

Canon Ball:
A Dive into the Deep End of Diversifying Texts
in Grades 6–12 English Language Arts Classrooms

by

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Abstract

In my role as a high school English Language Arts teacher, and more recently as a literacy coach, I have observed that the canonical texts used in senior-years classrooms reflect a complete lack of diversity and representation. The dearth of texts authored by Indigenous, Black, Asian, Hispanic and/or 2SLGBTQ+ voices necessitates an urgent conversation around diversifying the texts being used in our senior-years ELA classrooms. While the importance of representation in story is well documented in the literature, there is less known about how teachers recognize and enact this call for diversity. Informed by the powerful rationale for diversifying texts, this study explores how grade 6–12 English Language Arts teachers recognize and enact the call to diversify texts in their classrooms. In five half-day professional learning sessions (PLS), eight teachers participated in book clubs to explore middle grade and young adult texts written by diverse voices. This study was grounded in the research question, How do teachers recognize and enact the call to diversify texts in ELA? More specifically the study explored:

- How do teachers define and select diverse texts for their classrooms?
- What motivations and barriers exist in using diverse texts in the classroom?
- How are teachers facilitating learning with diverse texts?

In order to engage these questions, I invited teacher participants to book clubs where they explored middle grade and young adult texts written by diverse voices. Book clubs provided the framework of a shared text through which the teacher-readers could think more deeply about the importance of diversity and representation. To ensure that teachers had multiple entry points into the concepts of power and privilege, I provided language and conceptual frameworks that were spiralling, recursive, and interconnected.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, I facilitated a reflective exercise with fellow senior-years English Language Arts teachers in my school division. I asked teachers to work with a partner from their school to create a chart of the most widely used texts¹ in their classrooms. In the creation of this list, I also asked them to include the texts they were consistently repurchasing, year after year, due to popularity, damage, or loss. Once this list was generated, I requested that they create additional columns in the chart and list the year the book was published and the gender and ethnicity of the writer. The results of this exercise were unsurprising to me. The majority of the texts being used in the senior-years classrooms in my division were the traditional canonical novels written by dead white guys like John Steinbeck, J. D. Salinger, and William Shakespeare. These canonical texts reflect a complete lack of diversity and representation. Based on the lists created in this exercise, I could make a general observation that, over a four-year span of high school ELA courses, students in these classrooms encountered one novel written by an Indigenous author and virtually no texts created by Black, Asian, Hispanic and/or 2SLGBTQ+ authors. Additionally, the canonical texts did not include any texts written by or about people with neurodiversities or disabilities. Many of the canonical books being used were historically and socially out of date. For instance, books like *In the Heat of the Night* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*, which advance the perspectives of white authors, were often used to discuss themes of racism and discrimination, and the closest thing to young adult fiction was *The Outsiders* (Hinton, 1967), which was written over 50 years ago.

¹ My intended/intentional use of the terms *culture*, *diversity*, *curriculum*, and *text*, will be defined in a subsequent section.

Rationale and Purpose

The dearth of diversity in canonical texts is also reflected in the children's and young adult books being published. The Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) from the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin publishes an annual report documenting the children's and young adult books published, in the previous year, by and about Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour. The books in the CCBC diversity report comprise those that are published by large, mid-sized, and smaller trade publishers, largely from the United States although there are also some Canadian publishers included. The CCBC noted that, after a long period of stagnation, in 2014/15 they started to see an increase in books being published by BIPOC authors and about BIPOC characters. The CCBC added that, despite the increased amount of diversity being seen in children's and young adult books, there still "aren't enough of them" (Cooperative Children's Book Center, 2023). I have chosen to include the 2019 statistics (Appendix A), as they reflect the last year before the book industry was impacted by COVID-19. It is also worth noting that the more recently published CCBC diversity statistics for 2021–2022 do show some increases to the amount of diversity in newly published children's and young adult books. However, a slight uptick in the number of diverse authors being published in children's and young adult literature is certainly not enough to counterbalance years of predominantly white, able-bodied, neurotypical, cisgender, straight authors who are writing about predominantly white, able-bodied, neurotypical, cisgender, straight characters. The lack of Indigenous, Black, Asian, Hispanic and/or 2SLGBTQ+ authors in both the children's publishing world and in the canonical texts being used in senior-years ELA classrooms necessitates an urgent conversation around how diverse texts could and should be taken up in these spaces.

Classroom Culture Wars and Curricular Control

The world has continued to shift in the years since I facilitated the reflective exercise about book diversity with teachers in my division. Classroom culture wars have increased public focus on the pedagogy and curriculum enacted in classrooms. When I began my research in June of 2022, I referenced specific examples of classroom culture wars from the United States, specifically Florida's bill HB 1557. The "Parental Rights in Education Act," commonly referred to as the "Don't Say Gay" bill, states that discussion of "sexual orientation or gender identity may not occur in kindergarten through Grade 3 or in a manner that is not age-appropriate or developmentally appropriate for students" (Trimel, 2022). Passed by the state legislature in March of 2023, HB 1557 became a "mechanism by which parents or citizens who are censorship-minded can scrutinize school collections for books with topics they disfavor, books they feel are not age-appropriate, or books they feel violate the law" (Trimel, 2022). This law devastated the collections of K-12 school and classroom libraries in Florida. When HB 1557 is coupled with pre-existing state laws on the instruction of human sexuality in schools, Florida teachers and school districts could be exposed to civil liability by merely mentioning same-sex relationships in the classroom (Tolin, 2023).

Two months after the passing of Florida's HB 1557, in May of 2023, Canadian teachers were engulfed in, and surrounded by, those same movements motivated by pedagogical and curricular control over teachers and schools. In one instance, a Manitoba elementary school had its Pride flag stolen from the front of the school and Indigenous-authored books stolen from a teacher's classroom library (Petz, 2023). Another Manitoba school division began facing increasing calls to remove books that discussed sexual orientation and gender identity from

classrooms and libraries (Kemp, 2023), calls that were anchored in language made all too familiar by the “parental rights” movement in the United States. This culminated in May of 2023, after a 4+-hour-long school board meeting that was live streamed due to overwhelming public interest, when the board of trustees ultimately rejected, by a vote of 6–1, a call to remove books that discuss sexual orientation and gender identity from classrooms and libraries (MacLean, 2023).

In August of 2023, the language of the parental rights movement also began to surface in the Manitoba provincial election, when the Progressive Conservative party debuted billboards and other promotional material promising to “expand” parental rights in schools if re-elected (MacLean, 2023). While those making moves to narrow curriculum and control books represent a minority of the population, these actions can have a “chilling impact” on educators (Anderson, 2023). That is, teachers may be compelled to water down critical topics (including stories of race, gender, and sexuality) or avoid teaching them altogether, as they are deemed too controversial.

Local and national events aimed at increasing parental rights and censoring curriculum illustrate the urgency to demonstrate to teachers and students that there are diverse stories to be read and told, and that the stories of all students must be represented and legitimized through their inclusion in schools and classrooms. Students (and teachers) must be able to see their lived experiences and the lived experiences of others represented in the stories educators centre in their classrooms.

The Unlinked Implications of Canonical Texts

Grassroots organization #disrupttexts has argued that “the canon of literature taught to young people in schools is a product of time, space, an individual and collective consciousness” and that “when we prioritize some cultural capital above others, we send the message that marginalization is acceptable” (Ebarvia et al., 2020). This too extends to the field of children’s literature. Botelho (2021) stated, “Children’s books are cultural products that are shaped by the ideologies and publishing practices of the time in which they were produced” (p. 123). However, she warned that, while children’s literature does have the potential to show readers experiences and perspective other than their own, “it is often read unlinked to power relations” (p. 123).

One unlinked power relation that Ebarvia and Torres (2023) highlighted is the colonial legacy of canonical texts in Residential Schools:

The schools’ expressed purpose was to separate Native and Indigenous children from their families and forcibly assimilate them into white, European culture. This cultural genocide included forbidding Native students from speaking their own languages and reading only books important to white Europeans, (namely, the Bible). (p. 3)

They argued that the legacy of colonialism lives on when one casts a glance at the disproportionate amount of white, Eurocentric texts that occupy space in our classrooms (p. 3).

While canon-making has been the purview of post-secondary academia, K–12 teachers too function as canon-makers by choosing to uphold stories written by white, able-bodied, neurotypical, cisgender, straight authors who are writing about predominantly white, able-bodied neurotypical, cisgender, straight characters (Ebarvia and Torres, 2023). Consequently, teachers must disrupt the canon by casting a critical glance onto the canonical texts they are

utilizing in their classrooms. Germán (2021) argued that, while there is a need for teachers in all content areas, including science, math, geography, and history, to examine and disrupt their respective canonical texts, ELA teachers are uniquely positioned to do this work, and she argued that “through more meaningful curriculum, as well deliberate text selection, we can start the work of restoring our communities” (p. 5). While there is much research that has attended to what Germán would call the deliberate selection of diverse texts (Bittner, 2020; Botelho, 2021; Enriquez, 2021; Johnson et al., 2017; Krishnaswami, 2019; Reese, 2018), there has been less written about how the restoration of community might look in a classroom context, and particularly about how teachers might use diverse texts and curriculum as a framework to design learning and create community.

Research Question

Acknowledging the current climate surrounding classrooms and the coincident call to disrupt the canon, this research explored how grades 6–12 English Language Arts teachers recognized and enacted the call to diversify texts in their classrooms. Through five half-day professional learning sessions, teachers participated in book clubs and examined middle grade and young adult texts written by diverse authors. More specifically, they explored the following questions:

- How do teachers define and select diverse texts for their classrooms?
- What motivations and barriers exist in using diverse texts in the classroom?
- How are teachers facilitating learning with diverse texts?

These questions served as a framework for my literature review, allowing me to survey the scholarship that has already been done in the area of text diversification. This scholarship also

acted as a road map for the topics that were addressed in the professional learning series (PLS) that grounded this study. The research questions of this study (and the resulting methodologies, findings, and discussion) were all anchored in my understanding of words such as *culture*, *diversity*, *curriculum*, and *text*; as such, it is important that I share how I defined these terms.

Definitions

Language arrives to our conversations filled with historical tracings and interpretation. A term like *diversity* could potentially invite and/or evoke distinct, personalized understandings. Often terms that seem simple, or broadly understood, can be heard or understood differently. As this work rests on specific understandings, it is important to outline my intended/intentional use of the terms *culture*, *diversity*, *curriculum*, and *text*.

Inspired by Gay (2013), I employed a shifting definition of culture that included, but was not limited to, values, attitudes, beliefs, customs, traditions, histories, experiences, and perspectives. Within this definition, I also acknowledged that cultural groups are made up of individual people and therefore are not monolithic in nature. What may be truthful or accurate for one person within a community, communities, or culture may not be the same for another.

Some of the literature that grounded my research prioritized race, culture, and ethnicity within its definition of diversity, particularly as it related to underachieving students of colour (Gay, 2013). However, I defined *diversity* more broadly to also include class, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, neurodiversity, and disability. Within my definition of diversity, I also acknowledged the potential for intersectionality, a metaphor used to describe the ways in which social identities may overlap and/or compound to create obstacles and social inequalities (National Association of Independent Schools, 2018). In the context of this study, diverse texts

were stories that recognized the distinct experiences of ethnic, cultural, and religious minorities as well as the 2SLGBTQ+ and Indigenous communities, people of colour, and people with neurodiversity and people with disabilities. I acknowledge that this definition of a diverse text creates what Everett (2017) would identify as a binary in which heteronormative, white texts are centred as the default position and therefore diverse texts are othered. However, the reality is that canonical texts are already anchored in this binary, as they are, by definition, written by white, able-bodied, neurotypical, cisgender, straight authors who are writing about predominantly white, able-bodied neurotypical, cisgender, straight characters.

My definitions for *curriculum* and *text* were interwoven and anchored in a Manitoban context. The Manitoba English Language Arts curriculum situates itself as a framework that is living and being updated in response to needs and opportunity (Manitoba Education, 2020). It provides “direction for learning design and assessment” and sets out “the philosophical and pedagogical foundations for English language arts learning” (p. 1). What it *does not do* is mandate (or even list) texts, units of study, topics, or themes that must be covered in particular grades. If perceptions of texts, lists, and book mandates by grade do exist, they are not constructs of our current (2020) or previous (1999) iterations of the Manitoba ELA curriculum. For the context of this study, I defined *curriculum* as a framework used to design learning and create learning outcomes and assessments.

My understanding of the word *text* is also anchored in the Manitoba English Arts curriculum (Manitoba Education, 2020), which defines *text* as “the variety of resources that we use to make meaning. These include aural/oral, visual, print, digital, physical, gestural, and spatial texts, and the various combinations of these” (p. 5). As such, I used the term *text* to

mean any resource that is grounded in this expansive definition. It is important to contextualize our understandings of curriculum and text, as they may exist or be understood differently outside of Manitoba. Indeed, they are also likely to be understood differently within a province, division, or school and as such, a working definition is essential.

Theoretical Framework

This research was grounded in Culturally Responsive Teaching. More specifically, my research was shaped by the scholarship of Gay (2013), Bishop (1990), and Parker (2022). Gay (2013) defined Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) as an assets-based, student-centred practice that focuses on the prior experiences, cultural knowledge, and frames of references of students. Gay called teachers to teach to, and through, the culture and diversity of their students. Gay also noted that, while CRT does put a spotlight on curriculum and instruction, it is rooted in a teacher's capacity, knowledge, and beliefs to recognize the role of racial and cultural diversity in learning.

In recent years, Manitoban school divisions have shown an increased focus on data to track student progress in literacy. These data, collected predominantly through report card marks and indicators, as well as provincial literacy assessments, are aggregated to show the literacy "performance" of students. They are often arranged by identifiers such as gender, Indigeneity, and English as an additional language. For ease of sorting, the individuality of students as readers, writers, thinkers, and humans is reduced to deficit-focused numbers. As an ELA teacher and literacy coach, I have found that these data, and their aggregation, marginalize students and create a sense of hopelessness amongst teachers. Culturally Responsive Teaching made for an ideal theoretical framework for this study, as it works against this. It empowered

participants to push back on institutional practices such as deficit-focused data analyses to create student-centred learning environments that recognize cultural diversity as an asset.

If Gay provided the “what” of my theoretical framework, the “why” was informed by the work of Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop. In her highly celebrated essay “Mirrors, Windows and Sliding Glass Doors” (1990), she described books as mirrors that reflect our own human experiences, windows that allow us to see the human experiences of others, and sliding glass doors that transform us as we walk through them. Bishop’s work provided a conceptual metaphor that participants found useful in examining the texts they used in their classroom. She observed that children from dominant social groups are more likely to find books that mirror their own experiences, while children of colour are less likely to find books that affirm the traditions and values of their social groups. Bishop also warned that, when children read books that reflect images of self that are narrow, one-sided, or negative, they “learn a powerful lesson about how they are devalued in the society of which they are a part” (p. 1). Her call for classrooms to have mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors for all students directly informed my research questions and rationale. Particularly, it called to the forefront the reality that the current canon of texts in middle-years (MY) and senior-years (SY) ELA classrooms privileges white voices and marginalizes, misrepresents, and under-represents diverse voices.

Parker’s book *Literacy is Liberation* (2022) merged the what and the why of Gay and Bishop with the pedagogical implications of and for practical application. Parker acknowledged the diversity and experiences that teachers bring to their practice and introduced the concept of Culturally Relevant Intentional Literacy Communities (CRILC) as a response to the call for Culturally Relevant Teaching. She stated, “As educators, we first require a deep understanding of

how we have been shaped by policies and perspectives and how those same policies and perspectives impact the lives of our students and our practices” (p. 21). Parker argued that this knowledge will help teachers design high-quality literacy instruction that will benefit all learners in their classrooms, especially learners who are Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and People of Colour. Anchored in the assets-based model of Gay’s definition of CRT, Parker (2022) described CRILCs as places “that encourage a deep, sustained engagement with young people around transformative literacy practices and beliefs” (p. 77). That is, when learning about, and centring, the diversity, talents, and interests of their students, teachers can create culturally relevant literacy experiences and learning communities.

Gay’s scholarship provided a Culturally Responsive Teaching stance to my research in which culture is viewed as an asset that teachers must teach to, and through. Additionally, my methods focused on student-centred practices that supported student agency and educational equity. Bishop’s work provided a conceptual metaphor through which participants in this research examined the canonical texts they used in their classrooms, particularly how they may (or may not) have served as windows, mirrors, or sliding glass doors for their students. It was also used to assist teachers in internalizing processes for recognizing and selecting diverse texts. Finally, Parker articulated a conceptual framework of self-reflection, pedagogy, and practice that served as actionable themes for the professional learning sessions.

In the chapter that follows, I will outline the literature that grounded this study and served as a framework that allowed me to survey the scholarship that has already been done around the topic of text diversification. In my methodology chapter, I discuss the context of this study, a group of teachers participating in a divisionally offered professional learning series, and

the structure, topics, and themes of each of the five professional learning series sessions. In the methodology chapter, I will also discuss the literature that informed my methodological decision to use book clubs and my subsequent analysis processes for the audio recordings and transcripts that comprised my data. In the subsequent findings and discussion chapter, I will explore some of themes that emerged as study participants in the Professional Learning Series (PLS) participated in book club discussions around diverse texts. These themes include understanding how participants navigated social identity and the pervasiveness of the narrative of the Capital “C” Child, a previously debunked developmental discourse of the “idealized” middle grade reader as an innocent child. Finally, in the conclusion, I will share how this study adds to the existing body of research about diversifying texts, particularly in the context of middle-years and high school English Language Arts classrooms. These findings include the importance of: teachers’ participation in self-reflective and internal work about their own positionality prior to jumping into conversations around text selection and diverse book lists; mentor texts to serve as powerful scaffolds to guide the conversation around diversifying the MY and SY canon; and the power of book clubs to put teachers in conversation with themselves, each other, and the literature on culturally responsive and culturally relevant literacy practices.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this literature review, I will be examining the contributions of articles, findings of research studies, and the professional learning books that provided guidance for the recognition and practical application of the call to diversify texts in the classroom and explained the pedagogical implications of this practice. Within this body of literature, I will examine the themes that have emerged, note the gaps or omissions in the discourse and research, and explain how my research can potentially contribute to this literature.

Rationale for Representation/Diversity

Over 30 years later, there is still verisimilitude in Bishop's observations about the importance of representation in children's literature. Bishop's article "Mirrors, Windows and Sliding Glass Doors" (1990) has become a common conceptual framework among scholars for providing the rationale for representation and diversity in story (Bittner, 2020; Botelho, 2021; Enriquez, 2021; Johnson et al., 2017; Krishnaswami, 2019; Reese, 2018). Botelho (2021) argued that texts can affirm the lived experiences of readers. Consequently, when students are not able to see themselves in the books they read, they are sent a message that "their lives do not matter. They feel uncomfortable with—maybe embarrassed by—the bodies, language, homes, and families they do have. And they learn that the opportunities that lay ahead of them are limited because they do not see or read about anyone like them doing differently" (Enriquez, 2021). In addition to affirming lived experiences, texts have the ability to diversify readers' lived experiences (Botelho, 2021). Resultingly, diverse texts can work to disrupt a readers' view of how things exist in the present or how they have unfolded in the past (Krishnaswami, 2019) and

offer counternarratives to the predominantly white, able-bodied, neurotypical, cisgender, straight perspectives that dominate the ELA canon.

Diverse/Contested/Furthered Understandings of the Call for Diversity

Bishop's (1990) work has become a touchstone for much of the work around diversifying classroom texts. Literature written about Bishop's (1990) conceptual metaphor of windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors often adds nuance to its interpretation. The writing that builds upon Bishop's conceptual metaphor does not seek to question its validity but rather wishes to sharpen its application within a particular cultural context of story. This may be via curtains (Reese, 2018), foggy mirrors (Enriquez, 2021), tiny windows (Enriquez, 2021), heavy doors (Enriquez, 2021), or prisms (Krishnaswami, 2019). Reese's addition of curtains to Bishop's metaphor of mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors raises not just the question of ownership of story, but also of access. She argued that adding curtains to the metaphor

is a way to acknowledge and honor the stories behind the curtain—those that are purposefully kept within Native communities. Native communities resisted historical oppression and continued to preserve our culture by cultivating our ways in private spaces—behind the curtain. While Native people share some of our ways publicly in the present day, there is a great deal that we continue to protect from outsiders. (pp. 390–391)

Reese's nuanced addition to Bishop's metaphor raises the question, What other rethinking might be necessary when considering representation in story?

Authenticity and #OWNVOICES

Bishop (1990) noted the importance of authentic voices in diverse stories. This theme frequently has appeared in the research and professional literature when it comes to selecting and recommending diverse texts. In some literature, authenticity of voice has been implied, as the authors of various articles have recommended books written by authors from within the community they have been exploring (Enriquez, 2021; Krishnaswami, 2019). In other literature, voice and authenticity have been reflected via reference to the #ownvoices hashtag (Bittner 2020; Reese, 2018). It is worth noting that recognition of this hashtag is not unanimous. In Reese's (2018) case, she referenced this hashtag as an identifier of authentic Indigenous stories; however, Bittner (2020) understood the hashtag to be corrupted and potentially problematic when recommending 2SLGBTQ+ stories. Reese saw the hashtag as a useful tool for locating authentic voices, while Bittner recommended against its use. This juxtaposition in stance may be due to the timeframe in which these articles were written. As of 2021, the grassroots organization We Need Diverse Books had stopped using the hashtag, referring to it as a vague catch-all marketing term that had placed diverse authors in unsafe situations (We Need Diverse Books, 2021). Based on the recommendation of We Need Diverse Books and experiences shared by YA author Becky Albertalli (2020), I too suggest avoiding the use of this hashtag.

The Single Story

In many articles, Bishop's conceptual metaphor of "Mirrors, Windows and Sliding Glass Doors" is often in partnership with another phrase, "the danger of a single story." As spoken about by author and scholar Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in her TED talk (2009), the phrase warns against the oversimplification of understanding the world through the lens of a single

story. Adichie's phrase "the danger of a single story" has reverberated in the literature and brought with it a call to interrogate and challenge monolithic representations (Bittner, 2020; Botelho, 2021; Enriquez, 2021; Reese, 2018) of people, cultures, and communities. For Reese this has included an overreliance on stories that only locate Indigenous people in the past, while Botelho has cautioned against generalizing the immigrant experience. Bittner (2020) warned against "a heavy reliance on the homonormative representation of queerness (straight-acting, cisgender) as well as a rather formulaic perspective on coming out and the revealing of a 'true' identity" (p. 38). Furthermore, Bittner argued that these are constructs that need to be pushed back against and interrogated.

Also included in this thread of the single story is the conversation that one mirror, or one window, is not enough. Botelho (2021) warned that one story is not likely to resonate with all readers. To counter this, the literature has called for teachers to take a year- (or semester-) long approach that integrates diverse authors into the themes and topics being covered in the classroom and to avoid isolating diverse stories solely to monthly celebrations such as Black History Month and Pride (Bittner, 2020; Reese, 2018).

Enacting the Call for Diversity

Previous studies in the field of enacting the call for diversity in classroom texts have engaged the voices of pre-service teachers (Durand, 2015; Hartsfield & Kimmel, 2020; Tschida et al., 2014) and/or teachers partaking in graduate studies courses (Batchelor et al., 2018; Durand, 2015; Hartsfield & Kimmel, 2020; Heineke, 2014; Tschida et al., 2014). In some of these studies, the research was conducted within the context of a teacher education course being taught by the researcher (Hartsfield & Kimmel, 2020; Heineke, 2014; Tschida et al., 2014) while other

studies ran independently of coursework (Batchelor et al., 2018; Durand, 2015). Contrastingly, Boyd's research specifically targeted rural communities in which teachers may have had limited access to professional learning opportunities and university studies.

Many of the studies shared participant motivations for and barriers to using diverse texts in the classroom. Current political and societal contexts served as motivation in one study (Durand, 2015); elsewhere, a lack of diversity in the participants' school's population was listed as motivation (Batchelor et al., 2018). Some studies found that teachers wanted to be able to provide students with stories that had representation of self (Boyd et al., 2021; Heineke, 2014), and another study (Batchelor et al., 2018) mentioned allyship as a teacher motivator.

The work of Batchelor et al. (2018), Boyd et al. (2021), and Thein (2013) highlighted community pushback as a barrier for teachers to using diverse texts in the classroom. On a related topic, fears of job security and lack of support from teachers' school administrators also surfaced as potential barriers (Batchelor et al., 2018; Thein, 2013). Some teachers listed discomfort with book content, be it graphic or sexual in nature, as a barrier (Boyd et al. 2021; Durand, 2015), while others noted they felt ill-equipped to appropriately discuss sensitive topics (Boyd et al., 2021). These discomforts were particularly prevalent when it came to teaching 2SLGBTQ* texts and topics, with teachers in one study (Thein, 2013) stating they felt it was inappropriate for them to be teaching about such issues. In this same, study participants also suggested that teaching 2SLGBTQ* texts and topics would cause more harm than good and could evoke bullying or reignite existing tensions in the school.

Batchelor et al. (2018) and Thein (2013) both identified the fear of a hostile or immature class response as a potential barrier. Finally, another barrier that emerged in teachers was a lack of familiarity with social or historical context and the subsequent fear of “getting it wrong” (Durand, 2015; Thein, 2013).

The research on enacting the call for diversity in classroom texts has been strongly driven by a focus on students. This can be seen in the consistent reliance on/grounding in Bishop’s conceptual metaphor of windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors (Batchelor et al., 2018; Heineke, 2014; Tschida et al., 2014). While the language of Bishop’s work used the phrase “reader” to identify the who, it is safe to say that the reader was also the student. The research has shown that teachers view their students as a motivating factor for diversifying the texts in their classrooms (Batchelor et al., 2018; Boyd et al. 2021; Heineke, 2014). In other words, teachers believe that students benefit from reading stories that reflect their own experiences and show them the experiences of others. Some research has presented teaching methods and strategies that focus on building student capacity, knowledge, and beliefs so that students may reflect on their position within racial and cultural diversity and equity (Durand, 2015; Tschida et al., 2014). However, I would argue that most of the research has overly focused on building teacher capacity and knowledge as it connects to **texts**.

The theme of texts and text selection often emerges when one looks at the research findings on how teachers are enacting the call for diverse stories in their classrooms (Durand, 2015; Hartsfield & Kimmel, 2020; Tschida et al., 2014). Hartsfield and Kimmel (2020) reminded teachers to recognize their role as gatekeepers when making text selections and encouraged teachers to question their assumptions about the figured worlds of their adolescent students.

Durand (2015), Clark & Blackburn (2009), and Tschida et al. (2014) have provided discourse on how teachers can place diverse stories in meaningful conversation with other texts while resisting ethnocentric universalisms and dominant narratives of culture. However, much of the discussion has had a focus on recommending books titles with less of an emphasis on how teachers may internalize processes for recognizing, selecting, and facilitating learning with diverse texts.

Much of the research on enacting the call to diversify texts in the classrooms has tended to centre primarily on the recognition and selection of texts (Bittner, 2020; Botelho, 2021; Enriquez, 2021; Johnson et al., 2017; Krishnaswami, 2019; Reese, 2018). While some voices have delved into potential motivation for and barriers to enacting the call (Bittner, 2020; Johnson et al., 2017; Reese, 2018; Thein, 2013), generally speaking there has been a lack of concrete examples of what this work looks like in classrooms.

What teaching methods are needed to effectively mobilize diverse texts in classrooms? Lists of diverse texts recommendations are a start, but they are not going to create sustained and meaningful change to the landscape of literature in classrooms, nor are they practice- or systems-altering. While it is no doubt helpful for teachers to internalize processes for recognizing and selecting diverse texts, I feel more research is needed to help teachers recognize their own role in perpetuating systems of power and inequity—particularly as it relates to the practices and processes in their classrooms. Incorporating diverse texts while maintaining teaching (and reading) practices that centre on teacher control feels like a zero-sum situation. Teachers need to go beyond diversifying texts in order to understand whose voices are silenced and whose voices are privileged in the classroom.

Doing the Work: The Pedagogical Implications of and for Practical Application

The motivations for and barriers to using diverse texts in the classrooms are evidence of how important *the work* is. But what is *the work*? And how do teachers begin doing it? Both Germán (2021) and Parker (2022) referred to the phrase *the work* throughout their books. Both scholars identified *the work* as being self-reflective, encouraging teachers to look inwards first. Germán (2021) described *the work* as “an intentional and intense effort to unpack our biases and identify the ideologies that have shaped our thinking” (p. 4). Parker extended this thinking, quoting fellow #disrupttexts co-founder Tricia Ebarvia: “the internal work matters . . . A lot. You cannot disrupt if you don’t understand how systems of oppression work. You cannot understand how systems of oppression work until you have come to terms with how they have worked on you” (p. 9). Parker prioritized this internal work, stating it must be done prior to moving on to questions of text selection and creating diverse book lists, particularly because “a ‘diverse’ text in the hand of an assimilationist or segregationist teacher . . . has the potential to perpetuate a tremendous amount of harm of young people” (p. 15). Germán (2021) advocated and provided strategies for both teachers and students to engage in identity work. In this work, participants are able to declare their identities and establish norms for interacting with one another in community. Germán also noted the importance of land work in community building, acknowledging that our communities exist upon the original lands of Indigenous peoples. Her focus on land as part of *the work* is an important perspective that has often been overlooked in much of the research discussing the pedagogical implications of diversifying texts in the classroom. Land as text is a rich topic and worth further investigation.

Extending the Research

Unsurprisingly the literature has brought with it a discussion of critical literacy. This can be seen in arguments that the text and the reader bring with them of power and positionality, and therefore reading is never a neutral stance (Botelho, 2021; Johnson et al., 2017; Reese, 2018). Another aspect of critical literacy present in the literature is the transformation of the reader. This may come in the form of newfound perspective or understanding (Botelho, 2021) or an experience wherein the reader is inspired to action and becomes an agent of change (Johnson et al., 2017) or an opportunity for the reader to engage with or create counternarratives related to gender, sexuality, and sexual identity (Helmer, 2015). Through these occasional discussions of critical literacy, the literature has hinted at the intentional teaching that is needed to meaningfully invite readers into transformative reading experiences (Johnson et al., 2017); however, the focus has been predominantly on the attitudes, skills, and beliefs of students and has paid little attention to the capacity, knowledge, and beliefs of teachers. Teachers must actively participate in, navigate, and facilitate critical conversations around race, gender, and power. To do this, teachers need conceptual frameworks that will support them in interrogating the texts and reading practices that are privileged in their classrooms. One conceptual framework, the *Instructional Model of Critical Literacy* (Lewiston et al., 2015), was established in research with teachers for the specific purpose of teaching literature. This model views critical literacy as a transaction between personal and cultural resources, social practices, and critical stance and includes a discussion of the responsibility that comes with power and agency.

This conversation about critical literacy should also include a discussion of the responsibility that comes with power and agency. What assumptions are made when we look through all the windows? How do we respectfully step through a sliding glass door? And how do we avoid overstepping into white saviour-ism and the perpetuation of monolithic representations? Reese (2018) started this conversation, but continued dialogue is needed here.

Parker's response to the call for critical literacy has been Culturally Relevant Intentional Literacy Communities (CRILC). Through three primary action umbrellas of community building, Parker has looked to "eliminate traditional barriers to literacy," "address and heal reading trauma and curriculum violence," and "deliberately teach and hand over the habits, skills and dispositions required to be a high literacy achiever to every single student" (Parker, 2022, p. 64). Germán's (2021) response to the call for critical literacy has been Textured Teaching, a "framework for teaching and learning about texts, centered in love and social justice" that is student-driven, community-centred, interdisciplinary, experiential, and flexible. Parker's (2022) book focused on how teachers can build Culturally Relevant Intentional Literacy Communities with routines and traditions. She spent significant time and space discussing the powerful student agency that is developed in the routines and traditions of independent choice reading, reading conferences, and classroom libraries. Germán (2021) discussed independent choice reading and classroom libraries, while also providing teaching ideas, conversation frameworks, and examples from her own classroom practice.

The work of Germán (2021) and Parker (2022) provided the pedagogical implications of and for practical application, as they urged teachers to participate in self-reflective, internal work prior to jumping into conversations around text selection and diverse book lists. This,

combined with their practical applications of Culturally Relevant Intentional Literacy Communities and Textured Teaching, is far more likely to create sustained and meaningful change in English Language Arts classrooms. While both books were pedagogical and practical guides for my study, Parker's focus on liberating literacy routines and traditions such as independent choice reading, reading conferences, and classroom libraries provided actionable themes for the professional learning sessions.

Considerable amounts of research on diversifying texts in the classroom have been done with participants who were pre-service teachers (Durand, 2015; Hartsfield & Kimmel, 2020; Tschida et al., 2014;) or in-service teachers who were participating in graduate studies programs (Boyd et al., 2021; Heineke, 2014; Strong-Wilson, 2007). There are few research studies that have focused on in-service teacher participants, and even fewer with participants from within the same division. This study fills in this gap in the research. This study also extends the existing research about diversifying texts in the middle years and high school English Language Arts classroom by merging teacher introspection with the intentional teaching of diverse texts. Through book clubs, this research attended to the need of teachers to source diverse texts; however, the work did not end there. Participants in this study worked toward internalizing the process of recognizing and selecting diverse texts, while also examining their own role in systems of power and inequity and how those systems existed within their literacy practices.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This study took place throughout the 2022/23 school year in a small suburban school division in the Canadian Prairies. The Prairie Division² employs about 500 teachers and provides French Immersion and English-track programming to a population of approximately 8,400 students in kindergarten through grade 12. This study occurred within the context of a professional learning series (PLS) conducted in Prairie Division, as part of its ongoing work in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. The professional learning series (PLS) was an ongoing series of five half-day sessions, occurring during the school day, that focused on diversity and representation in story within the MY and SY ELA classrooms. The purposes of the PLS were to a) consider the ways in which the MY and SY teachers in Prairie Division might begin to diversify the texts being used in their English Language Arts classrooms, and b) consider how they could diversify their pedagogy via Parker's (2022) culturally relevant routines. The PLS took place over five months, from February 2023 to June 2023. Each school in the division was encouraged to support one teacher attendee. The participants for the PLS were selected by the school principal. Participants in the PLS were not expected to have previous experience with utilizing diverse texts in their classroom, but participant experience was welcome. The PLS was facilitated by me, in my role as literacy coach in this school division. In this way, I held dual roles as both research participant and researcher, and I attend to this positionality later in this chapter. All of the division's five high schools and six middle schools had at least one ELA teacher participating in the PLS, with study participants recruited from this pool of participating

² Prairie Division is the pseudonym that will be used throughout. All identifying names have been redacted or replaced with a pseudonym.

teachers. As the research occurred within the context of the PLS, I will provide the context for the study and then I will outline the structure of the PLS sessions.

Recruitment and Ethics

On August 3, 2022, I submitted a divisional ethics application and draft participant consent letter to the school division. The Prairie School Division Research Application Form required an ethics board approval letter prior to granting divisional approval for research. However, the University Research Ethics Board (UofMREB) also required school division approval in order to process an ethics application. Unfortunately, this created an impossible approval loop. The Prairie School Division agreed to support this research on the condition that it passed the University of Manitoba's REB process and thus conditional divisional approval was granted on August 3, 2022, by the then superintendent of schools, and the approval letter was signed by the current acting superintendent of schools.

In October of 2022, I visited an administrator's council virtual meeting attended by the school division's superintendent, as well as five high school and six middle school principals and vice-principals. In this meeting, I discussed my dual role of both PLS facilitator and lead researcher of this study. I also shared with them the overall scope and rationale for the PLS and how it would be connected to the work of this study. During this time, I clarified that, while I would be sending a forthcoming email requesting the names of the participants for the PLS, I would not be recruiting participants for this study until after I had received UMREB approval. I concluded this virtual meeting with an opportunity for administrators to ask questions about the PLS specifically and my research more generally.

In December of 2022, participant selection for the PLS was determined by the Prairie School Division and approval was granted by the University Research Ethics Board, which permitted me to contact all PLS participants and invite them to participate in the research connected to the PLS.

Study Participant Selection

Participants for this study were recruited from within the pool of 18 teachers who were selected by the Prairie School Division to attend the professional learning series. In January of 2023, an introduction to the study email was sent to all 18 PLS participants from my University of Manitoba email account. In this introduction to the study email, the PLS participants were introduced to the purpose of my research and the study methods, data collection, and participant recruitment and selection process. This email also invited PLS participants interested in learning more about the research to attend a virtual information session that was held during the lunch hours of the school day. Attending the research study virtual information session was not mandatory for joining the study; rather, it was an optional session intended to provide further information and answer questions about the study. The email also advised that, once the virtual information session had concluded, all participants in the Professional Learning Series would receive an email invitation to participate in the research study. The research study virtual information session was held at the end of January 2023. Both my faculty advisor and I were present; however, no potential PLS participants chose to attend. Directly after the virtual information session, the study invitation email was sent to all PLS participants. Attached to the email invitation was the research participation information and consent form.

As stated in my REB application and the subsequent study communication sent to potential research participants within the PLS, the first four MY teachers and the first four SY teachers who responded to my email with a completed research participant information and consent form would be chosen as study participants. I decided to limit the study to a maximum of eight participants to allow for a more focused approach to data collection with hopes of observing shifts in participant language and/or beliefs. Selecting four MY and four SY teachers would also hopefully encourage cross-pollination of beliefs and practices between grade levels. All completed consent forms were logged for first-come, first-served purposes. If there were insufficient study volunteers for either the MY or SY ratio, the remaining spaces in the study would be given to the next interested participants on the list. This, however, proved not to be an issue, as three MY teachers and three SY teachers responded to the email with signed consent forms. I responded to each participant's email individually, confirming that they had been accepted into the study and then also arranged a time to meet with them, in person, to discuss any question or concerns they had regarding their participation in the study.

It is important to note that all PLS participants were informed that ***participation in the study was optional***. A participant's decision to participate (or decline participation) in this study would not impact their position within the Prairie School Division. Professional Learning Series participants could choose to decline to participate in the study and still participate in the Professional Learning Series. That is, the choice to participate in this study would not, in any way, impact their participation in the Professional Learning Series. Moreover, if a participant initially agreed to participate in the study, they could later decide they no longer wanted to

participate in the study and remain in the Professional Learning Series. No participants chose to do this.

Participant Confidentiality and Anonymity

As this study occurred within the context of a professional learning series conducted through a school division, and because the PLS was offered regardless of whether participants chose to participate in the study or not, the PLS contained both teacher participants who were part of this study and participants who were not a part of this study.

At the beginning of each session, I asked all participants in the PLS to keep comments made in our discussion confidential. However, I could not guarantee confidentiality for anyone participating in the study. As per the consent form, study participants did have a responsibility to uphold confidentiality; however, this confidentiality could not be guaranteed. Beyond the expectations of consent encouraged in the study, all participants of the PLS were members of the Manitoba Teachers Society and were guided by the Code of Conduct. That meant they were expected to abide by the Code of Conduct's practices of integrity and diligence and were bound to its principles of respect and confidentiality, particularity when it came to criticisms of colleagues and the personal information of students. While this is the expectation of the profession, I could not guarantee that the teachers would not share the conversations that occurred in the PLS. That is, however, always a risk in professional development, staff meetings, and discussions in general in schools—and is not a risk that was unique to the PLS or connected to this study. At the beginning of each session, teachers in the PLS were reminded of their professional obligation and were reminded to speak directly to a colleague if they had an issue with anything said, and to not to share discussions from within the PLS beyond the group.

Students did not participate in this study, and as such, at the beginning of each session, PLS participants were reminded not to use student names or identifying information. If a study participant accidentally used a student's name, either in a written reflection or during a recorded book club, it was replaced by a pseudonym in the transcript. Similarly, if a study participant revealed the name of a colleague or supervisor, it was also replaced by a pseudonym in the transcript. Any information that revealed a student's, colleague's, or supervisor's identity was redacted. As per school division and research ethics, PLS participants (and therefore study participants) were reminded, at the beginning of each session, of their duty to disclose information pertaining to the abuse of children.

PLS Session Structures, Topics, and Themes

The five sessions of the professional learning series were designed (by me) to weave together the "why" of diversifying texts as provided by Bishop (1990) with the "how" of pedagogical implications of and for practical application as outlined in Parker's *Culturally Relevant Intentional Literacy Communities* (2022). Appendix B provides an initial overview of Sessions 1 through 5 and outlines the topics that I initially proposed we explore during the PLS. This overview was created months prior to the first session of the PLS and served as a general guide. Consequently, adjustments to session topics and themes were made in response to PLS participant needs and feedback and time constraints. More information about the adjustments made to this overview will be discussed later in this section as I discuss each session in more detail.

The PLS sessions were divided into two portions. The first portion of the session was an ebb and flow of large- and small-group discussions. For this first portion of the session, study

participants and non-participants were intermingled. As a result, the only data produced from this portion of the PLS was in the form of my research journal that evolved into a reflective tool I used to collect and examine my affective responses as researcher. For all five sessions, we started the first portion together as a large group and began with a reminder of the purpose for the PLS, participant duties to confidentially, and the teacher code of conduct. In order to support teachers in actively participating in, navigating, and facilitating critical conversations around race, gender, and power, participants were introduced to Singleton's (2021) four agreements for courageous conversations, and we discussed how we could use them to create space for safer conversations. These four agreements were also reviewed at the beginning of each session. From there, we moved into focused discussion on topics such as textual lineages (Tatum, 2014), interrogating language (TEDx Talks, 2022), problematic texts (Parker, 2022), the power of independent choice reading (Parker, 2022), and ways to examine power and privilege. These served as actionable ways in which participants in the PLS could begin to meaningfully facilitate learning with diverse texts in their English Language Arts classrooms.

The second portion of the session centred on the book clubs where there was a particular focus on reading middle grade and young adult texts written by diverse authors. For this portion of the session, study participants were separated into their own book clubs and were not intermingled with non-study participants. The study participant book club groups were audio recorded and transcribed. For this portion of the session, the book club groups frequently elected to move around and relocate themselves into a quieter space for their discussions. The book club group with the study participants chose to move into a room down the hall. The non-

study participants never indicated to me that they had deduced who was participating in the study.

The recommended texts for each book club session were organized based on theme; as such it was not necessary for all book club participants to select the same title to read. I provided text recommendations (Appendix E) based on each book club's theme: identity (Session 2), belonging (Session 3), and power (Session 4). The participants of the professional learning series were ELA teachers from grades 6–12, and I was cognizant to include texts that were written for middle grades and young adult readers, by diverse authors, about diverse characters. As diversifying the MY and SY ELA canon was the motivation for the PLS, Appendix E outlines the book club texts that could supplement (or replace) a canonical text or add a perspective that is missing from the canon (see the fifth column in Appendix E). This chart also contains a column reflecting the authenticity of the author. Earlier in this thesis, I acknowledged that understanding author authenticity is a complex and sometimes a problematic practice. With all these nuances in mind, I did need to use and model a process for selecting diverse texts. The purpose of this chart is to show that I undertook a process to ensure that, whenever possible, the books selected for the book clubs were written by authors from within the community they were exploring in the story.

Book club discussions lasted approximately 45 minutes and the discussion questions for the book clubs were provided by me, in my role as literacy coach. For 25 minutes, the book club discussions focused on empathy-building questions (Tulshyan, 2022):

- How does this character's social identity—race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic background, and so on—impact their lives?

- How does the protagonist or protagonists highlight perspectives that I haven't considered before and experiences different mine?
- How do other characters perceive the protagonist because of their social identity?
- How can I learn about the challenges that others who carry these identities face?

After the empathy-building questions, book clubs had 20 minutes to directly address the three primary research questions as set out for this study:

- In what ways is the book you selected to read a diverse text?
- What are the motivations and barriers in using this text in your classroom?
- How might you facilitate learning in your classroom using this text?

The discussion questions remained the same for all four book clubs.

After the book club discussion concluded, we came back together as a large group, with study and non-study participants intermingled, and all PLS participants were invited to complete a written reflection. The content of this written reflection was open-ended, but in my role as literacy coach, I offered guidance via two reflective prompts. The first prompt encouraged participants to reflect on the conversations they had engaged in during the current or previous session(s), noting things that struck them as significant, worth further thinking or investigating. The second prompt asked participants to share their thoughts, wonderings, and hopes for the upcoming sessions. Participants were also encouraged to go wherever the writing took them, as the prepared prompts were only intended to offer a grounding for participant reflection. Study participants, like the participants in the PLS, were not required to complete the written reflections. Study participants were invited to hand in their written reflections to me to use as data in this study.

Session 1: The Importance of Representation and Story

The first session of the PLS began by setting the purpose for the PLS, reminding participants of their duties to confidentiality and the teacher code of conduct and introducing Singleton's (2021) four agreements for courageous conversations. In advance of the session, participants were sent a pre-reading of Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop's "Mirrors, Windows and Sliding Glass Doors" (1990), and this essay grounded much of the work in Session 1 around the "why" for diversifying the texts in MY and SY ELA classrooms. First, participants met in small groups to discuss this essay, with a particular focus on the question, Why is diversity and representation in story important? When we met back together as a group, we layered in the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) 2019 Diversity Statistics (2019), and participants were asked to discuss what they noticed and what they wondered, and to consider how these statistics connected to Dr. Bishop's essay. Next, teachers were supplied with blank paper and markers to create textual lineages (Tatum, 2014). In these lineages, they were asked to create a map or web that reflected the texts that had significance or meaning in the development of their identity as a reader and/or a human. Once the lineages were complete, participants met in small groups to share them and to consider the ways those texts may (or may not) have served as windows, mirrors, or sliding glass doors. Next, participants were introduced to the format, themes, and discussion questions for the book clubs. They were provided with a brief plot summary for all the book club books and met with their book club group to discuss the reading options and indicate initial interest for each month's selections. The session concluded with time for participants to complete their written reflections.

Session 2: How to Interrogate Language and Text

The second session of the PLS focused on “the how,” with particular attention paid to Parker’s (2022) call to “address and heal reading trauma and curriculum violence” (p. 64) and to how teachers can place diverse stories in meaningful conversation with other texts while resisting ethnocentric universalisms and dominant narratives of culture. We started as a large group. We viewed and responded to a TedX talk by Elizabeth Stordeur Pryor (TEDx Talks, 2022) about the use of the N-word, and teachers were directed to a guide for inclusive language recently published by the provincial teacher’s society. The pre-reading for this session was a short excerpt from Parker’s *Literacy is Liberation* (2022) that focused on “Should I Teach This Text— Starter Questions for Consideration” (pp. 132–133). Using Parker’s starter questions as a guide, I modelled an interrogative process for four commonly used canonical texts in MY and SY ELA classrooms: *In the Heat of the Night* (Ball, 1965), *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck, 1937/2013), *April Raintree* (Mosionier, 1989), and *The Outsiders* (Hinton, 1967). In a large group discussion, we explored the purpose/intent for including these stories in our classrooms and reflected on whether or not they still serve as the best (or in some cases sole) story for that purpose or intent. Following this, participants formed small groups to repeat this interrogative process with texts they were currently using in their classrooms. We came back together as a large group to share our small group discussions, and participants were directed to consider whose voices were represented in these texts. Next, participants joined with their book club groups to discuss that month’s book club options, which were based on the theme of identity: *Freewater* (Luqman-Dawson, 2023), *Thanks A Lot Universe* (Lucas, 2022), *All American Boys* (Reynolds & Kiely, 2017), *The First Thing About You* (Hayden, 2022), and *The Firekeeper’s Daughter* (Boulley,

2021). The book club groups spent 25 minutes focused on Tulshyan's (2022) empathy-building questions and a follow-up 20 minutes of discussing the questions that paralleled the three primary research questions set out for this study. After the book club discussion time, participants had 15 minutes to do their written reflection, and we ended the session in a large group, sharing those written reflections.

Session 3: Liberating Literacy Through Reading for Enjoyment

The third session of the PLS attended to Parker's (2022) call to "deliberately teach and hand over the habits, skills and dispositions required to be a high literacy achiever to every single student" (p. 64) and to how teachers might begin to recognize their own role in perpetuating systems of power and inequity—particularly as they related to the literacy practices and processes in their classrooms. We started in a large group, where participants were introduced to some of the research that has documented the benefits of reading for enjoyment, and then we moved into a discussion of the pre-reading for this session, a short excerpt from *Literacy is Liberation* titled "Independent Choice Reading as Routine" (pp. 81–86). Next, participants formed small groups to more closely examine Parker's "Steps to Introduce Independent Reading Routines" and to discuss the ways in which they planned to (or were) meaningfully integrating reading for enjoyment in their classrooms. It was during this session that participant input began to carve a new path away from the topics I had initially posed some months ago in my initial overview of sessions. I had planned to spend some time in this session looking at divisional resources created about reading conferences, but the PLS participants, in their small group discussions, expressed a need for more explicit examples of the "how." In particular, they requested resources they could use to support independent reading in their

classrooms. In response to this, the small group discussions were moved to whiteboard spaces around the room, and each group created a t-chart reflecting on practices that they committed to doing more of, and less of, to meaningfully integrate reading for enjoyment into their classrooms, as well as crowd-sourcing resources (i.e., educational voices, readings) that could further support their learning in this area. I also nudged participants to look within the processes of the PLS sessions themselves for inspiration on how to meaningfully integrate reading for choice in the classroom. Following this, participants joined with their book club groups to discuss that month's book club options, which were based on the theme of belonging: *The Barren Grounds* (Robertson, 2021), *Akata Witch* (Okorafor, 2017), *The Sun Bearer Trials* (Thomas, 2022), *The Marrow Thieves* (Dimaline, 2017) and *Parable of the Sower* (Butler, 1993/2019). As outlined earlier in this thesis, the book club groups spent 25 minutes focused on Tulshyan's (2022) empathy-building questions and a follow-up 20 minutes of discussing the questions that paralleled the three primary research questions set out for this study. After the book club discussion time, participants had 15 minutes to do their written reflections, and we ended the session in a large group sharing those written reflections.

Session 4: Naming Power and Privilege

Session 4 moved almost entirely away from the topics I had initially suggested some months ago in my overview of the sessions. As a human, I felt it was necessary to take time in this session to process recent news around a nearby school division's call to ban 2SLGBTQ+ books in libraries and classrooms and another nearby school division's report of the theft of a school's Pride flag, which was accompanied by Indigenous-authored books being stolen from a teacher's classroom library. As a teacher, I was empathic to the needs expressed by my

colleagues in the previous PLS session to see practical examples of “how” to meaningfully incorporate diverse texts in the classroom. As well, as a facilitator of professional learning, it had become clear to me in the previous sessions, as I listened to book club groups discuss Tulshyan’s (2022) empathy-building questions, that many of the participants were lacking the explicit language needed to identify and name systems of power and privilege. Session 4 started by attending to the human need to discuss the recent news events. In a large group discussion, we unpacked the potential implications of these news events in our school communities, classrooms, and school division. In response to participant requests to see practical classroom examples, I followed our group discussion with a mini lesson and read aloud using the picture book *The Oldest Student* (Hubbard & Mora, 2020). I introduced a reading strategy that teachers could use in their class to scaffold readers in identifying their connections to a text, and participants practised using this strategy during and after the read aloud. Next, we moved into Privileges for Sale, an activity that could be used in a classroom context but, more importantly, I hoped would help participants in identifying and naming power and privilege. In the Privileges for Sale activity, each participant was given a list of “privileges” that related to education, food, water, culture, family, and safety and was asked, for the purposes of this activity, to imagine that they existed in a world with no privileges. They were assigned a random dollar amount to purchase privileges from the list and needed to be prepared to share their choices and rationale for the privileges they chose to purchase. Some groups were able to purchase only one or two privileges, while other could purchase up to eight or nine. After we debriefed the Privileges for Sale activity, we moved into our book club groups, and participants were encouraged to keep the list of privileges close to mind as they focused on Tulshyan’s (2022) questions. The theme for

that month's book club was power, and all the selections were graphic novels: *Go with the Flow* (Williams & Schneemann, 2023), *When Stars are Scattered* (Jamieson & Mohammed, 2020), *Borders* (King & Donovan, 2021), *Speak Up* (Burgess, 2023), *Displacement* (Hughes, 2020), *Messy Roots* (Gao and Xu, 2022), and *Heartstopper* (Oseman, 2021). After the 45 minutes allotted for book club discussion time, book club groups spent some time discussing what book they would be reading for the next month's choose-your-own-adventure book club. Participants were encouraged to select a diverse text, written by a diverse voice, that could update, supplement, or replace a canonical text currently being used in their classroom. To end the session, participants had 15 minutes to do their written reflections, and we once again ended the session in a large group with the option to share those written reflections.

Session 5: Now What? What Is Our Next Story?

The last session of the PLS occurred mid-June and once again veered off from my proposed session overviews. We began together as a large group, taking time to update and debrief on local and national events that pertained to book banning and anti-2SLGBTQ+ protests and legislation. Next, we read the *One and Everything* (Winston, 2022), a picture book that tells of the importance of sharing and preserving story. As a group, we discussed what the next steps in our story might be, as teachers, as a professional learning group, and as a school division. Following this, participants joined their book club groups. As this was the "choose-your-own-adventure" book club, and participants were likely to all be unfamiliar with the texts their colleagues chose to read, an extra 5 minutes was allotted for quick book summaries. As per the previous session, book clubs spent 25 minutes focused on Tulshyan's (2022) empathy-building questions, and a follow-up 20 minutes of discussing the questions that paralleled the three

primary research questions set out for this study. At the end of the previous four PLS sessions, participants had had the option of sharing their written reflections with me. In this final session, I returned all of their written reflections, and we spent some time reflecting on them. First, participants were given 25 minutes of quiet time to reread their reflections and respond, in a written form, to some response questions. These questions asked participants to look back at the written reflections, learning experiences, talking circles, and book club conversations they had engaged in over the last 4 months. I asked them to write about: how their thinking grew or changed; what struck them as significant, urgent, and/or worth further thinking and investigating; and what were they committing to doing more of and less of in their classroom particularly when it came to topics such as social identity, lived experiences, and the importance of diversity in story. Next, participants rejoined with their book club groups to spend 15 minutes sharing their responses. Finally, we reconnected as a large group to continue the sharing and close out the last PLS session. Participants were encouraged to share their final written responses with me; however, as with previous written responses, this was not mandatory.

Positionality

The PLS (and this study) was facilitated by me, in my role as literacy coach in this school division. In this way, I held dual roles as both research participant and researcher. I am a white, straight, cisgender, settler woman. I sit in a position of privilege that has shaped how I view and interact with the world around me, and how society has responded back to me. My intent for the PLS (and this study) was to be grounded in culturally relevant instruction. I acknowledge that this means I had to be willing to make mistakes, learn from them, and do better.

It is also important here to note the implicit power structures that exist within schools and school divisions. My role as a literacy coach has been non-evaluative. I have worked alongside teachers, as a fellow teacher, and contractually, I have been a teacher. I acknowledge that in the combined role of literacy coach and researcher, my positionality was not neutral; as Souto-Manning and Price-Dennis (2010) stated, “Teacher research is never neutral, but rather is informed by the political, economic, and cultural factors that merge within the classroom environment” (p. 273). It is naïve to believe that my role as literacy coach had no effect on the ways in which participants within the PLS and within this study interacted with me and each other. Participant perceptions of power over, via my close proximity to the board office, may have inhibited some participants from openly or fully contributing in the PLS (and this study). In an attempt to mitigate participant concerns, time was set aside at the beginning of each of the five sessions to remind teachers of *my* roles and responsibilities as a both PLS facilitator and researcher and *their* roles and responsibilities as teachers participating in the PLS (and in this study). During this time, particular attention was paid to confidentiality and participation consent (topics that were addresses earlier in the “Participant Confidentiality and Anonymity” portion of this chapter).

The exploration of power, identity, equity, and diversity, both personally and professionally, may have caused participants in the PLS (and in this study) to feel discomfort. Fear of saying the wrong thing in front me, or their colleagues, may have prevented some participants from fully or openly engaging in the PLS (and this study). It is also important to recognize that a participant in the PLS could have intentionally, or inadvertently, spoken words of harm. In anticipation of this, the PLS (and this study) required that I facilitate a level of safety

amongst participants. While I could not ensure a definitive safety, as a facilitator and researcher I worked to create a *safer* context for engaging in reflective dialogue. As noted previously, time was set aside at the beginning of the first session to introduce the PLS participants to the “Four Agreements of Courageous Conversations” as outlined by Singleton (2021), wherein participants were encouraged to “stay engaged,” “speak their truth,” “experience discomfort,” and “expect and accept non-disclosure.” The subsequent PLS sessions (Sessions 2–5) also began with reviewing the “Four Agreements.” The purpose of this was to support teachers in actively participating in, navigating, and facilitating critical conversations around race, gender, and power.

Nudging teachers to diversify classroom texts is work I have been enacting for many years now, both as a SY ELA teacher and as a literacy coach. The idea for the professional learning series began several months prior to the proposal of this research study and is work I would have been partaking in regardless of the existence of this study. My work in the area of diversifying texts in MY and SY classrooms has been a subtle dance between love (for my profession, students, and colleagues) and frustration (that my continued calls to diversify the canon are seemingly unheeded). These feelings persisted throughout the course of this study, and as such I used a research journal to collect and examine these emotions in an attempt to sort through how these affective responses might inform my next steps as both a researcher and a literacy coach.

The participants in the PLS, and in this study, were a mixture of colleagues I had not met before and colleagues that I had worked with for the past 20 years. They have been my community, and I respect and admire them. They are also some of the same colleagues that

participated in the text audit that I referred to in the introduction to this thesis. They are the same colleagues that I have continued to nudge in practice and pedagogy in my years as a coordinator and as a literacy coach. Some of that nudging has resulted in change; some of it has not. In fact, I suspect that my colleagues have become all too accustomed to my call for action. I fully admit that this causes me great frustration. My goal for this research was to leverage that frustration in order to lead with love. I respect my colleagues, I respect the weight of what it means to be a teacher (especially right now), I respect the vulnerability that was required for this process, and I thank them for joining me in this important work.

The Methodological Literature

Culturally Relevant and Culturally Responsive Teaching (Bishop, 1990; Ebarvia, 2023; Gay, 2013; Germán, 2021; Parker, 2022) are compatible with post-structural understandings of educational research (Britzman, 1992; Davies, 2003; St. Pierre, 2000), which recognize that power, truth, data, and validity are subjective and fluid and socially constructed by both the participants and the researcher. Thus, the methodologies of this research, specifically the choice to use books clubs, served as an ideal vehicle to explore my three primary research questions, which were also anchored in post-structural understandings.

Janzen observed that book clubs, which she called literary response groups, “honour, post structural conceptions of multiple and fluid identities (Britzman, 1992; Butler, 1990, 1993), knowledge as socially constructed (Davies, 2003; St. Pierre, 2000) and experience as contested (Britzman, 1992, 2003; Scott, 1992)” and that “within literary response groups, narratives and experience are understood as discursively influenced, infused with memory and desire, and restricted by the failures of language” (Janzen, 2015). In this way, book clubs recognize that the

teacher participants (and their understandings and identities) could not always be captured by their contributions. Their offerings were influenced by others in the discussions, by the day, by the questions asked, by the response given before, and by so many additional elements. Book clubs put the constructedness of all research on display, as there is no pretense about truth and authenticity. Brown (2019) also situated book clubs in a social constructivist framework in which “all meanings and knowledge are human constructions, and that the objective truth is an impossibility” (p. 79). Brown continued on to state that, as there is no absolute truth or capturing of what is real in post-structural research, book clubs highlight “Rosenblatt’s (1968) transactional approach to reader response theory is a natural extension of social constructivism to the realm of literature and reading” (p. 79).

In addition to being a format that some teachers were familiar with, book clubs also provided the framework of a shared text through which the teacher-readers could think more deeply about the importance of diversity and representation in story (Strong-Wilson, 2007). While Bishop (1990) emphasized the ability of a text to act as a window and mirror for the reader, the literature around teacher-reader book clubs has highlighted book clubs as spaces with a similar potential to act as windows and mirrors for teacher-readers (Boyd et al., 2021; Durand, 2015; Hartsfield & Kimmel, 2020). In this way, book clubs served as an ideal methodology to examine how teachers recognize and enact the call for diversifying the texts being used in MY and SY ELA classrooms. Janzen (2015) found that engaging in common readings such as book clubs “fostered a shared sense of context, providing touchstones for future conversation” (p. 991). This means that books clubs provide readers with shared window views of textual landscapes.

However, it is to be noted that, even while looking out the same window, no two people “see” the exact same thing. One step in either direction alters the viewer’s field of perception. Critical Literacy theory reminds educators that reading is never a neutral stance. Therefore, the teacher-readers in the PLS, and the texts included in the book clubs, brought with them power and positionality.

In her work, Strong-Wilson (2007) noted that using book clubs as a methodology “create[s] a space in which teachers could critically examine their constructions of difference through the discussion of children’s literature” (p. 119). In particular, she drew attention to the role of self-reflection in books clubs. In her research using book clubs as methodology, she has encouraged teachers to think about their own histories as readers and to reflect upon the stories that formed the landscape of their reading identities. Strong-Wilson argued

that teachers, including white teachers, need to be full, autobiographical participants in reclaiming these stories from the recess of memory so as to see them in a broader, historical and ultimately international perspective, in the sense of having broader implication beyond the local and immediate. (p. 128)

That is, teachers need to deconstruct how stories from their reading histories may have acted as foggy mirrors (Enriquez, 2021) or tiny windows (Enriquez, 2021), informed their perceptions of self and the world around them, and influenced the stories they have brought with them into their classrooms. Consequently, this study offered participants the language and the opportunity to reflect on the impact of their positionality and its fluid interaction with the texts they centred in their classrooms.

Janzen noted, “Within literacy response groups, narratives and experiences are understood as discursively influenced, infused with memory and desire, and restricted by the failure of language” (2015, p. 990). This is not a consequence of this particular method; instead, it is always a factor in all research that relies on participants’ stories, interpretations, and feelings. In book clubs, participants are undoubtedly influenced by the utterances of other participants and by the dynamics of the group. There is no illusion of authenticity and truth in using book clubs in/as research. Instead, book clubs put on display the ways that all data are constructed, contextualized, and interpreted. Despite, or even perhaps because of, the ever-fluctuating nature of narratives, this study leveraged books clubs to invite conversations about the familiar, the unfamiliar, and the instances in which a shared text may prompt teacher-readers to have differing perspectives on the textual landscape.

Data Collection Methods

To capture data during the PLS sessions, I utilized three data collection methods:

- 1) **Research Journal:** The first part of the session was an ebb and flow of large- and small-group discussions, facilitated by me, in my role as literacy coach. As PLS participants and research study participants were intermingled during this time, I planned to use a coded research journal to collect field notes only pertaining to the eight research study participants. Collecting field notes as a researcher while simultaneously being a present and responsive facilitator of professional learning proved near impossible to juggle. Consequently, I collected little in terms of field notes reflecting the comments made by study participants during the large-group discussions that occurred in the first half of the sessions. Instead, my

research journal evolved into a reflective tool I used to collect and examine my affective responses as researcher.

- 2) Audio Recordings: A password-protected iPad was placed on the tables of the book club discussion group(s) in the research study to capture their conversation. The audio recordings of their discussions were used to assist with the accuracy of transcripts and written field notes. The book club discussion groups were facilitated via questions provided by me. However, the book club participants had a substantial role in the direction of the conversation, particularly as I was not in the room during their book club discussions. Study participants, like participants in the PLS, were not required to respond to all the questions in the book club discussions. The prepared questions were intended to offer a grounding for the discussions and were not intended to script or instruct the process.
- 3) Transcripts: As I was not in the room during the book club discussions, the audio recordings collected were transcribed. Oftentimes during a book club discussion, participants would not complete their thought/sentence before moving onto their next thought/sentence. This is indicated in the transcript with an ellipsis.
- 4) Participant Written Reflections: After each book club discussion, 15 minutes were provided for the PLS participants to partake in an individual, written reflection. The content of this written reflection was open-ended, but in my role as literacy coach, I offered guidance via two reflective prompts that encouraged participants to reflect on the conversations they had engaged in during the current or previous session(s), noting things that struck them as significant and worth further thinking or investigating. Study participants, like participants in the PLS, were not required to complete the written reflections. While it was not mandatory,

study participants were invited to hand in their written reflections to me to use as data in this study.

Data Management

No participant names were used in this thesis. Pseudonyms were utilized to protect participant anonymity. Study participants were assigned gender-neutral pseudonyms. Participants were not informed of their pseudonym. Should there be any subsequent presentations, reports, or publications of this study, these pseudonyms will be used.

All email communications with study participants (including completed consent forms) were conducted via OneDrive/Outlook—the password-protected, dual-authentication, cloud storage email platform that is hosted by the University of Manitoba. All audio recordings of the book club discussions were transcribed by me; no transcription software, beyond the voice-to-text functionality of Microsoft Word, was used. Transcripts were coded and stored in OneDrive/SharePoint. The iPads used for audio recording were password-protected, with the ability to be remotely disabled, if needed. All iPads were locked in my personal filing cabinets. When transporting the iPads from the locked location to the workshop location, I was carrying them on my person. My research journal notes were coded and handwritten in a notebook that was stored in a locked filing cabinet in my home. Participants had the option to complete written reflections. If the study participants chose to share these, they were coded and stored in a separate locked filing cabinet. When I was transporting coded participant written reflections or the coded research journal from the locked location to the workshop location, I was carrying them directly on my person. As per the UMREB application, all audio recordings, transcripts,

research journals notes, and email communication with the study participants (including the consent forms) will be destroyed/deleted by June 30th, 2028.

Data Analysis

This research study, with its theoretical framework and methodologies anchored in post-structural understanding of truth as subjective, fluid, and socially constructed, brought added complexity when analyzing the data. Janzen (2015) noted that “from post structural perspectives, the research project is a precarious arrangement in which the researcher recognizes that truth is not something to be uncovered, that knowledge is not a static and fixed entity, and that language fails to fully represent its meaning” (pp. 990–991). That is, there is no authentic voice; there is no absolute or capturing of what is “real” within the data. This is most clearly illustrated in the context of the data collected for this research study. The focus of the data analysis was audio recordings and transcripts, in conversation with participant written reflections and my field notes, from which I construct a research narrative based on the narratives of the participants as they responded to the narrative of texts. I also recognize that the study participants’ offerings were constructions influenced by many factors, including the context of the book club itself—within a professional learning series, facilitated by a school division.

Janzen (2015) observed that the tension to find what is real in narrative data is further echoed when using the method of reading and discussing narrative texts (p. 992). She counselled against “seeking transparent and linear responses that propose to represent truth” and instead lean into the “dynamic engagements as well as social, collaborative, and contested reactions to novels” (p. 992). I would argue that the data collected in this research study were

indeed dynamic. They were collected over a period of five months, and thus they are reflective of several moments in time, occurring over a longer period, during which participants (myself included) left the context of the study and accrued more lived experiences and understandings. Janzen addressed this temporal ephemerality in her own data:

these various sources of data—the participants conversations, the novels, and my own writing and theorizing—were conceptualized within this research as texts. These texts do not represent something without origin—they are not without place, history, and lineage. The preconditions to discourse influence what is said, that is, statements are constituted by what come before and existed with the context they are spoken (Foucault, 1969/89). Therefore, as I reconceptualize data as comprising multiple texts, I recognize these texts exist within limits, remain burdened with history and are contextual and temporal (pp. 992–993).

However, if my data were constructed of multiple ephemeral and temporal narratives, nebulously woven together like a constellation of stars, and there was no “truth” to be found in that constellation, how should I begin to sift through the hours of audio recordings and transcripts I collected from the book clubs? Was there a way to see story in the pinpoints of light that were the data in my research?

I chose to partake in both sweeping and specific modes of transcript analysis to see what might emerge from my constellation of data. Given the introspective manner of this research study, only attending to the words of participants, without considering the subtext of their discomfort and conflict, would be missing out on a crucial part of the story. As such, I

utilized symptomatic analysis, as a larger sweeping analysis, in conjunction with thematic coding that was more specific and focused.

In my first round of interacting with my transcripts (and audio recordings), I conducted a symptomatic reading. In her study of teacher book clubs, Janzen (2015) described symptomatic reading as interpretative and speculative, while also providing an opportunity “to put the symptom into relation, to take notice of the particular and the peculiar, to consider what might be being rendered and referenced and to put these significant moments into conversation with the other texts” (p. 996). Symptomatic reading allowed for an analysis that focused on what was said and what was not said and looked closely for gaps, absences, and contradictions within the participant conversations. While doing this, I also was able to put my noticings of the data (the audio recordings, transcripts, and written reflections) in conversation with one another, and in conversation with the books used in the book club, canonical books, and larger discourses around teaching and literacy. Janzen also acknowledged the placement of the researcher within symptomatic analysis in that “the text, the researched and the researchers are all influential in the meaning maker endeavor, players in the scene of analysis” (p. 997). Consequently, symptomatic analysis provided a more nuanced analysis of the data that acknowledged the duality of my position, in and of the data. This was particularly helpful within the context of this study, as I was both the facilitator *in* the PLS and the researcher *of* this study.

Janzen (2015) stated that “working from a position where meaning-making is considered speculative (Pitt & Britzman, 2006) and where claims are lightly held interpretations instead of strongly seized assertions, *provokes a reconsideration of data and the desire to code data*” (p. 997). However, I was curious to see what might emerge when I placed symptomatic analysis in

conversation with a thematic coding that was both summative in nature and specifically focused to my three primary research questions:

- How do teachers define and select diverse texts for their classrooms?
- What motivations and barriers exist in using diverse texts in the classroom?
- How are teachers facilitating learning with diverse texts?

These three questions were integrated into the book clubs, with specific time (15 minutes) allotted for participant discussion. While symptomatic analysis rejects the spectacle of distanced coding, brazenly recognizes that we are always in our data, and rejects the quantitative impositions of coding on qualitative research, thematic coding still offered me a way to organize and interpret my data. In their studies of teacher book clubs Boyd et al. (2021), Durand (2015), and Heineke (2014) all used thematic analysis approaches, wherein the transcripts were read and reread to derive categories and themes from the words of the participants. Their methodology focused specifically on what participants said, paying less attention to how it was said. When utilized over a period of time, this approach allowed the researchers to observe shifts in participant language (Boyd et al., 2021). This analytical approach was of interest to me, as my study spanned over approximately 5 months, providing plenty of transcript data within which to explore how participants responded to my three primary research questions and to observe participant shifts in discourse over time.

In my second round of interacting with my data, I used thematic coding while listening to the audio recordings of each of the book clubs. Specifically, I used the three research questions to organize my data into themes. I listened for moments when participants may have attended to any of the three research questions and highlighted them on the transcript. A different colour

highlight was used to denote each of the three questions. I paused after each book club session to cut and paste the highlighted data fragments from the transcript into a chart (Figure 1). I repeated this process with all of the book club sessions, looking both within and across transcripts for themes. These themes became the sub-headings for organizing and connecting the data fragments. To be clear, I recognize that this process may appear to counter the post-structural theories that inform this research. However, I am not suggesting that this process resulted in themes emerging *from* the data, rather that my own analytical lens was always already informing what emerged. After analyzing my first transcript, I added an additional column to collect “aha lines” that felt important but did not seem to fit elsewhere in the chart.

Figure 1

Thematic Coding Chart—Session 2, Book Club 1

	Book Club #1
<p>Question 1: How do teachers define and select diverse texts for their classrooms?</p>	<p>(345) F: I think that first question is kind self-explanatory. E: Yeah, we already kinda . . .</p> <p>Reflecting on what is missing- (287) A: I can't say that I've read a book with like a character who had a physical disability that truly impacts most facets of their day-to-day life, before. Which is like wild, but. . . I can't, I can't think of a single other book, and which is why I chose this.</p> <p>Recommendations- (298) B: Is there a book like that that actually has a neurodiverse author that has their own voice attached to that? A: I saw – I took a picture of one that Tara had it on the table. . . "Speak Up?" (315) Other teachers, blogs</p>
<p>Question 2: What motivations and barriers exist in using diverse texts in the classroom?</p>	<p>Motivations: Connecting kids to stories (54) A: Indigenous kids can connect to lots of the traditions in that book. (59) EL: I think some of them don't necessarily feel super connected and it maybe it's good to see that kind of reflected in the text.</p> <p>The Danger of a Single Story (93-104) F: But would I personally, I would shy away from teaching that text. Only because there's not a lot of uplifting celebration of, you know, her, and kind of what she goes through. It's all very dark and depressing. A: It's important to do both right? Like you can teach it like the true history of a group of people, while also teaching brilliance and resilience, right? Like finding that balance. That's why I think I really resonate with that question- If this text is the only representation of the focal group in the story that I teach throughout the entire year, <i>am I comfortable with it being the representative texts that students will refer to repeatedly?</i> That was a really big one for me 'cuz I'm like, holy moly, even in lit circles, if kids only read one book like is this book doing that for them too? (113) A: they have some <i>brilliance and joy</i> in there too.</p> <p>Canonical Texts that need updating</p>

In my “final” round of interacting with my data, I listened to the audio recording and paused every few lines to write down, in the margins of the transcript, a word or key idea (such as navigating tough content or logistics of literature circles) that was reflective of that particular chunk of data. I paused after each book club session to transfer these words/key ideas from the transcript into the same chart as my thematic analysis based on my research questions (Figure 2). If a key theme or idea was noted multiple times, I assigned it a unique font colour. Once again, I repeated this entire process for all of the book club sessions.

Figure 2

Thematic Coding Chart—Session Two, Book Club 1

<p>354-363 Book Talk/Convincing a SY teacher 364-373 Navigating tough content 374-378 Engaging readers 380-429 Navigating tough content 433-436 Growing as a teacher 437- 458 Exposing student to other perspectives 459-468 Making mistakes as teachers 468-481 Logistics of Lit Circles</p>
--

Book Club #1 (Session 2)-

- Immediate discussion (line 2) of books being more appropriate for Sy vs My
- Why not appropriate? Sexuality? Violence
- Canonical books have sex, rape, etc.- Curley and his wife (keeping hand in glove with Vaseline)
- Is it legitimized because it’s canonical? Cis-het? Adults?
- Danger of a Single Story:
 - Line 94 struggling with April raintree- not saying it, but is he feeling tension with this being the sole representation of Indigenous story ?
 - 105- LGBTQ stories
 - 128- looking for books with queer main characters as a queer teen
 - INTERSECTIONALITY 145
 - Multiple perspectives 476
- Reflecting on canonical texts
 - 94 April Raintree
 - 221 Of Mice and Men
 - 291 Flowers for Algernon

Teachers reflecting on own growth:
(459-462)

A: I was just going to say like from when I read that two years ago to like when I listen to it more recently, I was like oh I understand way more of this now!

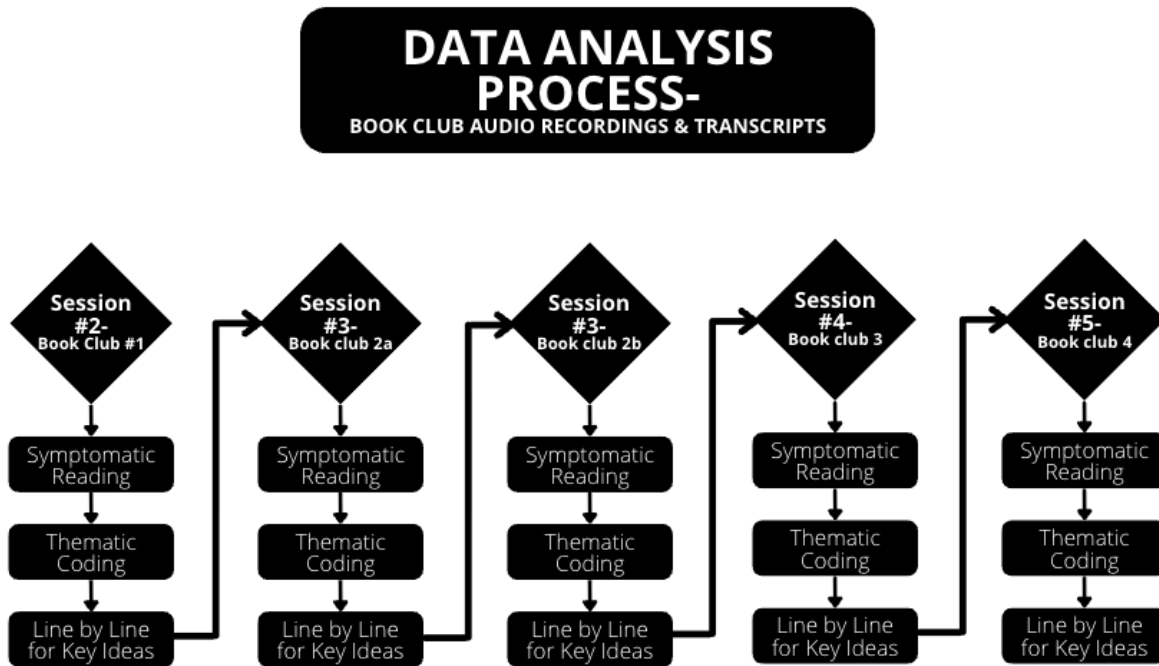
E: Yeah, right?

A: Or like when there’s Anishinaabemowin. . . I done a lot of growing too, that’s cool!

Any additional fragments of data from the audio recordings and/or transcripts that did not fit into the above-mentioned portions of the chart but seemed to have potential significance were stored below the chart in bulleted list with my accompanying notes, questions, and/or observations (Figure 2). I completed this three-step data analyses process for all four of the book club meetings occurring during the PLS. See Figure 3 below for a flow chart of my data analysis process.

Figure 3

Data Analysis Process—For Book Club Audio Recordings & Transcripts



The first session of the PLS was introductory in nature and as such did not contain a book club meeting to analyze. The second session of the PLS had four study participants present, which was enough participants to form one book club group and resulted in a data set of one audio recording and transcript. The third session of the PLS had six participants present, which resulted in the group splitting into two books club groups. Consequently, session three had a data set of two audio recordings and two transcripts. The fourth PLS session had four study participants present, who formed one book club group and resulted in a data set of one audio recording and transcript. The last PLS session had five study participants present, who also formed into one book club group and resulted in a data set of one audio recording and

transcript. I began my analysis with PLS Session 2 (Book Club 1) and moved through all three steps of my data analysis process before moving onto the next PLS Session 3 (Book Club 2).

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I will explore some of themes that emerged as study participants in the Professional Learning Series (PLS) participated in book club discussions around diverse texts. I found the book club discussions to consist of countless ephemeral and temporal narratives, nebulously woven together like a constellation of stars. In the findings and discussion that follow, there are moments when I zoom in to closely examine one of the pinpoints of light in the data, and other times when I zoom out from that pinpoint to consider how it is connected to other points in the data constellation. For instance, it was as participants were sharing their responses to the first discussion question of defining and selecting diverse texts that I was also able to gain an insight into their understandings of social identity. It was with the second and third research questions for this study (about what motivations and barriers existed in using diverse texts in classrooms, and how teachers were facilitating learning with diverse texts) that I was able to see how teachers upheld (or overlooked) perspectives that were different from their own. Participant interpretations established via the first set of questions, Tulshyan's (2022) empathy questions, were often affirmed and/or disrupted by what was discussed by participants in response to the second set of questions about facilitating learning with diverse texts. This made for rich opportunities (both within and across sessions) to put the participants in conversation with themselves, each other, and the literature on culturally responsive and culturally relevant literacy practices.

“Kind of Self-Explanatory” —Defining and Selecting Diverse Texts

The first of my primary research questions was aimed at understanding how teachers define and select diverse texts for their classrooms. As such, one of the questions included in

the book club discussions was “In what ways is the book you selected to read (for the book clubs) a diverse text?” My intent for this question was for participants to use the book club space and texts to engage in the critical process of unpacking who the author was and whose story was being represented. However, participants avoided answering this question altogether with their responses ranging from “I think that first question is kind of self-explanatory” to “can we skip ‘In what ways is the book selected a diverse text?’” It is possible that this question proved difficult to answer, as the participants had assumed, by default, that all the texts included in the book clubs were diverse. This was the intention, as I did employ a process to ensure that, whenever possible, the books selected for the book clubs were written by authors from within the community they were exploring in the story. However, because those texts were included in the book clubs, participants trusted and relied upon the design work I had done in selecting and defining diverse texts for the PLS. This meant that I was unable to gather data on participants as they grappled with the intricacies of discussing race and recognizing the complexity of social identity, particularly as it connects to selecting and defining diverse texts. Ebarvia (2023) argued that grappling with power, privilege, and marginalization as it relates to defining and selecting texts is important work for teachers to do:

How can I offer students “diverse” narratives in my classroom library if I haven’t unpacked what I mean or assume about what counts as “diverse”? Or if I don’t understand that using the term “diverse” can also reinforce Whiteness as a norm and all books written by non-white authors as *not* the norm, and therefore, “diverse”? As educator Everett (2017) writes, “one must ask diverse for whom or diverse from what”

The word diverse as it is currently used centres heteronormative Whiteness as the default. (p. 37)

In relying upon the design I had done in selecting and defining texts for the books clubs, the PLS participants had in many ways affirmed their beliefs that Whiteness was the norm, and they also divested themselves of the opportunity to question the heteronormative Whiteness of the phrase “diverse texts.”

“It's Important To Do Both, Right?”—Inclusive and Expansive Representation in Story

When discussing the graphic novel *When Stars are Scattered* (Jamieson & Mohammed, 2020), one participant, Ellis, a MY ELA teacher, identified author authenticity as a consideration in their text selection process:

It's the one that takes place in the refugee camp; it's a memoir. That's why I like using it in class. Because I think it would be good to open students' eyes up to just what life is like in a refugee camp. But it's also telling it from the perspective of somebody that's experienced it before, so it's a little bit authentic, right? It's not just the white author talking about something that happens to . . .

From this comment I can infer a few things. First, Ellis defined a diverse text as one that is written by an author who is writing about their own lived experiences. Second, Ellis was acknowledging that ELA classrooms have been, and continue to be, places that centre white authors telling appropriated stories, in this instance refugee stories, that are outside of their lived experiences. Parker (2022) directly addressed the phenomenon of story appropriation in her starter questions “Should I Teach This Text?” Designed to guide teacher decision making around text selection and the identification of potentially damaging texts, one of Parker’s

starter questions advises teachers to understand who the author is, what story they are telling, and to centre #ownvoices stories. I shared Parker's starter questions with participants during the second PLS session, and during the subsequent sessions I often heard participants echo her words in their own rationales for text selection. Parker argued that her questions were not designed solely to argue against the teaching of a potentially harmful text but rather to help educators "think proactively about how we can prevent curriculum harm and trauma and become more skilled at our decisions" (p. 133). This was particularly so with Parker's emphasis on multifaceted representations where she encouraged teachers to ask, "What are the identities represented by the focal group? Is this text the only representation of the focal group in this story that I teach throughout the year? If so, am I comfortable with this being the representative text that students will refer to repeatedly?" (p. 132). Parker's consideration was often present when the participants were discussing the selection of Indigenous and 2SLGBTQ+ stories in their classrooms. For instance, Flynn, a SY ELA teacher, discussed their own struggles with teaching the novel *April Raintree* (Mosionier, 1989), an Indigenous-authored text featuring an Indigenous protagonist:

Yeah, OK. So, my motivation for asking the question was like . . . It's not very celebratory at all. There's all sorts of terrible obstacles that April and her sister have to overcome, and so then, is it a text that merits being taught in schools today? Anyway, April is lighter-skinned Indigenous than her sister, and so April can pass as white whereas her sister, Cheryl, cannot. And so, there's kind of inequity in how the two sisters are treated just because of their skin tones. So, I kind of thought about that. But would I personally? I would shy away from teaching that text. Only because there's not a lot of uplifting

celebration of, you know, her, and kind of what she goes through. It's all very dark and depressing.

The interesting nuance to this conversation was that Flynn was using Parker's argument for inclusive and expansive representation as rationale to *exclude* a diverse text from their classroom. Avery, a MY teacher, pushed back against Flynn, nudging them to think about including more Indigenous stories in their classroom, in particular stories that focus on Indigenous brilliance:

A: It's important to do both, right? Like, you can teach like the true history of a group of people, while also teaching brilliance and resilience, right?

F: Sure.

A: Like finding that balance. That's why I think I really resonate with that question—If this text is the only representation of the focal group in the story that I teach throughout the entire year, am I comfortable with it being the representative text that students will refer to repeatedly? That was a really big one for me 'cuz I'm like, holy moly, even in lit circles, if kids only read one book . . . Like is this book doing that for them too?

Ebarvia (2023) echoed a similar sentiment, warning that societal biases can encourage a “flattened” perception of racial groups wherein cultural diversity is erased (p. 221). Ebarvia encouraged teachers to have expansive representation within the diverse texts they select for their classrooms to ward against this flattening that often lead to students viewing a single text as representative or definitive of a culture or community.

A focus on inclusive and expansive representation via stories of brilliance, resilience, and joy also surfaced during conversations around the selection and inclusion of 2SLGBTQ+ stories in

the classroom. Avery reflected on their own experiences as young reader looking for representation in story:

I think about like, even if there is representation—what does that representation include? I remember as a teenager in middle school, high school, looking for books with queer main characters. And at the end would always be like . . . And then they got AIDS, or they were ostracized from their family and sent to conversion therapy . . . And like those things do happen, I think it's important to talk about them too, but it's like terrifying. What's the point in coming out? Oh my God, right? And so . . . I don't know, I think that it's so important that there is lots of different representations. Like, if this is this the only thing a kid is reading, let's provide some positivity too. Not that that's the only thing we should do but . . .

Avery's comments about the inclusion of 2SLGBTQ+ stories illustrate that teachers need to be mindful of the curricular harm that results when teachers select only trauma-based representations. When queer students are exposed only to trauma-based stories in the classroom, it divests them of representation filled with hope and joy and creates additional fear around sharing who they are with others. Selecting joyous and hope-filled stories for the classroom can also build empathy and provide models for how non- 2SLGBTQ+ students and teachers can be good allies.

“Who You Are Is Not the Conflict”—Redefining Conflict Through the Lens of Social Identity

Flynn's and Avery's reflections on inclusive and expansive representations in texts connect to another text selection consideration from Parker's list. Namely, as teachers, are we prepared to teach about the historical context of a text in order to discuss topics such as

“systemic racism, linguistic justice, Black and ethnic pride and joy” (Parker, 2022, p. 133) within our classrooms? Additionally, as teachers, are we ready to do additional learning on these topics ourselves so that we are prepared to facilitate learning with these texts? Teacher knowledge about context and text selection could be seen in a conversation between Avery, Brooke, and Ellis:

A: I think one of the things I, like, want to see more of, is books with diverse characters that are joyful, like, representations, you know what I mean? I know that it kind of, like, defeats the purpose of there's a problem they're fighting against, right? When I think of a book like *Speak Up*, right? Where, like, super cool, she's, like, secretly this alter ego music girl. But during the day she's bullied incessantly for being autistic. I mean it's terrible, and I think that that definitely represents reality, but it be awesome to also have, like, books with just characters that are just vibing. They are vibing their vibe, living their life, and have some friends, have some people that they're not so close with. Have like . . .

E: Other challenges that are not connected with their identity.

A: Yes, yeah, yeah, exactly.

E: Trying to think if I know of any. I really don't. There's not many on that topic.

B: It's nice to have conflicts in books.

E: It is. But conflict doesn't have to be, like, centred around . . .

A: Who you are as a person.

E: Yeah. Because if it's constantly that. That's maybe not . . .

A: Right.

E: That can be hard for kids who are, let's say, autistic, right? And you're reading something, and they're, like, it's constantly like, "Oh, who you are is the conflict" . . .

A: That's the problem.

E: And over and over again.

A: And that's the problem.

B: But is there a resolution as well? There has to be some type of growth from beginning to end.

A: Like, yeah, there sometimes is. But if that's how every story starts, you know what I mean? Like, you're painting a very specific picture about groups of people.

E: Yeah, it's not . . . One story is not the problem, it's when all the stories are like that.

That's the problem.

This conversation highlighted that selecting and defining diverse texts requires a conscious shift in the way teachers position social identity and conflict. Literature, and popular culture more broadly, centres white, able-bodied, neurotypical perspectives, thus othering marginalized peoples and situating them as "problems" needing to be pitied, fixed, or saved. Prince and Hayden (2021) outlined some of the tropes that appear in texts about disability:

Books about disability have often reproduced the medical or charitable model of disability, presenting a protagonist with a disability as pitiable (Curwood, 2013) or as a token to promote change in the able-bodied people in the book (Dyches et al., 2006b). However, teachers should also exercise caution on the other end of continuum, namely, the protagonist should not be portrayed as a superhero (Martin, 2017) or "cured" of

their disability (Beckett, et al., 2010). When a family member or caretaker is portrayed, this individual should not be viewed as a “saint” in their caregiving role (p. 33).

Stories that are based in deficit representations uphold a saviour mentality that problematizes diversity and divests students (and teachers) of the opportunity to think critically about systems that uphold inequity. To counter this, Borsheim-Black and Sarigianides (2019) called for a racializing of literary elements, wherein literary elements such as plot and conflict are examined for implicit or explicit racial aspects (p. 76). From this perspective, the problem in the book club selection *Speak Up* (Burgess, 2023) is not that the main character has autism or that, in the canonical text *April Raintree* (Mosionier, 1989), Cheryl’s skin is darker than April’s, as expressed by Flynn in the data fragment shared earlier. The problem is that for decades ELA teachers have selected and centred canonical texts that uphold white, Eurocentric, cisgendered, neurotypical story tropes. Whiteness is seen as the default; consequently, when teachers do select diverse stories for their classrooms, it is important that marginalized people are not viewed as a conflict to be solved. This requires a shift in teacher mindset, moving away from problematizing marginalized people toward questioning systems that uphold inequity.

When discussing the literary element of conflict through an anti-bias lens, Ebarvia (2023) suggested,

one shift I’ve made is to turn students’ attention away from whether an individual character succeeds or fails, and instead ask how the society or community is able to support or not support the protagonist in their growth. This is a subtle but significant difference in framing. This framing turns students’ attention to the systems or cultural factors that facilitate or impede how an individual navigates their world. (p. 254)

The system is the focus rather than the individual. While Ebarvia's example was focused on students, it is also an important understanding for teachers to have as well, particularly when it comes to teaching and discussing diverse texts.

“I Don't Know If That's Something I Can Have in My Literature Circles”—The Capital “C” Child

An oft-occurring theme that emerged over several book clubs was a tension felt by MY teachers as they negotiated the grade level appropriateness of a diverse text. Notably, this was most often connected to books written by queer authors featuring 2SLGBTQ+ characters. For MY teachers Avery and Ellis, grade seven and eight served as the threshold of maturity, and they often navigated whether or not a text would be suitable for mature grade sevens, or mature grade eights, or should just be written off as a high school read. In one conversation, Ellis and Avery discussed the graphic novel *Messy Roots* (Goa & Xu, 2022):

A: And it's kind of just like her like growing up journey. So, like, kind of identity navigation. She's Wuhanese, but people don't like really to distinguish that in the States. And like just, like, being Chinese in America and then, like, coming to terms, like, with her queer identity and, like, how she can, like, still find acceptance within her family. And then there's, like, a part of it that, like—COVID-19 and how these people are really vilified in the media. And so I thought that was really interesting, cause it tied it to . . .

E: I feel it's more of a high school read . . .

A: Yeah, I think it could be . . . Like, I think some of the mature sevens would like it; I think my eights would like it.

E: Her [the character] scrolling Tinder, I'm like, I don't know if that's something I can have in my lit circles . . .

(Laughing)

A: Yeah.

E: But yeah.

A: There's like a few things I'm like, ummmmmm. But I think also too, it's like representation that our kids need?

E: I know I just wish it was had, like, a kind of, like, a version that would be more middle years, because you know. Yeah. But I love it; it's such a good book.

Both Avery and Ellis indicated that *Messy Roots* (Goa & Xu, 2022) was a powerful diverse text about social identity, but the occurrence of the queer main character scrolling on the dating site Tinder seemed to be enough for Ellis to deem the graphic novel too mature for MY students. Avery and Ellis frequently battled this cognitive conflict—the need for representation in text versus gauging grade level/age appropriateness. Through this, it would appear that previously debunked developmental discourses of the “idealized” middle grade reader as an innocent child have penetrated the beliefs of even well-meaning, affirming teachers. In the article “Dangerous Reading: How Socially Constructed Narratives of Childhood Shape Perspectives on Book Banning” (Tucker, 2023), Tucker drew on the work of Edelman and Kincaid to elucidate this phenomenon: “Edelman (2004) dubs this figure the capital-C ‘Child.’ The child is a universalized symbolic entity—the product of cultural narratives about children and is not to be confused with the lived experiences of any historical children” (Edelman 2004, 11). The capital-C Child, as Kincaid said, is “the perceptual frame we have available to us for fitting in just about anything we choose (Kincaid 1992, 62)”. The capital-C Child upholds teacher discourses on grade level/age appropriateness of texts for young readers, particularly as they connect to

“objectionable content” such as language, sexuality, gender, and conversations about discrimination and racism. However, as Tucker (2023), Kincaid (1992), and Edleman (2004) pointed out, beliefs about the capital-C Child completely ignore reality and the lived experiences of children. For example, there is research that has shown that, by age two, children use race to select playmates (Ebarvia, 2023), and by age five, children are likely to perpetuate the racial attitudes of the adults that surround them and have learned to associate power with certain groups of people (Ebarvia, 2023). To uphold the myth of the capital-C Child is to ignore the fact that, from birth, all children exist within a world of adults, and therefore they are constantly marinating in conversations, displays, and negotiations of power and privilege that are based on race, gender, and sexuality. Furthermore, the argument of the child as innocent and untouched by race, sexuality, and gender completely erases the lived realities and inequities faced by 2SLGBTQ+ children and children of colour.

The capital-C Child was ever present in another conversation between Avery and Devin (a high school teacher) as they navigated the paradox of gauging the grade level/age appropriateness of texts against the reality of the content students are likely to have access to via their cell phones:

A: I, yeah. I, like . . . I think it, for me, like, that I went from yes to no on this one is, like, it's not just the swearing. It's like a few other mature things too. But, like, the thing to me is, it's not a mature topic. It's just, like, it's the small references that the characters make because they're teenagers. Right?

B: Yeah.

D: Yeah. I have to get better about, like . . . I still have some baggage about, like, feeling you've handed it over and it had, yeah . . . But . . .

A: Uhm hmm. I think that's, like, scary though, to, like, give a kid something that you know is like . . . Not like . . . But, like, truly, I don't know . . . We're at the point in our teaching careers right where, like, we're giving kids books that have, like, maybe, a controversial word or topic but, like, they have phones in their back pocket that are, like . . .

D: There's a huge disconnect there.

A: Yeah, the amount of filth on the Internet? Insane!

This conversation is proof that, even while teachers were using the narrative of the capital-C Child to influence their process for selecting books, they sensed that it was a non-generative, reductionist way to view middle grade readers. These MY teachers acknowledged that this narrative completely ignored reality and the lived experiences of the students in their classrooms, and yet they still used it to censor their professional judgment. Consequently, when they were overruling their professional judgment, they were upholding systems of power and inequity that existed within their literacy practices.

The MY teachers in the PLS did come to some resolution in the cognitive conflict between representation in text versus grade level/age appropriateness when Avery and Ellis discussed the context of where a book would fit within their classrooms. They indicated that literature circles offered some safety and flexibility for the inclusion of diverse stories:

E: I think for *Thanks a Lot Universe*, like, there's occasionally a parent who pipes up and says they don't like 2SLGBTQ+ characters or whatever, and then you just ignore them

and say, look, they can read all sorts of things. Like, I'm doing lit circle, there's going, like, there's a bunch of options; they don't have to read that. I would think it's a great book, right? So, I don't see it as a strong barrier. Yeah, it's annoying—it doesn't happen a lot, but it's annoying when it does.

It also appeared that MY teachers had discovered that the element of choice within lit circles meant that, should there be a parental complaint around book selection, responsibility for the book selection could be divested back onto the student. This proved to be an interesting loophole; however, it could have negative implications for a teacher's relationship with the student. Namely, students might see that teachers were using procedure rather than taking an ethical stand about the inclusion of lived experiences in the stories they engaged in their classrooms. Avery affirmed Ellis's comments and pointed out that a similar choice loophole about book selection also seemed to exist when including diverse texts in the classroom library:

A: That's exactly what it is 'cause, like, most people are really supportive. But you don't always hear from people who are supportive; you hear from people who are like . . .

Yeah, but you're right. Like especially if it's in a lit circle or if it's in your classroom library.

Like, your child does not have to choose this text. They can never interact with it, and it's going to be just fine.

Is it okay, however, for some students to never interact with window texts that give them insight into lived experiences different than their own? Or, in the case of a not-yet-out young reader, is it okay to inhibit them from having access to texts that act as mirrors to affirm their own lived experiences? When educators do this, what message are they sending to students about the truth of their humanness and the humanness of others? I question Avery's response, that it is

“going to be just fine.” It may be “just fine” in the short term, as a vocal parent has been appeased, but ultimately, the educator has allowed that parent to preserve the belief that stories of heteronormative Whiteness should continue to be the focus of classrooms. When the MY teachers in this study were unsure about the grade level/age appropriateness of a text, the default was to hide the book in plain sight in the classroom library or quietly recommend it to individual students who were likely to identify with the story. However, I would argue that this is a betrayal of students and of these stories. Also, it perpetuates the marginalization of already-marginalized voices. A commitment to diverse stories means not hiding them in the corners of classroom libraries or have them exchange hands in furtive interactions. Diverse stories must be read and shared out in the open light of truth and humanity.

“I Just I Call BS on That at This Point. You Either Want To Change or You Don't”

As pervasive as the narrative of the capital-C Child was in the text selection processes of MY teachers, it seldomly surfaced in the canonical text selection processes of high school teachers, despite the fact that canonical texts often contain swear words, racism, sexism, and sexual innuendo. In *Romeo and Juliet* (Shakespeare, 1623/2016), a canonical text frequently taught in high school, the reader only makes it thirty lines into the first act of the play before the character Samson argues that women are the weaker sex and then threatens to rape the women in the family of his nemesis Montague. Why does *Romeo and Juliet*, like so many other canonical texts, escape the scrutiny of high school teachers while diverse texts that feature 2SLGTBQ+ characters and characters of colour give them pause? After all, the canonical texts and the diverse texts are likely to cover similar thematic territories of identity, sexism, racism, and prejudice. Is it because the characters in *Romeo and Juliet* are white, cisgendered, and

straight? Is it because many of the canonical texts are set in the past, and “things were different back then”? Or is it a type of academic hazing, wherein we have all had to suffer the slings and arrows of Shakespeare’s misfortune and so too should the next generation of readers. Or is it because Shakespeare is the norm, and nobody pushes back? Ebarvia (2023) warned of the side-effects of an unexamined canon:

over time as students and teachers who are socialized in the ‘canon’ we may internalize these racist, sexist ideas about what constitutes ‘literary value’—and then we reproduce it our curricular choices, year after year. Studying these works is then seen as necessary in order to be ‘educated,’ and how often do we really problematize or challenge how narrow that definition of education really is? Or how part of the narrow definition is rooted in racism and sexism? (p. 207).

Cameron, an ELA teacher who recently started a position as a vice principal, shared their frustrations in leading conversations with their staff about examining the biases in canonical texts:

C: Well yeah, and so interesting because that had been tried with my staff last year. And we’re, like, very traditional in the text that we’re teaching, right? And I mean the text that we’re teaching is the texts that our parents read in school in the 70s, right? Like, so . . .

E: We don’t need to read *In the Heat of the Night* anymore.

C: *Of Mice and Men*, *To Kill a Mockingbird* . . . Yeah, exactly. Anyways. But for whatever reason having conversations and trying to open dialogue about the why that we’re using and, or why we’re using these texts, and why this is kind of the road, the path that we

continue to go on, has been seen as an attack. And I'm trying to wrap my head around and reframe, see how the conversation can be reframed, to kind of see the value, and do some critical reflection. And I think that that's a bit of a piece that's missing—is that willingness to briefly reflect on what we're doing and whether or not it is actually reflective of, and responsive to, our learners, right?

Ebarvia (2023) argued that the defensiveness Cameron observed in their staff occurs when teachers are asked to consider the validity of the canon and consequently are required to acknowledge their own complicity in upholding structures of power and privilege. Another element that could also be at play is what Borsheim-Black and Sarigianides (2019) called White talk, a range of strategies learned by white people to avoid, subvert, and sidestep talking about race (p. 91). Consequently, upholding and defending the canon is, in and of itself, a form of White talk used by teachers to circumvent discussing race, racism, sexism, and other forms of inequity. White talk is also likely to stem from a fear teachers have of engaging in race talk as a whole and is also likely to include fear of making a mistake, saying something stereotypic or biased, or having a conversation about race spin out of control (p. 89). The teachers in the professional learning series expressed frustration at colleagues who use White talk to uphold the canon and avoid incorporating diverse texts into their classrooms.

B: And like you, when you were saying, like, “Oh, like, I'm scared to make a mistake,” I've heard that comment from teachers over the past five years, you know what I mean? Like . . .

E: It's an excuse.

A: It is.

C: 100%.

B: I just I call BS on that at this point. And it's, like, you either want to change, or you don't.

E: Yep.

B: Like, if you're comfortable doing the same thing you do every single year . . .

A: Also being scared to make a mistake doesn't mean that you don't try you, know what I mean? Like, you could be absolutely terrified and do it anyways, right?

B: 100%, so it is an excuse. It's, like, I'm scared to make a mistake, so therefore I will not try.

E: Which we see in kids, and I don't think teachers . . . Teachers will say no, that's not OK for kids to do.

Ellis pointed out a fascinating contradiction. While resistant teachers are quick to use making a mistake as an excuse not to try something new in their teaching, it is most certainly a behaviour they would not accept from their students, thus creating a “do as I say but not as I do” moment. It also leads one to think that, if teachers are not willing to recognize and interrupt the White talk that occurs in their own reasoning, it is unlikely that they will be able to see it in students or, in turn, help students to recognize it in themselves.

“Are We Still Having These Conversations?”—Getting Free

So, how do we support and engage teachers in the work of facilitating learning with diverse texts? The PLS participants expressed a wide range of responses to that question. Some expressed a more patient attitude and suggested coaching colleagues who showed an interest in using diverse texts in their classroom, speculating that purpose-built classroom resources

such as mini lessons or unit plans might result in a positive first experience and encourage more teachers to “dip their toes in.” While this approach shows a generous “meet teachers where they are at” mentality, it ignores the urgency of the work of cultural inclusivity. **All** students deserve to feel affirmed and see themselves in texts being used in their classrooms. This should not be occurring by chance, dependant on a teacher’s readiness to “dip their toes in.”

Other participants showed less patience for colleagues who were reluctant to include diverse texts in their classrooms and expressed a wish for a more top-down approach:

B: it's like sink or swim little bit. Like, we give people opportunity to, like, go to PD and other things. And, like, when you go back to staff rooms and you hear people talk, and they're just like, aw, that was a waste of time, or I just didn't like that, or I feel like my voice wasn't heard, I'm like OK, that's great, but it's unless it's really like top down, like this is the book that we're going to be doing, here is all books, let's do some book clubs, read some things, it's not going to change. And it has to be . . .

A: And it's hard, right? Because, like, you want to be really responsive to your students, and you want to be flexible with their needs, but yeah, you're right. At the same time, there has to be a bit of direct— this is a priority. And, like, because it's a priority, you *have* to like include diverse texts, or you have to do reading conferences; you have to do these things that we know are best for kids. Right? I don't know where that comes in, but I think that does need to be happening, right? Because we know what's best for kids. We can't . . . We can't accept us, you know what I mean?

C: Well, that's the thing, right? I mean we've had . . . these have been conversations that have been circling for a couple of years now. And the fact that we're still having conversations?

A: It's frustrating.

C: It's very frustrating. And it's still the conversation of "the how," right? And you still . . . There's still so, so much, like, resistance in some cases, against trying, right? And I mean the more recent excuse I'm going to say that I've been given is—well, I'm retiring in two years anyways. But there's still two years of kids, that's still four semesters worth of students, of five classes, you know? Like, that's still so many kids whose lives you can impact, right? And so, like, it's not an excuse.

Indeed, this conversation indicated a sense of exasperation from PLS members. They were frustrated that their colleagues were not being responsive to the needs of their students, they were frustrated that years later fellow educators are still at the beginning stages of this conversation, and they were frustrated by excuses as to why the work cannot start now. I am empathic to their frustration; after all, it was indeed the motivation for this study in the first place. However, I also suspect that a top-down directive from a school division is unlikely to mandate or motivate the teacher self-reflection that is the necessary first step in the work of building culturally inclusive classrooms.

Ebarvia (2023) affirmed that the work of building culturally inclusive classrooms begins with teachers participating in intentional and critical self-reflection. Through this, teachers can begin to free themselves from the unspoken rules and norms (such as those that have guided

their text selections) that have caused or maintained harms in classrooms and schools (p. 5).

She argued that

to get free means turning the lens on ourselves as readers, writers, thinkers, and social beings and examining all the ways in which we are not free, all the ways in which we are bound by what society tells us we are, who others are, and who we are to each other. To get free means being identity-conscious, socially aware educators, guiding identity conscious, socially aware readers and writers (p. 7).

Indeed, this deep teacher self-reflection as advocated for by Ebarvia (2023) and others (Borsheim-Black & Sarigianides, 2019; Germán, 2021; Parker, 2022) is unlikely to be the result of a top-down divisional mandate; however, there is still a powerful role for divisional leaders and school administrators to play in supporting teachers to utilize diverse texts in the classroom.

“We Shouldn’t Get All the Shit That Comes From This”

Early in the PLS, participants experienced a moment wherein it was anecdotally shared with them, from a divisional leader, that the division was seeing an increase in community voices calling for book banning. In response, the message to the teachers in the PLS from that divisional leader was clear: As teachers, they had the duty and responsibility to nurture and affirm *all* of the students who arrived in our schools, and part of that work was ensuring that our classrooms and libraries celebrated stories of diversity. Four months later, during the last session of the PLS, the message still echoed in the minds of the study participants:

A: Absolutely. Or even knowing . . . Like, I think there’s a lot of comfort in knowing that not only is what you are doing sanctioned, it’s encouraged by the division, and, like, that admin is getting the same message too. So you can say, like, “Hey! You have to be

supportive of this because this is a divisional priority right now, and if you are not . . . You know what I mean?

E: Yeah, get on board.

F: Ya, and there's . . . Kind of . . . You can get . . . You can be in your own kind of head a lot, right? In your classroom, you have relative autonomy and then, you might second guess yourself, especially if there is pushback. But knowing this is a divisional push, and there are other like-minded educators, it reinforces the decisions you are making.

D: I totally agree. I think even . . . And it's appropriate . . . We are being shielded by . . . I fear that we are not even getting some of the messages . . . Like when Director visited us, and she was like "keep doing this." And I think they do hear from angry parents.

A: Sure.

D: But the <divisional> message has not been to stop doing these things. It's, "We'll protect you, and we value these things, and keep doing them."

In this data fragment, teachers expressed their gratitude that Prairie School division had created a culture of safety and support for teachers engaging in the work of culturally inclusive classrooms. The existence of the PLS, as an opportunity for professional learning, generated the perception that the division supported and sanctioned the inclusion of diverse stories in classrooms and libraries. The theme of protection also emerged when teachers expressed the importance of feeling like the division was shielding them from the negative response that may have been coming from parents and/or the community. In addition to the need for support and protection on a divisional level, teachers also discussed the need for support on a school level from school administrators:

A: And, like, how powerful is that, right? Like, I do think the job of an administrator is to shield and protect teachers, right? Like, you think this is a divisional priority, like, you shouldn't get all the shit that comes from it, right? You should be supported and encouraged and protected, in a sense.

E: I enjoyed when a parent complained about the stuff I was teaching, and my administrator just, like, immediately rejected that complaint. She was like nope, no, no.

A: Yea.

E: That was like very affirming. It was like, ok, I will keep doing what I am doing. It's still going to feel uncomfortable, but I will keep doing it because it's . . . Yeah, it's nice to hear that.

Here teachers discussed the importance of school administrators “walking the walk” alongside classroom teachers. If the division was prioritizing the inclusion of diverse stories in classrooms, then school administrators needed to be ready to join the fight and protect teachers. Teachers are, in many ways, the front line of this work, and if school-based administrators are not prepared for, or fail to, make teachers feel supported when a parent or community-initiated book challenge arises, then the work is over before it even has a chance to begin.

Interestingly, in the conversations around protecting teachers, participants never once mentioned the role of their provincial teachers' society. Over the last few years, the Manitoba Teachers' Society (MTS) has been a visible presence all over the province, attending several of the school board meetings where book bans and books challenges have been the focus of the agenda. On their website, MTS has stated their opposition to book banning: “The Manitoba Teachers' Society will oppose, in the strongest possible terms and at every opportunity, any

attempt by any group to police what students may access in their school library. It is a direct threat to personal safety and democracy, and if it begins in schools, there is no telling where or how far such intimidation will extend. We must all speak out” (May, 2023). Having divisional leadership, school-based administrators, and teachers’ unions verbally expressing their support of teachers, students, and diverse texts is not enough. As of the writing of these findings, the Manitoba Teachers’ Society was the only educational entity that has publicly stated, via writing, their support of diverse texts in Manitoba classrooms. Prairie School Division had no written policies affirming the importance of diverse texts in classrooms, nor did Manitoba Education. Asking teachers to rely solely on school-based administrators (who may be waiting until they have divisional support) and on divisional leaders (who may be waiting until they have support of the school board) as their protection against community pushback is a massive act of faith particularly because, by the time a teacher has reached out to MTS for union support, it usually means that the teacher is on the defensive and that the school administrator and division has left them unsupported. The damage has been done. The findings of a collective case study about American educators’ experiences with book challenges by Sachdeva et al. (2023) recommended that teachers pre-emptively know their school system’s policies around media challenges (p. 49). However, if no such policies exist, how can teachers feel supported in the instance of parental or community pushback? If no policies exist, how can school administrators support and shield their teachers? Policies that affirm the inclusion of diverse texts must be put in place at a divisional and provincial level. To be clear, I am not suggesting that systems-level machinery be built through which voices in opposition of diverse texts can funnel their hatred via book challenges and bans. To suggest this would be to problematize diverse texts, and much

like my earlier argument around the problematizing of diverse characters, diverse texts are not the problem. What I am suggesting is the need for a divisional policy, backed by provincial policy, that affirms the importance and inclusion of diverse texts in classrooms and school libraries.

“I Don’t Need a Bunch of Crappy Wordsearches” —Facilitating Learning with Diverse Texts

When it came to discussing how teachers were facilitating learning with diverse texts, much of the focus was on how to navigate the topics associated with those texts. Teachers were concerned that students might lack understanding of the social and/or political nuances needed to fully understand topics of social identity, power, privilege, and marginalization within diverse texts. Alternatively, teachers were also concerned that students might have their own lived experiences with the topics and thus might find the text triggering to student traumas. In the conversation that follows, Brooke asked advice on how to navigate this:

A: Yeah. I'm just going to say it, like, really depends on, like, the theme of your lit circles and, yeah, the front loading that needs to occur. Often, I find 'cause, like, with the human rights circle, I found the same thing, their books—such diverse topics that, like, sometimes I'll give kids places of questions to start. And, like, they'll obviously add to that. Or, like, resources, and they'll do a little bit of, like, reading or watching or, like, previewing ahead of time. Like, they'll do that front loading, and then I'll be going around to the small groups and, like, having those conversations, like, based on the questions that come up as they're reading or viewing. But yeah, like with Indigenous lit circles, we'll start with, like, storytelling and that will be, like, a whole class thing, where, like, usually I start with *Refugee* before human rights circles, because I feel like that

refugee experience and what happens to the characters in the book . . . There's lots you can unpack; there are lots of, like, similarities to those books that they read later. But yeah, it kind of just depends on, like, it depends on your kids too. Like the kids who are going to choose *The Firekeepers Daughter* I think are kids who can probably work on that independent research, like, with your support, obviously.

Avery's response was full of suggestions, all of which could be categorized as front loading, wherein the teacher facilitates and supports learning about a topic prior to students engaging with the topic independently. Avery mentioned having students listen and view teacher-selected texts while the teacher circulated to support learning and answer questions. Avery also mentioned using a shared text, like a read aloud, wherein the teacher and students could have a shared experience of a text to explore topics of importance so that students could leverage their understanding of a topic into a more independent context such as a lit circle. Avery's response also raised professional discretion, specifically the ability to recognize and be responsive to the needs of the students currently in one's classroom. While this is good advice, it was far less concrete than their previous suggestions. Some teachers, such as those who are new to the classroom, might find that being able to recognize and be responsive to the needs of students comes with time and practice. The thought of trial-and-error teaching with deeply personal topics such as social identity, power, and privilege might be enough to dissuade some teachers from even engaging in the topics to begin with. Ebarvia (2023) emphasized that, while teachers must commit to creating vulnerable and brave classroom spaces, she also acknowledged that teachers cannot anticipate all the ways in which students may be impacted by a text or topic:

Even though I argue that our students need to feel welcome, safe, and seen, the truth is that I'm not sure that I, or any teacher, can guarantee our students' emotional safety. Even the most innocuous topic might be a sensitive one. While we might then be tempted to stay away from bringing the personal into the classroom and stick to "content only", we know that this would be futile; after all, any discussion of literature or current events can be fraught with the personal. (p. 65)

Ebarvia's words have reminded educators that, due to the very humanness of what a classroom is, teaching and learning are deeply personal work; consequently, topics of power and privilege exist in classrooms whether they are acknowledged or not. Thus, it is in the best interest of students and teachers to have explicit understandings of what power and privilege are, and how it is that equity is upheld.

When it came to locating resources to facilitate classroom conversations around power and privilege, the participants in the PLS did spend some time to vent about inadequate resources and to share resources they had found useful. One teacher expressed frustration when it came to locating resources that explicitly articulate what power and privilege are. When looking for resources to deepen the use of diverse texts in lit circles, Ellis articulated their exasperation in the value of the resources they found on a Government of Canada website:

E: Those resources are so inconsistent. Because I went to the government—I was looking at resources for Indigenous People's Day, and they have, like, a government website. It's like a bunch of word searches, and I'm like, well, this is crappy, like, I don't need word searches!

Indeed, students are not likely to grow their understandings of power and privilege simply by locating those terms in a word search. Contrastingly, another participant, Avery, mentioned that while official documents like the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and government documents such as the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms were a good place to start, they lacked the nuance students wanted to understand systems of power and inequity and how they are upheld:

A: Because it was the first time in doing these human rights books clubs that the kids weren't content just talking about human rights and that's it. They kept saying this isn't fair, and it's not necessarily a violation to UDHR, or Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It's like where is this <inequity> coming from?

Avery specifically mentioned two resources they utilized that explicitly articulate what power and privilege is. One was a resource created by the Canadian Council for Refugees that illustrates privilege as the centre of a wheel with various elements of social identity such as gender, sexuality, ability, skin colour, and formal education as spokes. Based on the work of physician Dr. Amy Tan (2021), the Wheel of Power and Privilege is a tool for reflecting on positionality. The more an individual shares in common with the social identities in the centre of the wheel (white, male, cisgender, able-bodied) the more privilege they hold. Avery mentioned that this resource, with marginalized elements of social identity around the outside of the wheel, helped students visualize privilege and marginalization:

A: It's like a really natural lead into conversations about power and privilege and marginalization and, like, who holds power in their books and stuff. It ended up being really powerful. And I'm happy we went there for the first time this year. Because it was

a very safe conversation-wise, because they were talking about their books and their characters, and not themselves. But a lot of kids made those connections independently. It was interesting for sure.

Tan proposed that the Power and Privilege Wheel can “create more awareness about the privilege one might have in Canada because of arbitrary and unfair hierarchies embedded within society” (Canadian Council for Refugees, n.d.). Avery observed that using the wheel in class helped students name elements of privilege and power that previously might have seemed indefinable. Additionally, when using the wheel in conversation with their lit circle books, it also provided a safe space for students to have conversations about the role social identity plays in power, privilege, and marginalization.

Another tool that Avery found useful for facilitating learning around diverse texts was Privileges for Sale, an activity we had participated in during an earlier session of the PLS. In the Privileges for Sale activity, each participant was given a list of privileges that related to education, food, water, culture, family, and safety, and asked for the purposes of this activity to imagine that they existed in a world with no privileges. They were assigned a random dollar amount to purchase privileges from the list and needed to be prepared to share their choices and rationale for the privileges they chose to purchase. Some groups were able to purchase only one or two privileges, while others could purchase up to eight or nine. I had hoped that experiencing Privileges for Sale would help PLS participants identify and name power and privilege as well as model how they could have similar conversations in their classroom with students:

A: And it was interesting, I did it with my class, and that's what started off our conversation about power and privileges. It was so interesting the amount of kids who were, like, I bought these privileges because I don't have them in my everyday life. And it's, like, the ability to walk through a store without being treated as a security risk.

Despite having facilitated this activity later in the school year, Avery confessed that they learned a lot about their students, particularly in regard to the privileges their students valued but did not have access to. This is why it is in the best interest of students and teachers to have explicit understandings of what power and privilege is, and how it is inequity is upheld. Teachers who understand these concepts have a racial literacy that enables them to be self-reflective of how their social identity forms and informs their power and privilege and how this impacts their role in the classroom. Students, in turn, benefit from learning in a culturally responsive classroom, wherein they can watch an adult be reflective about their positionality, power, privilege, and marginalization and understand this more clearly for themselves.

When it came to discussing how teachers in the PLS were facilitating learning with diverse texts, much of the focus was on the "how to" of navigating topics such as social identity, power, privilege, and marginalization. While some teachers shared teaching methods (front loading, shared texts, lit circles) or resources (the Wheel of Power and Privilege, Privileges for Sale), there was still more thinking to be done by teachers in examining how their own literacy practices might uphold systems of power and inequity, a theme I will explore in the forthcoming "Implications and Conclusions" chapter.

CHAPTER 5: IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

With a focus on the pedagogical implications of, and practical application for, diversifying the MY and SY canon, this study sought to understand:

- How do teachers define and select diverse texts for their classrooms?
- What motivations and barriers exist in using diverse texts in the classroom?
- How are teachers facilitating learning with diverse texts?

Much of the pre-existing research done in the area of recognizing and enacting the call to diversify texts has been done with participants who were pre-service teachers or who were in-service teachers participating in graduate studies programs. There have been few research studies that have included in-service teacher participants, and even fewer with participants from within the same school division. This study looked to fill this gap in the research. It also sought to extend the research by merging teacher introspection and the intentional teaching of diverse texts. Through book clubs, this study attended to the need of teachers to source diverse texts while also creating space for teachers to examine their own role in systems of power and inequity and to understand how those systems exist within their literacy practices.

Mentor Texts

The work of Bishop (1990), Germán (2021), and Parker (2022) filled in where the articles and research studies on diversifying the canon were left wanting. By providing the pedagogical implications of and for practical application, Germán and Parker urged teachers to participate in self-reflective, internal work about their own positionality prior to jumping into conversations around text selection and diverse book lists. While both authors' books were pedagogical and practical guides for this study, Parker's focus on liberating literacy routines and traditions was

intended to provide actionable themes for the professional learning sessions. Prior to each session, PLS participants were given a short excerpt from Parker's work on the topics of damaging texts, independent choice reading, reading conferences, and classroom libraries. These excerpts proved to be foundational pieces that participants frequently referred to over the five months of book club discussions. Parker's book section "Should I Teach This Text— Starter Questions for Consideration" (pp. 132–133) was the excerpt participants referred to most often by far and served as a strong scaffold for critical questions about canonical texts.

Since the inception of this research study, there has been much added to the area of professional learning literature in anti-racist, anti-bias, culturally responsive and culturally relevant literacy education. Ebarvia's book *Get Free: Antibias Literacy Instruction for Stronger Readers, Writers, and Thinkers* (2023) is a powerful text that merges the deep personal reflection that is needed for this work with the practical, clear, and specific strategies, structures, and routines needed to liberate literacy practice in MY and high school ELA classrooms. *Get Free* has provided a valuable voice for the findings portion of this research, and had it been published during the early stages of this research, it would no doubt have been a pivotal resource for the PLS.

Book Clubs

From a researcher's perspective, the book clubs in this study made for rich opportunities to put the participants in conversation with themselves, each other, and the literature on culturally responsive and culturally relevant literacy practices. The book clubs compelled the participants to interact with diverse texts written for middle grade and young adult readers, a practice that many of the participants did not engage in on a regular basis, despite the fact that

their work as ELA teachers was with middle grade and young adult readers. Using book clubs during the PLS also provided participants with the opportunity to experience a liberating literacy practice that could be used in their classrooms. Through the process of the books club discussions, participants were able to see how they could facilitate conversations around power and privilege in their classrooms, even when students may have selected to read different, but still thematically related, texts. This was a useful reminder that these conversations were still possible even in instances where limited school budgets meant purchasing multiple sets of books was not currently feasible.

In order to build a sense of community and to make for continuity in data collection, I had hoped to keep the book club groups for the study participants consistent throughout all five sessions; however, that was not logistically possible. General illness and a divisional shortage in substitute teachers meant that sometimes study participants were absent or unable to attend a session. This resulted in book club groupings changing throughout the study. The tenuousness of substitutes was an ongoing concern during the entirety of the PLS, and even now, a year later, continues to hinder the work I do in facilitating professional learning. I suspect the ongoing shortage of substitute teachers is going to have far-ranging implications beyond those for my work in facilitating professional learning. Continued substitute shortages are likely to limit the ability of teachers to participate in everything from divisional-level professional learning sessions to provincial-level curriculum update committees. Resultingly, teacher voices, experiences, and perspectives will be absent around the tables where this critical and collective work is being done.

As much as I wanted to maintain the same study participants in the same book club discussion groups throughout the process in order to make the data collected in the book clubs feel organized and cohesive, some of the study participants did communicate a wish to have had more opportunity to discuss and share with PLS participants outside of the research study. I am thankful to the study participants who unknowingly agreed to make this sacrifice when they signed up to part of this study.

Data Collection

Collecting field notes as a researcher while simultaneously being a present and responsive facilitator of professional learning proved near impossible to juggle. Consequently, I collected little in terms of field notes reflecting the comments made by study participants during the large-group discussions that occurred in the first half of the sessions. Instead, my research journal evolved into a reflective tool that I used to collect and examine my many affective responses as a researcher. My research journal also served as rich soil within which I planted many of the seeds that grew into the themes of my symptomatic analysis.

At the end of each PLS session, participants were invited to complete a written reflection. The content of this written reflection was open-ended, but I offered guidance via two reflective prompts. As the prepared prompts were only intended to offer a starting point for their reflections, participants were encouraged to go wherever the writing took them. Study participants, like participants in the PLS, were not required to complete the written reflections, nor was it mandatory for them to share these written reflections with me. That being said, study participants often chose to leave their written reflections with me. As a researcher, my decision to have access to these written reflections was primarily made to provide another, safer space

for reflection, just in case study participants felt uncomfortable sharing their thoughts and wonderings during the book club discussions. Fortunately, the book club discussions served as rich places of exploration. Consequently, the data from the written reflections did not find a place here in this thesis. As a facilitator of this professional learning, I found the written reflections to be useful, timely check-ins with the PLS participants that often helped inform my next steps. In particular, the pivot in Session 4 of the PLS was partially in response to written requests from participants to see practical examples of the “how” of meaningfully incorporating diverse texts in the classroom. In the fifth and final session of the PLS, I gave the participants their written reflections back and gave them time to write about how their thinking had grown or changed; to discuss what struck them as significant, urgent, and/or worth further thinking, investigating; and to identify what were they committing to doing more of and less of in their classrooms, particularly when it came to topics such as social identity, lived experiences, and the importance of diversity in story. This provided another opportunity for deep personal reflection and also resulted in some fruitful small- and large-group conversations about where this work could and should go next.

Time to Learn and Reflect

This study has many implications for the work of literacy coaches, coordinators, and other facilitators of professional learning. The first implication is that it takes time for teachers to do the work of self-reflection that is needed for them to be able to navigate and facilitate critical conversations around race, gender, privilege, and power. For context, the PLS that was the focus of this study was comprised of five half-day sessions, stretching over five months for a total of fifteen hours. Despite this expanse of time, it is my opinion that we were just getting

started. By the last session of the PLS, many teachers were *only just beginning* to consider how they were going to use diverse texts to navigate and facilitate critical conversations around race, gender, privilege, and power in their classrooms. This was because much of the work of the previous four sessions was in providing teachers with the time, language, and conceptual frameworks they needed to recognize and reflect on their own power and privilege as humans. To ensure that teachers had multiple entry points into the concepts of power and privilege, the language and conceptual frameworks provided in the PLS were spiralling, recursive, and interconnected, and came in the form of activities (the textual lineage, Privileges for Sale), readings (Bishop, 1990; Parker, 2022), and questions (book club discussion questions, end-of-session written reflections). It would be my recommendation that any literacy coaches, coordinators, or other facilitators of professional learning wishing to facilitate learning in the area of diversifying the MY and SY canon should follow a similar pattern of providing teachers with the time, language, and conceptual frameworks they need to recognize and reflect on their own power and privilege.

Time for Community and Connection

The goal of the PLS was to connect (and reconnect) the division's MY and high school ELA teachers through courageous conversations and the sharing of joyous and hope-filled diverse texts. Consequently, as a facilitator of professional learning, I was fulfilled to see numerous instances where participants expressed an appreciation for the community and connection provided through the PLS. The high school teachers were able to learn much about the ways in which their MY colleagues were already beginning the work of facilitating learning with diverse texts. Resultingly, the MY teachers found themselves re-energized in their work and

made plans to meet with colleagues to examine texts and create new resources for facilitating conversations around power and privilege in their classrooms. These examples illustrate the value of community and connection in building teacher capacity and show that when teachers leverage community and connection, professional learning becomes social, authentic, meaningful, and responsive.

An unintended implication of facilitating sustained professional learning that builds community and connection is that the PLS participants really acquired a taste for it and requested that we continue to meet as a group moving forward into the next school year. Unfortunately, an ever-tenuous substitute teacher shortage and years of austerity measures that resulted in budget cuts to many school divisions meant that Prairie School division was unable to honour this request. As the facilitator of the PLS, I continue to struggle with this decision. As I mentioned earlier, many teachers were *only just beginning* to consider how they were going to use diverse texts to navigate and facilitate critical conversations around race, gender, privilege, and power in their classrooms and as such would have benefited from the ongoing support and capacity-building of the PLS continuing into a second year. I worry that participants in the PLS will use a myriad of excuses (some more valid than others) to postpone or avoid continuing the work of diversifying the MY and SY canon. Additionally, I feel that a second year would have provided time and space to dive into topics we were unable to get to in the first year, namely, that of examining systems of power and inequity that exist within our literacy practices and pedagogies, particularly in the area of assessment.

Time to Try and Apply

In many instances, it appeared that the MY teachers had a more authentic or fruitful learning experience in the PLS because many of them had already begun the work of diversifying the texts being used in their classrooms. The MY teachers were more likely to take something learned in the PLS and, in between sessions, try and apply it with their students. I suspect this was because the MY teachers had already done the heavy lifting of sourcing and purchasing diverse texts and were now in a place where they could really get into the nitty gritty, vulnerable work of reflecting on and discussing power as it may have existed in their pedagogy and classroom practices.

Despite the fact that many of the high schools already had access to numerous sets of diverse texts, it was common for the high school teachers to get hung up in hypothetical conversations of *what ifs*, and *yeah, buts*. *What if* a student is offended by this text because it too closely aligns with their lived experiences? *Ya, but* is this diverse text rigorous or literary enough for high school? These are real examples of hypothetical concerns that participants in the PLS had about engaging in the work of diversifying the SY canon. I cannot help but wonder, if the PLS had been able to wrap around into a second year, would it have provided a time and space for high school teachers to try and apply some of their PLS learning in their classrooms? Would we have been able to debunk some their hypothetical concerns by using the PLS to embolden teachers to tinker with things in their classrooms and then report back to the PLS group to debrief and troubleshoot any real issues that may have occurred?

This research also has implications for the area of teacher education, particularly in the area of pre-service teachers. Indeed, pre-service teachers need to be able to define and select

diverse texts for their classrooms and know how to facilitate learning with those diverse texts. Additionally, my above-mentioned remarks about Bishop (1990), Germán (2021), Parker (2022), and Ebarvia (2023) serving as powerful scaffolds to guide the conversation around diversifying the MY and SY canon; my observation around the time that it takes for teachers to do the work of self-reflection that is needed to be able to navigate and facilitate critical conversations around race, gender, privilege, and power; and my comment that book clubs made for rich opportunities to put teachers in conversation with themselves, each other, and the literature on culturally responsive and culturally relevant literacy practices are also applicable to contexts of teacher education for pre-service teachers. However, I wonder if there also needs to be space for pre-service teachers to understand the landscape of the overarching conversation around book challenges and book banning, particularly as it relates to diverse texts? That understanding of the landscape needs to paint a picture of the conversations occurring in the United States, as well as in Canada, Manitoba, and Winnipeg. Perhaps this understanding also needs to include a conversation of local, divisional stances on diverse texts, book challenges, and book banning so that pre-service teachers can make informed decisions as they move out into the field for practicums and eventually employment. I also think we need to acknowledge that when pre-service teachers do participate in their practicums, they are likely going to be placed in a classroom where the mentor teacher upholds canonical texts and their accompanying beliefs in heteronormative whiteness. Furthermore, we need to acknowledge the implicit power structures that exist within the student-teacher-cooperative teacher relationship that may make it difficult for the pre-service teacher to push back or speak against using those canonical texts in an unexamined way. This is yet another conversation for another paper; however, I pose

the question, What role (or responsibility) does a faculty of education have in helping pre-service teachers understand the landscape of the overarching conversation around book challenges and book banning, particularly as it relates to diverse texts?

The Data Tara-tory

The stories within the data collected for this research study proved to follow Bishop's (1990) metaphor of windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors. In one session, the participants ended their books clubs by speaking directly to me, by name, calling out "I feel like we gave Tara lots of good stuff" and "You're welcome, Tara," laughing together as a group before pressing the stop button on the recording. In another session, the participants had a running joke of speaking loudly into the iPad to confirm that they were following copyright laws and only photocopying the fair-use amount of a book—clearly a nod to the fact that they were being recorded. In a third conversation of note, a participant was recounting a moment of racism they observed at their child's hockey game. When asked how they reacted to the racism, there was a pause in the conversation when the participant clearly censored their response due to the fact they were being recorded. Despite the fact that I was not physically present in the room, the existence of the iPad did remind participants of my omnipresence. All three of these data fragments (and all of the data collected for this study) placed me, as a researcher and literacy coach, in the position of listening to the participants through an open window in the future, some days, weeks, and months after the conversation had occurred.

In another data fragment, I heard a participant recount the same story that I opened this thesis with, wherein I had facilitated a reflective exercise with fellow SY English Language Arts teachers in my school division, asking them to work with a partner from their school to create a

chart of the most widely used texts in their classrooms. What makes this a particularly fascinating data fragment was that the participant was not actually present during that reflective exercise; they were simply recounting the story as it had been retold to them by a colleague. However, the participant had been able to confirm what I had previously suspected—that the reflective exercise had produced some long-lasting aftereffects, and some of my colleagues were still feeling quite defensive about their choices in text selection, even after all these years. Thus, this data fragment functioned as a temporal mirror, reflecting to me a previous lived experience *and* its future consequences.

The third element of Bishop's (1990) metaphor of windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors posits that, when stories function as sliding glass doors, "readers have only to walk through in imagination to become part of whatever world has been created or recreated by the author" (p. 1). It is my hope that this study has acted as a sliding glass door that has invited readers into a conversation about the pedagogical implications of, and practical application for, diversifying the MY and SY ELA canon. Additionally, it is my hope that this study does more than simply invite its readers to step through the threshold of this conversation. It is my hope that the findings in this study motivate readers (teachers, fellow instructional coaches and facilitators of professional learning, school administrators, divisional leaders, school trustees, and anyone else not mentioned here who supports public education) to examine their own role in systems of power, privilege, and inequity and to consider how those systems of power and inequity are upheld through the unexamined use of canonical texts in MY and high school English Language Arts classrooms.

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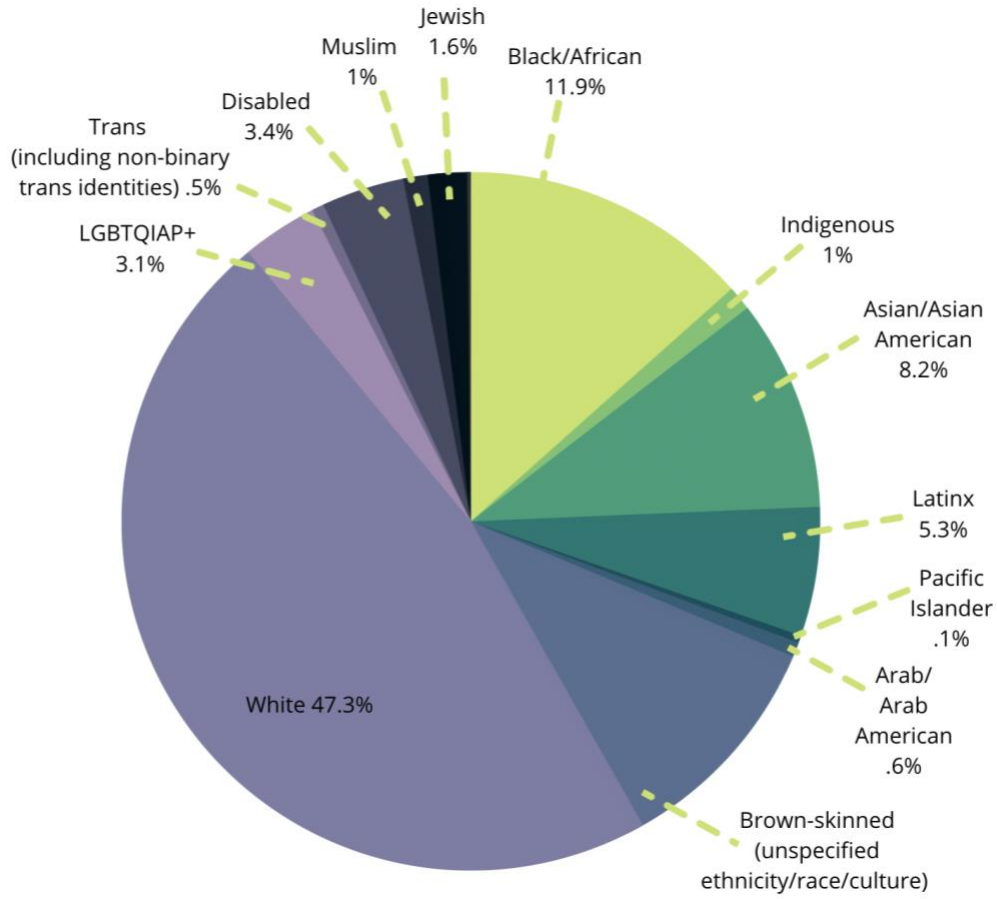
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Appendix A

2019 Diversity Statistics from the Cooperative Children’s Book Centre Books with Primary

Character/Subject



Appendix B

Initial Overview of PLS Sessions 1–5

	Central Research Questions			Other themes		
	Defining and selecting diverse texts	Motivations and barriers	Facilitating learning with diverse texts	Rationale for Representation /Diversity:	Diverse/ Contested/ Furthered Understandings of the Call for Diversity	Enacting the Call for Diversity: pedagogical implications of and for practical application
Session 1						
Pre-reading “Mirrors, Windows and Sliding Glass Doors” (Bishop, 1990)		X		X		
A look at the diversity statistics as per the CCBC		X		X		
Textual self-audit						X
View & discuss “The Danger of a Single Story” (Adichie, 2013)	X				X	
Book talks for the book club texts options	X					
Session 2						
Pre-reading: Book Club Selection #1						
Authenticity and #Ownvoices	X	X			X	
MTS Inclusive Language Guide		X	X			X
Should I Teach this Text?		X				X
Book Club Selection #1 Discussion Groups						
Session 3						
Pre-reading: Book Club Selection #2						
CRILC routine- Choice Reading			X			X
CRILC routine- Reading Conferences			X			X
Book Club Selection #2 Discussion Groups						
Session 4						
Pre-reading: Book Club Selection #3						
CRILC routine- Classroom Libraries			X			X
Book Club Selection #3 Discussion Groups						
Choose your own adventure for book club selection #4	X					X
Session 5						
Pre reading: Choose your own adventure for book club selection #4						
Book Club Selection #4 Discussion Groups	X		X			X
Reflection, Celebration and Wrap up						

Session One (8:30 am-11:45 am)1. Welcome (Whole Group) **30 mins**

Small and large group introductions

What are doing here?

Setting the parameters for a safe space- "Four Agreements of Courageous Conversation"

2. Table group discussion of pre-reading "Mirrors, Windows and Sliding Glass Doors" (Bishop, 1990) **15 mins**

Focus Question: Why is diversity and representation in story important?

3. Large group sharing and discussion of pre-reading "Mirrors, Windows and Sliding Glass Doors" (Bishop, 1990) **15 mins**

Focus Question: Why is diversity and presentation in story important?

4. Large group introduction and discussion of the CCBC 2019 Diversity Statistics: Books with primary character/subject. **15 mins**

Focus Question: When you look at the statistics, what do you notice, what do you wonder? How does this connect with Dr. Bishop's essay?

5. Textual Lineage- Individual reflection and creation **20 mins + 15 minute coffee break**
Focus Question:

Using the paper, pens and markers provided, create a map or web that reflects your textual lineage (texts that have significance or meaning in the development of your identity as a reader and/or a human). Add texts that:

- Had a lasting effect on you.
- You read, or exposed to as a child, young adult
- Were your favourite as a child/young adult
- That you read in school
- You continued to think about after you finished reading/viewing it
- Started you on a new path
- You reread several times on your own
- Stayed in your mind
- You felt a connection with
- Shaped who you are
- You recommended to others
- Made you think about moments in your life
- That were/are important to you
- Changed you.

6. Break **15 mins**

7. Textual Lineage- table group conversation and large group conversation **25 mins**
Focus Question: When you look at the textual lineages, what do you notice, what do you wonder? How does this connect with Dr. Bishop's essay?

8. Book Clubs: an Overview of the Structure (Whole Group)- **15 mins**
 - Current table groups will be your book club groups
 - You will have time as a book club to explore the books for each monthly theme
 - As the books are connected by theme, each person in your book club can choose any of the options.
 - Each session will have 1 hour of time devoted to book clubs
 - The first 45mins of will be book club group discussion time. Guiding questions will be provided to scaffold the conversation.
 - The last 15 minutes of book club discussion will be an opportunity for individual written reflection. You can choose to write about any of the guiding questions from the discussion time, or something else that is adjacent to the questions that strikes you as significant. Study participants will be encouraged to hand in their written reflections to me, however this is not mandatory.

9. Book Preview and Selection for Book Clubs (Table Groups)- **30 mins**

All participants will be provided with a summary for each of the book club offerings. As a group they will scan, discuss, and indicate initial interest for book selections. Reminder, as the books are connected by theme, each person in the book club can choose any of the options.

10. Wrap Up- Reminders and Next Steps **10 mins**
 - Share date for next session
 - Next steps: select and read one of the texts from the "Identity" theme booklist.
 - Share the book club discussion questions for the next book club:
 - o From the provided book club selections, what drew you to this text?
 - o How do you see the theme of identity reflected in this text?
 - o Select and share a powerful passage or event from the text. Discuss why you selected it, and the impact it had on you as a reader.
 - o In what ways is the book you selected to read a diverse text? HINT: look at the focus questions from the earlier table group discussions.
 - o What are the motivations and barriers in using this text in your classroom?
 - o How might you facilitate learning in your classroom using this text?

Session Two (8:30 am-11:45 am)

1. Welcome Back (Whole Group) **10 mins**

- Setting the parameters for a safe space—revisit the “Four Agreements of Courageous Conversation”
 - Small and large group check-ins
2. Large group introduction and discussion of “Should I Teach This Text- Starter Questions for Consideration” (Parker, pp. 132–133) and “A Guide for Diversifying the Canon” (McLauchlan) via a PowerPoint summary. **30 mins**
 3. Table group discussion **20 mins**
Focus Question: Use the following questions to reflect on the texts you centre in your classroom instruction:
 - What is my purpose/intent for including this text?
 - Is this text written by an authentic voice?
 - Does this text contain complex, multi-dimensional representations of oppressed or marginalized voices?
 - Is this the best text for my purpose/intent?
 - Whose voices are missing?
 4. Large group sharing out of table group discussion **15 mins**
 5. Highlight and share professional resources that support further learning—“MTS Inclusive Language Guide” and pages 131–133 of “Should I Teach This Text- Starter Questions for Consideration” (Parker). **10 mins**
 6. Break **15 mins**
 7. Book Club Discussion **45 mins**- Identity Theme
Focus Questions:
 - From the provided book club selections, what drew you to this text?
 - How do you see the theme of identity reflected in this text?
 - Select and share a powerful passage or event from the text. Discuss why you selected it, and the impact it had on you as a reader.
 - In what ways is the book you selected to read a diverse text? HINT: look at the focus questions from the earlier table group discussions.
 - What are the motivations and barriers in using this text in your classroom?
 - How might you facilitate learning in your classroom using this text?
 8. Book Club Individual Written Reflection **15 mins**-
Focus Questions:

The last 15 minutes of book club discussion will be an opportunity for individual written reflection. You can choose to write about any of the guiding questions from the discussion time, or something else that is adjacent to the questions that strikes you as

significant. Study participants are encouraged to hand in their written reflections to me, however this is not mandatory.

9. Large group sharing out of table group discussion **20 mins**
10. Wrap Up- Reminders and Next Steps **10 mins**
 - Share date for next session
 - Next steps: select and read one of the texts from the “Belonging” theme booklist.
 - Share the book club discussion questions for the next book club:
 - From the provided book club selections, what drew you to this text?
 - How do you see the theme of belonging reflected in this text?
 - Select and share a powerful passage or event from the text. Discuss why you selected it, and the impact it had on you as a reader.
 - In what ways is the book you selected to read a diverse text? HINT: look at the focus questions from the earlier table group discussions.
 - What are the motivations and barriers in using this text in your classroom?
 - How might you facilitate learning in your classroom using this text?

Session Three (8:30 am-11:45 am)

1. Welcome Back (Whole Group) **10 mins**
 - Setting the parameters for a safe space—revisit the “Four Agreements of Courageous Conversation”
 - Small and large group check-ins
2. Large group introduction and discussion of “Reading for Enjoyment: What the Research Says” (McLauchlan) and “Independent Choice Reading as Routine” (Parker, pp. 81–86) via a PowerPoint summary. **25 mins**
3. Table group discussion **10 mins**
Focus Question: Take a look at Parkers’ “Steps to Introduce Independent Reading Routines”. What do you notice? What do you wonder? How might these steps support/facilitate using diverse texts in your classroom?
4. Large group sharing out of table group discussion **15 mins**
5. Large group (re)introduction and discussion of Reading Conferences “Reading Conferences as Routines” (Parker, pp. 86–89) and divisional reading conferences resource. NOTE: SJASD has done some work in previous years introducing grades 6–9 teachers to reading conferences **25 mins**
Focus Questions:

- Take a look at Parkers' "How to Have a Reading Conference" and the divisional reading conferences outline. What do you notice? What do you wonder?
 - How do reading conferences support using diverse texts in your classroom?
6. Large group sharing out of table group discussion **10 mins**
7. Break- **15 mins**
8. Book Club Discussion **45 mins**- Belonging Theme
Focus Questions:
- From the provided book club selections, what drew you to this text?
 - How do you see the theme of belonging reflected in this text?
 - Select and share a powerful passage or event from the text. Discuss why you selected it, and the impact it had on you as a reader.
 - In what ways is the book you selected to read a diverse text? HINT: look at the focus questions from the earlier table group discussions.
 - What are the motivations and barriers in using this text in your classroom?
 - How might you facilitate learning in your classroom using this text?
9. Book Club Individual Written Reflection **15 mins**-
Focus Questions:
The last 15 minutes of book club discussion will be an opportunity for individual written reflection. You can choose to write about any of the guiding questions from the discussion time, or something else that is adjacent to the questions that strikes you as significant. Study participants are encouraged to hand in their written reflections to me, however this is not mandatory.
10. Large group sharing out of table group discussion **10 mins**
11. Wrap Up- Reminders and Next Steps **10 mins**
- Share date for next session
 - Next steps: select and read one of the texts from the "Power" theme booklist.
 - Share the book club discussion questions for the next book club.
 - From the provided book club selections, what drew you to this text?
 - How do you see the theme of power reflected in this text? Who holds the power, and how do power imbalances impact different character?
 - Select and share a powerful passage or event from the text. Discuss why you selected it, and the impact it had on you as a reader.
 - In what ways is the book you selected to read a diverse text? HINT: look at the focus questions from the earlier table group discussions.
 - What are the motivations and barriers in using this text in your classroom?
 - How might you facilitate learning in your classroom using this text?

Session Four (8:30 am-11:45 am)

1. Welcome Back (Whole Group) **15 mins**
 - Setting the parameters for a safe space—revisit the “Four Agreements of Courageous Conversation”
 - Small and large group check-ins
2. Large group introduction and discussion of “Classroom Libraries as Tradition” (Parker, pp. 90–93) via a PowerPoint summary. **15 mins**
3. Table group discussion
Focus Question: Take a look at Parkers’ “To Do’s for Classroom Libraries”. What do you notice? What do you wonder? How might these to -do’s support/facilitate using diverse texts in your classroom? **15 mins**
4. Large group sharing out of table group discussion **15 mins**
5. Book Club Discussion **45 mins**- Power Theme
Focus Questions:
 - Share the book club discussion questions for the next book club.
 - From the provided book club selections, what drew you to this text?
 - How do you see the theme of power reflected in this text? Who holds the power, and how do power imbalances impact different character?
 - Select and share a powerful passage or event from the text. Discuss why you selected it, and the impact it had on you as a reader.
 - In what ways is the book you selected to read a diverse text?
 - What are the motivations and barriers in using this text in your classroom?
 - How might you facilitate learning in your classroom using this text?
6. Book Club Individual Written Reflection **15 mins**
Focus Question:

The last 15 minutes of book club discussion will be an opportunity for individual written reflection. You can choose to write about any of the guiding questions from the discussion time, or something else that is adjacent to the questions that strikes you as significant. Study participants are encouraged to hand in their written reflections to me, however this is not mandatory.
7. Large group sharing out of table group discussion **15 mins**
8. Break **10 mins**

9. Group Discussion of the “choose your own adventure” book selection for next session.
Focus Topic: For the last session you will select your own text to read for book clubs. As with previous book clubs, each person in your book club can choose any text they wish (as long as it is a middle grades or young adult text). **10 mins**

When selecting your book consider a “canonical” text you wish to update/supplement/replace and refer to the focus questions from our first session:

- What is my purpose/intent for including this text?
- Is this text written by an authentic voice?
- Does this text contain complex, multi-dimensional representations of oppressed or marginalized voices?
- Is this the best text for my purpose/intent?

10. Book Club Discussion time for “choose your own adventure” book selection.
Focus Question: For the last session you will select your own text to read for book clubs. As with previous book clubs, each person in your book club can choose any text they wish (as long as it is a middle grades or young adult text). **20 mins**

When selecting your book consider a “canonical” text you wish to update/supplement/replace and refer to the focus questions from our first session:

- What is my purpose/intent for including this text?
- Is this text written by an authentic voice?
- Does this text contain complex, multi-dimensional representations of oppressed or marginalized voices?
- Is this the best text for my purpose/intent?

11. Large group sharing out of table group discussion **10 mins**

12. Wrap Up- Reminders and Next Steps **5 mins**

- Share date for next session
- Next steps: select and read your “choose your own adventure” text.
- Share the book club discussion questions for the next book club.
 - Why did you decide to select this text for your “choose your own adventure text”? What drew you to this text?
 - In what ways is the book you selected to read a diverse text? HINT: look at the focus questions from last sessions group discussions.
 - Select and share a powerful passage or event from the text. Discuss why you selected it, and the impact it had on you as a reader.
 - What are the motivations and barriers in using this text in your classroom?
 - How might you facilitate learning in your classroom using this text?

Session Five (8:30 am-11:45 am)

1. Welcome Back (Whole Group) **10 mins**
 - Setting the parameters for a safe space—revisit the “Four Agreements of Courageous Conversation”
 - Small and large group check-ins
2. Book Club Discussion **45 mins**- “Choose Your Own Adventure”

Focus Questions:

 - Why did you decide to select this text for your “choose your own adventure text”? What drew you to this text?
 - In what ways is the book you selected to read a diverse text? HINT: look at the focus questions from last sessions group discussions.
 - Select and share a powerful passage or event from the text. Discuss why you selected it, and the impact it had on you as a reader.
 - What are the motivations and barriers in using this text in your classroom?
 - How might you facilitate learning in your classroom using this text?
3. Large group sharing out of table group discussion **15 mins**
4. Book Carousel- Using an interactive format, participants will share a quick book talk about the text they selected for the “choose your own adventure” session. By the end of this portion we will have co-created a list of diverse texts. **55 mins**
5. Break **15 mins**
6. Book Club Individual Written Reflection **20 mins**-

Focus Question:

The last 15 minutes of book club discussion will be an opportunity for individual written reflection. You can choose to write about any of the guiding questions from the discussion time, or **any topic we’ve covered over our five sessions together**. Study participants are encouraged to hand in their written reflections to me, however this is not mandatory.
7. Sharing of reflections, celebration of learning **30 mins**

Appendix C

REB Approval Letter

University
of Manitoba

Research Ethics and Compliance

Human Ethics - Fort Garry
208-194 Dafoe Road
Winnipeg, MB R3T 2N2
T: 204 474 8872
humanethics@umanitoba.caPROTOCOL APPROVAL

Effective: January 4, 2023

Expiry: January 3, 2024

Principal Investigator: Tara McLauchlan
Advisor: Shannon Moore
Protocol Number: HE2022-0360
Protocol Title: *Diversifying Texts in Grades 6-12 English Language Arts Classrooms*

Andrea L. Szwajcer, Chair, REB2

Research Ethics Board 2 has reviewed and approved the above research. The Human Ethics Office (HEO) is constituted and operates in accordance with the current *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*- TCPS 2 (2018).

This approval is subject to the following conditions:

- i. Approval is granted for the research and purposes described in the protocol only.
- ii. Any changes to the protocol or research materials must be approved by the HEO before implementation.
- iii. Any deviations to the research or adverse events must be reported to the HEO immediately through an REB Event.
- iv. This approval is valid for one year only. A Renewal Request must be submitted and approved prior to the above expiry date.
- v. A Protocol Closure must be submitted to the HEO when the research is complete or if the research is terminated.
- vi. The University of Manitoba may request to audit your research documentation to confirm compliance with this approved protocol, and with the UM *Ethics of Research Involving Humans* [Ethics of Research Involving Humans](#) policies and procedures.

Appendix D

PUBLIC PLS Slide Deck with Purpose, Confidentiality and Four Agreements



https://www.canva.com/design/DAF3oDHmLPg/PD1kyF-dtBKaEnOduvyBDA/view?utm_content=DAF3oDHmLPg&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=editor

Appendix E

Book Club Selections Chart

Title	Author	Who is the Protagonist ?	MG or YA	What is my purpose/ intent for including this text?	Is this text written by an authentic* voice?	Does this text contain complex, multi-dimensional representations of oppressed or marginalized voices?
Book Club 1- Identity						
<i>Freewater</i>	Amina Luqman-Dawson	Homer-Black, male	MG	Identity- <i>Underground to Canada</i> alternative	Y	Y
<i>Thanks A Lot, Universe</i>	Chad Lucas	Brian- white, male Ezra- Black, male, 2SLGBTQ+	MG	Identity- Adding a missing voice to the canon	Y	Y
<i>All American Boys</i>	Jason Reynolds & Brendan Kiely	Rashad- Black, male Quinn- white, male	YA	Identity- alternative to <i>TKAM</i> or <i>In the Heat of the Night</i>	Y	Y
<i>The First Thing About You</i>	Chaz Hayden	Harris- white, male, Muscular Dystrophy	YA	Identity- Adding a missing voice to the canon	Y	Y
<i>The Firekeeper's Daughter</i>	Angeline Boulley	Daunis- Indigenous, female	YA	Identity- Supplement to <i>April Raintree</i> ,	Y	Y
Book Club 2- Belonging						
<i>The Barren Grounds</i>	David A. Robertson	Morgan- Indigenous, female	MG	Belonging- Supplement to <i>April Raintree</i>	Y	Y
<i>Akata Witch</i>	Nnedi Okorafor	Sunny-	MG	Belonging- Alternative to <i>Harry Potter</i>	Y	Y

		Nigerian, female, Albino				
<i>The Sun Bearer Trials</i>	Aiden Thomas	Teo- Transgender	MG	Belonging- Supplement to <i>Percy Jackson</i> series	Y	Y
<i>The Marrow Thieves</i>	Cherie Dimaline	Frenchie- Indigenous, male	YA	Belonging- Supplement to <i>April Raintree</i>	Y	Y
<i>Parable of the Sower</i>	Octavia E. Butler	Lauren- Black, female	YA	Belonging- Supplement to <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>	Y	Y
Book Club 3- Power						
<i>Go with the Flow</i>	Karen Shneemann & Lily Williams	Diverse ensemble, female	MG	Power- Adding a missing perspective/ topic to the canon	Y	Y
<i>When Stars are Scattered</i>	Victoria Jamieson and Omar Mohammed	Omar- Somalian, refugee, male	MG	Power- Adding a missing perspective/ topic to the canon	Y	Y
<i>Borders</i>	Thomas King & Natasha Donovan	Unnamed- Blackfoot, male	MG	Power- Adding a missing perspective/ topic to the canon	Y	Y
<i>Speak Up</i>	Rebecca Burgess	Mia- While, female, Autistic	MG	Power- Adding a missing perspective/ topic to the canon	Y	Y

<i>Displacement</i>	Kiku Hughes	Kiku- Japanese American, female	YA	Power- Adding a missing perspective/ topic to the canon	Y	Y
<i>Messy Roots</i>	Laura Gao	Laura- Chinese- American, 2SLGBTQ+	YA	Power- Adding a missing perspective/ topic to the canon	Y	Y
<i>Heartstopper</i>	Alice Oseman	Nick- 2SLGBTQ+ white, male Charlie- 2SLGBTQ+, white, male	YA	Power- Adding a missing perspective/ topic to the canon	Y	Y

Figure 1

Thematic Coding Chart—Session Two, Book Club 1

	Book Club #1
<p>Question 1: How do teachers define and select diverse texts for their classrooms?</p>	<p>(345) F: I think that first question is kind self-explanatory. E: Yeah, we already kinda . . .</p> <p>Reflecting on what is missing- (287) A: I can't say that I've read a book with like a character who had a physical disability that truly impacts most facets of their day-to-day life, before. Which is like wild, but. . . I can't, I can't think of a single other book, and which is why I chose this.</p> <p>Recommendations- (298) B: Is there a book like that that actually has a neurodiverse author that has their own voice attached to that? A: I saw – I took a picture of one that Tara had it on the table. . . "Speak Up"? (315) Other teachers, blogs</p>
<p>Question 2: What motivations and barriers exist in using diverse texts in the classroom?</p>	<p>Motivations: Connecting kids to stories (54) A: Indigenous kids can connect to lots of the traditions in that book. (59) EL: I think some of them don't necessarily feel super connected and it maybe it's good to see that kind of reflected in the text.</p> <p>The Danger of a Single Story (93-104) F: But would I personally, I would shy away from teaching that text. Only because there's not a lot of uplifting celebration of, you know, her, and kind of what she goes through. It's all very dark and depressing. A: It's important to do both right? Like you can teach it like the true history of a group of people, while also teaching brilliance and resilience, right? Like finding that balance. That's why I think I really resonate with that question- If this text is the only representation of the focal group in the story that I teach throughout the entire year, <i>am I comfortable with it being the representative texts that students will refer to repeatedly?</i> That was a really big one for me 'cuz I'm like, holy moly, even in lit circles, if kids only read one book like is this book doing that for them too? (113) A: they have some <i>brilliance and joy</i> in there too.</p> <p>Canonical Texts that need updating</p>

Figure 2

Thematic Coding Chart—Session Two, Book Club 1

	<p>354-363 Book Talk/Convincing a SY teacher</p> <p>364-373 Navigating tough content</p> <p>374-378 Engaging readers</p> <p>380-429 Navigating tough content</p> <p>433-436 Growing as a teacher</p> <p>437- 458 Exposing student to other perspectives</p> <p>459-468 Making mistakes as teachers</p> <p>468-481 Logistics of Lit Circles</p>
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Book Club #1 (Session 2)-

- Immediate discussion (line 2) of books being more appropriate for Sy vs My
- Why not appropriate? Sexuality? Violence
- Canonical books have sex, rape, etc.- Curley and his wife (keeping hand in glove with Vaseline)
- Is it legitimized because it's canonical? Cis-het? Adults?
- Danger of a Single Story:
 - Line 94 struggling with April raintree- not saying it, but is he feeling tension with this being the sole representation of Indigenous story ?
 - 105- LGBTQ stories
 - 128- looking for books with queer main characters as a queer teen
 - INTERSECTIONALITY 145
 - Multiple perspectives 476
- Reflecting on canonical texts
 - 94 April Raintree
 - 221 Of Mice and Men
 - 291 Flowers for Algernon

Teachers reflecting on own growth:

(459-462)

A: I was just going to say like from when I read that two years ago to like when I listen to it more recently, I was like oh I understand way more of this now!

E: Yeah, right?

A: Or like when there's Anishinaabemowin. . . I done a lot of growing too, that's cool!

Figure 3

Data Analysis Process— For Book Club Audio Recordings & Transcripts

