

Hamline University

DigitalCommons@Hamline

School of Education and Leadership Student
Capstone Projects

School of Education and Leadership

Summer 2022

Supporting Healthy Identity Development Using Text Selection and Instructional Activities in Secondary Language Arts Classes

Carla Beuning Obleman
Hamline University

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.hamline.edu/hse_cp



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Beuning Obleman, Carla, "Supporting Healthy Identity Development Using Text Selection and Instructional Activities in Secondary Language Arts Classes" (2022). *School of Education and Leadership Student Capstone Projects*. 845.

https://digitalcommons.hamline.edu/hse_cp/845

This Capstone Project is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Education and Leadership at DigitalCommons@Hamline. It has been accepted for inclusion in School of Education and Leadership Student Capstone Projects by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Hamline. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@hamline.edu.

Supporting Healthy Identity Development Using Text Selection and Instructional
Activities in Secondary Language Arts Classes

by

Carla Beuning Obleman

A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master
of Arts in Teaching.

Hamline University

St. Paul, Minnesota

August 2022

Capstone Project Facilitator: Kari Ross
Content Reviewer: Kirsten Wallevand

Table of Contents

CHAPTER ONE	3
Introduction	3
Personal and Professional Interest	3
Context and Rationale	7
Chapter Summary	10
CHAPTER TWO	11
Literature Review	11
Chapter Overview	11
Identity Development Theories	12
Text Selection	23
Instructional Activities	28
Chapter Summary	32
CHAPTER THREE	34
Project Description	34
Chapter Overview	34
Project Details	34
Web Design Framework	37
Connections to Research	38
Intended Audience	40
Timeline	40
Effectiveness	40
Chapter Summary	43
CHAPTER FOUR	45
Conclusion	45
Chapter Overview	45
Key Learning	46
Literature Review Impact	47
Implications of the Research	48
Limitations of the Project	49
Future Research	50
Summary	50
REFERENCES	52

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

From foundational theories on child development to more recent studies on how adolescents develop a healthy sense of self, it is clear that adolescent identity development is critical to healthy development and our ability to thrive in adulthood (Erikson, 1968). Literature is often a pillar of students' language arts education. There are many ways for educators to teach it, and many ways students engage with literature. This capstone seeks to bridge the gap between theory and teaching practice by answering the question: how can secondary language arts teachers support healthy identity development in adolescent learners using text selection and instructional activities? Chapter one explains my personal and professional interest in this topic as a parent and as an educator, and introduces the reader to formative experiences that led me to this research. Chapter one then discusses the context for investigating this question and its relevance to learners and educators. It includes key takeaways from literature on the topic that provide rationale for this project.

Personal and Professional Interest

Many of my interests and experiences converged to lead me to ask how language arts teachers can support healthy identity development in adolescent learners using text selection and instructional activities. First was my interest in psychology and more specifically, identity. The term *identity* takes on various meanings in many different contexts. For purposes of this capstone, I approach the term identity as Marcia (2009) defines it, "... a sense of who one *is*, based upon who one *has been* and who one can imagine oneself as becoming" (p.671).

I came to the world of teaching as a parent with the belief that students are whole people whose social, emotional, and developmental health is paramount to their ability to learn. Memories of my own stormy adolescence have often reminded me of the significance of identity development. The magnitude of this topic is not a stretch when we can recall or still conjure the burning desire to arrive at an answer--even if we could not form the words-- to the questions, Who am I? What purpose do I have here and what do I contribute to the world for being me? These questions may never have definite or final answers, but as we work to develop a sense of identity, we can often approach examples of meaningful answers to those questions. For example, I am an educator, I am a parent, I am a valued student, I am part of a community.

I have watched my own children navigate the social and emotional world of education and observed how important it was for them to develop a healthy identity--a sense of wholeness, success, and purpose for who they are. As I embarked on the coursework to prepare for teaching language arts, the more I read and observed related to identity development, the more interested I became. I began to see identity development not as a task to complete, but a lifelong process navigable with skills and support. Naturally, as an educator, I began to wonder how my students will develop their own identities, and how I can support them in the process.

I had the privilege of visiting a 7th grade language arts class over the course of a semester studying at Hamline University. In this setting, I observed many students engaging deeply with an assigned young adult (YA) literature text. Students signaled various ways they engaged with their own identities, such as agreement or disagreement

with viewpoints and cultural traditions or practices, expressing relatability with the text, or applying concepts and themes from the text to their own lives. Students read and completed coursework based on *Touching Spirit Bear* (Mikaelsen, 2001). They engaged in critical discourse about threads in the text, such as justice and forgiveness. When students were asked to discuss how life lessons from the text applied to their lives, they connected to the text in ways that seemed reflective of their own selves and identities. Watching students internalize this literature in ways that seemed to elevate their discovery of identity prompted me to want to investigate this topic further in order to better understand how texts like this example and language arts instruction can support identity development.

I also recently spent one school year teaching high school business classes, and observed my students as they experimented with identities and connected with their coursework on that basis. Students had opportunities to consider their occupational futures and identities as they explored different business topics and careers. They worked on new skill sets like marketing, business planning, and accounting to gauge their aptitudes and interest in various fields. Students also completed a project in which they researched and presented information to the class about a successful person. Students chose a successful person to research and presented information about that person in ways that were unique, reflective, and expressive of who they were as a student and how they identified with the concept of success. I noticed that students connected with this work as they expressed their own future career possibilities and identities in unique and meaningful ways. One student chose to research a successful musician, presented information to the class dressed up as that musician, and expressed interest in emulating

them as a role model. This experience fed my curiosity about identity development in relation to school and instructional activities.

Another path of interest leading me to this capstone topic originated from a course I took at Hamline called Literary and Cultural Theory. The concepts from this class changed how I think of literature and texts. Literature gives me a sense of understanding, belonging, and purpose, which I connect with my own sense of identity. Studying literary theory, I began to notice how I connect with literature in meaningful ways, and in ways that noticeably shape or express my own identity. Whether reading for enjoyment, information, or necessity, I noticed anecdotal connections between what I was reading and who I was. I have always loved reading, and considered myself a consumer of texts. However, in that course, I began to examine how we, as learners and humans, interact with texts and how texts can influence us or vice versa. French Psychiatrist and Theorist Lacan (1949) argued that once -- even as very young children-- we are able to view our own reflection and relate to the world, we develop and observe a concept of self or identity based on our external social experiences and interactions, which includes the texts we read. Others have argued that we develop our sense of self in relation to context and others around us (Erikson, 1968), and, importantly for this capstone, that narratives or stories serve to develop our identities (McAdams, et al., 2006). For example, if we read and feel connected to feminist theories, we may identify as a feminist. I realized that texts can affirm how we think, change how we think, make us comfortable or uncomfortable, connected or disconnected, and thus will prompt us to position ourselves in the world. Through that Literary and Cultural Theory course I came to question how we consume literature and how student engagement with a text might inform identity. I

consider myself a literature fan, and thoroughly enjoy certain genres while other genres challenge me or put me out of my element. That's just one way texts have shaped my identity. I'm a mystery and science fiction reader. I'm anti-racist. Those identities are directly correlated with my relationship with literature. This mutually-formative relationship between readers and texts, as it intersects with my desire to support healthy identity development in students, piques my interest in understanding the ways language arts teachers can select texts and design instruction to help support students as they navigate adolescence and develop their own identities.

Context and Rationale

This capstone seeks to connect the threads of adolescent identity development theory and language arts instruction for the benefit of learners and language arts teachers. Instruction that affirms identity increases student engagement (Cummins et al., 2015). The natural adolescent process of exploring identities is correlated with lower levels of mental health (Meeus et. al., 1999), which reinforces the timely need for teachers to support students as they experience this process. Adolescent students need to be able to experience the people and stories around them to develop their own identities (Eisenbach, 2018), and language arts teachers are in a unique position to use classroom instruction to support this need.

Research tells us that adolescent students navigate a normal developmental process to develop their identities, and that the primary task of adolescent development is to emerge with a "firm sense of inner identity" (Erikson, 1968, p.88). 20th century psychologist Erikson (1968) identified eight stages of psychosocial development: trust vs. mistrust, autonomy vs. shame, industry vs. inferiority, identity vs. identity confusion,

intimacy vs. isolation, and generativity vs. stagnation (Erikson, 1968). The stage most significant to high school students, identity vs. identity confusion, occurs during the adolescent high school years (Woolfolk, 2014). Identity development is of particular interest to me as an educator, because developing a sense of identity is essential to healthy development and progress toward adult maturity (Erikson, 1968). It is my goal to help students work toward healthy development and prepare them to grow and mature into successful adults.

When considering what a *healthy* identity is, it is important to consider the idea that development is a process, and that identities are based on not only our inner selves, but also on social contexts (Erikson, 1968). Erikson (1968) describes healthy identity development as a person's ability to navigate life with an "increased sense of inner unity, with an increase in good judgment, and an increase in the capacity 'to do well' according to his own standards and to the standards of those who are significant to him" (p. 92). In this capstone, I refer to healthy identities as those which contribute to this sense of wholeness and success.

Language arts teachers have a unique opportunity to help students engage with the social contexts that surround them through reading and expression. With this project, I intend to use research to connect the topics of text selection and instruction to healthy identity development in the language arts classroom setting.

One aim of this research is to provide language arts teachers with a theoretical foundation on which to base their text selection and instructional activities. This foundation includes identity development theories by Erikson (1968) and Marcia (1966), as well as intersectional approaches that touch on many different kinds of identities.

Narrative identity development emerges as meaningful and informative in this context as well, and should guide educators to effectively help adolescent students engage with the process of identity development.

Before I can meaningfully weave together identity development theories and the ways in which language arts teachers can use text selection and instructional activities to support healthy identity development in adolescent learners, I must define language arts. This capstone refers to language arts classes; in this term I include English, grammar, literature, and composition studies. Schools still often only focus on the *classic canon* of literature in language arts curricula (Eisenbach et. al., 2018). I believe this has historically marginalized many students, and it elevates the importance of researching the implications of text selection in language arts classes. To answer the question of how text selection can serve to support identity development, this capstone investigates how students relate to literature from the classic canon, why cultural relevance matters for identity development, and how young adult literature can serve to support identity development.

Language arts teachers can use a variety of instructional activities to teach literature, and I believe some activities support healthy identity development. It is important to my teaching practice and goal of supporting adolescent identity development to better understand not only which texts to select, but how to use instruction to create opportunities for students to explore and express their identities. I believe this research can result in language arts instruction designed to go beyond state academic standards and support healthy identity development. The goal of this capstone is to use existing research to inform the process of selecting texts and creating instructional activities,

thereby giving language arts teachers useful tools to build a sense of wholeness and success--healthy identities-- in their students.

Chapter Summary

My interest in psychology and my experiences as a parent and educator formed my interest in the topic of identity development. Watching students engage with literary texts and grapple with important questions about who they are and how they relate to the world nudged me to investigate my curiosity for how language arts teachers can support healthy identity development in their students. Research that creates understanding of identity development theories will serve to build a foundation to support recommendations for how educators can approach text selection and instructional activities. Chapter two presents a review of existing research on the relevant topics of identity development theories, text selection practices, and instructional activities that support identity development. Chapter three dives into the result of this research: a website for high school language arts teachers with tools to support healthy identity development.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Chapter Overview

This project seeks to answer the question: how can secondary language arts teachers support healthy identity development in adolescent learners using text selection and instructional activities? To begin, an understanding of identity development theory is necessary in order to fully understand which text selection and instructional approaches can best support healthy adolescent identity development. Chapter two first explains identity development theory beginning with Erikson's (1968) psychosocial development theory, then explores how others have clarified and expanded on Erikson's theory. Related to identity development theory, this section will explore how recent research has pivoted to address the nuances and intersections of identity pertinent for adolescents learners. As education evolves to better serve more diverse students, it is worth investigating an intersectional approach to the factors that influence adolescent identity development, particularly in the context of teaching and learning about literature. Important in the context of literature, this section of the literature review will also discuss narrative identity development.

The second section of this literature review will explore text selection, highlighting a debate between teaching the classic literary canon and young adult (YA) literature.

The third and final section of this literature review will identify specific instructional activities that support identity development, including critical discourse, opportunities for expression, and multi-modal projects in the language arts classroom.

Identity Development Theories

Research on how adolescents develop a sense of identity has evolved since foundational work on the subject was published in the 1960s. Foundational theories of identity development include Erikson's (1968) psychosocial development theory, which identifies eight stages of the human lifespan, including adolescence. Erikson, a psychoanalyst and widely recognized scholar, published new and impactful research on identity development in the 1960s (Maree, 2021). His work is still widely cited (Maree, 2021). Marcia, a prominent developmental psychologist, published important work that expands on and stratifies Erikson's (1968) theory regarding adolescent identity development into four identity statuses (Meeus et. al., 1999). These theories establish a foundation and consensus for adolescent development. They remain widely accepted and utilized in recent research, yet are not without criticism. Researchers with a more timely and diverse perspective explain how adolescents approach identity development in more complex and intersectional ways than Erikson's and Marcia's theories. The following sections will define and explore intersectional approaches to identity development, considering factors that influence adolescent identity development including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality.

Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory

Erikson's (1968) psychosocial development theory is based on biology and psychology. The theory assumes that humans are biologically programmed to develop, yet that development is influenced by our social and physical environment (Erikson, 1968). Erikson (1968) identifies eight developmental stages from birth through adulthood: trust vs. mistrust, autonomy vs. shame and doubt, initiative vs. guilt, industry

vs. inferiority, identity vs. identity confusion; intimacy vs. isolation, generativity vs. stagnation, and integrity vs. despair. While there is no requirement for successfully navigating one stage to move on to the next, Erikson (1968) argues that unsuccessful navigation of any one of the stages may present difficulties in subsequent stages.

This review zooms in on the fifth, identity vs. identity confusion stage, commonly encountered between ages 13 and 19 (Erikson, 1968). In this stage, adolescents face the challenge of forming a sense of identity by approaching increasingly complex tasks with growing cognitive ability and sense of independence (Maree, 2021). Biologically, adolescents begin to mature, and their physical and social world expands (Erikson, 1968). This stage is marked by the process of trying out new things and discovering competencies; successful experimentation and exploration results in a confirmed sense of identity, while a stunted or unsuccessful navigation of this stage results in identity confusion (Erikson, 1968). Erikson's (1968) theory links the importance of competence in meaningful tasks to identity development during adolescence.

Key attributes. Erikson's (1968) theory recognizes key attributes of the adolescent identity development stage, which are often evident in the classroom. For example, adolescents are hyper-aware of what their peers think of them and begin to compare themselves to a broader concept of society rather than their childhood surroundings (Erikson, 1968). As their world cognitively and socially expands, adolescents often fear being made to feel foolish and fear being forced into situations in which they would feel exposed to ridicule or self-doubt (Erikson, 1968). Adolescents would often rather disappoint their parents, guardians, or teachers than their peers; peer

pressure becomes a driver of behavior and activity selection, thus a way of trying out new experiences, competencies, and identities (Erikson, 1968).

Key takeaways. Attributes of adolescents in the identity vs. identity confusion stage are important for educators. When adolescents behave in ways that seem rebellious or delinquent, they are usually not pathological or criminal, they are sorting out a natural developmental process (Erikson, 1968). Furthermore, educators need to support adolescents in opportunities to experience success in new tasks or occupations (Maree, 2021). Erikson (1968) emphasizes the need to succeed at *meaningful* tasks, which has implications for designing instructional activities that are meaningful to students. While Erikson (1968) describes the developmental task at hand and of the life stage in which adolescents find themselves, Marcia's (1966) expansion of Erikson's theory provides a more thorough understanding of the process by which adolescents navigate this stage (Meeus et. al., 1999).

Marcia's Identity Statuses

Marcia's (1966) work expanded on Erikson's (1968) theory of psychosocial development, specifically clarifying the stage called identity vs. identity confusion. Marcia describes the stage as a continuum of development rather than a sequence (Marcia, 1966; Meeus et al., 1999). Marcia (1966) identifies four statuses within the identity vs. role confusion stage that describe adolescent moments or junctures of identity exploration and development. The continuum begins at identity diffusion, a stage marked by a lacking sense of self, and extends to identity achievement, in which adolescents emerge from an exploration period with a confirmed sense of identity (Marcia, 1966; Meeus et al., 1999). The stages in between are moratorium, which is the exploration

itself, and foreclosure, which is a commitment to an identity without any exploration (Meeus et al., 1999). Any of the identity statuses may be temporary and even revisited more than once (Meeus et al., 1999).

Key attributes. Marcia's (1966) four statuses: identity diffusion, moratorium, foreclosure, and identity achievement, illuminate the stages by which adolescents navigate identity development and offer scholars a framework for considering and studying this developmental process and its implications. For example, Meeus et al. (1999) use empirical data to correlate foreclosure and identity achievement with higher levels of psychological well-being, while the moratorium or exploration status correlates with lower levels of psychological well-being.

Key takeaways. Educators must understand the dynamic and cyclical nature of identity development stages and provide multiple opportunities that support identity development as adolescents experiment and explore new ideas and identities. As students explore identities, they will need multiple opportunities that support them in their exploration. Meeus et al. (1999) describe a correlation between Marcia's (1966) moratorium identity exploration status and a decreased sense of well-being that has implications for educators as well. Teachers must understand that healthy identity can be beneficial in the long term, yet anxiety-producing in the present.

Intersectional Approaches

A review of subsequent literature reveals a pivot to embrace more complex, intersectional approaches to identity development. Spencer, a psychologist and researcher noted for their work on race and development theory (Spencer, 2021), sets a precedent for considering all types of environmental, social, and contextual influences on identity

(Brittain, 2012). Nowhere is this more important than in schools, the places where adolescents encounter diverse environments and influences on their identities. Brittain's (2012) analysis of identity development literature favors approaches that consider individual differences in concert with a global analysis of adolescents' complex situations to a greater degree than the stages described in Erikson's (1968) and Marcia's (1966) theories. As such, the idea of intersectionality can be used as a basis for understanding and researching identity development.

Intersectionality. The concept of intersectionality was first described in Crenshaw's (1989) work discussing how Black women are marginalized by the White feminist movement, and has evolved into a theoretical approach that crosses disciplines and serves as a tool for analyzing how theories work together (Carbado et al., 2013). Crenshaw's theory has evolved into a social or critical thinking method that encourages analyzing how various factors affect various groups in society (Carbado et al., 2013). Using an intersectional approach allows us to consider the multitudes of factors relative to identity development.

Developmental systems theory. In a review of theories related to racial identity development, Brittain (2012) explains that using developmental systems theory (DST) offers useful ways to consider complex factors that shape identity. DST can be defined as an approach to theory that considers many dynamic factors or systems that affect development, such as biological, psychological, social, cultural, and historical influences (Molenaar et al., 2014). Developmental psychologists Lerner and Ford initially developed DST in their (1992) work on human development (Molenaar et al., 2014). DSTs focus on how internal factors and external support mutually contribute to identity development,

thus they are well-suited for considering identity development (Brittain, 2012). DSTs embrace a worldview that at once helps researchers expand on Erikson's theory and avoid analyzing identity-related factors in isolation (Brittain, 2012). This is useful as teachers consider their students' complex identities. For example, Spencer's (2006, 2018), Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST) "is one such DST that is particularly useful for considering the challenges that are most relevant to African American adolescents' healthy development and for understanding how identity may lead to various behavioral outcomes" (Brittain, 2012). Spencer's (2006, 2018) PVEST work identifies factors that are relevant to African American adolescents as they develop their identities, including vulnerability, levels of stress, emerging identities (positive or negative), and outcomes, then link the factors according to their dependent relationships in various ways (Brittain, 2012). Velez and Spencer's (2018) work models how educators can consider the multitudes of factors that influence African American identity development with an intersectional approach.

Racial and Ethnic Identity. Erikson (1968) connects the uniqueness of racial identity development with barriers and stereotypes that African Americans have endured, particularly in the 1960s. He acknowledges that African American adolescents have a different identity development experience than their white counterparts because the nature of identity development is both internal and relational to society (Erikson, 1968). He also argues that societal reinforcement of negative identities, perpetuated by not only the oppressive white majority culture, but also Black men and women, inhibit the positive identity development process (Erikson, 1968). Indeed African American and minority adolescents face negative stereotypes and racism, which indicates that supporting their

positive identity development in school is imperative (Brittain, 2012). Erikson's (1968) comments on race and identity convey an acknowledgement of hurdles that black adolescents face as they form identities among oppression and stereotyping and include ideas about building positive African American identities through what he calls technological skill, or learned aptitude, and shared identities. Intersectional approaches to identity development illuminate factors that contribute to positive identity and how educators can support it. One example is Spencer's (2006, 2018) PVEST theory that links stress and coping mechanisms to positive identity development and academic achievement, identifying how these factors affect one another (Brittain, 2012).

Ethnic and racial identity is central to healthy identity development, especially for minority adolescents; they need to explore what their own ethnicity, race, and culture mean to them (Umana-Taylor et al., 2014). However, race and ethnicity are by no means the only points of intersectionality in the identity development process. Gender identity and sexual identity play important and complex roles in adolescent identity development as well (Buckley, 2018; Perry & Pauletti, 2011).

Gender Identity. Gender is highly subject to cultural norms, societal influences, and even controversy. Gender identities are a result of social constructs (Perry & Pauletti, 2011). Gender identity is difficult to measure or interpret, because it is typically self-reported, subject to various interpretations, and perceived differently in different cultures and in aspects of life (Perry & Pauletti, 2011). Gender identity can be interpreted as how related a person feels to different gender categories, roles, or stereotypes, and social pressure to conform may play a role (Perry & Pauletti, 2011). Meeus et al.'s (1999) analysis of identity studies indicates that there are no gender differences in the identity

development process, with the exception that girls tend to develop relationship-based identities more quickly than boys.

Sexual Identity. Students' sexual identities are important to learning (Vetter, 2010), and are a complex part of identity development (Glover, 2006). Parmenter et. al. (2020) argue that this complexity is best approached with an intersectional approach: "By considering sexual identity in relation to other domains of identity, we gain a more holistic understanding of identity development" (p.2). Glover (2006) asserts that older ideas like essentialism, a model that assumes limited factors affect sexual identity development, fail to consider people's individual experiences (Glover, 2006). Glover's research highlights factors that influence how individuals incorporate sexual orientation into their identities, including the degree to which individuals find acceptance and support (Glover, 2006). Research by Parmenter et. al. (2020) affirms that providing support and LGBTQ+ resources for adolescents, especially those who identify as LGBTQ+, facilitates healthy identity development.

Key Takeaways. Complex, layered, and thorough considerations of factors affecting identity development can be used along with Erikson's (1968) and Marcia's (1966) theories to better understand and support identity development (Brittain, 2012; Glover, 2006; Parmenter, 2020; Spencer, 2018). While the literature provides examples of areas of intersection when considering identity development theory, such as race and ethnicity, gender, and sexuality, these intersections are limited examples. Intersectional approaches to identity development and DSTs acknowledge an essentially limitless list of possible factors at work in adolescent development, each potentially influential for students as they develop their identities. Understanding that identity development

theories include intersectional approaches to consider all aspects of an adolescent's identity, we turn to a narrative approach to identity development to understand how the multiple and intersecting identities are constructed.

Narrative Identity Development

Narrative as a means for adolescent identity development originated with research by McAdams (1985) (McAdams & McLean, 2013). McAdams and McLean (2013) find that “people create identity through constructing stories about their lives” (p.1). Narrative identity describes a person's identity as a constantly and endlessly evolving sense of self constructed through the process of storytelling (Cohler & Hammack, 2006; Pasupathi, 2006; Raggatt, 2006). This narrative approach to identity development acknowledges that identities are multiple, based on many different life experiences, and socially constructed in context of narrative and storytelling with other people (Cohler & Hammack, 2006; Halbertal, 2006; McLean, 2006; Pasupathi, 2006; Raggatt, 2006). The idea that we develop identities by telling our stories is essential for this capstone's question: how can secondary language arts teachers support healthy identity development in adolescent learners using text selection and instructional activities? It gives educators insight into the types of instructional activities that support healthy identity development.

Multiple identities. The first important aspect of narrative identity development is the acknowledgement that we all have multiple and complex identities (Raggatt, 2006). Raggatt's (2006) work states that we must consider our multiple identities when considering what is a healthy identity. Born of our multitudes of experiences, both traumatic or impactful and others trivial or fun, we create meaningful identities from our

experiences by telling stories to ourselves and others (Cohler & Hammack, 2006; Halbertal, 2006; McLean & Thorne, 2006). The idea that people have multiple identities speaks to the importance of an intersectional approach where all of a person's identities can co-exist (Raggatt 2006).

Social construction. The second important aspect of narrative identity development is that identity is developed in social contexts (McLean & Thorne; Raggatt, 2006). In agreement with Erikson's (1968) theory, a narrative approach to identity development acknowledges that identity is informed by individual internal factors as well as external social factors (Raggatt, 2006; McLean & Thorne, 2006). Identity is influenced by how we tell our stories, and to whom we tell them (McLean & Thorne, 2006; Pasupathi, 2006).

Types of storytelling. The third aspect of narrative identity development of interest to educators is understanding which types of narratives or storytelling affect identity development. McLean and Thorne's (2006) research reveals that telling light-hearted, fun, or entertaining stories about our experiences is equally formative as telling stories that are more deep or traumatic. This concept works in concert with Gregg's (2006) structural model that claims many stories are layered to develop identity. Gregg (2006) asserts that meaningful identities are formed by expressing and layering both deep and superficial experiences.

Gregg's (2006) structural model also describes identity development as a process of constructing identities by using narrative to compare pairs of binary oppositions, then layering them to form a unique, complex identity. Gregg (2006) argues that like in music and poetry, comparing pairs of opposites in the storytelling context helps create meaning

by acknowledging the space between them. Examples include comparing black and white, optimistic or pessimistic, loud and quiet, good and evil, happy and sad, etc. People form a complex and unique sense of identity by considering their position between pairs of opposites and layering those positions (Gregg, 2006).

Key takeaways. The narrative approach to identity development emerges in the literature as being complementary to Erikson's (1968) psychosocial development theory, Marcia's (1966) identity status model, and intersectional approaches to identity development. Narrative identity development expands on these theories by considering how multiple, complex identities are formed in social contexts, by engaging in deep and lighthearted storytelling, and by expressing positions between pairs of opposites (Gregg, 2006; McLean & Thorne, 2006; Raggatt, 2006). Raggatt's (2006) work, asserting multiple and complex identities coexist, supports the need for language arts teachers to provide multiple opportunities for students to tell many stories.

Summary

Identity development theories originated in the 1960s with Erikson's (1968) psychosocial development theory and was later expanded to include Marcia's (1966) four identity statuses. These theories provide key insights for teachers as they consider adolescent student's developmental task of exploring and affirming identities. More recent approaches to identity development theories embrace intersectionality, a tool for analyzing how theories work together (Carbado et al., 2013). DSTs emerge in the research as useful for considering identity development (Brittain, 2012), one key example being Spencer's (2006, 2018) work that considers multitudes of factors that influence African American identity development with an intersectional approach. Complex and

multiple factors affect identity (Brittain, 2012; Glover, 2006; Parmenter, 2020; Spencer, 2018) including race and ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. These examples provide a starting place to consider some intersections, but are limited. Narrative identity describes how identity is constructed through the process of storytelling (Cohler & Hammock, 2006; Pasupathi, 2006; Raggatt, 2006), and is especially applicable to the language arts setting. Using this basis of identity development theory, this review continues to investigate the question: how can secondary language arts teachers support healthy identity development in adolescent learners using text selection and instructional activities? The following section reviews literature on text selection and identity development.

Text Selection

This section of the review investigates how types of literary texts in the language arts setting can support identity development. Literary texts give adolescent students opportunities to consider how they see themselves in stories and in the world, and adolescent students can use texts to reflect on their own identities (Eisenbach et al., 2018). This section will discuss the ways in which pivoting from use of the classic canon toward culturally relevant texts can support adolescent identity development. The literature on text selection advocates for the use of young adult (YA) literature in secondary education, as well as the strategy of pairing classic and contemporary texts to support identity development (Gallo, 2001; Tatum et al., 2009).

The Classic Canon

As education formed in America, language arts or composition classes originated for the purpose of educating White Protestant boys and men, primarily with a classical

focus (Crowley, 1998). The classic canon refers to historical works of literature curated by an intellectual elite, primarily White English men, and reinforced by proponents of Christian values in the United States (Pike, 2003). Arguments exist for and against teaching the classic canon in schools.

While traditional literature from the classic canon generally does not reflect the experiences or identities of women, minorities, or those with lower socio-economic status, Pike (2003) argues that because literature from the classic canon is removed from modern social and experiential norms, it can be interpreted objectively as a work of art rather than interpreted as relevant or true, and offer a varied chronological perspective. It also provides adolescents with an opportunity to “read diachronically across time,” thus offering a varied or historical perspective (Pike, 2003, p.357). Additionally, Pike (2003) argues that the classical canon provides opportunities for students to contrast historical perspectives with their own using critical discourse.

The classic canon includes texts that were written as entertainment for educated adults long ago and are thus irrelevant to adolescent learners (Gallo, 2001). Gallo (2001) argues that the inaccessibility and irrelevance of classical works due to dense vocabulary and dated ideologies and experiences for adolescent readers in school turns adolescents away from literature. Additionally, the focus on classical texts for adolescents is problematic because students who do not identify with the authors and characters in these texts are excluded from valuable identity exploration opportunities.

Key takeaways. Students are effectively marginalized when they cannot identify with the texts they are required to read. For example, when girls do not see themselves represented in the selection of authors and stories they read, their opportunities to explore

their own identities are limited (Broughton & Fairbanks, 2003). Given the classic canon is centered around Western European male authors and characters (Crowder, 2016), others may be easily left out of opportunities to relate to the material and therefore marginalized if no other texts are used. Marsh's (2004) criticism of the classic canon in curricula states that only using classical texts marginalizes the work that is relevant to students.

Cultural Relevance

Culture, as discussed in Dutro et al's (2008) research on culturally relevant teaching, is difficult to define and is often conflated with race and ethnicity. Ladson-Billings (2014) describes culturally sustaining pedagogy as a step beyond cultural relevance, one that "recreates instructional spaces to ensure that consistently marginalized students are repositioned into a place of normativity" (p.76). This notion of cultural relevance speaks to a student's experiences that relate to cultural identity, including race and ethnicity (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Aronson and Laughter (2020) argue that cultural relevance should include gender and sexual identities as well.

The literature affirms that culturally relevant text selection based on student cultures and interests is a critical part of culturally relevant teaching needed to support healthy identity development (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Kibler & Chapman, 2018). For example, teachers can engage marginalized LGBTQ+ students by providing opportunities for students to explore their identities through literacy by including texts that address issues important to them, and opportunities to reflect and express themselves (Vetter, 2010). Teachers can work to engage and support African American students by including texts and materials that represent and celebrate African American cultural assets

(Ladson-Billings, 1995). In alignment with Ladson-Billings' (1995) culturally sustaining approach, it is important that students have texts that don't just represent them, but provide positive, affirming characters that honor students' experiences (Muhammad, 2012). Culturally relevant texts can help develop student literacy and support healthy identity development for students, including those from marginalized groups (Kibler & Chapman, 2018).

Young Adult Literature

Language arts curricula increasingly include YA literature in secondary schools. Alsop (2010) notes the usefulness of YA literature in its ability to engage adolescent readers:

When they are allowed to read books that do focus on characters, settings, or situations familiar to them (such as in much YA literature), and when they are allowed to respond personally to these texts prior to engaging in any critical analysis, students often respond more positively to reading. (p. 7)

The YA genre itself is typically intended for adolescent readers and often involves coming-of-age stories, identity and the transition from self-focus to a focus on forging an identity within society (Daley-Carey, 2017). Hill (2014) defines the genre:

...generally perceived as fiction that immerses readers in the experiences, lived and imagined, of young adults aged 14-18. Frequently written in the first person, YA narratives across genres enable identification with the narrator and/or encourage empathy for the protagonist and/or other characters. (p.8)

YA literature covers just about any topic or scenario, offering readers a chance to explore cultures and identities new and familiar. "As they have questions about the world around

them, adolescents explore, and YA literature offers this outlet for them to test their values” (Zdilla, 2010). Based on Erikson’s (1968) psychosocial development theory, Marcia’s (1966) identity statuses, and narrative identity development, this exploration process afforded by YA literature supports healthy identity development.

Gallo (2001) argues that in contrast to classic canonical texts that are dated and irrelevant, YA literature can engage and invigorate adolescent readers, helping them to feel “normal, comfortable, and understood” (pp.35-36). While YA literature as a genre tends to focus on identity development and provide relevance and connection for navigating the challenges of adolescence, Daley-Carey (2017) cautions that the genre may collectively reduce the adolescent experience to one where identity is always in the end affirmed, when in reality, many students may not successfully resolve their identity struggles.

Pairing Texts

The literature reveals an ongoing debate about teaching literature from the classic canon as opposed to YA literature. Researchers have identified one solution to this debate: pairing literature from the classic canon to more culturally relevant and relatable YA texts. The strategy presented by Tatum et al. (2009) of teaching *linked text sets* offers pairings of classic and YA texts to support adolescent identity development. For example, Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*, a text Gallo (2001) notes as being particularly unrelatable to adolescents today, can be supported by YA works by Oates, Meyers, and Koningsberg to address critical questions related to adolescence and identity (Tatum et al., 2009). “Linked text sets provide strategic means for using texts from both adolescent

literature and the literary canon that foster students' thinking about their own identity and the process of becoming adults" (Tatum et al., 2009, p.91).

Key Takeaways. While the strict use of classic canon texts precludes many students from being able to identify with or relate to texts (Gallo, 2001), these texts can provide opportunities for students to engage with and analyze historical perspectives (Pike, 2003). Research suggests that language arts teachers can give students the best of both worlds and support identity development by pairing classical texts with complimentary YA literature (Tatum et al., 2009).

Instructional Activities

This section of chapter two reviews literature about instructional activities that support healthy adolescent identity development. Language arts classes, because of their focus on literacy, are ideal for identity development activities (Broughton & Fairbanks, 2003). Language arts instruction that includes critical discourse (Daley-Carey, 2017; Slocum, 2019) and opportunities for expression based on narrative and storytelling (Hammock, 2008; McLean, 2005; Muhammed, 2012) will facilitate adolescent identity development. Multimodal projects also work to support adolescent identity development (Smith, 2018).

Critical Discourse

Critical discourse is the process of having critical, diverse, and interactive conversations related to texts, empowers students and increases student engagement (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). Alsup (2010) affirms that "discourse has a very real-world effect--what one says or does affects not only others but oneself... how one communicates determines the person one becomes" (p. 2). Students make meaning based on their unique

experiences, and the act of responding to or discussing a text serves to create meaning (Alsup, 2010). Considering and discussing others' perspectives supports students' ability to be empathetic and understand how the people around them can shape their own identities (Eisenbach, et. al., 2018).

Additionally, critical discourse and cultural relevance go hand in hand, allowing adolescents of all backgrounds to engage with and relate to literature in ways that support identity development. According to Aronson and Laughter's (2016) synthesis of culturally relevant pedagogy theories, culturally relevant instruction will "build on all students' cultural assets to create knowledge, reflect and analyze all cultures represented in an inclusive curriculum, provide opportunities for students to learn about their own and other cultures, and use critical discourse to analyze oppression in society" (p. 167).

Key takeaways. Texts used in language arts classes offer a springboard for critical discourse. Discourse creates opportunities to explore identities, where students can see themselves in some texts and discuss problematic aspects of other texts (Eisenbach et. al., 2018). In addition to opportunities for critical discourse, language arts curricula often include writing and other forms of expression. The literature identifies expression as the primary vehicle for identity development based on the narrative approach to identity development.

Opportunities for Expression

A common theme throughout the literature on identity development is the need for adolescents to express themselves as they explore and discover who they are. Narrative identity development, discussed earlier in Chapter two, defines identity as an open-ended and evolving sense of self that we construct through the process of

storytelling (Cohler & Hammack, 2006; Pasupathi, 2006; Raggatt, 2006). It follows logically that adolescents seeking to develop identities need opportunities to tell their stories. Language arts teachers can foster identity development by “allow[ing] ample opportunities for self-expression and self-exploration through reading, writing, and inquiry” (Broughton & Fairbanks, 2003, p.433).

Culturally relevant expression. Opportunities for expression can work to support identities using cultural relevance; for example, hip hop enables many African American youth to connect with and discuss subject matter, including texts from the classic canon in a way that is familiar and matters to them (Aronson & Laughter, 2016, p.188). Students can use hip hop as a bridge to effectively engage with and connect classic texts to their own lives (Aronson & Laughter, 2016, p.189).

Heritage Language Expression. Another example of identity-developing expression is work in which English language learners use their home or heritage language to create a meaningful expression of who they are and where they come from to tell their own story. This offers significant support for student identity development and academic achievement (Cummins et. al., 2015; Leeman, 2015). When students create multimodal expressions of their own identities related to their heritage using art, drama, videos, technology, etc., students engage more with literature and their identity is affirmed (Cummins et al., 2015).

Reflective expression. Reflection is another example of expression that supports identity development.

As students engage in the reading of texts and reflect on the ways in which the characters and content speak to their own experience, they can begin to critically

question how similar aspects of culture, society, and relationships have shaped their own identities (Eisenbach et al., 2018).

Key takeaways. Narrative identity development argues that our identities are formed using a collaborative process that takes place as we tell our stories, and in the process, create meaning for ourselves and others (Cohler & Hammack, 2006, p.153; Pasupathi, 2006, p.138). To support healthy identity development in adolescent students, instructional activities must include opportunities for expression that are culturally relevant, reflective, and prompt students to tell their own stories. In addition to critical discourse and opportunities for expression, the literature points to multimodal composition as being impactful for identity development.

Multimodal Composition

Including multimodal composition projects in language arts curriculum supports high school student identity development (Smith, 2018). Smith's (2018) research defines multimodal projects as those that use multiple formats like visuals, graphic design, video, audio, music, and movement. Multimodal work helps adolescents work to their varied strengths, express themselves in artistic and reflective ways, and connect their own interests and identities to their work (Smith, 2018). Multimodal projects about texts that include music, art or graphic design afford students natural ways to connect their text with personal experiences, preferences, and elements of their identities. These expressions also serve to highlight positive cultural associations and amplify the value of student voices that may be marginalized by other school experiences (Cummins et. al., 2015).

Key Takeaways. Working with literature in the curriculum, language arts teachers have the unique opportunity to use multimodal projects to help students connect with texts in meaningful ways. Research by Smith (2018) indicates that multimodal instructional activities support identity development in adolescents.

Summary

Supporting healthy identity development in adolescent learners requires instructional activities including critical discourse that allows students to think about and discuss their relationship with a text and how the text represents them and others (Alsup, 2010; Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Eisenbach, et. al., 2018). It requires opportunities for reflection and expression, particularly those that allow students to tell their own stories and interpretations in meaningful and personal ways (McLean, 2005; Broughton & Fairbanks, 2003). Additionally, multimodal projects afford students opportunities to express themselves and connect to a text in personal and affirming ways (Cummins et. al., 2015).

Chapter Summary

Identity development theory has evolved from Erikson's (1968) psychosocial development theory to Marcia's (1966) four identity statuses to a newer body of literature that endorses intersectionality as a basis for understanding identity development. Narrative identity development offers additional perspective on how adolescents construct identities. Understanding the origins of identity development theory as well as the reasons and implications behind its evolution can provide educators insight into how text selection and instructional activities can support healthy adolescent development. Text selection can support identity development as it pivots from a focus on

the classical canon to culturally relevant, inclusive texts (Gallo, 2001). YA literature adds perspective and support for identity development, and can be paired with classical texts to add depth to the adolescent's reading experience and identity (Tatum et al., 2009). The literature tells us that instructional activities can support identity development in important ways. Language arts teachers can support healthy identity development by facilitating critical discourse (Daley-Carey, 2017; Slocum, 2019), meaningful opportunities for expression (Broughton & Fairbanks, 2003), and providing multi-modal opportunities for expression based on relating to texts in personal and affirming ways (Smith, 2018). Chapter three will describe a website that synthesizes this research to give educators resources to support healthy identity development in adolescent learners.

CHAPTER THREE

Project Description

Chapter Overview

This capstone set out to answer the question: how can secondary language arts teachers support healthy identity development in adolescent learners using text selection and instructional activities? Chapter One introduced the experiences that compelled me to investigate this topic. Chapter two reviewed literature on the topics of identity development theory, text selection, and instructional activities related to identity development. Based on findings in the literature review, I designed and created a website called Linking Literature for the Student Self, which contains text selection guidance and text set resources to help high school language arts educators support their students' identity development. Chapter three explains details of this website project.

This chapter begins by providing a site map of the pages and content users will encounter on the website, along with my website design framework. Next, this chapter includes details about how the website content relates to my research and describes criteria used to curate text sets. Then, this chapter will describe the intended audience for this project. Finally, Chapter Three explains the timeline for building the site, and how I will continually evaluate its effectiveness toward answering the question: how can secondary language arts teachers support healthy identity development in adolescent learners using text selection and instructional activities?

Project Details

My research on how language arts teachers can support healthy identity development in adolescent learners led me to design a website with text selection

resources and text set recommendations specifically designed to support healthy identity development in adolescent learners. The literature on text selection clearly demonstrates that teaching YA literature in secondary education, as well as the strategy of pairing classic and contemporary texts, supports healthy identity development (Gallo, 2001; Tatum et al., 2009). Based on this evidence, the site includes resources to guide teachers as they select texts for students, and curated text sets that support diverse students in seeking to answer the essential questions *Who am I?* and *How do I relate to this text?*

The site map shown in Table 1 shows how the website is organized.

Table 1***Site Map***

Main Pages	Sub-Pages
<p>Home Page:</p> <p>Includes a brief background and summary of the project, summary of research findings, and explanation of the target audience.</p>	
<p>“Selecting Texts” Page:</p> <p>Summarizes literature review outcomes related to the process of selecting texts. The page highlights three areas: cultural relevance, classic canon, and YA literature.</p>	<p>Sub Pages:</p> <p>Cultural Relevance & Affirmation Classic Canon Texts Young Adult Texts</p>
<p>“Identity Development” Page:</p> <p>Summarizes the importance of supporting adolescent identity development. Provides key facts for educators and resources related to adolescent identity development.</p>	
<p>“Text Sets” Page:</p> <p>Explanation of text pairings and the criteria and rationale for the recommended text sets, links to external resources, and a link to the feature for sharing text ideas.</p>	<p>Sub Pages:</p> <p>Odyssey Text Set Scarlet Letter Text Set Romeo and Juliet Text Set Additional Text Set Resources</p>
<p>“Idea Sharing” Page:</p> <p>Includes links to forms requesting feedback about the project’s effectiveness and a link for educators to submit resources for inclusion on the website.</p>	
<p>“Sources” Page</p> <p>Cites sources for research and website resources.</p>	

Web Design Framework

Platform

With limited web design experience, I sought a user-friendly platform with built-in design frameworks that would allow me to build a relatively simple website with an easy-to-navigate user experience. Building a website that seamlessly adapts to mobile devices without becoming unreadable was also important, as many educators work on tablets or other devices. I investigated a number of free online platforms including Google, Weebly, and Wix. Ultimately, the intuitive user experience of Microsoft's Wix platform suited my criteria best. I opted to build the site using a Wix template that allowed me to customize the layout and hierarchy of pages on my site and choose from a large selection of free images and site backgrounds to customize the website aesthetically.

Layout and Design

Intuition told me to focus on content and focus my design efforts on maintaining simplicity and organization. This was my goal, and online web design resources confirmed my hunch to keep things simple. My primary framework for designing this website was the *Research-Based Web Design & Usability Guidelines* published by the United States Department of Health and Human Services (2006). My goals were to keep the site effective by focusing on its intended purpose and to let the content drive the site organization (Cardello, 2022).

Based on this approach, I created a site map and hierarchy of pages based on the content I wanted to include. Content also directly influenced which page layout templates or customized pages I included. Primarily based on my own desire for simplicity and ease

of use for the reader, I chose simple, non-embellished fonts and included free images from Wix that complemented or illustrated the content on the pages. I stuck with a relatively neutral color palette and simple black text on white backgrounds to allow for ideal contrast and readability. Each page is aesthetically consistent to eliminate any distractions for the reader of the site, and a menu carries through on each page of the site. Specific design goals based on this framework included keeping text aligned to eliminate the need to scroll horizontally, using clear category labels, and keeping navigation options clear and limited to what is necessary to avoid distractions.

Connections to Research

Outcomes from the literature review in Chapter two of this project inform the resources included on the website. The research indicates that students must have culturally relevant opportunities to see themselves represented in what they read (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Broughton & Fairbanks, 2003; Kibler & Chapman, 2018), and that only teaching classic canon texts marginalizes work that is relevant to students (Marsh, 2004). Research on YA literature hails the genre as engaging and relevant to adolescent readers (Gallo, 2001). One effective solution presented in the literature on text selection that supports identity development and maximizes students' opportunities to engage with literature is to pair YA literature with texts from the classic canon (Tatum et al., 2009). The site is organized in three main content sections that communicate research findings and offer guidance for educators: *Selecting Texts*, *Identity Development*, and *Text Sets*.

The *Selecting Texts* page of the website summarizes important research that can guide secondary language arts educators to opt for texts that best support their students'

identity development. This page highlights the importance of pivoting away from a focus on the classic canon to include modern, accessible, and culturally affirming texts. It also introduces educators to the research-backed idea of creating text sets that include classic and contemporary YA texts. Because students are marginalized when they cannot identify with required texts (Broughton & Fairbanks, 2003), the text selection of the website advocates for selecting texts with diverse representation and includes a variety of texts beyond the classic canon.

The *Identity Development* page of the website summarizes theoretical frameworks of adolescent identity development. This section provides a brief introduction to identity development theories from the literature review that influenced this project, including Erikson's (1968) psychosocial development theory, Macia's (1966) four identity statuses, and the concept of intersectionality as it relates to identity development. It recaps why identity development matters from student and educator perspectives, and offers links to additional resources for educators to learn more about identity development.

The *Text Sets* page includes a definition of text sets for the purposes of this website, criteria for how text sets can be created with identity development in mind, a summary of research indicating the effectiveness of text sets, and links to articles that recommend pairings of classical and YA texts based on common themes. This page is further organized into four sub-pages with original text set ideas curated based on the recommendations that emerged from this research project, as well as links to external text set ideas.

Intended Audience

Linking Literature for the Student Self is intended for secondary language arts teachers, primarily focusing on grades 9-12. Students in these grades fall between the ages of 13 through 19, representing the cohort most likely to encounter Erikson's (1968) identity vs. identity confusion stage of development (Maree, 2021, p.1111). In this stage, adolescents form a sense of identity by approaching increasingly complex tasks with growing cognitive ability and sense of independence (Maree, 2021). Tasked with designing meaningful instruction and supporting their diverse students, educators will be able to use the resources on this website to help support their students' identity development in ways that are grounded in research. Educators at any secondary school will be able to use guidance for text selection and text set recommendations.

Timeline

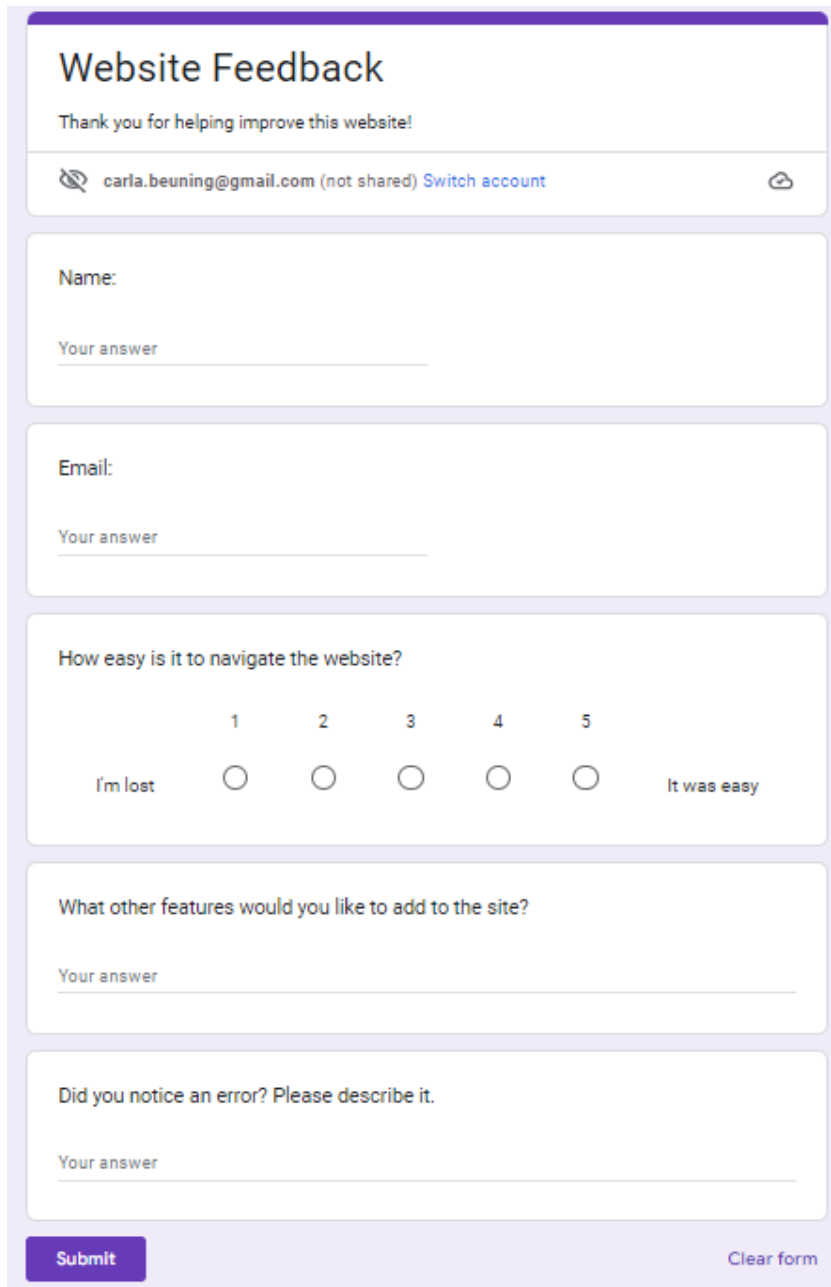
I began this project in September of 2021, first exploring meaningful topics, then reviewing literature and establishing a foundation on which to design a website and create text set recommendations. I designed and implemented the website and curated text set resources during the summer term of 2022, following one semester spent student-teaching in a secondary language arts classroom. The site took approximately three weeks to plan and five weeks to design and build.

Effectiveness

The website includes two feedback forms to solicit input from language arts teachers who use the text selection resources: one for website feedback and one for text set ideas. The feedback forms operate using Google forms, which house responses in a spreadsheet and alert me via email when someone responds. The forms serve as a way to

collect positive and negative feedback about the project and its effectiveness and to allow educators an opportunity to share their own creative ideas for text sets that support identity development. To ensure an ongoing commitment to quality and recommendations backed by research, idea sharing forms request that sources and relevant criteria accompany ideas for the site. Figures 1 and 2 show the content of these two feedback forms.

Figure 1

Website Feedback Form

The image shows a web-based feedback form titled "Website Feedback". At the top, it says "Thank you for helping improve this website!". Below this, there is a user identification bar showing the email "carla.beuning@gmail.com (not shared)" and a "Switch account" link. The form consists of several sections: a "Name:" field with a "Your answer" placeholder; an "Email:" field with a "Your answer" placeholder; a rating question "How easy is it to navigate the website?" with a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is labeled "I'm lost" and 5 is labeled "It was easy"; a text input field for "What other features would you like to add to the site?"; and another text input field for "Did you notice an error? Please describe it.". At the bottom, there are two buttons: a purple "Submit" button and a "Clear form" link.

Website Feedback

Thank you for helping improve this website!

carla.beuning@gmail.com (not shared) [Switch account](#)

Name:

Your answer

Email:

Your answer

How easy is it to navigate the website?

1 2 3 4 5

I'm lost It was easy

What other features would you like to add to the site?

Your answer

Did you notice an error? Please describe it.

Your answer

Submit [Clear form](#)

Figure 2***Idea Sharing Form***

Text Set Ideas

Please share your ideas for pairing classic and contemporary texts that support healthy identity development in adolescents. Texts should encourage critical discourse and provide diverse perspectives. Texts can include literature, nonfiction, poetry, film, visual art, and music.

carla.beuning@gmail.com (not shared) [Switch account](#)

* Required

Name: *

Your answer

Email Address: *

Your answer

Classic Text Title:

Your answer

Contemporary Text Title:

Your answer

Additional Title:

Your answer

Common themes, contexts, or ways of understanding: *

Your answer

Please describe how this text set supports healthy identity development: *

Your answer

Please list any sources used to compile your ideas: *

Your answer

Submit [Clear form](#)

Chapter Summary

This website includes text selection research and resources and curated text sets grounded in research to help secondary language arts teachers support healthy identity development in their adolescent students. Text selection resources focus on a culturally affirming mix of classic and contemporary texts, shifting away from a sole focus on the classic canon. Text sets pair classic texts with YA literature to ensure relevance and accessibility for all students. Website user input will help determine the project's effectiveness and ensure ongoing quality of information and ideas. Chapter four will

discuss the results of the project and my reflections on this process and the project's effectiveness.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

Chapter Overview

As a parent and educator, I began this project with a clear sense that identity development is a critical piece of learning for adolescent students. As I remembered my own experiences and reflected on how my own children and students connected with literature, I understood the unique opportunity that English teachers have to help students connect with their sense of self. My love of literature, interest in psychology, and experience in both business and language arts classrooms drove me to investigate the question: how can secondary language arts teachers support healthy identity development in adolescent learners using text selection and instructional activities? The outcome of this research was an informative literature review and a website, Linking Literature for the Student Self, sharing important conclusions and guidance for secondary language arts educators on text selection and text pairings of classic canon and young adult texts.

Chapter four begins by outlining the most impactful things about research, writing, and project management I learned from this project and reflects on how those learnings affect me as an educator. It then discusses the impact that important findings in my literature review will have on my teaching practice and future work. Next, chapter four reviews the implications this research may have on policy recommendations for teaching and curriculum development. Finally, this chapter addresses limitations of the project and recommendations for future research on the subject.

Key Learning

Above all, this project helped me grow as a researcher, writer, and educator. I started this endeavor as a confident and experienced analyst and writer. I am by nature a planner, and felt competent in my ability to plan and execute the project. Over the course of a year, I was humbled by the scope of the undertaking and emerged with humility, self assurance, and enthusiasm for research, project management, and the ways that research can inform my choices and practices as an educator.

I learned to rely on my colleagues, mentors, and professors. I received difficult and valuable feedback and suggestions that kept my research and writing focused and effective. While difficult feedback takes time and energy to process, I found that practicing the vulnerability of having my work reviewed made it far easier for me to accept feedback, gauge its validity, and improve the quality of my work.

At times the scope of the project seemed overwhelming. Embarking on a project of this scope, timeline, and level of commitment helped reinforce the very helpful practice of breaking work into manageable tasks. When I began the project, I did not know what it would look like to finish it. Yet, with the experience of moving through the process with support and scaffolding from professors and examples of those who have gone before, I was able to trust the process and move the project forward in an organized and well-paced way. As a natural planner, I found efficiency and comfort in some of the ways I learned to manage through projects such as creating timelines, keeping myself accountable with deadlines, and giving myself permission to re-plan and reorganize as needed.

As an educator, this project solidified my appreciation for research-based practices. It is empowering to understand research and create tools to use it in my work. While I may not have all of the answers or knowledge I need, this research process taught me that I can gain confidence in my teaching practice by engaging with research and teaching according to those outcomes. This project helped me improve my process and grow as a researcher, writer, and educator. It also equipped me with important knowledge from the literature review that influenced my project.

Literature Review Impact

The literature review in chapter two of this paper revealed important knowledge for educators and influenced the outcomes I shared on my website. There is well-established and emerging research on adolescent identity development and on language arts instruction practices. The most interesting findings in my literature review highlight the ways educators can use knowledge about how adolescents develop their identities to inform their teaching practices, particularly in the area of text selection for literature instruction.

Research on the merits of pairing classic and YA texts to support students' identity development stood out as an effective solution to the time-worn debate of teaching classic canon vs. contemporary YA literature. Interestingly, the research does not position text pairings as a compromise where both sides meet halfway, but an effective solution that supports the best possible experience from classics and YA literature. The literature review clearly shows that cultural relevance and affirmation, relatability, and accessibility help students connect with texts and supports adolescent identity development via effective and abundant opportunities for exploration. While focusing on

dated and irrelevant classic canon texts is problematic because it denies opportunities for students to connect and explore through literature (Broughton & Fairbanks, 2003; Gallo, 2001), YA literature engages adolescent students and supports a focus on identity development (Gallo, 2001). Pairing texts offers opportunities for students to problematize and contextualize historical literature with the support of relevant and engaging texts with complementary themes or literary learning (Tatum, et al., 2009).

Implications of the Research

This research has meaningful implications for curriculum design and education policy. Political debates often center on the appropriateness or favorability of texts rather than knowledge outcomes or instructional efficacy. This research can provide guidance for educators and administrators as they seek to select texts and provide text selection policies and guidance. Rather than focus on the specific content, appropriateness, or value of one book over another, this research reveals a framework for selecting and pairing texts that more objectively supports students.

Most importantly, this research shows that an optimal language arts curriculum in secondary schools will include both classic and YA texts, including culturally relevant and affirming selections. Students are effectively marginalized when they cannot identify with the stories they read, and including only classic texts excludes many students from opportunities to explore their identities (Broughton & Fairbanks, 2003; Marsh, 2004). Gallo (2001) provides a particularly relevant and persuasive argument on the irrelevance and inaccessibility of classic texts on their own, and Tatum et al. (2009) provide compelling arguments for strategically pairing contemporary texts with classic texts. Ladson-Billings' (1995, 2014) work on culturally relevant pedagogy and Aronson and

Laughter's (2020) work on gender and sexual identities highlights the importance of selecting relevant and affirming texts for all students. Consensus among researchers on identity development and text selection practices shows that implementing these practices in secondary-level language arts classes can give educators an objective framework for providing adolescent students opportunities to explore and reflect on their own identities -- a process critical to healthy adolescent identity development.

The research clearly shows that secondary-level language arts educators and curriculum designers can support identity development by selecting a variety of culturally relevant and affirming texts and by pairing classic texts with more accessible YA texts. Thus, the capstone project website focuses on sharing this research with guidance and recommendations for educators. The project, however, is not without limitations.

Limitations of the Project

The scope of this project included a review of existing literature on the subject. There are clear ties between identity development and text selection practices, however, more research is warranted. The research on text selection indicates that culturally relevant and affirming texts and pairing YA texts with classic canon texts correlates with relevance, engagement, and normalizing student experiences, all of which support identity development. These correlations are strong and appear in many sources; however, I did not find studies with direct empirical evidence directly linking text pairings with an improved and measurable identity development experience. This limitation indicates an area where future research could be done.

Future Research

Based on the findings in the literature review, the field could benefit from future studies that measure student experiences with pairings of classic and YA texts alongside identity development experiences or progress. I believe that case studies including a diverse variety of school settings and students could offer particularly relevant insights into the measurable effects text pairings can have on developmental outcomes related to adolescent identities, above and beyond educational assessment outcomes. Research in this area could also benefit from the development of a tool or survey to standardize and categorize some of the more abstract or subjective benchmarks of identity development. While the literature includes valuable insights and correlates text pairings with students' abilities to access texts and use them for opportunities to explore identities, additional research measuring student experiences with text pairings with specific developmental milestones related to identity would be useful.

Summary

Undertaking this project provided me with a valuable experience that supported my personal growth and my practices as an educator. Working through a research project of this size was overwhelming at times, but ultimately helped me practice vulnerability, accept and appreciate feedback, and trust in my ability to follow a process to meet an important goal.

I sought to investigate the question: how can secondary language arts teachers support healthy identity development in adolescent learners using text selection and instructional activities? This led me to important research that shows how selecting culturally relevant and affirming texts and pairing YA texts with classic canon texts in

literature instruction can support adolescents as they explore and develop their identities. Because text selection surfaces as an important factor in curriculum design and education policy, the research provides relevant insights for educators, administrators, and policy makers. While the research provides valuable insights and guidance for educators, additional research directly measuring identity development markers related to text experiences in language arts classes could provide important future insights.

The website I created for this project, *Linking Literature for the Student Self*, offers educators a background on the existing research and a beginning point for text selection and pairings that support their students in the quest for forming identities. Because language arts teachers are in a unique position to affect and support their students' healthy identity development, it is my hope that educators find this topic impactful and important as I have, and that research in this area continues to reveal how we can best support students.

REFERENCES

- Alsup, J. (2010). *Young adult literature and adolescent identity across cultures and classrooms: Contexts for the literary lives of teens* (1st ed.). Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203853139>
- Aronson, B., & Laughter, J. (2016). The theory and practice of culturally relevant education: A synthesis of research across content areas. *Review of Educational Research, 86*(1), 163-206. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654315582066>
- Aronson, B., & Laughter, J. (2020). The theory and practice of culturally relevant education: Expanding the conversation to include gender and sexuality equity. *Gender and Education, 32*(2), 262-279.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2018.1496231>
- Bishop, M., Melamed, G., & Stone, S. (2019). Positive bicultural identity development curriculum: A pilot evaluation. *Children & Schools, 41*(3), 131-139.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/cs/cdz010>
- Brittian, A. S. (2012). Understanding african american adolescents' identity development: A relational developmental systems perspective. *Journal of Black Psychology; J Black Psychol, 38*(2), 172-200.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0095798411414570>
- Broughton, M. A., & Fairbanks, C. M. (2003). In the middle of the middle: Seventh-grade girls' literacy and identity development. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 46*(5), 426-435.

- Buckley, T. R. (2018). Black adolescent males: Intersections among their gender role identity and racial identity and associations with self-concept (global and school). *Child Development; Child Dev*, 89(4), e311-e322.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12950>
- Carbado, D. W., Crenshaw, K. W., Mays, V. M., & Tomlinson, B. (2013). Intersectionality: Mapping the movements of a theory. *Du Bois Review; Du Bois Rev*, 10(2), 303-312. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1742058X13000349>
- Cardello, J. (2022, May 31). *Ten effective web design principles every designer should know*. Webflow Blog. <https://webflow.com/blog/web-design-principles>
- Cohler, B. J., & Hammack, P. L. (2006) Making a gay identity: Life story and the construction of a coherent self. In McAdams, D.P., Josselson, R., Lieblich, A. (Eds.), *Identity and story: Creating self in narrative* (pp. 151-172). American Psychological Association.
- Cole-Malott, D. (2018). *Immigrant girls from the caribbean: Identities, literacies, and the academic and social construction of selves*. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1989 (1), 139-167.
<https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8>
- Crowder, L. (2016). *Questioning the canon: Exploring the place of young adult literature in the high school curriculum*. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

- Crowley, S. (1998). The invention of freshman english. In *Composition in the university: Historical and polemical essays*. essay, University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Cummins, J., Hu, S., Markus, P., & Kristiina Montero, M. (2015). Identity texts and academic achievement: Connecting the dots in multilingual school contexts. *TESOL Quarterly; TESOL Q*, 49(3), 555-581. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.241>
- Daley-Carey, E. (2018). Testing the limits: Postmodern adolescent identities in contemporary coming-of-age stories. *Children's Literature in Education*, 49(4), 467-484. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10583-017-9317-7>
- Dutro, E., Kazemi, E., Balf, R., & Lin, Y.-S. (2008). What are you and where are you from?: Race, identity, and the vicissitudes of cultural relevance. *Urban Education*, 43(3), 269–300. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085907305177>
- Eisenbach, B. E., Corrieri, C., Moniz, K., & Forrester, R. (2018). In search of identity: Connecting the classics to contemporary texts. *Voices from the Middle*, 26(2), 34-38.
- Erikson, E. (1968). *Identity, youth, and crisis*. W.W. Norton.
- Ford, D. H., & Lerner, R. M. (1992). *Developmental systems theory : An integrative approach*. Sage Publications.
- Gallo, D. R. (2001). How classics create an aliterate society. *English Journal*, 90(3), 33-39. <https://doi.org/10.2307/821305>
- Glover, J. A. (2006). *Identity development, identity disclosure, and identity exploration among adolescent sexual minorities*. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

- Gregg, G. S. (2006). The raw and the bland: A structural model of narrative identity. In McAdams, D.P., Josselson, R., Lieblich, A. (Eds.), *Identity and story: Creating self in narrative* (pp. 63-87). American Psychological Association.
- Guzzetti, B. J., & Bean, T. (2013). *Adolescent literacies and the gendered self: (Re)constructing identities through multimodal literacy practices*. Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203085585>
- Halbertal, T. H., & Koren, I. (2006). Between “being” and “doing”: Conflict and coherence in the identity formation of gay and lesbian orthodox jews. In McAdams, D.P., Josselson, R., Lieblich, A. (Eds.), *Identity and story: Creating self in narrative* (pp. 37-61). American Psychological Association.
- Hammack, P. L. (2008). Narrative and the cultural psychology of identity. *Personality and Social Psychology Review; Pers Soc Psychol Rev*, 12(3), 222-247.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1088868308316892>
- Hill, C. (2014). *The critical merits of young adult literature : Coming of age*. Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203527283>
- Jahoda, M. (1968). Erikson, E.: "Identity: youth and crisis" (book review). A. L. Hummel for the American Academy of Political and Social Science.
- Kibler, K., & Chapman, L. A. (2019). Six tips for using culturally relevant texts in diverse classrooms. *The Reading Teacher*, 72(6), 741-744.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1775>

- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). *Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy*. American Educational Research Association. <https://doi.org/nfo:doi/>
- Lacan, J. (1949) The mirror stage as formative. In Leitch, V. B. (Ed.) *The norton anthology of theory and criticism* (pp.1285-1290). Norton.
- Leeman, J. (2015). Heritage language education and identity in the united states. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 35, 100-119.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190514000245>
- Marcia, J. E. (1966). Development and validation of ego-identity status. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology; J Pers Soc Psychol*, 3(5), 551-558.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/h0023281>
- Marcia, J. E. (2009). *Education, identity and iClass: From education to psychosocial development*. *Policy Futures in Education*, 7(6), 670-677.
<https://doi.org/10.2304/pfie.2009.7.6.670>
- Marcia, J. E., Waterman, A. S., Matteson, D. R., Archer, S. L., & Orlofsky, J. L. (1993). *Ego identity: A handbook for psychosocial research* (1st ed.). Springer New York.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4613-8330-7>
- Maree, J. G. (2021). The psychosocial development theory of erik erikson: Critical overview. *Early Child Development and Care*, 191(7-8), 1107-1121.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2020.1845163>
- Marsh, J. (2004). The primary canon: A critical review. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 52(3), 249–262. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1556055>

- McAdams, D. P. (1985). *Power, intimacy, and the life story : Personological inquiries into identity*. Guilford Press.
- McAdams, D.P., Josselson, R., Lieblich, A. (2006) Introduction. In McAdams, D.P., Josselson, R., Lieblich, A. (Eds.), *Identity and story: Creating self in narrative* (pp. 3-11). American Psychological Association.
- McAdams, D. P., & McLean, K. C. (2013). Narrative identity. *Current Directions in Psychological Science : A Journal of the American Psychological Society; Curr Dir Psychol Sci*, 22(3), 233-238. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721413475622>
- McLean, K. C. (2005). Late adolescent identity development: Narrative meaning making and memory telling. *Developmental Psychology; Dev Psychol*, 41(4), 683-691. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.41.4.683>
- McLean, K. & Thorne, A. (2006). Identity light: Entertainment stories as a vehicle for self-development. In McAdams, D.P., Josselson, R., Lieblich, A. (Eds.), *Identity and story: Creating self in narrative* (pp. 111-127). American Psychological Association.
- Meeus, W., Iedema, J., Helsen, M., & Vollebergh, W. (1999). Patterns of adolescent identity development: Review of literature and longitudinal analysis. *Developmental Review*, 19(4), 419-461. <https://doi.org/10.1006/drev.1999.0483>
- Mikaelsen, B. (2001). *Touching spirit bear*. HarperTrophy.

- Minnesota Department of Education. (2010). *Minnesota Academic Standards: English language arts*. Retrieved November 21, 2021, from <https://education.mn.gov/mde/dse/stds/ela/>.
- Molenaar, P. C. M., Lerner, R. M., & Newell, K. M. (2014). *Handbook of developmental systems theory and methodology*. Guilford Press.
- Muhammad, G. E. (2012). Creating spaces for black adolescent girls to "write it out!". *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy; J Adolesc Adult Liter*, 56(3), 203-211. <https://doi.org/10.1002/JAAL.00129>
- Parmenter, J. G., Galliher, R. V., Yaughner, A. C., & Maughan, A. D. A. (2020). Intersectionality and identity configurations: A qualitative study exploring sexual identity development among emerging adults within the united states. *Emerging Adulthood (Thousand Oaks, CA)*, , 216769682094659. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167696820946597>
- Pasupathi, M., (2006) Silk from sows ears: collaborative construction of everyday selves in everyday stories. In McAdams, D.P., Josselson, R., Lieblich, A. (Eds.), *Identity and story: Creating self in narrative* (pp. 128). American Psychological Association.
- Perry, D. G., & Pauletti, R. E. (2011). Gender and adolescent development. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 21(1), 61-74. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1532-7795.2010.00715.x>

- Pike, M. A. (2003). *The canon in the classroom: Students' experiences of texts from other times*. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 35(3), 355-370.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00220270305529>
- Raggatt, P. T. F., (2006) Multiplicity and conflict in the dialogical self: A life-narrative approach. In McAdams, D.P., Josselson, R., Lieblich, A. (Eds.), *Identity and story: Creating self in narrative* (pp. 15-35). American Psychological Association.
- Rogers, J., Morrell, E., & Enyedy, N. (2007). Studying the struggle: Contexts for learning and identity development for urban youth. *The American Behavioral Scientist (Beverly Hills)*, 51(3), 419-443. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764207306069>
- Slocum, A. (2019). Exploring identity through literature and language: Adolescents' identity positioning in rural appalachia. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, 18(5), 283-296. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15348458.2019.1612749>
- Smith, B. E. (2018). Composing for affect, audience, and identity: Toward a multidimensional understanding of adolescents' multimodal composing goals and designs. *Written Communication*, 35(2), 182-214.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0741088317752335>
- Spencer, M. B. (2006) Phenomenology and ecological systems theory: Development of diverse groups. In Damon, W., & Lerner, R. M. (2006). *Handbook of child psychology* (6th ed.). John Wiley & Sons.

- Spencer, M. B. (2021). *Department of comparative human development: The university of chicago: Margaret beale spencer*. Retrieved November 21, 2021, from <https://humdev.uchicago.edu/directory/margaret-beale-spencer>.
- Spencer, M. B., Dupree, D., & Hartmann, T. (1997). A phenomenological variant of ecological systems theory (PVEST): A self-organization perspective in context. *Development and Psychopathology*, *9*(4), 817-833.
doi:10.1017/S0954579497001454
- Tatum, A., Wold, L. S., & Laurie Elish-Piper. (2009). Adolescents and texts: Scaffolding the english canon with linked text sets. *English Journal*, *98*(6), 88-91.
- Umaña-Taylor, A.,J., Quintana, S. M., Lee, R. M., Cross Jr, W.,E., Rivas-Drake, D., Schwartz, S. J., Syed, M., Yip, T., & Seaton, E. (2014). Ethnic and racial identity during adolescence and into young adulthood: An integrated conceptualization. *Child Development*, *85*(1), 21-39. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12196>
- U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services. (2006). Research-based web design and usability guidelines.
https://www.usability.gov/sites/default/files/documents/guidelines_book.pdf.
- Velez, G., & Spencer, M. B. (2018). Phenomenology and intersectionality: Using PVEST as a frame for adolescent identity formation amid intersecting ecological systems of inequality. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development; New Dir Child Adolesc Dev*, *2018*(161), 75-90. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cad.20247>

- Vetter, A. M. (2010). "Cause I'm a G": Identity work of a lesbian teen in language arts. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy; Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 54(2), 98-108. <https://doi.org/10.1598/JAAL.54.2.2>
- Wiggins, G., & McTighe, J. (2005). *Understanding by design* (2nd ed.). Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development.
- Wold, L., & Elish-Piper, L. (2009). Scaffolding the english canon with linked text sets. *English Journal*, 98(6), 88.
- Woolfolk, A. (2014). *Educational psychology: Unisa custom edition (14th ed.)*. England: Pearson.
- Zdilla, G. (2010). The appeal of young adult literature in late adolescence: college freshmen read YAL. In Alsup, J. (2010). *Young adult literature and adolescent identity across cultures and classrooms: Contexts for the literary lives of teens* (1st ed.). Routledge.