [it] makes it a more active, and not to mention makes them for more active and ... better humans because then ... they watch something then they’ll see things, see details that are interesting and they’re like hey did you know this in our conversation. They could look like the smart ones in conversations with their friends.

Following this explanation, Guinevere paused, then finalized their response with the trademark laughter that often marked a transition into a new pathway of discussion.

***“Know better where you are going”***

Guinevere’s commentary also showed how they view the roles of textual access and student agency in an interconnected world teeming with knowledge. “We can do our best to guide our students and our kids as much as we can but they’re going to be making their own decisions,” Guinevere asserted. With a sigh, they continued, “and if we do not give them enough [information and access], we need to give them every option that we can.” In alignment with this perspective, Guinevere suggested that educators can offer access to diverse texts even when curricular boundaries seem to work against textual and informational inclusion.

If you can give them the opportunity to even in smallest bit ... even if you can’t give a lot because of just the way the curriculum is working with the school, if



you can at least give them a little bit ... a little hint into it then maybe that might strike their curiosity and they would learn about their own, where they came from.

The idea of students learning about “where they came from” echoed Guinevere’s own preferences (“I like knowing where things come from”) and extracurriculars (“there’s times where I will go onto YouTube and I will search up where things come from”). For Guinevere, this type of learning holds implications for readying their students to envision a pathway forward, beyond the revolving doors of the high school literacy classroom. “I’ve learned that you learn you know where [you] came from you can ... know better where you are going.”

***“We’re all ... on our own paths”***

Listening to Guinevere, I perceived their beliefs about the intersections between culture, language, society, and text, including the ways that key personal and professional episodes contributed to their outlook on education and textual access. During our time together, I also discerned Guinevere’s identity as blossoming educator who strives to keep their students’ instructional needs, everyday lived experiences, and future prosperity at the forefront of their educational priorities. As Guinevere’s dedicated approach to negotiating the challenges and demands associated with the teaching profession became apparent, so did a willingness to incorporate multicultural and popular culture texts into the classroom in engaging and creative ways. And as I learned more about Guinevere’s positioning as a lifelong gamer with an appreciation for the affordances and possibilities of diverse texts, I noted how they displayed an enthusiasm for curricular innovation that both respects school-wide requirements and envisions forward-thinking, student-centered ways to develop students’ literacy skills. As Guinevere told me, “We need to try to see

things from their eyes and the way they learn.” But concurrent with this sentiment, Guinevere recognizes that growing pains are inevitably entwined with learning and development. “I think a lot of those students are forgetting one big thing, and it’s something that my generation and before knew this. To get back up, you have to fall,” they told me.

Complementing this point of view is Guinevere’s own standing as a newer educator within a profession where learning never ends. “My teaching career is just really beginning,” they stated. Reflecting on their growth as an educator, Guinevere remarked that they find themselves “analyzing” texts more and “pulling every bit of information [they] can.” In addition to this attentiveness to the text, Guinevere displayed an awareness of the educational landscape in which they teach and the culturally mediated influences and knowledge sources surrounding the student population and small-town community they serve. Referencing the Internet-driven environment encompassing the daily experiences of today’s youth, Guinevere declared that “we have access to so much knowledge.” As they work alongside students that are enveloped by this global arena overflowing with endless outlets of access and information, Guinevere strives to prepare students for the life and literacy demands imposed by the world around them – a task that could include diverse texts within the realm of the multicultural and the popular. And even though each student’s pathway will likely diverge in unexpected directions, Guinevere views the end goal for all individuals in the same way. “I see many paths to the same goal,” they proclaimed. “We’re all trying to survive.... we’re all ... on our own paths.”

## **Thematic Analysis**

Michael, April, and Guinevere provided unique, individualized accounts of their experiences and perspectives with multicultural and popular culture texts. Collectively, these insights revealed how each educator's past, present, and future encounters with diverse texts present possibilities for teaching, learning, and adolescent students' literacy development. In this section, I will present and explain four themes that unite the three participants' stories and uncover the deeper meanings underlying the data (see Table 5). This will include describing the categories subsumed by each theme, listing the individual codes that comprised each category, and discussing examples from the narratives that exemplify the analysis. Prior to this analysis, I will provide an overview of a standalone category titled "The Educator, Past and Present." In addition to examining the transcript data, this section will provide a very brief, supplementary overview of codes identified from reviewing instructional documents Michael shared with me.

### ***The Educator, Past and Present***

Each participant provided information that provided substance and nuance to their stories, including personal attributes, backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives that supported an understanding of who they are as individuals. I identified this category, "The Educator, Past and Present," to group information about participants that lent depth to their stories but may not have related specifically to the overarching questions of the study. When constructing the narratives, I included information from this category to facilitate a deeper understanding of each participant's past and present realities, including information that adds context to current and prior teaching. Codes in this category include the following: 1) Cultural / Linguistic Background and Experiences, 2) Diverse Teaching

Experiences, 3) Educational Experiences, 4) Perspectives and Beliefs about Teaching, and 5) Prior Professional Experiences (see Table 6).

**Table 5**

*Themes with Corresponding Categories*

	<b>Theme 1:</b> <i>Navigating and Thriving within the Culture of Schooling</i>	<b>Theme 2:</b> <i>Prioritizing Diverse and Traditional Textual Experiences, Despite the Obstacles, Concerns, and Uncertainties</i>	<b>Theme 3:</b> <i>Embracing the Connections and Experiences that Link Society, Humanity, and Text</i>	<b>Theme 4:</b> <i>Empowering Students with Lifelong Literacy Skills and Preparing for a World Beyond the Classroom</i>
<i>The Educator, Past, Present, and Future</i>				
<b>Subthemes (Categories)</b>	Multilevel Teaching Requirements	Availability and Access	Acknowledging and Uniting the Generational and Experiential Divide	Developing Students' ELA and Literacy Skills
	Supportive School Climate	Inclusion, Exclusion, and the Space Between	Connecting and Responding	Looking Beyond the Classroom and Toward the Future
		Textual Heterogeneity and Versatility		"Opening Up the World to Students"

Examples of information included in "The Educator, Past and Present" category include the three participants' descriptions of prior teaching or professional positions, such as April's corporate work or Guinevere's hospitality work; past or current areas of educational focus and degrees obtained, which are statements that revealed information such as Michael's master's degree in writing studies and April's in communications; languages spoken and cultural affiliations, represented by statements such as Michael's early experiences with Bengali and Guinevere's ability to speak Spanish more

proficiently than their husband; and more general beliefs about teaching, characterized by statements such as Michael's assertion that "you absolutely have to be born a teacher in order to want to teach."

**Table 6**

*The Educator, Past and Present*

<b>Code</b>	<b>Description of Code</b>
<b>CULTURAL / LINGUISTIC BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCES</b>	Information about the participant's cultural affiliations and languages spoken, including experiences with culture and language that occurred on a personal level and not necessarily in the classroom or in reference to working in education; also, perspectives and feelings associated with these kinds of experiences for personal and/or pedagogical purposes
<b>DIVERSE TEACHING EXPERIENCES</b>	Statements that reveal the participant's breadth of teaching experience, including classes, subjects, and populations taught
<b>EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES</b>	Statements about prior / concurrent higher education experiences
<b>PERSPECTIVES AND BELIEFS ABOUT TEACHING</b>	General statements that provide insight into the teacher's personal feelings, beliefs, attitudes, and values about teaching
<b>PRIOR PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES</b>	Statements about prior professional experiences outside the field of education

***Theme 1: Navigating and Thriving within the Culture of Schooling***

This theme describes experiences and perspectives pertaining to state, district, and school-level demands, challenges, requirements, and supports related to pedagogical practice and text usage. Two categories comprise this theme: 1) Multilevel Teaching Requirements and 2) Supportive School Climate (see Table 7). The first category, Multilevel Teaching Requirements, focuses on commentary related to state and district-level demands and requirements that educators must navigate. Two codes were grouped to form this category: 1) Local and State Oversight and 2) State Testing Demands (see

Table 8). The second category, Supportive School Climate, encapsulates ideas about the culture of support and encouragement found within or absent from the participant's school. Three codes were grouped to form this category: 1) Administrator Support, 2) Mentoring and Supporting Colleagues, and 3) Teacher Autonomy (see Table 9).

**Table 7**

*Theme 1 with Categories*

<b>Theme 1:</b> <i>Navigating and Thriving within the Culture of Schooling</i>	
Multilevel Teaching Requirements	Supportive School Climate

### **Multilevel Teaching Requirements.**

All three participants provided commentary that revealed insights about text use as situated within an institutional hierarchy consisting of demands stemming from both local and statewide agencies, particularly as it relates to testing. For example, Michael discussed the role of oversight in their previous and current position and emphasized the omnipresent task of preparing students for the state test. Similar to Michael's assertion that they must "gear every lesson" to ensuring students' testing success, April expressed that while the school prioritizes the acquisition of literacy skills, a large district-level focus remains on preparing students to "answer the test." Guinevere's commentary likewise identified the ever-present role of testing and the "stress" it places on both students and teachers, leading them to assert that "the system is broken." Guinevere further pointed to the idea that the focus on testing imposes limits on curricular choice, with popular culture positioned as "kind of in opposition" with the standards and state tests. They also suggested that multicultural texts are less aligned to the content on state

tests, which they noted tend to feature texts that are “barebones, very English, very American.” On the other hand, Michael described the updated standards as flexible, noting that the standards provide “more room to be able to pull in more outside resources.” For April, whose responses often highlighted the importance of skills-based learning, diverse texts seemed to fit into a school culture based on accountability, particularly since the skills could be taught using a range of materials. April also suggested that the standards are compatible with cultural texts, telling me that these texts “allow us to incorporate the skills and understanding multi cultures. Many cultures.”

**Table 8**

*Theme 1, Category 1: Multilevel Teaching Requirements*

<b>Code</b>	<b>Description of Code</b>
<b>LOCAL AND STATE OVERSIGHT</b>	Statements about district and state policies and requirements, including perspectives about their impact and efficacy
<b>STATE TESTING DEMANDS</b>	Statements pertaining to state testing and related standards, including beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions about state tests; the school and state testing culture; and tasks, preparations, and requirements associated with state tests

### **Supportive School Climate.**

Participants also provided examples that suggest a level of teacher autonomy with curricular choice and inclusion, which was bolstered by a supportive administration. For instance, both Michael and April spoke about being tasked with selecting a new textbook program that featured diverse textual options. April explained that this autonomy resulted in “pick[ing] a book that gives us access to more cultural texts.” Michael likewise expanded on the impactful experience of choosing a textbook with diverse offerings and

the popular culture element of introductions that mimic movie trailers. These expressions of autonomy were linked to the idea of school-level support, a sentiment that emerged among both participants in statements such as Michael's declaration that "the district was very supportive" and April's statement that it was "a great support in letting the teachers choose their books." Michael and April again complemented each other's commentary when speaking about giving administrators a "heads up" prior to using a text, thereby implying flexibility and space for utilizing self-selected texts. April reiterated that school administrators remain "very open" to both "cultural" and popular culture texts, telling me that an open line of communication facilitates this support – "just tell us and they support us." The examples April provided featuring lessons that integrate a range of materials speak to this idea of curricular freedom.

**Table 9**

*Theme 1, Category 2: Supportive School Climate*

<b>Code</b>	<b>Description of Code</b>
<b>ADMINISTRATOR SUPPORT</b>	Statements about experiences and perspectives related to school and district-level administrative support and communication, particularly as it applies to selecting, using, and /or gaining approval to use textual materials in the classroom
<b>MENTORING AND SUPPORTING COLLEAGUES</b>	Statements about how the participant has or would assist colleagues, either through mentoring or another type of support
<b>TEACHER AUTONOMY</b>	Statements that reflect aspects of teacher autonomy, including the ability to choose texts for classroom use and the flexibility to implement texts and lessons within a standards-based school curriculum

The idea of flexible text use within a supportive school system also emerged when Michael offered contrastive examples of earlier teaching experiences to illustrate



how their current position provides a level of autonomy with curricular decision-making – “I can pretty much choose what to teach.” Elaborating on this sense of autonomy, Michael shared that they receive “the freedom to do what I need to do,” with “a lot of leeway” when justifying pedagogical and text-based decisions. As the educator with a comparably less tenured teaching position, Guinevere expressed some hesitation about including multicultural and popular culture texts, emphasizing the need to obtain approval before incorporating diverse texts such as those featuring Marvel characters or multicultural texts with more sensitive content. Yet, Guinevere remarked that school administrators “generally ... encourage” educators’ requests about text use and spoke with pride about self-selecting comics and videos to use with their students.

Participants also revealed a willingness to support their colleagues with understanding or using multicultural and popular culture texts in the classroom. For instance, Michael expressed a willingness to model a lesson integrating diverse texts or to speak with the principal about possibilities for professional development services to support colleagues. Along the same lines, April mentioned that they have “sent” materials to support a colleague’s use of popular culture and explained that they would be willing to share experiences using diverse texts with others. Guinevere’s commentary aligned to this supportive approach when noting an openness to providing colleagues with “access” to textual materials to support their use of diverse texts. Threaded between all three participants’ responses was the idea that all educators maintain their own decision-making capacities, which should be respected and upheld, even with well-intentioned efforts at supporting text use and offering resources toward that end.

***Theme 2: Prioritizing Diverse and Traditional Textual Experiences, Despite the Obstacles, Concerns, and Uncertainties***

The second theme describes experiences and perspectives pertaining to issues of access, belongingness, and appropriateness in the usage of an expansive and broadly conceptualized range of traditional and diverse texts, including the challenging, cautionary, and beneficial aspects of incorporating a diversity of textual materials into the classroom. A focus on participant viewpoints about prioritizing an extensive variety of texts and textual experiences further defines this theme, which includes three categories: 1) Availability and Access, 2) Inclusion, Exclusion, and the Space Between, and 3) Textual Heterogeneity and Versatility (see Table 10). The category Availability and Access captures issues and considerations related to the availability of and access to various textual resources and materials for student and teacher use. Two codes form this category: 1) Accessibility of Texts and Resources and 2) Lack of Guidance and Instructional Resources (see Table 11). The second category, Inclusion, Exclusion, and the Space Between, highlights ideas related to including or excluding texts, including the ambiguities associated with choosing and implementing curricular materials. Three codes are subsumed by this category: 1) Appropriate Texts, 2) “It Has Its Place,” and 3) Proceeding with Caution (see Table 12). The third category, Textual Heterogeneity and Versatility, focuses on the wide-ranging, fluidly defined, and versatile range of textual and communicative resources that have been or could be used in the classroom (including newer, traditional, and multimodal text types), as well as perspectives that elucidate the role of various text types in the classroom. Six codes comprise this category: 1) Applicability to Content Areas, 2) Blurred Text Genres, 3) “Everchanging” Texts and

Times, 4) Incorporating a Diversity of Texts, 6) Multimodal Ways of Learning and Communicating, and 7) Traditional Texts (see Table 13).

**Table 10**

*Theme 2 with Categories*

<b>Theme 2:</b> <i>Prioritizing Diverse and Traditional Textual Experiences,  Despite the Obstacles, Concerns, and Uncertainties</i>		
Availability and Access	Inclusion, Exclusion, and the Space Between	Textual Heterogeneity and Versatility

**Table 11**

*Theme 2, Category 1: Availability and Access*

Code	Description of Code
<b>ACCESSIBILITY OF TEXTS AND RESOURCES</b>	Statements revealing perspectives and observations pertaining to the availability and accessibility of various texts and materials for students and/or teachers, including instructional, informational, and/or technological resources
<b>LACK OF GUIDANCE AND INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES</b>	Statements suggesting a need for guidance, information, instructional models, resources, and/or research related to implementing diverse texts into the curriculum, including perspectives about why these supports and materials may be beneficial

### **Availability and Access.**

While discussing multicultural and popular culture texts, all three participants shared information about the texts that are frequently utilized in the classroom. Both Michael and April spoke to the idea that the new textbook program provides access to multicultural content, with April suggesting that the book's "wide range of multicultural text access" incentivized their decision. Each participant also noted the use of expository

texts obtained through online news outlets, with Guinevere referring to these materials as “quite vast.” The role of the Internet in accessing and retrieving materials appeared within all three participants’ responses, with Michael discussing Googling texts, April describing the availability of materials on a for-teachers website, and Guinevere mentioning that they use online “tools” to aid teaching. Despite the prevalence of online resources and plentiful access to web-based information, concerns about accessing multicultural and popular culture materials arose within the discussion, most notably within April’s commentary. Drawing a dichotomy between more traditional and “newer,” more diverse texts, April remarked on the difficulty of accessing instructional resources for teaching nontraditional texts. For April, “all of that stuff is out there” for the mainstays of the English curriculum, whereas guidance and materials for multicultural and popular culture texts are less abundant – thereby posing a “major problem” for some English educators. Further encapsulating this view is April’s assertion that “one of the big issues with pop culture” is a dearth of resources and the belief that more access to published works highlighting multicultural voices is likewise needed. This perceived lack of availability and access again emerged when April lamented the need for more “studies” or “background information” to guide pedagogical decisions when using these text genres, thus adding to some uncertainty about their application or efficacy. Michael hinted at this reliance on research when they mentioned using “data and facts” to justify curricular decisions yet did not expressly echo April’s points about the availability of research-based support. Guinevere also talked about access, noting their ability to use YouTube, but their inability to bring in their own media resources for classroom use. Guinevere also framed their perspective about access as something they want to extend to

their students. This view is exemplified by Guinevere’s declaration that they aim to provide their students with “access to all of it,” although “certain things have to be limited.” A similar sentiment arose as April compared an earlier lack of access to diverse texts to the later realizations that these genres do, in fact, exist. Michael’s suggestion that preservice educators should gain exposure to multicultural texts through their coursework highlights yet another facet of access that precedes classroom teaching, with possible implications for subsequent text use.

**Table 12**

*Theme 2, Category 2: Inclusion, Exclusion, and the Space Between*

<b>Code</b>	<b>Description of Code</b>
<b>APPROPRIATE TEXTS</b>	Statements reflecting perspectives about the appropriateness of texts for classroom, inclusion or exclusion, as well as experiences with or expectations about selecting appropriate texts for classroom use
<b>“IT HAS ITS PLACE”</b>	Statements about the extent to which pop culture texts belong in the classroom, including perspectives about the purposeful use of textual materials
<b>PROCEEDING WITH CAUTION</b>	Statements suggesting a careful approach to topic / text selection and usage

### **Inclusion, Exclusion, and the Space Between.**

Alongside issues of access and availability, Michael, April, and Guinevere expressed their thoughts about the appropriateness of multicultural and popular culture texts for classroom inclusion. While all three educators mentioned that texts should be age appropriate, their rationales for this assertion revealed some differences. Michael focused on the idea of grade appropriate, familiar texts to support understanding. Guinevere acknowledged how appropriate texts could function as part of “the bridge” to student understanding, yet also viewed appropriateness from a content-based perspective

that would offer increased access and specificity for older students. In a nod to “inappropriate” topics, Guinevere cited instances of “foul language” as cause for exclusion within a more “conservative” school system. April’s discussion of age-appropriate texts delved into the idea of making connections, as they noted that “you don’t want to go too far away from the age group that you’re teaching,” lest the students lose the ability to connect to the content.

**Table 13**

*Theme 2, Category 3: Textual Heterogeneity and Versatility*

<b>Code</b>	<b>Description of Code</b>
<b>APPLICABILITY TO CONTENT AREAS</b>	Statements about using texts in disciplines other than ELA, with a focus on expanding students' literacy skills
<b>BLURRED TEXT GENRES</b>	Statements suggesting fluidity between text genres and/or the applicability of multiple genres to a particular text (for instance, considering a graphic novel as multicultural; equating a traditional, canonical literary work with multicultural literature or popular culture; drawing parallels between rap and poetry)
<b>"EVERCHANGING" TEXTS AND TIMES</b>	Statements about the fleeting nature of popular culture and changing nature of texts that are considered "current"
<b>INCORPORATING A DIVERSITY OF TEXTS</b>	Statements about using a diversity of texts, genres, and mediums with students; also, statements suggesting a willingness and/or need to include a range of textual options and experiences in the classroom, as well as perspectives about why this may be beneficial
<b>MULTIMODAL WAYS OF LEARNING AND COMMUNICATING</b>	Statements related to using, creating, communicating with, and gaining understanding from multimodal texts and mediums, including performative ways of displaying learning; also, statements related to the form and function of multimodal texts
<b>TRADITIONAL TEXTS</b>	Statements that reveal experiences, feelings, perspectives, and/or observations related to traditional, canonical, and/or classical texts, text genres, and/or authors (often male and White); also, statements that compare / contrast traditional and classical works with multicultural or popular culture texts

The idea of maintaining a cautious approach to text use appeared throughout the data as well. For example, Michael discussed how they must remain “very careful” when implementing texts and shared an anecdote illustrating a heated confrontation between a parent and student due to using a text perceived as controversial. Michael reiterated this stance, noting how they found themselves on the “dangerous thin ice area” and discussing the need to remain “really super careful,” particularly after an incident involving discussions about gender. April alluded to similar situations, stating that they observed “several different issues” occur when an educator included a “new current” form of literature into the classroom. Expounding further on these concerns, Michael talked about the need to ensure that their students are “protected,” and explained that certain topics were off limits, such as a multicultural text with “a huge level of ... adult context.” Michael likewise mentioned that popular culture is often perceived as “safer” than the multicultural and indicated that some educators might prefer to “stick to” the safety afforded by the “old dead White guys” of the traditional literary canon, rather than engage with multicultural texts. Guinevere echoed this cautious perspective, reiterating that “you have to be careful to put [pop culture] in the right spot” and remarking that while it “has its place,” popular culture could also be “abused.” Citing an example of Tejano music, Guinevere suggested that a well-chosen song could fit into the classroom, if they deemed it “appropriate” for use with their students. In another instance, Guinevere justified the use of a Spiderman comic they thought was “appropriate,” stating that “there was nothing inappropriate in it.”

Despite the cautionary aspects of text use, commentary suggesting textual belongingness also permeated the data sets. For instance, Guinevere stated that these texts

“have a place...in learning,” a response resembling Michael’s statement that texts such as *Harry Potter* “do have a place,” even if time considerations are prohibitive. Both Michael and Guinevere spoke to how popular culture holds promise for classroom learning, provided that the text is purposefully chosen and fulfills the aims of the lesson. Michael pointed to the necessity of evaluating a text beyond its superficial veneer to find its cultural components, thereby challenging the notion of popular culture as a “flash in the pan” artifact that lacks depth or substance. Michael also expressed the belief that popular culture texts are misused if they are included “just to fill space.” Similarly, Guinevere stated that “you can’t just toss something random in there and then expect it to work,” but rather educators should discern the appropriateness of the text in a manner akin to selecting a novel for inclusion. Michael and Guinevere again complemented each other when discussing how popular culture belongs in the classroom, but the educator should accrue experience as a prerequisite to implementing it successfully. Consistent with Michael’s belief that five years of experience provides the ideal prerequisite to incorporating popular culture, Guinevere expressed that they might venture into gaming texts upon gaining “a little more experience.” From April’s perspective, multicultural and popular culture texts offer potential for learning, and their years of teaching have been characterized by a “mindset” to include more purposefully selected diverse texts into teaching.

### **Textual Heterogeneity and Versatility.**

Although issues of access and availability remain (as April pointed out when calling for more publishers to highlight diverse options), threaded through the data was participants’ awareness of a shifting and versatile textual milieu, as exemplified by



April's observation that "the texts are becoming more diverse." April acknowledged the "fast pace" of textual and technological change, declaring that "it's everchanging," with "more mediums" for classroom integration. Guinevere and April talked about the immense amounts of information available to today's youth, and Michael offered examples showing how popular culture mediums, such as sitcoms and commercials reflect the times that we live in, with an emphasis on the thought-provoking social issues that define contemporary life. Reflecting further on the idea of a shared evolution between society and text, Michael remarked that "the way society is evolving is a direct correlation to how the ... textbooks for the English classroom are evolving." Offering a similar perspective, Guinevere noted that today's society seems to represent a "totally different culture nowadays" in comparison to the depictions of life in an older text such as *The Lottery*.

Within these discussions, each participant offered ample commentary featuring a wide variety of texts and authors, with references sometimes reoccurring between participants. Multicultural and popular culture texts were perceived as versatile and fluid in definition, with attributes that positioned them as educative and desirable for the classroom. For example, Michael pointed to the broadly defined nature of multicultural texts, asserting that they "educate people," while popular culture "help[s] with the education process." April's commentary likewise suggested a willingness to use multiple text types, thereby highlighting their preference to "bring in different texts" to facilitate literacy learning and textual connections. Guinevere's responses pointed to a similar readiness to prioritize diverse texts. They noted the desire "to use more popular culture" and shared that their classroom success with a Spiderman comic made them "want to...

get some more.” These sentiments were again reflected in Guinevere’s desire to incorporate more culturally diverse texts that showcased various languages and countries – “I want to include as much [of the multicultural] as possible.” The idea of wanting to use “more” resurfaced in April’s perspective, as they indicated the goal of “moving towards” including “more texts,” and their aspirations to include more movies, music, young adult novels, and speeches. A comparable position appeared in Michael’s approach to instilling literacy learning, as they remain receptive to “any way that I can bring literacy in.”

Yet at the same time, Michael spoke to the importance of balancing the use of a heterogeneous array of texts with the “classical” mainstays of the English classroom, noting that they “try to keep that balance.” The idea of balance resurfaced with April, who shared examples of how they use older and newer texts with their students. Echoing Michael’s numerous references to “the old dead White guys,” April acknowledged the omnipresence of the “dead White guys” and described their reliance on the “usual” texts they frequented as an English major – “It’s tradition to use specific type of literature.” April also described their shifting approach towards incorporating more “current” texts within their teaching. Unlike Michael and April, Guinevere did not expand as extensively upon the role of traditional English literature, but they did point to how canonical works such as *Romeo and Juliet* appear in reimagined, pop culture infused versions that allow for “a direct comparison.” Michael and April also cited reworked movie versions of Shakespearean stories, with Michael pointing out that alternate versions might promote student understanding, and April focusing on the idea of relating to the text.

Additional commentary revealed fluid conceptualizations of multicultural and popular culture texts and emphasized the blurred, sometimes overlapping lines within genres, notably appearing when each participant discussed rap and music lyrics. Examples include Michael's use of music lyrics to teach poetry, April's validation of a student's rap lyrics as poetry, and Guinevere's envisioning of how a future "unit on multicultural poems" might feature Chinese, Tejano, and American music lyrics ("that's all music is. It's a poem, made into a song."). Further examples of the perceived blending between popular culture and the multicultural appeared when Guinevere observed that "the Marvel universe has transcended that cultural boundary" and remarked that they viewed "definitely a pop culture and a multiculture" within a video game. Guinevere also envisioned how the game *Dungeons and Dragons* might appear as "a crossover between English, history, and math," while the game *Assassin's Creed* could lend itself to a history lesson and "exploring things that are real within a video game." Content area learning emerged again as Michael shared how an interdisciplinary lesson merging English and History featured song lyrics. From April's perspective, interconnected social media apps such as TikTok function as beacons of cultural and historical learning, leading them to declare that "now pop culture is multicultural." April also identified how a "multicultural idea" might be present in texts that are not often referenced by using a multicultural descriptor, mentioning the cultural components of texts such as *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Twelve Angry Men*. As another example of the blurred lines that separate and bind textual content, April suggested that "Anglo texts" (such as those written by the "dead White guys") might be considered multicultural to students unfamiliar with the cultural norms depicted in the text. Guinevere likewise noted that an

older text could reveal unknown cultural insights to a modern-day audience. Related to these points is Michael's perspective about how Edgar Allen Poe's work – now a staple of the traditional – may have once been considered part of popular culture. Michael's responses also indicated that they rightfully position multicultural authors such as Maya Angelou and Gary Soto among the well-deserved ranks of English writers with a definitive mark on the English curriculum.

As the three participants expounded on their past, present, and future text use, their discussions offered insights into the multimodal components of multicultural and popular culture texts, as well as how multimodality plays a prominent role in the classroom. For example, both Michael and April prioritized vocabulary learning using emojis and pictures in a Frayer model, with April intimating that this approach fused literacy learning with youth-oriented ways of communicating. Michael talked about using political cartoons to illustrate elements of persuasion, while April and Guinevere expounded on the visual elements of comics and graphic novels. Guinevere spoke to supporting their students through visuals, stating that “the pictures are showing the action that the words aren't saying.” April similarly shared how they helped their students unpack an understanding of speech bubbles, noting that the visual depictions in a multicultural graphic novel such as *Persepolis* could enable students to “visualize much better than reading words.” In another instance of multimodality, April elaborated on using readers' theatre, offering insight into how performative modes of literacy learning might be used in tandem with a versatile text they viewed as inclusive of a multicultural component.

***Theme 3: Embracing the Connections and Experiences that Link Society, Humanity, and Text***

The third theme describes experiences and perspectives pertaining to the dynamic relationships, influences, and connections that occur within and are cultivated between the world, its diversity of cultures, individuals, and texts, including how these connections emerge for both teachers and students, in contexts that occur within and extend beyond the classroom. Two categories help explain this theme: 1) Acknowledging and Uniting the Generational and Experiential Divide and 2) Connecting and Responding (see Table 14). The first category in this theme, Acknowledging and Uniting the Generational and Experiential Divide, encompasses perspectives that acknowledge aspects of student identity and allude to the everyday lived experiences of today's youth, who navigate a different world from preceding generations. This category also captures commentary that points to bridging the generational gap, as well as perspectives and experiences that reveal how commonalities unite the intergenerational experience, particularly as it pertains to encounters with texts and the ubiquity of popular culture. Six codes are included within this category: 1) Appreciating and Enjoying Popular Culture Texts, 2) Diverse Student Population, 3) Generational Differences, 4) Referencing Pop Culture, 5) Relating to Students, and 6) Universal Use and Appeal of Popular Culture (see Table 15). The second category comprising this theme, Connecting and Responding, synthesizes perspectives and experiences related to student engagement and the connections that are forged to and between texts, with an additional focus on student and teacher responses related to literacy learning, textual engagement, and human interaction.

Four codes pertain to this category: 1) Making Connections, 2) Student (Dis)comfort, 3) Student Engagement, and 4) Relevant and Relatable Texts (see Table 16).

### **Acknowledging and Uniting the Generational and Experiential Divide.**

Michael, April, and Guinevere each provided details about the diversity of students they teach. The three participants noted a range of academic levels and a predominantly Hispanic student population at their school, as well as additional elements of identity. For example, Michael mentioned that some students at their school identify as LGBTQ. Some of their students are athletes, and others are parents. Many of Michael's students also have not travelled far beyond their "small town," an observation that may speak to socioeconomic status and perhaps even familial obligations. Like Michael, April shared that their students are familiar with Hispanic cultural traditions and reflect "mostly Mexican-American heritage," with a smaller number of biracial or White students. April also spoke to the LGBTQ population at the school and mentioned that their students "want to know who they are truly," as some students contend with "gender, or ... identity crises" along the way. Yet April recognized the uniqueness and diversity of today's students, asserting that they are "all individual." Guinevere likewise spoke to their students' cultural affiliations, both in their present role and when discussing their younger Chinese students. At Ramos-Canales, Guinevere discussed their "primarily Hispanic" students, noting that most do not speak Spanish, despite its prevalence throughout South Texas. Alongside April and Michael, Guinevere discussed how their students are growing up in a "small town," yet offered a contrastive opinion on gender fluidity, suggesting that transgender identities are "part of a fad" and detrimental to students.

**Table 14***Theme 3 with Categories*

<b>Theme 3:</b> <i>Embracing the Connections and Experiences  that Link Society, Humanity, and Text</i>	
Acknowledging and Uniting the Generational and Experiential Divide	Connecting and Responding

Along with these understandings of student diversity, participants provided commentary acknowledging the generational particularities that characterize their own and students' lives, as well as an awareness of how aspects of youth culture permeate their students' everyday experiences. For instance, Michael talked about the how their experiences with popular culture differ from those of their students, who appeared excited by a newly discovered movie from decades past and a popular pair of shoes that were commonplace when Michael was younger. Michael also offered examples of popular culture from years before their students were born, suggesting a familiarity with these materials. April expressed an awareness of how a technologically sparse upbringing differed from their culturally diverse Generation Z students – “they’re not who I was when I was growing up.” Consequently, April revealed ways that they have adapted instruction for their students, including the Frayer model that featured both “a generational thing” and a multicultural component with its use of emojis, as well as lessons featuring social media and the “culture of the young,” which April considered a form of popular culture. April further remarked that for them, “popular culture could be 80s music,” whereas their students are inundated with the popular influences of a social media driven society. Voicing a similar perspective, Guinevere spoke to the utility of a

social media app such as TikTok, stating that “instead of having [students] wear their parents’ shoes,” they need “shoes that fit them.” In another instance of recognizing generational differences, Guinevere laughed about how their students are unfamiliar with AOL (America Online) and implied that today’s students may not be prepared to overcome the setbacks they encounter in daily life, unlike preceding generations.

Partnered with commentary reflecting an awareness of students’ generational affiliations, all three participants offered insights about relating to students and the commonalities shared between individuals. Guinevere expressed that the main difference between cultures is that “we accept more now,” stating that student should be “remind[ed]” that teachers are “human too” – a sentiment that they voiced more than once. When speaking about using a Spiderman comic, Guinevere noted that students “know” the character, although it is likely from Guinevere’s own generation. Guinevere also described how a shared pastime of gaming made them relatable to students and enabled students to “open up.” Guinevere’s familiarity with video games was again on display when using the *Among Us* terminology *sus* – an anecdote that revealed a time when students’ “eyes lit up a little bit” because their teacher related to their out-of-school literacy experiences. By extension, Guinevere implied that using texts and learning experiences that are relatable to students provide a “higher chance of reaching them.” Michael detailed similar experiences, noting how their own gaming ventures and admission of watching anime provoked curiosity and recommendations from students. Although Michael nodded toward the possibly disadvantageous effect of sharing this kind of information (“it can actually shoot you in the foot”), these moments prompted Michael to remark that “they relate to me more” upon learning about the common thread of shared



experience. In tandem with Guinevere's position that popular culture acts as a "tool to help us to relate to and teach students," April detailed an experience with the student who shared rap lyrics, which further demonstrated a time when the use and affirmation of a popular culture medium facilitated relating to and connecting with a student.

Similar experiences emerged as the three participants provided examples of referencing popular culture in the classroom. For instance, April discussed using "a lot of references to movies, to TikTok," adding that students "seem to respond fairly well" when references include "movies of their generation." Exemplifying this point, April described using Marvel's Captain America to support students' understanding of setting and their ability to make connections - "I constantly talk about pop culture for my kids, to make [a] connection." April revealed that many of these references are made in an unplanned, "off the cuff" way to bolster student understanding or capture students' attention. Yet at the same time, April described ideas for incorporating popular culture into a more structured, pre-planned lesson, such as when talking about drawing on "at least the concept of TikTok" for an activity based on exploring aspects of character. Like April, Guinevere expressed how they work "to reference those [popular culture] things ... daily" and aims to build a "bridge" to their students - "this is what their world is becoming." Offering an additional perspective on popular culture references, Michael focused on the idea of familiarity, stating that "people are familiar with the pop cultural references." Michael also described using popular culture frames of reference with their students, notably when voicing the phrase "*where's the beef?*," a nod to a popular culture remnant of the past.

Although Michael's example reveals the generational and contextual specificities of some popular culture references, the universality and interconnectedness of intergenerational popular culture experiences also surfaced throughout the data. All three educators offered examples of popular culture text use in their personal lives, thus highlighting how the daily presence of social media, gaming, videos, and more are consumed, enjoyed, and appreciated by teachers as well as students. Alluding to these shared experiences, April noted that they can "see ... the enjoyment" in popular culture, which they believe is perceived as "fun" by both educators and their students. In April's view, popular culture's influence extends to "teachers themselves," as shown when April talked about using social media; reading anime, manhwa, and manga; and "watching movies." April's ability to pinpoint students' TikTok moves in the classroom points to a mutual use of this platform, which appears to transcend the confined boundaries of age and generational groupings. Akin to this classroom experience is Guinevere's recollection of using the word *sus* after observing their students' clandestine phone use, which revealed their own familiarity with the terminology of the game "Among Us." As a "gamer," Guinevere's commentary revealed how they value the aesthetic, creative, and multicultural features of contemporary games. Guinevere also mentioned using platforms such as YouTube and TikTok in their daily life and detailed a shifting mindset toward comic books – once Guinevere would "look down" on the genre, yet now recognizes their "insanely wonderful" artwork and "awesome" ability to tell stories. Additional evidence of educators' popular culture use emerged as Michael mentioned watching anime, playing video games, reading young adult novels, and watching television and movies. Michael detailed the impact of viewing emotional films, expressing that these

moments remove them from “the teacher authority role” and expose that they are “a normal person.” Aligned to this point is Guinevere’s assertion that “sometimes [students] realize that the teachers aren’t just somebody that is this dictator in a classroom.” Just like students, “We’re humans, too.”

**Table 15**

*Theme 3, Category 1: Acknowledging and Uniting the Generational and Experiential Divide*

<b>Code</b>	<b>Description of Code</b>
<b>APPRECIATING AND ENJOYING POPULAR CULTURE TEXTS</b>	Statements reflecting a personal appreciation for and enjoyment of popular culture, as well as statements recounting experiences or observations of enjoyment while interacting with popular culture texts
<b>DIVERSE STUDENT POPULATION</b>	Statements that capture the cultural, socioeconomic, and linguistic diversity of the students attending the educator's school and classroom, including statements that speak to aspects of student identity
<b>GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES</b>	Statements related to perceived generational differences between today's youth and individuals growing up during earlier time periods, including statements about adapting instruction and text use to meet students' youth identities; also, comparative statements highlighting how the participant's experiences may differ from those of current students
<b>REFERENCING POP CULTURE</b>	Statements about using pop culture references in the classroom to facilitate student understanding, as well as reasons why pop culture references are incorporated into learning activities
<b>RELATING TO STUDENTS</b>	Statements about relating to or making interpersonal connections with students, including seeing things from students' perspectives; also, statements that suggest shared experiences among participants and students
<b>UNIVERSAL USE AND APPEAL OF POPULAR CULTURE</b>	Statements that point to a universal, shared experience of encountering and interacting with popular culture; inclusive of but distinct from APPRECIATING AND ENJOYING POPULAR CULTURE TEXTS

### **Connecting and Responding.**

Threaded within participants’ responses were several segments of commentary that discussed relatable and relevant texts. For example, when discussing the use of

multicultural young adult novels, Michael stated that these texts are “a relatable item,” and their students “relate to these novels so well.” Michael further voiced a belief that “if its relatable,” students will “want to read it” – and as an educator, they are tasked with identifying these “relatable” texts. When discussing popular culture, Michael added that students are “more likely to be successful” when they can “relate to what they’re reading.” Yet, Michael suggested that not all kids will relate to the same texts, and a text might feature some relatable components, with others that are less familiar. When a text or character is familiar, however, student understanding can blossom – “because they’ve seen it.” From April’s point of view, popular culture texts such as rap and TikTok videos embody elements of the relatable, as they represent students’ daily lives. April further spoke about prioritizing the “things that [students] can relate to more,” including social media and “current books,” which they will talk about with their students. Additionally, April’s description of a future lesson featuring *Romiette and Julio* would interweave topics of “cultural identity” and partially draw on relevance and relatability – “they’re pretty much used to the Hispanic culture.” Offering a similar focus on cultural familiarity, Guinevere outlined ideas for a lesson that would forefront Tejano music, in part because their students “could relate” to the musical genre and the music of Selena. Guinevere also rationalized their ideas for using popular culture in poetry lessons because poems are “something that everybody relates to.”

An ample amount of participant response emphasized the important role of making connections to and between relatable texts and lessons. Notably, all three educators provided some insight into their own fondness for multicultural texts that resonated with their own lives, with Michael citing the “phenomenal” novel “The Good

Earth,” April describing impactful encounters with a range of culturally diverse texts, and Guinevere’s remembrance of how the novel *Cucumbers Have Thorns and Snakes Love Strawberries: How I Won* created a resounding “emotional impact.” In the context of the classroom, Michael recounted scenarios when students connected with characters, content, and plotlines featured in multicultural and popular culture texts. Examples include Michael’s anecdote about a student who related to *Harry Potter* and the description of a lesson featuring song lyrics that assisted students with “looking inward and then looking outward.” Michael also described how multicultural young adult novels spoke to many of their students. *Monster* communicated that “you’re not alone, this is going on across America,” while *No Choirboy* allowed students with to find commonalities in the life experiences depicted in the text. Michael expressed that when their students “can make a connection” through relatable and meaningful content, students’ enthusiasm to engage with texts increases – “they want to read more and more and more.” Another layer to Michael’s perspective appeared as they talked about making connections by identifying the connective links “between two different pieces of text” such as a comic and an expository article.

Similar to Michael, April provided several examples and statements that illuminated aspects of connecting to texts, such as when they discussed the novel *Monster*, stating that students “enjoyed” that they were able to “connect with the character,” and when detailing their thoughts about selecting a play and performative approach to facilitate student connections to the play *Twelve Angry Men*. April also described how a student who appeared “very hesitant in ... connecting with texts” identified characteristics of themselves in a character portrayed in *The Boy in the Striped*

*Pajamas* – a text and film laden with historical and cultural components. The idea of textual connections reappeared as April spoke about “more culturally inclusive text[s],” explaining that finding a connection and using “newer forms of texts” could encourage students to “want to learn” - a reoccurring phrase that arguably connotes motivation and interest, and also aligns to Michael’s statement about how meaningful connections could instill the “want to read.” April’s perspective about making connections was again on display when speaking about integrating popular culture to help students “make that connection into their own lives,” offering examples such as the X-Men, TikTok, emojis, and other references. As contrastive points, April recalled how some students seemed “disconnected with literature” during their early years teaching, and many encounter difficulty when reading “the old plays” – statements that imply a chasm between these types of texts and students’ lived experiences. In reference to the “stuffy old stories” of yesteryear and texts perceived as “boring” (including “the normal handouts” that are ubiquitous to the classroom), April indicated that materials that do not hold students’ interest could stifle their ability to connect with the content. Moreover, April remarked that students demonstrate improved productivity when popular culture appears in a lesson because it “connects with them more.” April’s commentary further highlighted the perceived linkages between skills-based learning and connecting with texts, as they suggested that culturally inclusive texts prompt students to “still learn the skills, but yet now they make more connections.” In addition to Michael and April’s contributions, Guinevere described influential personal experiences with multicultural texts that sparked possibilities for classroom use, and also talked about how both classic and remixed

renditions of Shakespeare have endured because they facilitate connections and resonate with audiences.

**Table 16**

*Theme 3, Category 2: Connecting and Responding*

<b>Code</b>	<b>Description of Code</b>
<b>MAKING CONNECTIONS</b>	Statements about making connections to texts (including personal / emotional responses to texts and making connections based on experiences / background knowledge), as well as making connections between texts, and/or making connections between texts and issues impacting the larger world / society
<b>STUDENT (DIS)COMFORT</b>	Statements related to student comfort or discomfort, particularly with topics, themes, and languages appearing in texts; also, experiences and perspectives about student feelings of comfort when interacting with diverse texts and/or during lessons based on texts
<b>STUDENT ENGAGEMENT</b>	Statements reflecting perspectives and observations related to student engagement (interest / attention), student disengagement (disinterest / inattention), and/or involved, active participation (or lack thereof) in response to texts, topics, and/or lessons
<b>RELEVANT AND RELATABLE TEXTS</b>	Statements about selecting and using texts and/or text genres featuring topics, issues, themes, characters, and/or formats that students may relate to, including perspectives about why certain texts have been or might be considered relatable and relevant to today's students

Together with commentary about relatable texts and textual connections, each participant spoke about student responses to texts, focusing on elements of engagement and comfort with texts and learning experiences. For example, Michael talked about introducing multicultural texts, noting that their students will “hit the ground running” when it “piques their interest.” This was on display in Michael’s anecdote of their students’ enthusiasm for *No Choirboy*, and their eagerness to continue reading, as well as when students “really got into” analyzing and interrogating a magazine advertisement. As another facet of engagement, Michael described how cultural texts often prompt their quieter students to actively partake in discussions by offering “well thought out and

articulate” responses. They also expressed that the new textbook program relies upon “pop culture...to get kids interested in reading,” and detailed interactions with a student who responded favorably to *Harry Potter*, which unwittingly seized the student’s interest.

Echoing Michael’s commentary, April described how students “really (laughs) got into” the performative lesson featuring *Twelve Angry Men*, remarking that they could “hear in the tone of their voice when they were into it” – a contrast to April’s observation that their students “don’t get into it” when reading older plays. On the other hand, April’s class again displayed a “wonderful response” during a lesson featuring the visually enticing multicultural graphic novel *Persepolis*– “the students really took to it.” In this instance, students were “really interested” in using a podcast format to show their responses. Similarly, April justified the use of TikTok by noting that it is “what our students are interested in” – a phrase that April repeated verbatim when describing a receptivity to using popular culture more generally. The idea of student engagement appeared again in April’s recollection of the student who engaged with *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*, who seemed to “pay attention more and respond more” – which April attributed to the connection that was made with the text. Once again bridging the idea of making connections and student engagement, April recalled how they could “see that engagement” during the interaction with the student who penned their own rap lyrics - “And that was a beautiful thing.” Despite these beneficial attributes, April voiced concern over the possible “distracting” qualities of a platform such as TikTok or overusing a genre such as anime, thereby infusing a cautionary counterpoint to their commentary on student interest, attention, engagement, and connection.



Like Michael and April, Guinevere provided perspectives and experiences related to student engagement, mentioning how their early learners at the online school were interested in culturally novel texts, and envisioning how the comic format of *Dog Man* might offer a humorous way to “get [students’] attention.” Although Guinevere noted that students seem “more animated” when a lesson incorporates elements that “affects them,” Guinevere also nodded toward the obstacles imposed by a lack of participation among many of the students, implying that inadequate classroom engagement might deter the use of a popular culture mode such as TikTok. Despite this concern, Guinevere boasted about their “higher rate of turning in” when students interacted with a skills-based lesson featuring a Spiderman comic, an outcome that perhaps spoke to aspects of student engagement with the lesson and its featured text. They also outlined a possible future lesson featuring fanfiction, a writing genre that people engage with “for fun.” Speaking to this quality, Guinevere discussed how they might engage students with popular culture content they find appealing and an activity that could be perceived as enjoyable. From this perspective, Guinevere’s students “could have so much fun with [fanfiction],” particularly since they could choose “their favorite” piece of popular culture to anchor the lesson.

Perspectives and experiences about student feelings of comfort or discomfort with texts offered another layer of connecting and responding to texts. Although April did not expound on these ideas, Michael and Guinevere offered different yet equally noteworthy perspectives. During Michael’s discussion of popular culture’s mirroring of society, they described how a potentially “uncomfortable” commercial depicting various forms of love might be used for a skills-based lesson. Michael indicated that while this type of visual

material would resonate with many students, they would remain open to accommodating those who experience feelings of uneasiness with controversial content. Even though Michael expressed that while some students might feel “uncomfortable” when engaging with multicultural materials, their students overall tend to “like the ... more uncomfortable novels,” which are often “relatable” as well. Michael partnered this observation with the assertion that this can be “a good thing,” as the discomfort experienced during a textual interaction could prompt student thinking – “you have to be able to think your way out of it.” Related to this point was Michael’s recounting of a time when a student upended a lesson by providing disparaging remarks about an article depicting the experiential realities of Japanese internment camps - “He made the class really uncomfortable.” Michael’s admission that they dislike having to “shut it down” during this type of situation highlighted the predicaments of mediating unexpected and unfavorable responses to a multicultural text, thereby speaking to the provocations and tensions that might arise when using “uncomfortable” texts. Guinevere’s contributions pertaining to student comfort reflected the idea that an educator’s empathetic mindset and the use of cultural texts may extend feelings of belongingness to students with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, particularly those encountering feelings of isolation within a new cultural environment. Guinevere further explained that texts featuring English alongside a students’ home language could provide a sense of comfort, thereby facilitating learning and understanding – “cause when you’re comfortable you’re more likely to learn things better.”

***Theme 4: Empowering Students with Lifelong Literacy Skills and Preparing for a World Beyond the Classroom***

The fourth theme describes experiences and perspectives pertaining to preparing students for life beyond the classroom, including how the text functions to broaden students' access to global perspectives, diverse ways of knowing, and literacy-based skills, while also validating their own identities; and how textual experiences and pedagogical approaches foster a broadly defined conception of literacy that exists within a world teeming with diversity. Three categories are subdivided within this theme: 1) Developing Students' ELA and Literacy Skills, 2) Looking Beyond the Classroom and Toward the Future, and 3) "Opening Up the World to Students" (see Table 17). The first category, Developing Students' ELA and Literacy Skills, points to ways that texts have been or could be implemented to promote a students' literacy learning, including perspectives and experiences about the role of the text in developing students' English Language Arts skills and approaches that support these aims. Six codes are included in this category: 1) Facilitating Class Discussions, 2) Offering Additional Support, 3) Skills-based ELA Lessons, 4) Text Production and Creation, 5) Textual Analysis, and 6) Writing Lessons (see Table 18). The second category in this theme, Looking Beyond the Classroom and Toward the Future, focuses on ideas suggesting an awareness about how educational, literacy-based schooling experiences and textual encounters translate into the world beyond the school, as well as perspectives and experiences that convey the prioritization of skills and experiences that may prove beneficial in alternate contexts that extend outside of the classroom. Three codes are incorporated into this category: 1) Becoming "Better Human Beings," 2) Student Agency, and 3) Transfer of Skills (see

Table 19). The third category, “Opening Up the World to Students,” revolves around validating students' own identities and locally situated experiences, while also transcending the local and encountering the global. This includes a focus on how texts offer opportunities for students to interact with and gain exposure to familiar, diverse, contemporary, and historical worldviews, perspectives, cultural experiences, and other facets of the human experience. Eight codes essentialize this category: 1) Being Open-Minded, 2) “Different and Yet the Same,” 3) Focusing on Gender, 4) “Glimpse(s) Into What Else Is Going On In the World,” 5) Multiple Perspectives, 6) “Students Need to be Exposed,” 7) Textual Reflections of Self and Community, and 8) “The Real-World Stuff” (see Table 20).

**Table 17**

*Theme 4 with Categories*

<b>Theme 4:</b> <i>Empowering Students with Lifelong Literacy Skills  and Preparing for a World Beyond the Classroom</i>		
Developing Students' ELA and Literacy Skills	Looking Beyond the Classroom and Toward the Future	“Opening Up the World to Students”

### **Developing Students' ELA and Literacy Skills.**

Each participant offered several examples of how multicultural and popular culture texts have been or could be used within skills-based ELA lessons, thereby showing ways that diverse texts apply to literacy learning in the high school English classroom. For instance, Michael spoke about using “The Joy Luck Club” to learn about theme and main idea, as well as to develop skills such as describing, comparing, and contrasting both textual

incidents and real-life experiences. They also synopsized how the novel lends itself to partnership with expository texts, skills-based strategy instruction, and examining the historical time period of the story. Among Michael's myriad contributions related to popular culture, they detailed using popular comic and film characters to foster an understanding of heroes and anti-heroes and suggested that a television commercial would be an appropriate visual text for developing students' inferencing skills. Also worth noting is that Michael advocated for the compatibility of state standards and diverse texts, suggesting that the new standards allow for "the interaction of the pop culture, the multicultural."

April likewise expounded on using multicultural and popular culture texts to "build [students'] skills." April implied that they prioritize a variety of skills, including inferencing, drawing conclusions, predicting, analyzing aspects of character, uncovering author's purpose, identifying setting, and locating imagery and symbolism in the text. Offering more specific examples, April discussed how students "used all of the skills" they had previously learned when tasked with crafting personal responses to the graphic novel *Persepolis*. April further shared that *Persepolis* aided students with visualizing the story and responding to the text using podcasts—skills-based activities that paired a multicultural, multimodal text with a popular mode of technological communication. Unlike Michael, several segments of April's commentary spotlighted social media's role in skills development, with TikTok functioning as a multifaceted tool applicable to different types of lessons – "I have used it in multiple lessons in different methods and to show different skills that we use also in English." In addition to discussing TikTok, April also spoke about utilizing other forms of popular culture to aid student understanding, as

seen when they discussed Captain America to clarify the idea of setting and again when talking about how short videos apply to skills development. Alongside Michael, April implied that the new standards support the use of varied text types, explaining that they will “bring in as many different mediums” as needed to enhance student understanding.

**Table 18**

*Theme 4, Category 1: Developing Students' ELA and Literacy Skills*

<b>Code</b>	<b>Description of Code</b>
<b>FACILITATING CLASS DISCUSSIONS</b>	Statements related to scaffolding, encouraging, and observing class discussions about texts and/or topics with real world implications
<b>OFFERING ADDITIONAL SUPPORT</b>	Statements related to providing support to students and scaffolding their literacy learning (for example, through text selection or promoting interactions with textual content); also, statements revealing perspectives about stated approaches
<b>SKILLS-BASED ELA LESSONS</b>	Statements that conceptualize or describe how skills-based ELA lessons could be or have been implemented; also, statements that reveal perspectives about developing ELA skills and processes with students, such as the perceived importance of focusing on these areas or how pop culture / multicultural texts are facilitative of skills development
<b>TEXT PRODUCTION AND CREATION</b>	Statements about learning experiences that position students as producers and creators of their own textual content
<b>TEXTUAL ANALYSIS</b>	Statements related to analyzing textual content, such as interrogating texts to uncover meaning, questioning the messages in texts, uncovering author's purpose, and evaluating the content of texts; similar to, but distinct from, the code SKILLS-BASED ELA LESSONS due to a deeper focus on analytical engagement with texts
<b>WRITING LESSONS</b>	Statements that conceptualize or describe how writing activities or lessons could be or have been implemented; also, statements about the writing process, such as revising, editing, giving / receiving feedback, and publishing final drafts

Guinevere also articulated how multicultural and popular culture texts are applicable to skills-based learning. Examples of Guinevere's ideas for current or future lessons based on skills development include comparing and contrasting multicultural

musical texts, identifying the differences in traditional and film versions of Shakespeare, answering literal and inferential questions in texts featuring Marvel characters, finding details in a video or comic, and using elements of popular culture to engage in the writing process. Although Guinevere did not speak to the supportiveness of state standards, they voiced the belief that popular culture can “improve” students’ literacy skills. Guinevere’s use of texts such as YouTube videos and comics in standards-based lessons supports the idea of popular culture as a medium to facilitate skills development.

**Table 19**

*Theme 4, Category 2: Looking Beyond the Classroom and Toward the Future*

<b>Code</b>	<b>Description of Code</b>
<b>BECOMING “BETTER HUMAN BEINGS”</b>	Statements reflecting perspectives about how textual experiences and access to information may contribute to students' personal growth and betterment
<b>STUDENT AGENCY</b>	Statements acknowledging that students will and should make their own decisions, think for themselves, and use their voices
<b>TRANSFER OF SKILLS</b>	Statements about students applying skills to alternate contexts and situations, with "skills" referring to both traditional school-based literacy skills and real-world skills encountered in daily life

Offering more nuance to this focus on developing students’ literacy skills, participants highlighted the text’s role in promoting class discussions and facilitating textual analysis skills, as well as how learning experiences with diverse texts could prove applicable to writing activities and reframe students as both consumers and producers of textual content. For example, Michael shared the belief that multicultural content oftentimes “allows for the discussion to really blossom and grow,” even among students who previously displayed reticence to voice their thoughts alongside their peers. Michael indicated that discussions are scaffolded with discussion questions and prompts, yet

students are simultaneously empowered to take ownership of these conversational moments. For Michael, multicultural texts such as *The Joy Luck Club*, *Monster*, and *No Choirboy* lend themselves to classroom talk. When discussing *Monster* and *No Choirboy*, Michael voiced their intentions in providing “a space where they can have ... conversations” that merge textual content with personal responses and real-world issues. Michael’s anecdote featuring their students’ responses to *Monster* showed how the text inspired a forum for discussion that encouraged students to share their lived experiences, thereby positioning students as active meaning makers. Examples of popular culture’s ability to spark academic discourse and analytic engagement with texts also appeared in Michael’s commentary, including when they recalled guiding a discussion after students inquired about a comic book’s portrayal of gay characters, and again when talking about how students might analyze and discuss the features of a political cartoon. This focus reappeared when Michael described interrogating advertisements for evidence of “gender discrimination, gender bias” (instances where students “start taking the ad apart”), and how repeated viewings of a televised commercial prompted students to share their observations and “look at [the text] with a critical eye” – an approach Michael likened to a “close reading” of a traditional print text. Likewise, when talking about music lyrics, Michael’s assertion that students “need to look beyond the lyrics” to uncover a “deeper meaning” reveals the viewpoint that musical texts encourage adapting an analytic lens, with possibilities for unraveling “what the author is actually trying to say.” This position was on display when Michael discussed using a U2 song during an interdisciplinary lesson (“what is he actually, really saying?”) and again during Michael’s lesson featuring the remixing of music lyrics to create unique poems. In the latter encounter, students



interpreted their peers' work, while concurrently becoming creators of reimagined texts, rather than solely consumers.

**Table 20**

*Theme 4, Category 3: "Opening Up the World to Students"*

<b>Code</b>	<b>Description of Code</b>
<b>BEING OPEN-MINDED</b>	Statements related to being open-minded about and accepting towards different cultures, situations, and points of view; also, statements about society becoming more open-minded
<b>"DIFFERENT AND YET THE SAME"</b>	Statements suggesting that commonalities exist between students and other individuals / groups (both real and fictional) with different cultural affiliations and experiential realities
<b>FOCUSING ON GENDER</b>	Statements about gender, gender equality, and/or reading texts that highlight women's experiences and points of view, particularly within discussions of multicultural texts; includes statements related to textual representations and portrayals of women and the challenges they encounter
<b>"GLIMPSE[S] INTO WHAT ELSE IS GOING ON IN THE WORLD"</b>	Statements suggesting that the text provides students with access to global experiences, ways of life, information, and events that transcend the local; also, perspectives about how this kind of access may benefit students
<b>MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES</b>	Statements related to broadening students' perspectives, learning from other perspectives, and / or seeing multiple perspectives reflected in texts, learning experiences, and the world
<b>"STUDENTS NEED TO BE EXPOSED"</b>	Statements about providing students with exposure to texts and learning experiences that highlight diverse cultures, experiences, histories, and points of view; also, statements reflecting the perceived need for exposure to diverse texts, ideas, and ways of life
<b>TEXTUAL REFLECTIONS OF SELF AND COMMUNITY</b>	Statements about students seeing aspects of themselves and/or their community reflected in the text, including perspectives or observations about the impact or pedagogical uses of these kind of textual experiences; also, statements about using texts that reflect students' cultures, identities, language, and/or communities
<b>"THE REAL-WORLD STUFF"</b>	Statements about incorporating texts that draw on real-world, contemporary events, topics, examples, and/or issues, including those that might be deemed controversial

Similar to Michael's statement about promoting "conversations" in the classroom, April talked about how they would "want to include more" diverse texts that encourage a

dialogue about issues related to the LGBTQ community. Also aligned to Michael's commentary is April's experience with using popular culture to promote analysis of the text, as seen when the class "went pretty in depth" analyzing the music from a TikTok video. In this instance, students focused on literary devices, mood, and worked to explore "what are they really saying" – a descriptor with semantic similarities to Michael's statement about deciphering "what is he actually, really saying?" when scrutinizing the meaning of music lyrics. April also described how their class produced responses in "podcast format" after reading *Persepolis* - a task that invited students to embody the role of multimodal text creators. Likewise, April detailed their vision for text creation activities that draw on students' familiarity with popular culture and the media platform TikTok, thus allowing them to uncover "a different way ... of expressing a character."

From Guinevere's perspective, class discussions in the form of "real conversation" emerged as an outcome of "something that affects [her students]" – an observation with implications for selecting texts and discussion topics that resonate with today's learners. Guinevere's instructional focus on inferencing and textual analysis also appeared within the commentary, such as when they voiced the belief that popular culture texts could help their students strengthen the ability to "pull the details out" of the text, which includes inferencing and locating main ideas. Guinevere's goal of helping students to "be active" meaning-makers and "pick apart" a text aligned to Michael's experiences with students "taking the ad apart" and the perspective that students could "pull [a Shakespearean] play apart based on the movie," thereby revealing a commonality in the role of diverse texts as mediums for identifying and looking beyond surface-level meanings. The idea of actively engaging with texts resurfaced as Guinevere talked about

finding the meanings in multicultural poetry and detailed their thoughts about collaborative writing lessons featuring fanfiction, which would entail text creation, character development, and an immersive focus the elements of the writing process, including editing, revising, and providing peer feedback. Among the three participants, Guinevere spoke most extensively about using popular culture to develop students' writing proficiencies, an observation that perhaps speaks to Guinevere's personal affinity for writing and their role as a creative writing teacher.

Equally noteworthy is that each educator expounded on ways they scaffold and support students' skill development while using diverse text genres. For instance, Michael discussed the use of multifaceted, customizable strategies, including dialectical journals for tasks such as analyzing character development, evaluating the text, and crafting responses; and "54321," a strategy that supports students with making connections, generating questions, activating prior knowledge, and citing and critiquing texts when engaging with a text such as *The Joy Luck Club*. They also mentioned that auditory texts benefit special education students, while visual texts like comics and graphic novel adaptations are advantageous for those requiring added support – "it's just in a different venue." Additionally, Michael's discussion of electronic texts (such as those in the new textbook program) revealed how tools that adapt text to students' reading levels help increase access to a text such as *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*. Similarly, April spoke about the support provided by online platforms with adaptable reading levels, remarking that this helps their students "to apply the processes that we've been learning in English." Echoing Michael's statements, April shared the viewpoint that comic books are a helpful resource, particularly for special education students – "they can visualize the

comic book panels.” Both Michael and April also discussed their utilization of a modified Frayer model, which serves to scaffold and strengthen vocabulary and conceptual learning.

Guinevere focused less on the use of specific strategies, and instead recounted how they use literal and inferential questions to encourage student engagement with the text. This became apparent when Guinevere spoke about “training their mind to pull those details out... and to see them to and try to understand.” The role of exemplar text models from “other cultures” also appeared in Guinevere’s commentary, as they spoke about how these texts could help students to “find a new way to write.” Although Guinevere did not outline the role of graphic organizers like the Frayer model or strategies such as “54321,” they did point to the idea of visual supports when describing how moving or still images (such as in a video or comic) could assist students’ inferencing skills and ability to make meaning from the text - “what do ... you think these characters are saying?”

### **Looking Beyond the Classroom and Toward the Future.**

In addition to speaking about the pedagogical and skills-based applicability of multicultural and popular culture texts to literacy learning, all three participants offered insights related to a sense of agency and the importance of students thinking for themselves. For instance, when speaking about the novel *Monster*, Michael pointed to how the “young men” in the class “get shut down every time they turn around,” yet Michael values offering a conversational space where students are able to vocalize their own thoughts and perspectives - “They do have a voice, and they can use it.” Speaking about the broader student population, Michael alluded to the goal of instilling students

with the capacity to make decisions, an aim that they view as central to their occupation as an educator - “My job is to ... allow the kids the ability to see and make up their minds.” A similar sentiment arose as Michael spoke about a possible lesson comparing and contrasting the “issues” presented in *Letter from a Birmingham Jail* to those at the forefront of the Black Lives Matter movement, as they linked this type of activity to the idea that students “need to be part” of the happenings and discourses characterizing the larger society beyond their local surroundings. Michael’s words also hinted at the participatory capacity of their students, as they declared that “you’re part of the country, you’re part of the human race” – a perspective that arguably encapsulates decision-making and an agentic stance toward societal participation.

April’s commentary highlighted the goal of partnering skills-based learning with experiences that empower their students to make decisions and adopt “a sense of agency” that extends beyond the classroom. Among their objectives, April reiterated that they aim to help students “to be able to make their own decisions,” “to think for their own,” and to “have self-advocacy.” This perspective emerged when April spoke about diverse textual options and again when acknowledging that their freshmen learners are only a few years away from “adulthood,” thereby implying an awareness that students will soon make decisions in real world contexts. Similar to Michael’s assertion that it is their “job” to help students to “see and make up their minds,” April declared, “...that’s what I’m here for. I want you to think for yourself.” April’s statement that “We’re not here to tell students what to think” further suggested that they perceive the role of educator as one of promoting active thinking, rather than the passive, unquestioning absorption of transmitted information. Illustrating this viewpoint, April recounted that their “proudest

moment” occurs when students admit that April made them think – those moments when students communicate that “the reason why I could be better myself was the fact that you were making me think.” In a related classroom episode, April recounted how a student declared, “stop making me think” during an exchange when reading *To Kill a Mockingbird* – a “favorite saying” that April recounted with amusement and pride.

Further, April’s assertion that popular culture’s overflow of information could complicate decision-making offered another layer to the goal of preparing students to think critically and make sound decisions outside of the classroom.

Guinevere also acknowledged student agency and decision-making, noting that educators can help to “guide” students, but ultimately “they’re going to be making their own decisions.” In response to this inevitable outcome, Guinevere suggested that educators are tasked with providing access to information – “we need to give them every option that we can.” For Guinevere, an equally important aim includes offering curricular experiences that “strike their curiosity” and encourage students to learn more about themselves and their pathways forward - a viewpoint that recognizes students’ roles as independent and capable learners and points to the temporary nature of secondary schooling.

Related to these perspectives is the idea that access to broad textual experiences could help students to improve individually and as members of society. Michael’s commentary alluding to societal participation and student agency align to the idea of personal and collective betterment through experiences that include diverse texts, and April’s statements about allowing students to grow as individuals and flourish when thinking for themselves complement these ideas as well. Among the three participants,

Guinevere elaborated most explicitly on the notion of student betterment, suggesting that students might become “better humans” when they are able to converse about information gleaned through actively engaging with a text such as a movie. From Guinevere’s viewpoint, “access” to information and diverse textual offerings inclusive of multicultural and popular culture texts offers implications for the future, while also positioning students as future agents of change – “the more that ... they can get their hands on, the better that they can make our world.” They also spoke about how access to “these other books,” “these languages,” and the real and fictional experiences of others could help students become “better human beings” – “the best humans that we can be.”

Another facet of participant responses that gazed toward the future included the idea of transferring skills to different situations that extend beyond the classroom. This idea emerged as Michael’s likened the use of “other resources” for learning to “tying your shoe” – “if you know the skill then you can apply to anything.” Likewise, when speaking about a shifting approach to text use, Michael explained how an initial focus on testing has been replaced by a reliance on using “tools” that will remain with their students, a mindset implying that skills acquisition could apply to new contexts – “what kind of tools can I use that the kids can put in *their* toolbox.”

April similarly expressed that using “current” texts could be facilitative of skills transfer, voicing the perspective that “later on after they leave high school” students will “be able to apply those skills to the more current world around them.” Toward this end, April vocalized an interest in knowing more about how multicultural texts could promote student learning of skills that are applicable to “the outside world,” while also acknowledging that the use of social media and the multicultural hold promise for

students who will consider “how can I apply this in my life.” April elaborated further on these ideas when discussing how students are “constantly using those skills” in their everyday lives, such as when interacting with popular culture texts to uncover “what they’re really want to say about society.” April voiced this belief again when stating that the “skills that we learned here in class can be used to for any of the ... outside materials that you would run into.” Worth noting is that April selected the word “outside” to describe the “world” students inhabit in their daily lives, as well as the “materials” they interact with in those contexts. Although the idea of “outside” implies a distinction between students’ out-of-school and in-school experiences, April’s remarks about transfer of skills introduces an intermingling of the two. Additional evidence of this perspective appeared when April remarked that the use of popular culture references helps students to “see the use of the skill out in the real world and not just in literature.” Reiterating that the skills learned in English class translate into the world beyond the classroom, April strives to impart skills “that they can use every day.”

The notion of skills transfer also emerged when Guinevere equated the skills used for reading to those employed when watching a movie. Rationalizing this parallel, Guinevere suggested that students capable of being “active” watchers of videos might use this skill when reading - “it’s not that big of a leap to actively read and do the same thing.” In a related data segment, Guinevere also explained that “pick[ing] apart” the text is a transferable skill, one that lends itself to “practice” using videos, with the goal of “eventually” applying the skill to identifying “these details in a text.” Guinevere’s anecdotes featuring YouTube videos to identify details illustrate the idea that varied



textual mediums could be suitable for developing the same skillsets, with possibilities for transferring skills between different genres and situations.

**“Opening Up the World to Students.”**

All three participants highlighted the positioning of students and text within local and global contexts, thereby showing how textual experiences provide opportunities for strengthening an understanding of the self and society, as well as gaining exposure to unfamiliar cultural experiences and points of view. These considerations were on display as participants shared their thoughts about individual and societal open-mindedness, including how textual interactions hold possibilities for promoting a sense of thoughtful acceptance toward other people and situations. For instance, when describing how a commercial featuring different forms of love might be featured in the classroom, Michael asserted that popular culture “does make your audience think” – a statement that arguably represents the reflective, thought-provoking capabilities of certain texts that depict different ways of life that some might deem controversial. Offering another angle on the notion of open-mindedness, Michael implied that multicultural texts are capable of exposing the “brutal” realities of American history, which could impart an urgent message to voters that elected leaders should be “open-minded” individuals – presumably so that the mistakes of the past will not be repeated.

From April’s perspective, access to cultural texts promotes an open-minded approach to others, as these experiences enable “our students to become more open-minded ... to different cultures.” When discussing students’ identities and the LGBTQ community, April spoke about open-mindedness as a quality of a progressive society, asserting more than once that “society has become more open, more open-minded to

hearing information on [LGBTQ issues].” Consequently, April indicated that they want to include more “inclusive” text offerings that reflect this diversity. Reflecting on their own attributes as an individual, April suggested that they consider themselves to be “a very open-minded person,” sharing that this quality assisted their transition to living in a culturally distinctive environment before becoming an educator.

Like April, Guinevere provided self-reflective commentary that hinged on past experiences to illustrate beliefs about the importance of adopting an open-minded stance, such as when they disclosed details about an initially “narrow” mindset when they first started teaching at the online school (“I was trying to be open-minded”), and again when describing an incident of misunderstanding during a social gathering that was attributed to a lack of open-mindedness. A similar viewpoint reappeared as Guinevere recollected their “cultural upbringing,” which they felt provided a “very narrow-minded” way of perceiving the world. To this point, Guinevere linked an open-minded upbringing to understanding - “I would understand things better than I do even as I do now.”

Complimenting this remark, Guinevere offered a connection between their own experiences and the students they teach, noting that “If [students] are understanding, if they are literate in multiple cultures ... then they will be better at accepting those other cultures.” Guinevere also spoke about how they would “implore” a colleague “to be open-minded” about diverse texts and hinted at the societal implications of rejecting an open-minded mindset toward others. In acknowledging the detrimental alternative to cultural acceptance, Guinevere suggested with a sigh that “it’s caused some of the problems we have ... in today’s society.” Expanding on their thoughts regarding individuals who opt “to keep their worldview very narrow,” Guinevere noted that

“they’re choosing to read the small sliver of things and saying that’s right.” Providing yet another angle on these ideas, Guinevere looked toward the text and discussed how a fictional character embodies acceptance and tolerance, thus suggesting that models of open-mindedness might be found in diverse texts such as those that comprise the *Dragon Ball* franchise.

In addition to statements conveying the role of open-mindedness, participants supplied perspectives and experiences related to how multicultural and popular culture texts provide access to multiple, diverse perspectives that expand and enrich the way students perceive other individuals and cultural groups. This was seen in Michael’s anecdote about how different cultures view the *lechuza* and more explicitly in the stated goal of providing students with “a diverse overview of not just ... literature but ... different people in in the world.” They also communicated that access to alternate perspectives allow students to gain “insight beyond what they know,” a statement that speaks to the varied ways of knowing that characterize different experiential frames of reference.

Alongside Michael’s viewpoint, April’s anecdote featuring *To Kill a Mockingbird* revealed how they prioritize opportunities for students to interact with a text that exemplifies “the idea of cultural inclusion” and allows students to “see” and “realize different perspectives.” Calling upon their own experiences navigating a new cultural environment, April voiced the goal of encouraging students to “conform or mold or be flexible” to various viewpoints and repeated the idea of realization when encountering other perspectives in a text such as *To Kill a Mockingbird* – “I use that [teaching] moment to help them realize that there’s other point of views that they need to be open

to.” The notion of perspective arose again as April spoke about *Monster* and *Persepolis*, detailing how *Monster* tells a story that showcases “different perspectives from different people,” and how *Persepolis* shows that perspective is not a fixed attribute; rather, “perspective can ... change within one person.” In an additional nod to the importance of access to multiple perspectives, April talked about using the text *Marigolds*, which showcased a story from a “female writer, African American.” Further accentuating their thoughts about using diverse texts, April uniquely shared the belief that publishing companies need to “open their doors more to more perspectives,” thereby “allowing students to, to see different perspectives from those texts.”

Guinevere’s comments likewise revealed that they value providing access to varied perspectives, as seen when they analogized the idea of differing viewpoints to recognizing a dual interpretation in a trick painting, and when they noted that multicultural texts lend insights into the ideas and worldviews of “other cultures.” For Guinevere, “the different cultures” and “ethnicities” represent “a different way ... of us holding the world.” Moreover, multicultural texts – especially those with linguistically diverse features – “help open ... students’ eyes” and illuminate the “ideas of other cultures.” Unlike commentary that framed multiple perspectives in a purely positive way, Guinevere’s dichotomization of “the good ideas” and “the bad” revealed a cautionary point of view about including multiple perspectives presented in diverse texts. These points emerged as Guinevere talked about encountering “bad” perspectives and ideas when engaging with multicultural content, and when they suggested that some texts, such as those reflecting historical retellings, could present an “extremely narrow point of view.” Yet Guinevere added further clarity to their position, noting that the absence of

exposure could end up “denying them knowledge that they could use to make our future better.”

Along these lines, participant commentary embraced the idea of exposure to a diversity of cultural experiences, viewpoints, and authors, with multicultural and popular culture texts positioned as mediums for this kind of exploration. All three participants likewise communicated a willingness to confront the sometimes-controversial real-world topics and issues that hold implications for daily life. This was seen in Michael’s receptivity to using “uncomfortable” texts and their willingness to confront and examine topics such as discrimination, racism, gender inequality, LGBTQ topics, the criminal justice system, and the Black Lives Matter movement. Similar topics and issues emerged in April’s commentary, including racism, the criminal justice system, the struggle for educational opportunity in other parts of the world (especially among girls), and the need for equity among all individuals, including those identifying as LGBTQ. April also shared the observation that their students were “saturated” with Black Lives Matter, which April linked to a possible lesson featuring the novel *Romiette and Julio*.

Supporting these examples, Guinevere explicitly pointed to the importance of exposing students to “real-world examples” and the “real-world stuff,” which they mentioned reflects what the administration “wanted [them] to do.” Connecting this type of “real-world” content to the text, Guinevere suggested that “that’s going to be pop culture” and “all of the ... multicultural texts.” Guinevere’s ideas about exposing students to a variety of historical, experiential, and cultural realities became evident as they talked about the importance of “exposing them to both the good and the bad,” while also ensuring that this was done in a “filtered way.” A complementary perspective appeared

when Guinevere analogized the idea of exposure to trying sushi and a variety of different foods – “it broadens their horizons ... and it’ll help them to understand the world.” Using another analogy, Guinevere likened providing students with “bits of everything” to nourishing a growing tree, thereby implying that access and exposure to a wide range of textual experiences facilitate students’ growth. According to Guinevere, books contain “a small universe to be able to open your mind to more than just your own culture.”

Also interwoven within all three participants’ responses was a focus on the role and representation of gender in the text, which emerged as a related facet of exposure to multiple perspectives, diverse experiences, and real-world issues. Moreover, commentary focusing on the female point of view arguably offered a contrastive counterpoint to the ubiquitous literary voices of the “old dead White guys” that popularize the English canon. Exemplifying these points, Michael envisioned a unit of study based on gender, remarking that “there’s more on women suffering than there is on men suffering.” Michael pointed to the merit of texts written by female authors that elevate female perspectives, experiences, strengths, and struggles when discussing influential works and writers such as Adichie, Angelou, Chopin, and Tan. Yet, Michael also suggested that an aura of caution surrounds the inclusion of the female voice, as seen when they sarcastically vocalized a possible response to tacking gender-related issues – “she’s talking about gender bias, oh my god we can’t do that cause now that’s not allowed.” Clarifying the link between gender and culturally inclusive texts, Michael declared that “gender is a culture” and supplied anecdotes showing how issues such as gender bias and gender discrimination (“something that’s going on right now”) materialized during classroom lessons featuring nonfiction and popular media texts.

Complementing Michael's ideas, both April and Guinevere recounted personal experiences reading texts that featured the female perspective. They also spoke about issues pertaining to gender, as well as the applicability of these topics to the classroom. For instance, April described how they encountered "the idea of diverse texts" in part due to their experiences with books that showed "a woman's point of view." In support of extending this exposure to their students, April expressed how *I Am Malala* showcased "[Malala's] ... struggle, and her want to have education spread to girls" – a markedly different experience from living in a nation where educational access is commonplace, "no matter your gender." Recounting the appeal of *Persepolis*, April again alluded to the role of gender, noting that the graphic novel allows students to see an "educated female" who experienced an upbringing that offered "a different perspective because that was tradition." Similarly, April's description of *Marigolds* as a story told through the lens of Black female author reveals an openness to including strong women's voices into the classroom.

Guinevere similarly shared their experiences with impactful fiction and nonfiction stories featuring women protagonists facing personal struggles, describing how stories centralizing diverse female experiences resonated with them and instilled a sense of empathy – "I could feel for [the narrator of *Cucumbers Have Thorns*] because she went through a lot...a woman and she wrote about it." When elaborating on how they've "always wanted to use" the novel *Memoirs of a Geisha* in the classroom, Guinevere invoked the ideas of struggle and perseverance among women, observing that "these women [in the text] were put at odds, but they were still women" who confronted the "problems within their culture." Despite concerns about approval and the school's

conservativism, Guinevere appeared open to including female-centered texts, thus illustrating the idea of exposure to diverse real-world experiences and worldviews.

Additionally present in the data were convergent viewpoints about how multicultural and popular culture texts offer access to an increasingly globalized and diverse world. This was seen as Michael expressed that diverse texts offer a “broader example” of different ways of life, with multicultural content providing students with “an opportunity to see the bigger picture” and “a glimpse into what else is going on in the world,” including injustices perpetrated against various cultural groups. The rural area students live in (“small town USA”), as well as the observation that few students venture far from their hometown, offered additional rationales for Michael’s dedication to showing “this is what’s going on outside of the city limits.” Alongside these points, Guinevere acknowledged that “not everybody’s going to be able to go to a place” with a wide array of cultures, thereby implying that global perspectives within “cultural text[s]” may expand access to cultures and viewpoints that might not otherwise be encountered. Echoing Michael’s use of the word “glimpse” to describe seeing beyond one’s immediate surroundings, Guinevere voiced that popular culture “opens peoples’ minds” and offers “a glimpse into something else.”

Supporting these viewpoints, April declared that they hoped to instill their students with an awareness “that there is more to the world out there.” April voiced the belief that exposure to “different cultural texts ... allows them to live in this more open world,” and suggested that “by using multicultural texts they can see other worlds, not just their own.” April communicated their observation that social media contributes to the “world opening up,” thus pointing to the cultural and communicative access afforded by



platforms such as TikTok that “will literally show you what [an individual’s] culture is.” In a related statement conveying the expansive reach of popular culture, April noted that “[popular culture texts] are opening minds ... to what’s available out in our world” – a position paralleling Guinevere’s point about how popular culture “opens peoples’ minds.” Furthermore, April expressed that multicultural texts are “important to bring in” because they “broaden the idea of what is literacy” within a society defined by a plurality of literate practices and ways knowing – “[multicultural texts help] them build their understanding of the world around them ... and allows... the world around them to be considered literate.”

Together with sharing beliefs about how the text enables the consumer to transcend the local, participants emphasized the importance of students seeing themselves and their communities reflected in the text, as well as the idea that the text empowers students to see the commonalities that exist between themselves and other groups and individuals. For example, Michael noted that multicultural texts invite students to identify the similarities between themselves and youth with different life experiences, explaining that students gain “the ability to see a kid who lives on a reservation and how he’s a teenager just like they are but his troubles are much different and yet the same.” Michael further pointed out that interacting with the text might inspire new “avenues of thought” or “unfulfilled dreams” - “If we’re reading about a kid who takes [a] chance, then maybe a kid in my classroom can go, oh hey, I can take that chance.”

From April’s perspective, students who “see themselves” reflected in diverse texts may recognize that “I am more than just those dead White guys ... I am in current ... text.” April further linked students “see[ing] themselves” in the text to learning and

understanding “the English process” and spoke to a need for increased access to texts that reflect aspects of the students they teach - “we need our students to have access to more, more diverse [texts] ... to be able to see themselves in the text.” April nodded toward this idea when discussing access to LGBTQ literature (“I want to be able to include them in what they see in literature”), and when referring to more specific fiction and nonfiction texts with cultural components, including *Monster*, *I Am Malala*, *Twelve Angry Men*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*. For example, April talked about how students could see aspects of themselves in the protagonist of *Monster* (“Who they are, same age as them”) and observed that a student “saw himself” in a character in *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*, despite the presence of very different life circumstances. April likewise noted that students could “see themselves” in young Scout (the narrator in *To Kill a Mockingbird*) and in characters portrayed in *Twelve Angry Men*. Similar to Michael, April implied that they value balancing texts that provide textual reflections of the self and those that feature other cultural perspectives and experiences – “I want to include texts that shows who they are in those texts, but I also want to be able to show other cultures.” Bridging these two goals, April described how *I Am Malala* shows students that Malala is just like them (“she is you guys”) even though Malala endured different life experiences (“it was like, that was me. But it’s not me”). April also contrasted the work of Malala with the “dead White guys,” drawing a distinction between White male authors and a remarkable teenage girl and activist that is in many ways “just like you” - “this is not an old White guy (laughs) that’s writing ... this is a girl that is just like you with the exception that she is from a poor country and ... is doing a lot of this work.”

Echoing Michael and April's perspectives, Guinevere expressed the belief that students should gain access to texts that reflect who they are, including the cultural surroundings that characterize their daily lives. Guinevere's ideas about integrating Tejano music and songs by Selena into instruction (both considered "a part of their culture") offer an example of valuing the use of "something very specific to the area." Guinevere likewise expressed an interest in using "more Hispanic things from that are Hispanic culture and text that are from our area," a statement that nods toward the predominantly Hispanic students in their classroom. Related to these comments is Guinevere's focus on the Spanish language and its link to students' Hispanic heritage, which offered a rationale for using music featuring a language that permeates students' community. In another example highlighting Guinevere's beliefs about texts that reflect students' identities and experiences, Guinevere contrasted interacting with other world cultures with seeing "a culture that is parallel to where you live" in the text, declaring that the latter provides an "awesome experience for kids who live in a small town." A differentiating focus that emerged in Guinevere's commentary included an emphasis on the idea of America as a "melting pot," reflective of a society where "differences are beautiful" and individuals of varying cultural affiliations comprise one America – "we're one world." Aligned to this perspective was Guinevere's realization that the Chinese students they taught at the international online school were "just like us," despite their "culturally different" experiences. They suggested that Americans are positioned "to embrace" and "learn" from "a lot of cultures," including those "that are not our own." Speaking to yet another facet to these ideas, Guinevere pointed out that popular culture texts such as those within the *Dragon Ball* franchise show "different universes," while

also “[showcasing] their similarities” – a statement implying that popular culture holds promise for replicating the unique and shared attributes that enrich an understanding of various cultures.

### ***Supplemental Document Analysis***

As a complement to interviewing Michael, April, and Guinevere (which served as my primary method of data collection), participants were invited to share instructional documents to supply another angle into how multicultural and popular culture texts might be used in the classroom. In response to this request, Michael provided me with three instructional resources that were referenced during interviews, which included a handout featuring the “54321” strategy, another with a modified form of “54321” for expository texts, and a dialectical journal. Michael discussed these when telling me about how they support student learning when teaching a text such as *The Joy Luck Club*. I reviewed and coded each document, basing my coding decisions on the content and function of the three resources (see Table 21 for an overview of codes, descriptors, related categories, and applicable documents). In sum, I identified 11 codes, which include the following: 1) Application to a Variety of Texts; 2) Citing Texts; 3) Guidance for Implementation; 4) Literary Elements; 5) Connecting and Responding to Texts; 6) Prior Knowledge; 7) Question Generation; 8) Scaffolded Support; 9) Strategy and Skills Instruction; 10) Textual Analysis; and 11) Textual Evidence. The 11 codes correspond to four of the categories outlined above, including Availability and Access (Theme One), Connecting and Responding (Theme Three), Developing Students’ ELA and Literacy Skills (Theme Four), and Textual Heterogeneity and Versatility (Theme Two).

**Table 21***Supplemental Document Coding*

<b>Code</b>	<b>Description of Code</b>	<b>Related Category</b>	<b>Applicable Document(s)</b>
<b>APPLICATION TO A VARIETY OF TEXTS</b>	Document appears customizable and suited to a range of instructional and textual possibilities.	Textual Heterogeneity and Versatility	54321 54321 (Expository) Dialectical Journal
<b>CITING TEXTS</b>	Document prompts students to provide citations and/or note identifying information about the source.	Developing Students' ELA and Literacy Skills	54321 (Expository) Dialectical Journal
<b>GUIDANCE FOR IMPLEMENTATION</b>	Document offers instructions for how to use the instructional resource / strategy with students.	Availability and Access	54321
<b>LITERARY ELEMENTS</b>	Document prompts students to create journal responses that focus on literary elements (e.g., theme, conflict).	Developing Students' ELA and Literacy Skills	Dialectical Journal
<b>CONNECTING AND RESPONDING TO TEXTS</b>	Document prompts the student to make personal connections to the text, identify new areas of learning, and/or respond to the text.	Connecting and Responding	54321 54321 (Expository) Dialectical Journal
<b>PRIOR KNOWLEDGE</b>	Document prompts students to display their prior knowledge on the topic.	Connecting and Responding	54321
<b>QUESTION GENERATION</b>	Document prompts the student to ask questions in relation to the main idea of the text.	Developing Students' ELA and Literacy Skills	54321 54321 (Expository)
<b>SCAFFOLDED SUPPORT</b>	Document provides visual supports (e.g., images; a color-coded model) and/or uses a graphic organizer format that breaks apart information into manageable sections.	Developing Students' ELA and Literacy Skills	54321 54321 (Expository) Dialectical Journal
<b>STRATEGY AND SKILLS INSTRUCTION</b>	Document provides students with strategy instruction focused on developing one or more ELA / literacy skills (e.g., finding the main idea and details, summarizing).	Developing Students' ELA and Literacy Skills	54321 54321 (Expository)
<b>TEXTUAL ANALYSIS</b>	Document prompts students to analyze and evaluate the text, including identifying the author's purpose.	Developing Students' ELA and Literacy Skills	54321 (Expository) Dialectical Journal
<b>TEXTUAL EVIDENCE</b>	Document prompts students to include textual evidence to support a response and/or to identify key textual details.	Developing Students' ELA and Literacy Skills	54321 54321 (Expository) Dialectical Journal

In addition to supporting Michael's commentary and correlating to categories discovered in the interview data, this analysis suggests that the approaches in each document extend plentiful instructional opportunities for engaging with a variety of texts, including those with multicultural and popular culture components. The documents also appear consistent with a standards-based English Language Arts curriculum that emphasizes the development of literacy skills alongside meaning-making through diverse textual encounters.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I provided narrative accounts of each participant's perspectives and experiences pertaining to the focal questions guiding this study. Techniques including thick description, verbatim quotations, and contextual details were woven into each narrative to highlight the distinctiveness of each participant's voice. Following the narrativized presentation of participant stories, this chapter transitioned into a synthesizing discussion of the four main themes retrieved in the interview data, which include the following: 1) Navigating and Thriving Within the Culture of Schooling; 2) Prioritizing Diverse and Traditional Textual Experiences, Despite the Obstacles, Concerns, and Uncertainties; 3) Embracing the Connections and Experiences that Link Society, Humanity, and Text; and 4) Empowering Students with Lifelong Literacy Skills and Preparing for a World Beyond the Classroom. In my discussion of codes, categories, and themes, I explained the meanings ascribed to the data and aimed to illuminate how participant responses supported my findings. To lend further clarity to this analysis, I incorporated tables representing categories and codes to show the nuanced relationships within each theme. As a supplemental element of analysis, I reviewed and coded three

instructional documents, which yielded 11 codes that applied to four categories identified in the interview data. In the following chapter, key findings from this analysis are discussed alongside connections to relevant literature and theoretical frameworks. Implications for practice and policy and recommendations for future research are also provided, followed by concluding thoughts.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

### Overview of the Study

Following my time with Michael, April, and Guinevere, I discovered new insights into my research questions and gleaming linkages to the work that precedes and informs this study. After narrativizing and analyzing the data, I reapproached my research questions with an invigorated appreciation for the depth of responses and candor extended by each participant, enlightened by the stories they told and the viewpoints they shared. When I first conceptualized the basis for this study, I began with the expectation that this work would be exploratory, since it was anchored by two broad, overarching questions that extended possibilities for multiple pathways and digressions. The first question focused on learning about South Texas English Language Arts educators' perspectives about and experiences with using multicultural and popular culture texts in the high school classroom. My second goal in developing this research was to uncover what these findings reveal about how multicultural and popular culture texts are positioned within the context of pedagogical practice and how they are situated as resources to facilitate literacy learning for culturally diverse adolescent learners. I found these questions compelling, as they are particularly relevant and timely. Multicultural and popular culture texts are situated within an expansive textual milieu that encompasses numerous text types, genres, and formats within a world of widespread global communication and evolving literacy practices (Coiro et al., 2008; Kress, 2003; Leu, 2000; Leu et al., 2013; Mackey, 2020). Even though consensus has eluded definitional understandings about multicultural texts (Cai, 2002; Harris, 2002) and popular culture (Alvermann, 2011; Alvermann & Xu, 2003; Fiske, 1995; Storey, 2012),



both contribute to the diversity of textual choice and literacy-based experiences that enrich contemporary life. Alongside expanded viewpoints of literacy and text (Campano et al., 2020; Dalton & Proctor, 2008; Mackey, 2020; Moje et al., 2020a), a broad conception of culture (Howe & Lisi, 2020; New York State Education Department, 2019) and an expanded idea of multiculturalism (Holland & Mongillo, 2016) add to understandings about how students cultivate multidimensional identities reflective of diverse life experiences and cultural affiliations (González, 2005; Irizarry, 2007; Li, 2011). Consequently, today's schools are brimming with a uniquely diverse student population that embraces and navigates a fluid terrain of textual access, embarking on communicative literacy practices that reflect the technological affordances and interconnectedness of daily life and contemporary innovation.

The literature reviewed for this study suggests that educational and literacy-focused possibilities exist when the curriculum includes multicultural texts (e.g., Bean et al., 1999; Dressel, 2005; Glazier & Seo, 2005; Kim, 2014; Louie, 2005; Morrell & Morrell, 2012; Thein et al., 2011) and popular culture texts (e.g., Bowmer & Curwood, 2016; Buelow, 2017; Chandler-Olcott & Mahar, 2003; Garland, 2012; Hall, 2012; Lee, 2007; Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2002; Stairs, 2007; Visco, 2019). Yet, even in a society rich in textual resources and possibilities, questions and uncertainties about the merit and positioning of diverse texts continue to abound. In addition to concerns about teaching with popular culture (Alvermann, 2011; Callens, 2017; Hall, 2003; Millard, 2003; Morrell, 2004) and multicultural texts (Haddix & Price-Dennis, 2013; Lewis & Ketter, 2008; Stallworth et al., 2006), the nation's presently divisive political climate perpetuates an ongoing debate about the role of diverse texts in the classroom. At both

state and local levels in Texas, mischaracterized understandings of critical race theory and pushback against related curricular materials are arguably restricting educational opportunities that illuminate social justice issues and discussions about race, equity, and civil rights – topics and themes that often appear in diverse texts. Addressing the widespread polarization among multiple stakeholders across the Texas education system, an article in the New York Times asserted, “Texas is afire with fierce battles over education, race, and gender” (Powell, 2021), with classical mainstays of the curriculum and more recent diverse voices at risk of misrepresentation or omission from school libraries and classrooms.

Despite the oppositional perspectives that presently position Texas at the forefront of conversations about curricular mandates and censorship, educators point to a need for expanded access to diverse texts (International Literacy Association, 2020), and national curricular frameworks and standards support the integration of a variety of diverse texts and perspectives in the literacy classroom (International Literacy Association, 2019; National Council of Teachers of English, 2013; National Governors Association for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). Likewise, English literacy standards specific to the state of Texas (Texas Education Agency, 2022) extend numerous pathways for textual exploration, which appear consistent with an inclusive curriculum that invites varied forms of textual expression into the classroom. Within this current era of educational promise, politicized debate, and standards-driven accountability, ongoing research is necessary to continue learning about how the curriculum and text use support or disenfranchise today’s culturally diverse learners. By learning from the lived experiences and perspectives of practicing educators working in

South Texas, this work aimed to contribute new insights into the current and possible roles of multicultural and popular culture texts in the high school classroom.

To achieve the goals of this study, I selected a narrative inquiry approach (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Kim, 2016) and relied upon qualitative methods that aligned to the research questions. These included the following steps: interviewing participants and inviting them to provide supplemental instructional documents; coding, categorizing, and theming the data; writing analytic memos throughout the analytic process; narrativizing participants' stories using thick description, verbatim quotations, and interpretation; inviting participants to member check narrative drafts; maintaining a reflexive stance during all phases of the research; and discussing salient points of convergence and divergence among participant responses. Throughout the study, I remained attentive to ethical considerations and adhered to a collaborative and trustworthy researcher-participant partnership.

### **Organization of the Chapter**

This chapter builds on the findings presented in Chapter 4 by presenting conclusions arising from the data alongside my own perspective and the extant literature. In the section titled "Discussion of Findings," I respond to the two research questions and subsequently show how each theme connects to the literature. Then, I discuss how the outcomes of the study are supported and informed by two theoretical lenses, critical literacies and multiliteracies. The next sections offer implications for practice, policy, and research. Following commentary about how this research might contribute to the field, the final piece of this chapter provides concluding thoughts about the role of diverse textual experiences within our current and future educational climates.

## **Discussion of Findings**

All three educators brought forward thought-provoking, insightful, and sometimes surprising perspectives and experiences into our interview sessions. In this section, I address the research questions before proceeding to a more in-depth discuss of each theme in order to uncover the deeper meanings of these findings. Within each themed discussion, I aim to show how the relevant literature connects to, supports, and enriches an understanding of participant commentary.

### ***Revisiting the Research Questions***

I identified the following two research questions to guide this inquiry: 1) What are the experiences and perspectives of English Language Arts educators with using multicultural and popular culture texts in culturally diverse secondary classrooms located in South Texas?; and 2) What do educators' experiences and perspectives reveal about the role of multicultural and popular culture texts in pedagogical practice and for promoting literacy learning with culturally diverse learners?

The answers to these interrelated questions are multifaceted and nuanced, as participants expounded on an array of experiences and perspectives that toggled the space between their past, present, and future text use. Through analyzing and considering the outcomes of participant interviews, I discovered that Michael, April, and Guinevere all encountered and envisioned opportunities to include numerous subgenres of diverse texts in their prior, current, and future teaching, which indicated that multicultural and popular culture texts do, indeed, hold a place within participants' classrooms. The notion that these texts offer potential for classroom use appeared across the data, even as issues of textual appropriateness, limited access to guidance and resources, and adherence to

curricular mandates provided a reminder of the challenging aspects of text use. Alongside a willingness to use multicultural and popular culture texts, participants acknowledged the role of curricular autonomy that existed within the constraints of teaching in an institution bound by measures of accountability. At the same time, I learned about the culture of support participants experienced within their current positions, which extended to their interest in supporting colleagues with using new types of texts. Participants also spoke about their experiences relating to their diverse student populations, with the text as a backdrop to these interactions. Complimenting participants' mindfulness about the generational and experiential particularities that separated them from, and linked them to, their students, commentary highlighted an appreciation for the personal and pedagogical applicability of popular culture, including the ways that popular culture references emerged in the classroom. Likewise corresponding to the research questions were perspectives pertaining to the evolving nature of the text, the blurred distinctions between text genres, and the continuous presence of classical texts in the modern classroom. These viewpoints spoke to the changing, omnipresent role of multicultural and popular culture texts in and beyond the classroom and captured the idea that diverse texts exist with a heterogeneous, constantly changing textual milieu. To this point, participants outlined creative possibilities for future lessons featuring an assortment of cultural texts reflecting various modalities. These collective perspectives about the affordances of multicultural and popular culture texts affirmed the value in using texts perceived as relatable and relevant to students, even as perspectives about comfort with textual content also appeared in the data.

Equally noteworthy connections to the research questions included participants' descriptions of lessons that offered promise for advancing students literacy skills, such as inferencing, analyzing texts, uncovering aspects of character, finding the main idea, partaking in class discussions, creating their own multimodal textual content, and more. This commentary spoke to how multicultural and popular culture texts could complement a standards-based curriculum and the preexisting, traditional texts that are already integrated into the classroom. Lending further emphasis to this point, findings from my review of supplemental documents suggested opportunities for using scaffolded instructional strategies in tandem with nontraditional texts to support students in areas such as identifying literary elements, generating questions, citing texts, identifying relevant textual evidence, analyzing and evaluating the text, connecting to texts, and utilizing prior knowledge to further understanding. Participant responses further addressed the focal questions as they spoke about how the text could be used in ways that support a number of additional curricular goals and purposes, which included facilitating connections to and engagement with texts, showing students aspects of the self and others, providing exposure to real-world topics, cultivating the quality of open-mindedness, and offering glimpses into different experiences and perspectives. Adding more depth to study findings, the role of multicultural and popular culture texts emerged within discussions of helping students develop as individuals with agency and critical thinking skills, who are prepared to encounter a world and society characterized by increasingly diverse populations and textual platforms.

Collectively, these experiences and perspectives enabled rich understandings in relation to the research questions, thereby fulfilling the hopes and aspirations of this

research. The subsequent discussion delves into the four themes that arose in the data in order to further illuminate the significance of participants' contributions to this work.

***Theme 1: Navigating and Thriving within the Culture of Schooling***

*The first theme encapsulated participant commentary about the demanding and supportive aspects of their profession, particularly as they related to textual and pedagogical freedoms and constraints.*

**Accountability and Testing Demands.**

Participant commentary revealed how decisions about textual inclusion are often negotiated alongside requirements that include preparing for state tests and addressing state standards. This focus on the role of local and statewide oversights is consistent with the reality that educators work in a field dominated by ongoing accountability (Moje et al., 2020b) and federal policies that “often shape instruction” (Smagorinsky et al., 2020, p. 66). Although accountability arguably remains a necessary component of the modern education system, accountability-based measures may also lead to instruction that prioritizes test preparation (Pedulla et al., 2003) and limits instructional opportunities (Bean, 2009). Assessments might also function as “gatekeepers” (Tierney & Pearson, 2021, p. 167) that dictate areas of curricular emphasis, thus resulting in “a kind of default curriculum” (p. 167). As Darling-Hammond (2010) pointed out, within this climate the test “can exert powerful influences on curriculum and instruction” (p. 69).

Linked to these observations is the critique that preparing for standardized tests impede effective teaching and contribute to the pressures of teaching. For instance, Darling-Hammond cited outcomes from a survey by The National Board on Educational Testing and Public Policy (NBETPP) at Boston College that revealed how teachers in

states enforcing high-stakes assessments “feel pressured to use test formats in their instruction and to teach in ways that contradict their ideas of sound instructional practice” (p. 71). The report outlining findings from the NBETPP survey further suggested that “teachers’ views on the value of the state test are highly negative” (Pedulla et al., 2003, p. 46). Similarly, educator responses on a national survey administered by the National Education Association (2010) revealed perceptions of dissatisfaction with the pervasive climate of testing that infiltrates public schools. An analysis of responses from 2,643 educators indicated that “testing demands or teaching to the test” were “hindrances to effective teaching in 2006” (p. 91). These factors ranked as the second highest perceived hindrance, marking an increased position from a survey administered five years prior, where the same issues ranked as the tenth highest hindrance. This corroborates Coburn et al.’s (2011) review of the literature on teacher perceptions of standardized tests, which identified a prevalence of “negative attitudes” (p. 570) toward these assessments.

All three educators offered their thoughts pertaining to the oversights and testing demands that characterize the teaching profession. Threaded between this commentary was the idea that the powers exerted by local, state, and federal agencies contribute to curricular and pedagogical decision-making (Oakes & Lipton, 2007). Consequently, participants implied that the use of diverse texts must coincide with the curricular aims of the school as situated within a state-wide governing body of educational oversight and accountability. Participants spoke to the omnipresent need to prepare students for the test, with Michael mentioning the time spent on preparing students for the test, April emphasizing the importance of accountability, and Guinevere highlighting an overall disapproval of the culture of testing, declaring that “students hate tests, hate those tests at



least as much as teachers do.” Michael and April also suggested that the standards were compatible with diverse text use, although Guinevere appeared less convinced of this alignment. Despite these nuanced differences in perspective, participants shared an awareness that their pedagogical responsibilities included balancing diverse text use with adhering to the local and state expectations that define pedagogical and student success.

### **Schoolwide Supports and Teacher Autonomy.**

Even though the all-encompassing authority of a multitiered system of accountability permeated the discussion, the role of support and autonomy also appeared within participant commentary. In a chapter synthesizing reading policy research, Coburn et al. (2011) discussed the influential role of the school district, school leaders, and fellow educators on the individual teacher’s curricular decision-making, implementation, and understanding of reading policy. They asserted that at the district level, professional development sessions and coaching initiatives contribute to educators’ efforts at implementing policy, while the principal’s role remains influential at the school level. The literature revealed that “Principals influence classroom implementation by emphasizing some aspects of reading policy and not others,” thereby “shaping teachers’ access” (p. 576) to select components of policy. Educators may also find themselves reliant upon school decision-makers to provide access to classroom resources (Spillane & Kenney, 2012). Elaborating on the “interdependency” (p. 549) linking teachers and administrators, Spillane and Kenney noted that “teachers are to some extent dependent on school leaders who allocate resources including funding, curricular materials, and class assignments” (p. 549). At the same time, a sense of “conflict” (Lipsky, 1980, as cited in Spillane & Kenney, 2012, p. 549) presides over the teacher-administrator relationship,

which may compromise levels of autonomy (Spillane & Kenney, 2012). Although the idea of teacher autonomy might be perceived as “nebulous” (Walker, 2016), it has been defined as the educator’s “control over classroom activities” (Sparks & Malkus, 2015). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) School and Staffing Survey for the year 2011-2012 found that most respondents reported experiencing a “moderate” amount of autonomy in their positions, including on a questionnaire item inquiring about the selection of textbooks and curricular materials (Sparks & Malkus, 2015).

Michael, April, and Guinevere pointed to the influential role of the school principal in supporting efforts to integrate various textual materials into the curriculum. Participants acknowledged that curricular decisions required communicating with the principal and at times remained contingent on approval, thereby illustrating an interdependent relationship between teachers and principals (Spillane & Kenney, 2012), and showing how text use may be filtered through an authoritative voice that exceeds that of the individual educator. Despite this constraint, all three participants implied the existence of a respectful principal-teacher relationship as they detailed how intentions and requests are communicated to the principal. In their positions as experienced educators within their district, Michael and April secured a level of flexible curricular autonomy and viewed the administration as a source of ongoing support. They expressed confidence that their principal would support their requests or decisions about multicultural and popular culture text use and spoke favorably about their ability to select a new core textbook for schoolwide implementation, a responsibility that suggested a high level of autonomy. Support and autonomy were evident when Michael and April both stated that they provide administrators with a “heads up” about text usage, when

April declared that the school district remains “very open” to the use of “cultural texts,” and again when Michael stated that the “district was very supportive” with the process of choosing a new textbook. Michael further asserted that they are given “the freedom to do what I need to do in the district,” a statement that conveys Michael’s independence within their current position. In contrast, Guinevere (the newest educator of the three participants) appeared more hesitant about gaining approval, expressed less confidence about procuring approval to use diverse texts, and did not partake in the textbook selection process. Despite Guinevere’s uncertainties, participants displayed a collective openness to approaching the principal to discuss or inquire about the use of diverse texts. This aligns with Xu et al.’s (2005) advocacy for “the principle of open communication” (p. 141) when interacting with school principals to talk about using popular culture texts.

In addition to the crucial role of the principal and perspectives related to teacher autonomy, colleague interactions and mentorships may contribute to instructional decision-making, which by definition extends to curriculum development and text selection. Coburn et al. (2011) cited literature indicating that “teachers’ *social interactions with their colleagues* influences their decisions about how to implement new approaches to reading instruction” (p. 576, emphasis in original). This central finding complements research suggesting that both newer and more experienced educators may benefit from collaborative “partnerships” with colleagues, which extend opportunities to learn about unfamiliar teaching methods and job-related requirements (Olsen & Huang, 2019, p. 5). The supportive advantages of teacher collaboration and mentorships are especially impactful for novice teachers who are learning about effective approaches to working with their student populations (Martin et al., 2015).

The notion of collaboration and mentorship emerged in the data as all three participants voiced a willingness to assist their colleagues with implementing multicultural and popular culture texts into the curriculum. Michael, April, and Guinevere mentioned supportive approaches including modeling instruction, providing curricular materials, and requesting professional development sessions. For example, April would “show [a colleague] what has been working for me,” while Michael would welcome a fellow educator into the classroom to “see me use it.” Alongside this inclination to help others, participants recognized that individual educators must also adopt a receptive stance to trying new approaches that include multicultural or popular culture texts, thus acknowledging how the individual teacher exerts their own opinions and agency even within a system of curricular demands and adherence to administrative decisions. As Guinevere pointed out, they “would give them access to materials if possible,” but will ultimately “respect” the decisions and opinions of their colleagues. Additionally, the notion of experience appeared in participant commentary, with Michael declaring that teachers need experience to teach popular culture, and Guinevere adopting a similar opinion in reference to their own newly emerging pedagogical expertise. The recognition that educators possess varying experiences with and knowledge about implementing multicultural literature (Stallworth et al., 2006) and popular culture texts (Lee, 2012) arguably lends support for the possible benefits of mentorship and collaboration in exploring the integration of diverse texts into the curriculum.

***Theme 2: Prioritizing Diverse and Traditional Textual Experiences, Despite the Obstacles, Concerns, and Uncertainties***

*The second theme identified issues pertaining to the appropriateness of textual content and access to a range of diverse textual options and instructional resources. It also highlighted views about the cautionary and advantageous aspects of inviting diverse texts into the classroom, as well as commentary illuminating the wide-ranging variety of textual resources that may offer implications for instruction and literacy learning.*

**Access and Availability of Texts and Resources.**

Participants revealed that issues of access and availability are entwined with discussions about implementing diverse texts. Consistent with participant commentary, the notion of access emerged as a prominent concern in the most recent International Literacy Association (ILA) survey (2020), where 36% of educators identified “Providing access to high-quality, diverse books and content” as a critical top topic, and 42% indicated that this topic required additional attention. Yet, some educators find themselves working in environments that offer “poor resources” and “low-quality curricula” (Moje et al., 2020b, p. x), thereby implying that “high-quality” textual selections may be difficult to procure. Concerns about a lack of resources similarly appeared in Stallworth et al.’s (2006) research featuring teacher perspectives about teaching with multicultural literature, where participants pointed to a “scarcity of materials and resources” (p. 485) as a factor preventing the inclusion of multicultural texts. Supporting this finding, 40% of educators on the ILA survey suggested that limited access to books in the school environment acts as a “barrier to equity in literacy” (p. 36), with almost half of literacy professionals (42%) pointing to the additional barrier of “a

lack of diversity and cultural relevance in literacy resources” (p. 37). Moreover, educators working with older adolescents ages 15-18 were “more likely” to highlight these issues (p. 40). Outcomes from the ILA survey further showed that 58% of respondents believed that “the greatest challenge in literacy” includes “Addressing disconnects between school curriculum and students’ actual needs in terms of literacy support and instruction” (p. 7). This broadly stated finding encapsulates the necessity of offering access to literacy materials and learning opportunities that are responsive to students’ needs, which arguably includes interactions with varied text genres that include the multicultural and the popular.

Unlike the under-resourced classrooms highlighted by Moje et al. (2020b), participants appeared to have access to a variety of texts. The breadth of texts mentioned by Michael, April, and Guinevere suggested that various textual materials are accessible, particularly given the internet’s expansive access to information and the wide-reaching ubiquity of popular culture. Additionally, Michael and April’s selection of and enthusiasm for the new textbook program seemed consistent with the ILA survey data expressing a need for expanded textual access, particularly as the new book program offered multicultural content and multimodal presentations that extended possibilities for diversifying the curriculum. Despite this, Guinevere mentioned limitations to unimpeded access, and declared their resolve to offer as much access as possible to students. For April, expanded access to multicultural voices also needs to occur from publishers, a point that hearkens to the historical privileging of White authors in at least one major publishing company (So, 2021). Writing almost twenty years prior to this research, Harris (2002) provided an overview of issues surrounding the publication of multicultural

works, including questions about the demographics of editorial staff and the ways multicultural books are marketed. Harris indicated societal progress in the dispersion of multicultural stories and perspectives, suggesting that “[t]he institutionalization of multicultural literature is dependent on the support for new voices” (p. 371). Yet, as Mackey (2020) pointed out, the present publishing landscape remains “still very white” (p. 101), despite efforts to encourage more widespread engagement with diverse texts.

Offering an equally noteworthy point of view on the idea of access and availability, April identified a need for guidance and instructional resources to facilitate the use of multicultural and popular culture texts and contrasted this observation with the availability of resources that guide the use of more traditional English texts. April further spoke to a need for access to research perspectives to guide decision making about implementing diverse texts. As April expressed, “for me since there is no background information or no studies that I can fall back on it makes it difficult for me to make certain that this could work for ... the students.” Although April provided this commentary when speaking about multicultural texts, their concerns more broadly echo Lee’s (2012) observation that preservice educators demonstrated “limited exposure to scholarly perspectives” (p. 94) about popular culture. At the same time, April’s remarks regarding a dearth of guidance evoke Xu et al.’s (2005) assertion that educators should remain informed about scholarly works that focus on using popular culture texts – advice that also illuminates the possibility that educators are not receiving information about how or where to retrieve these materials.

### **Including and Excluding Texts.**

In addition to discussing issues of textual access and availability, participants spoke about the appropriateness of multicultural and popular culture texts for the classroom, as well as the cautionary approaches that accompany the use of diverse texts. The scholarly literature acknowledges issues and concerns about the appropriateness of multicultural texts (e.g., Haddix & Price-Dennis, 2013; Ketter & Lewis, 2001; Landt, 2006; Thein, 2013) and popular culture texts (e.g., Alvermann et al., 1999; Beers, 2010; Callens, 2017; Hagood et al., 2010; Morrell, 2004; Xu et al., 2005) for inclusion in the classroom, as well as questions of whether popular culture belongs in a school setting (Hall, 2003; Millard, 2003). For instance, in a volume exploring the use of popular culture in the classroom, Hagood et al. (2010) addressed the “tensions and messiness of working with pop culture” (p. 8). This included the “paradox” (p. 8) of integrating interesting texts that also require attention to “issues of appropriateness” (p. 8), as well as an understanding that decisions about appropriate texts are made by educators with varying experiential backgrounds and perspectives. Milner (2010) similarly pointed to the divergent viewpoints of educators and other stakeholders (including parents and administrators) regarding the necessity and appropriateness of curricular materials, writing that “*Teachers do not teach on secluded islands*” (p. 98, emphasis in original). Given this collective interest and investment in issues of curriculum and instruction, Milner posited that curricular decisions related to diversity are particularly consequential for educators. Glenn and Ginsberg (2019) alluded to this element of consequence in their overview of challenges to integrating multicultural young adult novels, which identified



concerns about censorship and acceptability to the school community as areas that “courageous educators” (p. 191) must address.

Alongside the scholarly literature, Michael, April, and Guinevere all spoke to issues of textual appropriateness as an essential component of selecting multicultural and popular culture texts for adolescent learners. Participants indicated that these texts belong in the classroom, provided that materials are well-selected and purposefully chosen to advance student learning. Equally prevalent were perspectives highlighting the need to maintain a cautionary approach to text use. A particularly striking example included Michael’s recounting of a scenario with an irate parent who disapproved of a text used in the classroom. In addition to “ripping the principal apart,” Michael shared that the parent referred to them as “a disgrace to the teaching profession” and “a disgrace to the community.” The encounter Michael described exemplifies how the widespread viewpoints that emanate from multiple stakeholders in the educational process (Milner, 2010) may pose concerns and challenges for integrating texts that some consider provocative. Worth noting is that the text in this scenario, Goethe’s *Faust*, is widely considered a masterful literary work, yet the fact that its content sparked controversy suggests that classical texts are not immune to questions of appropriateness. On the other hand, Morrell (2004) pointed to the apparent contradiction in upholding literary works as art forms held to “high esteem” (p. 141) even when they contain themes and situations that some may deem inappropriate, while disregarding popular culture texts with a similar level of mature content as inferior and “not seen as art” (p. 141). Lee (2007) provided a similar perspective, pointing out that “the terrain of the canonical and the so-called vernacular is murkier than we might expect” (p. 70). While Morrell (2004) noted

that “plenty of worthy popular culture texts...are not going to set off fireworks” (p. 142), they suggested that educators should refrain from teaching texts perceived as “uncomfortable” (p. 142). These points call to mind Michael’s perspective about how some teachers default to the perceived safety afforded by the texts of the classic literary canon. They also provide a reminder of the “tensions” (Hagood et al., 2010, p. 8; Lee, 2007, p. 69) that educators may confront and negotiate when considering the use of nontraditional texts.

### **Heterogeneous and Versatile Texts.**

Even with the cautious approach espoused by participants, they spoke about a robust display of textual encounters and conveyed an open-minded disposition to welcoming a variety of texts into the classroom. While this readiness to discuss a range of texts may reflect participants’ mindfulness of the definitions outlined for this study, they offered anecdotes and perspectives that positioned multicultural and popular culture texts as valid textual materials that have been or could be featured in English and content area classrooms. This was evident as participants provided examples of text use and creation that included not only traditional print books, but also multimodal print and nonprint texts. Participants’ willingness to acknowledge and discuss a broad range of texts aligns to scholarly perspectives that view texts as evolving communicative resources that encapsulate various modes, genres, displays, and platforms (e.g., Alvermann, 2011; Dalton & Proctor, 2008; Hagood, 2008; Hagood et al., 2010; Kress, 2003; Mackey, 2020; Moje et al., 2011; Moje et al., 2020a; Moje et al., 2020b). Also consistent with the literature, participants showcased an ongoing awareness of the shifting textual, literacy-based environment permeating modern-day life (e.g., Coiro et al., 2008; Leu, 2000; Leu

et al., 2013). As April declared, their students are “bombarded by information all the time, continuously and everchanging,” within a textual atmosphere that is equally “everchanging ... what is current now it’s like within two years its already old.”

Similarly, Guinevere discussed how today’s technological world provides students with “access to so much knowledge,” while Michael noted that “Literature and the evolution of our societies kind of grow up together.”

Equally prevalent was how discussions of traditional English texts materialized in the data, thereby suggesting that canonical selections remain a central fixture of participants’ English classrooms. Among the three participants, Michael and April offered expanded commentary on the omnipresent role of the classics, alluding to their necessary positioning in the classroom, yet also recognizing that space exists for the inclusion of additional textual experiences. While classical literary voices remain merited pillars of English learning, exclusively depending on canonical texts perhaps hearkens back in part to prior decades, when movements toward multicultural education encountered challenges by traditionalists who advocated for curricula that conformed to dominant White cultural traditions (Banks, 1993). Similarly, proponents of “cultural heritage literacy” emphasized the need for a sole reliance on canonical works (Freebody & Freiberg, 2011). As Bintz’s (2018) observations of teacher conversations suggested, questions of whether to rely on canonical works remain a consideration for English educators, with perspectives aligning to these works as either “virtue” or “vice” (p. 2). In contrast to traditionalist viewpoints and bridging the divide between an either-or approach to text use, Lee (2020) pointed out that educators “do not need to limit [themselves] to selecting only texts from the European and Euro-American canon” (p.

45) to teach literacy-based skills. Lee's emphasis on the limitations of defaulting to using a singular classification of text suggests that while canonical texts are central components of English learning, additional textual options may offer similar possibilities for student learning, perhaps in ways that revitalize the literacy classroom. Corresponding to this point, the literature suggests that popular culture might be used in tandem with canonical texts to scaffold and enrich student learning (Buelow, 2017; Johnson, 2018; Lee, 2007; Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2002; Page, 2012; Stairs, 2007; Visco, 2019).

Although a distinction between canonical literature (predominantly authored by White males, referred to by Michael and April as the "old dead White guys") and more contemporary texts occurred in the data, the notion of textual fluidity implicitly arose within participant commentary as well, with overlapping categorical distinctions blurring the lines between classical, multicultural, and popular culture texts. This variability in text categorizations reflects the idea that genre might be considered "a relatively fuzzy concept" (Lefstein & Snell, 2011, p. 41), with texts being capable of embodying a variety of qualities and being used in different contexts. As seen in scholarly publications, ambiguity also surrounds a unified definition associated with multicultural texts (Cai, 2002; Harris, 2002) and popular culture texts (Alvermann, 2011; Alvermann & Xu, 2003; Fiske, 1995; Storey, 2012). Further contributing to these conversations are today's emerging forms of texts and literacy practices, which add nuance and deepening complexity to conversations about reading and text consumption (Mackey, 2020).

On several occasions, participants supplied insights and anecdotes that reinforced the difficulty in ascribing fixed descriptors to diverse texts. For instance, the distinctions between classical and multicultural texts softened as Michael spoke about multicultural

authors as classical mainstays, and again when April shared views on the cultural implications of exploring classical texts with decades of literary accolade. Participants also equated popular music with traditional poetry (“[r]ap is just a beautiful form of poetry,” according to April), and detailed lessons linking the two. This noted comparison echoes studies featuring the use of music lyrics to support English skill development in culturally responsive ways (e.g., Bowmer & Curwood, 2016; Lee, 2007; Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2002; Stairs, 2007). Additionally, April spoke at length about social media as a form of popular culture with multicultural, globally infused attributes, while Guinevere shared experiences with video gaming to show how this medium could be considered a form of popular culture that is simultaneously multicultural. These examples support the idea that the characteristics and possibilities of diverse texts are not simple or singular; rather, they may function in multipurpose ways to impart new possibilities to global audiences, including those in an educational setting.

***Theme 3: Embracing the Connections and Experiences that Link Society, Humanity, and Text***

*The third theme captured commentary that evoked the connections that exist between individuals with varying experiences and the world, within a society defined by broadened understandings of text and varied contexts for textual engagement.*

**Diverse Student Identities.**

Another recurring component of participant response included an awareness of the diversity of today’s student population and the individual identities present in the classroom, as well as the cultural and generational markers that typify students’ everyday experiences and textual interactions. The wide-ranging construct of identity is shaped and

molded during the adolescent years (Ormrod, 2011; Tatum, 2006), and may include affiliation with youth cultures, race, and ethnicity (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2014), as well as other elements of culture such as socioeconomic status, language, and gender (New York State Education Department, 2019). Identity from a literacy perspective captures the idea of “social relationships” (Gallego & Hollingsworth, 2000, p. 2) that are temporally and contextually informed, similar to Gee’s (2000, 2008) notion of “identity kits” or Discourses that are cultivated through social interactions in different settings. Along these lines, Moje et al. (2000) explained that “the learner” should be recognized “as a person with multiple identities” (p. 166) who enacts various “positions” (p. 166) that are dependent on situations and interactions with others.

Providing another layer to the widespread characteristics and identities of modern-day youth is the reality that demographic shifts are contributing to an unprecedented diversity among student populations (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). The recognition that this heterogeneity is not only found in cities (Moje et al., 2020a) resonates with the small-town setting of participants’ school site and aligns to commentary attesting to the uniqueness of the individual student. While participants specified that the students at Ramos-Canales High School are “primarily Hispanic” (in Guinevere’s words), they also spoke to the identities of their learners. For instance, Michael mentioned how some students shoulder parental responsibilities, and some may identify as LGBTQ. Adding depth to the idea of student individuality and identity, April pointed out that the students attending their school are “all individual” and “not industrial.” April added that “we don’t have a single type of student,” and students cannot be made to “fit a certain mold.” This phrasing calls to mind Moje et al.’s (2000) critique

of how “we often lump learners into a one-dimensional mold called individual, or we classify them in a group with all members having the same characteristics” (p. 166), rather than acknowledging their multiple student identities.

Negotiating the boundaries between the complexities of identity and commonalities shared between individuals, participants also appeared to have a strong familiarity with their overall student population and their cultural surroundings. This was implied by Michael’s commentary about several of students’ home lives, Guinevere’s observations about students’ limited language proficiency in Spanish, and April’s remarks about how students are “pretty much used to the Hispanic culture.” The idea of individuality existing alongside a collective identity notably arose in Guinevere’s commentary when articulating the idea that Americans “come from a very diverse background,” yet “we were built on a melting pot.” While Guinevere’s imagery conveys the intermingling of a shared American culture and experience, the analogy of a vibrant “salad bowl” adds nuance to the melting pot theory by depicting how individuals “retain their unique culture while assuming common customs and habits” (Howe & Lisi, 2020, p. 5). Nonetheless, Guinevere’s perspective suggests that students partake in shared cultural realities while maintaining their individual attributes and culturally informed identities.

Participants’ connections to the South Texas area and its cultural influences perhaps facilitated this knowledge of their students. Even though all three educators spent some time living in different locations, their relationship to the community surrounding Ramos-Canales High School seemed evident, with April talking about being raised in the town where they now teach. Yet on a national level, a close connection to the cultural backdrop of the school site may not be the norm. Data shows that educators’ backgrounds

frequently do not align to those of their students, and K-12 teachers remain largely White and female (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2021). Overall, educator demographics are “much more stable” (Rueda, 2013, p. 1260) than those of the shifting student population. While these points highlight the possibility of cultural or experiential mismatches between educator and student, Michael, April, and Guinevere seemed attuned to of the individual and combined characteristics of the students they teach.

### **Popular Culture Influences Amid Generational and Experiential Differences.**

Even though participants appeared to hold close ties to the community they serve, they cited observations that contrasted their own upbringings with their students’ present-day lived realities. This highlighted how experiential and generational differences may exist between teacher and student, particularly in relation to interacting with popular culture texts and the technological advancements of an ever-advancing society. Examples of this were seen when April discussed their limited access to the internet as a student, when Guinevere noted that today’s students would not recognize America Online (AOL), and when Michael talked about decades-past icons of popular culture. Yet at the same time, the omnipresence of popular culture texts and their ability to reach mass audiences suggests that educators and students are simultaneously bound by this common thread of experience. As Beach and O’Brien (2008) pointed out, popular culture texts have transformed from “accessible through limited venues” to “now ubiquitous due to their availability on the Web” (p. 781). In addition, participant commentary provided a reminder that popular culture is constantly in flux (Morrell, 2004), even as it remains capable of “transcend[ing] time” (Visco, 2019, p. 85). As modern-day consumers discover new forms of popular culture such as social media, they can still interact with



and connect to older popular culture artifacts like music and films from decades past (Visco, 2019). The range of materials discussed by participants nodded toward this point, as Michael talked about using 80s music in a lesson, April shared innovative ideas for integrating emojis into graphic organizers to promote vocabulary learning, and Guinevere discussed their success with an inferencing lesson using a Spiderman comic, which they described as familiar, but “probably something from my generation.”

The scholarly literature also points to the universal, everyday presence of popular culture in its many iterations, as well as its ability to spark critical discourses while also providing enjoyment for the consumer (e.g., Alvermann et al., 1999; Hagood et al., 2010; Marsh & Millard, 2000; Xu et al., 2005). Hagood et al. (2010) emphasized a viewpoint of popular culture as everyday culture, which refers to content that is “for and of the people” (p. 9). They further pointed out that “Teachers’ and students’ pop culture interests often overlap” (p. 72), even though a contrarian perspective acknowledges that they may also “not coincide” (Martinez Borda & Lacasa, 2008, p. 5). Additionally, the culture of schooling often situates adults “in full-fledged opposition” (Hagood et al., 2010, p. 71) to students, and school-based discourses have “at best disregarded popular culture and at worst positioned it as detrimental” (Beach & O’Brien, 2008, p. 776).

In contrast to dismissive or unfavorable views of popular culture, participants embraced the idea of using popular culture texts in the classroom and detailed their own everyday popular culture consumption, which at times intersected with that of their students. Moreover, it seemed that participants’ own experiences as consumers of popular culture contributed to their enthusiasm and ideas about text use and lesson development. In this way, educators arguably revealed their own popular culture funds of knowledge, a

concept that speaks to how exposure to and interactions with popular culture in varied in- and out-of-school contexts translate into opportunities and resources for school-based learning (Arthur, 2001; Buelow, 2017; Dickie & Shuker, 2014; Hall, 2003; Hall, 2012; Kelly & Brower, 2017; Petrone, 2013). These ideas were exemplified in Hall's (2012) explanation that adolescent learners "understand the world based on funds from popular culture such as television, film, music, art, and other forms of mass media they consume" (p. 298). While these discussions are rightfully framed through the lens of recognizing the rich funds of knowledge displayed by students (Moll et al., 1992; Moll & Greenberg, 1990; Rodriguez, 2013; Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992), participants supplied evidence that popular culture funds of knowledge may be a more universal construct that applies to educators as well as students. For example, Michael's experiences with and enjoyment of various forms of more traditional forms of media were on display as they offered examples featuring movies, television, and advertisements. Guinevere voiced their love of gaming, with corresponding views about incorporating video games and fanfiction into lessons. And April, a self-proclaimed "avid social media person," translated an ardent appreciation for social media into ideas for using these platforms in the classroom in engaging and creative ways. Examples such as these imply that teachers are individuals with their own out-of-school identities inclusive of, but not dependent on, their roles as educators. Guinevere hinted at this idea when declaring, "We're humans, too," and Michael likewise describing themselves as "a normal person" who watches movies and loves to eat popcorn. Speaking to the idea of a shared affinity for popular culture texts, April asserted that they could "see ... the enjoyment that our students could have in it," adding that "I enjoy just as much as my students do." Responses such as these coalesce

with Burn et al.'s (2010) survey and interview-based research on the “digital generation gap” (p. 183), which suggested that media educators, like their students, “are also intensive users of a full range of media in their personal lives” (p. 187), even though modern schooling constraints sometimes inhibit the use of media in the classroom. They also asserted that students “may belong to different generations and to different social groups, but they do not necessarily live in wholly different cultural worlds” (p. 197).

### **Relating to Students.**

Another pattern of commentary that spoke to bridging the generational gap included participants' thoughts about relating to students and utilizing popular culture references to make content accessible and to facilitate student learning. For instance, April described helping students make meaningful connections by using “a lot of references” to social media and “movies of their generation” in both structured and unplanned, “off the cuff” ways. This description echoes Lefstein and Snell's (2011) account of how the focal teacher in their research study used popular culture references that “were mostly fleeting” (p. 45). In contrast to research with preidentified areas of focus, the classroom episode analyzed for Lefstein and Snell's study emerged as “one of many spur-of-the-moment decisions that fill a day of teaching, not necessarily the product of careful planning...” (p. 59). April's use of spontaneous references implies a similar sense of spontaneity within their own classroom.

Michael and Guinevere also spoke about the familiarity of popular culture, with Guinevere stating that “using what they know, using what they see is a bridge.” Although popular culture texts may be perceived as familiar material that resonates with students' lives (Sourdout & Janak, 2017), with the capability to dissolve generational divisions,

students might not expect for them to appear in the classroom. Burn et al.'s (2010) research detailed one teacher's experience when students discovered the teacher's use of Facebook, which revealed how "this cultural proximity [was] marked as an object of surprise to the students" (p. 192). Similarly, Guinevere's students reacted with disbelief when Guinevere used the jargon of a popular video game in class, and April's students appeared shocked when TikTok dance moves were recognized during a lesson.

In addition to extending a sense of surprise, popular culture references may offer a way for teachers to relate to their students' out-of-school experiences, thereby facilitating positive teacher-student relationships. Marsh and Millard (2000) posited that popular culture may facilitate "social communities" where teacher and student "can engage in discourses that cement shared understanding and interest" (p. 190). Supporting this point, Michael described how students showed an overwhelming interest in wanting to know more about Michael's anime use, which transformed into a moment of connecting with their students. As Michael declared, "they relate to me more because I'm watching what they're watching." Michael's observation resonates with Chandler-Olcott and Lewis's (2010) case study of secondary educators, which revealed that many respondents viewed the use of online literacies as a way to "build relationships" (p. 171). Speaking about gaming, one case study interviewee stated on behalf of their students, "'This relates to me – if you know about it, *you* relate to me'" (p. 171, emphasis in original). In a similar way, Guinevere voiced the belief that popular culture functions as a "tool to help us to relate to and teach students," as illustrated when a shared affinity for gaming helped Guinevere's students to "open up" to her. Observations such as these align to Intrator and Kunzman's (2009) chapter synthesizing research focusing on adolescent "youth voices." The authors

explained that youth “yearn for positive relationships with their teachers” (p. 39) and perceive educators’ “affirmation, acceptance, and support” (p. 39) as desirable qualities that contribute to the classroom experience. Lending nuance to these points, Moje (2000) spoke to the influence of teacher care on student success, suggesting that “successful” students view “caring teachers” as dedicated to student learning and able “to make content meaningful and relevant to their lives” (p. 89).

### **Interacting with and Making Connections to Relevant and Relatable Texts.**

Whereas participants focused on popular culture when talking about relating to students, they also discussed how relatable multicultural and popular culture resources facilitate connections to and between texts. Observations and discussions about students making connections alongside diverse texts emerged across the literature (e.g., Bowmer & Curwood, 2016; Buelow, 2017; Glazier & Seo, 2005; Kim, 2014; Lee, 2007; Louie, 2005; Visco, 2019). For instance, in an article focusing on popular culture’s potential to invigorate the classroom, Visco (2019) noted that “Popular culture texts allow students to read and relate to them as they see fit and to make connections to themselves and to canonical texts” (p. 85). These ideas are upheld by an understanding “that pop culture is everyday culture” (p. 85), which positions audiences as active, critical meaning-makers during interactions with popular culture (Alvermann & Xu, 2003; Hagood et al., 2010). In a similar way, multicultural texts may assist readers with generating text-to-self and text-to-text connections (Glazier & Seo, 2005). Expanding on this point, Glazier and Seo nodded toward the collective body of literacy research and explained that “students need to make multiple connections to the text being studied, exploring it as a piece in and of itself ... and as a connection to self” (p. 689). However, some students may not easily

make connections to the characters, topics, issues, or perspectives presented in a multicultural text (Glazier & Seo, 2005), and may demonstrate “resistance” (Glazier & Seo, 2005, p. 698) or disengagement (Louie, 2005). For example, in Glazier and Seo’s research, non-White students drew on their own experiences and connected with the literature, whereas “European American members of the class did not make the text-to-self connections” (p. 695).

The idea of relatable and relevant texts arose within participants’ responses, notably when Michael discussed multicultural young adult novels, when April talked about social media and “current” texts, and when Guinevere described ideas for using Tejano music in a lesson. Equating this notion of relatability with motivation and success, Michael pointed out that students will “want to read” relatable texts, and as a result may be more “successful.” Participants also shared their own meaningful encounters with multicultural texts, as exemplified by Guinevere’s recollection of a text’s “emotional impact,” and highlighted their thoughts about students connecting to texts. This appeared as Michael talked about making intertextual and personal connections to novels such as *Monster* and *No Choirboy*, as well as in April’s examples of how “culturally inclusive text[s]” and popular culture could spark these connections, in contrast to observations of students being “disconnected with literature.” This commentary hearkens to reader response theory (also known as transactional theory; Rosenblatt, 1995; Unrau & Alvermann, 2013), which emphasizes the idea that textual meaning-making is “subjective and unique” (Glazier & Seo, 2005, p. 689), since readers call upon their own preexisting knowledge (Tracey & Morrow, 2012) and life experiences (Rosenblatt, 1995) during reading tasks. It also calls to mind how strategy instruction focusing on areas such as

text-to-text, text-to-self, or text-to-world connections could bolster comprehension (e.g., Fisher et al., 2004; L’Allier & Elish-Piper, 2007). Along these lines, Michael shared strategies that scaffold students’ ability to make connections and respond to texts, and April acknowledged the link between connecting to texts and skills development. April further described how using a Frayer model with emojis and scaffolded prompts allowed students to explain their thoughts and display “ideas of their worlds, how it influenced their connection to the word,” thereby evoking the idea of text-to-self connections. This example suggests that scaffolding may help students to realize these connections, and also reveals how contemporary emblems of culture and communication (i.e., emojis) are positioned as newer text forms that encourage personal connections and meaning making.

### **Textual Engagement and Comfort with Texts.**

In addition to focusing on the importance of making connections, participants spoke about students responding to texts, with an emphasis on the roles of interest, engagement, and comfort with the text. The notion of “engagement” has been described as “active involvement” (L’Allier & Elish-Piper, 2007, p. 339) and likened to “the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion” (Great Schools Partnership, 2016) brought forth when learning. Studies featuring multicultural and popular culture texts highlight the idea of promoting engagement among students (e.g., Bean et al., 1999; Bowmer & Curwood, 2016; Chandler-Olcott & Mahar, 2003; Dressel, 2005; Garland, 2012; Grater & Johnson, 2013; Stairs, 2007; Thein et al., 2011; Tuzel & Hobbs, 2017). This area of focus is similarly located within the tenets of culturally relevant and responsive approaches. Referencing Ladson-Billings’ (1995b) work on culturally relevant teaching, Marsh (2006) noted that popular culture may extend possibilities for motivating

students and communicating that their interests are compatible with school-based curricula. Likewise, Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2005) asserted that popular culture could function as a “centerpiece of culturally responsive literacy pedagogy in urban classrooms” (p. 285). They explained that popular culture provides “academic rigor and relevance to students’ lives,” with implications for offering opportunities for critical encounters and “a more engaging curriculum” (p. 297).

While research also speaks to the possibilities for engagement by adding multicultural texts into the curriculum, studies suggest that engagement may prove insufficient without a critical discourse component to deepen students learning (Dressel, 2005; Thein et al., 2011). For instance, the teacher in Dressel’s study cited enjoyment as desired outcome of students’ interactions with multicultural literature, a goal that was realized in student feedback and in survey responses indicating an increase in positive attitudes toward reading. Yet, responses suggested the need for deeper critical engagement with the text. A comparable finding in Thein et al.’s work showed that although one group’s literature circle discussions were “dialogic, interpretive, and engaged” (p. 21), students did not interact critically with the text. Instead, they offered some “problematic interpretations” (p. 22) and viewed the text “in ways that reinforced their status quo stances toward social class” (p. 21).

Participants spoke at length about the engaging affordances of multicultural and popular culture texts. This appeared when Michael described students’ animated responses during lessons featuring magazine advertisements and a multicultural young adult novel, and again when they detailed one student’s favorable response to *Harry Potter*. April also implied that texts including TikTok videos, a multicultural graphic



novel, and rap music align to students' interests. Illustrating this idea, April shared a noteworthy encounter that enabled them to "see that engagement" between a student and rap lyrics. As a media-driven, technologically mediated form of popular culture, the appropriate use of a platform such as TikTok may be positioned to contribute to students' interest and engagement (Leu, 2000). Moreover, April's creative student-centered lessons utilizing TikTok revealed an awareness of how newly emerging forms of popular culture might engage students using their out-of-school experiences and everyday literacy practices. But despite April's belief that TikTok and popular culture in general offer purposeful possibilities for use within the classroom, April also spoke to the idea of "distraction," recounting how some students "weren't paying attention" as they tried to conceal dance moves to a popular TikTok song during a lesson. In a similar way, Chandler-Olcott and Lewis's (2010) case study revealed one educator's perspective that "'students' new literacies are distracting to some extent'" (p. 174), a statement that shows an additional angle of possible tension in the use of diverse texts.

In another key moment of participant commentary, Guinevere recalled how their students had a "higher rate of turning in" an assignment that positioned a Spiderman comic as a focal text. This outcome parallels Grater and Johnson's (2013) finding that the use of popular culture texts correlated with improved task completion during newly implemented, culturally relevant lessons. Guinevere's retelling of their classroom success with Superman spoke to a possible benefit of pairing skills-based learning objectives with a text perceived as engaging and interesting. While Guinevere's lesson promoted skills development and did not focus on a critical analysis of the text, Michael and April supplied anecdotes showing how engagement and critically interrogating the text worked

together in their classrooms. This was seen as Michael detailed how their students examined an advertisement for gender bias and “really got into ... the various aspects of ... the magazine ad,” and again when April talked about going “pretty in depth” when analyzing a TikTok video (a platform they believe embodies “what our students are interested in”). Arguably, examples such as these illustrate the use of culturally relevant learning experiences that align to scholarly perspectives merging rigorous critical engagement with the text alongside student interest (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2005).

As an additional facet of students’ feelings about and responses to texts, participants highlighted observations pertaining to student comfort with the text. While some instances of educator hesitance or uneasiness with using diverse texts appeared in the literature (e.g., Ketter & Lewis, 2001; Lee, 2012; Lewis & Ketter, 2008; Petrone, 2013; Thein, 2013; Willis, 2003), Michael and Guinevere provided observations and beliefs about the comfort levels of students when interacting with multicultural texts. Whereas Guinevere linked comfort to the idea of belongingness, suggesting that cultural texts that make a student feel recognized and accepted could enhance learning, Michael spoke more ideas of student discomfort with multicultural texts. Michael noted that although multicultural materials may make some students “uncomfortable,” students also tend to “like” novels with that instill this response. Michael also described a scenario when a students’ resistance to and unkind, disruptive words about a multicultural text resulted in the class feeling “really uncomfortable,” a testament to the powerful reaction generated by the text. This episode calls to mind the work of Milner (2010), which detailed conversations with a Black educator named Dr. Johnson, who taught in an affluent, predominantly White school. Milner’s narrative detailed how Dr. Johnson’s

students felt “uncomfortable” (p. 100) and complained to the principal about Dr. Johnson’s approach to teaching *To Kill a Mockingbird*, which focused on deeper issues and themes concerning race and society. For both Michael and Dr. Johnson, the use of “uncomfortable” texts sparked a strong response among some students, thereby exposing a possible challenge to the goals of productively engaging with diverse texts.

***Theme 4: Empowering Students with Lifelong Literacy Skills and Preparing for a World Beyond the Classroom***

*The fourth theme reflected commentary related to preparing students to partake as active members of a world outside the classroom. This include viewpoints and experiences about how the text is positioned to facilitate literacy-based learning and access to a panoply of perspectives and experiential realities that transcend the local.*

**Prioritizing ELA and Literacy Skills and Proficiencies.**

Participants provided detailed commentary showing how they implemented or envisaged using multicultural and popular culture texts to promote students’ literacy skills. In addition to speaking about skills-based, scaffolded learning experiences, responses highlighted the role of class discussions, writing lessons, textual analysis skills, and lessons that facilitate the creation of student-authored texts. The literature suggests that curricular standards and popular culture are compatible (Buelow, 2017; Hagood et al., 2010) and that a range of literacy-focused student learning opportunities are possible across multiple contexts alongside the use of multicultural (e.g., Bean et al., 1999; Dressel, 2005; Glazier & Seo, 2005; Kim, 2014; Louie, 2005; Morrell & Morrell, 2012; Thein et al., 2011) and popular culture texts (e.g., Buelow, 2017; Finders, 1996; Garland,

2012; Grater & Johnson, 2013; Hall, 2012; Lee, 2007; Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2002; Peacock et al., 2016; Stairs, 2007; Visco, 2019).

All three participants spoke about literacy-focused lessons that integrate multicultural and popular culture texts, such as when Michael described using “The Joy Luck Club” to teach theme and main idea, when April talked about capitalizing on students’ interest in TikTok “to show different skills,” and again when Guinevere centralized popular culture texts within lessons focused on finding details and developing students’ writing skills. Examples such as these call to mind autonomous and ideological notions of literacy. Street (2003) conceptualized the autonomous model as a neutral way of viewing literacy and the acquisition of reading and writing skills. In contrast, Street’s ideological model challenges the idea of literacy as neutral, instead focusing on the situationally and contextually bound nature of literacy learning, with cultural mediation and social interactions at the forefront of literacy-related events. Aligned to these ideas, responses highlighted examples showing a skills-based focus, yet also featured socioculturally-informed instructional possibilities that incorporated multicultural and popular culture texts. For instance, Michael indicated that their students flourish when given a “space” for collaborative discussions, with multicultural texts lending themselves to discussions that “really blossom and grow.” Guinevere’s discussion of collaborative writing lessons with fanfiction also merged the idea of skills development with learning through social interaction, where their students could “[learn]...from each other.”

An emphasis on critical textual analysis also emerged in the data, thereby reflecting the critical stances and analytic curricular goals adopted across some of the literature (e.g., Batchelor, 2019; Coleman-King & Groenke, 2019; Finders, 1996;

Garland, 2012; Grater & Johnson, 2013; Lee, 2007; Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2002; Morrell & Morrell, 2012). Added to these research findings are scholarly models for merging literacy learning, popular culture, and critical pedagogies, which acknowledge aspects of engagement alongside the necessity of applying a critical lens (e.g., Alvermann et al., 1999; Marsh, 2008, as cited in Hagood et al., 2010; Marsh & Millard, 2000; Xu et al., 2005). Discussions about the critical and analytical affordances of diverse texts appeared in Michael's recounting of a lesson that interrogated gender bias in ads, with students "taking the ad apart" and in another instance when students sought to discover the "deeper meaning" in popular music. April also spoke about the critical possibilities of music, likening the interpretation of a short paragraph to analyzing a TikTok segment, and noting that the class "went pretty in depth" to unravel meaning from a TikTok song. This emphasis on music's analytical possibilities intersects with the impactful work of Morrell and Duncan-Andrade (2002), which detailed how the use of Hip-hop in an urban classroom facilitated critical discussions, analytic engagement, and poetic and expository writing skills. Authors described Hip-hop texts as "literary texts" (p. 89) with potential for critique and literary analysis. Lee's (2007) similarly groundbreaking study using cultural modeling with African American youth discussed using rap lyrics and videos alongside literary works by Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, and Dante Alighieri to teach symbolism, an area of focus that April also spoke to when describing the use of TikTok.

The idea of a critical approach to literacy learning is also relevant to multicultural works. Louie (2006) explained that textual critique, class discussions, and opportunities for personal response and reflection are among several key research-based components that may promote "understanding and enjoyment" (p. 438) when interacting with

multicultural texts. Linked to these ideas, a study by Batchelor (2019) presented findings about how preservice teachers identified linked text sets with pedagogical implications for examining social justice issues and the privileging of voice alongside issues such as mental health, rape culture, and Black Lives Matter. A critical lens to literacy learning also appeared in Coleman-King and Groenke's (2019) book chapter, which described how the "small-group literature circle strategy" functioned as a powerful way to encourage dialogue, personal written responses, question generation, and problem-posing when reading a novel that confronted issues of the historical enslavement and violent mistreatment of Black women. Authors pointed to the contemporary backdrop of the Black Lives Matter and Say Her Name movements in relation to the novel, thereby adding another layer of analytic possibility. Along these lines, Michael and April spoke about literacy lessons with potential for critical inquiry and recognized the Black Lives Matter movement as a timely and relevant topic that that could inform their teaching and student learning. For instance, Michael spoke about a possible lesson comparing and analyzing Dr. Martin Luther King's *I Have a Dream* speech to Black Lives Matter, with students considering questions such as "how are issues the same, how are they different, what could we do differently to prevent another Black life death." April also nodded toward the relevance of Black Lives Matter when talking about *To Kill a Mockingbird* before discussing how a character analysis lesson would fuse students' awareness of Black and Hispanic cultures alongside their knowledge of popular music.

While participants spoke about interpreting and analyzing the text, they also revealed ways that students are positioned as active text creators and meaning-makers, a role that extends beyond text consumerism. In a chapter exploring the literacy-focused

possibilities of visual media, Flood et al. (2000) indicated that students should adopt multiple modes for communication and expression, particularly as students are often tasked with acting as “receivers and interpreters of messages rather than as producers and communicators of ideas” (p. 67). Active text production through “media authorship” appeared in Byker et al.’s (2018) study featuring preservice educators’ use of media and technological platforms to self-create multicultural texts that may be used in their teaching. In addition to increased feelings of confidence with authoring and using texts with diverse students, respondents in this study strengthened their text creation skills, with one educator voicing the belief that ““future students can be [media authors], too” (p. 24). The idea of student authorship appeared in Visco’s (2019) article, which linked popular culture with traditional works and detailed the role of student choice in creating multimodal self-created texts. Visco asserted that “[m]ultimodal expressions of learning” allow students to display “what they know” (p. 88). Along these lines, Buelow’s (2017) research discussed how students created multimodal “cinemoems” to analyze and depict poetry and created either a video game design or a soundtrack in response to a novel.

Michael, April, and Guinevere each supplied examples of developing literacy skills that centralized the student as a text creator. Similar to Buelow’s activity that included developing a musical soundtrack to accompany a novel, April outlined ideas for students crafting a unique playlist to uncover aspects of character appearing in a multicultural novel. April further talked about their students creating podcasts to respond to a multicultural graphic novel and envisioned a lesson positioning TikTok a mode of student expression during a lesson on exploring characters’ attributes. In the latter scenario, students’ short video responses would provide “a different way ... of expressing

a character.” Michael’s lesson featuring the creation of new poetry from segmented songs fused elements of analysis and authorship, while Guinevere’s ideas about delving into the online fanfiction writing community offered possibilities for text creation, developing new and familiar characters, and practicing the skills associated with the writing process. Examples such as these are reminiscent of “remixing,” which Alvermann (2016) referred to as using a combination of one’s own work alongside the work of others “to create new meaning with images, words, sounds, and performances” (p. 91). Moreover, participants’ creative examples of melding literacy learning with different technological platforms and text types offers a reminder that today’s environment of literate activities, social practices, and meaning making has shifted from decades past (Rowse et al., 2013).

### **Facilitating Skills Transfer.**

The recurring emphasis on skills-based learning alongside multicultural and popular culture texts arguably aims to equip students for future school-based and out-of-school literacy experiences. Looking toward this goal, participants shared perspectives that spoke to the notion of transferring skills to new situations and contexts. Ormrod (2011) defined “positive transfer” as occurring when “prior learning *helps* learning or performance in another situation” (p. 261; emphasis in original). The idea of transfer appears in scholarly writings on popular culture’s use in the classroom (e.g., Alvermann, 2011; Beach & O’Brien, 2008; Duncan-Andrade, 2008; Hagood et al., 2010; Lee, 2007; Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2002). Alvermann (2011) framed the “Question of Transfer” (p. 546) as one of three key issues encircling popular culture’s applicability to literacy. This “debate” centers on questions of whether consumptive and productive experiences with popular culture hold “potential for transfer from informal to formal learning



environments” (p. 544). Alvermann’s review of the extant literature suggested that transfer may operate in a way that is “bi-directional in flow, or perhaps even blurred” (p. 550), a description that evokes Moje’s (2000) observation that adolescent learners may lack guidance on “mov[ing] back and forth” (p. 88) between their everyday literacy practices and school-based Discourses. From Buelow’s (2015) perspective, learners “need the ability to apply learning from one context to another, decontextualizing literacy learning across disciplines and tasks” (pp. 277-278). Affirming this point, Lee (2020) referred to cultural modeling (Lee 2007) as illustrative of the “positive transfer” (p. 44) that can occur when using popular music to teach the interpretive skills required to uncover meaning in literature.

Participant responses espoused similar viewpoints about how the text could facilitate skills-based learning that may prove transferable in alternate situations. This appeared when Michael talked about providing students with “tools” for their “toolbox,” imagery that calls to mind the usefulness and applicability of a “tool” to multiple contexts. Michael offered further insight when they likened the acquisition of skills to “tying your shoe” - once the skills are learned, “you can apply to anything.” April also used the verb “apply” when talking about transferable skills gained through interacting with “current” texts. At various points, April spoke about English and literacy skills such as making predictions, inferencing, analyzing character, and understanding symbolism and imagery, among others. April suggested that once students graduate, they can “apply those skills to the more current world around them.” These remarks resonate with Duncan-Andrade’s (2008) account of a conversational exchange between two recent high school graduates. This encounter revealed the youths’ beliefs about gaining proficiency

with analytical skills that could be applied to subsequent literacy events. As one youth named Yancy explained, “if you’re taught to look at [popular culture] in a certain way and analyze it in a certain way ... then I think, definitely, you can take that knowledge and analyze anything” (p. 122). Affirming this response, another youth named Shaun added, “Critique it, yup” (p. 122) midway through Yancy’s statement. A similar idea appeared in Guinevere’s commentary, as they talked about how actively viewing a video could translate into locating details during other textual encounters. As Guinevere explained, “it’s not that big of a leap to actively read and do the same thing.”

### **Encouraging Student Agency.**

In addition to the idea of transferring skills during future literacy events, participants voiced their thoughts about how multicultural and popular culture texts may promote student growth and betterment, as well as agency and critical thinking within the world around them. Similar ideas are implied in Langer’s (1995) work, which advances the viewpoint that “literature *is* thought-provoking and that students *are* competent thinkers” (p. 56; emphasis in original). Langer suggested that literary experiences offer possibilities for providing “personal, social, and intellectual benefits” (p. 5), as well as “empowering all students to reflect on and potentially reshape themselves and their world” (p. 1). While these points are framed through a discussion of experiences with print-based literature, they are arguably applicable to other text forms as well. For instance, a view of popular culture from an “everyday culture” (Hagood et al., 2010) perspective recognizes that consumers of popular culture are capable of negotiating meaning in the text, rather than passively accepting preassigned meanings. This suggests that popular culture could function as a resource for critical thinking, which might extend

to taking an agentic stance toward a topic or issue of importance. Complimenting this perspective, Janks (2014) highlighted a critical literacy approach and the role of student agency when detailing how a lesson on the impact of bottled water consumption could offer implications for examining the issue and determining a course of action to respond to the problem. Janks declared that “[e]ducation has a responsibility to develop students’ sense of agency,” a statement that, when applied generally, relates to taking proactive steps toward improving some aspect of society. This idea also appeared in Glenn and Ginsberg’s (2019) discussion of the challenges inherent in teaching multicultural young adult novels that centralize “touchy subject[s]” (p. 194), such as race. Glenn and Ginsberg asserted that the school functions as a site that prepares students for active, democratic citizenry, including the recognition that individual decisions exert an influence on others. Similarly, Morrell and Morrell (2012) suggested that studying literature could empower students “to take a broader and more agentic view of the world” (p. 12), with possibilities for taking action toward the betterment of society.

Participants vocalized their thoughts about preparing students for the world beyond the classroom, with an emphasis on critical thinking and adopting “a sense of agency” (in April’s words). When talking about opening a conversational space for discussing a multicultural text, Michael spoke about how students have “a voice.” As Michael explained, their students “do have a voice, and they can use it.” A similar perspective surfaced as Michael talked about students being able to “make up their minds” and partake in larger societal discourses, such as those concerning racial equity and Black Lives Matter. Similarly, April pointed to the overarching goal of helping students to realize their capacity for agency, “self-advocacy,” and thinking for

themselves. Guinevere acknowledged that the teacher is merely a “guide,” and students will be “making their own decisions.” Guinevere suggested that students should be given ample “option[s]” of information to further their education and spoke about how access to cultural texts and different languages could help students to improve the world, with students becoming “better human beings.” Whereas Guinevere implied that expanded access offers a means toward individual and societal betterment, Torres (2019) wrote about how seeing aspects of the self in the text might instill these qualities. Torres asserted that texts representative of “the superhero genre” (p. 162) could show “youth of color to imagine better futures and see themselves as agentic individuals” (p. 168). This might be accomplished by seeing exemplars of these qualities in the text, modeled by protagonists who share a common race, language, or other marker of cultural identity. Through seeing how change is possible in “imagined spaces” (p. 168), Torres extrapolated that this may translate into aspirations for change in the real world, particularly as it relates to racial inequities and social justice issues. This literature-based example and participants’ ideologies invoke the idea that education should extend transformative possibilities for individual agency and societal participation, a perspective championed by foundational thinkers such as Dewey (1916) and Freire (1970), as well as proponents of the ideals of multicultural education (e.g., Banks, 1998; Banks & Banks, 1995, 2001; Howe & Lisi, 2020; Nieto, 1995).

### **Seeing Reflections of the Self and Others in the Text.**

Participant responses offered insight into how encounters with diverse texts provide students with opportunities to identify aspects of themselves and their communities reflected in the text. Participants also elaborated on how texts are capable of

providing entryways into considering multiple perspectives and differing ways of life, while also showing the commonalities that exist between themselves and others. The text's positioning as a resource for exploring multiple perspectives appeared across the literature, particularly within studies focusing on the use of multicultural texts in the classroom (e.g., Glazier & Seo, 2005; Haddix & Price-Dennis, 2013; Kim, 2014; Louie, 2005; Morrell & Morrell, 2012). Bishop's (1990) highly influential and frequently cited analogy of mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors captures the significant role of the text in promoting access to reflections of the self as situated within the realm of human experience, while also providing a space for the reader to learn about others by stepping into their worlds. Echoing these ideas, Landt (2006) posited that "Imaginary barriers dissolve as students see themselves reflected in a diversity of cultures and recognize similarities across invented boundaries" (p. 697). Singer and Smith (2003) likewise described how multicultural texts offer entry to "both unfamiliar and universal situations" (p. 18) and enable readers - including those from dominant groups - the ability to view "the world through other people's eyes" (pp. 17-18). Singer and Smith identified parallels between these goals and culturally responsive approaches, which call for the inclusion of content that accurately portrays historically marginalized groups (Gay, 1995). The idea of textual accuracy in representation resounded in Bishop's (1990) work, which emphasized that the text communicates powerful messages to the reader, particularly when portrayals of the reader's own culture or identity are inauthentic or lacking altogether. Related to this point, Smagorinsky et al. (2020) addressed how some educational institutions have supported the "muffling of other perspectives" (p. 60) from school curricula, thereby

accentuating how issues of access may be enmeshed with the use of texts that advance various points of view.

Despite concerns such as these, participants spoke favorably about how the text invites students to see aspects of the self, other individuals, and the intermingling of the two, as well as how multicultural textual encounters could foster open-mindedness and access to differing perspectives. These collective viewpoints align to Morrell and Morrell's (2012) assertion that multicultural literature helps the reader to gain social awareness, access to "many points of view" (p. 12), and an understanding of the self, others, and the world. For instance, Michael expressed that a multicultural text could help students to learn about a teenager "who lives on a reservation" and is "just like they are but his troubles are much different and yet the same." April also supplied examples showing how students identified with real and fictional characters and captured the duality of Bishop's (1990) mirrors and windows analogy when stating, "I want to include texts that shows who they are in those texts, but I also want to be able to show other cultures." April further spoke to the idea of similar, yet different life experiences reflected in the text, as shown when they implied that their students might ponder, "it was like, that was me. But it's not me" when reading *I Am Malala*. In this instance, the text featuring Malala's experience detailed events occurring in a setting where citizens, particularly females, were marginalized. Other examples supplied by participants also included characters reflecting populations historically sidelined by society (such as *Monster* and *No Choirboy*). Including texts such as these provides entry into hearing multiple perspectives, while also uplifting the voices of marginalized populations (Langer, 1995). In another instance of April's commentary, they mentioned that students

“don’t usually see themselves in characters” and equated a need for increased textual diversity to providing students with opportunities “to be able to see themselves in the text,” much like Torres’s (2019) advocacy for youth of color to identify themselves within a comic book text with portrayals of strong, positive characters. Similarly, Guinevere talked about seeing representations of difference and similarity within a popular anime franchise and expressed that it would be an “awesome experience” for students to see “a culture that is parallel to where you live” reflected in the text.

A related area of commentary pointed to the virtues of being open-minded, which relates to deepening an understanding of the self and others. This is reminiscent of one of Banks’s (1999, as cited in Howe & Lisi, 2020) main purposes of multicultural education, which includes fostering “greater self-understanding” (p. 21) by looking inward to the self through the lens of other cultural perspectives. Related to this point, Ghiso et al. (2012) discussed the merit of promoting cultural understanding among children and adolescent readers through literary experiences. Following a review of culturally informed literary texts identified as “promoting global understanding” (p. 12), Ghiso et al. suggested that the text may extend possibilities for seeing “representations of social cooperation and the interconnectedness of humanity” (p. 21) alongside a critical awareness about inequality. Along these lines, Guinevere offered several examples of open-mindedness, including their own journey toward cultural understanding, and the belief that students who are “literate in multiple cultures” will in turn “be better at accepting those other cultures.” Michael looked toward the past to suggest that people should elect “open-minded” officials (thereby implying the worth they assigned to this quality), and April expressed how cultural texts encourage an “open-minded” stance “to

different cultures.” Underlying these examples is the idea that today’s readers, who interact with a range of texts and situations in a global, interconnected world, make meaning from listening to diverse perspectives, and in doing so, gain insight into aspects of the self and one’s own identity (Tierney & Pearson, 2021).

Another aspect of multiple perspectives that emerged in participant responses included a focus on women’s point of view and experiences, which offered a noteworthy juxtaposition to remarks about the reliance on canonical texts authored by the “old dead White guys.” The appearance of gender as a focal area in the data underscores how learning about the self and others may extend to multiple markers of identity and cultural affiliation. It also speaks to another reason why authentic representations in texts are so important. Evoking the work of Bishop (1990), Wender (2019) discussed how texts have often assigned a “dominant gaze” toward gender and race by positioning individuals as an “object,” where women are the “viewed” and men are the “viewers,” and people of color are “seen, reduced, or stereotyped” (p. 42). In contrast, an oppositional gaze shifts the power away from the stronghold of the dominant gaze and its inclination to provide inaccurate, dishonest portrayals of experience. As Wender explained, “Multicultural young adult (YA) literature, in particular, powerfully counters the dominant gaze by making it visible to the reader through honest first-person narrators, explorations of identity, and recognition of society’s injustices” (p. 43). Consistent with this outlook, Michael highlighted the value of exploring issues such as gender bias and gender discrimination in the classroom and envisioned a unit of study that would centralize texts representing the female perspective. Rationalizing why a unit on gender would be an appropriate area of focus, Michael declared that “there’s more on women suffering than



there is on men suffering.” Among the authors and titles Michael discussed, *The Joy Luck Club* appeared at numerous points. Rosenblatt (1995) mentioned how *The Joy Luck Club* “join[s] in the rejection of traditions of women’s subservience” (p. 194) and is situated within a corpus of literature that extends “a great variety of views of woman’s place in society” (pp. 193-194). Rosenblatt also linked “[f]eminist aspirations” to “the ongoing struggle for human rights” (p. 194), which further appeals to a rationale for elevating the female perspective. A similar line of thinking emerged as April spoke about the female voice emerging across texts such as *Persepolis*, *I Am Malala*, and *Marigolds*. When discussing *I Am Malala*, April noted the inequities in educational prospects for females living in other countries and spoke to this “struggle” in comparison to their own students’ experiences in a nation where educational attainment is possible “no matter your gender.” Similarly, Guinevere’s description of impactful female-centered texts featured protagonists who “were put at odds,” with one author “[going] through a lot.” Extrapolating from examples such as these, participants highlighted how perspectives flowing from women and individuals with diverse gender identities may be additive to student learning by offering possibilities for seeing the self, learning about others, and expanding an awareness of the human condition.

### **Gaining Exposure to a World Beyond the Classroom and Local Community.**

Alongside participant viewpoints about accessing multiple perspectives and strengthening an understanding of the self and others, commentary highlighted how multicultural and popular culture texts transcend the local to provide access to global events, perspectives, and information. Participants spoke to the necessity of exposing their students to a range of viewpoints and ways of life, and also expressed a willingness

to incorporate texts that feature real-world topics and issues into their teaching, including those that may be perceived as controversial. In contrast to participants' receptive stance, Glazier and Seo (2005) discussed how some topics are "silenced" from the classroom, including those that provide a counterpoint to narratives about the "[o]fficial knowledge" (p. 687) of the school and issues such as race, gender, and the economy. This point hearkens to the political nature of schooling (Freire, 1970, 1985; Freire & Machado, 1987; Heath, 1983; Shor, 1992) and the notion that literacy learning is not neutral (Pahl & Rowsell, 2005; Street, 2003). Glazier and Seo further equated "[s]ilenced topics" with "hot lava" topics (Glazier, 2003, as cited in Glazier & Seo, 2005), a descriptor that conveys how some subjects, including class, race, inequality, and culture, may invoke strong responses, even incensing some who do not agree with their inclusion in the classroom. Yet, the idea of "hot lava" also signals the presence of a spark, one that may instill a sense of discovery and exploration among students who are exposed to issues that invite critical reflection and critique. Along these lines and corresponding to the tenets of critical approaches and multicultural education, Shor (1992) spoke to the broader aims of schooling, suggesting that educational institutions provide "a socializing experience that helps make the people who make society" (p. 15). As one way to advance a student-centered, "problem-posing" (p. 55) classroom based on promoting critical discourse, Shor explained that educators can mindfully select "topical themes" (p. 56) reflecting social issues that are consequential to students' lives. Consistent with this approach, Glenn and Ginsberg (2019) asserted that classrooms and texts should "offer opportunities for complicated and necessary conversations" (p. 195) to take place. This includes providing

adolescents with an outlet for exploring both the self and others, while grappling with “issues that matter – even, especially, those that might be easier to ignore” (p. 195).

While participants recognized considerations such as the need for curricular approval and the caution inherent in selecting texts and topics for instruction, they displayed an openness to providing their students with exposure to timely and critical topics and positioning the text as a means toward this end. These perspectives relate to Ladson-Billings’ conceptualization of culturally relevant pedagogy (1995a, 1995b, 2009, 2014), which originally emphasized academic success, cultural competence regarding students’ own and additional cultures, and the development of sociopolitical consciousness, which is defined as “tak[ing] learning beyond the confines of the classroom using school knowledge and skills to identify, analyze, and solve real-world problems” (2014, p. 75). Ladson-Billings (2009) further described how this action-oriented framework “is about questioning (and preparing students to question) the structural inequity, the racism, and the injustice that exist in society” (p. 140). Complementing this approach, Gay’s (2000) overview of culturally responsive teaching explained that a main component of its “transformative agenda” (p. 34) includes “develop[ing] social consciousness, intellectual critique, and political and personal efficacy in students so that they can combat prejudices, racism, and other forms of oppression and exploitation” (p. 34). Howe and Lisi (2020) similarly noted that developing “a sense of civic responsibility and social consciousness” (p. 23) and preparation to contribute to a diverse, global world are among the key attributes of multicultural education. These descriptions capture the importance and implications of

exposure to critical topics and societal preparation in the classroom, both of which may be realized through textual and instructional opportunities for meaning making.

The prioritization of topics and issues with societal and cultural relevance arose in the data as Michael and April spoke about the multicultural and popular culture texts alongside the inclusion of topics such as racism, Black Lives Matter, gender equality, and the criminal justice system. Guinevere also discussed how a lack of exposure to the realities and histories of the world could result in “denying [students] knowledge that they could use to make our future better.” Underlying these examples was the idea that textual engagement and classroom experiences with culturally diverse texts allow students to gain insights to experiences and real-world issues that transcend students’ immediate surroundings, a concern that Michael implied was particularly important for students growing up in “small town USA.” As Michael expressed, multicultural texts in particular could extend a lens through which to “see the bigger picture” and get “a glimpse into what else is going on in the world.” Echoing the notion of accessing the broader world beyond the local community, April spoke about showing students “that there is more to the world out there,” and Guinevere talked about how popular culture “opens peoples’ minds.” Similar to these perspectives, Wolk (2009) contended that teaching approaches should situate young adult literature in ways that promote social responsibility and inquiry. Wolk suggested that adopting these pedagogical goals could “help students (and ourselves) learn to act to make a better world” (p. 672).

### **Connections to Theoretical Frameworks**

In addition to considering how the four themes are situated alongside scholarly works and perspectives, additional insights are gained through viewing study findings

through key theoretical lenses. The application of theory helps to explain the deeper meanings and implications of this work, while also providing a “philosophical grounding” (Tracey & Morrow, 2012, p. 7) to the research. Moreover, in the field of qualitative research, theory provides a basis for achieving more abstract understandings and enables the researcher to establish connections to “broader issues of the day” (Gay et al., 2006, as cited in Tracey & Morrow, 2012, p. 9). I selected two related, yet distinct theoretical frameworks through which to view this study: 1) critical literacies and pedagogies, and 2) a pedagogy of multiliteracies.

### ***Critical Literacies and Pedagogies***

The first theoretical lens is grounded in the critical stance advocated by Paolo Freire, who wrote about the liberating possibilities of education. A main tenet of Freire’s (1970, 1985) work is the rejection of education as a transmissive enterprise, where the educator assumes an all-knowing position of authority, and students are empty vessels awaiting the unquestioned knowledge of their teacher. Freire’s analogy of transmissive education acting like a bank lends clarity to these ideas, prompting the reader to visualize an educator depositing knowledge into students, who passively absorb the messages of wisdom afforded by the school. In contrast to education as a means of perpetuating a powerless citizenry within a hegemonic society, education for liberation seeks to reposition the educator “in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach” (Freire, 1970, p. 61). Freire further coined the idea of a “problem-posing education” (which Shor, 1992, also adopted) to describe how students should be situated as dialogic critical thinkers who uphold the virtues of inquiry and transformation. In this way, the very essence of humanity exists in a state of “*becoming* – as unfinished,

uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality” (Freire, 1970, p. 65, emphasis in original). Freire’s words embody the idea that people strive for a sense of betterment within an imperfect, not yet complete world, with a problem-posing education offering a vehicle toward personal and societal examination and critique.

Applying a critical lens across the themes illuminates how issues of institutional power, textual access, and a need to appease stakeholders contribute to and complicate text use and curricular implementation. Underlying these findings is the idea that classroom learning remains entrenched within a system of conformity to state and district-wide oversights and assessment demands. Though rationalized through a well-intentioned goal of accountability and promises of uniform access to educational equity, the school nonetheless exerts an authoritative grip on perceptions about what can, cannot, should, and should not be taught within the classroom. A critical literacy framework views the school as a site that assumes responsibility for “regulating access to resources and knowledge” (Luke & Freebody, 1997, p. 6) and reproducing the culture of the dominant group (Giroux, 1985). This resounded in educator’s statements about needing approval and adopting a cautious approach to text use, even as the school principal played an active and positive role in extending support and empowering educators to select the new textbook program. As another concern, participants cited the need for instructional guidance, studies, and supports for using multicultural and popular culture texts. They also implied that while mentorship, collaboration, and teacher autonomy are valued, the school, district, and state do not provide systematic efforts, such as professional development sessions or collaborative learning groups, to target, support, and sustain the incorporation of diverse texts into the curriculum. Viewed through a

critical perspective that “challenges the traditional belief that education is a politically neutral process” (Tracey & Morrow, 2012, p. 133), these realities emphasize the power structure of schooling, where the reigning voice of the institution, as overseen by state and district-wide governance, dictates policy, with limited or few opportunities for dialogic interaction between educators and decision-makers.

Even though the presence of institutional authority arose within the data, participants’ commentary and their positioning of the text often aligned to the classroom practices and ideological stances of a critical pedagogue. Lewison and Leland (2002) explained that “Critical literacies are rooted in principles of democracy and justice, questioning and analysis, resistance and action – all uncommon in the traditional pedagogy that defines a teacher as a transmitter of knowledge” (p. 109). They further identified five main components of a critical literacy framework, including “interrogating the everyday world,” “questioning power relationships,” “appreciating multiple realities and viewpoints,” “analyzing popular culture and media,” and “taking action to promote social justice.” Unrau and Alvermann (2013) pointed to the work of Lewison and Leland (2002) when articulating an overview of critical literacy, noting that this theoretical framework prioritizes emancipation and empowerment, particularly of marginalized individuals and groups. They explained that critical literacy practices allow “readers to see their world more clearly, understand how it works, rewrite the world with their interests written in, and take more liberating action within it” (p. 78).

Participants spoke to and embodied these goals in a variety of ways that centralized the role of multicultural and popular culture texts in the classroom. This included encouraging meaningful discussions, promoting critical analysis, inviting

societal critique, and valuing critical thinking and student agency. Activities such as these approach the idea that literacy instruction based on a critical stance should encourage students to cultivate a sense of curiosity and skepticism (Freire & Machedo, 1987; Shor, 1992) about knowledge and the world, which captures the idea that education functions to encourage questioning and discourse, rather than passive acceptance of the status quo (Freire, 1970, 1985; Freire & Machedo, 1987; Shor, 1992). Extending the idea of curiosity and discovery, participants spoke about how the text could enable students to recognize aspects of the self and the perspectives of others with differing and similar sociocultural and sociohistorical realities. An awareness of the marginalization experienced by groups such as women, Black and Hispanic teenagers, and members of the LGBTQ community also surfaced in the data, which nodded toward participants' recognition of the power imbalances that have historically infiltrated daily life, and the value ascribed to seeing and examining representations of these groups in the text.

The agency exerted by the three participants within an education system defined by politics also signaled how the individual teacher negotiates the space between mandates and autonomy. Shor (1992) spoke about teacher choice, noting the discontent that may emanate from "the limits of the traditional curriculum" (p. 14), and suggesting that educators' decisions (provided that decision-making capacities are present) position the classroom as a site that is "critical or uncritical, democratic or authoritarian" (p. 14). Central to this dichotomy is the inclusion or exclusion of multicultural representation within classroom texts, which communicate strong messages about whose stories are worthy of inclusion and whose experiences and histories are omitted or misrepresented. Luke and Freebody (1997) noted that disagreements about literacy resources are in reality



“disputes over how and which forms of life are to be represented, and whose representations of whom are to ‘count’” (p. 3). This point helps to explain why the omission or lack of representation of culturally diverse voices, as well as the overt or subtle condemnation of texts central to youth literacy practices, could impart strong messages of acceptance or dismissal to students.

Aligned to these points, participants recognized that White, male voices have traditionally dominated English learning, while countless other perspectives and stories have been sidelined, despite their worthiness for inclusion. Contrasting the idea of the canon and invoking Freire’s (1970) conception of the problem-posing classroom, Lewison and Leland (2002) asserted that a critical literacy approach empowers a co-construction of the curriculum founded on “the lives and interests of students” (p. 109), where “real-life issues and popular culture ... become topics of study” (p. 109). To these points, participant responses revealed favorable views about including real-world issues and topics and providing access to relatable and relevant textual experiences. Within these discussions, participants communicated that the texts and platforms many students value, such as TikTok, rap music, and video games, are valid and worthy of appearing in the classroom in appropriate ways that advance literacy learning. Weaver and Dasgupta (1999) suggested that popular culture texts – despite their complicity within complex institutions of power - extend “a pedagogy of possibility” (p. xxvii) that uplifts “silenced voices” (p. xxvii) and exists as a site of resistance. Similarly, Lewison and Leland (2002) wrote about how a critical approach illuminates multiple perspectives and difference, thus fostering a curricular space that counteracts “consensus and conformity” (p. 110). By displaying an openness toward prioritizing multicultural and popular culture texts that

feature various cultural groups, participants extended the message that a range of voices, perspectives, and identities merit a place in the literacy curriculum.

As additional areas of consideration, critical frameworks emphasize an action-oriented stance to improve the world and address issues of social justice, as well as developing an appreciation for the perspectives and experiential realities of others (Lewis & Leland, 2002). Related to these ideas, the fourth theme encompasses participant insights about preparing students to navigate the world beyond high school, which includes a focus on gaining and transferring literacy-based skills, being open-minded toward others, thinking for oneself, and gaining exposure to diverse ideas, perspectives, and ways of life. Participants supplied evidence of looking ahead to the future and implied that the educator serves a preparatory function in readying students to embark upon an imperfect world of contradiction and promise, within a nation that inaugural poet Amanda Gorman (2021) described not as “broken,” but as “simply unfinished.”

### ***A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies***

The second theoretical lens reflects the work of The New London Group (1996), which was comprised of literacy scholars who articulated a literacy-based pedagogical framework in response to a “changing social environment” (p. 60) defined by increasing student diversity and expanded forms of communication. The New London Group advocated for a wide definition of literacy that entails “negotiating a multiplicity of discourses” (p. 61) amid the growing availability of a range of multimodal, technological, and media-based text types. Alongside these attributes, scholars posited that communication resides in culturally and contextually mediated “modes of representation” (p. 64), which move beyond traditional language to include other forms of making

meaning (such as linguistic, visual, auditory, spatial, gestural, or behavioral modes).

Cope and Kalantzis (2015) indicated that this emphasis on multiple modes of meaning reflected the burgeoning of media-driven and digital multimodal texts, which utilize varied forms of meaning-making platforms that extend beyond “alphabetic representations” (p. 3). Added to these tenets of a multiliteracies approach is a critical orientation that focuses on access, equity, and the “disparities” (New London Group, 1996, p. 61) that exist among individuals and groups, as well as preparation for students to become active citizens, capable of intercultural communication, with the skills needed to embark upon a productive, engaged work life (New London Group, 1996). As a means toward these goals, pedagogies based on multiliteracies focus on the idea of *Design* (p. 65), where individuals are both “designers of meaning” and “designers of social futures” (p. 65). This distinction reframes learners as unbound to “static rules” (p. 74) about meaning making, while also repositioning educators “as designers of learning processes and environments” (p. 73), rather than “bosses” (p. 73) who regulate the thoughts and behaviors of their students. Moreover, educators develop learners’ proficiencies through “four components of pedagogy” (p. 85), which are grounded in sociocultural and critical applications. These include *Situated Practice*, which capitalizes on student experiences and builds a community of learners; *Overt Instruction*, which emphasizes Vygotskian principles such as scaffolding, collaborating, and the zone of proximal development; *Critical Framing*, which focuses on critiquing assumed knowledge and developing an awareness of the cultural context underlying information; and *Transformed Practice*, which encourages students to “apply and revise what they have learned” (p. 87).

Since the publication of the original multiliteracies manifesto, scholarship has reflected on the nuances and contemporary relevance and applications of The New London Group's work (e.g., Collier & Rowsell, 2014; Cope & Kalantzis, 2015; Garcia et al., 2018; Mirra et al., 2018), particularly in its application to a globalized world where even more varieties of texts are consumed and produced on platforms and devices that did not exist in the late 1990s. One area of multiliteracies with a renewed focus is its link to critical theories (Collier & Rowsell, 2014; Garcia et al., 2018; Mirra et al., 2018). While some conceptions and applications of multiliteracies have overlooked its social justice orientation and focused more on its emphasis on design and multimodality (Collier & Rowsell, 2014), "critical pedagogy, accounts of power, and Freirean values" (p. 14) share equal priority with other distinguishing characteristics central to the multiliteracies framework. The linkages between a multiliteracies framework and critical literacies are acknowledged within a shared chapter titled "The Critical Wave" in Tierney and Pearson's (2021) historical overview of the literacy field, which frames critical perspectives as seeking "transformative change" (p. 131) and adopting a sense of "critical advocacy" (p. 131) that critically engages with texts, the self, and the world. Similar to questions of power and access generated through a critical literacy perspective, a pedagogy of multiliteracies also grapples with ideas of textual access and voice (Mirra et al., 2018), seeking to extend literacy-based opportunities within a culturally and linguistically diverse society. Mirra et al. (2018) also focused on the critical possibilities afforded by a multiliteracies stance and proposed an extended conceptualization that included four "types of digital engagement" (p. 12): "critical digital consumption," "critical digital production," "critical distribution," and "critical digital invention." The

goals of this expanded conceptualization include empowering students “to produce, distribute, and even invent new media forms” (p. 13) and helping students learn how to “harness tools of expression to amplify their voices and address the pressing social issues affecting their lives in the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (p. 13). Related to this point, Allan Luke, a member of the New London Group, implied that today’s climate of political polarization and expansive access to media touting both accurate and falsified truth claims lend further justification for a critical stance toward literacy learning (Garcia et al., 2018).

Viewing the themes through a multiliteracies lens reveals how participants validated the use of a variety of text types to advance students’ literacy learning, which in many instances also capitalized on texts that could promote interest and engagement. This included traditional print books, such as multicultural young adult novels and canonical literary works, and multimodal texts that included comics, videos, advertisements, social media, music, and graphic novels. Participants also displayed an attentiveness to the semiotic and visual features of texts such as comics, graphic novels, and advertisements, thereby showing how conceptions of text extended beyond language and print-based mediums. Equally noteworthy was the implied awareness that today’s learners use digital tools such as emojis and social media platforms to communicate with others in a reciprocal way, as both receivers and transmitters of communicative output. These observations align to the idea that today’s texts reflect various “modes of representation” mediated by culture and context (New London Group, 1996).

Another component of a multiliteracies approach that emerged in the data included the positioning of students as text consumers and producers (Anstey & Bull, 2006; Mirra et al., 2018; New London Group, 1996), where learners socially situated as

“both inheritors...of meaning” and “active designers of meaning” (New London Group, 1996, p. 65). Participants spoke about situating the text within skills-based lessons that offered opportunities for varied types and displays of meaning-making, with students engaged in critical textual analysis tasks (focusing on both the content and visual features of the text), scaffolded class discussions, and other text-based literacy activities, including one that unpacked the form and function of semiotic text features, and another that encouraged dramatic interpretations of the text. Participants also articulated student-centered lessons that shifted students to the role of textual creators capable of developing their own remixed lyrical poems, TikTok videos, podcast responses, or fanfiction narratives. This active stance challenges critiques that popular culture exists as a passive enterprise that transmits meaning to inactive, unquestioning consumers (Hagood et al., 2010; Storey, 2012), and calls to mind how the consumption of popular texts is linked to issues of power and commercialization (Fiske, 1995). Viewed more broadly, the idea of students adopting the dual positions of text consumers and creators also coincides with Jenkins’s (2006) concept of a “participatory culture,” where individuals embody the role of expressive contributors of textual content, producing media and information that could remain locally bound or reach a wide, global audience. This shift to producer of text also reallocates the power of voice to individuals who previously may not have possessed an outlet for creative expressions of multimodal meaning-making (Mirra et al., 2018).

Within the literacy classroom, opportunities to analyze and create texts could foster inventive displays of 21st century digital literacy skills, while also capitalizing on the proficiencies and culturally informed literacy practices students acquire in out-of-school contexts. Moreover, text creation lessons such as those outlined by participants may

communicate to students that they are “designers of social futures” (New London Group, 1996, p. 65) and their cultures, perspectives, and inventive capacities are valuable assets. Educational experiences based on multiple forms of meaning hold promise for translating into the further development and transfer of these proficiencies in future in- and out-of-school contexts, thus fulfilling the goal of preparing students for an active, collaborative work life and to productively contribute to a diverse society (New London Group, 1996).

### **Implications for Practice**

Michael, April, and Guinevere provided insightful commentary that revealed how multicultural and popular culture texts have been or could be implemented in the secondary English classroom. Participants’ rich descriptions of instructional approaches, classroom interactions, and curricular materials provide a glimpse into the positioning of a range of heterogeneous texts within their teaching. Alongside theory and research, these perspectives and experiences lend a starting point for conceptualizing, approaching, and reimagining the use of multicultural and popular culture texts in a learning environment (see Table 22 for overview of implications for practice and policy).

### ***Partnering Text Genres in the Curriculum***

Particularly among Michael and April, a recurring topic of discussion included the role of multicultural and popular culture texts alongside canonical literature by authors such as Shakespeare and Poe. This commentary evoked the tensions between exposing students to the familiar classics, adhering to curricular mandates, and incorporating diverse texts. The successful use of nontraditional texts and participants’ expressed interest in wanting to broaden their text use suggest possibilities for partnering canonical works with multicultural and popular culture texts. Imbuing units of study with a variety

of text genres that work together in a unified way may offer creative and flexible ways for educators to make content interesting and relatable, while enhancing student learning. Worth noting is that the integration of multicultural and popular culture texts is not meant to supplant or displace the masterful prose of classical literary authors, or the impactful stories conveyed in the pages of their books. Speaking to this concern, Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2005) emphasized that the inclusion of popular culture texts does not imply that canonical texts “should be abandoned” (p. 295). Rather, a 21st century curriculum is capable of honoring the respected voices of tradition while also ushering in new voices and diverse textual mediums that reflect students’ identities and the expansive cultural influences that greet students on a daily basis.

As a means of scaffolding student learning and preserving the position of classical literature alongside more current and wide-ranging textual offerings, researchers have documented how Linked Text Sets (LTS) may enhance units of study with conceptually similar texts reflecting diverse genres and multiple perspectives (e.g., Bintz, 2018; Dodge & Crutcher, 2015; Elish-Piper et al., 2014). Elish-Piper et al. explained that a LTS consists of “a range of print and media, from music and movie clips to poetry, short stories, picture books, informational texts, adolescent literature, and canonical texts” (p. 567). They further articulated that LTSs adhere to standards-based frameworks for engaging with multiple types of texts, are compatible with examining theme-based essential questions, provide a connection to students’ lives and interests, and lend a scaffolded approach to the more complex text-based demands of the secondary classroom. In an illustrative vignette, Elish-Piper et al. showed how a three-phase framework (Engagement, Exploration, and Expansion) anchored the complimentary use



of texts such as popular music, tweets, a young adult novel, and a YouTube clip, which preceded reading *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Offering another example, Dodge and Crutcher (2015) explored how LTSs featuring nonfiction texts and LGBTQ young adult literature reflect critical and social justice-oriented pedagogies and culturally relevant approaches. In addition to discussing how LGBTQ texts might supplement canonical works and adhere to a standards-based curriculum, Dodge and Crutcher drew upon Adichie's (2009) calls to "disrupt the single story" (Dodge & Crutcher, 2015, p. 98) when discussing the necessity of counteracting dominant textual representations that have historically underrepresented or omitted diverse voices. Similar to these examples, educators may benefit from singly or collaboratively customizing LTSs using a variety of multicultural and popular culture mediums to enrich and scaffold students' engagement with canonical works. This also empowers students to see aspects of the self and others represented in the text, which advances yet another finding that emerged within the data. Further, this approach enables educators to build background knowledge, illuminate a unit's relevance to students' lives, and encourage various student-centered response formats (Elish-Piper et al., 2014). As a concrete application referencing the data, Michael's example of a unit of study based on gender could be adapted to include a LTS approach, which would thematically explore an essential question related to issues of gender and the female voice. This could partner a required text, a culturally rich novel such as *The Joy Luck Club*, and ancillary print and multimodal texts to scaffold and provide entry into the unit.

### ***Crafting Rationales to Support Text Choice***

Yet even within the context of thoughtfully designed curricula fusing multiple text genres, educators may experience some concern or hesitation about using

nontraditional texts, as illustrated in the scholarly literature (e.g., Alvermann et al., 1999; Beers, 2010; Callens, 2017; Haddix & Price-Dennis, 2013; Hagood et al., 2010; Ketter & Lewis, 2001; Landt, 2006; Morrell, 2004; Shipp, 2017; Thein, 2013; Xu et al., 2005).

Within the data, the element of caution and concerns about approval and textual appropriateness permeated educators' responses, even as participants expressed a degree of autonomy in their work and noted the supportive role of the principal. To alleviate these anxieties, educators may benefit from individually or collaboratively creating rationales explaining their decisions about text choice and articulating how the selected text aligns to and advances lesson objectives that are linked to curriculum standards. Stallworth et al. (2006) recommended writing rationales prior to teaching a text and equated the practice with being "proactive and purposeful" (p. 488), a position that Glenn and Ginsberg (2019) similarly adopted in relation to multicultural texts that could be considered controversial. In addition to helping educators "justify" (Smagorinsky, 2008, p. 112) curricular decisions, rationales could be included in a letter seeking a parental signature (Morrell, 2004; Xu et al., 2005), particularly if the content will include "mature themes" (Morrell, 2004, p. 143). Adding to these points, Xu et al. (2005) suggested that well-articulated rationales for the teaching of popular culture may assist educators with gaining support from parents and administrators. Citing guidelines published by the National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE; Brown & Stephens, as cited in Xu et al., 2005) that addressed the use of "challenged" texts, Xu et al. enumerated steps for the development of effective rationales, including adding citations; recognizing the audience; summarizing the text; explaining its relationship to the course of study, its impact, and problems that might be encountered; noting additional information about the text; and

identifying related alternative texts. In addition to these recommendations, educators might also pinpoint how the text relates to specific strategies, standards, or learning outcomes, possibly using the rationale in conjunction with a written lesson plan. For instance, participants spoke to the use of strategies such as the Frayer Model and dialectical journals to support understanding and scaffold responses to the text.

Explicating in writing how strategies such as these connect to the selected text may allow educators to build confidence with their text choices and more explicitly show how the strategy works alongside the text. Although writing a rationale presents an additional task for educators, the development of a stated rationale and clear connections to targeted learning standards provide additional clarity on instructional goals and function as documentation about how the text serves a useful and additive purpose within the lesson. Furthermore, by investing in this step, the educator will create a model reference that can also be shared with colleagues to illustrate how to design their own effective rationales.

### ***Learning About Students' Identities and Interests***

Also emerging in the data were comments about student interest and engagement, with participants acknowledging the generational particularities that both unite and distinguish themselves from their students. Participants also spoke about relating to their students, providing access to relevant and relatable texts, student comfort with texts, and students making connections and responding to the text. These patterns of commentary suggest that participants prioritize the use of meaningful content and texts that intersect with students' lives. Yet, given the array of individual identities and preferences among students, educators may experience uncertainty about selecting well-suited multicultural or popular culture texts that meet these goals. To assist with text selection, the use of

teacher-created informal student interest surveys or questionnaires and discussions about students' out-of-school interests and cultural affiliations might be used to inform text choice and extend possibilities for differentiating instruction based on students' interests (Xu et al., 2004). Shatter (1951) documented the use of an informal survey to gain insight into older adolescent students' reading habits and preferences, and found that popular magazines, tabloids, and comics were among the materials students frequently read. Over seven decades later, there is still merit in Shatter's observations that survey responses could inform grouping strategies and allow for better understanding of the individual student. Similarly, in the context of a study on culturally relevant literature, Cartledge et al. (2015) advocated for the use of informal assessments, interviews, and discussions to learn about students' interests, backgrounds, and how well they "identify with the texts" (p.19). Extending this point, Alvermann & Xu (2003) proposed that surveys provide a way for both teachers and students to reveal their thoughts about popular culture, while Morrell (2004) highlighted the idea of "student informants" (p. 120) who communicate with the teacher about youth culture, a task that could provide an up-to-date glimpse into ephemeral nature of popular texts. Further, educator might adopt an ethnographic stance to learning about students' interests (Johnson, 2018; Morrell, 2004), using methods such as observation, recording information, collecting artifacts, and interviewing students (Morrell, 2004). In addition to learning more about the cultural affiliations and interests of students, efforts such as these could enhance the development of positive student-teacher relationships, which are highly valued by students (Intrator & Kunzman, 2009).

Another component of participant commentary that spoke to text selection included the idea of students seeing themselves reflected in the text, as well as providing

students with a lens into other perspectives and lived experiences. Similar to the idea of a student interest inventory, educators might develop activities that empower students to reflect on and share individual and cultural attributes with the class. Myers (2017) detailed the implementation of a culturally responsive “Circles of My Multicultural Self” activity that prompted students to share aspects of their experiences and identities with their peers. Using a graphic organizer, students jotted key life moments related to “identifiers” (p. 44) such as ethnicity, hobbies, or gender, which provided the basis for small group discussions. Myers suggested that this activity helped create “an intercultural community” (p. 44) built on a dialogical teacher-student relationship, where learning and teaching are shared endeavors. This type of activity could provide a starting point for selecting texts that feature voices that represent members of the classroom community and the cultural surroundings of the school, while also lending insight into texts that complement students’ lived realities in some ways but differ in others. Participants spoke to this duality of access to stories featuring lived experiences that are similar to yet distinct from students’ lives, as seen in texts such as *I Am Malala* and *Monster*. Making informed decisions about cultural texts may facilitate personal connections to the content, prompt students to call upon their prior knowledge during textual interactions (Shipp, 2017), and provide students with access to windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors (Bishop, 1990). Moreover, by getting to know students, educators communicate that they appreciate the sociohistorical and present-day realities of students, while also encouraging positive classroom relationships and building a community of learners.

**Table 22***Implications for Practice and Policy.*

<b><i>Partnering Text Genres in the Curriculum</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include diverse texts representing multiple modes and genres alongside canonical works</li> <li>• Develop and incorporate Linked Text Sets to anchor units of study</li> </ul>
<b><i>Crafting Rationales to Support Text Choice</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Articulate decisions about text choice and linkages to curricular standards and learning objectives</li> <li>• Create rationales to communicate with parents and administrators</li> </ul>
<b><i>Learning About Students' Identities and Interests</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administer student interest surveys or questionnaires</li> <li>• Facilitate discussions about students' out-of-school interests and cultural affiliations</li> <li>• Communicate with students to learn more about youth culture and popular culture interests</li> <li>• Adopt ethnographic methods to learn more about students</li> <li>• Develop activities to share aspects of student identity and build a community of learners</li> </ul>
<b><i>Adopting a Critical Approach to Text Selection and Literacy Learning</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approach literacy learning from a critical perspective that emphasizes teaching for societal change and values multiple modes of meaning-making</li> <li>• Provide curricular opportunities to question, critique, analyze, and interrogate texts through a critical lens</li> <li>• Prepare students to become active citizens, to engage with multiple perspectives, and to productively contribute to society</li> </ul>
<b><i>Positioning Students as Producers and Consumers of Diverse Texts</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide opportunities for students to interact with and create a range of media-based, multimodal, and print texts, including (but not limited to) podcasts, videos, movies, music, plays, and more</li> <li>• Develop students' capacities for self-expression, making textual connections, critiquing critical topics, engaging with digital and technological tools, and displaying in- and out-of-school literacy practices</li> </ul>
<b><i>Providing Support Through Professional Development Sessions (PDs)</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct a needs assessment to develop sustained, constructivist professional development initiatives to support educators with selecting and implementing supplemental multicultural and popular culture texts within the curriculum</li> </ul>
<b><i>Establishing a Culture of Mentorship and Collaboration</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide ongoing support to newer and more experienced educators through a culture of collaboration and colleague mentorships</li> <li>• Facilitate department-wide book clubs to support academic discourse and ongoing engagement with foundational and innovative pedagogical perspectives</li> </ul>

### ***Adopting a Critical Approach to Text Selection and Literacy Learning***

Equally salient findings in the data included the value participants ascribed to exposing students to the world beyond their small town and providing opportunities for students to think for themselves, with the goal of preparing students to transfer skills to new contexts and achieve prosperity with future endeavors. Educators may benefit from using multicultural and popular culture texts in ways that infuse their curriculum with action-oriented lessons that draw upon critical literacy (Freire, 1970) and multiliteracies frameworks (New London Group, 1996). These theoretical lenses prioritize the preparation of students to contribute to society, which includes engaging in productive discourses with other members of their community and displaying an open mind toward other perspectives and points of view. Moje (2000) contended that educators who maintain the status quo opt for standard print texts that advance dominant values and historical perspectives, whereas a more progressive, egalitarian view of education would incorporate students' interests into learning conventional literacy skills. Educators with a critical disposition "would view literacy as a *tool*" (p. 108, emphasis in original) toward societal change and validate using multimodal texts for communication and meaning making. Moje's progressive and critical approaches resonate with today's society, which arguably reflects a particularly polarizing time in the nation's history. This necessitates a populace empowered to make meaning from diverse texts as they "critique and question the world" (Haddix & Price-Dennis, 2013, p. 254), which entails analyzing information, distinguishing fact from fiction, questioning inequities, and working toward collective betterment and societal progress. Also, literacy skills in comprehending and evaluating texts are "increasingly critical in an era of information saturation" (Proctor and Chang-

Bacon, 2020, p. 17). This may include interrogating texts to consider what groups or individuals are omitted from the story, whose perspectives are amplified or withheld, and what themes are present or lacking (Shor, 1992). It might also involve critically engaging with authentic, high-interest historical representations of human experience presented in the text, as seen in Chun's (2009) discussion of the critical possibilities afforded by teaching the visually captivating graphic novel *Maus*. Scaffolded small and whole group discussions (Shipp, 2017), project-based activities aimed toward societal improvement, and the Linked Text Set approach (Elish-Piper et al., 2014) all fit with these curricular goals, particularly if the guiding essential question is purposefully constructed from a critical disposition. Aligned to these aims, popular media content retrievable across digital platforms extends multiple pathways for exploring topics using an inquisitive, analytical lens. Multicultural content similarly offers opportunities to critique historical and current real-world representations of inequities or injustices, as well as to learn about and empathize with various worldviews and experiences. Thein et al. (2019) noted that applying a critical stance to multicultural YA literature "helps students consider how culture, race, class, gender, and power are represented through youth characters ... written expressly for a youth audience" (p. 153). Moreover, a critical lens is applicable to uncovering how traditional literature "is embedded in and shaped by ideologies" (Borsheim-Black et al., 2014, p. 124), thus opening possibilities for using multicultural, popular culture, and canonical works in tandem to advance critical literacy skills.

### ***Positioning Students as Producers and Consumers of Diverse Texts***

Participants also provided examples that showed how multicultural and popular culture texts functioned or could be positioned as objects of consumption, with students



interacting with a text authored by another individual or group, as well as examples that located students as the creators of original or remixed multimodal texts. Building further on critical and multiliteracies frameworks, classrooms that capitalize on the creative possibilities of text production may provide an additional means of realizing students' capacities for self-expression; making connections to the content, themselves, and others; exploring and critiquing critical topics; engaging with real-world issues; recognizing alternate realities and points of view; utilizing familiar and newly encountered digital and technological tools; and showcasing literacy practices and skills acquired in both in- and out-of-school contexts. Mirra et al.'s (2018) discussion of critically consuming, distributing, and inventing media as a means toward actively engaging in 21st century discourses described "media consumption and production as symbiotic partners" (p. 16), yet pointed out that low-income, non-White students may encounter less opportunities for text production. This point underscores the need to address these disparities (New London Group, 1996) and reimagine how students might author their own media-based, multimodal, and print texts, which might include expansive options such as podcasts, fanfiction, videos, music, fictionalized Twitter threads or social media pages, blogs, comics, short play performances, and more. From a culturally responsive standpoint, when students incorporate aspects of their cultural selves and experiences into the work they produce, they create a multicultural artifact for others to learn from, which affirms that their contributions are valuable assets to the broad textual arena of contemporary life.

### **Implications for Policy**

In addition to learning about participants' experiences and perceptions related to multicultural and popular culture texts in the classroom, the data also spoke to the

challenges, constraints, and possibilities surrounding text use in the larger context of modern-day schools. Participants' collective contributions and their relationship to research and theory offer possible directions for school policy initiatives that support educators' efforts to incorporate nontraditional texts into the curriculum.

***Providing Support through Professional Development Sessions (PDs)***

A prominent finding across the data included the important roles of administrator and colleague support, including the idea of assisting colleagues with text use and speaking to the principal to request professional development (PD) services. Participants also discussed issues of textual availability and access, with an added focus on a need for instructional guidance and resources. Underscoring these points was an emphasis on the political nature of schooling, with a state-mandated system of standards-based accountability positioned at the forefront of curriculum and instruction. Given these considerations, a series of school-wide PD sessions may offer additional support to educators with utilizing multicultural and popular culture texts in ways that foster students' literacy learning, capitalize on students' interests, promote engagement, complement state standards, and adhere to district-wide curricular mandates.

In an overview outlining findings from a 2020 international survey of literacy professionals, the International Literacy Association (ILA, 2020) reported that educators are “the single greatest factor” (p. 15) that contributes to student achievement. Yet, the ILA also recognized that educators “cannot, and should not, feel alone in helping students reach their potential” (p. 15). This is one reason why PDs, collaborative partnerships, and access to proven research-based strategies are “so critical” (p. 15) for the success of students and teachers alike. In support of this position, research suggests that PDs and

coaching contribute to policy implementation (Coburn et al., 2011), with PDs serving alongside teacher preparation as a valuable approach to “promoting quality literacy instruction in schools” (Proctor & Chang-Bacon, 2020, p. 21). Effective PDs incorporate a constructivist, rather than transmissive approach, where educators construct meaning by applying their prior knowledge to learning activities (Vogt & Shearer, 2011) and actively participate in a range of activities (Bean, 2009).

Sustained PD sessions may provide a powerful, collaborative, and flexible way to explore how multicultural and popular culture texts are compatible with the curriculum and to support both newer and more experienced educators with incorporating a diverse array of texts into their teaching. The environment of support extended by PD sessions may translate into opportunities for educators to gain knowledge and confidence about creative ways to include nontraditional texts into their standards-based lessons. An extensive assortment of focal areas and activities could be featured within PD sessions. These might include reflecting on and articulating beliefs and perceptions about using multicultural and popular culture texts; observing and partaking in model lessons conducted by educators with experience integrating these texts into literacy learning; discussing how diverse texts relate to student identity and literacy practices; developing standards-based lessons in small groups, with one or more group-selected texts identified as a focal resource within the mock lesson; examining how strategy and skill instruction could be applied to various texts; developing critical, action-oriented lessons aimed at societal improvement; exploring what constitutes multicultural and popular culture texts and how to purposefully select and procure these resources; unpacking how these texts might support and scaffold learning alongside canonical works; and other exploratory

activities that uncover aspects of nontraditional text use. A focus on critical literacy, multiliteracies, and other applicable theories, such as sociocultural theory, New Literacy Studies, and culturally responsive approaches, might also be integrated into PDs to lend a foundational perspective on how text use relates to scholarly work in literacy studies.

In addition to ideas such as these, a needs assessment might also be conducted prior to developing and implementing targeted PDs to gauge educators' concerns and the areas of focus they feel might be beneficial. This information might then be used to inform and tailor the PDs to educators' needs. Also worth noting is that this suggestion requires administrator buy-in, the allocation of time and resources for the sessions, and educators who will develop and facilitate the sessions, particularly if the school does not have a literacy specialist or ample resources. To these points, the school's grade level team leaders might spearhead these initiatives to collaboratively design and facilitate PDs for the English department. The team leaders might approach administrators with a concept for the PDs, outlining the goals and the topic's linkages to scholarly works. Texts obtained in digital online formats could be used for sessions, particularly since popular media is widely available in an online space, and segments of print texts might be obtained from online vendors who provide sample segments for consumer perusal.

### ***Establishing a Culture of Mentorship and Collaboration***

Participants' willingness to assist their colleagues with text use through modeling lessons and sharing resources also arose in the data, accompanied by perspectives about newer educators needing additional support to navigate the use of diverse texts. At the same time, commentary pointed to a dearth of instructional guidance for using diverse texts, highlighted the individual educator's resourcefulness in procuring and creating

curricular materials, and revealed insights about autonomy and curricular choice. These patterns of response suggest that pedagogical practice may be strengthened by a supportive, team-oriented school culture that prioritizes mentorship and collaboration.

Newer and more experienced educators may derive mutual benefit from mentorships and working together to incorporate a range of text types in innovative ways, particularly since teaching experiences, personal ideologies, and preservice preparation may differ. Hellsten et al. (2009) explained that mentorships entail cultivating respectful relationships and remaining open to learning from colleagues, while Polikoff et al. (2015) pointed to the importance of “proximity and availability” (p. 76) in supporting novice educators. Collaborative partnerships may also assist more seasoned educators with learning about “new teaching practices and strategies” (Olsen & Huang, 2019, p. 5). Outcomes from a qualitative study by Martin et al. (2015) noted the impactful role of a supportive school community, adding that “mentoring, coaching, and critical dialogue” (p. 9) can facilitate content-based understandings and knowledge about instruction.

With these findings in mind, the ongoing support provided through mentorship may offer multiple pathways for pedagogical enrichment that benefits mentors and mentees alike, such as providing a platform for developing inventive ideas about student-centered lessons; retrieving, developing, and sharing instructional resources; determining the text’s appropriateness and applicability to standards and learning outcomes; developing rationales for text choice; modeling lessons; identifying ways to complement mandated core texts with supplemental multicultural and popular culture content; gaining exposure to new technological platforms for obtaining materials and enhancing student learning; crafting lessons that integrate various modalities for displays of understanding

that build on critical and multiliteracies frameworks; or creating rich units of study that enable students to author their own creative texts (among the many possibilities).

In addition to mentorships, partnering educators in collaborative teams and facilitating department-wide book clubs may lend an equally valuable means of supporting text use. Within a school culture that recognizes the value of collaborative partnerships, educators may encounter avenues to discuss and reflect on ways that multicultural and popular culture texts are working in the classroom, seek out or provide help and guidance when needed, share materials with one another, offer advice on instructional improvements, and identify creative perspectives to strengthening the curriculum using new approaches and ideas. Likewise, a voluntary book club may lend a structured way for educators to interact with influential and seminal literacy-focused texts that relate to the theoretical underpinnings or pedagogical application of using culturally diverse texts in the classroom. Engaging with academic literature alongside colleagues invites educators to enter into academic discussions that directly relate to their teaching, while also offering a way to pose and answer questions from others. Although these suggestions may present additional time commitments within a profession overburdened with multilevel demands and requirements, collaborative opportunities may also invigorate a school atmosphere and communicate a sense of shared agency among educators. Moreover, by nurturing a culture of cooperation and support, rather than competition and isolation, the school becomes a space for open communication and exists as a site where educators learn from and contribute to the successes of their colleagues.

## Limitations

Unlike research that aims to generalize to the broader population, this narrative inquiry intended to offer insights into individual experiences and perspectives. This research goal, alongside a purposefully small number of participants ( $n = 3$ ) and the selection of a localized geographic location (South Texas) limit the generalizability of study findings. In response to this concern, qualitative research oftentimes seeks to discover and explore questions with depth, not breadth (Ambert et al., 1995). The focus is on illuminating the stories of the individual, rather than presenting findings in the positivistic tradition of quantifiable data. Another perceived limitation includes the lack of student work samples. While this additional data source may have coexisted alongside participant interviews and document analysis of instructional resources, the intended focus of the study remained on highlighting the educator's voice and range of experiences. This encapsulated past, present, and future experiences, which both included and transcended the spatial, contextual, and temporal confines of participants' current teaching positions. At the same time, through participants' rich, illustrative retellings and interpretations of classroom interactions, the student's presence emerged within and contributed meaningfully to the study. Also worth noting is that the two broadly conceptualized research questions intentionally focused on fluidly defined text categories in order to maintain an open-ended, exploratory stance to the topic. Unlike concrete definitions of terms, multicultural texts, popular culture texts, and understandings of culture are to some extent definitionally fluid, which could be perceived as a limitation in comparison to studies relying upon precise, unwavering definitions of key terms. Furthermore, the decision to code and theme the data collectively rather than in two

distinct groupings of data (one pertaining to multicultural texts and the other pertaining to popular culture texts) may be considered a shortcoming of the data analysis approach.

However, given the occasionally overlapping textual categorizations that blurred distinctions between clearly demarcated textual boundaries, as well as the narrative orientation of this work, I opted to collectively analyze and discuss the data.

Regarding data collection methods, this study relied upon phone and/or virtual interviews, rather than in-person interview sessions and face-to-face classroom visits. Although establishing a trusting researcher-participant relationship may be enhanced by face-to-face interactions, remotely administered data collection using technological platforms remains a viable option for qualitative data collection, with benefits such as increased flexibility and the ability to perceive visual cues (Janghorban et al., 2014; Mirick & Wladkowski, 2019), similar to those that would be observed during in-person interactions. Virtual and phone-based methods also enable communication that transcends geographic limitations (Irvine, 2011; Mirick & Wladkowski, 2019), thereby making the current study feasible for all participants. Furthermore, given the unprecedented global health crisis imposed by COVID-19, data collection methods that eliminated a face-to-face component were necessary to mitigate any health-related risks to myself or participants, particularly as the dynamic nature of the pandemic continued to persist throughout the study. Additional limitations include the procurement of document analysis materials and member checking confirmation from one of the three participants.

### **Directions for Future Research**

Several possibilities exist for advancing further research and addressing the limitations of the current study. Qualitatively exploring similar questions with different



focal populations of educators working in distinctive geographic locales and in different educational settings (urban, suburban, or rural) may provide new insights into how texts are positioned in the high school classroom and offer a basis for comparison to outcomes from this work. Studies might include a similar narrative inquiry methodology (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Kim, 2016) or could extend to a phenomenological study using interview data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) to explore and capture the essence of several participants' lived experiences with integrating culturally diverse texts into the curriculum. Additional research might also modify the central questions to focus on how multicultural and popular culture texts are currently being implemented in the high school classroom by using a case study approach (Stake, 1995) with the researcher located as an observer within a specific in-person or online classroom setting. The application of a case study design could integrate analysis of student work samples and firsthand in-person observations of classroom interactions, which addresses areas not undertaken in the present study. It could also incorporate semi-structured interviews and document review (Stake, 1995) to lend nuance to understanding the topic of inquiry. An additional option for future research includes extending findings from initial qualitative research to inform the development and implementation of a professional development workshop series. This could use findings from interview data to design workshops aimed at addressing educators' stated needs with using diverse texts, followed by interviews to evaluate the perceived impact of the professional development sessions. The post-workshop data would then function as a tool to modify or improve the workshop series.

Alternatively, quantitative approaches lend a different angle to uncovering new insights about the focal questions guiding this study, while also widening the scope of the

current study's focus and retrieving generalizable outcomes. This approach might include developing and validating a survey instrument with two separate sections that uncover perspectives about using either multicultural or popular culture texts. An electronically distributed survey would be unbound by geographic limitations, thereby allowing for broad administration to a wider range of statewide or nationally representative participants than is feasible in a qualitative inquiry. The use of fine-tuned operationalized definitions of individual text genres in addition to the overarching terms "multicultural text" and "popular culture text" might address questions of definitional precision arising in the current study. Survey outcomes could show commonalities and variances in relation to variables such as teaching experience, demographics, school setting, school size, etc., with data indicating which groups are using a diversity of texts, how texts are being used, what factors are impeding or facilitating text use, the extent to which the school supports or dismisses the use of nontraditional texts, and more.

While these ideas provide possible pathways for future studies based on the noted limitations of this work, additional research that explores beliefs about and experiences with diverse texts through a variety of applicable yet distinct theoretical frameworks (New Literacy Studies, reader response theory, sociocultural theory) and with designs that acknowledge both separate and overlapping conceptualizations of text offer promise for extending knowledge about the central role of the text in supporting literacy learning. Likewise, studies that integrate evolving understandings of new forms of popular culture and youth culture (such as popular media apps) may prove additive to the research base.

## Concluding Thoughts

This narrative inquiry sought to create a space for learning about the role of multicultural and popular culture texts in the secondary English classroom. Emerging from this undertaking were three distinct stories and perspectives that converged at times and diverged at others, yet ultimately complemented one another in a shared vision for reimagining the classroom as a site where textual exploration, diverse voices, and multimodal text mediums coexist in complementary ways. In addition to offering insight into the study's questions, the totality of participant commentary yielded a prismatic tapestry of experience and perspective that illustrated the humanity that unites the individual educator. Qualities such as creativity, resourcefulness, and open-mindedness flowed through the data, with Michael, April, and Guinevere offering repeated displays of their dedication to the teaching profession and their students.

Among the many enlightening insights shared by participants, perhaps one of the most revelatory was April's observation that more research and studies are needed to inform text use. April captured the uncertainty of making decisions about texts, expressing that this can be a very "touch and go thing." Continuing, April explained, "Trying to figure out what works, what ... can I incorporate, so it's for me since there is no background information or no studies that I can fall back on it makes it difficult for me to make certain that this could work for ... the students." Moreover, April noted that while resources abound for teaching traditional texts, "you have to go and create a lot of the processes yourself" for "newer" types of texts. This statement exemplifies a chasm between research and practice, where a body of research findings and applicable theoretical lenses exist but may not be consistently or uniformly communicated to the

teachers who could benefit from this information, whether in preservice teaching courses or through professional development sessions. April's observation lends a sense of urgency to the importance of research inquiries that focus on diverse text use and speaks to why it remains essential that schools provide practicing educators with information and professional development that present practical ways to draw on research findings.

Additionally, on a macro level that includes and extends beyond the small-town setting of Ramos-Canales High School, today's educators must navigate the pressures of the classroom and adapt instruction to meet the demands of culturally diverse 21<sup>st</sup> century learners, which includes sometimes difficult decisions about textual inclusion and exclusion. Inextricable from this discourse are texts with multicultural orientations that view culture as an expansive construct, as well as those reflective of popular culture's many ephemeral and enduring iterations. These decisions are further complicated by today's rapidly changing, media-driven and communication-based environment, where students traverse a climate of emerging and established textual possibilities on a daily basis. While the expanding communicative and authorial possibilities of today's society are markers of progress, the text's role in an educational setting remains a contentious topic, brimming with sociopolitical dimensions that influence text selection and curricular decision-making. Aligned with these realities, Michael, April, and Guinevere offered a glimpse into how the individual educator working in a rural setting is positioned within statewide and local systems of accountability. They also revealed ways that innovative possibilities for impactful learning experiences might coexist alongside the demands of modern teaching.

This study contributes to, but obviously does not resolve, questions about multicultural and popular culture text use in the secondary classroom. It does, however, seek to encourage ongoing dialogue about how and why educators should thoughtfully integrate a well-chosen and diverse array of texts into their teaching. Similar to the plentiful examples provided by Michael, April, and Guinevere, educators might consider how their own classrooms privilege or overlook certain text forms, perspectives, or historical accounts. The content and platforms that are missing from the classroom speak as loudly as the titles of tattered books on a shelf. Furthermore, there may be much to gain through educators reflecting on how individual ideologies, popular culture pastimes, cultural affiliations, technological proficiencies, reading preferences, and more contribute to their own identities as literate individuals. Uncovering the nuance of meaning-making on an individual level may lend further understanding into the socially mediated and cultural attributes that make our students special and unique.

## APPENDIX A

### IRB Approval

RE: IRB-FY2020-517 - Renewal: Renewal Submission - St. John's



Federal Wide Assurance: FWA00009066

Apr 9, 2021 12:54:46 PM EDT

PI: Jessica Fletcher  
Dept: Education Specialties

Re: Renewal - IRB-FY2020-517 *Secondary Educators' Experiences With and Perspectives About Using Multicultural and Popular Culture Texts With Culturally Diverse Students in the English Language Arts Classroom*

Dear Dr. Jessica Fletcher:

The St John's University Institutional Review Board has rendered the decision below for *Secondary Educators' Experiences With and Perspectives About Using Multicultural and Popular Culture Texts With Culturally Diverse Students in the English Language Arts Classroom*.  
The study is approved through April 8, 2022.

Decision: Approved

Sincerely,

Raymond DiGiuseppe, PhD, ABPP  
Chair, Institutional Review Board  
Professor of Psychology

Marie Nitopi, Ed.D.  
IRB Coordinator

## APPENDIX B

### Sample Recruitment Letter for Email Distribution

#### PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR DISSERTATION STUDY

**Topic: SECONDARY EDUCATORS' EXPERIENCES WITH AND PERSPECTIVES ABOUT  
USING MULTICULTURAL AND POPULAR CULTURE TEXTS WITH CULTURALLY  
DIVERSE STUDENTS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSROOM**

[Insert Date]

Hello! My name is Jessica Hernandez Fletcher, and I am currently a doctoral candidate in Literacy with the department of Education Specialties in the School of Education at St. John's University in Queens, New York. I am inviting you to participate in a dissertation study that seeks to learn about the experiences and perspectives of English Language Arts educators with using multicultural and popular culture texts in culturally diverse classrooms. To qualify for this study, you must currently teach ninth, tenth, eleventh, or twelfth grade English Language Arts in a South Texas high school.

As a participant in this study, you will be asked to partake in one or more individually administered interview sessions. All interviews will be completed remotely on the phone or by using a virtual meeting platform (such as Skype, Microsoft Teams, Facebook Messenger video chat, or Webex). You may also be asked to provide me with access to teacher-created materials and information about texts used in your classroom. Interviews will be scheduled at a time that accommodates your schedule. During interview sessions, you will be asked to respond to two sets of interview questions (one set for multicultural texts and the other set for popular culture texts). Before the first interview session, a time will also be requested to remotely discuss consent, the voluntary nature of your participation, the use of audio to capture your responses, and your participant rights. There will be no cost to you to participate, and you will not receive any compensation.

By participating in educational research, educators such as yourself meaningfully add to an ongoing dialogue about issues impacting our schools. Research participation elevates your voice within an evolving educational discourse about ways to improve student success and strengthen pedagogical knowledge. Although this opportunity may not provide direct benefit to you, your contribution to this study may extend the collective knowledge base related to multicultural and popular culture texts.

If you are interested in lending your experiences and insights to this study, I encourage you to please contact me at your earliest convenience via email, phone, or text message (contact information provided below). You can also contact my supervisor, Dr. Lisa Bajor, Department of Education, St. John's University with any questions. Dr. Bajor can be reached at [PHONE NUMBER] or [EMAIL ADDRESS]. Thank you for your consideration, and I hope to hear from you soon!

Sincerely,

*Jessica Hernandez Fletcher*

[PHONE NUMBER] (calls and texts)

[EMAIL ADDRESS]

## APPENDIX C

### Video Recruitment Script (Approved as Alternate Recruitment Method)

Hello! Thank you for taking time to view this video. My name is Jessica Hernandez Fletcher, and I am currently a doctoral candidate in Literacy with the department of Education Specialties in the School of Education at St. John's University in Queens, New York. Although I currently reside in Queens, I am originally from South Texas and hold fond memories of attending school in your area.

Although we may have already met at a virtual staff meeting, I am reaching out again today to invite you to participate in my dissertation study. This study aims to learn about the experiences and perspectives of English Language Arts educators with using multicultural and popular culture texts in culturally diverse classrooms. I am currently seeking the participation of educators who currently teach ninth, tenth, eleventh, or twelfth grade English Language Arts in a South Texas high school. Your school has provided approval to allow me to conduct this study with interested teachers.

As a participant in this study, you will be asked to partake in one or more individually administered interview sessions. All interviews will be completed remotely on the phone or by using a virtual meeting platform, such as Zoom, Skype, Microsoft Teams, Facebook Messenger video chat, or Webex. You may also be asked to provide me with access to teacher-created materials and information about texts used in your classroom.

To accommodate the many demands of your schedule, all interviews would be scheduled at a time convenient to you, which may include daytime, evening, or even weekend hours if that is preferable. During interview sessions, you will be asked to respond to two sets of interview questions (one set for multicultural texts and the other set for popular culture texts). I may also ask questions to clarify a statement you made or to learn more about something you mentioned.

Interview sessions are flexible and can occur over one lengthier or several smaller sessions, based on your preference. The total amount of time for interviews is variable but may range from approximately three to four hours. The information you provide during interviews will help me to write and analyze a narrative based on your responses. Once I write your narrative, I will also consult with you to ensure that I have portrayed your story in an accurate way, and I will use your feedback to make any needed improvements.

Before the first interview session, I will request a time to remotely discuss consent, the voluntary nature of your participation, the use of audio to capture your responses, and your participant rights. Throughout the study, I will take steps to maintain your anonymity, such as using a pseudonym and ensuring that any teacher-created materials do not include any identifiers. There is no cost to you to participate in this study, and I am not allowed to provide any compensation.

Although you may not benefit directly from participating in this study, educators such as yourself who partake in educational research meaningfully add to an ongoing dialogue about issues impacting our schools. Research participation elevates your voice within an evolving educational discourse about ways to improve student success and strengthen pedagogical knowledge. More specifically, your contribution to this study may extend the collective knowledge base related to multicultural and popular culture texts.

If you are interested in lending your experiences and insights to this study, I encourage you to please contact me at your earliest convenience via email, phone, or text message. My phone number is [PHONE NUMBER] and my email address is [EMAIL ADDRESS]. You can also contact my supervisor, Dr. Lisa Bajor, Department of Education, St. John's University with any questions. Dr. Bajor can be reached at [PHONE NUMBER] or [EMAIL ADDRESS]. Thank you for your consideration, and I hope to hear from you soon!



## APPENDIX D

### Snowball Sampling Email Outreach

**Subject Line:** Study Participants from Your School

Good Afternoon [**insert participant's name**],

Thank you again for participating in my study! It has truly been a pleasure to work with you, and I remain grateful for your time and ongoing cooperation throughout this process.

In addition to the wonderful contributions you have provided so far, I am also eager to include the perspectives and experiences of additional educators working at your school site within this study. As a current participant with firsthand experience of what study participation entails, I would greatly appreciate if you would provide my contact information to any colleagues in the English Language Arts department who may be interested in contributing to this research.

Although I would be very thankful for this help, there is no obligation to share the details of my study with your colleagues, and this is not a requirement of your participation. Any details that you supply to your colleagues would be on a voluntary basis. Also, please rest assured that your decision to offer this information would not impact your study participation or our collaborative partnership, which I value and respect in the utmost regard.

Thank you so much, and I hope that you have a lovely day!

Sincerely,  
Jessica

## APPENDIX E

### Virtual Meeting Request Email to Principals

**Subject Line:** Request to Attend Virtual Meeting

Good Afternoon [**insert principal's name**],

I truly appreciate your school's partnership as I continue to work on completing my dissertation. Although I have reached out to your English Language Arts educators using email outreach, I am still hoping to connect with at least one additional educator who would like to participate in my study.

As an additional method of recruitment, I am wondering if it would be possible for me to virtually attend a staff meeting for the purposes of introducing myself, explaining the study, and answering any questions that your English Language Arts educators may have about participation. I understand that your faculty meetings are likely very busy and include important discussions related to consequential topics and issues. While I would never want to impose on these meaningful times for staff development and professional dialogue, I would be incredibly grateful for the opportunity to have fifteen or twenty minutes to extend an invitation to your educators in a personalized and interactive way. If virtually attending a meeting would be a possibility, I will adapt my schedule to accommodate any time that is available between the months of October and November.

Thank you so much for your collaboration, and please let me know if I can further explain this request. I am always available via email, phone [PHONE NUMBER], or text messaging.

I hope that you enjoy the rest of your day, and thanks again for your time and consideration!

Sincerely,  
Jessica

## APPENDIX F

### Initial and Revised Interview Guides with Script

**Script:** Thank you for agreeing to participate in my dissertation study. Your partnership will help me and future readers of this study to learn more about the experiences and perspectives of English Language Arts (ELA) educators with using multicultural and popular culture texts in culturally diverse classrooms located in rural South Texas.

Although you have already provided signed consent to participate in this study, I will take a moment to review some key points related to your participation. Your participation in this study is occurring on a voluntary basis. At any time during this study, you are free to withdraw your participation. You are also permitted to decline responding to any questions that make you uncomfortable or that you decide not to answer for any reason. You will not need to explain your reasoning for declining to answer and may simply indicate that you want to skip that question and move on to the next.

Your responses to interview questions will be audio-recorded using two recording devices. Recordings on my phone are protected with a numerical pin and fingerprint identification. Audio captured on my phone that is also stored in my Google Drive cloud account will be protected by an alpha numerical password. All audio recordings will be labeled using a pseudonym to protect your identity. Similarly, any electronic documents or audio files related to today's session will be identified using a pseudonym and stored in a file folder located on my password protected personal computer. You have the right to review your audio and may request that all or a portion of it is destroyed. Physical data such as my handwritten notes and any printed copies of materials supplied during our session will be kept in a locked location in a workspace within my residence.

I am not permitted to provide compensation for your participation in this study. Risks for participation are minimal but could include an emotional response to revisiting previous experiences while responding to questions. Although you will not receive direct benefit from partaking in this study, your contributions may extend understanding of the topic explored in this research.

- Do you have any questions about any of the information I have presented up to now?  
[*The investigator will answer questions or offer clarification as needed.*]

Before we adjourn today's session or at a later time, I may request access to instructional or curricular materials referenced during today's interview. It is your decision to provide me with these materials via an email exchange either today or during a subsequent session. Alternatively, you can decline to offer these materials to me at your discretion. I will ensure that teacher-created materials you supply are anonymized to maintain your privacy.

At the end of today's session, I will request that we establish a meeting time for subsequent sessions. If you are unable to provide that commitment today, we can correspond at a later time to complete the scheduling process.

- Do you have any questions about any of the information I have presented up to now?

- *[The investigator will answer questions or offer clarification as needed.]*

Today, I will be asking you a series of interview questions related to multicultural texts and/or popular culture texts. Each of these interview questions is open-ended and there are no right or wrong answers. The purpose of each question is to learn about your own experiences and perspectives. I encourage you to take as much time as needed to respond to each question in a way that feels most comfortable to you. If the wording of a question is unclear to you, you may request clarification and I will rephrase the question or offer a definition of one or more words or phrases. After I ask each question, I will pause to allow you time to think through what I have asked. Throughout the interview, I may also ask questions to clarify a statement you made or to learn more about something you mentioned.

Prior to asking the first interview question, I will read aloud the operationalized definitions for the terms used throughout interview questions. You may continue to reference the definitional handout during our session. *[After ensuring that the participant has an electronic copy of the Operationalized Definitions Handout, the investigator will read aloud each definition.]*

- Do you have any questions about the definitions we are using for today's interview? *[The participant will confirm understanding or indicate areas of clarification that are needed. The investigator will answer the participant's questions.]*
- Do you have any questions about the interview process we are about to begin? *[The participant will confirm understanding or indicate areas of clarification that are needed. The investigator will answer the participant's questions.]*

### **Initial Question Sets**

#### **Interview Question Set I: Multicultural Literature / Multicultural Texts**

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What comes to mind when you hear the terms "multicultural literature" or "multicultural text"?
3. How do you think multicultural texts relate to teaching and literacy learning?
4. How are multicultural texts used in your school-based and online classrooms?
5. What are your thoughts and feelings about multicultural texts?
6. Tell me about reasons why you have included or excluded multicultural texts from your classroom.
7. What do you like or dislike about multicultural texts?
8. What is your school's approach to using multicultural texts?
9. Tell me about a time when multicultural texts were part of a lesson.
10. How does your current use of multicultural texts as a teacher compare to previous experiences with multicultural texts in a teacher preparation program?
11. If you were asked to develop a unit of study using one or more multicultural texts, what would your unit look like?
12. What would you say to a colleague with a differing perspective about multicultural texts?
13. Tell me about a time you observed one or more students responding to a multicultural text.
14. Describe your ideas about the best ways to use multicultural texts for learning.
15. Are there any other experiences or thoughts about multicultural texts that you would like to share?

### **Interview Question Set II: Popular Culture Texts**

1. What comes to mind when you hear the terms “popular culture” or “popular culture text”?
2. How do you think popular culture texts relate to teaching and literacy learning?
3. How are popular culture texts used in your school-based and online classrooms?
4. What are your thoughts and feelings about popular culture texts?
5. Tell me about reasons why you have included or excluded popular culture texts from your classroom.
6. What do you like or dislike about popular culture texts?
7. What is your school’s approach to using popular culture texts?
8. Tell me about a time when popular culture texts were part of a lesson.
9. How does your current use of popular culture texts as a teacher compare to previous experiences with popular culture texts in a teacher preparation program?
10. If you were asked to develop a unit of study using one or more popular culture texts, what would your unit look like?
11. What would you say to a colleague with a differing perspective about popular culture texts?
12. Tell me about a time you observed one or more students responding to a popular culture text.
13. Describe your ideas about the best ways to use popular culture texts for learning.
14. In what ways do your experiences with popular culture texts compare to your experiences with multicultural texts?
15. Are there any other experiences or thoughts about popular culture texts that you would like to share?

### **Revised Interview Sets**

#### **Opening Questions:**

- Can you please tell me about yourself?
- How would you describe your cultural and linguistic background?
- How would you describe your student population?
- What courses do you teach?
- How long have you been teaching?

#### **Revised Interview Question Set I: Multicultural Literature / Multicultural Texts**

1. What do you think about when you hear the terms “multicultural literature” or “multicultural text”?
2. In what context have you heard the terms “multicultural literature” and “multicultural text”?
3. How do you think multicultural texts relate to teaching and literacy learning?
4. How are multicultural texts used in your school-based and online classrooms?
5. What would you change about how often you use multicultural texts in your school-based and online classrooms?
6. What are your thoughts and feelings about multicultural texts in general?
7. What are your thoughts and feelings about multicultural texts in the classroom?
8. Tell me about reasons why you have included or excluded multicultural texts from your classroom.
9. What are some positives and/or negatives about multicultural texts?
10. How does your school support the use of multicultural texts?
11. Tell me about a time when multicultural texts were part of a lesson.

12. How have your experiences with multicultural texts changed throughout your teaching career?
13. How do your experiences with multicultural texts as a practicing teacher compare to your experiences as a preservice educator?
14. If you were asked to develop a unit of study using one or more multicultural texts, what would your unit look like?
  - a. (follow up) How do you think multicultural texts relate to curriculum standards?
15. What would you say to a colleague who disagrees with your perspective about multicultural texts?
  - a. (follow up) What would you say to a colleague who is hesitant to incorporate multicultural texts into their curriculum?
16. Tell me about a time you observed one or more students interacting with multicultural texts.
17. Describe your ideas about effective ways to use multicultural texts for learning.
18. Are there any other experiences or thoughts about multicultural texts that you would like to share?

### **Revised Interview Question Set II: Popular Culture Texts**

1. What do you think about when you hear the terms “popular culture” or “popular culture text”?
2. In what context have you heard the terms “popular culture” and “popular culture text”?
3. How do you think popular culture texts relate to teaching and literacy learning?
4. How are popular culture texts used in your school-based and online classrooms?
5. What would you change about how often you use popular culture texts in your school-based and online classrooms?
6. What are your thoughts and feelings about popular culture texts in general?
7. What are your thoughts and feelings about popular culture texts in the classroom?
8. Tell me about reasons why you have included or excluded popular culture texts from your classroom.
9. What are some positives and/or negatives about popular culture texts?
10. How does your school support the use of popular culture texts?
11. Tell me about a time when popular culture texts were part of a lesson.
12. How have your experiences with popular culture texts changed throughout your teaching career?
13. How do your experiences with popular culture texts as a practicing teacher compare to your experiences as a preservice educator?
14. If you were asked to develop a unit of study using one or more popular culture texts, what would your unit look like?
  - a. (follow up) How do you think popular culture texts relate to curriculum standards?
15. What would you say to a colleague who disagrees with your perspective about popular culture texts?
  - a. (follow up) What would you say to a colleague who is hesitant to incorporate popular culture texts into their curriculum?
16. Tell me about a time you observed one or more students interacting with popular culture texts.
17. Describe your ideas about effective ways to use popular culture texts for learning.
18. In what ways do your experiences with popular culture texts compare to your experiences with multicultural texts?
19. Are there any other experiences or thoughts about popular culture texts that you would like to share?

## APPENDIX G

### Teacher Consent Form



Dear Participant:

You have been invited to take part in a research study to learn more about educators' experiences with and perspectives about using multicultural and popular culture texts in the high school English Language Arts classroom. This study will be conducted by Jessica Hernandez Fletcher (subsequently referred to as "the researcher"), MA, MAT, School of Education, St. John's University, as part of her doctoral dissertation work. Her faculty sponsor is Dr. Lisa Bajor, School of Education at St. John's University.

Your school was chosen for this study due to its student demographics and familiarity to the researcher. As an English Language Arts teacher working in a public South Texas high school, your participation in this study will help the researcher to answer the questions guiding this study. Exclusion criteria for this study include not teaching grades nine through twelve, teaching subjects that do not include English Language Arts, and working at a location that is not an approved school site for this research.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

1. Participate in one or more remotely administered interview sessions to help the researcher understand your experiences with and perspectives about using multicultural and popular culture texts in your classroom.
2. Provide the researcher with access to electronic versions of teacher-created materials used for instructional purposes and/or electronic copies and names of published texts that were referenced during interview sessions. You will *not* be asked to provide student work samples, as any student-created work will not be permitted for inclusion in this study.

Your agreement to be in this study will require scheduling and participating in one or more interview sessions with the researcher. The scheduling of interviews may occur over the phone or via text or email. Interviews will be scheduled for a time that is mutually agreed upon by you and the researcher. Meetings may occur via one or more phone sessions or in a virtual space (such as Skype, Microsoft Teams, Facebook Messenger video chat, or Webex). The time required for participation will vary based on number of interviews and duration of each session.

During interview sessions, your answers to all interview questions will be recorded using two audio recording devices. Audio recordings will be used for analysis and to help the researcher write a narrative of your experiences and perspectives with multicultural and popular culture texts. The researcher may include your verbatim responses in the written narrative. You will not be asked to state your name on audio

recordings. The researcher will state a pseudonym on audio recordings to identify your responses. At the end of each interview session, you will be provided with the option to review the audio collected and may request that partial or full segments of your audio are destroyed. The researcher will also take hand-written notes throughout interview sessions. Once interview sessions are completed, you will be provided with the researcher's narrative of your experiences for review and asked to verify the accuracy of information presented. Audio recordings are a requirement for participation. Without your consent to audio recording, you will not be able to participate in this study.

Federal regulations stipulate that all subjects be informed of the availability of medical treatment or financial compensation in the event of physical injury resulting from participation in the research. St. John's University cannot provide either medical treatment or financial compensation for any physical injury resulting from your participation in this research project. Inquiries regarding this policy may be made to the researcher or the Human Subjects Review Board at St. John's University (718-990-1440).

Confidentiality of your research records will be strictly maintained by removing your name and replacing any identifiers with a pseudonym. The assigned pseudonym will be linked to your name on a Word document stored in a folder on the researcher's password protected computer. Consent forms will be collected by using a scanned electronic document. Electronic consent forms will be stored in a designated file folder located on the researcher's password-protected computer. If copies of informed consent are printed, they will be stored in a dedicated folder located in a locked area at the researcher's residence. Records of informed consent will be kept for a minimum of three years. If information from this study is published or presented at a professional meeting, your name and personal information will not be used.

Your responses to interview questions using a digital audio recorder and any printed copies of teacher-created materials will be stored in a locked location in the researcher's residence. Electronic versions of teacher-created materials and electronic files of audio retrieved from a digital recording device will be stored in a desktop folder located on the researcher's password protected computer. Audio captured on the researcher's phone will be protected by a numerical pin and the researcher's digital fingerprint. This audio will also be saved in a secondary cloud-based Google Drive location protected by an alpha numerical password. Teacher-created materials will be stripped of all identifiers. Recordings of your responses and documents consisting of teacher-created materials will be immediately destroyed once the study is completed.

The researcher will maintain the confidentiality of your information with the following exception: the researcher is required by law to report to the appropriate authorities any suspicion of harm to yourself, to children, or to others.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. You have the right to skip any question that makes you uncomfortable or that you prefer not to answer for any reason.

There will be no monetary costs to you for participating in this study, and you will not receive any compensation for your participation. Possible risks associated with this research are minimal but may include an emotional impact related to reliving or revisiting experiences discussed during interview sessions. Although you will receive no direct benefits from participation, this research may help the researcher and readers of this study to learn about multicultural and popular culture text use in your classroom and how you



perceive these text types for use in an educational context. This research may also benefit the field of education by providing further understanding into how multicultural and popular culture texts are used in the high school classroom in a rural South Texas setting.

If there is anything about the study or your participation that requires clarification or that you do not understand, or if you have questions or wish to report a research-related problem, you may contact Jessica Hernandez Fletcher, MA, MAT, at (XXX) XXX-XXXX, [EMAIL ADDRESS], St. John's University, 8000 Utopia Parkway, Queens NY, 11439 or the faculty sponsor, Dr. Lisa Bajor, at (XXX) XXX-XXXX, [EMAIL ADDRESS], St. John's University, 8000 Utopia Parkway, Queens NY, 11439.

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](mailto:digiuser@stjohns.edu) 718-990-1955 or Marie Nitopi, IRB Coordinator, [nitopim@stjohns.edu](mailto:nitopim@stjohns.edu) 718-990-1440.

Sincerely,

Jessica Hernandez Fletcher, MA, MAT, Doctoral Student  
School of Education, St. John's University, New York

\_\_\_\_ Yes, I will participate.

\_\_\_\_ Yes, I give permission for interviews to be audiotaped, for my verbatim responses to be used in the written narrative, and for the investigator to access instructional materials.

\_\_\_\_ No, I will not participate.

\_\_\_\_ No, I do not give permission for interviews to be audiotaped, for my verbatim responses to be used in the written narrative, or for the investigator to access instructional materials.

You have received a copy of this consent document to keep.

#### Statement of Consent

I have read this consent form. The research study has been explained to me. I agree to be in the research study described above. A copy of this consent form will be provided to me after I sign it. By signing this consent form, I have not given up any of the legal rights that I would have if I were not a participant in the study.

#### Agreement to Participate

Yes, I agree to participate in the study described above.

---

Subject's Signature

---

Date

## APPENDIX H

### Operationalized Definitions Handout

Participants will be provided with an electronic copy of this handout prior to the initial interview session. Participants will also be asked to retain this handout for reference during interviews if needed.

During interview sessions, the researcher will read aloud the following operationalized definitions, answer any questions for clarification of terms, and ensure participant understanding prior to beginning each interview session.

**Classroom** – “a place where classes meet” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.), including both physical and virtual spaces

**Multicultural texts / multicultural literature** –texts featuring individuals “from diverse cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic and religious backgrounds, who have been marginalized, and are considered outside of the mainstream of society (Salas, Lucido, & Canales, 2001)” (Morrell & Morrell, 2012, p. 11); also, “books that reflect the racial, ethnic, and social diversity of our society; especially books about the experiences and perspectives of culturally diverse populations under-represented in school curricula (Bishop 1997; Gunn et al., 2012/2013)” (Peterson et al., 2015, p. 42); although not always used interchangeably, the terms “text” and “literature” will be used in this inquiry to allow for the inclusion of multicultural texts extending beyond traditional print books and literary genres.

**Popular culture texts** - print and non-print texts representing a variety of modes, such as (but not limited to) videos, music lyrics, movies, anime, manga, comics, YA books, hypermedia / Internet texts, trading cards, game texts, and zine texts (Hagood et al., 2010; Xu, Perkins, & Zunich, 2005); also, as a genre categorically similar to comics, graphic novels (Brozo et al., 2014) may be considered a popular culture text (Frey & Fisher, 2004).

**Text** – a broadly conceptualized form of communication (Kress, 2003) that may include various print, non-print, multimodal, and digital representational modes (Alvermann, 2011; Hagood et al., 2010; Moje et al., 2011; Walsh, 2006).

## APPENDIX I

### Listing of Published Texts Appearing in Participant Narratives

- Adichie, C. N. (2015). *We should all be feminists*. Anchor Books.
- Anaya, R. (1972). *Bless me, Ultima*. TQS Publications.
- Angelou, M. (1969). *I know why the caged bird sings*. Random House.
- Austen, J. (1813). *Pride and prejudice*. T. Egerton, Whitehall.
- Boyne, J. (2006). *The boy in the striped pajamas*. David Fickling Books.
- Brooks, M. (Director). (1987). *Spaceballs* [Film]. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer; Brookfilms.
- Buck, P. (1931). *The good earth*. John Day.
- Chopin, K. (1893). *Desiree's baby*. Vogue.
- Coleridge, S. T. (1798). *The rime of the ancient mariner*. Educational Publishing Company.
- Collier, E. (1969). *Marigolds*. Johnson Publishing Company.
- Connell, R. (1924). *The most dangerous game*. Simon & Schuster.
- Draper, S. M. (1999). *Romiette and Julio*. Atheneum Books.
- Faulkner, W. (1930). *A rose for Emily*. Perfection Learning Corporation.
- Gilman, C. P. (1892). *The yellow wallpaper*. New England Magazine.
- Goethe, J. W. (1790). *Faust*. Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Golden, A. (1997). *Memoirs of geisha*. Alfred A. Knopf.
- Jackson, S. (1948). *The Lottery*. The New Yorker.
- Jacobs, A. P. (Executive Producer). (1966-1969). *The lone ranger* [TV Series]. Format Films; Halas and Batchelor.
- Junger, K. (Director). (1999). *10 things I hate about you* [Film]. Touchstone Pictures; Mad Chance; Jaret Entertainment.
- Kafka, F. (1915). *The metamorphosis*. Kurt Wolff Verlag, Leipzig.
- King, M. L. (1963). *I have a dream*. [Speech transcript]. <https://www.npr.org/2010/01/18/122701268/i-have-a-dream-speech-in-its-entirety>
- King, M. L. (1963). *Letter from a Birmingham jail*. [https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/sites/mlk/files/letterfrombirmingham\\_wwcw\\_0.pdf](https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/sites/mlk/files/letterfrombirmingham_wwcw_0.pdf)
- Kuklin, S. (2008). *No choirboy: Murder, violence, and teenagers on death row*. Henry Holt and Company, LLC.
- Lawrence, F. (Director). (2005). *Constantine* [Film]. Warner Bros. Pictures; Village Roadshow Pictures; The Donners' Company; Weed Road Pictures; 3 Arts Entertainment.
- Lear, N. (Executive Producer). (1972-1978). *Maude* [TV Series]. Tandem Productions.
- Lee, H. (1960). *To kill a mockingbird*. J. B. Lippincott & Co.
- Luhmann, B. (1996). (Director). *Romeo + Juliet* [Film]. Bazmark Productions; 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox.
- MacDonnell, N., Mantley, J., Leacock, P., & Arness, J. (Executive Producers). (1955-1975). *Gunsmoke* [TV Series]. CBS Productions; Filmaster Productions; Arness and Company; The Arness Production Company
- Myers, W. D. (1999). *Monster*. HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.
- Nelson, T. B. (Director). (2001). *O* [Film]. Daniel Fried Productions; Chickie the Cop; Dimension Films.

- Orwell, G. (1946). *Animal farm*. Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc.
- Pilkey, D. (2016). *Dog man*. Scholastic.
- Poe, E. A. (1839). *The fall of the house of Usher*. Burton's Gentleman's Magazine.
- Poe, E. A. (1842). *The masque of the red death*. Graham's Magazine.
- Poe, E. A. (1846). *The cask of amontillado*. Godey's Lady's Books.
- Rose, R. (1964). *Twelve angry men*. Penguin.
- Roth, V. (2011). *Divergent*. Harper Collins.
- Rowling, J. K. (1997). *Harry Potter and the sorcerer's stone*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Russell, K. (2007). *St. Mary's home for girls raised by wolves*. Penguin.
- Ryan, P. M. (2000). *Esperanza rising*. Scholastic Publishing.
- Salinger, J. D. (1951). *The catcher in the rye*. Little, Brown.
- Satrapi, M. (2003). *Persepolis: The story of a childhood*. Pantheon Books.
- Shakespeare, W. (1597). *Romeo and Juliet*. Simon and Schuster.
- Shakespeare, W. (1622). *Othello*. Clarendon Press.
- Shelley, M. (1818). *Frankenstein*. Lackington, Hughes, Harding, Mavor, & Jones.
- Sullivan, J. E. (2019). *Cucumbers have thorns and snakes love strawberries: How I won*. T & L Global Publishing.
- Tan, A. (1989). *The joy luck club*. Penguin Books.
- Twohy, D. (Director). (2000). *The chronicles of Riddick: Pitch black* [Film]. Gramercy Pictures; Interscope Communications.
- U2 (1983). *Sunday bloody Sunday* [Recorded by U2]. *On War* [Album]. Island Records.
- Werner, T., Hernandez, T., Gilbert, S., Caplan, D., Rasmussen, B., & Helford, B. (Executive Producers). (2018-). *The Conners* [TV Series]. Mohawk Productions; Sara + Tom; Gilbert TV; Jax Media; Werner Entertainment.
- Williams, T. (1944). *The glass menagerie*. New Directions Publishing Corporation.
- Yousafzai, M. (2014). *Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech*. [Speech transcript].  
<https://malala.org/newsroom/archive/malala-nobel-speech>
- Yousafzai, M., & Lamb, C. (2013). *I am Malala: The girl who stood up for education and was shot by the Taliban*. Little, Brown and Company.

**Unspecified Texts and/or Franchises with Multiple Mediums:** Among Us, Assassin's Creed, Avengers, Batman, Captain America, Disney, Dr. Seuss books, Dragon Ball, Dungeons and Dragons, Ernest Hemingway text, Gary Soto books, George Takei article, Hulk, Peppa Pig book, Scooby-Doo, Snoopy (Peanuts), Spiderman, Superman, Television commercials, Textbook, The Flash, TikTok videos, Unnamed Articles, William Golding text, X-Men, YouTube videos

## APPENDIX J

Codebook

Refined Codes	Description of Code	SAMPLE CODED SEGMENT 1	SAMPLE CODED SEGMENT 2
"EVERCHANGING" TEXTS AND TIMES	Statements about the fleeting nature of popular culture and changing nature of texts that are considered "current"	April, p. 149: "And I mean it's everchanging so what is current now it's like within two years its already old and the fast pace has not helped. So the teacher itself has to think on the fly"	Michael, p. 41: "Um well popular culture its kind of flash in the pan fad, kind of like uh uh Furbies back in the the 2000s when McDonald's had their Furbies and they kind of died out, popular culture texts kind of fall along the same lines"
"DIFFERENT AND YET THE SAME"	Statements suggesting that commonalities exist between students and other individuals / groups (both real and fictional) with different cultural affiliations and experiential realities	Michael, p. 12: "I think the multicultural text, it it gives you know students in South Texas the ability to see a kid who lives on a reservation and how he's a teenager just like they are but his troubles are much different and yet the same."	April, p. 149: "we love <i>I Am Malala</i> because she was fifteen years old when she was writing that book with the writer because then you have these kids that you can say well this is not an old White guy (laughs) that's writing this this is a girl that is just like you with the exception that she is from a poor country and um and uh is doing a lot of this work."
"GLIMPSE[S] INTO WHAT ELSE IS GOING ON IN THE WORLD"	Statements suggesting that the text provides students with access to global experiences, ways of life, information, and events that transcend the local; also, perspectives about how this kind of access may benefit students	Michael, p. 21: "Positives would be these texts give a glimpse into what else is going on in the world. Um, they give a glimpse into how injustices are not just done on African Americans, they're done on Native Americans, they're done on Chinese Americans"	April, p. 142: "definitely the positives is the fact that um, they are opening minds to um, to what's available out in our world. And I want that to start in education itself. I don't want to have them to look for it themselves. Something that I actually had to do uh myself."
"IT HAS ITS PLACE"	Statements about the extent to which pop culture texts belong in the classroom, including perspectives about the purposeful use of textual materials	Guinevere, p. 229: "I definitely think that it has its place. Um I think they could easily, there could almost be a unit on pop culture texts um on over it or it could be a mini-unit interspersed in there, um or just added onto it. It's... it's another tool to help us to relate to and teach students."	Michael, p. 46: "all the pop culture texts, they really do have a have a purpose in the classroom, it's just that you should have more than you know five teaching years under your belt before you really start to get into that arena"
"STUDENTS NEED TO BE EXPOSED"	Statements about providing students with exposure to texts and learning experiences that highlight diverse cultures, experiences, histories, and points of view; also, statements reflecting the perceived need for exposure to diverse texts, ideas, and ways of life	Guinevere, p. 238: "I mean if that can apply to any cultures I mean we, we need to be exposed, even as adults we need to be exposed."	Michael, p. 27: "you need to reach out to all these other wonderful novelists, Maya Angelou, uh Gary Soto, uh Amy Tan, these are all wonderful authors that the students need to be exposed to"

<p><b>“THE REAL-WORLD STUFF”</b></p>	<p>Statements about incorporating texts that draw on real-world, contemporary events, topics, examples, and/or issues, including those that might be deemed controversial</p>	<p>Michael, p. 31: "we will switch off between uh <i>No Choir Boys</i> and <i>Monster</i>, and both of those novels have to do with teenagers who are on death row...and uh in <i>No Choirboys</i>, I tell them its about five kids, five sixteen, fifteen year olds who are arrested, tried for murder, they are on death row, one of em did not survive, and they went, wait, what, this is real? I'm like yes, this real."</p>	<p>Guinevere, p. 216: "they wanted us to do real world stuff and a lot of the real world stuff, the real world examples that's um that's going to be pop culture. That's going to be all of the um multicultural texts."</p>
<p><b>ACCESSIBILITY OF TEXTS AND RESOURCES</b></p>	<p>Statements revealing perspectives and observations pertaining to the availability and accessibility of various texts and materials for students and/or teachers, including instructional, informational, and/or technological resources</p>	<p>April, p. 115: "[it] mostly has to do with the ability to um get materials from which you can teach with them...There is a lot of materials out there available for <i>The Cast of Amontillado</i>, <i>The Most Dangerous Game</i>, you know pair text, things that you can use in order to teach the students the processes of English. When it comes to newer text, which that's what multicultural text is, unfortunately...because um, it's not used as much, you have to go and create a lot of the processes yourself."</p>	<p>April, p. 148: "there isn't has not been a lot of reference material available reso- resources on using more current popular culture type of um, manipulatives to, that way you can connect with students. There's a lot of information about the actual skills, in looking at the old text, but then you don't have the current resources as much bringing in um screenplays, instead of using uh a novel."</p>
<p><b>ADMINISTRATOR SUPPORT</b></p>	<p>Statements about experiences and perspectives related to school and district-level administrative support and communication, particularly as it applies to selecting, using, and/or gaining approval to use textual materials in the classroom</p>	<p>April, p. 144: "I've seen several different issues with other teachers bringing in uh new current um examples of of uh literature and things like that where um a student might reply back to s-, to parents and then it gets to our administration ... they're usually very supportive, uh so long as um we're giving them a heads up. We kind of learned um how to give heads up before we touch a certain subject in reference to popular culture but they're very open to the way we use popular culture."</p>	<p>Michael, p. 23: "he gives us he gives us a lot of leeway, now that doesn't mean that he won't tell us, mm no not this time, but pretty much as long as we can back it up with data and facts, we can use it"</p>
<p><b>APPLICABILITY TO CONTENT AREAS</b></p>	<p>Statements about using texts in disciplines other than ELA, with a focus on expanding students' literacy skills</p>	<p>Michael, p. 42: "I also will use song lyrics in conjunction with uh a teacher in history, so if the world history they're looking at uh Bloody Sunday then I would bring in U2's <i>Sunday Bloody Sunday</i>, and we would discuss you know well he's saying this in his lyrics, but what is he actually, really saying? And so um a lot of times I'm doing uh uh cross curriculum teaching when I do actually use lyrics"</p>	<p>Guinevere, p. 211: "um but I can see how somebody could use <i>Assassin's Creed</i> in a say a history class...because there is so much, because if you really wanna l- and explore it they have actual historical documents in there and you and in that's literacy, that's reading, that's the uh that's exploring things that are real within a video game."</p>

<b>APPRECIATING AND ENJOYING POPULAR CULTURE TEXTS</b>	Statements reflecting a personal appreciation for and enjoyment of popular culture, as well as statements recounting experiences or observations of enjoyment while interacting with popular culture texts	April, p. 157: "So as an individual that actually enjoys popular culture items, I read manga, I read manhwa, I watch anime, I literally just finished watching a series yesterday um and and jumping into a new one. I, I see what the enjoyment that our students could have in it. I love watching movies um but I also like reading and um, and I like scrolling through TikTok, I love posting in Facebook"	Guinevere, p. 224: "I used to look down on um comics myself until someone had me actually read one, uh and I realized that they're not, that there's more to them than just, the artwork is insanely wonderful usually, um the amount of creativity and the amount of storytelling within it is awesome. That I would tell them that I appreciate that"
<b>APPROPRIATE TEXTS</b>	Statements reflecting perspectives about the appropriateness of texts for classroom inclusion or exclusion, as well as experiences with or expectations about selecting appropriate texts for classroom use	Guinevere, p. 188: "some of the songs they're singing aren't appropriate in Spanish (laughs) ... I would choose an appropriate one, but I could easily find a love song in Spanish, a Tejano Spanish uh song"	Michael, p. 51: "I don't exclude all of them, I only include and I hate to use this terminology but the grade appropriate (laughs) ones"
<b>BECOMING "BETTER HUMAN BEINGS"</b>	Statements reflecting perspectives about how textual experiences and access to information may contribute to students' personal growth and betterment	April, p. 131: " And so, I think bringing multicultural texts into the classroom more ... would draw that [students' individuality] out. And allow them to grow individually."	Guinevere, p. 170: "But if they can grow up learning the, the um, if they can grow up having access to these other books, access to these languages, and access to this learning, and (sigh) it very mu- it helps them um be better human beings."
<b>BEING OPEN-MINDED</b>	Statements related to being open-minded about and accepting towards different cultures, situations, and points of view; also, statements about society becoming more open-minded	Guinevere, p. 177: " if her upbringing had included more open-mindedness, more being able to know about more things, it may not have happened, and a lot of misunderstandings may not have happened"	Guinevere, p. 210: "they're choosing to keep their worldview very narrow and not at least being open to other, other potential opinions. Um, other peoples' um, other (sigh) go- other cultures. They're choose I mean and in this case it's a choice. ... they're choosing to read the small sliver of things and saying that's right"
<b>BLURRED TEXT GENRES</b>	Statements suggesting fluidity between text genres and/or the applicability of multiple genres to a particular text (for instance, considering a graphic novel as multicultural; equating a traditional, canonical literary work with multicultural literature or popular culture; drawing parallels between rap and poetry)	Guinevere, p. 167: "so the Marvel universe has transcended that cultural boundary. It's multicultural now. Because of the way the language, it's the language it's just been, it's been translated. So it goes into both cultures now."	April, pp. 137-138: "I always refer back to rap as being a form of poetry because it is, it um it (sighs) they use lyrics too and symbolism and they have uh stanzas I mean it might not look like um the normal type of poetry that we see but they are broken up you know you your um chorus lines are just repetitive uh its about repetition, the same thing that you would see in literature. So, I was able to make that connection just to that fact that I recognize rap as a form of poetry."

<b>CULTURAL / LINGUISTIC BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCES</b>	Information about the participant's cultural affiliations and languages spoken, including experiences with culture and language that occurred on a personal level and not necessarily in the classroom or in reference to working in education; also, perspectives and feelings associated with these kinds of experiences for personal and/or pedagogical purposes	Michael, p. 8: "...when I was little little, and we're talking uh probably about two years old my parents lived in Washington D.C. and they had a housekeeper who spoke Bengali"	Guinevere, p. 187: "I think I mentioned before my husband's eh um he's like a quarter uh Spanish and he doesn't and and I speak more Spanish than he does"
<b>DIVERSE STUDENT POPULATION</b>	Statements that capture the cultural, socioeconomic, and linguistic diversity of the students attending the educator's school and classroom, including statements that speak to aspects of student identity	Michael, p. 25: "But now in high school, you have you have kids who have one, two children, and now you have transgender kids in the classroom, you have bisexual kids in the classroom, you have homosexual kids in the classroom, and you have heterosexual kids"	April, p. 100: "my student population we are, and I just ran this for my my own class um they are about 98 percent Hispanic, um... since I teach in that small town I grew up uh- mostly Mexican-American heritage"
<b>DIVERSE TEACHING EXPERIENCES</b>	Statements that reveal the participant's breadth of teaching experience, including classes, subjects, and populations taught	Guinevere, p. 162: "before I worked as, I finally got my teaching job I was a [name of school] teacher and I taught Chinese students English online."	Michael, p. 3: "now I'm at uh I'm at [name of school] and I'm going on my fifth year um, in that time, I have worked with uh ESL kids, I have worked with uh sped kids at variousing variousing levels"
<b>EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES</b>	Statements about prior / concurrent higher education experiences	April, p. 96: "I went back to a university and I got my bachelor's in English and minor in in communication uh specifically uh my area of expertise was journalism."	Michael, p. 2: "Umm, so I got I finished I finished my uh my degree in education majoring in English and minor in reading"
<b>FACILITATING CLASS DISCUSSIONS</b>	Statements related to scaffolding, encouraging, and observing class discussions about texts and/or topics with real world implications	Michael, p. 32: "And you know I'm and I'm monitoring what they say, but I'm kind of letting them have a space to say it, because these young men, they get shut down every time they turn around, and so I want them to be able to have a space where they can have these conversations and we can have the bigger discussions"	Guinevere, pp. 225-226: "when they were putting um with the riots the Capitol...we were having this conversation and that I mean I guess that could be seen as popular text um they're (sigh) they don't have we had more real conversation but that wasn't even what we were discussing that day"
<b>FOCUSING ON GENDER</b>	Statements about gender, gender equality, and/or reading texts that highlight women's experiences and points of view, particularly within discussions of multicultural texts; includes statements related to textual representations and portrayals of women and the challenges they encounter	Michael, p. 28: "I actually think I would use I would have the course based in uh gender, in order to be able to utilize the multicultural text better um...so if and it would all it would be focused mainly how women are mistreated, abused, and used by either men or a town um I would be able to use Adichie's <i>We Are Feminists</i> "	Guinevere, p. 199: "It's, because... no matter if they the ... these women were put at odds, but they were still women. They were still trying to they and when they were dealing with the the problems within their culture. And the changes."



<b>GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES</b>	Statements related to perceived generational differences between today's youth and individuals growing up during earlier time periods, including statements about adapting instruction and text use to meet students' youth identities; also, comparative statements highlighting how the participant's experiences may differ from those of current students	April, pp. 135: "I deal with a lot of Generation Z, and eventually the Alphas will be coming up, and their idea of popular culture is uh items that, things that they interact with more nowadays. So um I'll think of anything doing with social media, with music, with um they, where they have more interaction themselves with. So that's what I think popular, pop culture is, even though for me, popular culture could be '80s music."	April, p. 112: "I ... understand they're not who I was when I was growing up. So I wanted to bring in more texts. And so ... that's where I'm moving towards."
<b>INCORPORATING A DIVERSITY OF TEXTS</b>	Statements about using a diversity of texts, genres, and mediums with students; also, statements suggesting a willingness and/or need to include a range of textual options and experiences in the classroom, as well as perspectives about why this may be beneficial	April, p. 155: "in order to get my students to want to learn about the skill and I have to pull up some comic book or some video or some TikTok or a podcast I will do it. And for that I have slowly progressed adding more different mediums."	Michael, p. 25: "when I started ah unfortunately I kinda stuck to my textbook, so whatever was in the textbook is what I used, and then you know a student will have me one year, and then they'll go, oh she's going to do this text again, so then I would actually you know do Google searches for other texts so that I'm not you know beating a dead horse...um, and now I'm finding that the texts are becoming more diverse"
<b>LACK OF GUIDANCE AND INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES</b>	Statements suggesting a need for guidance, information, instructional models, resources, and/or research related to implementing diverse texts into the curriculum, including perspectives about why these supports and materials may be beneficial	April, p. 119: "there is no positive studies out the- the outside in which I can draw on and so I'm kind of like, this is a very... touch and go thing. Trying to figure out what works, what what can I incorporate, so it's for me since there is no background information or no studies that I can fall back on it makes it difficult for me to make certain that this could work for the the students."	April, pp. 119-120: "there's not a lot of information out there when it comes to multicultural texts. Uh, there is information on the usual classics uh chan- or how to teach s- students, but not what to teach students and the impact of what um allowing them to either choose and or what kind of new stories are available or new texts are available in order to better incorporate education into their lives."
<b>LOCAL AND STATE OVERSIGHT</b>	Statements about district and state policies and requirements, including perspectives about their impact and efficacy	April, p. 122: "and really the pressure that is put on us is by the state...and not the actual district, um the state requires the student to meet these type of TEKS, uh and those TEKS are the ones that are tested, so of course our district focuses on those TEKS and those have specific questions."	Michael, p. 30: "like every other governing body on the planet, has a long way to go."
<b>MAKING CONNECTIONS</b>	Statements about making connections to texts (including personal / emotional responses to texts and making connections based on experiences / background knowledge), as well as making connections between texts, and/or making connections between texts and issues impacting the larger world / society	April, p. 116: "I found a connection to because of my students, their personalities...matching them to the characters, that's how I I why I included them, so you have to, when it comes to including texts, you have to find texts in which your students can make connections to."	Michael, p. 19: "we're going to go into school and Black Lives Matter is still going to be happening, um so I may put, I may have them read uh <i>Letters from a Birmingham Jail</i> , and I may have them compare Dr. King's letters from nineteen sixtttee... two, I think? To today's Black Lives Matters, how are issues the same, how are they different "

<b>MENTORING AND SUPPORTING COLLEAGUES</b>	Statements about how the participant has or would assist colleagues, either through mentoring or another type of support	Guinevere, p. 225: "I would try to give them [colleagues] good examples of things within that they might not be exposed to"	Michael, p. 78: "I would tell him, you know what? Find somebody to watch your class on this day and come in here and you know you'll see me use it."
<b>MULTIMODAL WAYS OF LEARNING AND COMMUNICATING</b>	Statements related to using, creating, communicating with, and gaining understanding from multimodal texts and mediums, including performative ways of displaying learning; also, statements related to the form and function of multimodal texts	April, p. 147: "there was another time that I mentioned manga and talking about how dialogue uh works with um when they're saying something. And I talked about how the speech bubbles look and it shows how it's either the panel is showing the person and then and the way the speech bubble looks uh the point like is it coming from off's um off the panel or is it the person saying it and how that can show uh either the person the, the character in the panel's reaction or how it involves in uh what they're saying."	Michael, p. 82: "it helps with literacy because it's another way of showing that a persuasive argument just isn't on paper. It's not just in a magazine article. It is a cartoon"
<b>MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES</b>	Statements related to broadening students' perspectives, learning from other perspectives, and / or seeing multiple perspectives reflected in texts, learning experiences, and the world	Guinevere, p. 198: "you might figure out your calling in life from something because an author told you about something in a different way than you were used to seeing. Um (sigh) its (sigh) like looking at a painting. If you, you know those trick paintings that um if you look at it one way looking at it right side up it's a bird or a woman, if you turn it the other way it's, it's something else?...It's almost kinda like that, all it the different, the different cultures the different ethnicities ethnicities, all they are is a different way of of us holding the world. "	April, pp. 131-132: "I was like okay, well let's take this from another perspective. Let's look at the teacher, she's in a new place, she's lived somewhere else, uh she's teaching a community that has, is set in its own ways, and she has no idea about, she is not culturally savvy to that location. How do you thi- how would you feel if you were put into an unknown location. And she responded like well I wouldn't know what to do. And I would feel embarrassed. And I would lash out. And she stopped for a moment and she's just like no miss, I I mean, I understand but now you're no- you're making me not hate the teacher anymore! Because she could see that different perspective."
<b>OFFERING ADDITIONAL SUPPORT</b>	Statements related to providing support to students and scaffolding their literacy learning (for example, through text selection or promoting interactions with textual content); also, statements revealing perspectives about stated approaches	Michael, p. 81: "you might want to find maybe a a comic book or a nn- well Sunday comics, those would probably be more receptive for for your your gen pop your [learners needing more support]"	Michael, p. 18: "um we do printed books for for the gen pop, for my sped students I will specifically look for uh if if there's an online version that it can be read to"
<b>PERSPECTIVES AND BELIEFS ABOUT TEACHING</b>	General statements that provide insight into the teacher's personal feelings, beliefs, attitudes, and values about teaching	Michael, p. 3: "and so you know at the end of the first year, I'm like yes, I still love teaching, but I do not love middle school (laughs)"	Michael, p. 94: "but you know you have to be born a teacher to want to be a teacher. "

<b>PRIOR PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES</b>	Statements about prior professional experiences outside the field of education	April, p. 96: "I did ... spend about fifteen years in uh business."	Guinevere, p. 162: "I used to work for [company name]"
<b>PROCEEDING WITH CAUTION</b>	Statements suggesting a careful approach to topic / text selection and usage	Guinevere, p. 229: "I think that pop culture that made, there's a lot of potential but definitely... you have to be careful to put it in the right spot...you can't just toss something random in there and then expect it to work"	Michael, p. 10: "but you have to be careful because Adichie is a very strong feminist...and uh while I'm I absolutely love her, there there are some excerpts from her book <i>We Are Feminists</i> that I wouldn't dare bring into my classroom, only because there's a huge level of uh adult context"
<b>REFERENCING POP CULTURE</b>	Statements about using pop culture references in the classroom to facilitate student understanding, as well as reasons why pop culture references are incorporated into learning activities	April, p. 145: " So I'm showing how the setting of the movie has impacted the character. So um I use a lot of references to movies, to TikTok for the that reason."	Guinevere, p. 210: "Um I mean I reference video games, anime (sigh) movies, Netflix. I do my best to reference those things regur-uh daily. Because these are the things that my students see, this is their, this is what their world is becoming."
<b>RELATING TO STUDENTS</b>	Statements about relating to or making interpersonal connections with students, including seeing things from students' perspectives; also, statements that suggest shared experiences among participants and students	Guinevere, p. 194: " And, and they asked if I played games. They asked what games and they I mean honestly I'm it the fact that I could relate to them on that uh level ... helps them to open up to me...[pause] and the fact that I'm willing to listen, even the students who don't really like me because I've had to write them up (laughs)"	Michael, pp. 51-52: "I like to watch anime only because I love the genre and I don't actually have to think about what I'm watching, and I did tell a couple of kids that, and by the end of the day all of the kids were like, miss you've gotta watch this anime [ <i>uses alternate voice</i> ], oh my god, and they relate to me more because I'm watching what they're watching, and so (sigh) it it helps"
<b>RELEVANT AND RELATABLE TEXTS</b>	Statements about selecting and using texts and/or text genres featuring topics, issues, themes, characters, and/or formats that students may relate to, including perspectives about why certain texts have been or might be considered relatable and relevant to today's students	Michael, pp. 31-32: "our own Hispanic men, who have family members that are in the correctional facilities, they I mean they relate to these novels so well, they get they get angry when when I have to tell them you have to stop reading, they're like, uh I'm not done! [ <i>uses alternate voice</i> ] ... because it's it's a relatable item to them, and in a lot of ways they're not alone, even though I tell them guys you're not alone, this is going on across America"	April, pp. 123-124: "So already I've changed from looking at classical text and instead trying to find something that is more open to c- cultural differences in which they can see, in which they can relate to more.... now it's like when I talk to them and explain uh a skill and understanding I'm com- you know always mentioning social media, different types, uh more current books, things that they can relate to more, and I have seen that just in that short amount of time that I s- started teaching from year one and then four years later, I'm using completely different texts."

<b>SKILLS-BASED ELA LESSONS</b>	Statements that conceptualize or describe how skills-based ELA lessons could be or have been implemented; also, statements that reveal perspectives about developing ELA skills and processes with students, such as the perceived importance of focusing on these areas or how pop culture / multicultural texts are facilitative of skills development	Michael, p. 29: "I would have them contrast you know the two incidences and then I would ask them to you know go ask mom how things were when she was growing up and then look at how things are with you growing up. What are the similarities between the fictional text and real life"	Guinevere, pp. 235-236: "when I say pick apart I mean find details, um inferencing, is um since my uh since my [name of class] they're, I am trying to train their brains to find details and find main ideas. "
<b>STATE TESTING DEMANDS</b>	Statements pertaining to state testing and related standards, including beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions about state tests; the school and state testing culture; and tasks, preparations, and requirements associated with state tests	Michael, p. 69: - "And then from January to the end of March I've got to hit the other 30 or so - 30 percent - and then I have to go back and I have to get the [standards] that the kids weren't really strong in"	Guinevere, pp. 205-206 - "for example standardized tests, they're part of popular culture people complain about em and on a regular basis. But they, but not only are they irrelevant that and they stress students out and they stress teachers out, they hold everybody back."
<b>STUDENT (DIS)COMFORT</b>	Statements related to student comfort or discomfort, particularly with topics, themes, and languages appearing in texts; also, experiences and perspectives about student feelings of comfort when interacting with diverse texts and/or during lessons based on texts	Michael, p. 12: "multicultural texts they ...they do a lot, but they also make the kids uncomfortable...which, which is a good thing, because as much as I want them to learn, I also want them to understand that being uncomfortable, you have to be able to think your way out of it"	Guinevere, p. 190: "that's what people who come that when they are thrown into another culture they, they feel very isolated. If we have even a little bit, even a sliver of their own culture it will help them feel more comfort."
<b>STUDENT AGENCY</b>	Statements acknowledging that students will and should make their own decisions, think for themselves, and use their voices	Guinevere, p. 175: "we can do our best to guide our students and our kids as much as we can but they're going to be making their own decisions. And (sigh) and if we do not give them enough, we need to give them every option that we can. You know and what's a horrible decision for us, may be a great decision for them."	April, p. 127: "we're not here to tell students what to think. We're here to show them uh why it's important, how to do it, and how to apply it to themselves to make their own decisions."
<b>STUDENT ENGAGEMENT</b>	Statements reflecting perspectives and observations related to student engagement (interest / attention), student disengagement (disinterest / inattention), and/or involved, active participation (or lack thereof) in response to texts, topics, and/or lessons	Michael, pp. 34-35: "the kids will read through the first chapter, and that's when it piques their interest, because especially when it's a text about a teenager, that they kind of hit the ground running, they don't want to take you know five, ten chapters to build it up, they want to hit the ground running, and get out as much as they can"	April, p. 103: "And when I use a multicultural text I'm hoping that they ... get that want to know more about the story. So they want to pay attention to what is being said. How its being said. And that's why it's important for multicultural texts to be used"
<b>TEACHER AUTONOMY</b>	Statements that reflect aspects of teacher autonomy, including the ability to choose texts for classroom use and the flexibility to implement texts and lessons within a standards-based school curriculum	Michael, p. 40: "its really up to the teacher and how the teacher wants to bring it into the classroom and expose his or her students to a multicultural text or authors or genres or what have you"	April, p. 112: "So this year, the idea when we were choosing our new book program and we chose a program ...we wanted to move to virtual books. And we specifically chose a program that had a wide range of multicultural text access. "

<p><b>TEXT PRODUCTION AND CREATION</b></p>	<p>Statements about learning experiences that position students as producers and creators of their own textual content</p>	<p>April, pp. 146-147: "and then they created a response, personal response in podcast format. [pause] and uh, they really responded well to that. Like I, I had some entries like they wrote out podcasts but as an, as an additional like you could earn points, you could create a podcast itself so I could hear the audio."</p>	<p>Michael, p. 66: "I'll cut up all the song lyrics I'll mix 'em up in a bag and I'll tell the kids pull out twenty strips. And so they'll pull out twenty strips and I'll tell 'em alright now give me the stanzas and they're like is it four stanzas of five or five stanzas of four I'm like, dealer's choice...now, once you're done give it to somebody else and you take their poem and you teepee cast their poem, which means they're now having to look at different song lyrics that have now become somebody else's poem."</p>
<p><b>TEXTUAL ANALYSIS</b></p>	<p>Statements related to analyzing textual content, such as interrogating texts to uncover meaning, questioning the messages in texts, uncovering author's purpose, and evaluating the content of texts; similar to but distinct from the code SKILLS-BASED ELA LESSONS due to a deeper focus on analytical engagement with texts</p>	<p>Michael, p. 80: "when I had a group of students looking at the the gender and the gender bias in uh magazines they were really look- I mean they looked at the color they looked at you know where was the girl looking up at, was she looking at the guy you know, how is the guy posi- I mean the kids really got into you know the various aspects of the the magazine ad."</p>	<p>April, pp. 151-152: "And then we went into deeper looking at the lyrics and what are they really saying so would, then we went into um literary devices covering like metaphors and similes and symbolism. And then we went (laughs) in to watch the video of the original music video for that, that was popular for that TikTok and then we analyzed what the creator's mood was. And so we travelled between how people were using the, the music itself but then how the creator itself ended up being. So here we tie in author's purpose and author's um the, the method that they used to create the message. And then interpreting what do you think he felt."</p>
<p><b>TEXTUAL REFLECTIONS OF SELF AND COMMUNITY</b></p>	<p>Statements about students seeing aspects of themselves and/or their community reflected in the text, including perspectives or observations about the impact or pedagogical uses of these kind of textual experiences; also, statements about using texts that reflect students' cultures, identities, language, and/or communities</p>	<p>April, p. 128: "But the multicultural part of it was who was on trial, which was a Hispanic boy. And so they could see themselves being the <i>chismosa</i>, being you know talking to the other jurors, uh and they saw themselves in that character. They really, and I mean really (laughs) got into it."</p>	<p>Guinevere, p. 241: "Because it's one thing to see a culture somewhere across the world, but a culture that is parallel to where you live is, is an awesome experience for kids who live in a small town. A culture that they kind of see a little bit, because I mean most of them are Hispanic but most them don't speak a lot of Spanish. So, so they don't know that part of, a lot of them don't know that part of their heritage."</p>

<b>TRADITIONAL TEXTS</b>	Statements that reveal experiences, feelings, perspectives, and/or observations related to traditional, canonical, and/or classical texts, text genres, and/or authors (often male and White); also, statements that compare / contrast traditional and classical works with multicultural or popular culture texts	April, p. 154: "I read Shakespeare um I read the the usual things that we would teach our high schoolers um you to use the skills with. But when I first taught I used that same concept, I used those the usual novels. The usual plays."	Guinevere, p. 200: "I mean, you have something so basic and so (sigh) it it that everybody knows about. Um Romeo and Juliet. The story that's from [inaudible] another culture."
<b>TRANSFER OF SKILLS</b>	Statements about students applying skills to alternate contexts and situations, with "skills" referring to both traditional school-based literacy skills and real-world skills encountered in daily life	April, p. 137: "that's what I hope to get the kids to understand is that even though we are in an English class studying literature, when you go out in the real world, the world that you do live in that still matters, those skills that we learned here in class can be used to for any of the, um... outside materials that you would run into."	Michael, p. 56: "it just goes back to using other resources to ensure that the student learns the concept so that ... when they learn the concept then he can apply it to any skill they're doing, like tying your shoe, if you know how to tie a tennis shoe that comes up to your ankles, then you can tie a high top...if you know the skill then you can apply to anything"
<b>UNIVERSAL USE AND APPEAL OF POPULAR CULTURE</b>	Statements that point to a universal, shared experience of encountering and interacting with popular culture; inclusive of but distinct from APPRECIATING AND ENJOYING POPULAR CULTURE TEXTS	April, p. 159: "the idea its effect on teachers themselves...and knowing how our students are taking it. I think that's a definitely a key thing that should be considered also because its not just the thought about using the materials to teach so that we can make we can show how connections are made with from our students how they connect to the material we're teaching but the fact when we're teaching it we're actually being influenced by it just as much."	Michael, p. 54: " and we're sittin there and I'm like, (sniffs) and I hear my son, and he's like (sniff) and then I hear the big huge football player behind me going (long inhale sniff) ahh...and so that just takes me out of the teacher authority role into, I'm a normal person. You know, I watch movies, I cry, I love popcorn"
<b>WRITING LESSONS</b>	Statements that conceptualize or describe how writing activities or lessons could be or have been implemented; also, statements about the writing process, such as revising, editing, giving / receiving feedback, and publishing final drafts	Guinevere, p. 220: "I think that I could do a revise thing from um from something from fanfiction...I would have them, and this is not something they would publish fanfiction itself, but I would want them to search into their favorite pop culture culture (laughs),... and have them go through and then have them um essentially go and revise that piece of work."	Guinevere, p. 195: "they might find a new way to write because they see the different um patterns and different um rhythms that in like uh maybe a Korean poem does [inaudible] versus what we do here in America.."

## REFERENCES

- Adichie, C. N. (2009, July). *The danger of a single story* [Video]. TED Conferences.  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\\_ngozi\\_adichie\\_the\\_danger\\_of\\_a\\_single\\_story?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?language=en)
- Alexander, P. A., & Fox, E. (2013). A historical perspective on reading research and practice, redux. In D. E. Alvermann, N. J. Unrau, & R. B. Ruddell (Eds.), *Theoretical models and processes of reading* (6th ed., pp. 3-46). International Reading Association.
- Alvermann, D. E. (2000). Narrative approaches. In M. L. Kamil, P. B. Mosenthal, P. D. Pearson, & R. Barr (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (Vol. III, pp. 123-139). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Alvermann, D. E. (2002). Effective literacy instruction for adolescents. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 34(2), 189-208. [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15548430jlr3402\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15548430jlr3402_4)
- Alvermann, D. E. (2011). Popular culture and literacy practices. In M. L. Kamil, P. D. Pearson, E. B. Moje, & P. P. Afflerbach (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (Vol. IV, pp. 541-560). Routledge.
- Alvermann, D. E. (2016). "Blowin' in the wind." *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 60(1), 91-93. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.566>
- Alvermann, D. E., & Hagood, M. C. (2000a). Critical media literacy: Research, theory, and practice in "new times." *The Journal of Educational Research*, 93(3), 193-205. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220670009598707>
- Alvermann, D. E., & Hagood, M. C. (2000b). Fandom and critical media literacy. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 43(5), 436-446.

- Alvermann, D. E., Hinchman, K. A., Moore, D. W., Phelps, S. F., & Waff, D. R. (Eds.). (2006). *Reconceptualizing the literacies in adolescents' lives* (2nd ed.). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Alvermann, D. E., Moon, J. S., & Hagood, M. C. (1999). *Popular culture in the classroom: Teaching and researching critical media literacy*. International Reading Association and National Reading Conference.
- Alvermann, D. E., & Xu, S. H. (2003). Children's everyday literacies: Intersections of popular culture and language arts instruction. *Language Arts*, 81(2), 145-154.
- Ambert, A., Adler, P. A., Adler, P., & Detzner, D. F. (1995). Understanding and evaluating qualitative research. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 57(4), 879-893. <https://doi.org/10.2307/353409>
- American Psychological Association (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). <https://doi.org/10.1037/0000165-000>
- Anderson, R. C., Hiebert, E. H., Scott, J. A., & Wilkinson, I. A. G. (1985). *Becoming a nation of readers: The report of the commission on reading*. The National Institute of Education.
- Anstey, M., & Bull, G. (2006). *Teaching and learning multiliteracies: Changing times, changing literacies*. International Reading Association.
- Aronson, B., & Laughter, J. (2016). The theory and practice of culturally relevant education: A synthesis of research across content areas. *Review of Educational Research*, 86(1), 163-206. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654315582066>
- Arthur, L. (2001). Popular culture and early literacy learning. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 2(3), 295-308. <https://doi.org/10.2304/ciec.2001.2.3.3>



- Au, K. H. (1980). Participation structures in a reading lesson with Hawaiian children: Analysis of a culturally appropriate instructional event. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 11(2), 91-115.
- Au, K. H. (2002). Multicultural factors and the effective instruction of students of diverse backgrounds. In A. E. Fastrup & S. J. Samuels. (Eds.), *What research has to say about reading instruction* (3rd ed., pp. 392-413). International Reading Association, Inc.
- Au, K. H., & Raphael, T. E. (2000). Equity and literacy in the next millennium. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 35(1), 170-188.
- Banks, C. A. M., & Banks, J. A. (1995). Equity pedagogy: An essential component of multicultural education. *Theory into Practice*, 34(3), 152-158.
- Banks, J. A. (1993). The canon debate, knowledge construction, and multicultural education. *Educational Researcher*, 22(5), 4-14. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1176946>
- Banks, J. A. (1998). Multiculturalism's five dimensions (M. Tucker, Interviewer). *NEA Today Online*. <https://www.learner.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/3.Multiculturalism.pdf>
- Banks, J. A. (2001). Multicultural education: Historical development, dimensions, and practice. In J. A. Banks, & C. A. M. Banks (Eds.), *Handbook of research on multicultural education* (pp. 3-24). Jossey-Bass, Inc.
- Banks, J. A., & Banks, C. A. M. (2001). Introduction. In J. A. Banks, & C. A. M. Banks (Eds.), *Handbook of research on multicultural education* (pp. xi--xiv). Jossey-Bass, Inc.
- Banks, J. A., & Banks, C. A. M. (2001). *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives*

(4th ed.). John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Batchelor, K. E. (2019). Using linked text sets to promote advocacy and agency through a critical lens. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 62(4), 379-386.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.906>

Beach, R., & O'Brien, D. (2008). Teaching popular culture texts in the classroom. In J.

Coiro, M. Knobel, C. Lankshear, & D. Leu (Eds.), *Handbook of research on new literacies* (pp. 775-804). Taylor & Francis.

Bean, R. M. (2009). *The reading specialist: Leadership for the classroom, school, and community* (2nd ed.). Guilford.

Bean, T., Valerio, P., Senior, H., & White, F. (1999). Secondary English students'

engagement in reading and writing about a multicultural novel. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 93(1), 32-37. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220679909597626>

Beers, K. (2010). Foreword. In M. C. Hagood, D. Alvermann, & A. Heron-Hruby (Eds.), *Bring it to class: Unpacking pop culture in literacy learning* (pp. ix-xi). Teachers College Press.

Berry, G. L., & Asamen, J. K. (2001). Television, children, and multicultural awareness:

Comprehending the medium in a complex multimedia society. In D. G. Singer, & J. L. Singer (Eds.), *Handbook of children and the media* (pp. 359-373). Sage.

Bintz, W. P. (2018). The literary canon: Virtue, vice, or both. *The Journal of Balanced*

*Literacy Research and Instruction*, 4(1), 1-9. <https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/jblri/vol4/iss1/5>

Birks, M., Chapman, Y., & Francis, K. (2008). Memoing in qualitative research: Probing data and practices. *Journal of Research in Nursing*, 13(1), 68-75.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1744987107081254>

- Bishop, R. S. (1990). Mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors. *Perspectives: Choosing and Using Books for the Classroom*, 6(3). <https://scenicregional.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Mirrors-Windows-and-Sliding-Glass-Doors.pdf>
- Borsheim-Black, C., Macaluso, M., & Petrone, R. (2014). Critical literature pedagogy: Teaching canonical literature for critical literacy. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 58(2), 123-133. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.323>
- Botzakis, S., & Hall, L. A. (2011). Aliteracy, agency, and identity. In A. McGill-Franzen & R. L. Allington (Eds.), *Handbook of reading disability research* (pp. 129-136). Routledge.
- Bowmer, M. E., & Curwood, J. S. (2016). From Keats to Kanye: Romantic poetry and popular culture in the secondary English classroom. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 60(2), 141-149. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.550>
- Brozo, W. G., Moorman, G., & Meyer, C. K. (2014). *WHAM! Teaching with graphic novels across the curriculum*. Teachers College Press.
- Buckingham, D. (Ed.). (1998). *Teaching popular culture: Beyond radical pedagogy*. Routledge.
- Buelow, S. (2015). Visual to print transfer: A literacy strategy for theme analysis of text. *The Reading Teacher*, 69(3), 277-280. <https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1412>
- Buelow, S. (2017). Popular culture and academic literacies situated in a pedagogical third space. *Reading Horizons*, 56(1), 1-24. [https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading\\_horizons/vol56/iss1/1/](https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading_horizons/vol56/iss1/1/)
- Burn, A., Buckingham, D., Parry, B., & Powell, M. (2010). Minding the gaps: Teachers'

- cultures, students' cultures. In D. E. Alvermann (Ed.), *Adolescents' online literacies: Connecting classrooms, digital media, & popular culture* (pp. 183-201). Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.
- Byker, E. J., Good, A. J., Miller, E., & Kissel, B. (2018). Multicultural media authorship: Using technology to create children's literature texts. *Multicultural Education*, 25(2), 22-25.
- Byrd, C. M. (2016). Does culturally relevant teaching work? An examination from student perspectives. *Sage Open*, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244016660744>
- Cai, M. (2002). *Multicultural literature for children and young adults: Reflections on critical issues*. Greenwood Press. [https://openlibrary.org/books/OL3557624M/Multicultural\\_literature\\_for\\_children\\_and\\_young\\_adults](https://openlibrary.org/books/OL3557624M/Multicultural_literature_for_children_and_young_adults)
- Callens, M. V. (2017). The cultural diamond as an English teacher's best friend. *English Journal*, 106(5), 64-69.
- Campano, G., Nichols, T. P., & Player, G. D. (2020). Multimodal critical inquiry: Nurturing decolonial imaginaries. In E. B. Moje, P. P. Afflerbach, P. Enciso, & N. K. Lesaux (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (Vol. V, pp. 137-152).
- Cartledge, G., Keesey, S., Bennett, J. G., Ramnath, R., & Council, M. R., III (2015). Culturally relevant literature: What matters most to primary-age urban learners. *Reading & Writing Quarterly: Overcoming Learning Difficulties*, 1-28. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10573569.2014.955225>
- Chandler-Olcott, K., & Mahar, D. (2003). Adolescents' anime-inspired "fanfictions": An exploration of multiliteracies. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 46(7), 556-

566.

- Chandler-Olcott, K., & Lewis, E. (2010). "I think they're being wired differently": Secondary teachers' cultural models of adolescents and their online literacies. In D. E. Alvermann (Ed.), *Adolescents' online literacies: Connecting classrooms, digital media, & popular culture* (pp. 163-182). Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.
- Chun, C. W. (2009). Critical literacies and graphic novels for English-language learners: Teaching Maus. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 53(2), 144-153.  
<https://doi.org/10.1598/JAAL.53.2.5>
- Clandinin, D. J., & Caine, V. (2008). Narrative inquiry. In L. M. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*. (pp. 542-545). Sage.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. Jossey-Bass.
- Coburn, C. E., Pearson, P. D., & Woulfin, S. (2011). Reading policy in the era of accountability. In M. L. Kamil, P. D. Pearson, E. B. Moje, & P. P. Afflerbach (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (Vol. IV, pp. 561-593). Routledge.
- Coiro, J., Knobel, M., Lankshear, C., & Leu, D. J. (2008). Central issues in new literacies and new literacies research. In J. Coiro, M. Knobel, C. Lankshear, & D. Leu (Eds.), *Handbook of research on new literacies* (pp. 1-21). Taylor & Francis.
- Coleman-King, C., & Groenke, S. L. (2019). Teaching #BlackLivesMatter and #SayHerName: Interrogating historical violence against Black women in *Copper Sun*. In R. Ginsberg, & W. J. Glenn (Eds.), *Engaging with multicultural YA literature in the secondary classroom* (pp. 122-131). Routledge.
- Collier, D. R., & Rowsell, J. (2014). A room with a view: Revisiting the multiliteracies

manifesto, twenty years on. *Fremdsprachen Lehren und Lernen*, 2, 12-28.

Common Core State Standards Initiative (2022). *Standards in your state*.

<http://www.corestandards.org/standards-in-your-state/>

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry.

*Educational Researcher*, 19(5), 2-14. [https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X0](https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X019005002)

19005002

Cope, B., & Kalantzis, M. (2015). The things you do to know: An introduction

to the pedagogy of multiliteracies. In B. Cope, & M. Kalantzis (Eds.), *A*

*pedagogy of multiliteracies: Learning by design* (pp. 1-36). [https://doi.org/10.](https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137539724_1)

1057/9781137539724\_1

Cortés, C. E. (2001). Knowledge construction and popular culture: The media as

multicultural educator. In J. A. Banks & C. A. M. Banks (Eds.), *Handbook of*

*research on multicultural education* (pp. 169-183). Jossey-Bass, Inc.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five*

*approaches* (2nd ed.). Sage.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative,*

*and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). Sage.

Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry.

*Theory Into Practice*, 39(3), 124-130. <https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip3903>

\_2

Dalton, B., & Proctor, C. P. (2008). The changing landscape of text and comprehension

in the age of new literacies. In J. Coiro, M. Knobel, C. Lankshear, & D. Leu

(Eds.), *Handbook of research on new literacies* (pp. 297-324). Taylor & Francis.

- Darling-Hammond, L. (2010). *The flat world and education: How America's commitment to equity will determine our future*. Teachers College Press.
- Delaney, T. (2007). Pop culture: An overview. *Philosophy Now*, 64. [https://philosophy now.org/issues/64/Pop\\_Culture\\_An\\_Overview](https://philosophy now.org/issues/64/Pop_Culture_An_Overview)
- Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education*. The Free Press.
- Dickie, J., & Shuker, J. (2014). Ben 10, superheroes and princesses: Primary teachers' views of popular culture and school literacy. *Literacy*, 48(1), 32-38. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lit.12023>
- Dodge, A. M., & Crutcher, P. A. (2015). Inclusive classrooms for LGBTQ students: Using linked text sets to challenge the hegemonic "single story." *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 59(1), 95-105. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.433>
- Dressel, J. H. (2005). Personal response and social responsibility: Responses of middle school students to multicultural literature. *The Reading Teacher*, 58(8), 750-764.
- Dudley-Marling, C. (1997). "I'm not from Pakistan": Multicultural literature and the problem of representation. *The New Advocate*, 10(2), 123-134.
- Duncan-Andrade, J. (2008). Your best friend or your worst enemy: Youth popular culture, pedagogy, and curriculum in urban classrooms. In G. S. Goodman (Ed.), *Educational psychology: An application of critical constructivism* (pp. 113-143). Peter Lang.
- Duncan-Andrade, J., & Morrell, E. (2005). Turn up that radio, teacher: Popular culture pedagogy in new century urban schools. *Journal of School Leadership*, 15(3), 284-304.
- Elish-Piper, L., Wold, L. S., & Schwingendorf, K. (2014). Scaffolding high school

- students' reading of complex texts using linked text sets. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 57(7), 565-574. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.292>
- Equal Educational Opportunities Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1701 (1974). <https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?path=/prelim@title20/chapter39&edition=prelim>
- Farber, P., Provenzo, E. F., & Holm, G. (Eds.). (1994). *Schooling in the light of popular culture*. State University of New York Press.
- Finders, M. (1996). Queens and teen zines: Early adolescent females reading their way toward adulthood. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 27(1), 71-89.
- Fisher, D., Schell, E., & Frey, N. (2004). "In your mind and on the paper": Teaching students to transform (and own) texts. *Social Studies Review*, 44(1), 26-31.
- Fiske, J. (1995). *Understanding popular culture*. Routledge.
- Fitzgerald, J., & Noblit, G. W. (1999). About hopes, aspirations, and uncertainty: First-grade English language learners' emergent reading. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 31(2), 133-182. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10862969909548043>
- Flood, J., Lapp, D., & Bayles-Martin, D. (2000). Vision possible: The role of visual media in literacy education. In M. A. Gallego & S. Hollingsworth (Eds.), *What counts as literacy: Challenging the school standard* (pp. 62-84). Teachers College Press.
- Fong, A., & Hernandez Sheets, R. (2004). Multicultural education: Teacher conceptualization and approach to implementation. *Multicultural Education*, 10-15.
- Freebody, P., & Freiberg, J. M. (2011). The teaching and learning of critical literacy: Beyond the 'show of wisdom.' In M. L. Kamil, P. D. Pearson, E. B. Moje, & P. P.



- Afflerbach (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (Vol. IV, pp. 432-452).  
Routledge.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Penguin Books Ltd.
- Freire, P. (1985). *The politics of education: Culture power and liberation*. Bergin & Garvey.
- Freire, P., & Macedo, M. (1987). *Literacy: Reading the word and the world*. Bergin & Garvey.
- Frey, N., & Fisher, D. (2004). Using graphic novels, anime, and the internet in an urban high school. *The English Journal*, 93(3), 19-25.
- Gallego, M. A., & Hollingsworth, S. (2000). Introduction: The idea of multiple literacies. In M. A. Gallego & S. Hollingsworth (Eds.), *What counts as literacy: Challenging the school standard* (pp. 1-23). Teachers College Press.
- Garcia, A., Luke, A., & Seglem, R. (2018). Looking at the *next* 20 years of multiliteracies: A discussion with Allan Luke. *Theory Into Practice*, 57, 72-78.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2017.1390330>
- Garland, K. (2012). Research for the classroom: Analyzing classroom literacy events: What observing classroom conversations about popular culture can reveal about reading. *The English Journal*, 101(6), 104-106.
- Gates, P. S., & Mark, D. L. H. (2006). *Cultural journeys: Multicultural literature for elementary and middle school students*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Gay, G. (1995). Mirror images on common issues: Parallels between multicultural

- education and critical pedagogy. In C. E. Sleeter & P. L. McLaren (Eds.), *Multicultural education, critical pedagogy, and the politics of difference* (pp. 155-189). State University of New York Press.
- Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, & practice*. Teachers College Press.
- Gay, G. (2002). Preparing for culturally responsive teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53(2), 106-116. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487102053002003>
- Gee, J. P. (2000). Identity as an analytic lens for research in education. *Review of Research in Education*, 25, 99-125. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1167322>
- Gee, J. P. (2008). *Social linguistics and literacies: Ideology in Discourses* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Ghiso, M. P., Campano, G., & Hall, T. (2012). Braided histories and experiences in literature for children and adolescents. *Journal of Children's Literature*, 38(2), 14-22.
- Gilton, D. L. (2007). *Multicultural and ethnic children's literature in the United States*. The Scarecrow Press, Inc.
- Giroux, H. (1985). Introduction. In P. Freire (Ed.), *The politics of education: Culture power and liberation* (pp. xi-xxv). Bergin & Garvey.
- Giroux, H. A., & Simon, R. I. (Eds.). (1989). *Popular culture, schooling, and everyday life*. Praeger.
- Glazier, J., & Seo, J. (2005). Multicultural literature and discussion as mirror and window?. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 48(8), 686-700. <https://doi.org/10.1598/JAAL.48.8.6>

- Glenn, W. J. (2012). Developing understandings of race: Preservice teachers' counter-narrative (re)construction of people of color in young adult literature. *English Education, 44*(4), 326-353.
- Glenn, W. J., & Ginsberg, R. (2019). Conclusion: Recognizing and speaking to the challenges that come with courageous teaching. In R. Ginsberg, & W. J. Glenn (Eds.), *Engaging with multicultural YA literature in the secondary classroom* (pp. 191-196). Routledge.
- González, N. (2005). Beyond culture: The hybridity of funds of knowledge. In N. González, L. C. Moll, & C. Amanti (Eds.), *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households, communities, and classrooms* (pp. 29-46). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Gorman, A. (2021). *The hill we climb: An inaugural poem for the country*. Viking Books.
- Grater, E., & Johnson, D. (2013). The power of song: Cultural relevance in the eighth-grade classroom. *Voices from the Middle, 21*(1), 32-40.
- Great Schools Partnership (2016). *The glossary of education reform*. Retrieved January 22, 2022, from <https://www.edglossary.org/student-engagement/>
- Guba, E. G. (1981). ERIC/ECTJ Annual review paper: Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiries. *ECTJ, 29*(2), 75-91.
- Haddix, M., & Price-Dennis, D. (2013). Urban fiction and multicultural literature as transformative tools for preparing English teachers for diverse classrooms. *English Education, 45*(3), 247-283.
- Hagood, M. C. (2008). Intersections of popular culture, identities, and new literacies

- research. In J. Coiro, M. Knobel, C. Lankshear, & D. Leu (Eds.), *Handbook of research on new literacies* (pp. 531-551). Taylor & Francis.
- Hagood, M. C., Alvermann, D. E., & Heron-Hruby, A. (2010). *Bring it to class: Unpacking pop culture in literacy learning*. Teachers College Press.
- Hall, K. (2003). *Listening to Stephen read: Multiple perspectives on literacy*. Open University Press.
- Hall, L. A. (2012). How popular culture texts inform and shape students' discussions of social studies texts. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 55(4), 296-305.  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/JAAL.00036>
- Hamdan, A.K. (2009). Reflexivity of discomfort in insider-outsider educational research. *McGill Journal of Education*, 44(3), 377-404. <https://doi.org/10.7202/039946ar>
- Harris, M. (2020, June 10). The absolutist case for problematic pop culture. *Vulture*.  
[https://www.vulture.com/article/the-absolutist-case-for-gone-with-the-wind.html?utm\\_medium=s1&utm\\_source=fb&utm\\_campaign=nym&fbclid=IwAR1BxQH48gHw3eC8qqiiIyRKHC8XqAONPlpKF5sUN\\_wyCQE2M2Cm1QMt4F8](https://www.vulture.com/article/the-absolutist-case-for-gone-with-the-wind.html?utm_medium=s1&utm_source=fb&utm_campaign=nym&fbclid=IwAR1BxQH48gHw3eC8qqiiIyRKHC8XqAONPlpKF5sUN_wyCQE2M2Cm1QMt4F8)
- Harris, V. J. (2002). Multicultural literature. In B. J. Guzzetti (Ed.), *Literacy in America: An encyclopedia of history, theory, and practice* (Volume 1, pp. 368-374). ABC-CLIO, Inc.
- Heath, S. B. (1983). *Ways with words: Language, life, and work in communities and classrooms*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hellawell, D. (2006). Inside-out: Analysis of the insider-outsider concept as a heuristic

- device to develop reflexivity in students doing qualitative research. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 11(4), 483-494. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562510600874292>
- Hellsten, L. M., Prytula, M. P., Ebanks, A., & Lai, H. (2009). Teacher induction: Exploring beginning teacher mentorship. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 32(4), 703-733.
- Hermanns, H. (2004). Interviewing as an activity. In U. Flick, E. von Kardorff, & I. Steinke (Eds.), *A companion to qualitative research* (pp. 209-213). SAGE Publications.
- Hipple, T. (2000). With themes for all: The universality of the young adult novel. In V. R. Monseau & G. M. Salvner (Eds.), *Reading their world: The young adult novel in the classroom* (2nd ed., pp. 1-14). Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc.
- Hixenbaugh, M. (2022, February 1). Banned: Books on race and sexuality are disappearing from Texas schools in record numbers. *NBC News*. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/texas-books-race-sexuality-schools-rcna13886>
- Holland, K. F., & Mongillo, G. (2016). Elementary teachers' perspectives on the use of multicultural literature in their classrooms. *Language and Literacy*, 18(3), 16-32. <https://doi.org/10.20360/G2MP4G>
- Hollins, E. R. (2008). *Culture in school learning: Revealing the deep meaning*. (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Howe, W. A., & Lisi, P. A. (2020). *Becoming a multicultural educator: Developing awareness, gaining skills, and taking action* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Huber, J., Caine, V., Huber, M., & Steeves, P. (2013). Narrative inquiry as pedagogy in

education: The extraordinary potential of living, telling, retelling, and reliving stories of experience. *Review of Research in Education*, 37(1), 212-242.

<https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X12458885>

International Literacy Association (2018, November 19). Seven major changes to standards 2017 [Video]. YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=McINRj0FTfQ&list=PLPEkvzXdK-8rVQ9heRZOBgH00Pud0C6uK&index=3)

[McINRj0FTfQ&list=PLPEkvzXdK-8rVQ9heRZOBgH00Pud0C6uK&index=3](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=McINRj0FTfQ&list=PLPEkvzXdK-8rVQ9heRZOBgH00Pud0C6uK&index=3)

International Literacy Association (2019, June 11). *ILA standards 2017 for departments of education* [Video]. YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gJDXFVO](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gJDXFVO_iyI&list=PLPEkvzXdK-8rVQ9heRZOBgH00Pud0C6uK&index=4)

[\\_iyI&list=PLPEkvzXdK-8rVQ9heRZOBgH00Pud0C6uK&index=4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gJDXFVO_iyI&list=PLPEkvzXdK-8rVQ9heRZOBgH00Pud0C6uK&index=4)

International Literacy Association (2020). *What's hot in literacy report*. [https://www.lite](https://www.literacyworldwide.org/docs/default-source/resource-documents/whatshotreport_2020_final.pdf)

[racyworldwide.org/docs/default-source/resource-documents/whatshotreport](https://www.literacyworldwide.org/docs/default-source/resource-documents/whatshotreport_2020_final.pdf)

[\\_2020\\_final.pdf](https://www.literacyworldwide.org/docs/default-source/resource-documents/whatshotreport_2020_final.pdf)

Intrator, S. M., & Kunzman, R. (2009). Who are adolescents today? Youth voices and what they tell us. In L. Christenbury, R. Bomer, & P. Smagorinsky (Eds.), *Handbook of adolescent literacy research* (pp. 29-45). The Guilford Press.

Irizarry, J. G. (2007). Ethnic and urban intersections in the classroom: Latino students, hybrid identities, and culturally responsive pedagogy. *Multicultural Perspectives*,

9(3), 21-28. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15210960701443599>

Irvine, A. (2011). Duration, dominance, and depth in telephone and face-to-face

interviews: A comparative exploration. *The International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 10(3), 202-220. <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940691101000302>

Janghorban, R., Roudsari, R. L., & Taghipour, A. (2014). Skype interviewing: The new

- generation of online synchronous interview in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being*, 9(1), 1-3.  
<https://doi.org/10.3402/qhw.v9.24152>
- Janks, H. (2014). Critical literacy's ongoing importance for education. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 57(5), 349-356. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.260>
- Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide*. New York University Press.
- Johnson, L. L. (2018). Exploring youth, race, and popular culture: A critical dialogue with Jabari Mahiri. *Language Arts*, 96(1), 51-56.
- Johnson, R. B. (1997). Examining the validity structure of qualitative research. *Education*, 118(2), 282-292.
- Kelly, C., & Brower, C. (2017). Making meaning through media: Scaffolding academic and critical media literacy with texts about schooling. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 60(6), 655-666. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.614>
- Ketter, J., & Lewis, C. (2001). Already reading texts and contexts: Multicultural literature in a predominantly white rural community. *Theory into Practice*, 40(3), 175-183.
- Kim, E. (2014). Korean and Korean American adolescents' responses to literature: Impact of narratives and interpretive community. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 57(8), 666-675. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.304>
- Kim, J. (2016). *Understanding narrative inquiry: The crafting and analysis of stories as research*. Sage.
- Kirkland, D. E., & Hull, G. A. (2011). Literacy out of school. In M. L. Kamil, P. D. Pearson, E. B. Moje, & P. P. Afflerbach (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research*

- (Vol. IV, pp. 711-725). Routledge.
- Krefting, L. (1991). Rigor in qualitative research: The assessment of trustworthiness. *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 45(3), 214-222. <https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.45.3.214>
- Kress, G. (2003). *Literacy in the new media age*. Routledge.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995a). But that's just good teaching! The case for culturally relevant pedagogy. *Theory into Practice*, 34(3), 159-165. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00405849509543675>
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995b). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal*, 32(3), 465-491. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312032003465>
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2009). *The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American children* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2014). Culturally relevant pedagogy 2.0: a.k.a. the remix. *Harvard Educational Review*, 84(1), 74-84.
- L'Allier, S. K., & Elish-Piper, L. (2007). "Walking the walk" with teacher education candidates: Strategies for promoting active engagement with assigned readings. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 50(5), 338-353. <https://doi.org/10.1598/JAAL.50.5.2>
- Landt, S. M. (2006). Multicultural literature and young adolescents: A kaleidoscope of opportunity. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 49(8), 690-697. <https://doi.org/10.1598/JAAL.49.8.5>
- Langer, J. A. (1995). *Envisioning literature: Literary understanding and literature*



- instruction*. Teachers College Press.
- Lankshear, C. (1997). *Changing literacies*. Open University Press.
- Lankshear, C., & Knobel, M. (2011). *New literacies: Everyday practices and social learning* (3rd ed.). Open University Press.
- Larrick, N. (1965). The all-white world of children's books. *Saturday Review*, 48, 63–65, 84–85.
- Larson, J., & Marsh, J. (2006). *Making literacy real: Theories and practices for learning and teaching*. Sage.
- lead4ward. (2020). *Snapshots*. Retrieved June 18, 2020, from [https://lead4ward.com/docs/resources/snapshots/elar/teks\\_snapshot\\_elar\\_gr\\_hs.pdf](https://lead4ward.com/docs/resources/snapshots/elar/teks_snapshot_elar_gr_hs.pdf)
- Lee, C. D. (2007). *Culture, literacy, and learning: Taking bloom in the midst of the whirlwind*. Teachers College Press.
- Lee, C. D. (2020). Social and cultural diversity as lens for understanding student learning and the development of reading comprehension. In E. B. Moje, P. P. Afflerbach, P. Enciso, & N. K. Lesaux (Eds.). *Handbook of reading research* (Vol. V, pp. 37-56).
- Lee, L. (2012). "That's a great idea, but I will think about it later": Early childhood preservice teachers' perceptions about popular culture in teaching. *Teacher Education & Practice*, 25(1), 87-99.
- Lefstein, A., & Snell, J. (2011). Promises and problems of teaching with popular culture: A linguistic ethnographic analysis of discourse genre mixing in a literacy lesson. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 46(1), 40-69.
- Leu, D. L. (2000). Literacy and technology: Deictic consequences for literacy education

- in an information age. In M. L. Kamil, P. B. Mosenthal, P. D. Pearson, & R. Barr (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (Vol. III, pp. 743-770). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Leu, D. J., Kinzer, C. K., Coiro, J., Castek, J., & Henry, L. A. (2013). New literacies: A dual-level theory of the changing nature of literacy, instruction, and assessment. In D. E. Alvermann, N. J. Unrau, & R. B. Ruddell (Eds.), *Theoretical models and processes of reading* (6th ed., pp. 1150-1181). International Reading Association.
- Lewis, C., & Ketter, J. (2008). Encoding youth: Popular culture and multicultural literature in a rural context. *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, 24(3), 283-310.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10573560802004217>
- Lewis, L., Parsad, B., Carey, N., Bartfai, N., Farris, E., Smerdon, B., & Greene, B. (1999). *Teacher quality: A report on the preparation and qualifications of public school teachers*. National Center of Educational Statistics Publication Number 1999080. NCES: Washington, DC. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs99/1999080.pdf>
- Lewis, M., & Leland, C. (2002). Critical literacy. In B. J. Guzzetti (Ed.), *Literacy in America: An encyclopedia of history, theory, and practice* (Volume 1, pp. 108-111). ABC-CLIO, Inc.
- Li, G. (2011). The role of culture in literacy, learning, and teaching. In M. L. Kamil, P. D. Pearson, E. B. Moje, & P. P. Afflerbach (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (Vol. IV, pp. 515-538). Routledge.
- Lichtman, M. (2013). *Qualitative research in education: A user's guide* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Louie, B. (2005). Development of empathetic responses with multicultural literature.

*Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 48(7), 566-578. <https://doi.org/10.1598/JAAL.48.7.3>

Luke, A. (2000). Critical literacy in Australia: A matter of context and standpoint.

*Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 43(5), 448-461.

Luke, A., & Elkins, J. (1998). Reinventing literacy in new times. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 42, 4-7.

Luke, A., & Freebody, P. (1997). Critical literacy and the question of normativity: An introduction. In S. Muspratt, A. Luke, & P. Freebody (Eds.), *Constructing critical literacies: Teaching and learning textual practices* (pp. 1-18). Hampton Press, Inc.

Luke, C. (1997). Media literacy and cultural studies. In S. Muspratt, A. Luke, & P. Freebody (Eds.), *Constructing critical literacies: Teaching and learning textual practices* (pp. 19-49). Hampton Press, Inc.

Mack, N., Woodsong, C., MacQueen, K. M., Guest, G., & Namey, E. (2005). Qualitative research methods: A data collector's field guide. Family Health International. <https://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/Qualitative%20Research%20Methods%20-%20A%20Data%20Collector's%20Field%20Guide.pdf>

Mackey, M. (2020). Who reads what, in which formats, and why? In E. B. Moje, P. P. Afflerbach, P. Enciso, & N. K. Lesaux (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (Vol. V, pp. 99-115). Routledge.

Major, A. (2020, May 20). How to develop culturally responsive teaching for distance learning. *KQED*. <https://www.kqed.org/mindshift/55941/how-to-develop-culturally-responsive-teaching-for-distance-learning>

- Marsh, J. (2006). Popular culture in the literacy curriculum: A Bourdieuan analysis. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 41(2), 160-174. <https://doi.org/10.1598/RRQ.41.2.1>
- Marsh, J., & Millard, E. (2000). *Literacy and popular culture: Using children's culture in the classroom*. Sage.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2006). *Designing qualitative research* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Marshall, E., & Sensoy, O. (2011). Introduction. In E. Marshall & O. Sensoy (Eds.), *Rethinking popular culture and media* (pp. 1-11). Rethinking Schools Ltd.
- Martin, K. L., Buelow, S. M., & Hoffman, J. T. (2015). New teacher induction: Support that impacts beginning middle-level educators. *Middle School Journal*, 47(1), 4-12. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00940771.2016.1059725>
- Martinez Borda, R., & Lacasa, P. (2008). Video game narratives: A “walk-through” of children’s popular culture and formal education. *Revista Electrónica de Investigación Educativa*, 10(1), 1-18. <http://redie.uabc.mx/vol10no1/contents-lacasa.html>
- Mathison, S. (1988). Why triangulate? *Educational Researcher*, 17(2), 13-17. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X017002013>
- McIntyre, E. (2011). Sociocultural perspectives on children with reading difficulties. In A. McGill-Franzen & R. L. Allington (Eds.), *Handbook of reading disability research* (pp. 45-56). Routledge.
- McLean, C. A., Boling, E. C., & Rowsell, J. (2009). Engaging diverse students in multiple literacies in and out of school. In L. M. Morrow, R. Rueda, & D. Lapp (Eds.), *Handbook of research on literacy and diversity* (pp. 158-172). The Guilford Press.

- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). *Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*. Retrieved January 10, 2020, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>
- Mertens, D. M. (2005). *Research and evaluation in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods* (2nd ed.). Sage.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2020). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Millard, E. (2003). Towards a literacy of fusion: New times, new teaching and learning? *Reading: Literacy and Language*, 37(1), 3-8. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9345.3701002>
- Milner, H. R. (2010). *Start where you are, but don't stay there: Understanding diversity, opportunity gaps, and teaching in today's classrooms*. Harvard Education Press.
- Mirick, R. G., & Wladkowski, S. P. (2019). Skype in qualitative interviews: Participant and researcher perspectives. *The Qualitative Report*, 24(12), 3061-3072. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2019.3632>
- Mirra, N., Morrell, E., & Filipiak, D. (2018). From digital consumption to digital invention: Toward a new critical theory and practice of multiliteracies. *Theory Into Practice*, 57(1), 12-19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2017.1390336>
- Mitman Colker, A. (n.d.). *Developing interviews: Preparing an interview protocol*. Retrieved on July 20, 2020 from National Science Foundation, Online Evaluation Resource Library website: <http://oerl.sri.com/module>

/mod6/m6\_p2c.html

- Moje, E. B. (2000). *"All the stories that we have": Adolescents' insights about literacy and learning in secondary schools*. International Reading Association.
- Moje, E. B. (2013). Hybrid literacies in a post-hybrid world. In K. Hall, T. Cremin, B. Comber, & L. C. Moll (Eds.), *International handbook of research on children's literacy, learning and culture* (1st ed., pp. 359-372). John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Moje, E. B., Afflerbach, P. P., Enciso, P., & Lesaux, N. (2020a). Game changers in reading research. In E. B. Moje, P. P. Afflerbach, P. Enciso, & N. K. Lesaux (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (Vol. V, pp. 3-13). Routledge.
- Moje, E. B., Afflerbach, P. P., Enciso, P., & Lesaux, N. (2020b). Preface. In E. B. Moje, P. P. Afflerbach, P. Enciso, & N. K. Lesaux (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (Vol. V, pp. ix-xvii). Routledge.
- Moje, E. B., & Dillon, D. R. (2006). Adolescent identities as demanded by science classroom discourse communities. In D. E. Alvermann, K. A. Hinchman, D. W. Moore, S. F. Phelps, & D. R. Waff (Eds.), *Reconceptualizing the literacies in adolescents' lives* (2nd ed., pp. 85-106). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Moje, E. B., Dillon, D. R., & O'Brien, D. (2000). Reexamining roles of learner, text, and context in secondary literacy. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 93(3), 165-180. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220670009598705>
- Moje, E. B., Luke, A., Davies, B., & Street, B. (2009). Literacy and identity: Examining the metaphors in history and contemporary research. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 44(4), 415-437. <https://doi.org/10.1598/RRQ.44.4.7>
- Moje, E. B., Stockdill, D., Kim, K., & Kim, H. (2011). The role of text in disciplinary

- learning. In M. L. Kamil, P. D. Pearson, E. B. Moje, & P. P. Afflerbach (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (Vol. IV, pp. 453-486). Routledge.
- Moll, L. C. (2001). The diversity of schooling: A cultural-historical approach. In M. de la Luz Reyes & J. J. Halcon (Eds.), *The best for our children: Critical perspectives on literacy for Latino students* (pp. 13-28). Teachers College Press.
- Moll, L. C., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & González, N. (1992). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. *Theory into Practice*, 31(2), 132-141. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00405849209543534>
- Moll, L. C., & Greenberg, J. B. (1990). Creating zones of possibilities: Combining social contexts for instruction. In L. C. Moll (Ed.), *Vygotsky and education: Instructional implications and applications of sociohistorical psychology* (pp. 319-348). Cambridge University Press.
- Monseau, V. R., & Salvner, G. M. (2000). Introduction. In V. R. Monseau & G. M. Salvner (Eds.), *Reading their world: The young adult novel in the classroom* (2nd ed., pp. ix-xi). Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc.
- Montero, M. K. & Washington, R. D. (2011). Narrative approaches: Exploring the phenomenon and/or method. In N. K. Duke & M. H. Mallette (Eds.), *Literacy research methodologies* (2nd ed., pp. 331-352). The Guilford Press.
- Morrell, E. (2004). *Linking literacy and popular culture: Finding connections for lifelong learning*. Christopher-Gordon Publishers, Inc.
- Morrell, E., & Duncan-Andrade, J. M. R. (2002). Promoting academic literacy with urban youth through engaging hip-hop culture. *English Journal*, 91(6), 88-92.

<https://doi.org/10.2307/821822>

- Morrell, E., & Morrell, J. (2012). Multicultural readings of multicultural literature and the promotion of social awareness in ELA classrooms. *New England Reading Association Journal*, 47(2), 10-16.
- Myers, A. (2017). Layers of cultural responsiveness: Community, collaboration, and literacy. *Voices From the Middle*, 24(4), 43-46.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2017). *Racial / ethnic enrollment in public schools*. [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator\\_cge.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cge.asp)
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2018). *Percentage distribution of enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools, by race/ethnicity and state or jurisdiction: Fall 2000 and fall 2017*. [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19\\_203.70.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_203.70.asp)
- National Center for Educational Statistics. (2021). *Characteristics of public school teachers*. <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/clr>
- National Council of Teachers of English. (2013). *NCTE framework for 21st century curriculum and assessment*. [https://cdn.ncte.org/nctefiles/resources/positions/framework\\_21stcent\\_curr\\_assessment.pdf](https://cdn.ncte.org/nctefiles/resources/positions/framework_21stcent_curr_assessment.pdf)
- National Education Association. (2010). *Status of the American public school teacher 2005-2006*. National Education Association. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED521866.pdf>
- National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers. (2010). *Common core learning standards for English language arts and literacy: Reading standards for literature 6-12*.



<https://www.engageny.org/resource/new-york-state-p-12-common-core-learning-standards-for-english-language-arts-and-literacy>

New London Group. (1996). A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures.

*Harvard Educational Review*, 66(1), 60–92.

New York City Department of Education. (2019). *DOE data at a glance*.

<https://www.schools.nyc.gov/about-us/reports/doe-data-at-a-glance>

New York State Education Department. (2019). *Culturally responsive – sustaining education framework*. <http://www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/programs/crs/culturally-responsive-sustaining-education-framework.pdf>

Nieto, S. (1995). From brown heroes and holidays to assimilationist agendas. In C. E.

Sleeter & P. L. McLaren (Eds.), *Multicultural education, critical pedagogy, and the politics of difference* (pp. 191-220). State University of New York Press.

Nieto, S. (2004). *Affirming diversity: The sociopolitical context of multicultural education* (4th ed.). Pearson.

NYC Coalition for Educational Justice. (2020). *Diverse city, white curriculum: The exclusion of people of color from English Language Arts in NYC schools*.

Education Justice Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools, NYU

Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools.

<https://www.nyccej.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Diverse-City-White-Curriculum-3.pdf>

Oakes, J., & Lipton, M. (2007). *Teaching to change the world*. McGraw Hill.

Obidah, J. E., & Marsh, T. E. (2006). Utilizing student's cultural capital in the teaching

- and learning process: "As if" learning communities and African American Students' literate currency. In D. E. Alvermann, K. A. Hinchman, D. W. Moore, S. F. Phelps, & D. R. Waff (Eds.), *Reconceptualizing the literacies in adolescents' lives* (2nd ed., pp. 107-127). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- O'Brien, D., Stewart, R., & Beach, R. (2009). Proficient reading in school: Traditional paradigms and new textual landscapes. In L. Christenbury, R. Bomer, & P. Smagorinsky (Eds.), *Handbook of adolescent literacy research* (pp. 80-97). The Guilford Press.
- Olive, J. L. (2014). Reflecting on the tensions between emic and etic perspectives in life history research: Lessons learned. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 15(2), Article 6. <https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-15.2.2072>
- Ollerenshaw, J. A., & Creswell, J. W. (2002). Narrative research: A comparison of two restorying data analysis approaches. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8(3), 329-347. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10778004008003008>
- Olsen, A. A., & Huang, F. L. (2019). Teacher job satisfaction by principal support and teacher cooperation: Results from the school and staffing survey. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 27(11). <http://dx.doi.org/10.14507/epaa.27.4174>
- Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Leech, N. L. (2007). Validity and qualitative research: An oxymoron? *Quality & quantity*, 41(1), 233-249. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-006-9000-3>
- Orellana, M. F., Reynolds, J., & Martinez, D. C. (2011). Cultural modeling: Building on cultural strengths as an alternative to remedial reading approaches. In A. McGill-Franzen & R. L. Allington (Eds.), *Handbook of reading disability research* (pp.

- 273-278). Routledge.
- Ormrod, J. E. (2011). *Educational psychology: Developing learners* (7th ed.). Pearson.
- Ovando, C. J., & Combs, M. C. (2018). *Bilingual and ESL classrooms: Teaching in multicultural contexts* (6th ed.). Rowman & Littlefield.
- Padilla, R. V. (2005). High-stakes testing and educational accountability as social constructions across cultures. In A. Valenzuela (Ed.), *Leaving children behind: How "Texas-style" accountability fails Latino youth* (pp. 249-262). State University of New York Press.
- Page, M. A. (2012). Adventures with text and beyond: Popular culture - the new literacy challenge for English teachers. *English Journal*, 102(2), 129–133.
- Pahl, K., & Burnett, C. (2013). Literacies in homes and communities. In K. Hall, T. Cremin, B. Comber, & L. C. Moll (Eds.), *International handbook of research on children's literacy, learning and culture* (1st ed., pp. 3-14). John Wiley & Sons.
- Pahl, K., & Rowsell, J. (2005). *Literacy and education: Understanding the New Literacy Studies in the classroom*. Sage.
- Paris, D. (2012). Culturally sustaining pedagogy: A needed change in stance, terminology, and practice. *Educational Researcher*, 41(3), 93-97.  
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X12441244>
- Paris, D., & Alim, H. S. (2014). What are we seeking to sustain through culturally sustaining pedagogy? A loving critique forward. *Harvard Educational Review*, 84(1), 85-100. <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.84.1.9821873k2ht16m77>
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Peacock, J., Covino, R., Auchter, J., Boyd, J., Klug, H., Laing, C., & Irvin, L. (2016).

- University faculty perceptions and utilization of popular culture in the classroom. *Studies in Higher Education*, 43(4), 601-613. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2016.1180673>
- Pearson, P. D. (2002). American reading instruction since 1967. In N. B. Smith (Ed.), *American reading instruction*, (pp. 419-486). International Reading Association.
- Pearson, P. D., Barr, R., Kamil, M. L., & Mosenthal, P. (1984). *Handbook of reading research*. Longman.
- Pedulla, J. J., Abrams, L. M., Madaus, G. F., Russell, M. K., Ramos, M. A., & Miao, J. (2003). *Perceived effects of state-mandated testing programs on teaching and learning: Findings from a national survey of teachers*. National Board on Testing and Public Policy, Boston College. <https://www.bc.edu/research/nbetpp/statements/nbr2.pdf>
- Peterson, B., Alley, K., Gunn, A., & Brice, A. (2015). Exploring names and identity through multicultural literature in K-8 classrooms. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 17(1), 39-45. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15210960.2015.994434>
- Petrone, R. (2013). Linking contemporary research on youth, literacy, and popular culture with literacy teacher education. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 45(3), 240-266. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1086296X13492981>
- Polikoff, M. S., Desimone, L. M., Porter, A. C., & Hochberg, E. D. (2015). Mentor policy and the quality of mentoring. *The Elementary School Journal*, 116(1), 76-102. <https://doi.org/10.1086/683134>
- Powell, M. (2021, December 13). In Texas, a battle over what can be taught, and what books can be read. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/10>

/us/texas-critical-race-theory-ban-books.html

- Proctor, C. P., & Chang-Bacon, C. K. (2020). Demographic realities and methodological flexibility in literacy teaching and research. In E. B. Moje, P. P. Afflerbach, P. Enciso, & N. K. Lesaux (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (Vol. V, pp. 17-36).
- Rets, I. (2016). Teachers' perceptions on using popular culture when teaching and learning English. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 232, 154-160.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2016.10.040>
- Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Sage.
- Roberts, D. F., & Christenson, P. G. (2001). Popular music in childhood and adolescence. In D. G. Singer & J. L. Singer (Eds.), *Handbook of children and the media* (pp. 395-413). Sage.
- Rodriguez, G. M. (2013). Power and agency in education: Exploring the pedagogical dimensions of funds of knowledge. *Review of Research in Education*, 37, 87-120.  
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X12462686>
- Rogers, R. (2018). Coding and writing analytic memos on qualitative data: A review of Johnny Saldaña's the coding manual for qualitative researchers. *The Qualitative Report*, 23(4), 889-892. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2018.3459>
- Rosenblatt, L. M. (1995). *Literature as exploration* (5th ed.). The Modern Language Association.
- Rowse, J., Kress, G., Pahl, K., & Street, B. (2013). The social practice of multimodal reading: A new literacy studies – multimodal perspective on reading. In D. E. Alvermann, N. J. Unrau, & R. B. Ruddell (Eds.), *Theoretical models and*

- processes of reading* (6th ed., pp. 1182-1207). International Reading Association.
- Rowell, J., & Pahl, K. (2007). Sedimented identities in texts: Instances of practice. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 42(3), 388-404. <https://doi.org/10.1598/RRQ.42.3.3>
- Rueda, R. (2011). Cultural perspectives in reading. In M. L. Kamil, P. D. Pearson, E. B. Moje, & P. P. Afflerbach (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (Vol. IV, pp. 84-103). Routledge.
- Rueda, R. (2013). 21st-century skills: Cultural, linguistic, and motivational perspectives. In D. E. Alvermann, N. J. Unrau, & R. B. Ruddell (Eds.), *Theoretical models and processes of reading* (6th ed., pp. 1241-1267). International Reading Association.
- Saldana, J. (2009). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Sage.
- Scotland, J. (2012). Exploring the philosophical underpinnings of research: Relating ontology and epistemology to the methodology and methods of the scientific, interpretive, and critical research paradigms. *English Language Teaching*, 5(9), 9-16. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/elt.v5n9p9>
- Schwoch, J., White, M., & Reilly, S. (1992). *Media knowledge: Readings in popular culture, pedagogy, and critical citizenship*. State University of New York Press.
- Seidman, I. (1998). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (2nd ed.). Teachers College Press.
- Shatter, A. (1951). A survey of student reading. *The English Journal*, 40(5), 271-273.
- Shipp, L. (2017). Revolutionizing the English classroom through consciousness, justice, and self-awareness. *English Journal*, 106(4), 35-40.
- Shor, I. (1992). *Empowering education: Critical teaching for social change*. The University of Chicago Press.

- Short, K. G., & Fox, D. L. (2003). The complexity of cultural authenticity in children's literature: Why the debates really matter. In D. L. Fox & K. G. Short (Eds.), *Stories matter: The complexity of cultural authenticity in children's literature* (pp. 3-24). National Council of Teachers of English.
- Siegel, M., & Fernandez, S. L. (2000). Critical approaches. In M. L. Kamil, P. B. Mosenthal, P. D. Pearson, & R. Barr (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (Vol. III, pp. 141-151). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Singer, J. Y., & Smith, S. A. (2003). The potential of multicultural literature: Changing understanding of self and others. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 5(2), 17-23.  
[https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327892MCP0502\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327892MCP0502_4)
- Sleeter, C. (2011). An agenda to strengthen culturally responsive pedagogy. *English Teaching*, 10(2), 7-23.
- Smagorinsky, P. (2008). *Teaching English by design: How to create and carry out instructional units*. Heinemann.
- Smagorinsky, P., Guay, M., Ellison, T. L., & Willis, A. I. (2020). A sociocultural perspective on readers, reading, reading instruction and assessment, reading policy, and reading research. In E. B. Moje, P. P. Afflerbach, P. Enciso, & N. K. Lesaux (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (Vol. V, pp. 57-75). Routledge.
- So, R. J. (2021). *Redlining culture: A data history of racial inequality and postwar fiction*. Columbia University Press.
- Song, S. Y., & Pyon, S. M. (2008). Cultural deficit model. In N. J. Salkind (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of educational psychology* (Vol. 1, pp. 217-217). SAGE Publications, Inc. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412963848.n60>

- Sourdout, L. A., & Janak, E. (2017). Introduction: Educating through popular culture: “You’re not cool just because you teach with comics”. In E. Janak & L. A. Sourdout (Eds.), *Educating through popular culture: You’re not cool just because you teach with comics* (pp. ix-xxii). Lexington Books.
- Sparks, D., & Malkus, N. (2015). *Stats in brief: Public school teacher autonomy in the classroom across school years 2003-04, 2007-08, and 2011-12*. National Center for Education Statistics. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2015/2015089.pdf>
- Spillane, J. P., & Kenney, A. W. (2012). School administration in a changing education sector: The U.S. experience. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 50(5), 541-561. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/09578231211249817>
- Spring, J. (2022). *Deculturization and the struggle for equality: A brief history of the education of dominated cultures in the United States* (9th ed.). Routledge.
- Stairs, A. J. (2007). Culturally responsive teaching: The Harlem renaissance in an urban English class. *English Journal*, 96(6), 37-42.
- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Sage Publications.
- Stallworth, J., Gibbons, L., & Fauber, L. (2006). It’s not on the list: An exploration of teachers’ perspectives on using multicultural literature. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 49(6), 478-489. <https://doi.org/10.1598/JAAL.49.6.3>
- Steiner, S. F., Nash, C. P., & Chase, M. (2008). Multicultural literature that brings people together. *The Reading Teacher*, 62(1), 88-92. <https://doi.org/10.1598/RT.62.1.12>
- Storey, J. (2012). *Cultural theory and popular culture: An introduction* (6th ed.). Pearson.
- Street, B. (1984). *Literacy in theory and practice*. Cambridge University Press.



- Street, B. (2003). What's "new" in New Literacy Studies? Critical approaches to literacy in theory and practice. *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, 5(2), 77–91.
- Suh, Y., & Hinton, K. (2015). Mirroring ourselves: Teacher educators of color reading multicultural texts. *Issues in Teacher Education*, 24(2), 23-42.
- Syed, M., & Nelson, S. C. (2015). Guidelines for establishing reliability when coding narrative data. *Emerging Adulthood*, 3(6), 375-387. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167696815587648>
- Tatum, A. W. (2006). Adolescents' multiple identities and teacher professional development. In D. E. Alvermann, K. A. Hinchman, D. W. Moore, S. F. Phelps, & D. R. Waff (Eds.), *Reconceptualizing the literacies in adolescents' lives* (2nd ed., pp. 65-79). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Tatum, B. D. (2007). *Can we talk about race? And other conversations in an era of school resegregation*. Beacon Press.
- Tejano music. (2021, June 27). In *Wikipedia*. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tejano\\_music](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tejano_music)
- Terrell, S. R. (2016). *Writing a proposal for your dissertation: Guidelines and examples*. The Guilford Press.
- Texas Education Agency. (2020). *2019-2020 Student enrollment: Statewide totals by county*. Retrieved June 20, 2020, from [https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/cgi/sas/broker?\\_service=marykay&\\_program=adhoc.addispatch.sas&major=st&minor=e&charsln=120&linespg=60&\\_debug=0&endyear=20&selsumm=so&key=TYPE+HERE&grouping=e+&format=W](https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/cgi/sas/broker?_service=marykay&_program=adhoc.addispatch.sas&major=st&minor=e&charsln=120&linespg=60&_debug=0&endyear=20&selsumm=so&key=TYPE+HERE&grouping=e+&format=W)
- Texas Education Agency. (2022). *Resources for the revised English and Spanish*

*language arts and reading TEKS*. <https://tea.texas.gov/academics/subject-areas/english-language-arts-and-reading/resources-for-the-revised-english-and-spanish-language-arts-and-reading-teks>

Thein, A. H. (2013). Language arts teachers' resistance to teaching LGBT literature and issues. *Language Arts*, 90(3), 169-180.

Thein, A. H., Guise, M., & Sloan, D. L. (2011). Problematizing literature circles as forums for discussion of multicultural and political texts. *Journal Of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 55(1), 15-24. <https://doi.org/10.1598/JAAL.55.1.2>

Thein, A. H., Sulzer, M. A., & Schmidt, R. R. (2019). Critical comparative content analysis: Examining violence, politics, and culture in two versions of *I Am Malala*. In R. Ginsberg & W. J. Glenn (Eds.), *Engaging with multicultural YA literature in the secondary classroom* (pp. 153-161). Routledge.

Tierney, R. J., & Pearson, P. D. (2021). *A history of literacy education: Waves of research and practice*. Teachers College Press.

Tierney, W. G., & Clemens, R. F. (2011). Qualitative research and public policy: The challenges of relevance and trustworthiness. In J. C. Smart & M. B. Paulsen (Eds.), *Higher Education: Handbook of theory and research* (Vol. 26, pp. 57-84). Springer.

Torres, F. L. (2019). Deconstructing the superhero: Interrogating the racialization of bodies using *All-New, All-Different Avengers, Vol. I*. In R. Ginsberg, & W. J. Glenn (Eds.), *Engaging with multicultural YA literature in the secondary classroom* (pp. 162-170). Routledge.

- Tracey, D. H., & Morrow, L. M. (2012). *Lenses on reading: An introduction to theories and models* (2nd ed.). The Guilford Press.
- Tuzel, S., & Hobbs, R. (2017). The use of social media and popular culture to advance cross-cultural understanding. [El uso de las redes sociales y la cultura popular para una mejor comprensión intercultural]. *Comunicar*, 51(XXV), 63-72.  
<https://doi.org/10.3916/C51-2017-06>
- Unrau, N., & Alvermann, D. E. (2013). Literacies and their investigation through theories and models. In D. E. Alvermann, N. J. Unrau, & R. B. Ruddell (Eds.), *Theoretical models and processes of reading* (6th ed., pp. 47-90). International Reading Association.
- U.S. News (2022). *Best high schools*. <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools>
- Vasudevan, L., & Campano, G. (2009). The social production of adolescent risk and the promise of adolescent literacies. *Review of Research in Education*, 33, 310-353.  
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X08330003>
- Vélez-Ibáñez, C. G., & Greenberg, J. B. (1992). Formation and transformation of funds of knowledge among U.S.-Mexican households. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 23(4), 313-335. <https://doi.org/10.1525/aeq.1992.23.4.05x1582v>
- Vellutino, F. R., & Schatschneider, C. (2011). Experimental and quasi-experimental design. In N. K. Duke & M. H. Mallette (Eds.), *Literacy research methodologies* (2nd ed., pp. 155-187). The Guilford Press.
- Visco, W. (2019). Using pop culture to foster student understanding and engagement. *English Journal*, 109(2), 84-91.

- Vogt, M., & Shearer, B. A. (2011). *Reading specialists and literacy coaches in the real world* (3rd ed.). Pearson Education, Inc.
- Wake, D. G., & Modla, V. B. (2008). Using multicultural literature as a catalyst: Teaching preservice teachers culturally responsive instructional approaches and challenging sociocultural predispositions. In M. M. Foote, F. Falk-Ross, S. Szabo, & M. B. Sampson (Eds.), *Navigating the literacy waters: Research, practice, and advocacy* (pp. 179-200). The College Reading Association. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED512605.pdf#page=193>
- Walker, T. (2016, January 11). Teacher autonomy declined over past decade, new data shows. *NEA Today*. <https://www.nea.org/advocating-for-change/new-from-nea/teacher-autonomy-declined-over-past-decade-new-data-shows>
- Walsh, M. (2006). The ‘textual shift’” Examining the reading process with print, visual and multimodal texts. *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 29(1), 24-37.
- Ware, L, & Ware, M. (1996). Plessy’s legacy: Desegregating the Eurocentric curriculum. *Georgia State University Law Review*, 12(4), 1151-1186.
- Weaver, J. A., & Daspit, T. (1999). Critical pedagogy, popular culture, and the creation of meaning. In T. Daspit & J. A. Weaver (Eds.), *Popular culture and critical pedagogy: Reading, constructing, connecting* (pp. xiii-xxxiii). Garland Publishing, Inc.
- Wender, E. (2019). The dominant/oppositional gaze: The power of looking in Yaqui Delgado wants to kick your ass. In R. Ginsberg & W. J. Glenn (Eds.), *Engaging with multicultural YA literature in the secondary classroom* (pp. 42-52). Routledge.

- Willis, A. I. (2003). Parallax: Addressing race in preservice literacy education. In S. Greene & D. Abt-Perkins (Eds.), *Making race visible: Literacy research for cultural understanding* (pp. 51-70). Teachers College Press.
- Wolk, S. (2009). Reading for a better world: Teaching for social responsibility with young adult literature. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 52(8), 664-673. <https://doi.org/10.1598/JAAL.52.8.2>
- World Health Organization (2014). *Recognizing adolescence*. <http://apps.who.int/adolescent/second-decade/section2/page1/recognizing-adolescence.html>
- Xu, S. H., Perkins, R. S., & Zunich, L. O. (2005). *Trading cards to comic strips: Popular culture texts and literacy learning in grades K-8*. International Reading Association.
- Yang, J. (2020, June 16). It turns out your favorite movie is racist. What now? *CNN*. <https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/16/opinions/gone-with-the-wind-how-to-deal-with-racist-art-yang/index.html>
- Yoon, B., Simpson, A., & Haag, C. (2010). Assimilation ideology: Critically examining underlying messages in multicultural literature. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 54(2), 109-118. <https://doi.org/10.1598/JAAL.54.2.3>
- Young, T. A., Campbell, L. C., & Oda, L. K. (1995). Multicultural literature for children and young adults: A rationale and resources. *Reading Horizons*, 35(5), 375-393.

## Vita

Name	<i>Jessica Hernandez Fletcher</i>
Baccalaureate Degree	<i>Bachelor of Arts, University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Major: Program of Liberal Studies</i>
Date Graduated	<i>May, 2004</i>
Other Degrees	<i>Master of Arts in Teaching, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, Major: Teaching Secondary English</i>
Date Graduated	<i>May, 2014</i>
	<i>Master of Arts, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, Major: Reading Specialist</i>
Date Graduated	<i>May, 2017</i>