JOURNAL OF LITERACY INNOVATION

RETHINKING LITERACY INSTRUCTION

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EDITORS' INTRODUCTION:
PAYING HOMAGE TO THE GROUNDBREAKING SCHOLARS OF DIVERSITY ISSUES IN LITERACY AND CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION
TIFFANY A. FLOWERS AND SEAN RUDAY, ISSUE CO-EDITORS

During Fall 2019, we sent each other emails to start a serious conversation about doing one or more special theme issues related to diversity and literacy. Our backgrounds, which lend itself to coming up with solutions and properly training teachers to ensure they can handle diversity issues in English Language Arts (ELA) classrooms, was at the forefront of the decision to focus on this work. After two years of collaborating on this project, we are pleased with the result of adding new voices within the diversity and literacy research literature. The diversity in literacy special theme issue includes works which not only pay homage to the diversity and literacy scholars and researchers who shaped the field of education, but also include research focusing on the 21st century literacies. During the preparation of this special theme issue, the editorial board and the reviewers focus on ensuring that both historical and contemporary voices in the field were not omitted. We pay special attention to the #citeablackwomen, #citeasista, #weneeddiversebooks, #buildyourstack, #disrupttexts, BIPOC voices, and the #ownvoices movements currently underway in the field. Additionally, we did not accept any research which focuses on a deficit orientation or any submission which contains references or booklists of stereotypical depictions and/or historical racist imagery.

Our goal was to broaden the call for submissions and to ensure all manuscripts regarding theory to practice, critical reviews, gap research, and empirically based work were given serious consideration. The research in this special theme issue includes critical analyses, content analysis, critical reviews, and case study research. The process we used to review articles includes a submission to the co-editors and a blind review by the reviewers. We are pleased to see final five articles for this special theme issue. The published research in this issue focuses on both the theoretical underpinnings in the field and the current 21st century issues and solutions for ELA classrooms. Our hope is that our readership finds useful strategies and new directions for research within the field of education.

"Putting Black Boys'" Literacies First: Collective Curriculum Development for the Lives & Literacies of Black Boys by Nightengale-Lee et. al focuses on research within the new literacies tradition of Brian Street, David Barton, and Mary Hamilton. The racial literacies and focus on Black boys in this article is written in the tradition of Elaine Richardson and Alfred Tatum. The Culturally Relevant Pedagogy research tradition by Gloria Ladson-Billings and healing literacies work by Gloria Boutte et al is included as well. *"School Based Representations of America's African American and Latinx Populations: An Analysis of Informational Picture Books in Social Studies"* by Dorian Harrison is a critical analysis written with the theoretical underpinnings and traditions of Gloria Ladson-Billings, Geneva Gay, and Rudine Sims-Bishop. *"Missing Voices Within the Classroom: Cultural Identity, Lexical, and Authenticity in Cajun, Creole, and Native American Children's Literature"* is written the tradition of James Banks. This article focuses on the need for representation of both race, location, and culture. *"Connections, Continuities, and Critical Lapses: Underperforming and Underprepared in School Writing"* is written in the

tradition of Mikhail Bakhtin and Lev Vygotsky. The underrepresented and underperforming research is written in the tradition of both Donna Ford and Lamont A. Flowers work on investigating the concerns of underperforming students. This article also draws on the more contemporary research of Lisa Delpit, Sonia Nieto, and Shirley Brice Heath. *"Meeting the Needs of All Students: Fostering the Use of Graphic Novels Among Pre- and In-Service Teachers"* focuses on critical literacy and graphic novels. The theoretical underpinnings include multimodality and focuses on the work of Gunther Kress and Carey Jewitt. This work also cites Louise Rosenblatt and reader response theory.

As editors of this special theme issue, we anticipate a high number of citations and references from the published articles in this volume. The Diversity and Literacy special theme issue has the potential to open the door for more work which delves into the important and practical work happening in the field of education. Creating academic scholarship which is accessible for undergraduates, graduates, practicing teachers, research institutes, districts, state departments of educations, and education consultants, will ensure that the work we publish gets shared with broader audiences. Creating quality work which is open access speaks to the call to make the work we do as academics available for public consumption. As we move forward, we must forge new knowledge, understandings, and explanations for our toughest issues within the field. Focusing on identity, culture, representation, academic achievement, culturally relevant pedagogy, multimodalities, and new literacies, will pave the way for more work in this area to take up space in academic journals in the field. Our next challenge as academics is to continue to create spaces where quality work which speaks to innovative classroom practice is practical and publishable work for the public good. Special thank you to all of our authors in this issue as well as the reviewers.

PUTTING BLACK BOYS' LITERACIES FIRST: COLLECTIVE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT FOR THE LIVES & LITERACIES OF BLACK BOYS

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Abstract

From the murders of Trayvon Martin in 2012, to Tamir Rice in 2014, to Philando Castile in 2017, to now George Floyd in 2020, the unrelenting assaults against Black men and boys serves as a haunting reminder of the imbalance of justice, equity, and humanization that continuously render Black male lives disposable in the U.S. Paradoxically, in education we could ask the same question about Black boys' literate lives, as traditionalized school settings often serve as sites of oppression that judge their diverse literacies and cultural language practices against Eurocentric norms and White female expectations. While deficit theories associated with poor attitudes, violent behavior and classroom disengagement have been implicitly adopted to account for the literacy underachievement of Black boys, we argue curriculum which ignores the sociocultural and linguistic identities of Black boys are to blame for their disinvestment within the literacy process (Kirkland, 2008). In this work, we use this critique to call out the curricular barriers of the traditionalized literacy curriculum and share our collective journey to center Black boys at the core of the curriculum design process.

Putting Black Boys' Literacies First: Collective Curriculum Development for the Lives & Literacies of Black Boys

From the murders of Trayvon Martin in 2012, to Tamir Rice in 2014, to Philando Castile in 2017, to now George Floyd in 2020, the unrelenting assaults against Black men and boys serves as a haunting reminder of the imbalance of justice, equity, and humanization that continuously

render Black male lives disposable in the U.S. While arguments of a post-racial America are grounded by the induction of Barack Obama as the first Black president, Black men and boys continue to be stereotyped, criminalized, and incarcerated at rates that surpass any other demographic group. Acknowledging this truth forces us to question the value we place on Black male lives in our country (Johnson, Bryan & Boutte, 2018; Love, 2016; Lyiscott, 2017). Paradoxically, in education, we could ask the same question about Black boys' literate lives, as traditionalized school settings often serve as sites of oppression that judge their diverse literacies and cultural language practices against Eurocentric literacy norms and White female expectations (Murphy & Zirkel, 2015; Swanson, Cunningham & Spencer, 2003). As Black Boys' literacy norms are often overlooked and undermined, their learning and engagement are subjugated to the periphery of the educational process. Implications of this subjugation can be linked to the literacy achievement of Black boys, which remains amongst the lowest in the nation across all demographic groups (NAEP, 2018). More specifically, in 2018, the National Center for Educational Statistics reported that only 10% of eighth-grade Black boys scored proficient on their state-based standardized test in literacy.

While deficit theories associated with poor attitudes, violent behavior and classroom disengagement have been implicitly adopted to account for the literacy underachievement of Black boys, deficit ideologies such as these are dangerous because they place the onus of academic failure on Black boys rather than the power structures which maintain their marginalization. Dumas and Nelson refer to this mode of thought as a "crisis" in which,

> Young men and boys become constructed as 'problems' in themselves-prevents us from seeing Black boys outside of public fears and anxieties about their future lives as adults and locates crises within Black male bodies rather than the political economy and racial order that heavily determine the living conditions and life chances of Black males from boyhood on (2016, p. 30).

Like Gloria Ladson Billings (2006), we denounce placing the disenfranchisement of Black boys' achievement on them and instead exert our energies to interrogate the curricular and pedagogical structures that de-center Black male lives in literacy classrooms. Interrogating pedagogical outlooks and curricular approaches, rather than Black boys' behaviors and attitudes, realistically situates the responsibility of literacy failure on schools, teachers, and districts as opposed to the Black boys they are intended to serve. Embedded in this critique, we argue the curriculum, which ignores the sociocultural and linguistic identities of Black boys, is a major factor in their disinvestment in the literacy process (Kirkland, 2008). Understanding the critical importance of literacy on the educational outcomes and life trajectories of Black boys, we write this work with feverish urgency to examine our collective efforts to engage Black boys in the literacy process and how our curricular outlooks and methods align with their needs (Kirkland, 2011, Muhammad, 2020).

Honest acknowledgment of the educational failure of Black boys' exposes a detrimental divide between who they are as literate beings and the literacy methods and materials used to instruct them (Dumas & Nelson, 2016; Duncan, 2002, Kirkland, 2011). Consequently, studies link the low literacy achievement of Black boys to a cultural, racial, and gender mismatch that fails to

produce curriculum and learning experiences that reflect their unique social, cultural and linguistic competencies (Alim, 2007; Seltzer & de los Rios, 2018). Symptoms of this divide are emblematic of high dropout rates, frequent absenteeism and excessive school suspensions rates amongst Black boys in public schools (Coles & Powell, 2019; Swanson, Cunningham & Spencer, 2003; Tatum, 2006). For example, in 2018, the US Department of Education Office of Civil Rights reported that African American males were suspended more than any other racial group, beginning in preschool. Alfred Tatum (2006) expounds on this phenomenon by stating,

> African-American male students often exhibit various cultural-specific coping mechanisms- such behaviors as acting tough, failing to retreat from violence, avoiding self-disclosure and dissociating from school. These students are often subject to disproportionate and sometimes unfounded grade retentions and suspensions because teachers and administrators misinterpret these behaviors and find them offensive (2006, pg. 44).

While current models of literacy education continue to underserve Black boys, many educators remain tethered to pre-packaged curricular programs that promote one-size-fits-all approaches to teaching our most vulnerable student population. Researchers across the field of culturally relevant and anti-racist pedagogies call out the "curricular violence" associated with homogenized literacy methods, which fail to acknowledge students' race, culture, ethnicity, gender and language as salient aspects of their identity (Baker-Bell, 2020; Herr & Anderson, 2003; Paris & Alim, 2014). Undergirded by the notion of curricular violence, we agree with literacy scholars, Johnson, Jackson, Stovall, & Taliferro Baszile (2017), that color-blind curricula exacerbate the proliferation of "symbolically violent" (Bourdieu, 2001; Coles, 2016; Coles & Powell, 2019) ELA classrooms, which ignore the sociocultural and linguistic competencies of Black students (Acosta, 2016; Baker-Bell, 2020; Haddix & Sealey-Ruiz, 2012). As power brokers, teachers make determinations about the legitimacy of different forms of literacy curriculum, validating some and denouncing others, which in turn send messages about what specific forms of reading, writing and speaking are most important and valued in the classroom. If Black boys are unable to see their form of literacy expression reflected in the curriculum, then symbolic violence may be enacted within the classroom. Thus, educators who are unwilling to interrogate their potential alignments to symbolically violent curriculum serve to perpetuate a curricular inequity that renders Black students, and in this case, Black boys' literacies as flawed-prompting some to internalize attitudes of inferiority, which could result in lowered literacy engagement and academic performance (Camangian, 2011; Coles, 2016). To resist the reification of symbolically violent ELA classrooms, Kinloch, Burkhard, and Penn (2017) assert, "it is important for literacy practitioners and researchers to interrogate and teach against such beliefs in ways that build on the strength, brilliance, and power of Black lives" (p. 72).

While symbolic violence serves as a barrier between current public-school curricula and the literacy achievement of Black boys (Ball, 2009; Haddix & Rojas, 2011 Ladson-Billings, 1995; NAEP, 2018), finding effective methods to mitigate this barrier is the collective responsibility of multiple stakeholders beyond the scope of the classroom teacher. Akin to the Nigerian proverb "it takes a village to raise a child," it literally takes a village of educational professionals,

students, community members, and parents to collectively examine, strategize, and reconceptualize how we approach literacy instruction for Black boys. In this work, we stand as a village of educators committed to curriculum development for the lives and literacies of Black boys.

We lean into this perspective to first examine the curricular restrictions of the traditionalized literacy curriculum and then share our collective journey to center Black boys at the core of the curriculum design process. As a hip-hop based teacher educator, a music education Ph.D. student, and a district-level curriculum manager, we use this space to share our collective thought process, which captures the messy realities of abandoning the strictures of standardized curriculum and the various considerations at play when devising literacy curriculum that honors Black boys. In the sections that follow, we will provide the context for our curriculum development work, our conceptual understanding of curriculum development for Black boys, and key dialogic exchanges that helped us conceptualize the considerations noted above.

Our Educational Contexts

As educational professionals, we enter the curriculum conversation from different vantage points. I (Bianca) am a teacher educator, literacy specialist, and hip-hop researcher who focuses on critical pedagogy and humanizing curricular praxis, Paul is a second-year Ph.D. student whose scholarship focuses on Pan-Caribbean music education and culturally relevant pedagogy, and Brian is an African and African-American history expert, who serves as the manager of the African-American curriculum studies department for one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse school districts in the nation. Being that Paul and I work at the same institution, we would often engage in conversation around the challenges to overcome traditionalized educational practices. Many of our informal chats centered on curriculum creation that more authentically reflected the nuances and lived experiences of Black students. However, we weren't able to really begin thinking through what a curriculum like this could look like until Brian presented us with the opportunity to partner with him at a local urban middle school. For years, Brian has partnered with this particular middle school to work with 7th & 8th grade young men of Color in their Leadership Academy course- which is an elective course that provides experiences for life, college, and career readiness. Brian's aim for this school year was to collaborate with the teacher of record to deliver literacy-based experiences that engaged students in new and innovative ways. As a collective team, we worked diligently every week with the teacher of record, the Leadership Academy students as well as other key district personnel to develop what we call the Hip-Hop Learning Lab Curriculum (HHLLC).

Conceptual Framework

Though we each come from different disciplines, we understand literacy as a cultural process, mediated by lived experiences, cultural identities and linguistic practices. From this perspective, we view all literacy (language, text, words, visual expression) as an interactive exchange, contextualized through the reader's sociocultural lens. Acknowledging literacy from a sociocultural lens maintains that all reading and writing is mediated through social, cultural, political and socio-historic practices, an interpretation characterized by Gee (1996) called "new"

literacies studies or socio-literacy studies. While we lean on the underpinnings of new literacies studies, this work aligns with African-American literacy studies, defined by Elaine Richardson (2003) as a rhetorical approach that acknowledges the socially, politically and historically situated complexities of Black language as a means of racial and cultural survival. As African-American literacies remain contested and challenged by dominant literacies, we view Black boy's literacy practices as an instantiation of cultural survival to maintain their humanity amidst an oppressive and repressive educational system which forces them to "eradicate their mother tongue, mother culture, voice, identity and native knowledge" (Richardson, p. 32). Acknowledging this, we link how Black boys' literacies are used or unused in the curriculum to correlate to how they view themselves as valued in educational environments and what this value or devalue means for their sense of belonging (Murphy & Zirkel, 2015) within the literacy classroom. This outlook helped us narrow down the three basic elements that we felt were essential in the creation of the HHLLC. In preparation for the start of the school year, Brian, Paul and myself sat together to strategize the conceptual foundations upon which to build our curriculum. We agreed that each lesson would embed the following three components: a) student voice, b) hip hop-based education, c) critical literacy.

Student Voice

Knowing that Black boys' lived experiences and literacies are often subjugated to the back corners of the literacy classroom, we intentionally developed our curriculum in a co-constructed manner where we relied on students' voices to sculpt the curriculum. In this way, we deliberately sought feedback from our students to support their agency as learners and deepen their investment in the lessons we provided. Fostering agency to enact action, or what Freire refers to as praxis, is crucial in cultivating conscious individuals who own their power, potential and possibility (hooks, 1994). Though some refer to Freire's approach as empowering education (Allen & Rossatto, 2009), he was deliberate in delineating the difference between agency and empowerment, through the emphasis of the inextricable teacher-student, student-teacher connection (Freire, 1970).

One of the ways we enacted Freire's concept of agency or the teacher-student, student-teacher link was through a student survey which explicitly asked students questions about what kind of learning experiences they wanted to gain from the hip hop learning lab. The results of this survey were instrumental in helping us better understand the socio-emotional and socio-academic needs of our boys. We utilized survey results to tailor lessons that spoke to their current interests and realities. Though the survey only had six questions, it was an informative tool that not only gave us insight into the boy's interests as students but also who they were as individuals. The six questions from the survey included:

1. What would you like to learn in the Hip Hop Learning Lab?

2. In general what makes school boring for you?

3. What is the best part of school for you?

4. What is the best part about the Hip Hop Learning Lab for you?

5. List the name of your favorite hip-hop song and rap artist.

6. List two things you worry about on a daily basis.

Upon analyzing the 25 surveys collected, we found five major themes from their survey responses. The following table represents the themes, which emerged, from the data, the corresponding survey question, and how we used each theme in the creation of the HHLLC.

Table 1 Survey Themes & Curricular Development

Survey Question	Student Response Theme	How Theme was used in Curriculum Development
1	How to create music	Lessons were intentionally created where we studied mentor texts (hip-hop texts) to analyze the arc and structure of hip-hop lyrics. Students then used the mentor texts to create their raps around critical topics.
2	Boring teachers	Instruction was delivered in an engaging format, where students were placed in a circle (cypher), which facilitated peer-to-peer communication. The teacher stood in the middle of the class to engage with each student through eye contact and proximity. Lessons were kept short and focused on explicit literacy skills.
3	Lunch, Gym, Courtyard	Since social interaction was of high interest to the boys, each lesson included small group discussion or project-based. Minimal behavioral direction was given, as we wanted the boys to engage with each other authentically and comfortably.
4	Creating Raps for Peers	After the boys completed their group raps, they spent time practicing how they would perform their raps in front of the class. Each performance was recorded and judged based on different criteria. After each group rap performance, students received peer feedback and teacher feedback. Groups were able to watch their performance again via a video recording to do their self-analysis. They discussed areas for growth and strengths of their rap and overall performance.
6	Being Poor, My Family	Understanding that money and family were significant concerns for the boys, each lesson

		either focused on financial literacy (entrepreneurship, generational wealth, welfare system) topic or a family-focused topic (brotherhood, community enrichment, taking care of momma).

We found the most variation in question number 5, which asked the boys who their favorite hip-hop artist was. Their responses allowed us to understand what current hip-hop artists and topics were of interest to them. Understanding this, we paired old hip-hop artists with contemporary artists of interest to talk about various themes and critical issues pertinent to their lives and local communities.

Hip Hop Focus

Our decision to utilize Hip-Hop Based Education (HHBE) was constructed from an asset-based perspective. We wanted each literacy lesson to be of high interest for the boys while reflecting their cultural and linguistic identities. Far too often, students in urban contexts are conflicted as their cultural identities stand in direct opposition to White mainstream literacy expectations. Due to this, we ensured that each lesson in HHLLC was focused on one or more of the five (5) elements of hip-hop:

1. Emceeing

2. Djing,

3. Knowledge of self,

4. B-boying/b-girling,

5. Graffiti

 Embedding HHBE as a literacy approach served as a useful form of culturally relevant pedagogy that placed students at the center of curriculum development (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Love, 2018). Leading scholar Gloria Ladson-Billings has shared her work around culturally relevant pedagogy (1995) to provide a foundation upon which to approach educational equity through curricular development grounded by Black students and urban communities' positionalities. Ladson-Billings asserts that culturally relevant pedagogy requires educators to combine academic achievement, cultural competence, and critical consciousness as an amalgam to promote academic and socio-emotional success for students of Color (1995). Looking at culturally relevant pedagogy from a research perspective, Flowers & Flowers (2008) contend, "researchers who support the notion of culturally relevant pedagogy assert that the linguistic differences, cultural heritage, and socioeconomic status are all positive factors that teachers should consider within their pedagogy" (p. 166). Considering this, the potential of HHBE rests within a shared understanding of vernacular and social practices which bridge literacy learning to the ways in which Black Boys exist and engage in the world (Beucher & Seglem, 2019; Freire, 1970; Emdin, 2010; Author A & Clayton-Taylor, 2020).

In the Hip-Hop Learning Lab, we used HHBE because it mirrored our Black male students' gendered, social, linguistic, and cultural mores. As opposed to the traditional or canonized forms of literature, we mechanized hip-hop as a physical and metaphorical text to promote a form of learning that mirrored the boys' lived experiences through song, art, video, dance, rap, and self-expression. Leaning on Luke's conceptualization of multiliteracies pedagogies, we utilized hip-hop as "an agentive bridge between convention and innovation, between the canonical and the new, between reproduction and creativity" (Garcia et al., 2018, p. 75). For example, using both the elements of knowledge of self and emceeing, we analyzed the lyrics of "Alright", written by Kendrick Lamar, along with his 2015 BET music awards performance, to interrogate police brutality. In conjunction with this written and visual text, we also dissected an infographic that shared facts about the association between Black boys and the school to prison pipeline. Within this lesson, we highlighted the likelihood of Black boys being acculturated into the criminal justice system based on current statistics. The boys used the discussion generated from this eye-opening lesson to create group raps about Black boys' disenfranchisement, which included topics focused on high suspension rates, racial stereotypes, and police brutality.

Critical Literacy

As our students lived within urbanized communities, they were subjected to the inequities associated with underserved environments. Considering this, we deemed it essential to embed elements of critical literacy into each lesson to push students to "confront the conditions of social and economic inequity in their daily lives" (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008, p. 7). Fostering awareness of institutional power structures that contribute to societal oppression and structural racism is a foundational tenet of critical literacy as this form of pedagogical practice aims to "name, analyze, deconstruct, and act upon unequal conditions in urban schools and communities" (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008, p.10). The revolutionary work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire stands as one of the most prolific contributions to critical literacy (Giroux, 2003; McLaren, 2000). Freire posits that when "an awareness of self and others through critical consciousness can be developed students can begin to reflect on themselves and the world in which they live to uncover hidden biases and imbalanced power structures" (1970, p. 94). Adopting a critical perspective to knowledge means that teaching and learning must be linked "to understand why things are the way they are, and how they got to be that way; to make the familiar strange and the strange familiar" (McLaren, 1986, p. 32). Therefore, our curriculum's primary aim sought to promote a critical view of literacy that pushed students to interrogate hip-hop as an aesthetic to uncover hidden forms of bias, discrimination, power, or inequity as it related to themselves and others in their community.

For example, based on survey data, we knew that family was an essential aspect of the boys' lives, so we created a lesson which focused on the concept of brotherhood. In the brotherhood lesson, we analyzed the lyrics to "Middle Child" by J- Cole. In this text, J-Cole touches on a variety of issues felt by the Black community. However, in his critique of societal oppression, he also stresses the importance of being a brother to those younger than him. We used J-Cole's words as a catalyst to discuss as a group why it was important to show brotherhood to people in our homes, community and classrooms. At the heart of this lesson, there was a large focus on

self-love and community love and the significance of enacting both to protect the people and places we value.

Key Reflections

The dialogic exchange below represents our collective reflection to creating and teaching the Hip-Hop Learning Lab curriculum, as, at the time of this writing, we had just completed our experience with the boys. The specific structure of this work initialized with Bianca asking questions, capturing Paul and Brian's real-time comments in response to her questions. Within this conversation, we interrogate the curricular barriers of the traditionalized literacy curriculum and the advantages of devising a curriculum focused on HHBE. We want to make clear that the aim of this shared dialogue is not to put forth a perfect picture of collaboration, but to share our collective challenges as we wrestled with the detachment from standardized curricula, to reconceptualize praxis (Boutte, Johnson, Wynter-Yoyte & Uyoata, 2017) that platformed the lives and literacies of Black boys. The overarching considerations, which guided our dialogue, focus on:

1. Challenges to Authentic Curriculum Development

2. Advantages of using Hip-Hop Based Education,

3. Lessons Learned from the Hip-Hop Learning Lab.

I. Challenges to Authentic Curriculum Development

Bianca: While we hold teachers responsible for perpetuating symbolic violence through their curriculum. We must also acknowledge the role of school districts in this scenario. What happens when school districts force teachers to become dependent on pre-packaged curricular programs?

Brian: When teachers become too dependent on pre-packaged curricular programs, it limits cultural responsiveness, innovation in pedagogy and mastery of content. A significant component of developing lesson plans is understanding the learning preferences, culture, and students' perspectives. Prescribed lesson plans created by someone who does not have a relationship with a specific group of students cannot adequately address any of the components. It requires relationship building to develop instruction for individual students. This can contribute to student disengagement and poor academic performance.

Paul: Firstly, pre-packaged curricular programs become the norm. These documents guide the scope and sequence of the teachers' work and the students' learning, and there is minimal room for the modification of the content. Secondly, most of the time, the curriculum is linked to the evaluative process. Therefore, teaching and learning become an exercise guided by the test, and students are not seen as the most important stakeholder. The opportunities for dialogue between the teacher and student aren't valued and reduce over time. Thirdly, the pre-packaged curricular programs represent traditional instructional practices and content and do not consider the experiences of students of Color, especially Black boys. Therefore, they cannot fully connect with the text and context of the lesson itself.

Bianca: **What specific issues do you think prevent school districts/schools from engaging in an authentic curriculum that speaks to the lived experiences and literacies of Black children?**

Brian: Standardization and high stakes testing prevent school districts/schools from engaging in authentic curricular experiences that speak to the lived experiences and literacies of Black children. There are cultural biases in standardized tests that marginalize the history and cultural experiences of students of Color. The fact that school districts/schools measure their effectiveness on these assessments is indicative to the idea of teaching to the test. This forces teachers to provide instruction where the lived experiences of Black children are not at the core or omitted altogether.

Paul: To begin with, I think the experiences of Black students are not given the value it deserves, so placing Black lives at the core of the curriculum is most often seen by districts or schools as fringe practices or a type of elective that is optional to teach.

Bianca: What would it take for schools to begin engaging in a curriculum that speaks to the lives and literacies of Black students, thereby putting them at the core of the curriculum rather than the periphery?

Brian: Schools must espouse a culture where the needs of Black students are central. This includes their social-emotional and curricula needs. What is core in this environment is providing a curriculum where students can see themselves. This should not be relegated to elective courses, but it must be integrated into every subject area and discipline.

To mitigate the urgency around standardized testing, there must be an effort to create a curriculum aligned to the skills and standards associated with state/district assessments. This means teaching the skill sets required to be successful in these assessments while using instructional materials that are culturally relevant to Black students.

Paul: First, there must be the focus of quality professional training and development, focused on Afro-centric praxis, pedagogies, and outlooks and approaches that directly focus on Black student achievement. District-sponsored and supported culturally relevant P.D. that is systematic and ongoing throughout the year will support schools and teachers to understand practices that support the literacies of Black students.

II. Advantages of using Hip-Hop Based Education

Bianca: For the Hip-Hop Learning Lab Curriculum, we centered hip-hop pedagogy as a multidimensional resource that more appropriately spoke to the lives and literacies of Black boys. What do you think this approach to literacy can afford other educators?

Paul: HHBE platforms a curriculum that allows Black boys to experience literacy in multiple ways. Students get to critically observe, using audio or video, how the text has been performed in a multidimensional public space. Therefore, as we begin to engage boys through HHBE, the text is brought to life through the artist. The students can discuss the artist and his or her life experiences. They then connect to what the artist has written as text, which becomes an authentic

experience. Furthermore, dialogue becomes richer as the discussion between teacher and students and student and student become natural to them in this environment and connections are made between HHBE and various literacy elements. Through using HHBE, students have a better understanding of how language operates to convey a message and how the context of hip-hop based songs connect to the expressive and communicative nature of literacy.

Brian: Since Hip hop culture is synonymous to that of the students, it enables them to engage in the literature reflective of their experiences. Teachers will discover that students already possess the skills that schools are trying to develop. As listeners of Hip Hop music, students can already analyze, decode, and perform other higher-order critical thinking skills. HHBE ensures students to identify they are not only learning at a higher-order level but have the capacity to perform at an optimal level and exceed expectations.

Bianca: HHBE provides the educator and student with an indigenous resource. Students can bring their lived experiences to the classroom, and these experiences are given value. Why do you think this is important for Black students?

Paul: HHBE provides Black students with the opportunity to bring their realities into the classroom. Traditional classrooms where a Eurocentric education is at the center do not accommodate Black students' realities, which serves as a demarcation between the world of the student and the learning process. These resources also promote a more dynamic pedagogy where teachers cannot hide behind the textbooks but create a more dynamic environment where interaction, meaningful dialogue, and relationship building transpire.

Brian: Providing the educator and student with indigenous resources not only bring their lived experiences to the classroom, but it validates their humanity and experiences. Traditional curriculums are Eurocentric and within this framework, the lives of non-whites are devalued. HHBE permits Black boys to see themselves in an academic environment, which creates a sense of belonging to a larger society. Their lives, experiences, and voices are now seen as valid when incorporated within the classroom/learning process.

Bianca: **HHBE provides the learner with a resource that is represented in different media iterations. Why is multimodal learning important for students today?**

Paul: HHBE education has currency. In today's world, students are provided with media that allows them to acquire knowledge through all their senses. Therefore, HHBE embraces a world that students can identify with and uses media that are normative in their understanding. Our initial engagement with them is one of comfort and connects with their previous knowledge and experiences. I remembered in the Hip Hop Learning Lab, having students use their smartphones to record their rap sessions. They were also able to view the videos created to showcase the artistic performance of the text. They listened to beats found on YouTube and started the writing process. Interestingly, we also allowed them to observe the methodology used to compose the written material. The students became performers of their original work and learned audience etiquette. Therefore, all students' learning styles are engaged, and they are self-motivated, thus minimizing the need for punitive classroom management.

Brian: I remember in the Hip-Hop Learning Lab, the boys' smartphones become a tool for continuous learning and the sharing of the material. They can also find the relevant resources for the lesson using the different forms of media. Therefore, HHBE meets students where they are and engages their innate technological abilities. As such, the multimodality of using technology serves as a reference point of comfort and engagement that deepens their connection to literacy learning.

III. Lessons Learned from the Hip-Hop Learning Lab

Bianca: Based on our journey in the Hip Hop Learning Lab, what did you learn from this experience?

Brian: Elevating hip-hop as the primary text within the classroom allowed conversations to focus on a sort of culturally based ethnographic perspective that more accurately spoke to the realities of existing as Black male students. Though our curriculum was experimental, it reached beyond a simplistic understanding of popular rap songs (Asante, 2008; Hall, 2017). Moreover, the activities become transformative, and collectively teachers and students recommended positive ways to respond to these experiences. These experiences also built resilience, tenacity, and knowledge of self. Furthermore, students connected with artists and realized the role they are playing to ensure that they understand the real world and the part they must play to make it better. Through this journey, I discovered that this curriculum opened doors of dialogue and connection with students who in traditionalized settings were often disengaged from the learning process.

Paul: The Hip Hop Learning Lab became a place where both teachers and students were transformed due to the innovative instructional practices. Students became excited and readily participated in the dialogue critically. They listened and viewed the selected material and listened to the responses of their peers. They also responded to their peers' contributions and it became an enriching dialogic activity. Critical theorist Paulo Freire talks about contextualizing everything we read by analyzing the word and the world, which means that we cannot make meaning of the text without understanding the context upon which the word was created. Therefore, in the Hip Hop Learning Lab, the students connected to materials and experiences that were unfamiliar to them, and this time of engagement broadened their understanding of the word and the world.

Implications

As educators continue to cling to White mainstream notions of reading, writing and speaking, the dangers of symbolically violent classrooms proliferate to threaten the literacy achievement of Black male students. The nexus of this work predicates on introspective analysis to engage thoughtfully about the methods, orientations and materials we use to support Black boys' literacy development. Considering that Black boys are among the **most** marginalized student population and yet represented the **least** within literacy curriculum, we believe village-based conversations which examine epistemological approaches, methods, and curriculum are needed frequently and across multiple stakeholders, at the classroom, district, and university levels if we are to begin to bind the divide between Black boys and the curriculum used to instruct them. As a collective, we reflect on the lessons learned from the HHLLC experience to share five approaches to support

educational professionals as they orient themselves to curriculum development that prioritizes Black boys' literacies first.

Placing Black Boys First Suggestions:

1. Unapologetically believe that Black Boys' literate lives matter.

The belief that Black Boys' literate lives matter translates to a deep appreciation and understanding of how Black boys language connects to their cultural, familial and social identities. The mattering of Black boys' literate lives requires a disposition which views the communicative forms they chose to express themselves as valid and worthy in a classroom setting. To be unapologetic about this belief means a de-centering of traditional literacy modes to encompass a broader perspective inclusive of anti-racist pedagogies.

2. Interrogate your belief systems to examine which forms of literacy are valued, privileged, and platformed most frequently in your classroom and why.

Again, working from your disposition, you need to question what is the dominant racial, cultural, and gendered epistemological base of your teaching, and the frequency upon which you include voices of Color, specifically Black male voices. This will require serious self-study and action-based classroom investigation to identify if **what** and **how** you teach resonates with the ways Black boys relate and engage in the world.

3. Cultivate a critical curriculum that integrates the socio-historical and sociopolitical contexts of Black boys and how they are viewed through a societal lens.

This curricular approach requires a critical critique of language itself, to interrogate the socio-historical underpinnings of dominant language ideologies and how these orientations intertwine with race, power, gender and privilege. Within this critique, you help Black boy's question why certain language domains are more appreciated than others and the ways in which linguistic discrimination can play out in their everyday lives and communities. Problematize scenarios and situations where Black boys and other linguistic minorities are pressured to take off, let go, or code-switch away from their home language.

4. Have cultural and linguistic knowledge about Black boy literacies to realistically situate their ways of communication at the center of literacy lessons.

This requires an understanding of the rhetorical nature of Black language itself, and the syntactic and semantic structures akin to Black language users. These rhetorical modes should be seen as linguistic resources that are allowed in the classroom as Black boys respond and communicate their thoughts and ideas with peers and teachers.

5. Intentionally solicit the voices, opinions and outlooks of Black boys to ensure their perspectives and interests are reflected in the literacy classroom.

Co-construct lessons, projects, and activities with Black boys to ensure their voices and cultural perspectives are embedded into the pedagogical fabric of your classroom. This form of

engagement elicits a greater sense of belonging for Black boys, a method of practice, often overlooked in traditionalized classroom settings.

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Author Bios

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Brian currently serves as the Manager of the Office of African, African American, Latino, Holocaust, and Gender Studies within the School District of Palm Beach County, the tenth–largest public-school district in the United States. The Office of African, African American, Latino, Holocaust, and Gender Studies has been in existence for 26 years with a major focus on providing best teaching practices for students of color and the development of culturally responsive curriculum.

Brian and his team have been instrumental in supporting schools to create environments that are conducive to the academic success of all students. His work has served to eliminate systemic barriers and interrupt practices rooted in racism at many levels including the classroom, the School District, and the community. During his tenure, he is proud of several accomplishments including authoring the SDPBC Equity and Access Policy 1.041, which legally binds the District to address systemic deficiencies that create gaps in academic achievement. Brian has also designed a series of state-wide, secondary-level courses that highlight the historical contributions and experiences of African Diasporic people:

• Great Men and Women of Color Who Shaped World History

• Examining the African American Experience in the 20th Century through Music and Visual Arts

• Exploring Hip Hop as Literature, and

• The History and Contribution of Haiti in a Global Context.

SCHOOL BASED REPRESENTATIONS OF AMERICA'S AFRICAN AMERICAN AND LATINX POPULATIONS: AN ANALYSIS OF INFORMATIONAL PICTURE BOOKS IN SOCIAL STUDIES

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Abstract

This paper reviews a third-grade social studies scope and sequence for evidence of diverse children's literature. In particular, I analyzed the suggested supplemental texts for evidence of representation and diverse authors. This paper found that there is a lack of representation and history being shared through books. Implications for the continued push for diverse texts that extend beyond the field of literacy into other disciplines is and continues to be a needed discussion amongst researchers and practitioners.

School Based Representations of America's African American and Latinx Populations: An Analysis of Informational Picture Books in Social Studies

My interest in studying history through picture books began when I started to reflect on my K12 teaching experiences. I loved teaching 3rd and 4th grade students and the multiple ways we explored cultures and groups of people in the United States and beyond. The school I taught in was designated as a low income, Title 1 school with a mixture of culturally and linguistically diverse students. However, the resources (textbooks and trade books) that were a part of the curriculum rarely featured the diverse students in my classroom. At the time, we were supplied with an outdated social studies textbook which was no longer in print, and some websites that offered additional information on the history of Tennessee. When my students' cultures were highlighted, there were issues related to authenticity and stereotypes. For example, the same stories of slavery, Dr. King, and a lack of Latinx representation were often curricular issues for me as well as other educators in the school.

In 2012 the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) published a report on the "Portrayal of African American and Hispanics" at their annual meeting (Garcia, 2012). That report pulled data from 1997-2008, which found an almost non-existent presence of scholars dedicated towards equity and comprehensive historical understandings over the last twelve years. The study revealed two important points related to social studies education. First and foremost, even in the 21st century our society still struggles to recognize the need for research on communities of color in the field of social studies. Secondly, the implications for improvements in representation were not going to be located within the national organization dedicated to research and practice

on social studies. In a later study by Navarro and Howard (2017), they addressed the continued lack of race as a central tenet in social studies education. Within their review they highlighted disparities between teacher demographics and student demographics, textbook contents, and social tensions that are often absent from classrooms. In a closer examination of classroom practice, Demoiny and Ferraras-Stone (2018) found that many elementary teachers relied primarily on textbooks to help them teach U.S. history to their students. However, multiple studies of social studies textbooks have revealed disparities in representation and historical accuracy (Lucy, Demszky, Bromley, & Jurafsky, 2020; Brown & Brown, 2010; Gordy & Pritchard, 1995). A common discrepancy found across the studies related to the historical contributions and representations of minoritized groups and the persistent stereotypes concerning various races and genders. For example, Farris and Fuhler (1994) reported a lack of contributions by African Americans in multiple social studies textbooks across the U.S. While Baker and Saul (1994) found that despite educators' best efforts, "history [in school textbooks] is written on the grand scale and sweeps over great issues and crises, dealing only with the powerful few" (Baker & Saul, 1994, p.64). Milton Meltzer stated that, "in my childhood, those books had little to say about the values and problems of a multiethnic America" (citation found in Baker & Saul, 1994, p.82). In more recent studies of social studies textbooks, scholars have continued to identify concerns related to silencing narratives (Call-Cummings, 2017; Demoiny & Ferraras-Stone, 2018), the literary canon of texts required in schools (Guillory, 2013; Worlds & Miller, 2019), and the need to diversify texts and curricular materials (Liou & Cutler, 2020; Au, Brown, & Delores, 2016; Brown & Wayne, 2014). However, Chu (2017) found that "recent textbook content analyses reported higher percentages of stereotypical or biased content" (p.238). Being that all perspectives throughout history cannot be captured within a year's worth of content it is assumed that teachers will supplement for the gaps in historical content that is told. Most often elementary educators will use non-fiction texts such as picture books to help children see and understand historical content. This approach became more important as my home state of Tennessee began to implement changes to the social studies curriculum.

Tennessee, after years of not renewing their social studies textbook contract, chose to release a curriculum that required teachers to use primary sources and supplementary texts to teach social studies. This approach, in theory, would eliminate many of the concerns with textbooks discussed above. However, when reviewing the third-grade social studies scope and sequence, I was drawn to the suggested texts (predominately picture books) that were listed for third grade. Picture books have been studied widely in the field of literacy for their cultural and historical importance but fewer, if any, studies of picture books in social studies have occurred. What begins to emerge across these studies is a lack of awareness towards culturally relevant pedagogies (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and culturally sustaining pedagogies (Paris, 2012) in the creation of textbooks and the selection of supplementary texts. This prompted me to inquire more into the types of text selected and how teachers could plan for equitable and accurate representations in their supplementary texts. This study sought to discover historical contexts of representation in social studies and then examine suggested informational/non-fiction picture books suggested by one district's third-grade resources in Tennessee. I chose representations of African American and Latinx based upon the students in my previous 3rd and 4th grade classrooms.

The following question guided my inquiry:

1. How are curriculums structured to represent African American and Latino populations in supplementary social studies texts?

Relearning and Reimagining Critical Multiculturalism

Before attempting to analyze the suggested picture books, I needed to ground my knowledge in studies of representation in children's literature. For this study, I chose critical multiculturalism (Botelho & Rudman, 2009) because it addresses representations of people of color. I recognize that the choice of critical multiculturalism does not address intersecting identities (Robinson, 2013), but for the purposes of this study, there was a clear racialized focus that was being enacted. Banks (2007) considers each child as multicultural and that multicultural education helps position students as more than fitting into a prescribed version of themselves. By focusing on the predominant racial groups that were in my previous classrooms, I both recognize and highlight their importance within the curriculum.

All children's literature contains cultural messages (Botelho & Rudman, 2009) and the literature conveys ideas of citizenship that is implied in social studies standards. Critical multiculturalism involves more than the texts that students and teachers use in a classroom. However, the instruction and pedagogical approaches are highly influenced by the materials made available to educators. As Chalmers (2002) stated, "a commitment to multiculturalism must mean more than conditional hospitality" (p. 301). The teaching conditions require that educators push for additional supplementary texts in social studies in order to fill in the gaps that many multicultural and critical scholars have called for, for over twenty years. By utilizing this theoretical approach, one can critically analyze texts for the cultural impacts on racial groups of people.

Methods and Analysis

To closely examine and critique representations in the picture books, I utilized Bradford's (2007, 2009) critical content analysis. Critical content analysis has been used widely as researchers investigated representation, authenticity, and cultural artifacts. I began my analysis of the picture books by reading the texts two times and established an understanding of how I would analyze data. I first established how history was being told and presented in the stories. I categorized stories based on narrative features versus non-narrative formats. Initial coding also involved locating visual representations of African Americans or Latinx people in the picture books and the roles ascribed to them.

The books that were selected for this study were books listed on the 2018-2020 scope and sequence social studies document for the selected district. I reviewed 29 third grade non-fiction picture books that were suggested in the scope and sequence. Books were divided into categories of instruction for the social studies unit. Categories included geography, physical and political features, U.S. geography, world geography, indigenous peoples, colonization, and economics. Initial coding of the texts was conducted first. The first pre-coded to assess the author's backgrounds, genders represented in the texts, and the presence of various countries.

Category	Findings
Authors	29 books 28 different authors (10 male & 18 female) 24 white authors, 1 Mojave, 1 Ojibwe, & 2 unknown
Years of publication	Range from 1984 – 2017; Most frequent year - 2002

After initial coding of the texts, the following guiding questions were used when looking critically at representations of African American and Latinx characters:

(1) Are the suggested book authors from the backgrounds and/or cultures of the people represented in the texts?

(2) How are African American and Latinx cultures represented in texts?

(3) Do the representations of African American and Latinx people include specific cultural information?

During the second round of analysis, each book was analyzed for the representations of Black and Latinx peoples as well as the representations of Black and Latinx authors. *Appendix B* offers a summary table of the information found within each social studies category of books suggested. The questions used to analyze the texts did not guide me towards an understanding of cultural authenticity as described by Yoo Lee et al. (2014), but the questions did lead towards a deeper understanding of representation. After completing the second layer of analysis, deeper understandings of which types of texts were selected and the broader implications on learning were developed.

Findings

In this section, I highlight my analysis of the picture books. The findings are organized into two sections. The first section illustrates how racially diverse texts were needed in the text sets. The second section focuses on dominant narratives across the picture books.

Racially Diverse Texts

Through my analysis of the suggested picture books for each nine weeks, I found few, if any, inclusions of diverse authors and themes. I use the phrase not present to suggest that teachers may choose to supplement beyond what the district is suggesting, but in the scope and sequence, diverse texts lacked and diverse authors were not present. Diverse texts movements have built on the work of the CCBC and other literary scholars to point out discrepancies related to representation. Much of this work has occurred in the field of literacy. However, the move to include literature and writing across disciplines is not new to the fields of social studies. Based upon the National Council for the Social Studies report in 2012, cited above, this finding was not shocking.

In fact, there were no authors of color that were observed on the list of suggested picture books in third grade social studies. This was more shocking given the topics being discussed over the course of the year (*Appendix A*). Of the eight books suggested under the topics of *colonization* and *indigenous peoples*, none of the books were developed by people from within those groups. It is important to consider how representations are created in picture books and the ways it can advantage and disadvantage students in the classroom and beyond.

When considering that the social studies curriculum is designed to provide a snapshot of U.S. society and that of other countries, it becomes painfully apparent that black and brown bodies are visually and contextually positioned as minorities based on the text selections.

Banks (1993) argues that "students should be given opportunities to investigate and determine how cultural assumptions, frames of references, perspectives, and the biases within a discipline influence the ways knowledge is constructed" (p. 10). The opportunity to browse between multiple perspectives in history takes additional understanding about students' reading levels and collecting varieties of texts (Saul & Dieckman, 2005). What is consistently found in studies of informational picture books is a lack of access to multiple texts or a lack of attention to multiple perspectives in practice. This creates a lack of what Paris (2012) calls culturally sustaining pedagogies, within the context of social studies. A teacher's lack of access to resources that mimic the pluralistic society of the United States limits the cultural competencies we are striving to create among our students. This led me to my next theme concerning the privileging of certain histories.

Whose History is Being Highlighted?

Another insight that emerged from the analysis is related to the cultural lens on history that was being told within the texts. In a previous study by Lamme (1994), highlights the need to include family stories as a form of informative literature in social studies and the issues with informational picture books being labeled as fictional because they read like narratives. However, a more concerning issue relates to that of invisibility of African American and Latinx people within and across social studies. The review of suggested picture books provided a peek into whose culture is reflected or not reflected in the stories being told. When books such as *This Child, Every Child* and *Brining Rain to the Kapiti Plain* show levels of diversity at an international level and texts that focus on the U. S. show a lack of representation, the issue of invisibility in U.S. history become apparent. I also found several moments of white male privileging in history and a non-existent narrative being developed for Black and Latinx people. Multiple perspectives are needed and encouraged when teaching history; the need for these perspectives is a driving force for integrating supplementary texts into curriculum. Very few texts provided insights into the language and cultural practices of various cultures in the U.S. and around the world.

Botehlo and Rudman (2009) further discuss the issue of invisibility and the history of representation in the United State. Because of the cultural identity that dominates the United States, Botehelo and Rudman (2009) state that our history and social studies books can't focus

on the more subtle intricacies of socioeconomic and linguistic histories. Ten years later, we continue to see this same understanding and practice in picture books in social studies.

Discussion

The findings in the social studies picture book suggested readings is not novel. As groups of people continue to migrate to newer parts of their countries and engage in international travel, the diverse nature of a country's demographics will continue to transform. This global phenomenon, related to the value of certain narratives and inclusion of supplementary texts continues even in the 21st century. Ersoy & Sahin (2012) describe the value systems associated with the social studies curriculum within Turkey. There the government imposes a value curriculum which systematically attempts to teach children the value of the Turkish heritage and history. While the development of aware and socially conscious citizens' benefits the country, the lack of appreciation for the individuals' cultural values and need to connect with the curriculum. In like manner, the social studies curriculums in the United States seeks to foster active citizenship (Demoiny and Ferraras-Stone, 2018).

As found in Lazar & Offenberg (2011), "critical discussions of multicultural literature may be compromised by teachers' lack of knowledge about historical events (p. 306). To help supplement a possible lack of knowledge, picture books and other resources are able to guide conversations by using texts to assist students learning and teachers continued growth and development. By making these conversations invisible in the curriculum, it only serves to continue the pattern of invisibility that is often observed across curriculums.

In more recent discussions of diverse texts and representations across disciplines, Thomas and Stornaiuolo (2016) discuss the idea of restorying texts to make texts [history] accessible for students. In similar fashion, Yosso (2002) provided critical race media literacy as an approach for teaching marginalized students to create a more accurate depiction of their races and experiences into the curricular materials. Both examples call on teachers to provide students the space to think critically about the narratives and histories being developed within their learning. In the above examples, the children were in middle school and high school. The approaches and capabilities of elementary children is less understood within this context. What is emphasized in elementary programs is English Language Arts instruction that includes various theories and pedagogical approaches to understanding history through children's books.

 In order to envision a social studies curriculum using a series of picture books as supplementary texts (trade books), teachers must have a strong foundation in the history of multicultural literary movements and diverse literacy movements. As early as 1990, Rudine Sims Bishop brought our attention to children's books being windows and mirrors. This approach draws our attention to the ways books can reaffirm and transforms children's experiences seeing the world through a familiar lens or through a different cultural lens. Each text has a role in mirroring our lives or connecting us to cultures and ways of being that are distant from us. Bishop's approach to literature builds on the core concept of multiculturalism as a celebration of pluralism versus a celebration of differences (Chalmers, 2002). Because schools and teachers still fear adding

"critical" approaches into the classroom, many teachers engage in patronizing forms of what they consider to be multicultural approaches to learning.

 While teacher training programs are attempting to inform future educators of the gaps in representation, current teachers have also begun addressing the lack of history being taught across schools in America. While many teachers feel obligated to use the materials provided for units of instruction, I suggest that teachers still critically and carefully consider the students in their classrooms and how inclusive they are being across discipline areas. The process of studying the books ahead of teaching them helps create moments to develop meaningful questions and to look for additional resources for students to explore. For example, during a unit focused on the college experience for elementary 4th graders, I took time to bring information about Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) that told a different and relevant story of the college experience for people of color. In other ways, educators and researchers have also created historical and literary based resources for teachers to access. For example, the #DisruptText movement, Project Zinned, and others provide online resources and materials for teachers and administrators to consider for their teachers and students.

I also argue that a windows and mirrors approach to supplementary texts used in social studies could offer more to the growing field than some have anticipated. Does this mean that all texts on the examined set were insufficient? No, that is not what the study sought to find. What is known is that teachers have to fill in the gaps when history is told from a single perspective. That may mean delving into additional professional development programs or reaching out to past instructors for additional help. In addition to filling in gaps, creating text sets so students are able to interrogate multiple perspectives (Lewison, Flint, & Van Sluys, 2002) of historical events creates well informed and democratic minded student learners. That is one of the main goals of social studies educators and continues to be a critical approach to literacy that is taught in English Language Arts curriculums.

Final Thoughts

While I am critical of the books selected and the implications a single story can have on children's perceptions of themselves in the world, I also understand the tension experienced by teachers seeking to do something different. There are spaces where critical discussions are discouraged or the children in the classroom don't represent a variety of races and/or ethnicities. As the literature and experiences have taught us in the field of education, we must push to establish a new standard of learning that seeks to both see and understand the world through multiple experiences. The books highlighted in this study reflect a small fraction of the non-fiction books created each year, and so there are opportunities to grow students' view of the world and of themselves through thoughtful processes. There isn't a specific formula or combination of practices that will guide each teacher to the same culturally aware ending, but small efforts to create these spaces will eventually result in a learning environment that is more culturally and globally aware for all children. I would encourage educators to read Ladson-Billings' (2014) extension of culturally relevant pedagogy 2.0 that takes into account Paris' (2012) and others integration of youth culture and its fluid nature. In this way educators are

always trying to adapt curriculum to the students and move away from dehumanizing practices in their classrooms, which includes critical multicultural analyses of the books we introduce to our students. If you begin here you will then see how engaged students can and will become about learning and the intellectual growth that can occur. However, it begins with teacher's awareness and willingness to approach their curriculum with a critically conscious lens for learning for all students.

Resources

I offer some organizations and book award groups that highlight diverse books that may impact the types of texts you choose for your classroom libraries.

Diverse book awards that will inform your book selections concerning various cultures.

- American Indian Library Association: https://ailanet.org

- Coretta Scott King Award: http://www.ala.org/rt/emiert/cskbookawards

- Pura Belpre Award: http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/belpremedal/belpreabout

- Tomas Rivera Award: https://www.education.txstate.edu/ci/riverabookaward/

Collections of recommended books

- CCBC Multicultural Book List: https://ccbc.education.wisc.edu/books/multicultural.asp

- World of Words: https://wowlit.org/

Diverse Texts to Consider for Social Studies. This is a brief collection of texts that could be used in various ways. We cannot always change the curriculum, but we can invite additional representations into the curricular materials that serve to enrich students views of the world and themselves.

- *Tar Beach* by Ringgold, F. (1991)

- *Tia Isa wants a Car* by Medina, M. (2016)

- *The Airport Book* by Brown, L. (2016)

- *My Two Border Towns* by Bowles, D. (2021)

- *Biblioburro: A True Story from Columbia* by Winter, J. (2010)

- *A Chair for my Mother* by Williams, V. (2007)

- *How I learned Geography* by Shulevitz, U. (2008)

- *Adventures on Earth* by Tyler, S. (2019)

- *This is Our World: From Alaska to the Amazon* by Turner, T. (2020)

- *Heart and Soul* by Nelson, K. (2013)

- *This is the Rope: A story from the Great Migration* by Woodson, J. (2017)

- *Dave the Potter Dave the Potter* by Hill, L. C. (2010)

- *Carolina's Gift: A story of Peru* by Diaz, K. (2002)

- *Last Stop on Market Street* by de la Pena (2015)

- *Going down home with Daddy* by Lyons, K. S. (2019)

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Appendix A: Scope and Sequence Listing of Supplemental Picture Books

Theme	Books
Geography	*There's a Map on My Lap* by Dr. Seuss *As the Crow Flies* by Gail Hartman *Mapping Penny's World* by Loreen Leedy *Follow that Map! A First Book of Mapping Skills* by Scot Ritchie *Where Do I Live?* By Neil Chesanow
Physical and Political Features	*Looking at Landforms* by Ellen K. Mitten *U.S. Landforms* by Dana Meachen Rau *National Geographic Kids United States Atlas 5th Ed.*
U.S. Geography	The **_Scrambled_** *States of America* by Laurie Keller *Our 50 States: A Family Adventure Across America* by Lynne Cheney *50 States (A TIME for Kids Book) (America Handbooks, a TIME for Kids Series)* by the Editors of TIME for Kids *If America were a Village* by David J. Smith
World Geography	*A Ticket around the World* by Natalia Diaz & Melissa Owens *If Earth were a Village* by David J Smith *This Child, Every Child* by David J Smith *If You Lived Here: Houses of the World* by Giles Laroche

Indigenous Peoples	*If You Lived with the Indians of the Northwest Coast* by Anna Kamma *Encounter* by Jane Yolen *The Birchbark House* by Louise Erdich
Colonization	*The Maryland Colony* by Kevin Cunningham *If You were a Kid in the Thirteen Colonies* by Scholastic *Colonial Times, 1600-1700* by Joy Masoff *Roanoke: Solving the Mystery of the Lost Colony* by Lee Miller *1607: A New Look at Jamestown* by Karen Lange
Economics	*Round and **Round** the Money Goes* by Melvin and Gilda Berger *Prices Go Up, Prices Go Down: The Laws of Supply and Demand* by David Adler *Bringing Rain to the Kapiti Plain* by Verna Aardema *The Go Around Dollar* by Barbara Johnston Adams

Appendix B: Summary chart of analyzed books

	Author(s) is white	**African American primary character**	**Latinx primary character**	**African American secondary character**	**Latinx secondary character**	**African American cultural elements**	**Latinx cultural elements**
There's a Map on my Lap	X			X	X		X
As the Crow Flies	X						
Mapping Penny's Worlds	X			X	X		
Follow that Map! A First Book of Mapping Skills	X						
Where do I Live?	X			X	X		
Looking at Landforms	X			x	x		
U.S. Landforms	X						
National Geographic Kids US Atlas 5th Edition	X						
The Scrambled States of America	X						

Our 50 States: A Family Adventure across America	X			X	X		
50 States (A TIME for Kids Book)	X						
If America were a Village	x			X	X		
A Ticket around the World	X (Owens)			X			
If Earth were a Village	X			X			
This Child, Every Child	X			X			
If you Lived Here: Houses of the world	X			X	X		
If You Lived with the Indians of the Northwest Coast	X						
Encounter	X						
The Birchbark House							

The Maryland Colony	X					
If You were a Kid in the Thirteen Colonies	X		X			
Colonial Times, 1600-1700	X		X			
Roanoke: Solving the Mystery of the Lost Colony	X		X			
1607: A New Look at Jamestown	X		X			
Round and Round the Money Goes	X					X
Prices Go Up, Prices Go Down: The Laws of Supply and Demand	X					
Bringing Rain to the Kapati Plain	X	X	X		X	
The Go Around Dollar	X					

Appendix C: Analysis of Years of Publication for children's books

Years of Publication
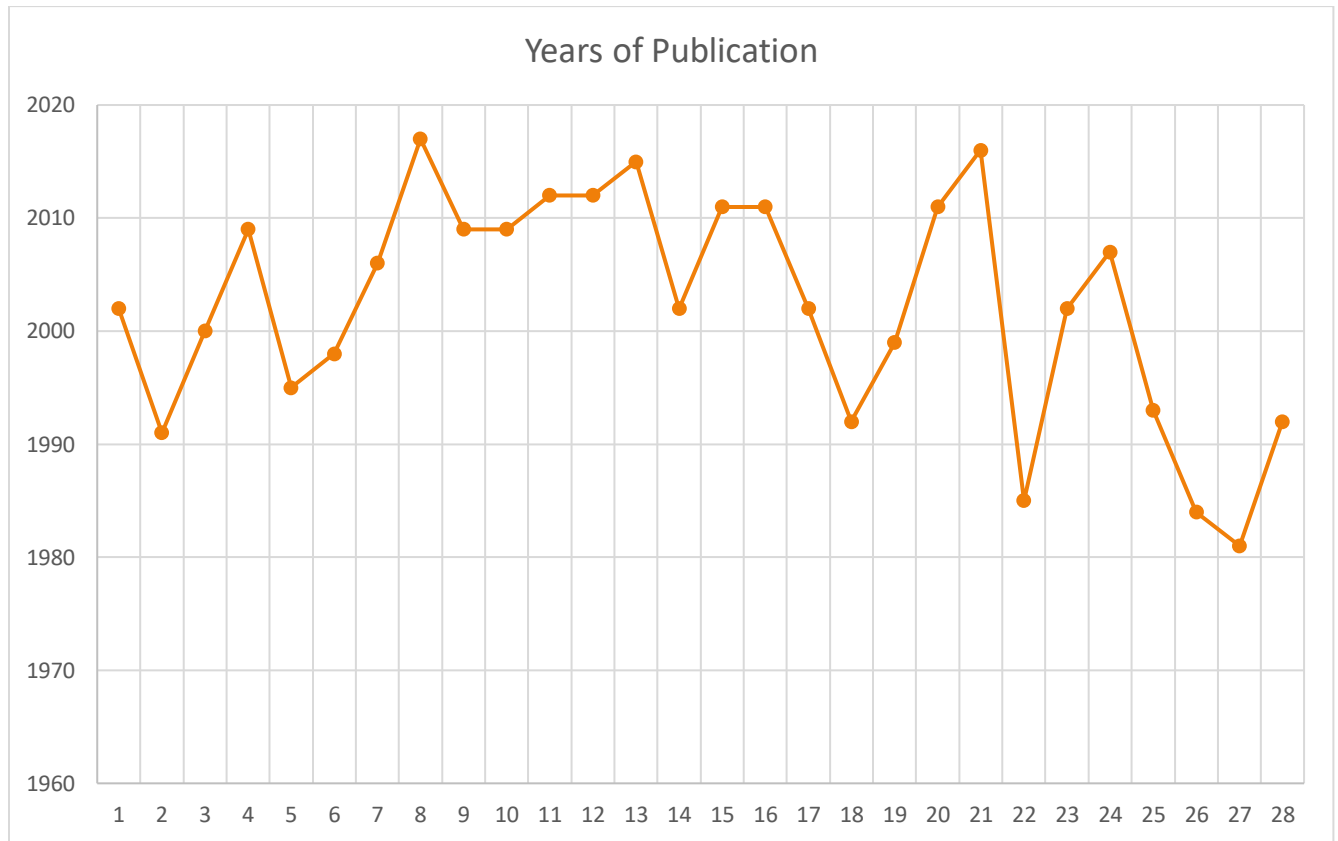
Mean: 2002

Mode: 2002

Median: 2002

Author Bio

Dorian Harrison is an Assistant Professor of Teaching and Learning at The Ohio State University at Newark. Her research interests focus on equity issues in literacy education, paying particular attention to how race, class, and language affect teaching and learning. By analyzing teaching/learning communities within traditional education settings, community centers, and longitudinal studies of practicing teachers, Dr. Harrison's work seeks to challenge deficit views of Black and Latinx students. As a trained educator, she is also broadly interested in multicultural literature, including text and images that influence children's perceptions of themselves.

Missing Voices Within the Classroom: Cultural Identity, Lexical, and Authenticity in Cajun, Creole, and Native American Children's Literature

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Abstract

It is important for all members of a culture or community (including school community) to "encourage children to understand cultural differences, to take pride in individual differences and use this understanding to develop uniqueness versus awkwardness in society" (Cox & Wallis, 1982, 264). If young children are supported within the visualization of how they reflectively see their fit within the world, there are possibilities to embrace the leadership benefits of heritage and belonging, and eventually gain the understanding of how to use their cultural authenticity as a strength of character development.

Authors explored regional libraries for diverse books, specifically for preservice teachers to use as an emerging model of English Language Arts (ELA) and Social Studies curriculum planning with children's literature. There was a lack of authentic cultural connections in these libraries to support multicultural populations in their historical and current diverse literature sections. The authors contend that developmentally, children must see themselves in picture books and other literature to make genuine connections for a cultural identity, language, and self-identification in children's literature. Portrayal of all cultures accurately is important to reduce bias and misconceptions of others who might be different than the reader. We uncovered missing voices in Cajun, Creole and Native American in children's literature.

Key terms: Diverse books, cultural identity, Cajun, Creole, Native American, multicultural literature, picture books, culturally responsive teaching.

Missing Voices Within the Classroom: Cultural Identity, Lexical, and Authenticity in Cajun, Creole, and Native American Children's Literature

Introduction & Background

Authenticity of Picture Books

Young children spend most of the time at school, growing in knowledge while learning in classrooms. Educators and preservice teachers are expected to have access to literature on various reading levels for use in their classroom instruction. This study began with two curriculum and instruction methodology faculty and their pre-service teachers who were struggling to find culturally relevant literature or diverse books to use in their early childhood education practicum experiences at their assigned public-school sites. Limitations were discovered when seeking quality diverse literature, in a state that has multiple cultures living in it. For such a diverse population this area lacks in diverse resources. There is a need to acknowledge and bridge the gap in the use and availability of diverse cultural resources, personal narratives, and folklife stories as ancillary materials for core curriculum to help children recognize how they fit into the world, which is an integral part of early development and self-identity.

Appropriate literature available on school site for the early grades that portray Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) are limited to a few biographies such as Harriet Tubman, Martin Luther King Jr, and Author Ashe (The story of Ruby Bridges is not allowed due to its references to prayer). It should be noted that early educators (preservice and in-service teachers) need to know how to use culturally relevant resources, such as diverse books as an extension of classroom knowledge. Powerful picture books are necessary for emergent literacy and can be used effectively as an introduction to a variety of content for young readers. These diverse literatures provide connections for young readers on how to self-identify within a cultural existence and educators become culturally responsive.

One purpose of culturally responsive teaching (CRT) is to encourage educators to identify the importance of authentic cultural knowledge to a region (Williams Rucker, 2019). Regional cultural heritage is an important factor for early educators to plan for learning and developmental growth in all classrooms. Why the focus on culture rather than race? Culture is where one has an emotional and spiritual connection of belonging to a specific group (family) which goes deeper than race (skin tones and labels assigned by census takers). Multiple resources were found on three specific cultures the Cajun, Creole, and Native American, which supported a working model to distinguish multi-cultural research-based teaching practices. CRT anchors the study of these Louisiana cultures. This regionally prevalent example of Cajun (Acadian), Creole (see table 1), and Native American customs demonstrate the relevance of cultural authenticity (how people live) in children's literature. These three cultures had a small but available collection of books in area libraries compared to the other cultures and races of people living in this area. The researchers showcased the uniqueness of Louisiana within these three cultures, and found multiple cross-over *races*, thus making it a challenge to place members into an individual racial group.

The Power of Culture

 According to Kathleen Tracy's (2015) *Louisiana Creole & Cajun Cultures in Perspective,* Cajun culture resulted from the evolution of Acadians, French immigrants in Canada to their expulsion from Nova Scotia and nearby areas, to settling in Louisiana (16-17). Cajun culture and language are incredibly unique to the offspring of the Acadians' despite their increasingly diverse bloodlines (21). There is a common ground for the people of this region that weaves the language and dialect used by each culture, which sounds similar when first heard by one who may not dwell in this region. A common interpretation of the language may include misunderstanding or need for further clarification of context.

Most Creole languages that developed in the colonies were typically based on English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish, the languages of the superpowers of the time. However, there are also numerous Creoles based on other languages such as Arabic, Hindi, and Malay (World Languages). French Creole's on the other hand, are ethnically diverse with racially charged origins defined as "slaves born in the colony" to "free people of color." Spanish/French mixed whites were identified as French Creole and spoke Colonial French which became its own dialect. French, West African, African and Caribbean mixed peoples spoke Louisiana Creole French, which was considered a hybrid language developed from French-West Africans (25-26). French creole languages are mainly found in the Caribbean, in the U.S., and on several islands in the Indian Ocean. Table 1 illustrates the complexity of regional locations and origins of Louisiana's French Creoles:

Table 1. French-based Creoles

Caribbean

Haitian Creole	7,389,066	Haiti, U.S.
Guadeloupean Creole	848,000	Guadeloupe, Martinique
Louisiana Creole	**60,000-80,000**	**U.S.**
Guianese Creole	50,000	French Guiana
Amapár Creole	25,000	Brazil

Indian Ocean

Morisyen Creole	604,000	Mauritius
Réunion Creole	600,000	Réunion
Seychellois Creole	72,7000	Seychelles

Retrieved on November 20, 2020 from
http://aboutworldlanguages.com/creole-languages.

Within Native American tribes there are dialectal differences due to geographic separation of tribes, as well as differences in orthographies adopted by different groups. For example, the Cherokee Nation has two well documented dialects, the form *Cherokee* came from the Eastern, while the form *Tsalagi* came from the Western dialect. Today, all Cherokee people refer to themselves as *tsa-la-gi.* Cherokee speakers constitute the seventh-largest group of speakers of native languages north of Mexican border. It is spoken by 15,000 to 22,500 people in eastern and northeastern Oklahoma, Cherokee Reservation; Great Smokey Mountains; and western North Carolina (http://aboutworldlanguages.com).

Picture books are powerful learning tools with the complexity of understanding regional, cultural differences. These stories help children embrace and enlighten differences, specifically when they picture self in the story.

For this early literature cultural model, or research-based teaching practice, there were limited selections of Cajun, Creole, and Native American children's literature available for teacher resources. Early educators seem to share whatever they find without evaluating the authenticity and culturally appropriateness of the literature. "The move toward teaching for multicultural understanding has made teachers more aware of the role of self-concept, language diversity, and background experience in education" (Cox, 263). Self-concept, language, diversity, and background experience are key elements in cultural identity. If a child can visualize his or her connection through a story, this notion would support authenticity in cultural identity. Below are some examples of prompts that can be used to facilitate student's making connections with literature, which should also lead to improved comprehension:

> **Text-to-self:** What does this remind me of past or present? How is this character, or situation similar or different from me and in what way?
> **Text-to-text:** Reminds me of another book I have read or heard?
> **Text-to-world:** What or how does this remind me of an event or someone in the real world? (Harvey, S. & Goudvis, A., 2000).

It is important for authentic cultural knowledge to be available and valued for educational practice in literature. Local children's author, Dianne de las Casas (2013) explained while sharing her Cajun-flavored storytelling strategies with fourth graders, "I strive for my stories to connect across the curriculum", as de las Casas uses visual, tactile, and vocal lexicon strategies to enhance her stories for an authentic flair. De las Casas writes, *The Cajun Cornbread Boy,* (2013) to replicate the well-known *The Gingerbread Boy* tale when the story tells of a boy made of cornbread, who experiences many risk-taking adventures in the swamplands of Louisiana.

At first glance, most Cajun, Creole, and Native American children's stories appear to have built in components to support these cultures through characterization using specific lexicon, historical accuracy, and cultural authenticity within the texts. Those who are not familiar with these regional cultures within Louisiana may be more willing to accept these writings as authentic truths. Whereas, those who experience Cajun, Creole, and Native American cultures may quickly notice the blatant bias and errors within the writings and illustrations for authenticity.

To prepare ancillary materials for lesson planning for early educators, there was a need to visit children's sections within several branches of the local libraries. After a brief discussion with a children's librarian, it was noted that selections of children's books in the stacks were limited in Cajun (Acadian), Creole, and Native American cultures, specifically. After a search through the catalogues and in the stacks, we agreed that appropriate selections were extremely limited. We found that there was not a way for young children to identify self (personal connections) within the limited selection of children's literature for this regional area of Louisiana. Within the illustrations of the stories and limited selections, there were not many children seen within the books. What was not found lead to collecting Louisiana children's books from the shelves following with this discovery.

Method of Evaluation

Abington-Pitre (2010) created a method for evaluation of multicultural children's literature; each term is defined with examples for evaluator to determine if the book has merit (culturally appropriate & relevant). Each of the categories Table 2, below have three specific elements to "look for" specific to that category, like *7. Other*.

Table 2: Categories to evaluate multicultural children's literature

1. <u>Characterization</u>: A person marked by conspicuous, often peculiar traits.
2. <u>Stereotyping:</u> By assigning traditional and rigid roles or attributes to a group, instructional materials stereotype and limit the abilities and potential of that group.
3. <u>Language</u>: Form or style of verbal expression; the BIPOC's (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) dialect cannot be presented as substandard English.
4. <u>Lexicon</u>: The vocabulary of a language, which is free from offensive or degrading vocabulary. Ex: Stunted, stultified = to make (someone) look foolish or stupid (www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary).
5. <u>Historical accuracy</u>: Is there more than one interpretation of an issue, situation, or group of people, such as the Native perspective of history and their contemporary life experiences.
6. <u>Cultural authenticity</u>: Accurate portrayal of beliefs, characteristics, activities, fundamental values and behavior patterns unique to a particular group. Opinions are distinguished from facts and show the diversity of the BIPOC.
7. <u>Other:</u>
a. Were there other traits or values identified in the book, which were not among those specifically mentioned above? List them and page numbers
b. Will children be able to relate to the characters in the text and illustrations?
c. Would you recommend this book to a friend (child)? Explain

<center>**Analysis of Literature**</center>

The Power of Cultural Picture Books

It was discovered within the library stacks, that only eight selections were available resources for critical review of diverse literature. These books were analyzed for cultural identity, authenticity, and lexical components. Out of the eight selections, only two were written with children serving as main characters of the story. Those two stories were written as a retelling of a classic tale with the author using a "Cajun twist" to the original folk tale. There were no original stories about young children found in the Cajun and Creole literature at the main branch of the regional library. Native American stories were even more rare and typically categorized as "tall tales or myths", which gives the perception these people are not real but made-up characters.

The first children's literature selection, *Jacques et la Cann a Suere: A Cajun Jack and the Beanstalk* written by Sheila Hebert-Collins (2004) begins, "Once upon a time deep in the Louisiana bayou country, there lived a poor widow, Jacqueline Boudreaux and her son, Jacques. Jacqueline and Jacques lived in a houseboat right there on Vermillion Bayou" (1). While the classic tale has what Hebert-Collins regards as a Cajun twist, we argue that there is not enough evidence to show young Cajun or Creole children a reflection of their own lives. There are some authentic language pieces within the classic tale, however educators must recognize that authentic narratives, not just storytelling through a twist on classic tales, teach young children how to see themselves within the story (connecting text-to-self). Not every child in Louisiana lives in a swamp, or on a houseboat, nor do the family members speak Cajun English that has a lexicon particular to today's contemporary Cajun dialect. There is a need to be more authentic, to retell stories to young children that are authentic, and relatable to real life—true stories of authentic tales that reflect how people of their culture live, how they might see themselves within that culture, specifically in this case, how Cajuns, Creoles, and Native Americans in this region live. Hebert-Collins also serves as the author of a series of Cajun children's literature twists of classic tales such as, *Jean-Paul Hebert Was There; Blanchette et les Sept Petits Cajuns: A Cajun Snow White; 'T Pousette et 'T Poulette: A Cajun Hansel and Gretel; Cendrillon: A Cajun Cinderella; Jolie Blonde and the Three Heberts: A Cajun Twist to an Old Tale; Petite Rouge: A Cajun Twist to an Old Tale.* This series of classic tales with a Cajun twist, illustrates cultural identity historically, with some authenticity of language, lexical components.

Within J.J. Reneaux's (1995) book *Why Alligator Hates Dog: A Cajun Folktale*, Reneaux writes a personal note regarding Cajun dialect within the forward of the story. He states, "Reading and listening to folktales is a wonderful way for children to learn about the world. Not only do they teach us about our differences, they also remind us of our similarities" (x). Although one might agree with Reneaux, that folktales are one way of learning and teaching about culture and differences, there is a need to challenge the fact that children cannot see themselves in this story—there are limited illustrations of humans, and the tale is told for children to see themselves only within a metaphorical context. The only human in this story is what the author refers to as "man". Man's face appears Caucasian and is only pictured several times in the story. The

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folktale is predominantly told with main characters of animals, an alligator, a dog, and a rabbit. The dog plays the trickster who befriends the alligator bully and uses the rabbit to outsmart the gator. Reneaux offers an end of story summary, which states, "I loved the story. I knew Dog and Alligator. They acted like the children at school. To this day, wherever I tell the story, children love it" (x). Reneaux continues to note that the story demonstrates the great struggles of childhood within the familiarity of the behavior of a bully. In the author's endnotes, he encourages adults to swap stories with children as this act links in what he refers as a "timeless chain of humanity" (x). One question that comes to mind, is how might humanness be supported if we are telling stories with very few humans within the story itself? Are children supposed to relate to alligators, dogs, and rabbits? Some young children have never seen an alligator, or for that matter knows how dangerous this swamp animal can be. Besides, not all young children in Louisiana live near a swamp, and never have visited that type of environment.

Another Cajun children's selection written by Jacklyn Sonnier Hirshberg (2001) is *Nicky the Swamp Dog: A True Story*. Sonnier Hirshburg is a native of Louisiana who returned to her beloved home within the swamplands, bayous, and sugarcane fields of where she grew up. For over two years Sonnier Hirshberg gained a deep appreciation for the Atchafalaya River Basin swamp as she became a tour guide, which influenced the development of the characters within the story, the swamp guide named Half Pint and Nicky the swamp dog. While this story reveals the authenticity of life in a Louisiana swamp, the main character is a small Rat Terrier dog. Human characters are revealed in Nicky the Swamp dog's many adventures, however there are limited references to young children within the story. Specifically, in chapter three, "Nicky Goes to School," the title refers to school, the school in the story is metaphorically the swamp. Normally, one might believe that children would be found in a school setting, however the absence of children is noted within this chapter. In chapter three, references how the dog learns lessons, how specific commands from Half Pint such as "bad baby" and "check it out" bring forth specific actions with the dog. While the story of *Nicky the Swamp Dog* is environmentally authentic to the Louisiana swamplands, there is only one photograph and reference to a child within the story found on page 37.

Sharon Doucet's (1997) children's book titled, *Why Lapin's Ears are Long and Other Tales from the Louisiana Bayou*, portrays her lived experience within the heart of French Louisiana. A lifetime of experiences serve as a catalyst for writing this unique collection of African and European folktales dating back to 1700–1800's. Doucet spent her time serving as a French teacher in elementary and post-secondary classrooms as she speaks to the "wacky humor, and down to earth wisdom of the joyful kinfolk" of Louisiana which inspired her to compile and preserve this rich collection of folktales. While the book is beautifully illustrated with the main character being Comp`ere Lapin (a rabbit), illustrations of children are not found within the stories. Lapin, a long-eared rabbit was a trickster who played pranks among what Doucet refers to as "Creoles, who are French speaking Blacks, and the Cajuns, descendants of French Acadians who had been exiled by the British from their Canadian homeland" (v).

A Creole version of Lapin, a Brer' rabbit character is found in *Bouki's Honey: Based on the Creole Folktales*, a children's book written by Arthur "Roy" Williams (2008). Mr. Williams, a

retired educator writes these authentic Creole phrases within the text of the book, *"Comment ca va? Ca va bien, Oh mais yeah, Lapin, and Tout Fini"*, commonly used lexicon marking the authenticity of Creole dialect within the story. Lapin, the trickster rabbit and Bouki, a simple-minded donkey, are characters in many Creole folktales still spoken today within folklife and festivals. The only mention of children in this story is a baby who may have been baptized at the local church. This book is one of ten selections of Bouki and Lapin stories within this series of Creole children's literature. An author's note, after reading the series, children would be familiar with over one hundred Creole expressions. Implications of specific lexicon within the stories speaks to preserve the culture and authenticity of the Creole language.

Rose Anne St. Romain (2003) author, of *Moon's Cloud Blanket,* references Gray Hawk, a Houma-Choctaw friend, helped craft the story from his memory. *Moon's Cloud Blanket* captures the folklife tale of a woman's internal wisdom and faith as told by elders within the Houma-Choctaw tribe in Louisiana. The story tells of a woman's strength to save her young children from the raging storm floodwaters that rose in the swamplands of Louisiana. This woman found strength to move above the rising waters into the strong branches of a cypress tree, which provided shelter from the storm. When the moon rose on the evening of the storm it was in the cypress tree where she found hope as she plead to the moon to keep her family safe. The story tells of a beautiful ending, how we all should find comfort in what nature provides to humans for safety and refuge. In the illustrations of this story, there are illustrations of young children who had dark hair, appear to be of Native American descent.

In the children's story, *Ol' Bloo's Boogie-Woogie Band and Blues Ensemble*, Jan Huling (2010), writes the tale set in Louisiana of four main characters, a rooster, a cat, a dog, and a donkey, a band of misfits who collaborated to save the dear Ol' Bloo Donkey from Farmer Brown's plan of "putting the poor beast out of his misery" (3). The tale shows the reader how the four animal friends outsmarted some thieves and earned a spot to rest and retire, free and away from Ol' Farmer Brown. While there are some human characters in the book, the main characters are animals.

Results

Picture Book Gallery

The first emerging theme found showed characters portrayed as animals with very few people actively engaged within the story. We can agree that stories hold the language and images for young children to see and hear how they fit into their world. We argue that it is important to visualize roles at a young age within classroom settings, family, community, and finally within a larger population.

Secondly, emerging inquiry evolved, we asked ourselves, "What do young Cajun, Creole and Native American children look like? Are there differences and similarities to be noted? Are the stories culturally accurate to what young Cajun, Creole, and Native American children know?" Limited copies of current selections of children's literature were available for Cajun, Creole, and Native American cultures. This might make it difficult for children to see themselves in stories,

to relate real human life in the Cajun, Creole, and Native American children's literature, as there are more non-human characters than humans found.

Third, findings show that animal characters portray the lead roles in most children's stories. This shift makes it difficult to meet the text-to-self connection required in Reading/English Language Arts (ELA) academic standards for the state of Louisiana.

Lastly, there is lack of cultural authenticity with appropriate characterization of stereotypical themes that were found in selected children's literature. For example, "The teacher of the Cajun child, however, has had a difficult time locating literature in which to develop the child's cultural awareness and pride" (Cox, 263-264). There is an absence of children in Cajun, Creole, and Native American children's literature demonstrating authentic cultural identity. This is indeed an issue within itself.

All members of small learning communities must "encourage children to first understand cultural difference, to take pride in individual difference and use this understanding to develop uniqueness versus awkwardness in society" (Cox, 264). If young children can visualize how they fit into their world through cultural connection in literature, possibilities emerge as they embrace learning opportunities. Heritage and belonging helps young children gain understanding of how to use their cultural authenticity as a true strength of character development.

Initial findings lead to discovery of missing voices for young children within cultural identity, lexical, and authenticity in Cajun, Creole, and Native American cultures. There are very few illustrations to reflect self for young children (BIPOC or otherwise) to make a distinct identification of self within the specific cultural children's stories. Emergent themes show that the lack of visible representation of children within regional children's literature. In addition, authenticity of cultural connections shows limited examples of how children really live within this region. Lastly, an overwhelming majority of cultural children's literature features talking animals rewritten in folk tale and classic tales in the regional lexicons familiar to the region. Swamp creatures play the protagonists, which places self-identity and the voice of young children in an abstract context, which may lead to confusion with identity. A majority of selected children's literature is set in the swamplands, not perceived to a great majority of the regional population. There are specific regions of swampland within the state, however swamps are not found statewide despite stereotypical beliefs. Most children in the state do not live nor unlikely have visited any swampland areas at all.

For Early Teachers

The goal of rich experiential learning with authentic cultural resources begins with early educators and the Louisiana Believes State Content Standards. Content standards in English Language Arts (ELA) and Social Studies to serve as a guiding source to drive instructional design, implementation, and assessment of data to support knowledge and to gain a deeper understanding of how pedagogical skills move early teachers to enrich learners with culturally relevant literature.

When books are read orally, children who live in Louisiana and globally, hear familiar words to make connections to language and the imagery found in local author's writing. This oral reading strategy makes authentic cultural connections for developing learners. According to Luttrell (2000) "collecting, interpreting, and narrating life stories is a common tool in the anthropological kit and has gained increasing prominence in the post-modern era since the oft-noted postmodern turn" (p. 503). When children are presented an oral reading of local language or read excerpts independently to respond in writing they gain a "sense of what life is like or what it means to be a member of a particular culture" (p. 503). Children can see themselves in the story, or even greater, to see themselves in the works of a published author from their own region. The authenticity of cultural language in a story, "is a way of knowing, making personal sense of the world, becoming conscious of oneself and a means of creating an identity (Lankiewicz, & Wąsikiewicz- Firlej, 2014, p. vii). For example, why not support your prescribed curriculum with the work of local authors? This method might serve as an exemplar to showcase a famous Louisiana author during February, Black History month in south Louisiana schools, or any other works that creates a deeper connection for young learners. For example, Louisiana state standards for K-12 English Language Arts requires each grade level to learn about diverse cultures in a variety of genres of literature (see Table 3).

Table 3. **Louisiana Believes expectations for K-12 English Language Arts**

Anchor Standard RL 2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
Grade 2 Recount stories, including fables and folktales from diverse cultures, and determine their central message, lesson, or moral.
Grade 3 Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text.
Texts are instructionally useful. • Texts build student knowledge about universal themes, diverse cultures, and other perspectives.
Texts are authentic. • They are written by a published author and/or are high-quality and contain accurate information as opposed to short passages expressly written for the purpose of teaching a discrete ELA skill, (https://www.louisianabelieves.com/resources/classroom-support/teacher-support-toolbox , 122-123).

We can teach what we are prescribed as teachers, however we can do so much more. We can do this by teaching children how to select and evaluate books that demonstrate cultural competency (see Table 2). Teachers should also research diverse websites (see Table 4) to find appropriate books and activities to share in their classrooms with their students in mind, not just looking at state standards.

Table 4: Suggested Websites for Diverse Resources

Website	URL	Benefits
Teach Thought: we grow teachers	https://www.teachthought.com/home/pedagogy	Education, teaching, strategies, workshops, videos and booklists
Here Wee Read	http://hereweeread.com/2019/11/the-2020-ultimate-list-of-diverse-childrens-books.html	Diverse & inclusive books, education products, podcasts, book reviews, read aloud strategies
Understood Team	https://www.understood.org/	Non-profit organization that provides support for families, educators, health care providers promoting diversity and inclusion.
We need diverse books	https://diversebooks.org/	Recognizes all diverse experiences, including (but not limited to) LGBTQIA, Native, people of color, gender diversity, people with disabilities*, and ethnic, cultural, and religious minorities. Children can see themselves in books. Resources for race, equity and inclusion

Conclusion

Teaching for Equity

Teaching for equity means early educators and young children need culturally relevant children's literature in early grades to self-identify and understand their own voice within this developmental life stage. Teaching for equity means all children should have access to authentic literature that reflects their culture and ethnicity in age appropriate and global settings, to visualize self and to learn about others in these renderings.

To strengthen research into practice, early educators must question, how does the addition of self-concept, language, diversity, and background experience through cultural identity enhance

learning and enrich prescribed curriculum? One might agree that cultural identity is the piece that makes one human. As humans, we do have the choice to identify with a group, or not, to make a unique connection with what young children already know. Educators play an active role to secure this connection, by becoming the missing voice of advocacy for young children. The question arises, how might we utilize the most valuable resources to support all, to make these cultural connections in a school system?

To improve the practice within the field of education and human development, early educators can make connections available for young children by using a cultural viewpoint, what we know, how we know, and decision making based upon what and how we know (Bateson, 1979). If classroom teachers were provided with the whole picture of how one lives, learns, and grows, through cultural identity and have resources, would they feel more supported? How might these resources expand learning and growth for all? Future research will require investigation of other library's for diverse collections outside this parish for diverse children's literature.

Lastly, educators can support cultural equity for families and children through knowledge and understanding of how culture plays an important role in the holistic viewpoint of how a child responds to curriculum. Early educators must be prepared to view the authenticity of cultural identity as a positive resource for learning. CRT support resources for pre-prescribed curriculum need to be developed in a form of children's literature to support cultural authenticity. In addition to diverse books, oral histories and interpretive folklife stories are important to secure authenticity of self at an early age. Our future depends upon how early educators are culturally responsive in classrooms. Rich stories and language through the power of cultural picture books reflect life, authentically and support self-identity for young learners.

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Connections, Continuities, and Critical Lapses: Underperforming and Underprepared in School Writing

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Abstract

In light of increased testing mandates and their impact on students' writing, this article explores struggles and triumphs in school writing across two contexts. The first context is a 10th grade English Language Arts class during a testing year, and the second context is the transition from remedial to college-level writing in a community college. The authors examine connections and continuities across these contexts through two participants in their studies who felt confident in their writing but were labeled underperforming and underprepared. The authors offer suggestions for teachers and researchers interested in supporting students in overcoming barriers of tests and labels and developing their academic writing.

Connections, Continuities, and Critical Lapses: Underperforming and Underprepared in School Writing

In today's secondary and post-secondary schools, great emphasis is placed on writing, and often as an assessment tool. How many and what kind of tests middle and high school students take depends on individual states and school districts, but most take plenty. At the post-secondary level, writing tests often place students in either remedial or college classes even though many college placement "writing" tests are multiple choice grammar/editing assessments. In any case,

students generally take numerous high-stakes writing tests, often tied to graduation requirements, that necessitate some kind of formulaic or prescribed format for success, at least minimally. As this paper addresses writing practices, we consider the ways that teachers must negotiate the often complex state and/or Common Core State Standards in school that often inform writing instruction. As Lent (2016) states, "Students must try on the many types of writing required in each discipline in order to become fluent and confident writers capable of manipulating language to serve their purpose" (p. 73). However, standardized writing assessments, at all levels, yield little insight into students' motivation or teachers' pedagogy and certainly do not offer students the opportunity to engage with multiple genres of writing.

As scholars and teachers, we share a mistrust of the externally imposed, standardized measures used to determine students' school success and most especially, their writing prowess. We see this current, pervasive practice as a problem because it creates a limited and often inaccurate view of K-12 students' writing abilities and potential. Additionally, these standardized writing tests often reward academic, "standard" conventions of English (i.e. middle-class white students) while dismissing cultural and linguistic diversity. Some scholars argue that present day writing practices that are pervasive in schools alienate identities and cultures of students, particularly Black students (Johnson & Sullivan, 2020). What the test scores can never reveal are the experiences students have with writing in school and how those experiences shape their communicative capacities. According to Lee (2007) when it comes to understanding language variety in schooling spaces it is important for teachers to have an understanding of African American Language (p. 32). Additionally, Delpit (2006) argued, "the teacher's job is to provide access to the national standards as well as to understand the language the children speak sufficiently to celebrate its beauty" (p. 100).

Oftentimes teachers do want to engage in writing and teaching approaches that best support their students; however, they are often held accountable to administrators who may have different ideas about "best practices." These practices and approaches that are mandated by administrators are sometimes governed by the very tests we mention above. According to Buehl (2017), scaffolding, or "supported practice phase," of literacy instruction is very important for teachers to consider when addressing practices like reading and writing with their students (p. 24). Such practices allow for students to become thoughtful and independent writers; however, teachers need to spend time considering how to appropriately scaffold writing instruction for their students. We do know that teachers have great influence over students' success and it is important for teachers to employ practices that meet the needs of their learners, as many teachers work with students who do not share similar cultural, racial, or ethnic backgrounds (Nieto, 2013).

In this article, we draw on two studies to understand students' experiences with writing: one, in a tenth-grade English Language Arts (ELA) class and the other, moving from remedial to college writing to make recommendations for secondary teachers working to support all students. The two students (all names are pseudonyms) in our studies are: (one) a fifteen-year-old in the tenth-grade, Rock, and (two) Ida, a middle-aged woman who enrolled in her local college after dropping out of school in the eighth grade. In the following paper, we consider how to better

engage secondary students in authentic writing practices by considering our participants' schooling experiences and how they shed important light on the teaching of writing in secondary teaching contexts.

Both studies employed an instrumental case study design and used similar research methods. They both share a similar theoretical framework that invokes a socio-cultural view. Perhaps most important, both teacher/researchers identified a similar challenge in each context: how to support the writing development of students who haven't received much previous support/encouragement/explicit instruction in writing beyond the formulaic nature of preparation for standardized writing tests. Further, standardized writing assessments, at all levels, yield little insight into students' motivation or teachers' pedagogy. We have stories to tell that are missing from the statistics. Each of these studies offers compelling portraits of the experiences of individual students who were stymied by multiple forces, some of which we could ameliorate with changes in our teaching practices. Indeed, the experiences of these individuals highlight the need for improved writing pedagogy for all. What the numbers from test scores can never reveal is how capable underachieving and underprepared students often are, nor how much the common schooling practices of test preparation and testing have constructed barriers to their literacy development. Writing teachers at both secondary and college levels could benefit from understanding the challenges faced by underperforming and underprepared students, the experiences that shape their detrimental school behaviors, and the varied responses they give to the teachers who try to help.

A central aspect of this paper discusses how to support learners with their writing as they continue to deepen their skills and competencies. While our two participants identified as African American, neither address race as an aspect of their writing development. With that said, it is crucial to consider the teaching of diverse students. This is particularly important because K-12 schooling is a system built and sustained by whiteness that often requires young people of color to assimilate to experience success.

Relevant Literature

In *Notebooks of the Mind*, John-Steiner (1997) examined the varied and shared thinking processes of adults and found that learning is a cultural event involving social interaction and the co-construction of meaning. Learning happens through a "contradictory process" of interacting with and drawing from "models, teachers, collaborators," or other mentoring relationships and apprenticeships to build on the past, while at the same time, transforming the past to broaden choices for future growth (p. 207). In school contexts, teachers can provide access to and scaffold use of appropriate resources for the learning process. As learners build upon those resources, they can access their own mind's structure to form "networks of interlocking concepts, of highly condensed and organized clusters of representations," which constitute one's "language of thought" (p. 9). Learners can transform those "inner thoughts into overt and communicable forms that can be shared" through talking, listening, reading, and writing (p. 9). This process is similar to Vygotsky's model of learning in which children interact with others to form inner speech by drawing on their experiences using social speech and internalizing egocentric speech. John-Steiner (1997) adds that inner speech exists in more modes than just

"speech." She found that the artists she interviewed tended to have more of an "inner eye and hand," thinking more in images and shaping spaces; musicians tended to have more of an "inner ear and heart," thinking more in sounds and emotions; and scientists tended to have more of an "inner spreadsheet," thinking in numbers and relationships. Writers were the most verbal—their inner speech was the most phonological. And the work of writing formed germinal ideas into comprehensible words, the challenge of rendering graphically what exists in mind as multi-layered, complex, and interlocking thoughts.

Not surprisingly, many writers experience strife over this process (John-Steiner, 1997). One of Steiner's participants, Simone de Beauvoir, explained the agony of moving from inner speech to the written word as a child and developing her language of thought. She said she "refused to submit to that tangible force: words," (p. 30). She explained that she observed "all kinds of grays and half tones" around her, and she seemed to have an understanding of this experience that was whole and complete in all its multiple shades of color. When she "tried to define their muted shades, [she] had to use words," efforts that restricted and simplified her experience, almost seeming to turn the endless variants of gray into black or white (p. 31). She was frustrated with the "inflexible concept" that words can seem to represent (p. 31). Writing then is not just inner speech translated into outer speech put onto paper (or onto a screen). It is a process in itself of trying to make sense in the social sphere for self and of self for others, and it is a process that uses words in particular, slippery and constraining though they may be. For many people, writing can be a difficult and challenging task, especially when laying out one word after another to explain or express an idea that's not linear and sometimes of ineffable complexity.

Learning to write well is a developmental process, one that can be aided by appropriate instruction and actions, intentional and authentic. It's a process that requires interaction, either with self or others. Learning to write in school *as a social event* -- teacher and students interacting about issues of topic, tone, and purpose in writing-- supports the movement from social to egocentric to inner speech, accomplishing the kind of mental work that reflects our capacities for judicious reasoning and conscious articulation. Students grow in their capacities for communication by interacting with more knowledgeable others who have stronger understandings of a concept, idea, or skill.

School is a place that requires students to use appropriate language in socially appropriate ways. School is also meant to be a place where students can grow, stretch their capacities to learn, and in doing so, develop communicative competence in multiple (subject area) discourses. Yet, adding to the complexity of language and literacy development across the curriculum is a complex set of behaviors required by school. Students grow by engaging in reading, writing, and by sharing oral language in order to learn (Bakhtin, 1986; Bruner, 1986; Lindfors, 2008; Vygotsky, 1986), but the *kinds* of literacy events (Heath, 1983) students encounter in school will profoundly shape their understandings and abilities. Writing is "essential to most adolescents" and even when we think about the lives of teachers, likely essential to them as well, as we all consume or create writing on a daily basis (Brozo, 2017, p. 252).

In a well-planned and crafted ELA class, students engage in meaningful writing tasks that require them to stretch their capacities as learners to become better thinkers and writers. Students

who engage in such activities and demonstrate "strong writing" skills tend to embody high performance in a writing-rich ELA class. Claggett (2005) notes that students learn to write most effectively by engaging in multiple genres of writing, and in each of these forms, by going through a process that involves feedback and opportunities for revision. Claggett cautions that teachers should pay careful attention to their students' writing processes, encouraging students to move through multiple drafts of their writing in diverse, often circular ways that work best for them individually, all while considering their purpose and audience for each particular genre.

While Claggett (2005) provides a strong model for effective writing instruction, many scholars are exploring writing in today's high stress and high stakes testing landscape. Applebee and Langer (2011) note that students are still not writing enough, do not engage in much extended writing, nor share their work with peers. Such tasks allow students to learn more about their own writing, try different ways of writing, see how others write, and see how others respond to what they themselves write. By missing these crucial aspects of writing, students miss meaningful tasks, do not build a sense of a writing community in the classroom setting, and may develop low self-efficacy when it comes to their written work (Sanders-Reio, Alexander, Reio, & Newman, 2014). Sanders-Reio et al (2014) argue that students should engage in meaningful writing assignments where they spend time perfecting one piece of writing rather than producing large amounts of writing. By engaging in such a process, they say students will likely see the writing process as important and gain confidence when writing. They suggest that these strategies will allow students to see that "good writers revise" and that it may take multiple attempts to improve one's writing. Additionally, in their study, Vandermeulen, Leijten, and Van Waes (2020) found that when students were given writing interventions and thoughtful feedback, they were able to grow in writing confidence

Nevertheless, performance and writing instruction have been greatly influenced by the high stakes test-writing era, and students are not always asked to engage in complex writing tasks in school. More often than not, students are required to engage in writing that asks them to recall facts, fill in blanks, and compose according to a pre-ordained formula (Applebee & Langer, 2011; Matsumura, Correnti, & Wang, 2015).

Methods: An Overview of Two Studies

In this paper, we draw upon two qualitative, instrumental case studies to consider students' underperformance in high school and possible consequences when faced with the demands of college writing. The "cases" are different—Study A's case is "low performance of 10th grade ELA students," and Study B's case is "the transition from developmental to college writing of underprepared writers." Our two qualitative, instrumental case studies consider first, students' underperformance in high school and second, the possible consequences for the underprepared when faced with the demands of college writing. The studies are different, yet in comparing their results, we were struck by some intriguing possibilities that raised new questions:

1. What connections might there be between an underperforming high school student and an adult who arrives in college unprepared for the skills required in college-level writing?

2. What continuities between the two different contexts suggest implications for teaching writing in school at all levels?

We rooted our studies in a social constructivist framework, in which individuals develop varied and multiple subjective meanings of their experiences as they "seek understanding in the world in which they live and work," (Creswell, 2003, p.8; Creswell, 2013, p.24). These meanings are fluid (not fixed) "intangible mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature…and dependent for their form and content on the individual persons or groups holding the constructions" (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 110-111). Thus, we considered education to be "a process" and "school" to be a "lived experience," and we explored how our participants' views, informed by history and culture, formed over time through experiences and interactions with others (Merriam, 1998, p.4; Creswell, 2013).

Case study "assumes that examining the context and other complex conditions related to the case(s) being studied are integral to understanding the case(s)" (Yin, 2012, p. 4). The goal of case study is to explore complex social phenomena in context and weave "together the contextual threads so that a quilt of persuasive images—a coherent narrative—emerges" (Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 113). In Study A, the complex social phenomenon was the concept of low performance within an English Language Arts class, so the case was the low performance of otherwise capable students in their ELA course. In Study B, the complex social phenomenon was the concept of underpreparedness for college writing, so the case was the transition of underprepared writers from developmental-level into college-level writing.

Setting

The setting for this research was a small city in the southeastern United States with approximately 130,000 residents. Summerville (pseudonym) is a university town with a diverse population. The community draws residents from around the world because many in the community work at the local nationally recognized hospitals and university; the town boasts a competitive Community College (Study B) and many well-known high schools (Study A). The following table provides relevant information about the setting of each study.

Table 1

Information About Each Study

	Study A	Study B
Pseudonym	Markham High School	River Run College
Institution	K-12 School	Community/State College
Study Location	Tenth grade ELA classroom	Various - The study wasn't classroom based. The researcher met student and professor participants in many different places on campus and around town for interviews.

| Relevant Information | Affiliated with the local university and serves as a research and laboratory school. | An "open door" institution that accepts all applicants and abides by state legislated policies which requires some students to pass developmental (remedial) coursework in order to enter college-level classes. |

Participants

Each study drew from participants the researchers were teaching or they had taught. In study A, the researcher/teacher, Kathleen, recruited participants from one of her classes. The school considered the participants "low performing" because of their grades, assessment results, and their appearance on a grade-level list that indicated they were struggling in school and their teachers were developing a plan to support them. In study B, the researcher, Dawn, recruited students she and colleagues had taught in developmental writing classes and who were entering college classes that required college writing. In this article, we tell the stories of Rock and Ida. However, it is important to understand the research context that frames the schooling contexts of each of the participants. Rock and Ida were not alone in their learning communities with their struggles for academic success; instead, their stories highlight the challenges many students face when it comes to the complex task of writing.

Rock

Rock was a telling example of a bright, capable student who rarely completed his school work, especially his writing assignments. Rock resided with his parents and brother outside of the city of Summerville in a rural community. While both of his parents were professionals, they owned a farm that required both Rock and his brother help out. Rock's parents were immigrants of African and South American heritage, and the family moved quite a bit throughout much of Rock's early schooling before settling outside Summerville.

Ida

Initially, Ida was not happy to begin college labeled as an underprepared writer, but in retrospect, she felt appropriately placed and found developmental writing to be a positive opportunity to develop skills needed for college-level writing. Ida, a middle-aged African American woman, was motivated by personal drive and an accumulation of powerful events and people. As a child, Ida loved learning. When she looked back on what she enjoyed most about school, she said, "My attitude—I enjoyed learning." However, she had to leave school in the 8th grade to raise her children. After completing her GED, she enrolled in college.

Data Collection and Analysis

The researchers examined students' writing/ELA work and conducted semi-structured interviews with participants. These interviews focused on participants' prior experiences, their academic

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success, and their areas of struggle. Study A focused on adolescent learners, and not wanting to exert any undue influence, students were not informed that they were low performing. Questions instead explored students' perceptions of success. In Study B, the students were aware of being labeled underprepared in writing due to their placement test scores, so the students described their experiences being placed in remedial writing and their subsequent efforts to develop into and succeed as college-level writers.

As each researcher began their initial coding, they developed notes and initial codes (Saldaña, 2009; Merriam, 2009). As Saldaña (2009) notes that when researchers first examine codes, we are "decoding" or looking for codes; however, when we determine the codes' meaning we are "encoding." We used this notion of coding to guide our work. Study A coded for underperformance and Study B coded for underpreparedness. Using theories of utterance and dialogue articulated by Bruner (1986), Bakhtin (1986), and Lindfors (1997), a key aspect of our analysis attended to participants' self-report of their experiences in their coursework.

Persuasiveness

To ensure that the studies were accurate and to address issues of bias, both researchers used triangulation and member checking. They consulted with colleagues and other teachers for information that would help them construct an understanding of the participants' experiences and also as a way to monitor bias. In Study A, the researcher engaged in at least one round of member checking with participants. In Study B, member checking with students was built into the iterative, organic, idiosyncratic interview process. The first interview with each student followed prescribed questions. During each follow-up interview, the researcher and student reviewed and discussed the transcript of the previous interview together, and this discussion along with any new writing issues and samples presented by the student guided the direction of the interview.

Results: Connections, Continuities, and Critical Lapses

The following section provides a profile of each of our highlighted participants from Study A and Study B. There is no one way to write well, and people bring all kinds of different attributes and experiences with them to the school task of writing-- some helpful, some not. Hence, within the contexts of the two larger studies, we discuss each participant's necessarily individual struggle with writing. We also consider their paths to developing their abilities, and we highlight the connections, continuities, and critical lapses that formed patterns that hold implications for other students and other settings.

Rock's ELA Experiences

Once Rock's family settled outside of Summerville, Rock attended a local rural middle school. He reported that the experience was "interesting" to him because he noted that he was the only student of color in his class. Eventually, Rock's parents applied to Markham High School (MHS). While MHS was considered a public school, its affiliation with a local university as a research and laboratory school required that students apply for a limited number of positions that reflected the local demographic. Rock had been at MHS for approximately three years when

Study A began. Rock was heavily involved in the school's music program and loved to talk about music and the arts in general. He loved politics and liked to talk about novels and literature. He showed great creative promise.

In interviews, Rock noted that he was "good" at English and "liked" English. He viewed the course and content area as one of his stronger subjects. Many of his peers found the high stakes state assessment issued during tenth grade stressful and disliked how some test preparation inevitably found its way into the curriculum. In contrast, Rock reported that he "liked" standardized tests because they confirmed his self-perception that he was intelligent. And Rock was bright; however, he may have attached undue significance to his score in thinking it reflected a general ability to write for different purposes rather than, more narrowly, his ability to succeed on a standardized assessment. Nevertheless, Rock often scored above average on the standardized tests, and according to Rock, a high score on a state assessment meant that he was "smart."

Rock made clear his positive feelings about his testing experiences. He described his test scores as high and expressed his enjoyment of "timed writing" for "tests" (a component of the state, grade-level assessment). In two reflective writing pieces, students were asked to explain their feelings about class activities, and Rock reported that he "liked timed writing" because it "reminded him of speech and debate" and he "liked the pressure."   As a result of these testing experiences, Rock concluded that he was "good at English" and had proven his writing capability. Possibly because the state awarded him a high score, Rock felt that he already demonstrated that he was capable at writing and placed less value on other writing assignments both in ELA and in his other courses, frequently neglecting to do them or turn them in.

Paradoxically, one of the reasons that Rock reported that English was among his favorite subjects was because it was a writing intensive class. While Rock was indeed a skilled writer, he struggled to submit his writing assignments. Rock had outstanding attendance; therefore, he always submitted timed writings because he was present to participate in them. In contrast, Rock rarely submitted major essays that often took two weeks to plan, draft, and write, in part or at all. A key aspect of his underperformance was that Rock rarely submitted work nor generated writing in class for the purposes of assessment.

Why he did not complete and submit work he was certainly capable of is one of the puzzles of Study A. Rock felt that he was "smart" and indeed said he had a "special intelligence." He explained that other people might not always understand what he was trying to communicate and hence, he did not always feel comfortable expressing his ideas. In one interview he noted, "I like English a lot. But, uh in other classes a lot whenever I raise my hand to answer something the teacher will just say, "okay" and I thought it was a really good explanation. But it was not what they were looking for." Rock explained that his interests were "intellectual" which he defined as "music, justice, freedom, equality, and humanity." His hesitation to express himself in speech and in writing likely impeded submission of his written work, which in turn worked against his success in class. He may have feared that his ideas, so brilliant in his head, would be lost in translation when committed to the page. Also, Rock reported that outside of high school, he did not construct multiple drafts of his writing or have any reason to write long and complex essays.

Nevertheless, Rock's passion for discussing literary themes and his desire to explore them was evident in ELA class discussion. In one instance, Rock was so involved in a class discussion he half stood when listening to his peers. While Rock said he was not a "creative person" when it came to authoring poetry or optional artistic interpretations of literary work, he was indeed a creative thinker. He liked to look at literary characters' actions from a variety of perspectives and reported that he liked to engage in "analyzing" and "interpreting" different novels. All of Rock's characteristics as an engaged learner were often obscured by the results from mandated state testing.

Ida's Writing Course Experiences

Ida had individual determination, high self-awareness and efficacy, adequate time to dedicate to school, financial assistance, and support from family and friends—resources that some participants did not have, and the lack of which often hinders student success. Nonetheless, Ida struggled becoming a college writer. In expressing her primary concern, she explained: "I don't have the words." As if she were learning a new language in a new culture, she struggled to form and articulate her thoughts for college writing. Similar to Rock in Study A, Ida was bright and had many dynamic and sophisticated ideas, but she feared her ideas would be "lost in translation" when forming and expressing them in this new academic discourse.

In Ida's first two interviews (after her developmental writing courses), she indicated a need to develop social and linguistic competence in a new literacy community. She described moving outside her comfort zone and into foreign territory as "stepping in new water" and her process of navigating the terrain by learning new ways with words as "getting wid' it." Ida astutely sensed that she was an outsider becoming an insider—a process corroborated by the three professors interviewed in Study B. Collectively, they described the transition to being a college writer as a process akin to "joining the college writers club."

When Ida began college, she was older and in class with people her children's age, some who were even her kids' friends, so she felt out of place. She said, "I was scared, very scared." However, Ida quickly renegotiated these relationships and socially adjusted well. Another fear was more linguistic than social. Ida was aware that even if some of the people were familiar, she was moving into a new discourse community with unfamiliar literacy practices. Ida seemed hyper-aware of her audience being her college professors and a need to shift register for them. She said, "I was scared because… I couldn't talk on their level." She feared that if she didn't make the shift, the professor would "look at [my] work like, [I'm] not there yet," so when writing, she'd think, "I know I gotta write this like a college person…I gotta write it like the professor would write it." She said she knew when her writing was "there" because she'd get "a little comfort feeling inside…It's like, yeah."

To understand more about this "comfort feeling" and how Ida was "getting wid' it," Dawn, one of Ida's former developmental writing instructors and Study B's researcher, asked Ida to share her favorite assignment. She responded that she most liked "the paragraph," a prescribed, formulaic writing assignment with exactly seven sentences and specific criteria for grammar, content, and style. This paragraph was the only type of writing assigned (all other assignments were grammar

and editing exercises and exams). Students were required to write (and pass) one of these paragraphs for the final exam to exit developmental writing and move on to college-level writing. Ida liked the paragraph because she was "able to express [herself]." She said, "[I felt] good! To know that I was able to put my thoughts on paper, and they made better sense on paper than when they come out my mouth at times."

When discussing samples of her paragraphs from her developmental writing classes in one of their interviews, Dawn noticed that Ida focused intensely on very specific grammar issues. For instance, Dawn noted, "In the moment, you're really, really thinking about 'is' versus 'are'…and like 'what's the rule' or 'let me get this right.' You're not thinking about your aspirations, your goals, your kids." Ida replied, "No, it's all about getting the information in my brain so I can use it." So, while Ida was globally aware of trying to become an insider of a new discourse community, in the moment of writing, she was intensely focused on constructing grammatically correct sentences.

Ida did successfully exit developmental writing. At that point, she felt confident and competent and believed that the transition to becoming a college writer was within her control and could be achieved through her efforts. However, when Ida started writing for college-level classes, she felt out of place again. She struggled to find words or form thoughts for longer and different kinds of writing, and eventually, she questioned whether she could ever be a college writer or if she even belonged in college at all.

Rock and Ida: Connections and Continuities

Rock and Ida were bright and capable students, but critical lapses in their experiences became barriers to their potential development. Connections and continuities across these students include their faith in themselves as learners juxtaposed with their misunderstandings about the process of writing and few opportunities to write for a real purpose and audience. Both were comforted by the constraints of formulaic writing but missed systematic opportunities across grade levels to extend their range, revise their thinking and language, and continue developing their communicative competence.

Ida's decision to begin college set in motion her transition to being a college writer. Because Ida had a GED (General Educational Diploma), state policy required her to take a college placement test. She scored low on the writing section; therefore, she was labeled "underprepared" in writing and placed into the lowest level of developmental (remedial) writing. Ida was disappointed. She said, "I thought the material I had learned getting my GED would be enough to get me past the [remedial] classes." Similar to Rock in Study A, Ida thought she had gotten good at writing, particularly based on succeeding at the standardized tests required for the GED. Unlike Rock, Ida completed and submitted all her assignments, but her work was often incomplete or anemic, and making progress required frequent and intense additional guidance from her instructors.

Rock and Ida both became complacent with the simple fill-in-the-blank kind of demands that standardized tests make until they were faced with authentic writing demands, and we imagine such a stance is common to many students. So, perhaps their lapses in writing progress resulted

from their high dependence on narrow, formulaic writing tasks, detouring them away from immersion, engagement, and interaction in authentic writing opportunities.

Rock attributed much more importance to state assessments than to the writing process. Study A's author and teacher, had stressed that students were to explore ideas and concepts salient to them, but Rock seemed to have an ingrained sense about a *right* essay and a *wrong* essay and was very anxious about selecting the *right* one, perhaps reflecting his experience with over-emphasis on standardized assessments. Engaging in the cognitively complex task of authentic writing tasks and topic choice when there really is no one right or wrong answer was stressful to Rock. He found it easier to engage in the planning process and write a minimal amount, than to take the intellectual and emotional risks of expressing himself fully.

Ida had a similar comfort and success with the in-class, prompt-driven, structured writing assignments in developmental writing. These writings were often one-and-done rather than works-in-progress that involved multiple revisions. While these writings helped Ida progress in some ways, they were not enough to prepare her for college writing. Like Rock, she might also have felt stressed and worried when her writing was more and more subjected to academic discourse insiders—the college writer's club that was foreign to her and the root of her struggles.

Discussion

Perhaps if Rock and Ida and other students like them had earlier experiences with writing as a rhetorical task that requires careful consideration of purpose and audience and that benefits from deep and intentional revision, they would both have been more successful in school writing sooner. Rock and Ida eventually moved through their struggles to later academic success. Rock returned to Kathleen during his 11th-grade year and reported that he was scoring high marks in his new English class. He credited her 10th-grade ELA class, in which he had actively engaged in discussion and considered multiple possibilities for literary interpretation for his achievement. Indeed, he had generated ideas and planned persuasive strategies, two quite challenging aspects of writing, and Kathleen had created an atmosphere where success in writing was not necessarily framed by test taking. She nurtured an environment where students could take risks, choose their own topics, and garner feedback from teacher and peers for the purpose of revision. From being in this one excellent ELA class and despite not participating fully, Rock had observed the writing process in action among his classmates and probably gleaned sufficient skills to develop in his next year's ELA class.

Ida gained many of the new tools she needed in the intensive writing-conference interviews with Study B's author, Dawn. Motivated by "getting stuck," Ida called for help, and in their conferences, Ida collaboratively planned her paper by purposefully enacting her existing strategies of talking out her ideas, using questions to form and elaborate her thoughts, and integrating her unique ways with words into discussion and notes. This method helped Ida construct thoughts and resume writing flow as she built a pathway for her transition to being a college writer. We believe many students would benefit from such opportunities to talk out their ideas.

Standardized testing and formulaic writing substitute too often for the rhetorical decision making that more challenging writing activities require (Applebee & Langer, 2011; Matsumura, Correnti, & Wang, 2015). Students' writing development flourishes when they are given authentic opportunities to write in multiple genres with the guidance of mentors who share an interest in a mutual topic, keep audience impact in mind, and give feedback that focuses on expression over conventions (West & Saine, 2017). When students must consider both what they want to say and how others may understand them, they are developing their creative thinking and inner speech (John-Steiner, 1997) as well as their ability to imagine what someone else might be thinking and feeling, surely crucial attributes of democratic citizenship.

Learning to choose topics that will be fruitful, experimenting with different sentence structures and textual organization schemes, re-reading and re-thinking ideas and their expressive possibilities, engaging in deep revision of one's own writing are among ways we know that students can gain prowess in writing (Clagett. 2005; Sanders-Reio, Alexander, Reio, & Newman, 2014). That kind of literacy development takes years if not a lifetime. Henry and Stahl (2017) suggest "the metaphoric pipeline" eventually leaking students into remedial classes in college "is actually a pre- K–16 issue," and the leak can begin to be fixed by forging partnerships among "educators from secondary schools, community colleges, and (when appropriate) four- year institutions to design, implement, support, and evaluate programs reflecting the strengths of the local culture and the needs of the community," (p. 615).

To this end, teachers, writing programs, schools, and governing entities can shift the focus off standardized testing and formulaic writing and on to forums and resources for partnerships in authentic writing curricula across K-16. These strategies are steps toward students' sense of agency and personally active writing development, creating a more prepared, seamless, and successful pathway to complete high school and college. We *can* do better.

Take Action

The first critical step toward rigorous and thoughtful writing development instruction should be to conduct a systematic review of writing tests both mandated and suggested within the school curriculum. While this work should be conducted by teachers and other school leaders, we suggest that students be involved in this review process where appropriate to begin to dispel and dismantle the system of standardized writing that often makes students feel inadequate. We know that these mandated tests are often a required part of writing instruction, yet being transparent about the way these tests are crafted to maintain the standardization of academic English can help both teachers and students to compartmentalize these tests as one type of writing, not the only type of writing. In their experiences teaching tenth grade English in a high-stakes testing year for writing, Kathleen and Shelby asked students to analyze the rubrics utilized to assess writing by the state, prompting students to consider both what the state test valued and what was missing in terms of what makes for great writing. Christensen (2017) advocates that teachers and students engage in a critical analysis of test questions to share their feelings about these tests and why schools focus on them.

We also suggest that teachers and school leaders consider how sample writing prompts from standardized tests might be used as a starting point, but not an endpoint within the curriculum. In our work as teachers of writing, we've often found that students can do much more than these prompts require, and accordingly we've added supplemental tasks and criterion to the prompts. Being transparent to students about this modification can instill confidence in writers who might experience anxiety due to the nature of the state writing test being labeled "high stakes," not because of the prompt itself. Lastly, where appropriate, school leadership should encourage teachers to practice autonomy in writing instruction, as the teacher has insight into the individual needs of their students. High-quality writing instruction is rarely a homogenous solution. Below, we offer further suggestions for developing writers for success at various stages:

1. In secondary school, reserve one, regularly scheduled day in the week's schedule for writing workshop and, at different times, include mini-lessons, individual conferences, independent writing, and group shares and discussion.

2. To prepare students for college, expand the kinds of writing students do and also attend to students' writing process by making the "rules" of the college writing expectations explicit.

3. Spend time building a classroom writing community that helps students get to know each other. Minor (2019) advocates that teachers engage in focused listening so that they hear who their students are and what they need.

4. Help students learn how to give each other useful feedback, focusing on strengths, questions, and tentative suggestions for improvement.

5. Make opportunities for student writers to talk to each other and you about their ideas and their developing writing.

6. Make fewer assignments and encourage students to work through multiple drafts of major writing projects.

7. Encourage students to work toward deep revision of the content, logic, structure, and appeal of a piece of writing.

8. Distinguish revision of content from editing for polish, which is also important.

9. Keep the focus on purpose and audience for a variety of genres, like reports for the classroom newspaper, persuasive letters to real people and businesses, poetry and stories for class collections.

10. As advocated by Sara Ahmed (2018) begin working on identity activities to make students aware of their own identities and the identities of others in the class. Engage in identity-based writing activities.

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Meeting the Needs of All Students: Fostering the Use of Graphic Novels Among Pre- and In-Service Teachers

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Abstract

A longitudinal study was implemented in two children's and young adult literature courses at different universities where teacher educators investigated pre- and in-service teachers' engagement with graphic novel texts and potential for utilization of these texts in K-12 settings. Teacher educators utilized an action research methodology where they designed curriculum around ways to support pre- and in-service teachers' engagement with graphic novels and their application in K-12 settings. Findings revealed shifts in perception among pre- and in-service teachers as well as shifts in implementation of graphic novels in K-12 classroom settings. Given their multimodality and diversity, graphic novels have the potential to provide readers with numerous layers of meaning making (Sipe, 2008). The authors provide implications for how teacher educators and K-12 teachers can play an essential role in utilizing this widely recognized literary medium for 21st century learners.

Meeting the Needs of All Students: Fostering the Use of Graphic Novels Among Pre- and In-Service Teachers

In today's classrooms, the definition of "text" includes multiple modes of representation, such as combined elements of print, visual images, and design (Yildirim, 2013; Hassett & Curwood, 2009). Multimodal texts blend numerous avenues for readers to follow, including corresponding representations of the message of the text (e.g., panels in graphic novels), expressive graphics, and images that enhance or create an alternative path to meaning making (Hassett & Curwood, 2009). Thus, multimodal texts "take on dynamically interactive elements as readers (not authors) choose where to look and how to engage with certain aspects of the text" (Hassett & Curwood, 2009, p. 271). Graphic novels are one form of multimodal texts and are a widely recognized literary medium for 21st century learners (Gavigan, 2012). Students' interactions with graphic novels can support their understanding of multimodal meaning making, as within each page they must navigate meaning from text, images, positioning, and progression of the narrative between panels (Boerman-Cornell, 2016). Kern (2016) also emphasizes the analytical ability necessary for students to engage in inferencing, synthesizing, close reading, and visualizing, all

components of English Language Arts standard curriculum. Even with the many benefits of graphic novels, some teachers are still hesitant to utilize them despite their potential for multiple types of readers and opportunities for critical reflection (Möller, 2016).

A two-year longitudinal study was implemented in two children's and young adult literature courses at different universities where two teacher educators investigated pre- and in-service teachers' engagement with graphic novel texts and potential for utilization of these texts in K-12 settings. In year one, researchers examined pre- and in-service teachers' understanding of and willingness to use graphic novels in K-12 settings. In year two, researchers engaged in an action research teaching project in which they modified graphic novel instruction based on findings from year one. The purpose of this article is to discuss the action research project implemented in year two of the longitudinal study. The research questions were: 1) How do two university K-12 literature instructors design course curriculum to support pre- and in-service teachers' engagement with graphic novels? and 2) In what ways does participation in a graphic novel unit of study influence pre-and in-service teachers' likelihood of utilizing graphic novels in K-12 settings? Our initial research (from year one) revealed that it was important for our university participants to not just read, write, and talk about the use of graphic novels in K-8 classrooms, but to also *reflect* on and *name* how the use of graphic novels can support K-12 students' engagement and problem solving through the use of literature. Additionally, the research enabled us to address misconceptions related to university participants equating graphic novels to solely comic books or valuing them as useful only for struggling readers. In response to our year one findings, we conducted an action research project in our children's and young adult literature courses the following year where we investigated shifts in our practices after researching pre-and in-service teachers' engagement with graphic novels. This article will focus on year two of the work the researchers did in their university courses.

Graphic Novels

Often the terms graphic novel and comic are used interchangeably, where comics become the overarching term to include comic books, comic strips, and graphic novels (Yildirim, 2013). Connors' (2015) lens defining graphic novels qualifies them as book-length narratives told in a comic format. Earlier explanations of comics define them as sequenced images conveying information to produce what Rosenblatt (1978) calls an aesthetic experience with the text. However, we draw from Jiménez et al. (2017) who provide a different explanation for graphic novels as, "A static and sequential book-length narrative in which words (implied or explicit) and images work to support each other, bounded by page and panel, to tell a story impossible to convey using only one or the other" (p. 363).

Graphic novels, with their rising popularity as teaching tools in the classroom and many recognized benefits, have been fast-growing in recent years (Yildirim, 2013). Graphic novels have helped motivate 'reluctant' readers (e.g. Crawford, 2004; Simmons, 2003; Snowball, 2005), support English language learners (e.g. Chun, 2009), and aid students who struggle with literacy as it is traditionally conceived (e.g. Frey and Fisher, 2004). Graphic novels are also capable of challenging readers of varying ability levels (e.g. Carter, 2007; Connors, 2012; Jacobs, 2007; Versaci, 2001, 2007). Still other scholars regard graphic novels as a tool for fostering visual

literacy (e.g. Frey and Fisher, 2008; Gillenwater, 2009). Moreover, recent scholarship has showcased the diverse nature of many graphic novels, which make them exemplary resources to explore issues such as racism, immigration, and stereotypes (Grice et al., 2017), sexual orientation (Pagliaro, 2014), and social justice (Garrison & Gavigan, 2019). According to Garrison and Gavigan (2019), "The combination of visuals and text in these titles can provide a lens for students to explore and understand the challenges and injustices of the world around them (p. 8). However, while there has been an increase in diversity in graphic novels, according to data collected from the Cooperative Children's Book Center, the diversity found in children's books does not accurately represent the diversity found throughout our society (Moeller & Becnel, 2018).

Using research to design instruction and guide practice helps to ensure that graphic novels are used effectively to teach challenging social justice issues to young adults. This can also influence the ways that students view themselves, their peers, and their world as readers and writers. Moeller and Becnel (2018) state, "More and more, graphic novels are helping to shape children's ideas of what is normal, acceptable, and powerful in a society they are just learning to navigate on their own (p. 2). Classroom teachers who provide graphic novels with social justice issues align their curriculum with culturally relevant pedagogy standards (Garrison & Gavigan, 2019). Graphic novels, with their many signs, are an important component of K-12 literature as students learn how to navigate those multimodal literacies.

Multimodality

As digital and multimodal literacy grow in popularity, students need the necessary skills in order to navigate those materials. Traditionally, texts have only required the reader to focus on the written language as they read (Hassett & Curwood, 2009), whereas multimodal texts depend upon the reader's ability to engage with varying modes. Given their multimodality, graphic novels have the potential to provide readers with numerous layers of meaning making (Sipe, 2008) providing various pathways to follow, parallel displays of information, extensive cross-referencing elements, evocative graphics and images that extend, and often replace, the printed word as the primary carrier of meaning (Boerman-Cornell, 2016; Bolter, 1991; Burbules & Callister, 1996; Dresang, 1999; Kress & Jewitt, 2003; Landow, 1992; Lanham, 2001). Thus, "researchers and student readers alike need to come to understand the meaning of graphic novels not as words, pictures, fonts, and so on that should be analyzed separately but rather all of them at once" (Boerman-Cornell, 2016, p. 328). When multiple modes are embedded within each other, what occurs is synergy (Sipe, 2008). Graphic novels extend the use of synergetic interaction as the reader utilizes not only words for meaning making, but pictures, creating an overall deeper connotation of the text (Sipe, 2008). Other defining elements that enhance the synergy while reading a graphic novel include color, point of view, lines, and other visual cues. It is important for both students and teachers to understand these aspects to engage with these multimodal texts.

Graphic Novels in Classroom Settings

Graphic novels are used in both K-12 and university classrooms for varying purposes (Brugar et al., 2018; Connors, 2012; Dallacqua, 2012; Pantaleo, 2018). Indeed, Connors (2015) advocates for the use of graphic novels for students of all ages to expand their analytical framework through both reading and production of such narratives. Carter (2008, 2009) promotes the integration of graphic novels into existing thematic units. The proliferation of digital technologies in today's world enables efforts for students to compose multimodal texts in which word, image, and design elements merge to make meaning. In order to produce such narratives, students of all ages need opportunities to read and interact with graphic novels in classroom settings. Jiménez et al. (2017) advocate for the use of graphic novels in the classroom and emphasize the importance of teaching students how to read these texts. Graphic novels entail a reading process that does not follow the top-to-bottom, left-to-right, heavy text format of traditional print texts. Moreover, reading graphic novels involves deep comprehension of images, empty space, and the ability to merge text and graphical elements to infer what is not written. Jiménez et al. (2017) provide educators with strategies on how to teach graphic novels to students, including elements of graphic novels and visual thinking strategies for discussion of comic panels. Moreover, they suggest that using reader's theater as a tool for modifying text, considering mood and intonation, evaluating characters and speech bubbles, and interpreting graphic elements can support students' engagement with and understanding of graphic novels.

Elementary Settings

During a study conducted in two fourth grade classrooms, Pantaleo (2018) engaged students with multimodal print and digital texts and varying compositional tools, which included reading, discussing, and writing about graphic novels. Findings revealed that students' understanding was influenced by learning about the medium of comics and mode of image in graphic novels. Dallacqua (2012) explored the ways four fifth grade students engaged with the graphic novels, *The Arrival* (Tan, 2006) and *American Born Chinese* (Yang, 2006). The students and researcher discussed literary devices in the graphic novels and discovered the visual representation of elements such as point of view and symbolism. Dallacqua (2012) purported that using graphic novels could aid in the instruction of difficult literary devices to support students' understanding of them in textual readings.

In a study that analyzed how second, third, and fourth graders in a racially integrated suburban school engaged in multimodal meaning making in a graphic novel book club, Boerman-Cornell (2016) found that students engaged in literary analysis and discussion of the graphic novel, discussed multimodal observations, and connected multimodally to additional texts, graphic novels, and life experiences.

Hassett and Curwood (2009) conducted research with K-3 teachers on design and instruction of children's books with highly visual and interactive textual elements. They found that multimodal aspects of texts provided new roles for students as readers and writers and that sociocognitive aspects of multimodal texts provided new roles for the teachers (e.g., teacher as resource manager, teacher as co-constructor of knowledge, and teacher as design consultant).

Secondary Settings

Brugar et al. (2018) examined the comprehension and content mastery relevant to the American Revolution after engaging 16 sixth graders in a six-day unit in which they read *One Dead Spy* (Hale, 2012), a historically situated, factually accurate graphic novel about the American Revolution. The researchers used intersecting instructional foci on content (American Revolution), strategies for multimodal text comprehension and graphic novel elements. Results indicate that instruction around the graphic novel helps to build students' background knowledge on the topic and increases their conceptual knowledge of the American Revolution. Therefore, Brugar et al. (2018) purported that incorporating historically accurate graphic novels into the classroom can build vocabulary and prior knowledge and scaffolding necessary to support students' engagement with such historical texts.

In a case study with six high school students in a voluntary after-school reading group, Connors (2012) examined semiotic resources students used when reading and discussing four graphic novels and found that students actively drew on visual and linguistic design to make meaning and interpret the graphic novels.

Pre-service Settings

Clark (2013a), in a study that examined the relevance of graphic novels in history education, used graphic novels with pre-service history teachers and subsequently evaluated their viability as a resource in their future classrooms. Pre-service teachers valued the multiple perspectives about historical events and recognized historical agency in the graphic novels. They ultimately demonstrated that graphic novels could promote historical thinking in classroom settings. In a different study by Clark (2013b), pre-service teachers read and evaluated graphic novels in relation to the development of historical thinking and presentation of multiple perspectives. However, despite pre-service teachers' value for graphic novels and their desire to use them in future classrooms, they all identified constraints as to why they would not be able to use them in future school settings. These findings suggest that both in-service teachers and social studies methods instructors in university settings should use graphic novels for exploration in their classrooms.

Similarly, Matthews (2011) examined pre-service teachers' reactions to graphic novels that included historical content and the potential for the use of graphic novels in secondary social studies classrooms. Matthews (2011) found that pre-service teachers support the use of graphic novels as alternative perspectives to traditional texts or to increase engagement among struggling readers. However, they noted that they would not use graphic novels that included violent images or included controversial issues.

These studies in pre-service teacher settings suggest that additional research is needed on ways to support pre-service teachers' interactions and future possibility of using graphic novels in K-12 settings. Jiménez and Meyer (2016) purported that "Effective reading of graphic novels requires cognitively intensive activity in which the reader attends to and synthesizes linguistic, visual, and spatial resources to co-create the story" (p. 438). McClanahan and Maribeth (2019) provide educators with a systematic approach for developing skills and strategies as an entry point for

teachers new to graphic novels. They discuss three major components that make reading graphic novels challenging and offer strategies for each: 1) visual literacy, 2) vocabulary, and 3) synthesizing. While this scholarship advances our understanding of instruction on reading, interacting with, and understanding the features of graphic novels, additional research needs to occur focusing on the ways in which teacher educators incorporate graphic novels in university coursework to support pre-and in-service teachers' utilization of these texts in K-12 classrooms.

Methodology

This action research project (Mills, 2011) was implemented in two children's and young adult literature courses at different universities located in the Southeast. Nineteen pre-service teachers in one children's and young adult literature course participated from one university, a private university with a student population of approximately 3,100. The other teacher education program included twenty-five in-service teachers at a public regional comprehensive university with approximately 12,600 students. Each university requires the children's and young adult literature course for participants based on their degree programs including English and Education, Elementary Education, and Reading M.Ed. programs; the course is optional for those enrolled in the Educational Studies and Curriculum and Instruction M.Ed. programs.

Researchers employed multiple methods of data collection used across a variety of contexts, which allowed for theoretical foundations from the data indicating how participants' views and interactions with graphic novels shifted after participating in in-depth graphic novel genre studies. The following data sources were used throughout the study: instructor anecdotal notes, participant work samples, and open-ended responses to pre- and post-survey questions completed by participants.

To respond to the first research question (How do two university K-12 literature instructors design course curriculum to support pre- and in-service teachers' engagement with graphic novels?), researchers planned a graphic novel unit of study that included changes based on findings from the first year of the study (dissenting views on the value of graphic novels, opposition to classroom implementation, and misconceptions of graphic novel format and use in the classroom). The researchers created an action plan involving intentional engagements in their courses to deeply teach the elements of graphic novels, strategies to support comprehension of the multimodalities and elements in graphic novels, and strategies for how to use graphic novels in K-12 settings. Participants completed a pre-survey completed prior to beginning the graphic novel unit of study. Questions included those about participants' general knowledge base of graphic novels, how they defined them, when they had seen graphic novels used (if ever), and if they planned to use them in their future or current classrooms. Before participants began reading graphic novels, the researchers provided instruction on the elements and format of graphic novels.

The first graphic novel participants read was one of their choosing, from a suggested list of titles (see elementary and secondary titles, Appendix A). The researchers each planned for two weeks of reading and in-class discussion for participants in their choice graphic novels. Participants also read an article on using literature circle roles designed around graphic novels (Low & Jacobs,

2018) which provided specific graphica tasks for the multimodal aspects of a graphic novel. Those roles included image mage, gutter dweller, text raven, synergizer, palate cleanser, and superfan (Low & Jacobs, 2018). After reading the article, participants each took the leadership for a different role in the group and engaged peers relative to the specifics of their tasks in the graphica literature circle. Participants engaged in a general discussion in their groups about the text before shifting into their graphica roles. Researchers created a graphic organizer for participants to use to showcase their graphica roles and surrounding conversations within their groups. One of the classes created an overall book response at the end of the literature circle which included response options such as Infographics (e.g., Venngage,) Storyboard That, Make Beliefs Comix, or a book trailer (i.e. Animoto) (see Table 1).

Table 1

Instructional Resources

Graphica Literature Circles
Storyboard
Make Beliefs Comix
Infographics: VennGage, Piktochart
Animoto
Teaching Strategies for Graphic Novels

The text *Maus* (Spiegelman, 1980) was the second graphic novel read by both classes. *Maus* is a black and white representation of the Holocaust as told by a father to his son who wants a better understanding of events during that time. *Maus* was broken into two sections for participants to read and discuss over the course of three weeks. Each group session provided an opportunity for participants to engage in a general debrief of the section assigned to clarify and confirm their understandings and explain misconceptions. Participants then shifted their conversations towards questions crafted by the researchers within their small groups. Finally, the class joined together to engage in a whole group discussion to work through graphic elements of the text as well as any difficulties and confusion that arose among participants. The last interactive component was for each group to create their own multimodal response (e.g., Storyboard That, Make Belief Comix) of *Maus.*

The final text the classes read was *The Arrival* (Tan, 2006), an award-winning wordless graphic novel that blends historical imagery and elements of science fiction to depict the journey and assimilation experiences of an immigrant man. After engaging with this wordless graphic novel, participants in each class were given a variety of response options. The participants in one class were asked to read the entire text first. Then they were divided into six groups, representing the six sections of the book. In their groups, participants composed their own words to the text in accordance with their section. A compilation of a written version of *The Arrival* was created based on each section's adaptation. The other class read and reflected on the storyline and message conveyed by the author's illustrations, and considered ways *The Arrival* could be used in classroom settings.

In addition to the literature circles and whole group texts, both researchers also provided numerous read-alouds of graphic novels for early readers during the course. Prior to the onset of the graphic novel unit of study, the teacher educators spent considerable time researching quality graphic novels to share with participants across all K-12 grade levels (for location sources, see Appendix B). In our initial findings of the longitudinal study (from year one), we found that participants left the unit of study with misconceptions about graphic novels for early readers (e.g., kindergarten teachers believed that no graphic novels existed to use with emerging readers). Therefore, in year two's action research project, we intentionally utilized graphic novels for early readers as read-alouds in our classrooms and provided participants with a "sampling" of many examples of graphic novels for early readers (see graphic novels for early readers, Appendix A).

At the end of the graphic novel unit, all participants were given a post survey. The post survey included questions expanding on participants' understanding of graphic novels. The researchers also wanted to know how participants believed graphic novels differed from other children's and young adult literature. Inquiries involving pre-and in-service teachers' future or current planned classroom use and level of student encouragement of graphic novels for independent reading were also included in the post survey.

To respond to the second research question (In what ways does participation in a graphic novel unit of study influence pre- and in-service teachers' likelihood of utilizing graphic novels in K-12 settings?), qualitative thematic analysis was utilized to analyze the following data sources: anecdotal notes, participant work samples, and open-ended responses to pre- and post-survey questions. We named patterns in the data and developed themes relative to our research questions (Saldaña, 2013). Researchers individually coded the data using in-vivo and descriptive codes (Saldaña, 2013). We compared codes (e.g., values and non-value for graphic novel rigor, values for K-12 settings-choice, values for K-12 settings-student interests, values for K-12 settings-visual literacy, interest and disinterest in graphic novels, and engagement with multimodal features), discussed the rationale behind our coding decisions, and identified patterns across codes (values, impressions, and K-12 student use). Findings revealed two dominant themes: 1) shifts in perception and 2) shifts in implementation.

Findings

Shifts in Perception

Findings from this action research project emerged from the intentional implementations in instruction in two children's and young adult literature courses. The shifts occurred among participants' perceptions about graphic novels, a lessened resistance regarding their own interest in reading graphic novels, and labeling graphic novels as engaging and rigorous texts. Instructional changes as part of the action research included exposure to a variety of graphic novels of varying levels and topics and scaffolding participants away from labeling graphic novels simply as comic books. We recognized a shift as a change in a participant's opinion on either personally choosing to read a graphic novel or utilizing them in the classroom.

Reading Graphic Novels. Prior to beginning our graphic novel unit of study, the pre- survey showed that 43.9% of participants had never read a graphic novel before. By providing opportunities in our courses for participants to read graphic novels, the potential for these pre- and in-service teachers to use them in their classrooms heightened. Many participants shared that exposure to graphic novels in our courses increased their likelihood of future use in appropriate situations, such as a historical unit of study. One graduate participant responded, "Without this class, I would have never touched a graphic novel. I am so glad I have." The researchers' choice to include these graphic novels as part of their unit of study provided a wider and more diverse variety of titles and themes, such as *American Born Chinese* (Yang, 2006) and *El Deafo* (Bell, 2014), thus increasing the opportunity for future classroom use. Additionally, allowing the first graphic novel participants read be a book of their choice made the entire experience more appealing. This was an intentional instructional move in year two of the study after beginning year one instruction with *Maus* (Spiegelman, 1980), which was met with some resistance by participants apathetic towards graphic novels. Even participants who already enjoyed reading graphic novels indicated they now had an expanded repertoire of titles to offer students in their classrooms. Additional comments alluded to the fact that after the experience of reading graphic novels in their course, not only would they be more likely to use them in their classrooms but would also encourage their use among their students.

Graphic Novels as Engaging and Rigorous Texts. In addition to pre- and in-service teachers' increasing the likelihood of using graphic novels in their classrooms, shifts in their description of graphic novels also changed. The pre-survey revealed many participants perceived graphic novels as comic-like. Other misconceptions about graphic novels were that they are easier to read, included vocabulary that was less challenging, and had fewer words. Several participants commented that they would not use graphic novels with their students because they were not challenging. Comments after participation in the graphic novel unit of study revealed a different perception. One undergraduate participant commented, "I have learned that graphic novels are engaging ways for students to be interested in books and reading, and I want my students to like books." This pre-service teacher's comment represents a shift from graphic novels being easy to engaging, discovered from her own interactions with these texts. Another graduate participant stated, "Unfortunately, I was one of those teachers who assumed that graphic novels were an easier read with not much substance. Thankfully, this course has enlightened me and I now

realize that there is so much more to graphic novels than meets the eye!" In totality, the experience in the K-12 children's and young adult literature course, coupled with providing exposure and involvement with graphic novels, allowed pre-and in-service teachers to value these multimodal and diverse texts as much more than comics.

Shifts in Implementation

At the conclusion of the action research project, it was evident that shifts in implementation occurred as a result of the changes made in instructional practices in the children's and young adult literature courses. In analyzing the data, what stood out is the cyclical nature of the shifts in implementation. We, as teacher educators, shifted our instructional practices and designed course curriculum to intentionally support pre- and in-service teachers' engagement with and hopeful influence of the utilization of graphic novels in K-12 settings. The ways in which participants engaged in learning surrounding graphic novels then impacted the value our participants held for graphic novels, both as readers and as pre- or in-service teachers. This shift in the value of these multimodal and diverse texts then led to a shift in their appreciation for and use of graphic novels in K-12 classrooms.

Value for K-12 Participants. An overwhelming 97% of participants commented in the post-survey that reading and engaging with graphic novels changed their opinion of whether they would use graphic novels with students in their classrooms. Pre- and in-service teachers commented on many ways they valued the use of graphic novels with K-12 students, such as engaging reluctant readers, pushing above average readers, supporting ELL students, and motivating students through read-alouds. One undergraduate participant commented, "I think that it [the use of graphic novels] can be a great way to capture the interest of reluctant readers. Reluctant readers would still consider themselves readers and their perspective of what a reader is would change." In analyzing this quote, representative of many participants' open-ended comments about the potential value for graphic novels, we connected this theme back to the intentional shifts made in the instruction and curriculum design surrounding graphic novels for this action research project.

Use in K-12 Classrooms. Beyond the values participants found in graphic novels, both pre- and in-service teachers strongly vocalized varying ways they would use or had begun to use graphic novels with K-12 students as a result of the graphic novel unit of study. We encouraged our participants to try out several of the instructional resources they used in their interactions with the texts to provide them opportunities for potential ways they could use them in their classrooms. For *Maus*, participants crafted their own Storyboard to create a representation of what the story meant to them. The vast majority of pre- and in-service teachers shared how they would encourage K-12 students to select free-choice graphic novel texts during independent reading, whereas at the beginning of the course, they indicated apprehensions about encouraging the use of graphic novels among students because of a lack of rigor of these texts in comparison to traditional chapter and picture books. Moreover, some shared ways they would utilize graphic novels to support instruction on inferring, as they felt that the elements of graphic novels and the use of text, along with the panel, gutter, and images, would lead to rich instruction on inferencing.

Engaging with graphic novels in the course led some in-service teachers to share notable differences in their own classrooms. For instance, one in-service teacher, who participated in a literature circle on *Smile*, shared that "It wasn't until I started reading *Smile* that I noticed how many of my students loved graphic novels. *Smile* provided an authentic discussion between my students and I." Beyond the ability to use graphic novels as a springboard for reader-to-reader talk, participants also shared how they planned to use the graphica literature circle roles to lead their own students in small group conversations surrounding graphic novels. Another in-service teacher who taught secondary students shared that "Both *Speak* and *Maus* have layers upon layers of meaning that could have only been expressed in the graphic novel form." As a result of her interactions with the graphic novel unit of study, she partnered with her technology support teacher to create a slide presentation based on graphic novel wordless books, including *The Arrival*, to use with her secondary students. She then went on to present her instructional interactions at a state level reading conference several months later.

Educational Implications

While the results from a single action research project are not generalizable, they do provide valuable windows into participants' experiences (Stake, 2005), which can enhance educators' understanding of how to support pre-and in-service teachers' use of graphic novels in K-12 classrooms. The majority of the participants in this action research project had never read a graphic novel prior to taking the children and young adult literature class. The intentional curriculum design forced participants to read and gain exposure to numerous graphic novels. As a result, many pre- and in-service teachers discovered a newfound appreciation for these multimodal and diverse texts and vowed to help their own K-12 students (or future students) to explore a variety of texts, including graphic novels. While some even expressed an interest in continuing to read graphic novels for personal reading enjoyment, those that did not enjoy graphic novels still commented on how they would include them in their classrooms. Therefore, teacher educators and K-12 teachers alike can expose students to graphic novels as a springboard for reading a variety of texts.

Moreover, we know that effective reading of graphic novels requires readers to synthesize linguistic, visual and spatial resources to make meaning from these multimodal texts (Jiménez & Meyer, 2016). Garcia (2017) states, "Words are conceptual, and images are more sensational. When used together a reader can more readily employ empathy" (p. 594). The novel *Kindred* (2017) is an excellent example of the power of diversity through illustrations. The main character, a Black woman, time travels between 1970s Los Angeles and early 1800s to a Maryland plantation before the Civil War where she navigates issues of relations amongst race, class, and gender. It is crucial that students of all ages understand how to navigate illustrations and utilize the numerous layers of meaning (Sipe, 2008) to successfully engage with these texts. Teacher educators can provide explicit instruction on not only the elements of graphic novels, but can also equip pre- and in-service teachers with strategies on how to teach graphic novels in K-12 settings.

Conclusion

The findings from this action research study suggest that pre- and in-service teachers may benefit from intentional instruction and engagement in graphic novels geared towards K-12 readers. Reading, discussing, and interacting with graphic novels influenced pre- and in-service teachers in this study to shift away from negative perceptions regarding graphic novels, lessened resistance to including these multimodal and diverse texts in K-12 classrooms, and inspired them to find ways to implement graphic novel instruction into their classrooms or future classrooms. Teacher educators and K-12 teachers can play an essential role in ensuring that this widely recognized literary medium for 21st century learners (Gavigan, 2012) continues to enhance the reading lives of our K-12 learners.

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<center>**Appendix A**</center>

Noteworthy Graphic Novels

Below is a variety of graphic novels for early, elementary, and secondary readers that teachers and educators might consider sharing with students.

For Early Readers

Chick and Brain: Egg or Eyeball? by Cece Bell (2020), Newberry Honoree, delights beginning readers with a hilarious story on good manners gone awry. Punched with visual and verbal comedy, this graphic story will delight readers from beginning to end.

Do You Like My Bike? by Norm Feuti (2019) is a series for early readers. Children may relate to Hedgehog, a character who loves his new bike and wants to ride alongside his best friend. With basic messages about friendship and empathy, peppered with playful humor and an easy to read graphic format, readers are sure to delight in this series.

Fox and Chick: The Quiet Boat Ride and Other Stories by Sergio Ruzzier (2019) is a series that inspires conversation about appreciating one another's differences. Fox and Chick set off on three adventures involving a boat ride, a mysterious box, and a trip to see the sunrise.

Owly: The Way Home by Andy Runton (2020) is a great introduction series for young readers that presents Owly, a good-natured owl who seeks belonging among a circle of friends. Divided into two stories, Owly takes readers on heartfelt adventures peppered with goodwill and kindness.

For Elementary Readers

Akissi: Tales of Mischief by Marguerite Abouet, Mathieu Sapin, Judith Taboy, and Marie Bédrune (2018) is a colorful graphic novel representing the challenges of being the little sister. Akissi marches to the beat of her own drum, as this graphic novel will prove. Akissi is based on the inspired true stories from the author, Abouet's, lived childhood on the Ivory Coast.

Coraline by Neil Gaiman and illustrated by P. Craig Russell (2012) accurately adapts the original text inviting the reader to enter the dreary world in which Coraline's boredom leads her to a mysterious door where her adventure begins.

El Deafo by Cece Bell (2014) is a relatable story for those navigating childhood friendships. On top of the normal hardships of growing up, Cece is also deaf. Readers will empathize with the challenges Cece faces with her Phonic Ear at her new school.

Smile by Raina Telgemeier (2010) is a simply drawn graphic novel that tells a relatable story of sisters. Young girls, especially, will find solace in this book as they experience the agony of friendship, braces, and sisterhood with Raina.

Shirley and Jamila Save their Summer by Gillian Goerz (2020) is a graphic novel set in Canada that features diverse characters forging a friendship in lieu of attending summer camp against

their will. Spending summer days together at the neighborhood basketball court, Jamila practices ball while Shirley, a child detective, solves cases courtside.

For Secondary Readers

American Born Chinese by Gene Luen Yang (2008) tells a three-part story of Jin Wang who moves into a new neighborhood and upon beginning a new school learns he is the only Chinese-American student. This present-day narrative merges American pop culture with Chinese mythology enveloping the reader as Jin challenges the racial stereotypes he is faced with while defining himself in this graphic novel.

March: Book One by John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, illustrated by Nate Powell (2013) is the first book in a trilogy that presents a first-hand account of John Lewis' lifelong commitment to civil and human rights. Book One spans Lewis' childhood from Alabama through a climactic ending on the steps of City Hall. What is noteworthy of the book *March* is the insight it provides into the leaders of the civil rights movement during Lewis' experiences. Both young and old will find *March* an eye-opening account of the life and times of John Lewis and those fighting for civil liberties.

New Kid by Jerry Craft (2019) is a timely graphic novel that accurately depicts tales of race, class, and the pursuit of self-identity in middle school. Jordan Banks is the new kid, an African American boy from Washington Heights, who makes the daily trip to Riverdale Academy Day School and finds himself torn between two worlds, yet not finding his place in either.

Speak: The Graphic Novel by Laurie Halse Anderson and illustrated by Emily Carroll (2018) is a rewrite of the 1999 text recounting the story of a high school freshman, Melinda, who is raped at a high school party prior to the start of school. The story's narrative, paired with the illustrations, allows the reader to simultaneously experience the trauma of attending high school with Melinda and her rapist. The illustrations are woven into the story as Melinda processes her rape through her own drawings, allowing readers to rage the war of what happened until Melinda finally speaks.

When Stars Are Scattered by Victoria Jamieson and Omar Mohamed (2020) tells the story of a Somali boy, Omar, and his little brother, Hassan, living in a refugee camp in Kenya. Life is difficult, with limited food and no access to medical care Omar knows his nonverbal little brother needs. Omar earns an opportunity to go to school and must navigate the difficult choice of a chance to change his future or continue to give his brother the daily care he needs. Based on Omar's own life experiences, this story provides readers with a poignant view of the trauma and uncertainty of life in a refugee camp, while filled with heartbreak and hope.

Appendix B

Websites for Locating Graphic Novels for K-12 Students

Kirkus Graphic Novels and Comics Reviews
Social Justice Books Graphic Novels
Diversity in Graphic Novels
American Library Association Graphic Novels for Younger Readers
2020 Great Graphic Novels for Teens Top Ten
65 Graphic Novels for Kids Starring Mighty Girls
Early Childhood Education Zone: The Best Graphic Novels for Early Readers
Graphic Novels for Beginning Readers K-3
10 Great Kids Comics for Early Readers
50 Must-Read Middle Grade Graphic Novels
20 Graphic Novels that English Teachers Love

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