

IN-SCHOOL AND OUT-OF-SCHOOL ADOLESCENT IDENTITIES IN HIGH  
SCHOOL ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSROOMS

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF LITERACY AND LEARNING

COLLEGE OF PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

BY

KIMBERLY THAGGARD, M. ED., M.A.

DENTON, TEXAS

DECEMBER 2021

Copyright © 2021 by Kimberly Villarreal Thaggard

## DEDICATION

For Weston, Harrison, and Holland

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank God. He has been by my side since my first day of school, and He is here with me today as I finish the last measure of my doctoral degree. To Him be the glory. I would also like to thank my family for their continued support and guidance throughout the over three decades that I have been a student: my husband Weston, and our two children Harrison and Holland, as well as my parents, Richard and Dlynn, and my brothers Justin and Tony. Their love, support, and unending prayers have served me beyond measure.

I would also like to thank the powerhouse of women that make up the Department of Literacy and Learning at Texas Woman's University. I especially want to thank Dr. Nancy Anderson for giving me such valuable guidance, even when I did not want to hear it. You amaze me every day. Thank you, Patricia Watson for all the loving reminders to stay the course and for your heart for adolescent learners. Thank you, Dr. Amy Hendrix-Soto, for all of your purposeful feedback and support. Dr. Anne Simpson, you were there at the beginning of my journey and even until the last draft and I am so grateful. Lastly, I have to thank Mandy Stewart, who is responsible for initiating my Ph.D. journey. Her love for bilingual students and critical lens has reshaped the perspectives of so many students, including my own.

I would be remiss if I did not recognize the fantastic cohort that I started this journey with three years ago: Germaine Koskina, Ivonne Solano, Paul Parkerson, and Kirsten Foti. These colleagues were with me in almost every class. We laughed together, we

complained together and worked closely together through it all. Their feedback and encouragement are a significant reason I am where I am today in my research.

I want to thank my close friends who never stopped asking, “are you done yet?” Jill Jester, Chelsie Clark, Amanda Lemley, Heather Hays, Nicole Adamson, Lindsay Fykes, Toni Rivers, Marybeth Reinke, and Peyton Swick, thank you for the last three year of love and laughter. You will never know how much it meant to me.

Finally, I would like to thank my employers, specifically Joel Hays, Dr. Diane Huber, Andrew Rozell MBA, and Dr. Zach Rozell. As educational leaders, they extended constant encouragement, both verbal and in the form of time, to focus on my research, goals, and the completion of my coursework. Their appreciation for education, and its importance to our world, was illustrated throughout the tenure of this study. Thank you, all.

## ABSTRACT

KIMBERLY VILLARREAL THAGGARD

### IN-SCHOOL AND OUT-OF-SCHOOL ADOLESCENT IDENTITIES IN HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSROOMS DECEMBER 2021

Adolescents' in-school identities, out-of-school identities, and literacy practices are intertwined and connected. This research project aimed to explore the development of adolescent identities and out-of-school literacy practices in students' English Language Arts classes. As a high school teacher and administrator, the researcher adopted a constructivist approach and conducted a cross-case analysis of six ninth-grade students from classroom observations, interviews, and an identity-centered word sort activity created for the study. The researcher's analyses revealed the students' out-of-school identities, preferred literacy practices, and personal affinities were underrepresented in their English Language Arts class. The key findings in the study support a multi-faceted definition of literacy for adolescents and that identity-centered approaches in classrooms may be conducive to increasing their interest in English Language Arts skills and content. These findings support the argument that adolescents' in-school identities and out-of-school identities need to be incorporated into classroom literacy practices.

*Keywords:* adolescents, identity, literacy practices

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
DEDICATION .....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iii
ABSTRACT .....	v
LIST OF TABLES .....	ix
LIST OF FIGURES .....	x
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Background and Problem Statement .....	4
Purpose of the Study .....	6
Research Questions .....	8
Significance .....	8
Theoretical Frameworks .....	9
Summary .....	12
II. LITERATURE REVIEW .....	13
Establishing Identity .....	15
Microsystem Identities and Literacy Practices .....	21
In-School Identities and School Policy .....	22
Out-of-School Identities Through Discourse and Affinities .....	24
Adolescent Youth and Digital Literacy .....	27
Instructional Practices that Promote Individual Identity and Out-of-School Literacy Practices .....	30
Summary .....	32
III. METHODOLOGY .....	34
Research Design and Context .....	34
Research Site .....	38
The Researcher .....	38
Classroom Teachers and Context .....	38
Participant Selection .....	44
Data Sources and Collection Procedures .....	45
Archival Data .....	46

Classroom Observations .....	48
Interviews.....	49
Word Choice Activity.....	50
Interview Protocol.....	52
Student Artifacts .....	53
Field Notes .....	53
Data Analysis .....	56
First Cycle Analysis: A Priori and Descriptive Coding.....	57
A Priori Coding.....	58
Descriptive Coding .....	60
Second Cycle Analysis: Pattern Coding and Cross Case Analysis.....	63
Pattern Coding .....	64
Cross-Case Analysis .....	66
Trustworthiness and Credibility.....	67
Authenticity.....	68
Transferability.....	69
Limitations .....	70
Summary .....	72
 IV. FINDINGS.....	 74
Participant Profiles.....	75
Case 1: Michael.....	76
Case 2: Chris .....	78
Case 3: Hazel .....	81
Case 4: Carmen .....	84
Case 5: JJ.....	87
Case 6: Carlos .....	90
Cross Case Analysis.....	93
Establishing Identities in Two Spaces .....	94
Work Time and “Free Time” .....	98
Grades Influence Identities In-School and Out-of-School.....	100
Institutional Authorities and In-School and Out-of-School Identities.....	101
Language Identity for Bilingual and Multilingual Adolescents .....	104
Home Language is for Home .....	104
English is for the Classroom.....	105
Academic Spanish vs. Home Spanish.....	107
Adolescent Identities and Practices in the Digital World .....	109
Digital Literacy Practices In-School and Out-of-School.....	109
Digital Literacies in ELAR that Bridge the Affinity Identity Gap .....	111

Summary .....	113
V. DISCUSSION .....	115
Contributions.....	117
Theories on Establishing Identity In-School and Out-of-School.....	117
Adolescent Identities and Literacy Practices in the Classroom .....	119
Digital Literacy and Identity Expression .....	122
Implications.....	123
Implications for Leveraging Out-of-School Identities in the ELAR Classroom	123
Understanding Who Students Are Outside of School.....	125
Literacy Practices that Go Beyond Traditional Assessments and Products.....	126
An Identity-Centered Classroom .....	127
Implications for Bilingual and Multilingual Adolescent Identities .....	127
Current In-School Language Practices .....	129
Developing a New Perspective of Out-of-School Language Identities.....	129
Implications for New Literacies and How Literacy is Defined .....	130
Valuing Out-of-School Identities in School .....	131
Consequences of Ignoring Out-of-School Digital Literacy Practices .....	132
Conclusions.....	133
REFERENCES .....	135
APPENDICES	
A. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL .....	145
B. ARCHIVAL DATA COLLECTION PROTOCOL.....	151
C. EXAMINATION OF ARTIFACTS PROTOCOL .....	154
D. SYLLABUS FOR ELAR CLASS PROVIDED BY TEACHERS .....	156
E. 8th GRADE MATERIALS SURVEY .....	161
F. STUDENT MEMBER CHECK EXIT QUESTIONNAIRE.....	169

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
2.1. Gee's Four Ways to View Identity in Educational Research .....	19
3.1. High School Population by Grade and State Tested Subject .....	34
3.2. Word Choice Activity List.....	51
3.3. Data Collection Timeline .....	55
3.4. Gee's Four Ways to View Identity in Educational Research .....	59
3.5. A Priori Codes and Descriptive Codes and Definitions.....	61
3.6. Pattern Code List .....	65
4.1. Number of Words Selected to Describe In-School and Out-of-School Identities .....	95
4.2. In-School and Out-of-School Affinities Discussed by the Case Studies .....	96
4.3. Student Exit Survey Responses to “When you are in ELAR class whose voice matters most?” .....	103
4.4. Data Reflecting Traditional ELAR Literacy Formats and Practices Outside of School .....	111

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1.1 Model of Case Study and Research Questions .....	7
2.1 Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory .....	16
3.1. Mrs. G's Hip-Hop Book Pairing Board: Pairing Examples.....	40
3.2 Mrs. G's Classroom Library: Selection Examples .....	41
3.3. Mrs. C's Was it Tupac or Shakespeare Board: Examples .....	43
3.4. Mrs. C's Classroom Library: Selection Examples.....	43
3.5. Graphic Description of A Priori Code Application .....	60
4.1. Michael's Word Choice Activity Results: In-School Identities .....	76
4.2. Michael's Word Choice Activity Results: Out-of-School Identities.....	77
4.3. Michael's Title for the "Student Choice" Novel .....	78
4.4. Chris' Word Choice Activity Results: In-School Identities .....	79
4.5. Chris' Word Choice Activity Results: Out-of-School Identities.....	80
4.6. Chris' Title for the "Student Choice" Novel .....	81
4.7. Hazel's Word Choice Activity Resultss: In-School Identities .....	82
4.8. Hazel's Word Choice Activity Results: Out-of-School Identities .....	83
4.9. Hazel's Title for the "Student Choice" Novel .....	84
4.10. Carmen's Word Choice Activity Resultss: In-School Identities.....	85
4.11. Carmen's Word Choice Activity Results: Out-of-School Identities .....	86
4.12. Carmen's Title for the "Student Choice" Novel.....	87
4.13. JJ's Word Choice Activity Resultss: In-School Identities .....	88

4.14. JJ's Word Choice Activity Results: Out-of-School Identities.....	89
4.15. JJ's Title for the "Student Choice" Novel .....	90
4.16. Carlos' Word Choice Activity Results: In-School Identities.....	91
4.17. Carlos' Word Choice Activity Results: Out-of-School Identities.....	92
4.18. Carlos' Title for the "Student Choice" Novel.....	93
4.19. Frequency Count of Bilingual Language Use in Classroom Observations .....	106
4.20. Frequency Count of Apps Students Reported they Use Outside-of-School .....	110

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In-school and out-of-school identities a student develops over space and time contribute to their literacy practices (Heath, 1983). As a former assistant principal at an urban high school in Texas, a literacy educator of adolescents, and a graduate student of literacy learning, the researcher seeks to understand how students construct identities in and out of school. The researcher combined those areas of expertise and applied them in this study.

In the spring of 2019, the administrative team at an urban high school was investigating a case of cyberbullying. A female student posted a series of derogatory images of another student with several overlay GIFs (graphics interchange format) to Snapchat and shared it on her story. The snaps were reported to the school administration and provided the only proof to validate the student's claim. However, the pictures were already erased, essentially becoming virtual vapor. No member of the administrative team understood how Snapchat worked. After Googling for an hour "How to trace snaps?" a student, "Ben," who was in the front office, offered to help.

Everyone in the front office knew Ben. However, this morning, as he volunteered to help those in charge of the school with Snapchat, Ben displayed confidence, motivation, and proficiency as he facilitated the investigation. The administrative team watched as he feverishly typed on his phone. After five text messages, three snaps, and a

private group chat, Ben helped the team obtain all the pictures, with time stamps, and the Snapchat handle of the bully.

Ben was more digitally literate than four seasoned administrators, a combined seven advanced degrees, and over 40 years of experience with adolescent students. For Ben, his out-of-school identity, which included a presence on several social media platforms, was not something the researcher saw privileged in the classrooms at their school. It was certainly not reflected on Ben's STAAR (State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness) tests. However, Ben proved to be more than prepared to showcase his out-of-school identity and the literacies and skills valued by him and his peers, but a modern world. As an assistant principal, the researcher observed Ben's out-of-school identities and personal literacy practices in action. The researcher wondered how these practices and identities were manifested in Ben's courses, specifically his English classroom.

Many of the instructional practices that the researcher observed as a high school administrator did not always authentically leverage the out-of-school identities and the individual literacy practices of the students. As an administrator and literacy leader in the school, the researcher observed that teachers felt compelled to make instructional decisions grounded exclusively in the skills and knowledge assessed on state achievement tests. Many of these decisions resulted in the use of traditional literacy practices and modalities. As a result, the researcher saw instruction that remained centered on classics, canon texts, or previously tested excerpts from old STAAR exams. In addition, the products students created were showcased in traditional formats like

essays or other written texts. Most of the digital literacies students used for English Language Arts (ELAR) class were limited to Word documents, popular search engines like Google, or platforms such as Canvas that are exclusive to the school environment.

Literacy practices are defined as more than reading and writing canon texts, essays, and standardized tests in our modern world. The modern definition of literacy, like the modern teen, is multilingual, multimodal, and multifaceted (Kress & Bezemer, 2015). Whether TikTok, Snapchat, or online fan-fantasy book clubs, there are multiple literacies adolescents use to express their identities. These avenues provide freedom, validation, and a currency of cool via “likes,” emojis, fan followings, and other electronic affirmations. Social media platforms contribute to how adolescents develop a sense of who they think they are and assign identities within the world. Kinloch et al. (2017) pose that “this type of sense-making about the world, and its current contexts, occurs inside and outside of schools, and has implications for teaching, learning, and community engagement” (p. 63). As an educational leader, the researcher sought to understand how students connect their outside-of-school literacies and identities with the literacy practices in their ELAR classroom.

Because schools are microcosms of the natural world, how students are seen and heard in a classroom will ultimately translate to how they are valued in the world and vice versa. How schools began to recognize and leverage student identities begins with instructional practices that recognize that the most valuable thing a student takes away from the classroom is not a skill set based on antiquated practices that limits individual identity. Instead, schools need to build on the social practices, power struggles, contexts,

meanings, and the out-of-school identities that shape the world in which adolescents live (Hull & Schultz, 2001).

### **Background and Problem Statement**

Kellner and Share (2019) defined literacy as a collection of skills and knowledge that allow individuals to read and interpret the world's texts and navigate and negotiate its challenges, conflicts, and crises. International communication systems, immigration, emigration, civil conflicts, the digital world, and a global pandemic have afforded high school students a buffet of literacies. Many current teachers were not exposed to the affinities and digital worlds of their students in their teenage years. The words “digital” and “internet” did not appear in any Common Core or Texas state standards until two decades after the launch of the world wide web (Ravitch, 2010). The lack of emphasis on digital literacy standards might explain why the researcher observed many teachers who did not explore more progressive, specifically more digital, instructional practices and products in the ELAR classroom (Leu et al., 2011).

Haddix et al. (2017) posed that it is common in high schools to encounter “disciplinary content [that] is taught using outdated examples, materials, and antiquated pedagogical strategies” (p. 21). When one considers the digital, social, and cultural movements that have come to the forefront of society, it seems appropriate and timely that ELAR instructional practices begin to reflect a more critical lens that incorporates multiple language and modalities. According to Luke (2000), instructional practices must consider students’ out-of-school identities as students process multiple texts, formulate “resistant” perspectives, and produce counter texts. Students must learn how to make

informed decisions about the formats and platforms that communicate an understanding of content and demonstrate personal understanding (Behram, 2006). Adopting more critical and identity-based teaching practices will afford students the technologies, discourses, and multicultural knowledge necessary to thrive in and beyond high school.

High school is an opportune time to leverage students' out-of-school identities (Gee, 2000b). Many adolescents enter high school and assign less credence to the identities assigned by nature (i.e., race) and institutions (i.e., standardized test scores). Instead, they give more value to the identities they recognize in social discourse (i.e., compliments or criticisms of friends and peers) and their affinity spaces (i.e., online fan clubs). As high school adolescents move away from family-based childhood identities, they begin to construct meaning and assign value to those things they choose on their own (Moje et al., 2017).

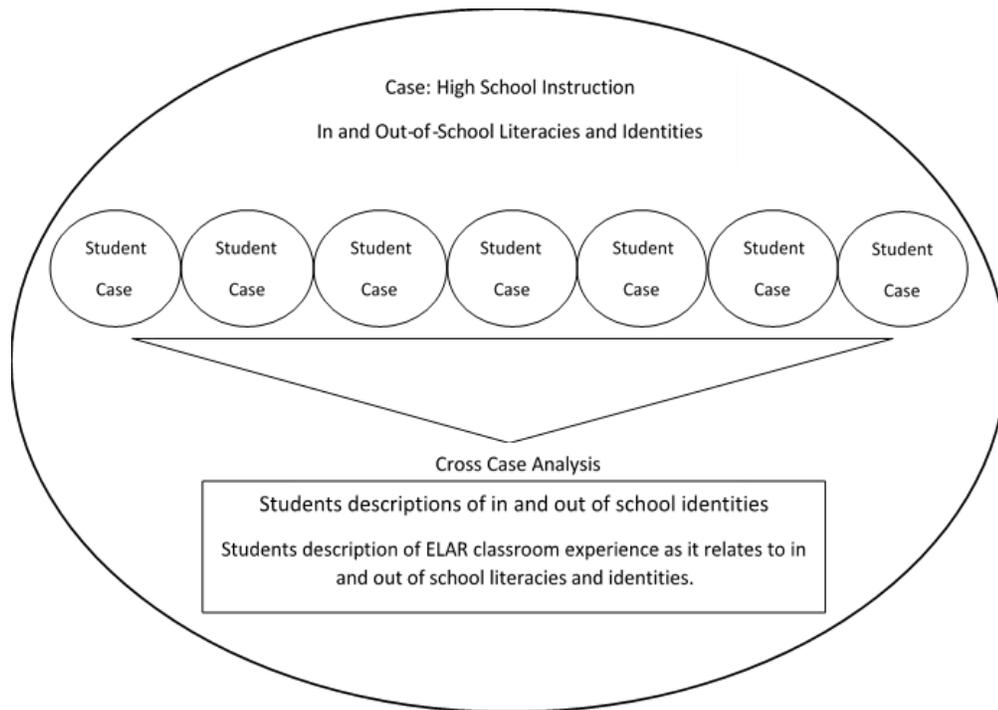
Adolescent identity development leads to new meaning-making, opinions, ideas, revelations, and discourses requiring a hypothesis testing platform (Ruddell & Unrau, 1994). The ELAR classroom is fertile ground for tapping into students' identity development. Understanding how students experience classrooms that strive to include students' out-of-school literacies and identities is essential. Therefore, this study focuses on a detailed description of students' in-school identities, out-of-school identities, and where they see the connections to these identities in the literacy practices of their ELAR classrooms.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to describe how ninth-grade adolescents connect their own identities to the instructional practices in their ELAR classroom. By understanding where students see the connections between their identities and the literacy practices of the ELAR class, educators and researchers may understand more about supporting and building on out-of-school identities and literacy practices in the classroom. The researcher adopted a constructivist approach. The original number of participants in the study totaled seven however participants in the study were six students or cases in two classrooms where teachers have reported they seek to adopt more identity-centered content and instructional practices (i.e., counter texts, student choice). The data for the six cases supported a cross-case analysis because multiple cases allowed “for greater opportunity to generalize across several representations of the phenomenon” (Merriam, 1998, p. 123). Figure 1.1 represents how the purpose and the design of the study relate.

**Figure 1.1**

*Model of Case Study and Research Questions*



The researcher recruited seven cases, from which they conducted a cross-case analysis (see Figure 1.1). Merriam states that a single case can afford a better understanding of a phenomenon; they add that multiple cases “allow for greater opportunity to generalize across several representations of the phenomenon” (p. 123). The recruited students represent two classrooms and two teachers who have started to adopt more identity-centered content and instructional practices (i.e., counter texts, student choice) that build on in-school and out-of-school identities in their literacy practices. Finally, by understanding where students see the connections between their identities and the literacy practices of the ELAR class, educators and researchers will

understand more about supporting and building on out-of-school identities and literacy practices in the classroom.

### **Research Questions**

Three central questions guide this study:

1. How do high school adolescent students describe their in-school and out-of-school identities?
2. How do high school adolescent students describe the instructional practices in their ELAR classroom?
3. How do high school adolescent students describe the connection between ELAR instructional practices and in-school and out-of-school identities?

### **Significance**

Qualitative descriptions and case studies that explore how high school students describe their in-school identities, out-of-school identities, and the connections to their ELAR instructional practices are rare in the published literature. Two relevant studies informed this work. Smith and Wilhelm's (2002) study focused on in-school and out-of-school identities of boys, social class, and ethnicity in relation to. Compton-Lilly's (2017) study focused on identity and literacy practices in relation to space and time and Bronfenbrenner's model. This study focuses on out-of-school identities related to ELAR classroom practices.

Detailed descriptions of identity development in high school ELAR classrooms are few. Many cases focus on niche participant pools (i.e., gender) or identity development at large but not a full range of varied identities. This study's findings will

contribute to research and theory related to multiple literacies, in-school and out-of-school identity development, and high school ELAR instruction. Furthermore, this study is unique, given the researcher is an insider and a former administrator in the school where the study took place. As a long-time member of the ELAR professional learning communities (PLCs) who witnessed the transition to more identity-centered instructional practices, the researcher was able to observe instructional decision-making processes in real time. Educators will benefit from the detailed description of students' experiences in high school ELAR classrooms, especially those seeking to include a more significant consideration of students' out-of-school identities. Finally, understanding in-school and out-of-school identities will help schools build on students' unique skills, multiple languages, and how to use various modalities as they apply to our modernized, global world.

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

The researcher reviewed foundational scholarship on identity and adolescent literacy practices to better understand how students develop out-of-school identities and literacy practices, mainly cultural and social development. This study is grounded in a social constructivist theory of literacy (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). It emphasizes the roles of social, cultural, and historical factors in the human experience and their contribution to a student's experiences, in and out of school (Tracey & Mandel Morrow, 2017). Specifically, it uses Bronfenbrenner's (1989) ecological systems theory, which provides a Russian doll illustration of the spheres that influence identity development (Tracey &

Mandel Morrow, 2017). These spheres shape the social worlds of adolescents and include home life, school, neighborhoods, and for modern students, their online communities.

The researcher considered Gee's theory illustrated in "Identity as an Analytic Lens for Research in Education" (2000b). This theory posits that literacy is understood as "a socially accepted association among ways of using language, thinking, and acting are used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or "social network" (Gee, 2000b, p. 1). "Identity as an Analytic Lens for Research in Education" builds on Bronfenbrenner's theory by noting four specific identities (nature, institutional, discourse, affinity). Exploring the potential combination of available spheres of influence and identities pointed out by Bronfenbrenner and Gee would prove exhaustive. However, both theories and their relationships are relevant to understanding the rich depth of information and influence that ultimately shapes adolescents' overall identities and their literacy practices by proxy. The categories outlined in both theories are not mutually exclusive (Gee, 2000b). Like adults, adolescents are multifaceted and complex.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines adolescence as the "transitional phase of growth and development between childhood and adulthood" for individuals between the ages of 10 and 24 (WHO, 2020). The researcher in this study specifically examined the in-school identities, out-of-school identities, and literacy practices of ninth-grade adolescents, generally age 14–15, as they completed their first year of high school. Hinchman and Appleman (2017) defined literacy identities as a reflection of the adolescents' beliefs, values, actions, and interactions in their literacy choices. These identities are found in how students organize semiotic systems, how they situate their

peers and teachers in their learning, as well as their preferred tools and technologies (Latour, 1991).

For the high school campus in this study, the ninth-grade transition included exposure to many of the same changes any typical ninth grade student might experience when they leave middle school for high school. These transitions include a much larger physical environment, exposure to a more extensive teaching and administrative staff, the availability of more diverse course work, and the exposure to more sophisticated technologies and programs (Alspaugh, 1998). This transition can also involve an intangible change to an adolescent's identity and how they believe that the world reflects and values that identity.

Adolescent identities and the potential to leverage them through instruction evolves as students leave middle school and enter high school (Gee, 2000a). For example, middle school adolescents, especially those students in lower grades, tend to apply more value to institutional identities because adults have dominated much of their sense of self, decision-making, and matriculation as young children (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). High school adolescents tend to assign additional value to discourse and affinity identities and the literacy practices that connect them to course content (Hinchman & Appleman, 2017).

The concept of value is abstract. The researcher utilized value theory as outlined by Ziff (1960) and recognized the term value as something which rivals axiology, represented by levels such as good, bad, better, worse/worst. The researcher did not use value as a means of moral weight or worthiness. Instead, the definition was used to

ascertain which ELAR instructional practices students describe as being good, bad, better, worse/worst at connecting to their out-of-school identities and personal literacy practices.

### **Summary**

Students' in-school and out-of-school identities influence how and where they make connections to the content in their ELAR classrooms. Identity development is influenced by a wide range of variables, some without the student's knowledge. In the following chapter, the researcher will present theories and models that explain identity development, specifically Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1989) ecological systems theory and James Gee's identity as an analytic lens for research in education (2000b). In addition, this section will include scholarship that focuses on modern adolescents' in-school-identities and out-of-school identities, the historical and contemporary influences on classroom instruction, as well as instructional practices utilized in today's ELAR classroom.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review presents theories and models that explain identity development, specifically Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1989) ecological systems theory and James Gee's identity as an analytic lens for research in education (2000b). It reviews modern adolescents' in-school- identities and out-of-school identities and literacy practices and the historical and contemporary influences on classroom instruction. Finally, it summarizes some noted instructional practices utilized in today's ELAR classroom recognized as more identity-centered and pluralistic.

Adolescent identities shape the content and the modalities of their literacy choices. Moje and Luke (2009) argued that these identities are central to their reading and writing choices. Achievement tests rarely focus on individual student identities, and as a result, these identities can be overshadowed in the classroom by state and local standards aimed at higher scores and inclining data. These identities, however, are an avenue for adolescents to express who they are and how they see themselves within their world. Gee (2015) posed that these identities are even more critical with the rise of new, digital literacies that students use out of school, which give them a more comprehensive range to express who they are. It also gives them access to a broader community of like thinkers who share their backgrounds, stories, ethnic and cultural practices, as well as their affinities (Lam, 2006). Understanding adolescent identities is paramount to offer a classroom experience that allows students to exchange personal, unique stories, express

who they are, and invite their out-of-school identities (including their out-of-school literacy practices) into their post-secondary lives (Kress, 2003).

The development of an adolescents' anatomy and physiology is relatively predictable, however within the last 10 years, specifically with the popularity and accessibility of "new," digital literacies, student identities, both in-school and out-of-school, have become more elusive, diverse (Leu, 2000). The iPhone, social media, online book clubs, fan fantasy, and other digital avenues afford some adolescent students' recognition, validation, and in some cases, financial success beyond those traditionally awarded to them in school. Gee (2000a) recognized these avenues as part of a new capitalism, where traditional skills and know-how are only a fraction of success. In the new capitalism, adolescents who can use multiple skills, multiple languages, and multiple modalities that are not always leveraged in school (Compton-Lilly, 2017). Before the rise of the "new capitalism," the out-of-school identities of students between the ages of 10 and 12 years were primarily dictated by their family's cultural and ethnic background, as well as their proficiencies in tested areas such as reading, writing, and mathematics. As adolescents enter their teen years, however, they have had a more significant opportunity to gain independence through their identity and their literacy experiences, as well as their unique perceptions of those experiences, both good and bad (Moje et al., 2017).

The 21st century's social and civil rights movements have also had a notable influence on the need for more identity-centric classrooms. Students of color, Latinx, bilingual, immigrant/emigrant, and adolescents in the LGBTQ+ community see their stories on major media platforms and in their digital worlds. Still, many of them do not

see their out-of-school identities in the pedagogy of their classrooms (Juzwik et al., 2017). The use of instructional practices that give students agency to share their out-of-school identities bolster inclusivity and allow adolescents' interpretations and affinities to supersede institutional identities and priorities (Blackburn & Schey, 2017). These practices contribute to safer spaces and an increased level of plurality in the classroom. On the other hand, students whose out-of-school identities are marginalized by both institutional achievement goals and an antiquated status quo tend to have more discipline issues and less motivation in school (Moje, 2008).

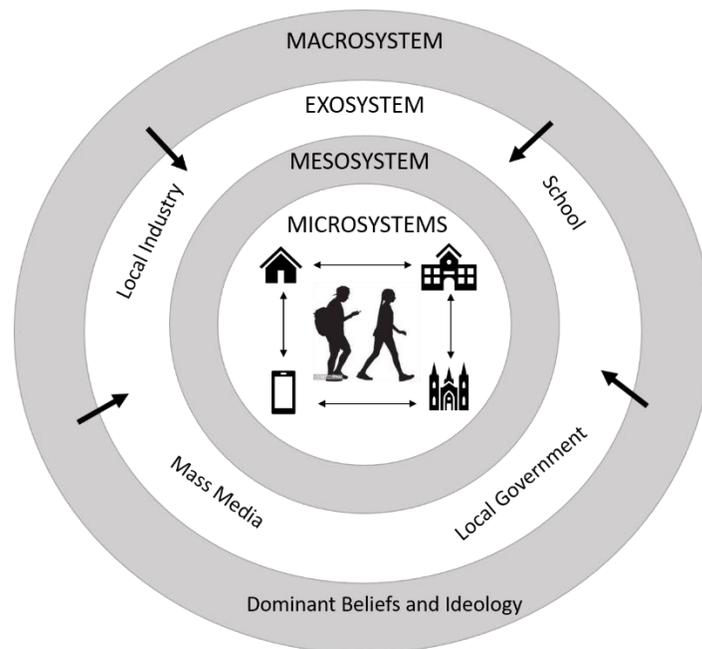
### **Establishing Identity**

One of the most outstanding theories of identity development, specifically adolescent identity, is Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (see Figure 2.1). The multi-tiered models can appear outdated, considering how technology has re-threaded the fabric of an adolescent's social existence. However for this study, these models serve as a foundational illustration of adolescent identity development and the variables that collectively influence their daily life (Compton-Lilly, 2017). The first layer, the microsystem, includes the adolescents' small immediate environment in which they live. For adolescent students, this includes their home, school, church, their neighborhood, and for modern adolescents, their digital communities. Bronfenbrenner designed his model in the late seventies, so the researcher modified the model below to reflect the influence of digital communities (smartphone graphic) as part of the microsystem (see Figure 2.1). The inclusion of digital communities to the microsystem layer is not nuanced. Hinchman and Appleman (2017, p. 21) listed other scholars who

recognize digital communities that shape identities: “multimodal and digital practices at school (Mills, 2010), literacy practices outside of school (Moje et al., 2008), technology-mediated literacy practice outside of school (Chandler-Olcott & Mahar, 2003), instant messaging (IM) practices (Lewis & Fabos, 2005), and composition practices within a fanfiction community (Black, 2005).” Smartphones, computers, and digital devices give adolescents convenience and fast access to these communities where they serve as allegiant digital citizens.

**Figure 2.1**

*Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory (adapted from Härkönen, 1989)*



The next layer is called the mesosystem. The mesosystem represents the interaction of the adolescents’ microsystems. For instance, how a family interacts with school or how a family interacts with friends. Mesosystems contain shared experiences between multiple microsystems and can be benevolent, or harmful when rich with

conflict. Mesosystems include in-school and out-of-school literacy practices as well as online and offline discourses and exchanges.

Bronfenbrenner (1989, 1998) referred to the third layer as the exosystem. The exosystem is a layer that may or may not include the adolescent or their awareness, yet it can directly influence their identity. An example of an exosystem influencer might be a parent or guardian's work environment. While the student may have no direct exposure to their parent's workplace, that environment can directly impact their parents' moods, actions, and attitudes, which can set the tone of their microsystems (Compton-Lilly, 2017). The macrosystem is the fourth tier, and it represents the most global aspects of the adolescent's identity. The macrosystem can include a war-torn nation and globalized technology. The final level of development is the chronosystem, and this layer accounts for the dimension of time. In addition to time, it accounts for the changes over time that significantly alter an adolescent's environment. These changes can be as insignificant as moving into a new house to something as paramount as a global pandemic.

In the late 1980s, Bronfenbrenner modified this model to reflect the introduction of modern technologies, specifically those that influenced adolescents and learner development. He called this updated theory, biological systems theory. One outstanding difference between the two theories is the elimination of ecological validity and ecological experiments, instead giving greater credence to the biological development of the individual. Biological systems theory, and its development were not a static process but took place over time and did not reach its end until Bronfenbrenner's death in 2005 (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994).

This theory brought more attention to the original theory's chronosystem, which considers how an individual's identity is developed over space and time and more importantly how this identity is influenced by the biological development of the individual at the center of the model. Biological systems theory's four overriding components are: processes (interactions with the objects or people), person (personality, physical appearance, inherited IQ, etc.), context (home, school, peer group, community) and time (length of a process or cultural/ historical changes in time; (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994). Since the new theory is a modification, not a complete overhaul of the original theory, both provide a conceptual and theoretical framework of identity development as they apply to this study and the research questions.

To complement Bronfenbrenner's original ecological systems model and to expand on identity development, Gee's (2000b) identity as an analytic lens provided four specific identities that work within Bronfenbrenner's ecological model to mold adolescent identities. Gee looked specifically at four identities, each developed, manifested, and sourced differently (see Table 2.1). Gee's identity as an analytic lens for educational research provided the definitions for four specific identities that the researcher used to frame the researcher's investigation: nature, institutional, discourse, and affinity. The first is N-identities. These identities are assigned by nature and include but are not limited to race, neurological composition, and genetic composition. An example of a nature identity might include deafness or color blindness (Gee, 2000b). I-identities, or institutional identities, are assigned by the laws, rules, traditions, or principles to which someone is born. These identities are established by an individual's

family, school, and government structures. Examples of institutional identities are attention deficit disorder (ADD), low-socioeconomic status, or services received through the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA; Gee, 2000b).

**Table 2.1**

*Gee's Four Ways to View Identity*

Process		Assigned through	Source of Power
Nature Identity (N-Identity)	developed from	forces	in nature
Institution Identity (I-Identity)	authorized by	authorities	within institution
Discourse Identity (D-Identity)	recognized in	the discourse/dialogue	of/ with "rational" individuals
Affinity Identity (A-Identity)	shared in	the practice	of "affinity groups"

Discourse identities (D-identities) are constructed and sustained through dialogue with others. This dialogue "ascribes" identity and helps an individual "achieve" said identity when dialogue continues to reinforce it (Gee, 2000b, p. 4). Examples of D-identities might include "he is a hard worker" or, on the other hand, "she is such a kind girl." While institutional powers can assign D-identities, they are not the sole source of such identities (Gee, 2000b). Finally, affinity identities (A-identity) are constructed through an individual's association with a larger group that shares that individual's

interest, aptitude, or affiliation. A-identities are self-selected. Examples of A-identities include “fashion blogger,” “Harry Potter fan,” or Tik Tok influencer (Gee, 2000b). Which identity a student assigns the greatest value might suggest instructional practices where they see the most significant connections to who they are, and in turn the practices will entice their motivation and participation in the classroom.

McLeod and Yates (2006) agreed with the assignment of value and posit that the microsystems many childhood institutions naturally emphasize N-Identities I-Identities for young adolescents, including everything from family to social class. As a result, young adolescents’ base their literacy practices on the resources, values, and cultural practices of their home, as well as the surveillance of teachers, school policies, and test score applications (Compton-Lilly & Nayan, 2015). How these young adolescents construct their identities undergoes what Compton-Lilly (2016) referred to as “temporality” as they enter their teens and begin to consider their futures, their desires, and more personal literacy interests than the ones they pursued as middle schoolers. The researcher considered not only the breadth of Bronfenbrenner’s theory but also the potential variance of each layer that could impact an adolescent’s identity, for example, the students’ digital communities. For practitioners considering student microsystems alone conjures a plethora of possible scenarios. Adolescents who live in resource-rich households versus resource-deficient households. Students who are cisgender versus nonbinary. Adolescents who are emerging bilinguals versus those raised in bilingual homes. A place for teachers to begin is with demographic data that reveals their student’s

N-identities, an even better place for them to begin is by talking to the student about who they are outside of school.

### **Microsystem Identities and Literacy Practices**

Adolescents' at-home and out-of-school identities directly influence what they read, express, build, and produce in the classroom. As discussed above, these communities can include families, churches, and neighborhoods. Again, Bronfenbrenner's model did not initially consider the myriad of communities introduced later to adolescents online (Wilson, 2007). Within these communities, adolescents associate themselves with the customs, cultural practices, and power dynamics that define who they are and the other individuals they want to invite into these communities. Wortham (2005) noted that these community influences are deep rooted in terms of literacy practices and will ultimately manifest in what an adolescent will ascribe to in-school, including the types of texts they will read and the stories they will invest their interest. These influences can also play a role in a student's motivation and determine how they feel about their literacy and academic abilities.

Adolescents exposed to multiple literacies, topics, languages, and texts within their communities are more likely to read by choice, participate in classroom discourse, and be more successful on institutional standardized tests (Alvermann et al., 2018). In a study by Hall (2012), students who believed that they did not have enough background knowledge of a subject were less likely to offer their ideas on a topic in school. Moll (2019) confirmed this trend and noted that students will sometimes refuse to share their thoughts even if their unique funds of knowledge can offer a formidable contribution and

perspective to the discussion. Microsystem identity formation is present in the classroom for better or worse and can condition students to adopt a positive or negative perception of their literacy abilities. Students, and teachers alike, may not realize that these identities have less to do with ability and proficiency and more to do with their access to specific knowledge outside of school and in previous educational settings.

Students whose families lack resources, especially students of color and English language learners (ELL) may not be aware of their capital. Yosso and Solórzano (2002) argued that many of these students have been victims of institutional racism embedded in their teacher's pedagogies, curriculum, and intelligence testing for years, many of them completely unaware. Harklau and Moreno (2019) posited that for multilingual students who are part of English-dominant institutions, this difficult transition is compounded by their language identities. Similar to the days before desegregation, some modern education institutions can overlook and even discount the microsystem influences of some students (Moje et al., 2017). This practice is not limited to day-to-day curricula. Still, these institutions further limit these students by using socially and culturally biased assessments to determine the classes students can enroll in, and ultimately the opportunities these adolescents pursue.

### **In-School Identities and School Policy**

Historically, American students' institutional identities are shaped by social mores, politics, and educational policy. Whether it was the Eisenhower administration's increased focus on science and mathematics in response to the launch of Sputnik or the emphasis on "bridging gaps" in Johnson's Elementary and Secondary Education Act,

U.S. education reforms initiated, and continue to create, macrosystem influences on America's students (Shannon et al., 2009).

The researcher recognizes term race as a theory rather than an indelible, biological classification (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000); and it remains one of the most common ways educational institutions classify adolescent identity and, regrettably, determines the literacy practices of many students. Their registration information, their achievement data, and their discipline records all include race. In the mid-21st century, students' in-school identities and literacy practices relied heavily on N-identities, specifically the White classification. At the time, White students were presented with a canon-based curriculum focused on a route to college and preparation for the professional world. For minorities and resource-limited students, their in-school identities and practices generally resulted in immediate enrollment in the US workforce (Shannon et al., 2009). Ethnographic researchers began to investigate and describe the advantages of resource-rich students; for instance, the Piedmont study (Heath, 1983) was conducted to uncover where and how gaps were established. The study's findings unveiled gaps were not always a matter of resources, but a result of minority students, specifically Black students, that simply had out-of-school identities and practices that conflicted with the expectations and demands of their in-school, institutional measures such as tests.

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA), like A Nation at Risk and later Every Student Succeeds Act, all sought to locate and remedy the achievement gap culprit. The intention (like most literacy gap investigations) was noble. However, the tests used to

pinpoint the gaps, ultimately gave greater power to the identities assigned by institutional measures like achievement tests (Ravitch, 2010).

Who a student is and how they are identified in school is limited to the policies and constructs within that institution. The I-identities that students were assigned in school since *Brown v. Board* are some of the same ones schools assign today. These identities influence their motivation, academic success, as well as their self-worth and self-efficacy (Faircloth, 2009). As a high school administrator, the researcher can attest that when students' out-of-school identities are exchanged for an overemphasis on grade and achievement scores, they will grow frustrated, unmotivated, and disengaged.

### **Out-of-School Identities Through Discourse and Affinities**

Young adults (YAs) in the 21st century crave choice, individual expression, and the here and now (Hayn et al., 2011). However, despite the addition of popular, new YA fiction, some teachers continue to favor the canons that have graced the syllabi of English classes since an era that precedes the 19th century (Hopper, 2006). The irony of this practice is that many new fiction stories embrace the timeless stories of the canons. New YA fiction embraces enduring themes like dystopia, heroism, adventure, love, and fighting for justice. Students and teachers alike embrace YA literature (Hopper, 2006). However, very few of these titles are available to them in the classroom. And yet, student choice is one of the most critical predictors in determining a student's motivation and engagement with literature (Hinchman & Appleman, 2017). Teens also want the power to choose the mode in which they read and discuss fiction as well.

YA literature, while often consumed in print, especially extended series like *Harry Potter* and *His Dark Materials*, is often discussed and debated by teens in a digital medium (Mackey, 2001). In an attempt to further the appeal and perpetuation of YA literature, teachers might benefit from creating a bridge between traditional mediums like the novel and the digital avenues teens use every day. Hinchman and Appleman (2017) posed classrooms, and virtual worlds provide a rich place for teachers to examine the reading habits of young adults. The virtual worlds are paramount because they provide a way for students, outside of school, to “talk, share, and recruit reading partners and groups around compelling texts” (Hinchman & Appleman, 2017, p. 351). Ivey and Fisher (2006) pointed out that some students do not like participating in literacy discourse inside the classroom. However, these same timid students who are unsure about how peers will accept their thoughts in a face-to-face classroom might feel more comfortable expressing their views online, on a number of platforms.

Students gravitate toward digital literacies and multiple modalities that allow them to express what they think socially, but they also provide a practical measure to become more digitally literate. Ivey and Fischer (2006) asked a college student named Stephen Hinkle to reflect on how he would change the ELAR curriculum that he received in high school. His responses to several different questions revealed that he wished the curriculum focused on digital literacies. He posed that he would have benefited from learning “computer skills like word processing, building databases, spreadsheets, creating graphics, and how to critically approach web content” (Ivey & Fischer, 2006, p. 324).

Stephen's commentary is anecdotal but not to be dismissed. As a college student, he is still young enough to provide a high school student's perspective on the importance of current, essential skills lost in his literacy classroom. Literacy skills are not lost when presented with digital skills. When combined, literacy and digital media can make students feel empowered and free to express who they are and what they think about a text.

Colwell et al. (2018) observed a group of YAs in an online book club and found that the students not only read the books and participated in the online conversation; they even used formal, academic language to discuss their choice titles. Online affinity spaces are hubs for YAs who share a common interest or fandom. Gee et al. (2015) note that online affinity spaces provide the social realm that teens embrace while exposing them to discourse and technical skills that might be beyond their own, helping to evolve their thought, writing, and their perspective (Colwell et al., 2018). These spaces are essential for teachers to understand because they may allow their otherwise shy and reserved students to flourish and share their thoughts. Digital spaces also enable students to get excited about what they are reading, and in some cases, it draws in students who are altogether reluctant to read.

YAs appreciate hype. When a new Taylor Swift album comes out, they start looking for clues in her Twitter and Instagram feed. When J.K. Rowling is dropping a new title, students rush to the fan boards. Mackey (2001) encouraged teachers to use paratexts (i.e., digital, visual, and media aspects of a book) to draw reluctant readers into the offline text. In this case, the teacher uses a text's hype and production elements to

attract young readers. *Harry Potter*, *The Wizard of Oz*, and *His Dark Materials* are just a few examples of offline texts that have a world of paratexts available to help teachers get students hooked on series reading (Colwell et al., 2018). In addition, the world of paratexts generally has an online discourse element as well, one that allows students to ask questions and discuss the text in an informal, ungraded format.

YAs continue to be interested in quality storytelling and original characters like those found in canonical literature; however, modern teens need choice in both the literature they elect to read, and the modalities used to discuss it. Teachers that marry independent reading selection, to digital platforms and skills encourage the excitement and hype that surrounds the production of a story. These practices improve their students' reading skills while creating active, lifelong readers equipped with the digital skills of the modern world.

### **Adolescent Youth and Digital Literacy**

Adolescent literacies reflect youth culture itself. Faulkner (2005) posited that youth literacies also referred to as adolescent literacies, include the varied literacies that modern adolescents adopt, utilize, and consider part of their everyday life. For Ben, the student from the introduction, his daily literacy practices include Snapchat, Twitter, and his iPhone. Adopting this perspective of literacy requires both researchers and practitioners to expand how we define literacy itself.

With the dawn of the digital age literacy cannot be confined to oral and written text (Gee, 2017). Leu (2011) supported the idea that digital literacies constitute literacy, although many available formats are non-traditional. The New London Group (1996)

recognized that digital literacies required different skills and ways of thinking critically about content beyond written and oral texts. Leu's attempt to streamline new literacies research produced a dual theory of new literacies that allows researchers to position these new skills while maintaining a broader lens of the shape-shifting world of technology.

Luke and Elkins (2000) considered youth literacy practices to be “complex, ecological and social relations between adolescents and their symbol-, language-, and discourse-rich environments” (p. 396). Stereotypes about youth and adolescence result from cultural and power constructs that position adolescents as less competent and often underscore their self-guided interests, values, and purposes that inform their literacy decisions. However, the immature, incapable caricature of adolescents in movies, popular media, and young adult literature is also present in schools.

Digital literacies have changed the world, and they have specifically changed the world for students. With the introduction of smartphones and social media, students can adopt literacy identities that their schools and their teachers do not assign. In their digital worlds, whether a self-started Etsy store or their massively followed fashion blog, students create identities that individuals value outside of the institutions (e.g., home, school) that traditionally fashioned them. Mentioned earlier, Gee called this the rise of the new capitalism (Gee, 2000a, 2015). The old capitalism was based on production, industry, standardization, and established class systems. The men (and very few women) of the old capitalism relied more on products and less on skills. For students to survive in the new capitalism, they, as Leu explained, must develop a refined skill set that is interchangeable, project (not product) based, and one that reaches across cultures,

discourses, and modalities (Kress & Bezemer, 2015). However, access to instruction and classroom practices does not afford enough time or privilege to these literacies, especially when one considers how paramount they will be to adolescents in their post-secondary school lives.

A digital user is not always a proficient digital native. Students who own technology and use digital content still need instruction to help them establish a critical lens to develop these literacies further and maximize their utility (Coiro et al., 2015). In a study completed by Leu et al. (2011) in Finland, they found that a majority of the over 200 high school participants in their study used inaccurate or highly bias digital sources for a school project. The study's findings revealed that most students admitted to using one of the first three sources that they found from a list on a popular search engine, and many did not search beyond their initial search. When the study was replicated in a Connecticut high school of mostly upper-middle-class students, it yielded similar results. In an interview with one of the students from the Connecticut study, he admitted that the reason he selected one of his sources was that it aligned with something “his grandmother told him” (Coiro et al., 2015, p. 6). The interesting part about this and other studies completed by the New London Group and the Digital Literacies Lab at the University of Connecticut is that access to technology is not the impetus for these knowledge gaps. Instead, it is that most students have never received direct instruction with digital literacies and Information Communication Technologies (ICTs; Leu, et al., 2004; Corio et al., 2015).

There are two primary reasons that teachers do not incorporate more digital learning opportunities in their classroom; 1) they do not have enough of an understanding of digital literacies and 2) state and nationwide testing does not assess them. While there are other reasons, including the underfunding of technology in the classroom and the issue of home access for some students, these two reasons remain primary (Leu, 2000). To further illustrate schools' delayed approach to digital literacy endorsements, it was not until 2015 (over five decades after the first IBM processor was developed, three decades after the internet went live, and one decade after the introduction of Facebook) that the words internet or digital appeared in Texas' Essential Knowledge and Skills or the Common Core Standards (Coiro et al., 2015). Digital literacies fall even lower on the list of priorities for struggling schools that become hyper-focused on standardized tests because of the threat of losing funding (Ravitch, 2010). Sadly, the students in many of these schools already face achievement gaps in the areas prioritized by the old capitalism, which begs the question, how will these adolescents fair in the new capitalism if their schools do little to prepare them for a digital, globalized world?

### **Instructional Practices that Promote Individual Identity and Out-of-School Literacy Practices**

Instructional practices in ELAR classrooms have not only evolved alongside state achievement tests, but they have also evolved with our culture (Corson, 2002). In 2017 Angie Thomas wrote *The Hate U Give* about the systemic racism in the penal code and American institutions. Fast forward two years later, with the tragedy of Breanna Taylor and George Floyd, these social issues are gaining popularity in ELAR classrooms.

Thomas's book is just one of many that have started to express who teens are outside of school and in their affinity spaces—places where these adolescents feel safe. Many teachers are seeking a pedagogical balance of things like texts about current issues, multiple modalities, and multiple languages in their classrooms as a way to tell their students, we see you (Luke, 2000).

An ELAR classroom that supports modern times and modern adolescents use instructional practices that recognize their students' out-of-school identities as well as demands of the contemporary world, both economic and social. Instructional practices and educators that acknowledge that the classroom is a democratic community that involves multiple identities prepare students to be good citizens in the digital and physical world (Buchholz et al., 2020). To prepare students for a digital world where information is plentiful, ever-evolving, and often inaccurate ELAR teachers must help students adopt a critical lens, fostering their understanding of their own identity and the identity of their fellow man.

Critical literacy instructional practices are vast. A teacher's background, experience, and preferences all play a role in the instructional practices they use. Behram (2006) reviewed published articles and studies on classroom practices to develop more critically minded students. In the 36 papers and studies, which included critical literacy practices primarily used at the secondary level, Behram found that the instructional activities and tasks could be organized into six broad categories: “(1) reading supplementary texts, (2) reading multiple texts, (3) reading from a resistant perspective, (4) producing counter-texts, (5) conducting student-choice research projects, and (6)

taking social action” (p. 482). A focus on social justice and democracy in ELAR instructional practices affords a classroom environment where multiple identities are expressed and hopefully understood.

Some instructional practices can have the intention of being critically and identity-centered; however, the classroom structure prevents their full potential. For instance, to expand a classroom library with multilingual choices for choice reading, the stories themselves may not fully realize their intention because the teacher has not explored the identity of their students. A common misconception is that if you have a stack of translated books about North American themes written by North American authors, you are compiling a multilingual/multicultural (MC/ML) set of choice texts, but this is not the case (Montoro, 1995). Ann Martin's *Babysitters Club* series is one of the best examples of how a mere translation does not serve the global aspects of a MC/ML library. While the Spanish translation of the book is accurate, and age-appropriate the characters, themes, and settings are very North American-specific and not relatable to students who have not lived in North America (and even North American students born after 1990). Creating identity-centered instructional practices requires intentional decisions that ought to involve both teachers and students, as well as a clear exploratory discourse between both parties.

### **Summary**

Children undergo physical, mental, and environmental changes when they transition into adolescence. These transitions invite them to reevaluate the value they assign to certain developed identities and literacy practices that served them in

elementary and middle school. This researcher aims to describe how ninth-grade adolescents connect their own identities to the instructional practices in their ELAR classroom. In Chapter 3, the researcher will explain the theoretical approach and methods used to explore the study's research questions.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

A constructivist approach was used to examine the identities of ninth-grade students and how they perceive these identities in the literacy practices of their ELAR classes. A constructivist approach enabled the researcher to study how individuals form their realities (Creswell, 2017). In this study, the adolescent participants communicated their identities and how they make meaning of these both in school and out-of-school. Creswell and Poth (2017) noted that a constructivist approach yields varied results because individuals construct meanings that are personal and unique. The researcher sought to describe the participant's complex views. They created categories through analysis that helped make sense of the processes and interactions between the adolescents' identities and the instructional practices of their ELAR classroom (Creswell & Poth, 2017). To organize the participants' experiences the researcher employed a case study approach (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015).

#### **Research Design and Context**

Merriam and Tisdell (2015) argued that cases are bounded systems and can include individuals, programs, communities, or specific policies. For this study, the researcher considered the two high school classrooms and the teachers' identity-centered instruction a bounded system which to recruit the six cases for the study. The classroom was not explored as a broader case, but it did provide an environment where the teachers strived to focus on students' identities and in-school and out-of-school literacy practices.

Seven students were selected within the bounded system of the two classrooms. After four weeks, one student declined further participation, resulting in six cases. A case study approach was appropriate because detailed, in-depth data collection occurred and involved multiple sources of information within the bounded system. Reports from the six students lead to a description of the classroom using themes constructed through data analysis (Creswell, 2017).

The context for this study was a high school located in an urban area of North Texas that, for the 2020–2021 school year, had a population of 2,035 students, which included both in-school and virtual learners. The student body demographics were: 42% Caucasian, 39.4% Hispanic, 12.1% African American, 47.8% Economically Disadvantaged, 7.7 % Special Education, 27.7 % ELL. Located in the center of the city, students were from urban and rural backgrounds alike. For the school year in the study, the school held an approximate 50% economically disadvantaged population. The high school staff, like the student body, represented several cultures. In all, the students came from over 30 different countries. The teaching staff contained multilingual and an administrative, and support staff to accommodate parents during parent-teacher communication (where needed) and in discipline matters.

All of the students at the high school were required by the state of Texas to test and show mastery in five different subjects to qualify for graduation. Table 3.1 explains the class, grade level, age, school population count, test, and language of the tests and year the state uses to determine mastery in respective subjects (see Table 3.1). Those levels from lowest to highest are does not meet, approaches, meets mastery, and exceeds

(Texas Education Agency, 2019). The tests were issued by grade level and were completed in March and May of the respective year (see Table 3.1). This year a statewide glitch in the online testing caused several tests to be moved to different dates.

**Table 3.1**

*High School Population by Grade and State Tested Subjects*

Class	Grade	Age	Population	State Tested Subjects	Language of Test
Freshmen	9 <sup>th</sup> grade	14– 15	579	English I, Biology, Algebra I	English
Sophomore	10 <sup>th</sup> grade	15– 16	464	English II	English
Juniors	11 <sup>th</sup> grade	16– 17	523	United States History	English
Seniors	12 <sup>th</sup> grade	17– 18	469	No Tested Subjects	English

Traditionally, from the researcher's observations, the data from these tests drive the initiatives, curriculum, and instructional practices for the ELAR courses. For ninth grade ELAR, the teachers traditionally used professional development in early August to determine ninth grade instruction, which focused primarily on I-identity data in the form of test scores, Big Five demographic categories, and language proficiency. The ninth-grade teachers in this study participated in the annual August professional development and data digs. They also worked to adopt a more identity-centered curriculum for the 2020–21 school year. The two classroom teachers, who were pursuing graduate work at Texas Woman's University (a local college near the high school), expressed to the researcher that they were committed to bringing a more critical and identity-centered lens to their instructional practices. They wanted the instruction to focus on students' D-identities and A-identities, specifically their digital literacies and affinities.

The two classes were on a double block schedule (A days and B days), and, unlike the other ninth grade ELAR classrooms, the classes were offered every day. State-related content was delivered on A day of the course. B day observed student-centered instructional practices such as but not limited to writing conferences, student choice texts, student-choice research, counter texts, and multi-modality products. The instructional practices in this course, combined with the diversity of students' in-school and out-of-school identities, helped the researcher answer: How do high school students describe in and out of school identities? And how do students describe their ELAR classroom experience related to in-school and out-of-school literacies and identities?

## **Research Site**

Research completed on-site was approved by all area superintendents within the district and the principal of the high school. Internal Review Board (IRB) approval from both the school district and Texas Woman's University (TWU) was mandatory before research could commence. Signed parent consent packets, approved by the IRB of TWU, gave the researcher permission to access and collect various pieces of data required for a formidable case study, including interviews, classroom observations, field notes, artifacts, and pertinent archival data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

## **The Researcher**

The researcher is an 18-year secondary high school educator. Their background is in political science and in history, which they hold two advanced degrees. They hold an M.Ed. and have led professional development and curriculum building for over 7 years in ELAR for Grades 6–10. In 2010–2014, the researcher served as a grader and curriculum developer for the International Baccalaureate Educators Network (IBEN). They primarily graded and helped build curriculum for students in Grades 6–10. In addition, they have helped their district develop pilot programs aimed at using ELAR instruction as a response to intervention (RTI) measures in high schools.

## **Classroom Teachers and Context**

In the fall of 2019, the researcher, serving as an assistant principal and chair of the English department at the school in the study, worked to pilot a course that would work in one part to cover coursework and in the other part to focus on student-centered practices like writing conferences, personal narratives, choice texts, and the inclusion of

more digital literacies and multi-modal products. The pilot was discussed with the ELAR staff and ninth grade teachers were asked, as a whole, who would like to volunteer to take on the course. The students for the course were originally set to be selected based on seventh grade and eighth grade S scores. They would be placed in a double blocked course that would take place every day. As a result of COVID the ninth-grade students in this study did not take the eighth-grade, State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) and therefore, their scores could have no bearing on the rosters for the courses. While some of the students in these classes would have qualified based on the original criteria the classes ultimately contained some students who did not meet the original criteria. The context of these classes is relevant for this study only in that it provided a convenient, and appropriate environment for the study. The teachers in the study, even though they were not teaching the intended group, reported that they were still committed to the student and identity- centered practices.

Mrs. G taught Michael, Chris, and Hazel. She is a 9-year teacher who had recently completed her master's degree.

Earning a degree that focused on multilingualism helped recenter my class to be more inclusive. Over the years, I started to recognize the voices that were missing in the curriculum and in my classroom. TWU allowed me a space to work through and recognize my own internal biases and who else I needed to center.

Additionally, they provided resources and opportunities for me to deepen my learning and provide more opportunities for my learners.

While observing Mrs. G’s class it appeared that she valued her students’ opinions and choices. While teaching she would sit close to her students at eye level and seemed attentive to their feedback. The researcher saw her consistently conduct class by visiting each student individually to conduct discourse related to the content of the course, as well as about the students’ affinities, ranging from gaming to the students’ out-of-school activities. The practices that she reported illustrated her identity-centered efforts included her hip-hop and book pairing board, “First Chapter Friday,” choice reading and writing topics, BookSnaps, Social Media Personal Narrative, and book clubs (see Figures 3.1 and 3.2).

**Figure 3.1**

*Mrs. G’s Hip-Hop Book Pairing Board: Pairing Examples*



**Figure 3.2**

*Mrs. G's Classroom Library: Selection Examples*



Mrs. C taught Carmen, JJ, and Carlos. She is a 20-year teacher. She was in her second semester of graduate work during the study.

Earning my Master's degree has always been important to me. I tried two other times, but ultimately, dropped out due to the internal conflict from being a mother, teacher, and student. Being a mother was my top priority. For me, the amount of work and attention it required eclipsed my vision of the kind of mother I wanted to be. The opportunity that TWU offered came at the perfect time for me. I was searching for a new direction in my own educational expertise and took a leap of faith to transfer my skills to a new educational experience: teaching secondary. I began the program (ELLevate program at TWU) the same year I began teaching high school. TWU confirmed what I knew to be best practice from my formative years as an elementary teacher. High school needs more literacy-based practices that focus more on the individual, like that of elementary school

practitioners. All the skills that help to individualize learning for younger students can, and should, be applied successfully to older students. TWU also reinforced the belief in choice reading and writing practices that help to drive developmental growth and creativity.

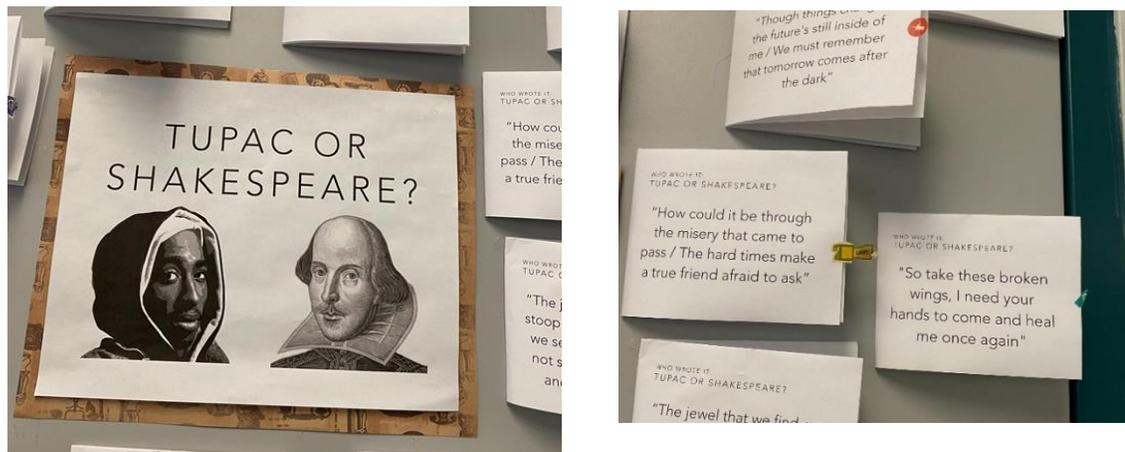
The researcher recorded the use of multiple languages in Mrs. C's room. She had four bilingual students in a class of seven (in-person students). Like Mrs. G, she had incorporated a diverse classroom library, and hip-hop themed bulletin boards (see Figures 3.3 and 3.4) She regularly asked the students to consider using their first language or home language to explore new content or concepts. Some students relied on using their home language first. Mrs. C is fluent in Italian and appeared to use her second language to encourage the students to endorse a bilingual, inclusive classroom.

Individualization and cultural integrations have always been important to me but being new to secondary I was concerned with how to do so. The ELLevate program helped empower me with ideas that reinforced my beliefs. I had previously fully embraced translanguaging and code-switching concepts. I now post signs that state 'this is a translanguaging classroom' and actively talk to my students about the usefulness of using ones' first language. I also seek out books and literature that promotes alternative viewpoints. I begin the school year with an identity unit. My students are encouraged to share stories from their families and traditions that are important to them. We discuss our names and I use excerpts of books and video clips that emphasize the importance of our names.

For the purpose of reflectivity, the researcher wants to note that they were no longer working in a capacity as an administrator with these teachers. They were not obligated to participate in the study and their courses and interactions with the students were recorded for the collection of data only. Considerations regarding the teachers and classroom are also noted in the limitations in this chapter.

### Figure 3.3

*Mrs. C's Was it Tupac or Shakespeare Board: Examples*



### Figure 3.4

*Mrs. C's Classroom Library: Selection Examples*



## **Participant Selection**

The researcher aimed to discover, understand, and gain insight into the instructional practices of ninth grade ELAR and to get specific feedback from adolescents as to how they believed these practices value their identity. The researcher collected and analyzed a wide range of data from multiple experiences, creating a purposeful sampling (Merriam, 1998). The researcher considered what and who they wanted to observe before considering participant selection. The primary goal was to consider the problem in the study and the three research questions, which resulted in purposive sampling. Merriam explains that purposive sampling is based off of a selection of a sample of people that would provide the greatest benefit to the study and would allow the researcher to glean the most that they could from that group (Merriam, 1998).

This study used what Merriam refers to as criteria-based selection, wherein all of the students in the two classes met the criteria for the study. Essential criteria for participant selection for this study were:

1. The students had to be in the ninth grade.
2. They had to be a part of the double-blocked ELAR course using identity-centered instructional practices.
3. The students could not be virtual learners.

More specifically this study used what Merriam calls typical purposeful sampling, which takes a sample that reflects the average person in that group. There were over 30 students enrolled, both in-person and virtually that were exposed to the practices in these two classes. The sample for this study began with seven students and resulted in six.

As explained above, recruitment took place in two high school English 1 classes and included six ninth-grade adolescent students. The teachers in these classes are former colleagues whom the researcher had worked with for over 3 years and whose classrooms they frequently visited, both for instructional coaching and PLCs. The students in the study had multiple interactions with the researcher before research began, and there was already a degree of trust established before formal field observations commenced in March.

The study was presented to all the students in both classrooms. Two presentations, in total, took place. The researcher offered the presentation in English and Spanish; however, all, students elected to hear the English presentation. The presentations were age-appropriate and provided a thorough explanation of the study, including its timeline, confidentiality measures, and the process for observations and interviews. Letters and consent packets explaining the study, its intent, and any possible risk were sent home with each student. Several students (three) asked for the Spanish letters and packets for their parents to read and sign. The presentations, letters, and consent packets made it very clear that participation in the study was voluntary and that there was no penalty for students who chose not to participate. Once the names of potential participants were compiled, the researcher excluded the virtual learners. The first seven students from the two ELAR classes that submitted their signed consent packets were added to the study.

### **Data Sources and Collection Procedures**

In their definition of case study, VanWynsberghe and Khan (2007) stated that a “case study is not exclusively about the case revealing itself [but also how the] analysis

[is] being discovered or constructed” (p. 90). The researcher developed relationships with the participants to earn their trust and collect enough data in multiple forms to discover how the adolescents connected their identities to their ELAR classroom practices.

Over the 2020–2021 academic school year, specifically from November 2020 to March 2021, the researcher collected various data about the ELAR courses and the participants. Data about the ELAR class included discussions with the two teachers, the ninth grade ELAR Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), and the class syllabi and ninth grade ELAR Canvas course (see Appendix D). Participant data was not requested before parental consent was signed and collected in March. The researcher collected observations and field notes during the daily 90-minute ELAR classes. School personnel provided archival data (i.e., principals, counselors, technology specialists, and testing coordinators). Student feedback was recorded through audio recordings of a word choice activity and an in-depth interview that each participant completed with the researcher. In this section, each source of data and how the researcher collected it is explained in-depth. A timeline is also provided to illustrate approximate dates, order of data collection, and analysis.

### **Archival Data**

After the researcher collected the consent forms, they met with each participant individually to establish a pseudonym. The students selected their pseudonyms that were provided to the researcher and why they chose that name. The explanations were recorded in the researcher’s field notes. The pseudonyms provided anonymity and were

cited in place of the participants' names in all data, including writing samples, surveys, interviews, observational field notes, and any memos associated with the field notes.

Before fieldwork began, the researcher collected archival data, including students' 2021–2020 demographic data, results of their seventh-grade STAAR scores (eighth-grade scores were not available as a result of COVID), results from the eighth-grade ELAR survey (collected February 2019; see Appendix E), and their class schedules were collected to determine N-identities as well as the I-Identities that may contribute to students' responses in their in-depth interviews. Bogden and Biklen (2006) recommend requesting access to any archival data before the interviews began, which allowed the researcher to frame a focus ahead of the fieldwork. This case allowed the researcher to create a specific schedule to make classroom observations and make field notes. Because a case study relies on the participants' expertise and viewpoints to shape the themes of the study, the researcher used the archival data to identify and record the various N-Identities and I-identities that were noted, such as race, home language, and federal code.

This data included the participants' 2019–2020 demographic data, STAAR scores, and the courses they registered for at the beginning of the 2020–2021 school year. Access to students with varying N-Identities and I-Identities (both detected in the archival data) allowed the researcher to understand the connection between what shaped the micro-systems in their out-of-school ecological systems, and in turn, in their out-of-school identities (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). In addition, because N, I, D, and A- Identities are not mutually exclusive, the archival data also offered some insight into the student's in-school identities. For instance, the students' whose registration information listed

Spanish as their language spoken at home were linked to the likelihood that they qualified to take Spanish for Spanish speakers as their ninth-grade language elective, and the possibility that Spanish could be part of their in-school and out-of-school identities. These considerations were included in the researcher's notes and informed the probing questions they used during the word choice activity and in-depth interviews.

### *Classroom Observations*

In this study, the researcher observed the classroom instruction and the six students within the case study. The schedule of the observations was communicated to teachers, participants, and the minors' guardians ahead of time so that all parties were aware of the researcher's participation in their classes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Classroom observations began once participant selection was completed. The original timeline for classroom observations was modified due to a state-wide crash of the state testing system. To not disrupt the usual daily activities of the students, the researcher moved the classroom observations to accommodate the new testing dates. The researcher informed participants, teachers, and parents of the updated schedule. These observations took place weekly for 2.5-month period. Each student was observed two to three times a week during an entire 90-minute block. Each student was observed for 30–45 minutes per class. If a student was absent or other schedule conflicts arose, the observation resumed within the week of their return.

Observations provided an opportunity for the researcher to have first-hand experience with the participants and record data as it presented itself (Creswell, 2017). The researcher was able to observe the D-identities established in student-to-student and

student-to-teacher conversations. Classroom observations also offered insight into A-identities, which included students' use of their smartphones and the apps they used during “free time.” They also verbalized their common affinities by exchanging strategies about everything from gaming to trending TikToks and Snaps. The observations were recorded in NVIVO in the file under each participant’s pseudonym. After each observation, the researcher uploaded the notes into NVIVO, along with any memos made during that observation.

The researcher maintained the role of a disciplined observer. This included assuming a seat that allowed them to see and hear the participants without drawing their attention away from the teacher or the instruction. As the researcher got to know the students, they made small talk and discussed what they were reading and doing on their phones during the class. The researcher’s primary role throughout the observation was to pay attention, shift from ‘wide angle’ to ‘narrow-angle while mentally blocking out others, look for keywords in people’s remarks that [would] stand out later, concentrate on the first and last remarks in each conversation, and mentally playback remarks and scenes during breaks in the talking or observing (Merriam, 1998, p.46).

## **Interviews**

The interview component consisted of six in-depth interviews with six ninth-grade students. Creswell and Poth (2017) recommend that the interviewer ask “open-ended questions in a comfortable, distraction-free space and use recording equipment that is sensitive to the room’s acoustics” (p. 165; see Appendix A). They also recommend that the questions be designed to engage the participants and stay within the boundaries of the

study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Interviews for these adolescents required different lines of questioning. This case study employed in-depth interviews and descriptive questioning used in Smith and Wilhelm's (2002) approach in their case study *Reading Don't Fix No Chevys* as well as those outlined by Spradley (1979) in *The Ethnographic Interview*. These authors make specific recommendations for interviewing adolescents, including but not limited to establishing rapport, using native adolescent language, and speaking with adolescents from multiple ethnic backgrounds. The in-depth interviews considered how the students differed in terms of class, ethnicity, and academic achievement (N-identities and I-identities); this helped the researcher discover what contributed to the development of their out-of-school identities, but furthermore those identities absent in the instructional practices of the students' ELAR class (Smith & Wilhelm, 2002).

### ***Word Choice Activity***

The word choice activity asked students to select a series of words established and grouped according to Gee's (2000b) definition of the four identities outlined in *Identity as a Lens for Educational Research*. The potential outcome for these lists was wide-ranging. To compile a more detailed list, the researcher consulted the counseling team, administrative team, and the academic leadership team at the high school to help compile the list below (see Table 3.2). The original words used in the nature identity were the prescribed federal codes used in the school's registration system. To ensure that the student participants understood the words, the researcher consulted two diverse groups of adolescent students to get their feedback on the words listed. They made several changes, including adding their native terms to the original list to clarify understanding. The

researchers also included blank cards where students could enter their own identity descriptors. For instance, one of the students in the study noticed that the word family was missing, so she added it to a blank submission card, and included it in her selection.

The word activity consisted of two rounds. The students were asked to select as many words as they wanted from the list below in each round. In the first round, the students were asked to choose the words that they felt best to describe their in-school identities. In the second round, students were asked to select the words they thought best related to their out-of-school identities (see Table 3.2). The students were not aware of the pre-organized categories in the matrix below. After each round, the researcher took a picture of the participant’s selections and asked them to briefly explain why they made those selections briefly. The images of the results were clearly labeled by student and round

**Table 3.2**

*Word Choice Activity List*

N-Identities	I-Identities	D-Identities	A-Identities
Asian American	ADD/ADHD	“High achieving”	Fan Fiction
Black	Anxiety	“Great athlete”	Digital Devices
Female	Bad Student	“Good kid”	Sports/Cheer/Dance
Hispanic/LATINX	Depression	“Punk”	Gaming
LGBTQ+	ELL/LEP	“Kind/Generous”	Insta
Male	English-Speaking	“Bully”	Snap
Native American	Good Grades	“Smart”	You Tube
Low	High Test Scores	“Failure”	Hip Hop/Rap
Socioeconomic/Poor	Special Education	“Nice”	Religious
Wealthy	Spanish-Speaking	“Quiet”	Social
White		“Funny”	

### *Interview Protocol*

The researcher conducted a one-on-one, face-to-face, semi-structured, in-depth interview with each of the six purposely selected participants in this case study. The researcher's interviews were conducted in one of the high school English classrooms. The original location was set to be the school library; however, as a result of COVID-19, the library was not available. This was communicated to teachers and students a week before the interviews commenced. Interviews took place outside of instructional time and did not interfere with the students' current schedules. The researcher requested permission to use this space through the English department. The interview room was a windowed space, and the researcher used a microphone and a separate recording device conducive to acoustics in that room. These interviews observed the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's recommendations for social distancing and surface cleaning recommended to mitigate the spread of COVID. Surfaces were wiped clean, including the microphone, the table, and the words used during the word activity.

The interviews were conducted on a date that was most convenient for each student. The researcher asked each question and gave ample time for the student to respond. When the student finished speaking, the researcher waited 5 seconds before probing or asking the next question. Then the researcher explored each question at least one time to generate more detailed descriptions. After the student responded, the researcher would rephrase a portion of the answer and probe. For example, "you said (rephrase) tell me more about what you meant" or "you said (rephrase) say more about that." The masks that both the researcher and the students had to wear made it difficult to

hear each other. If the researcher could not distinguish what they said, they simply asked them to repeat it.

### **Student Artifacts**

Artifacts for the study came in two forms: (1) pictures of word choices made by the participants and (2) products that the students created in the classes that they thought best represented their literacy identities. The researcher's access to the students' products was limited which is discussed in the limitations in this chapter.

After each round, the researcher took a picture of the students' selections. The images were uploaded to NVIVO, and initial coding was applied based on the identities outlined by Gee (2000). Artifacts also included text choices the students made and their character analysis and reflections on these texts. The artifacts represented several identities outlined by Gee (2000b), depending on the text and the students' expressed in-school literacy practices. Douglas et al. (2015) posited that while interviews could reveal individual perspectives and points of view, a constructivist approach that solely relies on interviews could potentially miss some subconscious insights that prompt individual perceptions, meaning-making, and interview responses. While the students' work varied in content, all submissions were primarily written or typed text.

### **Field Notes**

The researcher recorded field notes under each students' pseudonym. They included highly detailed descriptions of the participants, the ELAR classroom setting, and the activities and behaviors that the student participants and the teachers exhibited during the class (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The researcher maintained a field note system in

NVIVO, which allowed them to observe and record different students at one time. The notes were explicitly helpful when the students were involved in the same discourse. In addition to the field notes for each participant, the researcher maintained a memo page in NVIVO, where they frequently made observations about consistent behaviors or where they felt there were signs of saturation in the observations. The field notes and the memos provided a means of reflection for the researcher during initial coding and when determining emerging themes.

Merriam and Tisdell (2015) considered reflective comments like those that include the researchers' "feelings, reactions, hunches initial interpretations, speculations, and working hypotheses" valuable to the study (p. 151). This commentary provided early stages of analysis as the researcher began to describe and understand the setting and the participants, their actions, and their discourse. In this study, the researcher was a part of the school ecology, so insights included specific comments about how the overall school environment might influenced behaviors (i.e., high stakes testing, a lockdown drill).

**Table 3.3.**

*Data Collection Timeline*

	SP 20	SU 20	Sept 20	Oct 20	Nov 20	Dec 20	Jan 21	Feb 21	Mar 21	Apr 21	May 21	June 21	Jul 21
Background Reading													
Initial Discussions													
Literature Review													
Research Methods Planning													
Obtain permissions to observe and collect data from the site													
Proposal Submission IRB Submission													
Prepare Fieldwork Protocols*													
Pilot Study for interview questions.													
Participant Selection													
Collect Consent Permits for Student Participants													
Classroom Observations and Record Observation Field Notes													
Word Choice Activity													
In-Depth Interviews													
Data Analysis													

## **Data Analysis**

Creswell and Poth (2017) posited that the data analysis for a case study should include the products of multiple sources such as interviews, documents, and artifacts. The documents used in this study included visual results of the student responses to the word choice activity, in-depth student interviews, archival data provided by the school's personnel, and field note observations of the participants taken during their ELAR class.

The researcher recorded interviews on their computer as well as a secondary recording system. The MP3 files of the recordings were uploaded and transcribed via Sonix, an online transcription software. This program allowed the researcher to get a thorough transcription. It also allowed them to listen and re-listen to the dialogue and make necessary edits for unplanned interruptions and words missed due to masks (COVID protocol) worn during the interview. The researcher listened to each in-depth interview and word choice activity twice to ensure the transcriptions were accurate for this study.

All data from the study was uploaded, formatted, and organized by the researcher in NVIVO, a qualitative analysis tool. NVIVO allowed the researcher to manage their case files separately, highlight and sort relevant data for each coding cycle, and record field notes to accompany memos for later use. The NVIVO account was password protected and only accessible by the researcher to safeguard the confidentiality and identities of the participants. After the first two interviews, the researcher began their initial analysis and coding.

Coding choices were based on the research questions:

1. How do high school adolescent students describe their in-school and out-of-school identities?
2. How do high school adolescent students describe the instructional practices in their ELAR classroom?
3. How do high school adolescent students describe the connection between ELAR instructional practices and in-school and out-of-school identities?

### **First Cycle Analysis: A Priori and Descriptive Coding**

The first round of coding incorporated both a priori and descriptive coding. Saldaña (2016) recognized a priori categories help shape patterns and establish themes. However, he suggests that the real value of this categorization is that it allows the researcher to focus on “inconsistencies, paradoxes, and surprises that will move the analysis beyond premature patterns and into a richer understanding of the data” (p. 23). He also recommends this approach for studies that explore concepts like identity, which hold multiple definitions in multiple fields (i.e., psychology, education, human development). This approach allowed the researcher to use applicable theories to help answer the research questions (Saldaña, 2016).

Saldaña (2016) described descriptive coding as the analysis of words and short phrases that sufficiently summarize the data categorically, similar to a hashtag used in social media. The researcher also cited Tesch (2013), who advises that “it is important that these [codes] are identifications of the topic, not abbreviations of the content...[they] are the content” (p. 119).

### *A Priori Coding*

The researcher applied a priori codes during the first cycle that were represented in Gee's (2000b) identity as an analytic lens for educational research (see Table 3.4), which defines four specific identities: nature, institutional, discourse, and affinity. The unit of meaning for these codes was applied to both individual words and short phrases collected in all data forms. After this first cycle of coding, the researcher took the smaller segments of coded data and applied pattern coding.

The unit of meaning for this study was words or short phrases relevant to the research questions. Short phrases included 2–3-word clusters, especially where they presented new or salient discoveries to individual words (Gee, 2017). Examples of units of measure used in the study were:

Word- Tia.

Phrase- My tia.

Phrase- My favorite tia

A priori coding applied to Gee's four identities so the researcher could begin their initial exploration of the students' in-school and out-of-school identities. Gee's identity as an analytic lens for educational research defines four specific identities that the study used to frame the researcher's investigation: nature, institutional, discourse, and affinity. The first is N-identities. These identities are assigned by nature and include but are not limited to race, neurological composition, and genetic composition. An example of a nature identity might include deafness or color blindness (Gee, 2011). I-identities, or institutional identities, are assigned by the laws, rules, traditions, or principles to which someone is born. These identities are established by an individual's family, school, and government structures. Examples of institutional identities are attention deficit disorder

(ADD), socioeconomic status, and IDEA qualifications and services (Foucault, 1977; Gee, 2000a). Since the family is considered an institution, I-identity data included items like home language and religious and heritage celebrations, as well as specific traditions and practices that the students assigned to authority figures in their home.

Discourse identities (D-identities) are constructed and sustained through dialogue with others. This dialogue “ascribes” identity and helps an individual “achieve” said identity when dialogue continues to reinforce it (Gee, 2000b, p. 4). Examples of discourse identities might include “he is a hard worker” or, on the other hand, “she is such a kind girl.” While institutional powers can assign D-identities, they are not the sole source of such identities (Gee, 2000b). Finally, affinity identities (A-identity) are constructed through an individual’s association with a larger group that shares that individual’s interest, aptitude, or affiliation (see Table 3.4). Affinity identities are self-selected. Examples of affinity identities include gamer, TikTok influencer, *Harry Potter* fan (Gee, 2000a).

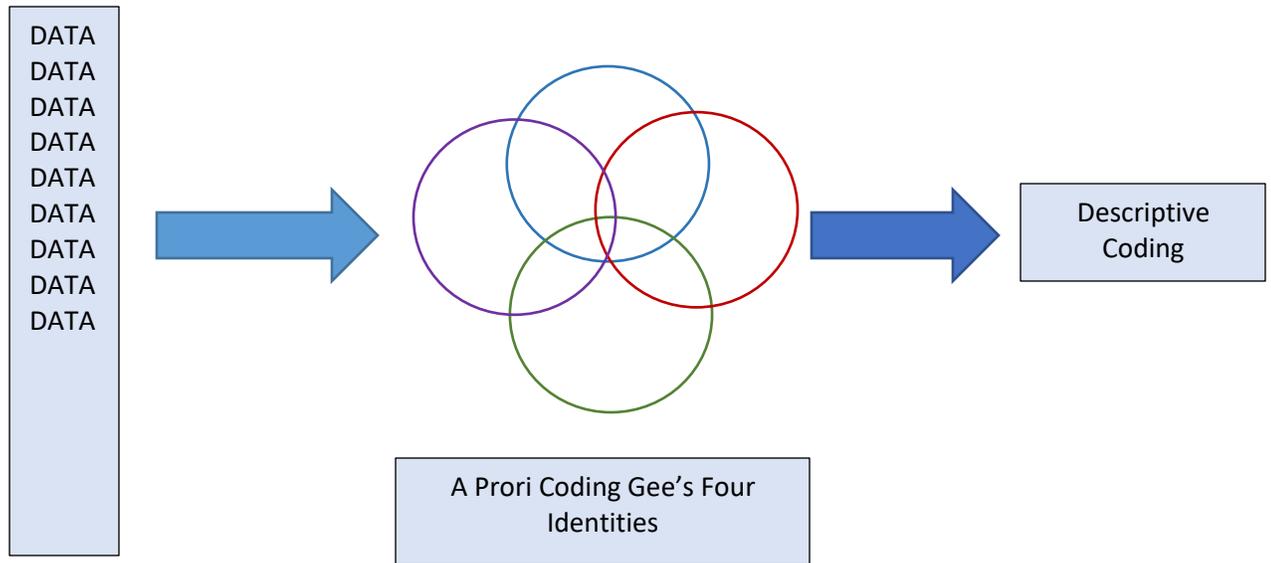
**Table 3.4**

*Gee’s Four Ways to View Identity*

Process		Assigned through	Source of Power
Nature Identity (N-Identity)	developed from	forces	in nature
Institution Identity (I-Identity)	authorized by	authorities	within institution
Discourse Identity (D-Identity)	recognized in	the discourse/dialogue	of/ with “rational” individuals
Affinity Identity (A-Identity)	shared in	the practice	of “affinity groups”

**Figure 3.5**

*Graphic Description of A Priori Code Application*



***Descriptive Coding***

As a priori coding was conducted and member checked, the researcher began applying descriptive coding to organize the data further. Because the data was a priori coded for Gee's definitions of identity (see Figure 3.5), descriptive coding allowed the researcher to step further into the topics the students consistently referred to in the data. As the researcher applied the a priori codes, they made marginal notes of the topics that informed the descriptive codes.

**Table 3.5***A Priori Codes and Descriptive Codes and Definitions*

A Priori Code	Descriptive Code	Definition	Example from Data
Nature	Assigned Gender	Assigned gender listed by the participant's guardian in all archival data collected.	"I like Moxie because it was about a teen girl, like me."
Nature	Ethnicity	Demographic data listed by the participant's guardian in all archival data collected.	"Because he Mexican like me."
Nature	Learning Differences	Includes dyslexia and dysgraphia, which is noted in the archival records and was noted by some participants in their interview.	"I like listening to the books read aloud because of my dyslexia."
Institutional	Home Language	This is the language that the participants identify as their first language and the language they reported they use most at home.	"Me and my mom, and like my family, all speak in Spanish."
Institutional	Authority figures out of school	Behaviors, routines, and practices established by the mom, dad, older siblings, and grandparents.	"My mom tells me to turn off my games."
Institutional	Authority Figures in school	Teachers, principals	"She is cool and takes care of her students."
Institutional	Grades	Passing, failing, or completing missing assignments to improve grades.	"I need to be passing to play football."
Institutional	Behaviors Regulated In-School	Getting in trouble, ISSC, not cussing, respecting the classroom environment.	"We don't have any freedoms in school."
Institutional	School Sanctioned Literacy Practices	School sanctioned literacy tools/practices used in the ELAR Classroom such as reading books/texts, writing, Canvas, and Google Docs, Membean, Gimkit.	"We be on Canvas, Google Classroom."
Institutional	Discouraged	Apps, technologies and digital literacies that are not used in	"We can't be on our phones."

	Literacy Practices	the classroom for instruction, and which participants indicated they could receive a behavioral consequence.	
Institutional	In- School Language	The language that the participant noted they prefer to use in school. This language is the one the student elects to read, write, and speak during their ELAR class.	“Because in school I read in English and I write in English.”
Institutional	Socializing	Groups, organizations, friends, and associations that students maintain only in school.	“We are all in football, so we listen to hip-hop.”
Discourse	Parent-Child Discourse	Language exchanged between the student’s guardian and the student out-of-school.	“My mom tells me that I am smart.”
Discourse	Teacher-Student Discourse	Language exchanged between the ELAR teacher and the student in school.	“Mrs. G. is a gamer so we talk about games some.”
Discourse	Student-Student Discourse	Language exchanged between the students both in-school and out-of-school.	“I only talk to my friends when I got all my work done.”
Discourse	Face to Face Discourse	Language exchanged in person.	“We talk about it in class.”
Discourse	Online Discourse	Language exchanged through text, email, facetime, social media apps, or another electronic platform. This exchange can be text, audio, visual, or a combination of these.	“On GTA you just like start talking to people and then you can race them.”
Discourse	Classroom Discourses	Language exchanged in the ELAR classroom that is related to ELAR content or topics.	“We talked about our books in the book club.”
Affinity	Social Media	Social media applications that the students use most frequently; SNAP, Instagram, Tik Tok.	“I just pull up Tik Tok on my phone and watch the makeup videos.”
Affinity	Choice	Expressed freedom or the allowance to choose their	

Affinity	Family	literacies, interests, what they do with their time. Reference to leisure time, activities, and pleasantries enjoyed with family out-of-school.	“I go with my parents to Dallas to shop and explore.”
Affinity	Gaming	Games, gaming apps, and consoles that are used for entertainment out-of-school.	“I’m usually playing Ace Fishing or Rocket League.”
Affinity	In-School Friendships	Friends who enjoy activities with the student. Includes friends that are present for physical activities and in-person gatherings.	“We meet every Monday after school to play football.”
Affinity	Online Friendships	Friends who are part of the student’s affinity spaces, such as online gaming	“Yeah one guy I play with lives like 4 hours away.”

### **Second Cycle Analysis: Pattern Coding and Cross Case Analysis**

The researcher compiled the descriptive codes and then applied pattern coding to establish broader themes. Miles et al. (2014) described pattern coding as bringing together a lot of material from first-round coding to identify emerging themes. This approach is also supported by Saldaña (2016) as a way of “laying the groundwork for cross-case analysis by generating common themes and directional approaches” (p. 236). Merriam (1998) posited that there are five analytic techniques typically utilized in case study research: pattern matching, explanation building, time-series analysis, logic models, and cross-case synthesis. For this study, the researcher compiled and analyzed data for each case individually applied pattern codes and then conducted a cross-case synthesis of all six cases.

### *Pattern Coding*

To establish the pattern codes, the researcher looked at the coded data and once again aligned it to the three research questions:

1. How do high school adolescent students describe their in-school and out-of-school identities?
2. How do high school adolescent students describe the instructional practices in their ELAR classroom?
3. How do high school adolescent students describe the connection between ELAR instructional practices and in-school and out-of-school identities?

In addition to the coded data, the researcher considered their theoretical approach, which aimed to capture how the students constructed and communicated their in-school and out-of-school identities, and where they said they saw the connections between these identities and the literacy practices in their ELAR classroom.

The codes (see Table 3.6) that were systematically developed from this second round of coding revealed that the student responses centered on:

1. Value prescribed to out-of-school affinities (VPOSA)
2. Identity prescribed by institutional practices (IPIP)
3. Classroom Practices/Activities (CPA)
4. Classroom literacy practices that endorse out-of-school identities (CPEOSI)
5. Classroom literacy practices exclusive to the classroom (CPETC)

**Table 3.6***Pattern Code List*

Code Name	Code	Description	Patterns of
Value prescribed to out-of-school affinities	VPOSA	the discourses, routines, and practices that describe students' <i>outside</i> of school affinities	family to student discourse, peer to peer activities, online discourse, language used at home, technologies students use outside of school, ethnicity
In-School Identities	IPIP(s)	routines, and practices that students describe they maintain <i>inside</i> of school	grades/achievement, teacher to student discourse, peer to peer discourse, language used at school, federal codes that assign race
Classroom Literacy Practice/Activities	CLPA	the technologies, assignments, texts, product outcomes, and projects used in the ELAR classroom	Canvas, Google Docs, "Book Clubs," text summaries, journal writing, sustained silent reading, group work
Classroom literacy practices that endorse out of school identities	CPEOSI	the technologies, assignments, texts, product outcomes, projects, and discourse in the ELAR classroom that reflect the OSI identities expressed by the student	bilingual texts, stories about adolescents and adolescent experiences, authentic teacher-student discourse that recognizes their OSIs, student choice
Literacy Practices Exclusive to the Classroom	CPETC	the technologies, assignments, texts, product outcomes, projects, and discourse in the ELAR classroom that <i>do not</i> reflect the OSI identities expressed by the student	assignments centered on testing, teacher-assigned texts, individual (non-group) work, technologies that students do not use outside of school

### *Cross-Case Analysis*

This researcher used a cross-case synthesis in which each of the six student participants was initially treated as an individual case. In review, all of the data from the study was uploaded into the NVIVO qualitative analysis program. The researcher organized each case in its own file and included the following pieces of data: in-depth interview transcription, word choice activity picture (in-school round), word choice activity picture (out-of-school round), field notes and classroom observation notes, artifacts, and archival data that included the student's demographic data, test scores, and institutional classifications. Before the researcher began to code the data, they went through each case, one by one, to ensure that each student file contained all necessary pieces of data. For the word-choice activity and the student's archival information, the researcher had to extract words from the document and type them directly into NVIVO's program fields so they were captured in any queries the researcher ran in the program.

Once the data was organized and entered for each case, the researcher examined each piece of data, highlighted the units of measure, and applied a priori codes to their respective data units. As the researcher highlighted and categorized the data, the NVIVO system maintained numeric totals and lists that the researcher organized into system nodes or categories. The researcher named and organized the nodes, which allowed them to run frequency queries and code searches. The searches a) helped detect identity codes that the students referred to most often, and b) to see the responses in each category with a broader lens to determine individual case responses and potential cross-case similarities or differences. For instance, by searching the units that contained *English* and *Spanish*,

the researcher could generate a list of responses from all six cases that helped them detect patterns concerning language identity in school and outside school.

Each of the cases' data was coded and organized as outlined in the above procedures. The data from each case was applied to the research questions, and the outcomes were recorded. Once each case was analyzed, the researcher used the outcomes to conduct the cross-case synthesis and construct cross-case conclusions that helped answer the research questions. The cross-case study gave the researcher insight into how each of the students constructed their in-school identities and out-of-school identities within the ELAR classroom and the everyday experiences surrounding identity that the students shared.

The themes warranted in the data revealed that: adolescents observe a clear line between who they are supposed to be at home and who they are supposed to be at school, bilingual and multilingual students use two different means of language expression while in-school and out-of-school, and that the students see their out-of-school affinities, specifically their out-of-school digital literacy practices and affinities, underrepresented in their ELAR classroom. In Chapter 4, individual case descriptions are explained in-depth, along with the themes that resulted from the data analysis and the respective research question they helped answer.

### **Trustworthiness and Credibility**

This study employed trustworthiness measures outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985), which explain a more naturalist explanation of the research that suits qualitative

research methods. Their terms include “authenticity, transferability, dependability, and confirmability” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 300).

### **Authenticity**

Authenticity was illustrated through reflexivity. The researcher disclosed and clarified any information about their biases, values, and any other matters of positionality that could influence the outcome of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). They revealed any “dark matter” pieces and omitted any prejudices or opinions that could shape the interpretations during data collection (Weiner-Levey & Popper-Giveon, 2013). Several of these pieces are explained in the limitations section of this chapter. Validation measures extended to the participants and teachers, who had an opportunity to review the research observations, interpretations, and analysis drafts through member-checking.

Member checking was conducted on two levels, first by the participants and then by the teachers from each classroom. Member checking is advised for researchers who do solo coding and want to ensure that their interpretations of the data align with the participants' intentions (Saldaña, 2016). The student member check was collected via questionnaire after the researcher had concluded their interviews (see Appendix F). The questions sought to clarify and validate the participants' responses to the interview questions and whether the researcher's descriptions of their responses were viable. For instance, one of the participants marked clearly on the questionnaire that his voice/opinion was the one that mattered the most when making a book selection. Member-checking validated the researcher's application of affinity and choice codes to

these units of meaning in the student's in-depth interview transcription. Once the researcher collected the exit questionnaire, they revised the list.

The researcher defined the descriptions and submitted them for a second round of member-checking with the teachers from both classrooms. Each teacher was provided three random samples of student data: field note observations, word-choice activity responses, and a portion of the in-depth interview. Along with the samples, the researcher provided definitions for the a priori codes, the descriptive codes, and the pattern codes. The teachers read through the samples and definitions and provided feedback to the researcher to help refine the list. During the teacher member check Zoom, the researcher was able to ask specific questions about the literacy practices in the classroom, and more specifically, about the technologies, experiences, and literacy practices that the students discussed in their interviews. Saldaña (2016) suggested that these discussions could bring in new insights about portions of the data. In this case, both teachers provided details about some literacy practices, including Gimkit and Membean, which are in-school digital literacy practices that contained qualities found in the gaming affinities that the students claimed were part of their out-of-school identities.

### **Transferability**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined transferability as “showing findings have applicability in other contexts” (p. 290). Transferability was demonstrated through the insights gained about adolescent identity development, how they construct these identities in-school and out-of-school, and the ELAR instructional practices that connect to those identities. Because the participant selection included students from a wide range

of identities, these findings could potentially influence the instructional practices of a wide range of teachers and, by extension, the experiences of as many adolescents.

### **Dependability and Confirmability**

Dependability is defined as, “showing that the findings are consistent and could be repeated” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 91). Dependability is evident in the researcher's ability to plan data collection and analysis that is connected to their research questions. As an 18-year educator in a high school setting and a 7-year chair of the ELAR department, the researcher sought data that could provide a rich understanding of the participants as it related to the research questions, specifically data that revealed aspects of Gee’s four identities. The researcher’s background in ELAR PLCs also allowed them to understand specific references students made to the ELAR content and the technologies they used in the classroom.

Confirmability is defined as a measure of neutrality and was reflected through the researcher’s identity and positionality statement. In addition, the researcher adopted the intentional implementation of critical research partners and other validity strategies for acknowledging and correcting biases, specifically member checking with the participants and teachers in the study, as well as close colleagues and advisors in their field (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

### **Limitations**

The study’s findings created several surprising insights and reinforced previous studies and theories in literacy; however, it did have limitations. While the data for each case was substantial and included classroom observations and interviews that clocked

over 200 minutes per case, a testing issue delayed access to the school building by four days. Many of the students, including Carlos and JJ, left class early some days, refused to do any work, or simply fell asleep, producing fewer field note observations for their individual cases. These absences also inhibited the collection of authentic responses to prompts that would have provided insight into their identities and literacy practices.

Many of the students in the study recognized the researcher as a former assistant principal on the campus. Although by the time study began, they were no longer an active staff member on campus, the researcher wondered if the responses were constrained by their relationship with the students while in this capacity. This limitation is significant because the researcher's former role positioned them as an authority figure on campus. In addition, the students were aware of the researcher's previous relationship with the teachers in the study and on campus, which could have directly impacted their honesty regarding in-school practices, teacher feedback, and any criticism they held toward the literacy practices.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on educational research will continue to unfold years and decades from now. This pandemic caused the shutdown of movie theatres, entertainment venues, concerts, shopping malls, and indoor sporting facilities. Student data revealed that many of the out-of-school identities involved spending time at home with their families. After months subjected to their homes for safety reasons, the researcher wondered if the out-of-school identities the students reported would have been the same if they had more flexibility and movement outside of their homes. COVID-19

also moved the classroom online into Canvas. The Canvas system, where many student products were stored, was not accessible to the researcher.

The researcher considered their own bias as a member of the team that helped recruit and pilot the teachers for these courses. They also considered their previous relationship as their chair and their formal observer. Specifically, the researcher weighted how they might make the teacher's efforts appear more successful or less successful based on their previous experience in these classrooms with these teachers. The researcher also worked diligently to eliminate bias toward parts of the content that they were a part of creating when they worked in a capacity as the ELAR chair.

Finally, the researcher could have gained more information about the students' identities if they had access to their discourses on their smartphones. All cases reported they used instant messaging and Snap Chat as their primary discourse with friends and family. The researcher believed that this data could have provided information on how they maintained aspects of the literacy content they taught in school as part of their out-of-school identities. This data could have also offered insight into the bilingual student's use of Spanish and English in their digital worlds.

### **Summary**

The analysis showed that the students' identities, both in-school and out-of-school, supported Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model and Gee's four identities. The analysis results also displayed a relationship between the students' identities, their connections to their in-school and out-of-school identities, and the literacy practices of their ELAR class. In Chapter 4, the researcher provides a profile of each case/student, the

individual case data findings, and finally, a cross-case discussion as it applies to the study's themes. The themes are: adolescents observe a clear line between their in-school identities and out-of-school identities, bilingual and multilingual students use two different means of language expression in school and out-of-school, and students see their out-of-school affinities, specifically their out-of-school digital literacy practices and personal affinities, underrepresented in their ELAR classroom.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

Adolescents consistently negotiate their out-of-school identities and their in-school identities when they are in the classroom. Their affinities, the language they use to communicate, and their digital literacy choices help them determine when their out-of-school identities are acknowledged and manifested in the literacy experiences of their English class (Moje & Luke, 2009). Appleman and Hinchman (2017) posed students who are put in an environment that considers their affinities, preferred literacies, backgrounds, spoken languages, and cultures are more likely to learn the content.

The purpose of this study was to describe how ninth-grade adolescents experience their own identities through the instructional practices in their ELAR classroom. It employed a constructivist approach and included six descriptive case studies and a cross-case analysis of the individual cases.

This chapter begins with a profile of each of the six cases. These profiles include brief data from classroom observations, the results of the students' Word Choice Activity, and in-depth interview transcriptions. The profiles reflect the students' personally constructed and expressed in-school identities, out-of-school identities, and a sample of a self-selected titles from their ELAR class. The profiles also speak to how they connect the literacy practices in their ELAR class with their affinities and out-of-school literacy practices.

Next, this chapter discusses the more prominent themes supported by the data analysis explained in Chapter 3: adolescents observe a clear line between their in-school identities and out-of-school identities, bilingual and multilingual students use two different means of language expression in-school and out-of-school, and students see their out-of-school affinities, specifically their out-of-school digital literacy practices and personal affinities, underrepresented in their ELAR classroom. The researcher will present the students' responses regarding what shapes their identity in-school and outside-of-school, their use of their home language in and out-of-school, and finally, their literacy practices, specifically their digital literacy practices in-school and outside-of-school.

Finally, the chapter reveals the findings across the cases that answer the study's research questions:

1. How do high school adolescent students describe their in-school and out-of-school identities?
2. How do high school adolescent students describe the instructional practices in their ELAR classroom?
3. How do high school adolescent students describe the connection between ELAR instructional practices and their in-school and out-of-school identities?

### **Participant Profiles**

This section provides a profile of each of the six cases observed in the study.

These profiles were drawn from classroom observations, the results of the students' Word

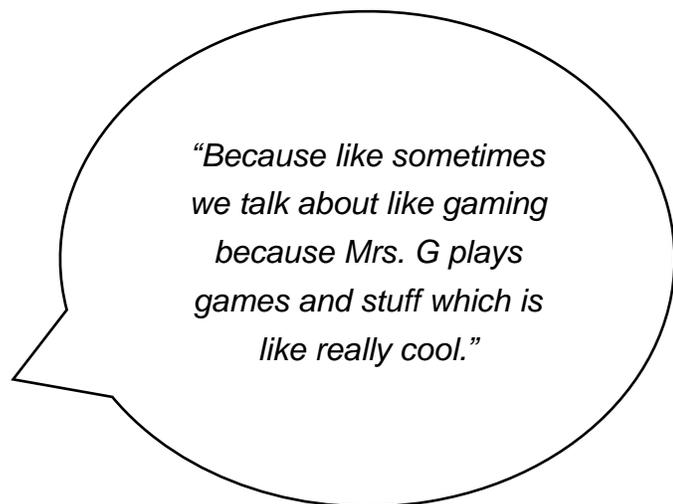
Choice Activity, and the in-depth interview transcriptions. The profiles reflect the students' personally constructed and expressed in-school identities, out-of-school identities, and a sample of a self-selected title from their ELAR class that speaks to how they connect ELAR and their personal affinities. The profiles address the research question: How do high school students describe their in-school and out-of-school identities?

### Case 1: Michael

Michael is a 15-old Caucasian male. In school, Michael plays football, often appears to get distracted in class, and says he does not like reading aloud or sharing his writing aloud. He reported that he does not like to read or write in ELAR; instead, he would rather play ELAR games, such as Gimkit or Membean (see Figure 4.1). He often puts his head down to rest when he appears to get overwhelmed in class. According to Michael, his out-of-school identities are not always recognizable in his ELAR class.

### Figure 4.1

*Michael's Word Choice Activity Results: In-School Identities*



His out-of-school identities are primarily shaped by institutional and affinity identities, specifically hanging out with his parents and older brother and gaming, respectively (see Figure 4.2). He says his main interest is gaming, specifically single-shooter games like Battlefield Five. He frequently spoke about themes such as death, war, and conflict. When asked about stories and characters they had read in class, he said he liked stories involving death, justice, and violence. He reported that he does not choose to read for leisure outside of school.

**Figure 4.2**

*Michael's Word Choice Activity Results: Out-of-School Identities*



*"I am not really allowed to, but I use SNAP and Insta sometimes. Mostly I watch gaming tutorials on You Tube."*

In the researcher's observations of Michael, he often wore jeans, a sweatshirt or hoodie, and really like tie-dyed patterns. Michael consistently used his Chromebook, both to access the course in Canvas and to listen to music on Spotify. This student chose the name "Michael" because it was the name of one of his favorite Cowboys football players.

He said that he was really sad when he heard about the dog ring that MV (Michael Vick) had started because watching the Cowboys was one of his favorite things to do with his grandfather.

For his student choice text, Michael chose to read *The Good for Nothings*, which was recommended by his ELAR teacher (see Figure 4.3). Michael said that he did not read the whole book, nor did he take the book home to read it. He liked the parts of the book that had to do with robbery, getaways, and the prison break. Michael also said that he liked the fact that the book had graphics embedded in the text. Michael says overall, he prefers graphic novels.

**Figure 4.3**

*Michael's Title for the Student Choice Novel*



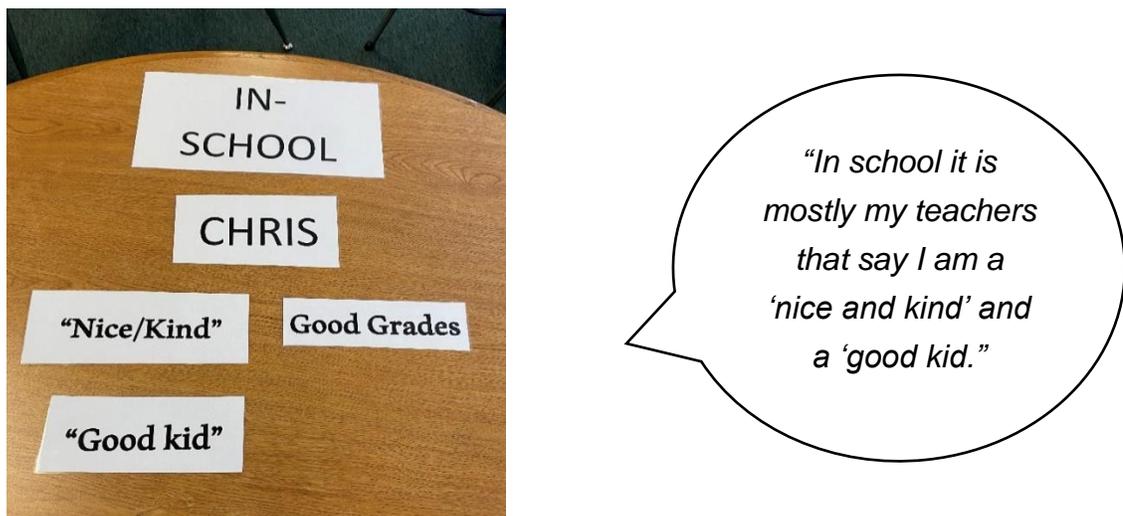
**Case 2: Chris**

*"I like books that have pictures like 'Diary of a Wimpy Kid.' This book was cool because it was about this kid that goes to jail for robbing the queen or something like that."*

Chris is a 15-year-old African American male. Chris identified as a “good kid” that sometimes jokes around (see Figure 4.4). He is involved in the theatre class, which he says that he likes because it is quiet and “chill.” He does not act on the stage but instead helps on the theatre tech side. He also likes to talk about gaming with other students who play some of the same games that he plays outside of school.

**Figure 4.4**

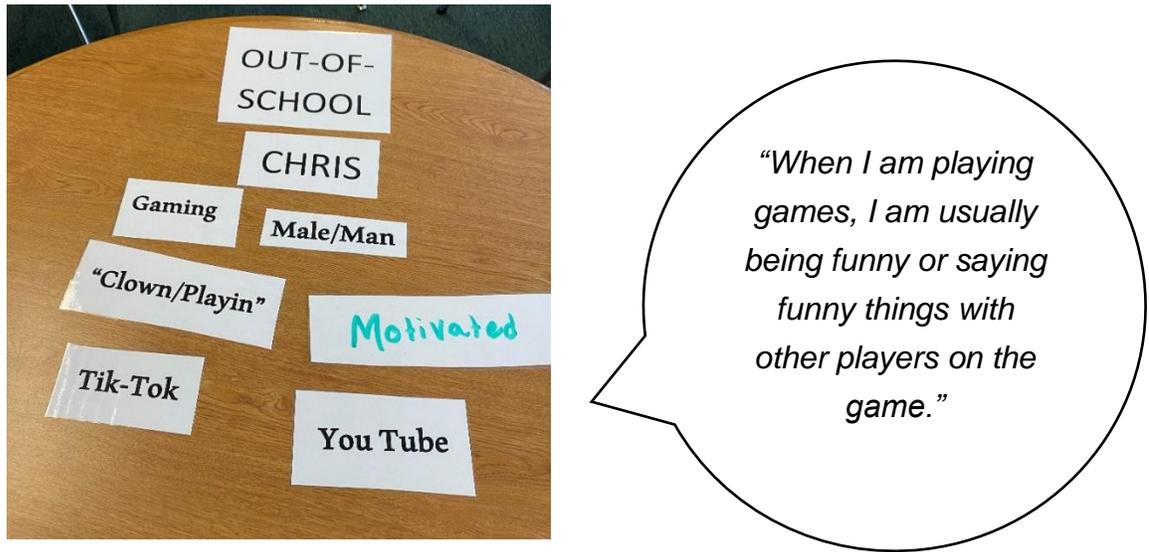
*Chris’ Word Choice Activity Results: In-School Identities*



His out-of-school identities seemed to be shaped by his I-identities and A-identities, specifically playing games and hanging out with his parents and grandparents. He says he is very close with his grandfather. According to Chris, he can see his out-of-school identities in his English when he can play Gimkit and read fantasy stories. He likes when he is given free time in English class to watch TikTok and play Ace Fishing on his cell phone, which he plays with his grandfather (see Figure 4.5).

**Figure 4.5**

*Chris' Word Choice Activity Results: Out-of-School Identities*

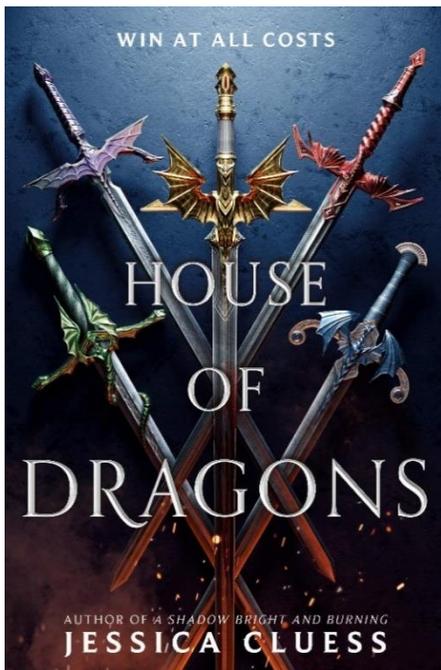


In the researcher's observations of Chris, he often wore jeans, the same Nike shoes, and the same black hoodie. Chris was very rarely without his phone. He was usually looking at his screen as he entered the classroom, both at the beginning of class and when he re-entered from lunch. He also kept his phone on his desk or on his knee so that he could see the screen often. This student originally said he wanted his name to be "No-no." I asked why he chose this name and he actually said that it is a nickname that his friends had given him since middle school. Because the name would make him identifiable to teachers and other students, he said that he wanted to be named Chris, after the Notorious B.I.G.

For his student-choice text, Chris chose to read *House of Dragons*, which he said was recommended by his ELAR teacher but said that he ended up selecting this book because of the cover (see Figure 4.6). He likes stories with “good” characters and working in groups for ELAR assignments. His goal for his ELAR class is to make good grades so he can have a successful life.

**Figure 4.6**

*Chris’ Title for the Student Choice Novel*



*“I picked this book probably because it is about dragons and fantasy.”*

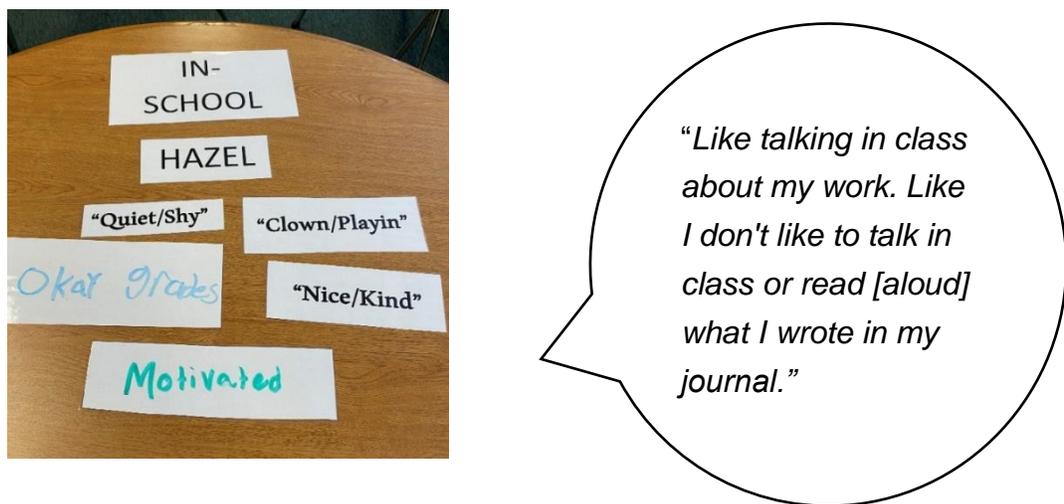
**Case 3: Hazel**

Hazel is a 15-year-old Latinx student. In school, Hazel reports that she is quiet and comes to school to “work” (see Figure 4.7). She also noted that her grades are important to her, and she tries to get all of her work done on time, but sometimes she does not make good grades. In class, the researcher observed that she pays close attention

to the teacher, especially when the teacher reads aloud or watching short videos containing poetry. Hazel sees her ELAR class as a way to make good grades so she can be in the cosmetology program at the school.

**Figure 4.7**

*Hazel's Word Choice Activity Results: In-School Identities*



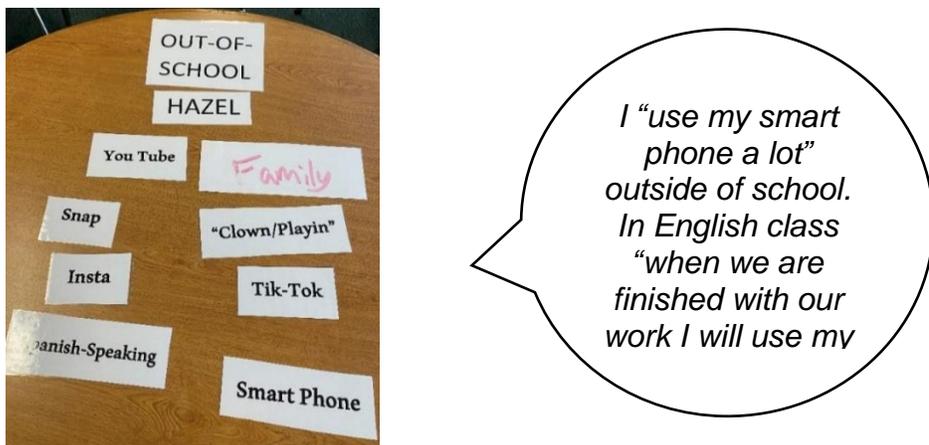
In the researcher's observations Hazel came into class each day and sat in the exact same spot on the floor atop a large futon cushion. Her habit was to prop her legs up and put her Chromebook on them so it was eye level. She would also, on occasion, use this position to conceal her phone behind the screen. But Hazel appeared to be very intent on her work in Canvas, rarely getting distracted by her phone. The only time the researcher really saw Hazel deviate from her tasks was when she was hungry. She often visited the teacher's snack bin to get chips or crackers that Mrs. G made available daily to the students. Hazel frequented the snack bin more than any of the other students in the class. Her most eaten snack from Funions. The student chose the name Hazel after her

favorite character in the book *The Fault in Their Stars*. The teacher praised the decision and said that "was one of her favorite names."

Her out-of-school identities appeared to be shaped by her institutional identities and her affinity identities, respectively. Her family is the institution that occupies her most significant investment of time and reverence. She loves animals, walks in the fresh air, and spends time out of school with her parents or on her aunt's farm. She often watches TikTok to get ideas and to explore new ways to apply make-up. She is also fond of Snapchat and says that this is the primary way she talks to friends outside of school (see Figure 4.8)

**Figure 4.8**

*Hazel's Word Choice Activity Results: Out-of-School Identities*

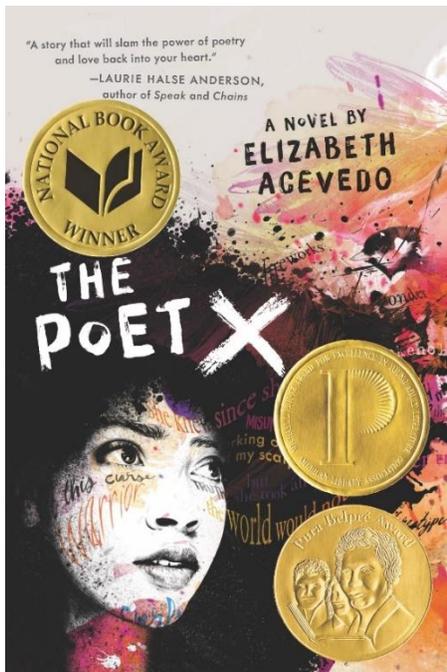


For her student-choice text, Hazel selected *Poet X*, which her ELAR teacher recommended. She says she likes characters and stories centered on social justice but admits that she is most concerned with making a good grade and getting all of her work

done in class (see Figure 4.9). She noted that she enjoyed *Poet X* but did not read the entire book, nor did she read it outside of school.

**Figure 4.9**

*Hazel's Title for the Student Choice Novel*



*“I would pick to do a character analysis for this book using Snapchat. I would enjoy that more than writing.”*

**Case 4: Carmen**

Carmen is a 15-year-old Latinx student. In school, she says she likes to stay focused so that she can make good grades. She has friends in school, but the researcher observed that she does not want to talk to them if she has work to complete. She is bilingual but prefers to speak and write in English in her ELAR class (see Figure 4.10). She has a good friend in her class that she talks to sometimes in Spanish, but when she is in school, she says that it is most important to make good grades to stay in sports.

**Figure 4.10**

*Carmen's Word Choice Activity Results: In-School Identities*



*"It's kind of like a difficult thing because like, you know, when you speak English and Spanish you have to separate them sometimes for school. Like in school, I have friends that talk English and Spanish. Mostly I like speak English and Spanish at the same time. OK, and with my family, I can only talk Spanish because they're like in school, you talk English and then in the house you talk Spanish."*

Her out-of-school identity appeared to be shaped by her A- and I- identities, respectively, primarily her time with family and her use of TikTok and Instagram (see Figure 4.11). Carmen also enjoys watching documentaries and films about Latin singers. She specifically likes the Netflix series *Jenny*, and all of the Netflix shows about Selena.

**Figure 4.11**

*Carmen's Word Choice Activity Results: Out-of-School Identities*



*"We get together and we just chill. We will watch movies or go hand out somewhere. If I am not like, you know like, with my family I am hanging out with my friends probably."*

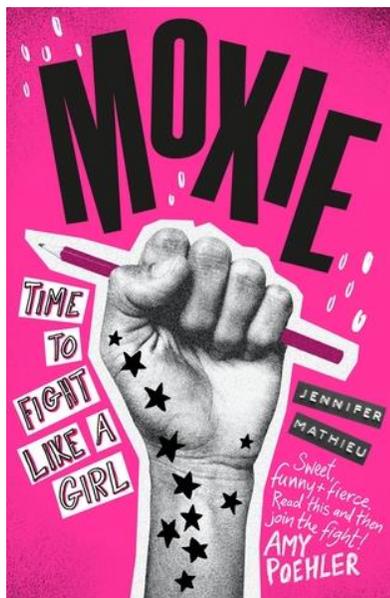
In the researcher's observations Carmen entered class each day, and after lunch with a small group of other students. These students appeared to be her friends and a majority of their conversation as they entered the room was spoken in Spanish. Carmen sat in the same assigned seat every day and appeared to be attentive when the teacher was conducting instruction. The researcher observed Carmen being particularly helpful to another Spanish-speaking student in the class. This other female student often elicited Carmen's help to translate everything from the teacher's instructions to the tasks that were listed on the board. Carmen helped this student each time I saw her consulted. When asked to select a pseudonym, this student appeared very hesitant to offer up any name. In order to give her an idea of what the researcher was asking her to do, they gave

her some examples from the other class so that she could get an idea of what other students chose and why. She chose Carmen because it was the name of her tia.

For her student-choice text, Caren selected *Moxie*. While she said that her ELAR teacher suggested this book, she notes that she ultimately chose it because of the movie on Netflix that she watched about the book (see Figure 4.12). She is passionate about equal rights for all people. The stories and the characters she most enjoyed in class discussed immigrant families and social justice. She likes to write outside of school, but only for family.

**Figure 4.12**

*Carmen's Title for the Student Choice Novel*



“Yeah, yeah. But like because like [Mrs. C] said, like in Netflix, there's some parts that are different from the book. Right. They make them more interesting in the book.”

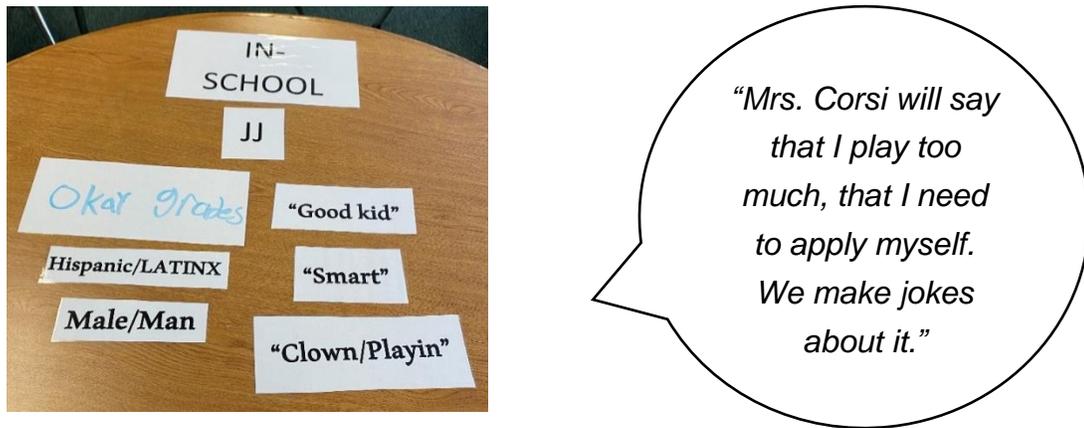
**Case 5: JJ**

JJ is a 15-year-old Caucasian male. In school, JJ plays football and says he likes to talk to his friends and “clown around” but does not get to see them a lot because they

have different classes (see Figure 4.13). At the beginning of the year, JJ says that he “did not take school seriously and that he skipped class a lot, but that now he is trying to turn things around to get his grades up in his classes.”

**Figure 4.13**

*JJ’s Word Choice Activity Results: In-School Identities*



His out-of-school identities seemed to be shaped by his A- and I- identities, respectively. He spends time with family and loves listening to and recording music (see Figure 4.14). His family spends a lot of time together and frequently discusses current events, which occupy many of his interests. He likes to instant message his friends, play sports, watch Tik Tok, and read about world events on Instagram outside of school.

In the researcher’s observations JJ entered class each day and often went to his desk. He generally did one of two things, laid his head on his desk, or spoke with Carlos, who sat next to him. JJ did not use the school-issued Chromebooks, instead he brought his own MacBook. JJ appeared to be very eager to participate in classroom discussions and to share his work. His offerings appeared to get a positive reception from Mrs. C. The researcher observed that Mrs. C reminded JJ, more than any of the other students,

that he could work harder and that he needed to apply himself more to his attendance and his classwork. JJ, in his interviews, noted that he appreciated this ribbing and saw Mrs. C as a maternal figure so much as it applied to this commentary. On picking a pseudonym, this student had heard the instructions given to the other students and quickly and plainly said he wanted to use the name "JJ." He did not provide an explanation or a rationale.

**Figure 4.14**

*JJ's Word Choice Activity Results: Out-of-School Identities*

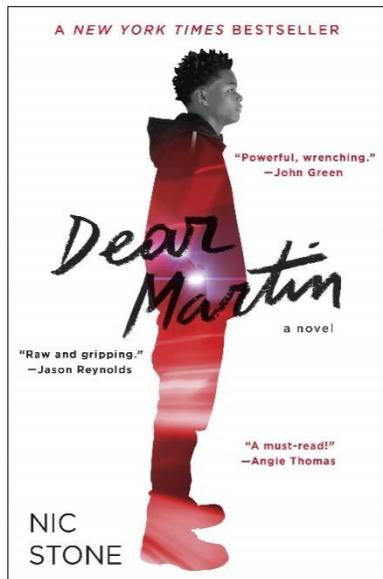


*“Uh, the reason why there's more here is because at school, I feel like its just different. It's like the program, like how schools set up.”*

For his student-choice text, JJ chose *Dear Martin* because it was about mistreated people and justice. He did not finish the book and admitted that he does not read books outside of school (see Figure 4.15). He sees his out-of-school identities in his English class when the teacher allows the class to work in groups and discuss global events like protests and the environment. A majority of his out-of-school literacy practices include digital media like Instagram, where he can read news stories.

## Figure 4.15

*JJ's Title for the Student Choice Novel*



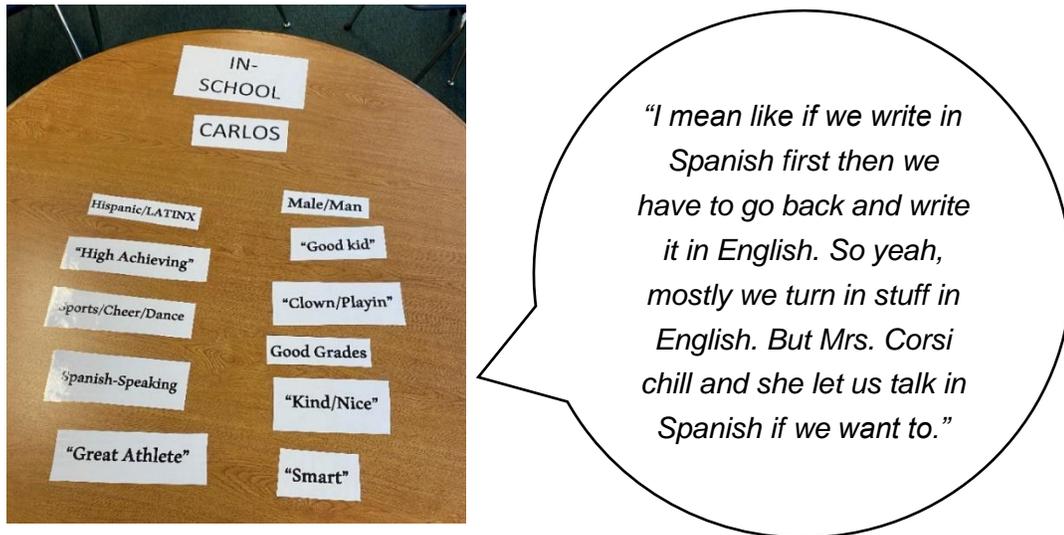
*"Yeah, it's like a very touchy subject. You know, it's it's important too. So the fact that we're talking about it in the class, which you don't see in a lot of classes, is I think it's good. It keeps everyone informed."*

## Case 6: Carlos

Carlos is a 15-year-old Latinx student. In school, Carlos plays football and says that he stays out of the drama. He will fight, though, if a friend or one of his family members needs him. He reports that he does not like going to class, but he likes his ELAR class because he says he likes his teacher, Mrs. C. He is bilingual but says he mostly uses Spanish to speak to friends and family outside of school (see Figure 4.16). He has a lot of friends but says that he likes to stay chill and to himself.

**Figure 4.16**

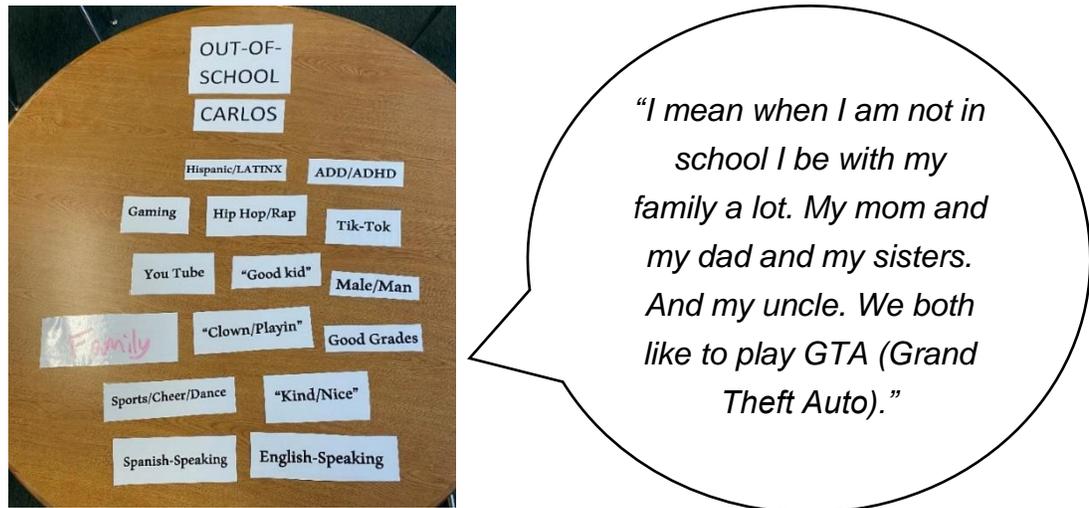
*Carlos' Word Choice Activity Results: In-School Identities*



His out-of-school identities appeared to be shaped by his A- and I- identities, specifically gaming and spending time with his family. He is an athlete who plays football and who boxes competitively outside of school (see Figure 4.17). He reports that his parents and uncle have a significant impact on his out-of-school identity, including the music he enjoys and his clothes.

**Figure 4.17**

*Carlos' Word Choice Activity Results: Out-of-School Identities*

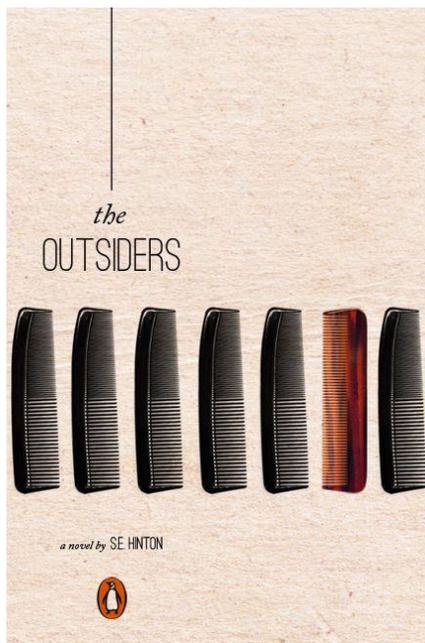


In the researcher's observations Carlos was often part of the group that entered class with Carmen. Once he entered the room Carlos reported directly to a large lounge chair in the front corner of the room under the bulletin board and directly in front of the classroom door. While he did not speak to passers-by, he did look up periodically to see who was there and who was talking just outside of the room. Carlos often licked his fingers and removed marks and dirt from his shoes. Carlos had several different pairs of sneakers that he wore to school. He explained the difference between the shoes in his interview. He referred to his phone very often, usually entering class looking at the screen and then looking at it in the lounge chair. During "free time" Carlos used his time to listen to music on Spotify. He reported that he mostly listened to hip-hop and Latinx singers/groups. The pseudonym that he selected was the name of his grandfather. He said the name and the explanation loud and clear.

His student-choice text was *The Outsiders*. He chose this book because he read it in seventh-grade, and the teacher read it aloud (see Figure 4.18). He likes the characters because he says they are from the hood like he is and will fight. He admits he does not read books unless he has to read them for school, and even then, he only reads them while at school.

**Figure 4.18**

*Carlos' Title for the Student Choice Novel*



*"I picked that book myself. But like in my seventh-grade year, we read the book as a class. I've read it every year seventh grade."*

**Cross Case Analysis**

In all cases, the students drew an indelible line between their in-school identities and out-of-school identities. Whether it was the languages they elected to speak in-school or their digital affinities outside-of-school, they claimed that there were some areas where who they were outside-of-school met a threshold in-school.

## **Establishing Identities in Two Spaces**

This section includes data and evidence regarding how the students explained the value they prescribe to their out-of-school affinities, their in-school identities, and the literacy practices they practiced exclusively in the classroom. The data and evidence included in this section will answer: How do high school adolescent students describe their in-school and out-of-school identities? How do high school adolescent students describe the relationship between ELAR instructional practices and in-school and out-of-school identities?

### ***Who I am at Home and Who I am at School***

In the Word Choice Activity exercise, all but one of the students picked more words to describe their identities outside-of-school versus inside-of-school (see Table 4.1). In Table 4.1, each student is listed along with the total of the words they selected during each round of the activity. The researcher consulted adolescent students in a pilot round of the activity to ensure that the words represented the identities in their native language (see Appendix A). The students in the pilot Word Choice Activity concluded that some words were not listed, so blank cards were included for the students to add their own words.

**Table 4.1**

*Number of Words Selected to Describe In-School and Out-of-School Identities*

Case	# of Words for In-School Identities	# of Words for Out-of-School Identity
Michael	5	14
Chris	3	6
Hazel	5	8
Carmen	12	11
JJ	6	18
Carlos	11	15

Students also talked for approximately 2 minutes longer when asked about who they were outside of school during the Word Choice Activity exercise and the in-depth interviews. For instance, Chris, who noted that he is considered “a good kid” who makes “good grades” in school, mostly responded to the researcher’s in-school-related questions with 4–5-word responses. On the other hand, when he was asked about Ace Fishing or Rocket League, two of his favorite video games, he would answer in complete sentences with great detail about the objective of the game, who he plays with on the game, and how well he has done on the game.

These responses fell in stark contrast to his responses to questions like “what technologies do you get to use in ELAR class?” To which Chris’ response was “uhh just Canvas and Google Docs.” Chris was not the only student to go into detail about his out-of-school affinities and digital literacies. Michael spoke in-depth about his favorite games, specifically Battlefield Five and the YouTube channels he consulted for gaming strategies. Hazel talked about watching vampire movies and TikToks that taught her how to do hair and make-up. Carmen spoke about her love of Selena, which was ignited by the

Selena movies on Netflix. JJ talked about an existential animated film that he watches regularly. And Carlos gave me a lengthy education about Grand Theft Auto and how he can make friends, earn points, and race self-made cars on the game. The students and the out-of-school affinity identities they shared with the researcher are listed in Table 4.2.

**Table 4.2**

*In-School and Out-of-School Affinities Discussed by the Case Studies*

Case	In-School Affinities	Out-of-School Affinities	Sample Discussion
Michael	-Friends -“Free Time” -Football	-Battlefield Five -First Person Shooter Games - Tube Gaming tutorials -Friends online who game -Cooking -Hanging out with family	“Well, right now, mainly I play battlefield five with my two friends, which is my cousin and this guy I met online like four years ago. And I like the game because, like, it's like an overall good game, and you get to blow up stuff.”
Chris	-“Free Time” to use SmartPhone -Talking to peers about gaming -Theatre	-Ace Fishing on his smartphone -Rocket League game -Fishing at the lake -Hanging out with his family -Being with his grandparents -Hanging out with friends online	“So basically, I would go into a random online match and then we would just talk, communicate. Eventually, I would say hi and they would say hi back and then we'll just start a random conversation and then somehow we'll end up being friends.”
Hazel	-“Free Time” -Friends	-Snap Chat -Watching vampire and scary movies on Netflix -Instagram -Tik-Tok videos to learn about make-up and hair	“I will watch like random people [on] Tik Tok...and see what they are doing and how they are doing it... then I practice on myself sometimes, like eye shadow and stuff. And then I straighten my

		-Exploring new places, especially big cities -Doing stuff with family -Animals -Cleaning the House -Hanging out with friends	mom's hair a lot so I get to practice on her.”
Carmen	-Friends -“Free Time” -Cheer	- Snap Chat -Tik Tok videos about make-up -Instagram -YouTube videos of singers -Singing - Cleaning -Shopping -Watching Netflix, especially movies about social justice	“Sometimes we watch Netflix together or we do some other stuff like play games...I like to watch Jenny or movies like Selena...Jenny is like Selena.”
JJ	-“Free Time” -Football -Friends	-Snap Chat -Instagram -Netflix -Writing Music -Recording Music -Producing Music with Friends -Playing drums and piano -Talking to his mom and reading about global issues -Spending time with friends to play sports -Meeting with friends to play sports	“It was like there's this one...on Netflix...its called Midnight Gospel, it's a good show. It's a show, but it's like. It's like a podcast. But they're going through like an animation while they're having a podcast, so it's like they mix the two.”
Carlos	-Football -“Free Time” -Hanging with family that goes to school.”	-Rocket League -Grand Theft Auto -IMing Friends -Hanging out with family -Boxing	“On GTA [Grand Theft Auto] ...just like. So you can like drive around and then someone might try to mess and you just start getting along with them, some might

-Meeting friends to  
play sports

be like, you want to make  
money? Yes? You want to  
race?...I am always racing  
somebody.”

---

However, when asked about the books they read, the characters they remembered, or the essays they wrote in ELAR, the phrases “I don’t know” and “I can’t remember” were common responses. It appeared that when they were asked about who they were outside-of -school the answers were more multifaceted and complex, whereas their in-school identity appeared to be limited to “worker.”

### ***Work Time and “Free Time”***

When they were at school, the students appeared to assume the role of “worker,” which several of them used to express their primary in-school identity. This was a role that some described had always been part of their in-school identity and the reason they had to limit their out-of-school affinities in their ELAR class. JJ noted that “the person [he is] on the outside of school is more, I guess, is definitely more free because here at school I’m here to do school, not here to chill out.” For instance, socializing is an affinity that all students expressed that they pursued outside of school, both in-person and online. Carlos said that if the researcher were to ask his gaming friends online what he was like outside of school they would say he was “Funny. GOATED (Greatest of All Time). I’m the best one at GTA. I’m a racer. I make anything a race. Think of it and I’ll make it a race car. I got fast cars...I do doughnuts, I like to go off road too with my truck.”

Whether on Snap or in a gaming chat room, all of the cases reported peer-to-peer time as a common affinity when they were outside of school. However, when asked how

often they were allowed to socialize in class, they all noted that this time was limited except for a few opportunities when they were able to work in groups. Hazel said, “Yeah, whenever I am like focused and not like talking is when I mean, like, I am doing my work and trying to turn in everything. When I am talking is like when I don't really have much work to do.” The researcher did not observe any group work; however, they did see the students enjoy “free time.”

“Free time” was something that the students said they cherished as a time they could relax and be themselves, but it was something they felt was regulated by their work output and their teacher’s affordance. When asked if she was able to talk to her friends in class, Carmen noted, “I mean, sometimes I talk to [them], I'll be like, let's work, and then when I was finished, we could talk and it be alright.” During “free time,” the students in the study pursued other out-of-school affinities as well, including listening to music, talking to their friends in their home language, and using their smartphones to check social media or play games.

The classroom observations showed that none of the students in the study used “free time” to read, write for leisure, or consult the digital platforms that they considered part of their in-school literacy practices. Carlos noted, “I usually just turn on Spotify and sit in one of the big chairs and relax.” Again, these affinities were only reported or observed as they existed in “free time.” Most of the students said that their affinities were for outside-of-school. Chris stated in his interview that while in school, he had to “take care of business.” Many of the other students shared the same sentiments and associated

words like good/bad grades, late work, and failing as the primary motivators behind their in-school identities and their in-school literacy practices.

### ***Grades Influence Identities In-School and Out-of-School***

Across the cases, students reported that grades defined a large part of their in school identity, whether it was in-school or out-of-school. Grades were the most prominent factor of the students' I-identity that was recorded. In some cases, the researcher observed students asking the teacher, “what grade do I need to be passing?” or “can I retake this for a higher grade?” As discussed above, the focus on grades meant forfeiting affinities like socializing. Carmen said,

I take my work seriously. I don't joke around as much like when I have to do things, I take it seriously. I don't joke. I just like to get in my zone and like do my work. I like to have my grades up and to be like passing.

The students reported that they thought good grades equated to success, and bad grades correlated to failing. The data contained evidence that both their parents and their ELAR teacher reinforced this idea. Chris expressed more than once that what his parents wanted for him was to “be a good kid that made good grades” so that he could have a “good life.” Grades appeared to have the most significant influence on the students’ access to their A-identities. In-school, good grades allowed students to maintain their membership on sports teams, the cheerleading squad, and their access to advanced technology courses like cosmetology and graphic design. These in-school affinities were not permitted unless the students were passing all their classes.

This trend persisted outside of school where students reported that their parents, interpreted by the researcher as the institutional authority figures at home, prohibited affinities like video games, smartphone time, and media use. During football season, JJ failed ELAR and faced consequences at home that impacted his music, social time, and playing football. He said, “Midway through the year I got tired of my parents yelling at me, ‘Oh, your grades are blahhh. Don't be a bum!’ And I was just like, whatever. But then, I like, fixed my attitude, fix my grades, and realized I have to do it right.”

If he did not work on his homework, Michel was prohibited from his out-of-school affinities. When asked why he did not want to do his work at home, Michael responded, “well, because I'm outside of school. I don't want to do any schoolwork or anything. Then my mom tells me to get off [my phone] and do my schoolwork like I don't want to do it right; I just never end up doing it.”

### ***Institutional Authorities and In-School and Out-of-School Identities***

All the students in the study referenced the authority figures that shaped their identities both in-school and out-of-school. Specifically, they talked about their parents, older extended family members, and their teachers. The topics, stories, and characters that many of the students expressed interest appeared to be closely connected to conversations they described having with their families. Carlos and his uncle liked to box and watch fights (*The Outsiders*). Carmen and her mother watched civil rights and Black Lives Matter protests together on television (*The Hate U Give*). Michael loved hearing stories from his brother in the military (*Long Way Down*), and JJ was highly influenced by his mother's dedication to the homeless population in their town (Instagram stories

about immigration and homelessness). Carlos, who admitted “I don’t read outside-of-school,” noted that he did like one of the books discussed in the class called *The Garcia Girls*. He said, “it's funny because the dad was like really strict and he didn’t want nobody around his daughters, which be like my mom and dad. They be strict with me too. So I like knew.”

The students admitted that they gave weight to their ELAR teacher's voice when making personal literacy choices in school. Michael said that “She kind of lets us tell her what stuff we like to read. And when we tell her she tells us what books are like that to read.” Carmen agreed and noted that “sometimes I have trouble, like choosing books, so like she will recommend this book. And then before that, she would like to read part of that book, and then if it was interesting for me, I will read it.” Carlos mentioned that, while he usually chose a graphic novel that he had already read in middle school like *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, “She stop me. Mrs. C don’t like me reading *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. She is like you can do better. So I just be picking books I know like right off of the bat like *The Outsiders*.”

All of the cases in the study said that they sought book titles encouraged by their ELAR teacher, whether it was their current ELAR teacher or one that they had in middle school. The male students reported that they were more likely to participate when the teacher included their out-of-school identities in one-on-one discourse, or furthermore, in full-class discourse. Chris said that he gave more value to what Mrs. G suggested for student choice “because she is a gamer like me and she will talk about gaming...her husband I think is a gamer too.” They could recall these moments throughout the year when they

had one-on-one time with the teacher to discuss movies, gaming, and family. All of the students noted that their ELAR teacher’s opinions of their out-of-school identity were important. Five out of the six cases reported that their teacher’s voice was the one that mattered the most when making literacy choices in their ELAR class (see Table 4.3).

**Table 4.3**

*Student Exit Survey Response to “When You Are in ELAR Class Whose Voice Matters Most?”*

	Your Family	Your Teacher	Your Friends	Your Voice
Michael		X		
Chris		X		
Hazel		X		
Carmen		X		
JJ		X		
Carlos				X

Authority influences on identity was an area in the data where in-school and out-of-school shared the same significance to the student. Some of the students referred to the teacher as a maternal figure who influenced their literacy choices in class. Carlos said, “Mrs. C is like a mom, she is always making us do our best you know. She don’t want us to fail.” JJ agreed that there was

Definitely [a] connection between the teacher and students, Mrs. C, is really good at that. She's really nice to students and takes care of them. So I think that, like, that really brings out the best student that you can be. I think it really depends on the teacher and personally, like in my English class that I had this year, she has brought everyone together during class. It was really nice.

## **Language Identity for Bilingual and Multilingual Adolescents**

The researcher's analysis revealed that language was another point of negotiation between in-school identities and out-of-school identities. Four of the six students in the study noted Spanish as their home language in the archival data. These students expressed that, in addition to the affinity identities that they deemed "for school," there are languages they considered appropriate for school, specifically the languages they choose to read and write. More specifically, the four cases of Spanish-speaking students associated Spanish as part of their out-of-school identity, while English was the primary language they used in school.

This section includes data and evidence regarding how: adolescents observe a clear line between their in-school identities and out-of-school identities; bilingual and multilingual students use two different means of language expression in-school and out-of-school. The data and evidence included in this section will answer: How do high school adolescent students describe their in-school and out-of-school identities? How do high school adolescent students describe the instructional practices in their ELAR classroom? How do high school adolescent students describe the relationship between ELAR instructional practices and in-school and out-of-school identities?

### ***Home Language is for Home***

All of the students whose archival data listed their home language was Spanish said they did not choose to use Spanish in their English class but did say that they spoke Spanish at home to their parents and extended family members. While most of these students talked to their Spanish-speaking peers in Spanish, their traditional literacy

practices, like reading and writing, were all in English. Carlos pointed out that “we mostly speak Spanish. But if they (family) ask me something, sometimes I answer in English if I don’t know the word in Spanish.” Hazel remarked, “sometimes I am just more comfortable speaking Spanish than English... because at home I am used to speaking a lot more Spanish than English.”

One of the students, Carmen, referred to Spanish as her love language, as it was the language she used with those she loved outside of school. She noted that she always wrote them in Spanish when she wrote letters or cards for her family. “Sometimes when it is someone’s birthday or like a quince, I will write them an essay in Spanish.” JJ noted that only his mom and grandparents speak Spanish and that he “really only [uses] it when the family is around his [Spanish-speaking] grandparents.” For the cases in the study, their home language was not something that they simply used to communicate; it was something they appeared to identify with in the context of family, customs, and respect for their heritage.

### ***English is for the Classroom***

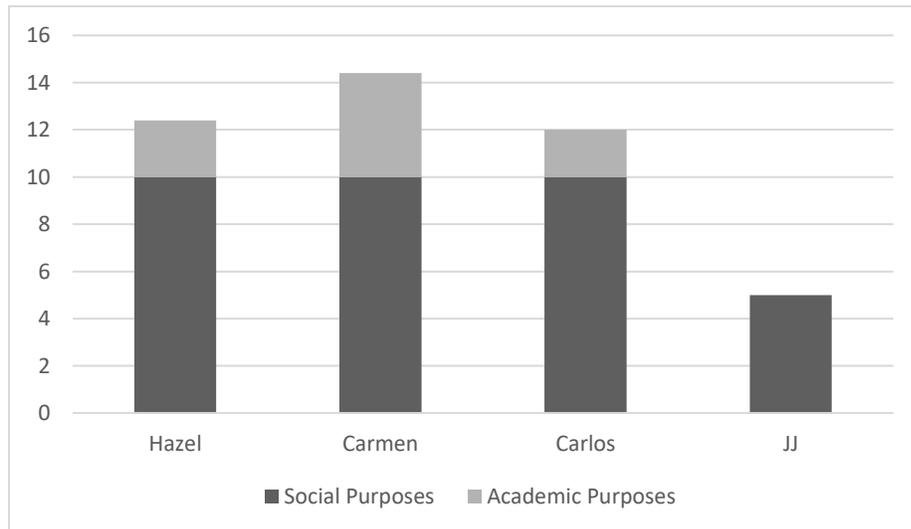
All of the bilingual students in the study said that they use English in their ELAR class and their other courses. An interesting finding was that not only did these students say they used English in school, but they preferred to use English for all traditional literacy products, including essays, journal responses, and short answer responses. Carlos noted, “I don’t know. I have just always read English books. Like I can write and read in Spanish, but English is just easier for me.” Hazel, who reported that she almost

exclusively talks to her immediate and extended family in Spanish, said, “When I write, like at the beginning of class, I will only write in English.”

The students use Spanish in-school as a means of social exchanges, but not for academic exchanges, whether spoken or written. The graph above represents how many occasions during the researchers' field observations saw one of the bilingual students use Spanish in their ELAR classroom. All four cases were observed using Spanish for social purposes. In Figure 4.19, the researcher notes the frequency that each bilingual student used Spanish in class and whether it was used for academic or social objectives. They checked the purpose of the language being used based on whether it was “free” time, and in some cases, they asked the students for the English translation of what they said.

**Figure 4.19**

*Frequency Counts of Bilingual Student Language Use in Classroom Observations*



Carmen used Spanish more than any other student in the study for academic reasons because she was primarily responsible for helping interpret for her Spanish-speaking friend in the class. What made her case interesting was that when she focused on her work, she would ask her Spanish-speaking peers to be quiet and leave her alone in English, not in Spanish. She said, “Because usually in school, everyone talks English. Yeah, sometimes just with my friends, I talk Spanish. Because it is like easy. Like my friend (in Mrs. C’s class) she only speaks Spanish really, so I speak to her in Spanish.” During “free” time, Carmen spoke to these same Spanish-speaking peers only in Spanish.

The bilingual students preferred English as the primary language for their literacy practices. This was surprising since Mrs. C actually encouraged her bilingual students to use Spanish. As a bilingual teacher (fluent in English and Italian), she told them several times, “if you need to use Spanish first to think through it, you can do that.” She also called upon Carmen several times to assist in this practice. Even though the students were told they could first consider expressing their initial feelings or analysis about a topic in their home language, they did not. The teacher offered this as a means for them to capture their immediate thoughts, feelings, and emotions. Still, the bilingual cases elected to use English for their academic practices in school. Hazel said of her entire experience in school, from elementary to high school, “I have always used English, so I use English.”

### ***Academic Spanish vs. Home Spanish***

The type of Spanish used by the students outside-of-school is different from the type of academic Spanish used by seasoned Spanish speakers. Half of the cases in the study (Carmen, Hazel, and Carlos) are enrolled in a course at the school called Honors

Spanish for Spanish Speakers. This course is designed to increase Spanish-speakers' proficiency, both spoken and written. However, the use of academic-Spanish element in the course is where the student's in-school and out-of-school language identities reached an impasse. Carlos said, "When he [Mr. T] be reading stories in his class like, I put the whole thing in Google translate. I have no idea what they say." Carmen agrees, "It's not what I speak Spanish, but he talks like professional Spanish, not like I speak Spanish with my family."

In Honors Spanish for Spanish Speakers, the instructor, Sr. T, uses very little English; however, the students are expected to uphold the literacy practices and create products that mirror those in the students' ELAR class. Carmen, Hazel, and Carlos all said that using English in the course would be easier. Carlos said that his grandparents used this kind of Spanish. As a result, he said, "they mostly speak to us in Spanish but will speak in English to us when the words are too hard for us in Spanish." During the in-depth interview, the researcher asked the students if they would read books written in Spanish in ELAR if the teachers offered them; all three cases said they would prefer to read them in English. When I asked if they could have the option to write in English or Spanish, they all said English. Carmen said, "Sometimes when I write essays, she says you can write in Spanish first, and then you could do it in English because we could express ourselves in Spanish if we know more, but I just use English. It's better, and it is easier to write."

## **Adolescent Identities and Practices in the Digital World**

The last overarching theme from the study's data revealed a large gap between the digital literacies the students practiced outside of school and the ones they used in school. This section includes data and evidence regarding how the students explained: that adolescents observe a clear line between their in-school identities and out-of-school identities and how students see their out-of-school affinities, specifically their out-of-school digital literacy practices and personal affinities, underrepresented in their ELAR classroom their out-of-school affinities, their in-school identities, their ELAR classroom practices, and activities and the literacy practices exclusively in the classroom. The data and evidence included in this section will address: How do high school adolescent students describe the instructional practices in their ELAR classroom? How do high school adolescent students describe the relationship between ELAR instructional practices and in-school and out-of-school identities?

### ***Digital Literacy Practices In-School and Out-of-School***

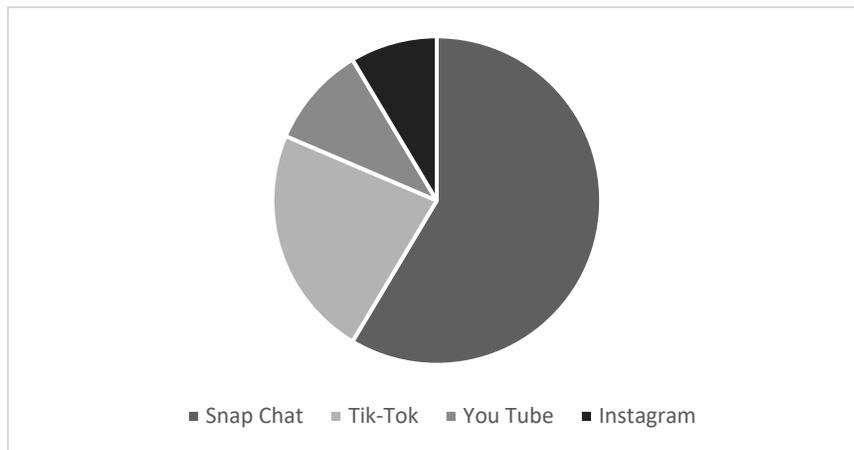
The primary digital literacies used in the ELAR classes were Canvas and Google Docs. As stated above, Canvas provided a digital classroom platform where the teacher listed lessons, posted assignments, collected assignments, and linked pertinent readings. Google Docs, and the students' personal Google Drives, were primarily used to store their work. Chris said that in-class digital literacies consisted of "really just Google docs and Canvas, that is what we use the most." In all the cases, the students did not recognize Canvas as an out-of-school literacy practice except when it was associated with making up late "work" that the students needed to submit to pass the class. Michael said when he

is home, “I do not use Google Docs or Canvas for anything.” Carlos said, “I will sometimes use Google Drive for like saving pictures of trucks and cars to keep space on my phone, but not really.” There were some digital literacies that the students enjoyed, including Gimkit and Membean, but they also did not use this outside of school.

The digital literacies students pursued outside of school included Snapchat, TikTok, Instagram, instant messaging, and their gaming systems. In Figure 4.20, the researcher used the frequency count of the top four digital literacies that the students reported that they used outside of school.

**Figure 4.20**

*Frequency Count of Apps Students Reported They Use Outside-of-School*



When asked whether they would rather use an in-school technology to express their understanding of the content or use one of the traditional technologies used in their ELAR class, all of the students chose a digital literacy practice with which they were familiar. “If I could do an assignment on Snapchat or write it, I would choose the Snapchat,” Hazel said. The most utilized digital literacy that the students engaged in

outside of school is social media, specifically Snapchat. TikTok was a close second, “I am usually watching funny videos and like gaming TikToks on my phone in class.” All of the students' out-of-school literacy practices included digital literacies. None of their out-of-school literacy practices reflected traditional in-school formats.

The students said they did not read or write for leisure outside of school (see Table 4.4). They also all said that they do not use traditional in-school literacy practices for any reason other than schoolwork outside of the school setting.

**Table 4.4**

*Data Reflecting Traditional ELAR Literacy Formats and Practices Outside of School*

Student	Response
Michael	“No, I don't read or write outside school.”
Chris	“Uh. Not at home. Like for a project that I need to finish for, like major grades that bring up grades.”
Hazel	“Sometimes, but mostly no. Like I like reading, but at the same time I don't.”
Carmen	“No. Like mostly books that my brother will bring home from school...he is in Kindergarten.”
JJ	“I'm not like the biggest fan of reading, so any time we had to do. It depends like if it's like an article that's like a little more interesting than reading [a] whole book.”
Carlos	“No, not unless I had to. Like ‘hey did you finish that work?’ Can you pass it.”

*Digital Literacies in ELAR that Bridge the Affinity Identity Gap*

The cases in the study said that their favorite in-school literacy practices included those that mimicked their affinity spaces outside of school. The students who identified as male were especially drawn to the digital literacies in ELAR that mimicked gaming.

JJ noted that in Mrs. C's class:

We do like these games, we've done like grammar games on the computer, and you get to see other people having fun to join and then you match their energy and it's better for the whole class. But I've had, like prior English classes that were like, here just fill out this sheet. That's just not fun. So this English class that is definitely part of one of those classes I've never had.

The bilingual students in the study appeared reluctant when they admitted they would prefer to use Snapchat, another selected digital literacy in place of traditional literacy practices. The students associated traditional literacy formats like reading and writing with success and “getting their work done,” whereas outside-of-school literacy practices are associated with fun and, therefore, not something they should use in school unless it was sanctioned by “free time.” When Hazel was initially asked about doing a project on social media or writing an essay, she said, “I would write an essay.” However, when the researcher said, “If the teacher allowed you to do a character analysis by writing an essay or doing a Snapchat story, she said that “I would probably do the Snap if it was allowed. I could do a Snap pretty quick, and it would be good. If I could.”

The students did not dismiss all of the digital literacies in their class. There were two that all of the cases mentioned helped them learn their ELAR content while incorporating their out-of-school identities, specifically their affinities for gaming. Two digital options the students reported that did bridge their in-school and out-of-school identities were Gimkit and Membean. Gimkit, fashioned after a video game, allowed

students to use different modes to complete a series of literature-based tasks, including trivia from various stories, author facts, and background information. Michael said of Gimkit, “[It] is good because you can get points and like take out zombies, but you have to know the answers to the question too.” Chris, a self-described gamer, said, “Gimkit is a fun, educated game, which you can be on teams in zombie mode, team mode and parsers, which is among us. Then there's solo mode. It is cool, and it has English stuff on it and science and other subjects.”

Membean is another digital game that uses academic vocabulary-based questions. Carmen said, “I mean, it's actually fun because you get to learn more vocabulary, and then you type in a way to learn it and get it.” Correct answers equate to points that the students earn. Both of these digital technologies mimic out-of-school gaming characters (i.e., zombies) and the accrument of points which the students, especially those with an out-of-school affinity for gaming, said they enjoyed and learned from at the same time. Still, even with a high score on the games, the students shared that their grades were the actual measure of their success in ELAR and that the technologies were more for in-school use only. JJ spoke of Membean as “one of the grammar things that we do...I think it's good to do in class quick 15 minutes of grammar and learning new words and how to spell. But I don't practice that out of school, so I don't see myself using that out of school.”

### **Summary**

The findings in this chapter resulted from the methods explained in Chapter 3: adolescents observe a clear line between their in-school identities and out-of-school

identities, bilingual and multilingual students use two different means of language expression in-school and out-of-school, and students see their out-of-school affinities, specifically their out-of-school digital literacy practices and personal affinities, underrepresented in their ELAR classroom. Chapter 4 revealed that the adolescents in this study appeared to have different in-school and out-of-school identities. From the languages they chose to use in school to the digital literacies they left at the threshold of their classrooms, they expressed that outside-of-school they felt “freer,” and that the opportunity to use their preferred digital literacies contributed to their affinity identities and more opportunity to expand their personal expression and social circles. Overwhelmingly the students in the study reported they rarely used traditional literacy practices outside of school. In Chapter 5, the researcher discusses these findings and why it is vital to explore how teachers and classrooms can marry students' in-school identities and out-of-school identities with the literacy practices used in ELAR classrooms.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to describe how ninth-grade adolescents experience their own identities through the instructional practices in their ELAR classroom. As a high school teacher and administrator, the researcher aimed to explore the development of adolescent identities, the out-of-school literacy practices and proficiencies of these adolescents, and finally, where the students saw the connections to their identities in their ELAR classrooms. The researcher's central question was: How do adolescents' in-school and out-of-school identities shape their literacy practices? The theoretical lens used in the study reflected the evolution of the term literacy toward one that is more inclusive of digital media, multilingualism, and classroom practices that streamline a student's ability to negotiate who they are out-of-school through their ELAR experience.

The study began with a personal anecdote from the researcher regarding their role as a high school administrator and the head of its ELAR department. The researcher's experience was that many students had extensive knowledge of digital technologies, languages, and personal affinities, however classroom observations did not reveal a direct link between the student's "funds of knowledge" and the literacy practices taking place in the classroom (Moll, 2019). The researcher's experience with adolescent students, combined with two of their English teachers strides to introduce a more identity-centered experience, inspired the study's research questions:

1. How do high school adolescent students describe their in-school and out-of-school identities?
2. How do high school adolescent students describe the instructional practices in their ELAR classroom?
3. How do high school adolescent students describe the connection between ELAR instructional practices and in-school and out-of-school identities?

The researcher then presented theories that established how identity is formed in an adolescent. Identity development was framed by Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1989) ecological systems theory and James Gee's Identity as an analytic lens for research in education (2000a), which provided a review of a modern adolescent's in-school and out-of-school identities and literacy practices as well as the historical and contemporary influences on both of these. They also summarized some noted instructional practices that today's ELAR classrooms recognized as more identity-centered and pluralistic.

A constructivist approach was used to examine the identities of six ninth-grade students and how they perceive these identities in the literacy practices of their ELAR classes. A constructivist approach enabled the researcher to study how adolescents formed their own realities (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Each of the students was asked to communicate their identities and how they make meaning of these identities both in school and out of school. Creswell and Poth (2017) note that a constructivist approach yields varied results because individuals construct meanings that are personal and unique. This approach required the researcher to narrow the participants complex views and put

them into categories that made sense of the general process of interaction between an individual and another entity, in this case, the interaction between the adolescents' identities and the instructional practices of their ELAR classroom (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To organize the participants' experiences, the researcher employed a case study approach and then a cross-case analysis to glean patterns in the data, and ultimately the themes that shaped the study's findings.

The key findings in the study bolstered the idea that a multi-faceted definition of literacy is appropriate for adolescents and that this practice is conducive to increasing their interest in the content of their ELAR classroom and supporting their out-of-school identities. The students' word choice activity results, combined with their responses to the in-depth interview questions, revealed their out-of-school identities, preferred literacy practices, and personal affinities were underrepresented in their ELAR class. In addition, the study found that students who recognized their out-of-school identities in their ELAR classrooms invested more time and interest in the content and traditional formats presented to them, even if they did not subscribe to these formats outside of school.

### **Contributions**

This study complements and adds to the literature on identity, monolingualism in the classroom, technology use in the school, and adolescents' value for their affinities.

### **Theories on Establishing Identity In-School and Out-of-School**

The findings indicate that students' in-school and out-of-school identities influence their in-school literacy practices, behaviors, and attitudes. It specifically affects what they choose to read, express, build, and produce in the classroom. Bronfenbrenner's

model (1989) is sustained, even in the 21st century, without considering the people, discourses, and affinity spaces that modern-day adolescents are exposed to online (Wilson, 2007). Based on the Word Choice Activity and in-depth interviews, the students associate themselves with the same affinities, customs, cultural practices, and institutional discourses in school defined them outside of school, however they felt that the classroom constrained their ability to express their out-of-school identities and literacy practices outside of assigned “free time.”

These findings support Wortham’s (2005) findings, which note that community influences are deep-rooted and will ultimately manifest in what an adolescent will ascribe to in-school, including the types of texts they will read and the stories they will invest their interest. The students identified a number of these deep-rooted influences. One example was the parallel they drew between the authoritarian discourse they experienced at home and similar discourse they experienced with their teacher. In both cases this discourse was met with reverence and appreciation. Students admitted that, even though they did not practice any in-school literacy practices at home, when they did choose to read a text, the teacher was the leading influence of their selections.

On the other hand, there appeared to be a clear gap in where the student’s connected their digital literacy identities outside of school with those in their ELAR class. There also seemed to be a disconnect in how they defined the digital literacies intended for “work” and those for “school.” These findings confirm the work of Kellner and Share (2019), who posed that the definition of literacy has moved beyond just reading and writing and that a more progressive report considers literacy as a collection of skills and

knowledge that allow an individual to read and interpret the world's texts and navigate and negotiate its challenges, conflicts, and crises through their own personal lens. The "world's texts" include Instagram, YouTube, and Snapchat alongside novels, essays, and other traditional ELAR practices and products in this study. These literacy practices also reflect multiple cultures and languages, supporting a broader range of identities. As a former administrator and curriculum writer, the researcher wondered why there was not more content pulled from online sources and platforms that the students admitted they used outside of school. Instagram, You Tube, and TikTok all contain opportunities for students to learn ELAR content.

The study supports Luke (2000), who poses those current instructional practices should consider students' out-of-school identities, including their home language, to help them process multiple texts, formulate "resistant" perspectives, and produce counter texts that reflect their out-of-school identities. These practices include more critical and identity-based teaching practices that afford students' technologies, discourses, and multicultural understanding necessary to thrive in and beyond high school. The practices Luke discusses were recognized and preferred by the cases in the study

### **Adolescent Identities and Literacy Practices in the Classroom**

The findings contribute to the literature created by Gee (2000a) that applies four specific identities to adolescent students. In identity as an analytic lens for educational research, Gee provided the definitions for four distinct identities that adolescents develop outside-of-school and which they associate with in-school: nature, institutional, discourse, and affinity. These identities capture the most significant influences on the

students' in-school identities, specifically regarding their literacy practices. The a priori analysis showed that some of these identities outweighed the others. Most of the students' reports and literacy practices were attributed to one or more of these identities as defined by Gee.

In addition, the findings support Scribner and Cole (1981) who pose that literacy practices “consist of three components: technology, knowledge, and skills .... Whether defined in broad or narrow terms, practice always refers to socially developed and patterned ways of using technology and knowledge to accomplish tasks” (p. 236). These practices directly contribute to students’ development of meaning-making, opinions, ideas, revelations, and discourses that required a platform for hypothesis testing (Ruddell & Unrau, 1994). The teachers in the study were making strides to use literacy practices that were identity-centered, which was successful when we consider their reports about technologies like Gimkit and Membean. Scribner and Cole (1981) would agree these two digital platforms combine technology with knowledge and [accomplishing] tasks. However, the disconnect was with the primary technologies in the class that the students were required to use every day, Canvas and Google Drive. These digital avenues served little more than conduits for work input and output. In all the cases a majority of the digital literacies that were used in-school were not part of the students’ out of school identities.

This study adds to Smith and Wilhelm’s *Reading Don’t Fix No Chevys* (2002). While this classic study explicitly focused on adolescent boys’ motivation to read, their findings provided a significant foundation for the importance of an adolescent’s identity

in the classroom. Specifically, it confirmed how these students' literacy practices were mainly influenced by identities shaped out-of-school, including their social circles, affinities, and parents. Similar to the cases in this study, the young men from Smith and Wilhelm were more likely to complete a novel or participate in classroom discourse when the stories and characters represented the students' out-of-school interests and experiences. While the students in the study admitted they do not read outside of school, they all selected topics for their choice selections that were aligned to their out-of-school affinity and institutional identities.

Language identities also played a large role in this study. The findings support Harklau and Moreno (2019) that multilingual students who are part of English-dominant institutions, can face challenges with their language identities during adolescence. While the bilingual students appeared to make it clear that English was the language they preferred to use in their ELAR class, they still admitted that they liked to speak Spanish and considered it part of who they were. Negotiating these two languages and when they should and should not, or could and could not use them, appeared to be something that they actively consider when it applied to the classroom, except during "free time."

Although the students were required to submit their ELAR products in English the teachers' encouragement to use both languages to process and express the content was something they all mentioned, with respect, in the data. This practice supports Crump (2013) who noted that that teachers' language awareness not only allows bilingual students to flourish in both languages but also demonstrates an inclusive classroom that promotes a positive attitude toward multilingualism and diverse cultures (Anderson,

2021). The researcher can confirm that both classrooms, as well as the teachers and students respected, and in some cases celebrated, both languages.

### **Digital Literacy and Identity Expression**

The A-identities of modern adolescents are directly correlated with the digital world and the independence afforded to them in these worlds (Hinchman & Appleman, 2017). Apart from text choice, the students expressed less opportunity to make independent literacy choices in ELAR, even if they could potentially use these literacies to create traditional ELAR content, like character analysis, short answer responses, or journal entries.

According to Hull and Schultz (2001), adolescent students are not only capable but are equipped to use multiple modalities to showcase their understanding of ELAR content. These modalities include using various texts, digital stories, blogs, podcasts, and online videos. While the teachers in this study had student choice for texts and writing topics, the content was primarily presented in traditional pedagogical models that promoted a “single, exclusive, and intensive focus on written language” (Kress, 2003, p. 156). The collected data reinforced these traditional practices. Most students reported that their assignments were generally written in a journal or typed into a classroom-assigned digital platform like Canvas.

Gee (2015) posits that students adopt the lexicons and literacy practices that they use every day. Whether in-school or out-of-school, they will gravitate to the words, language, and pictures that they speak, hear, and see most often. The cases in this study, specifically JJ, reinforced this with his explanation of Instagram. While he noted that he

did not like to read in school, he said he would independently read Instagram posts from media outlets like the *New York Times* to get information about global events. Like the bilingual and multilingual students from the study, the students who pursued their digital literacies outside of school could not negotiate their place or legitimacy in ELAR. Seemingly, these digital literacies have been proven to increase fluency, critical thinking, and a way for students to establish a personal stance. In addition, these platforms can make them better problem solvers and help them find answers faster and from a much more extensive library of information (Compton-Lilly, & Nayan, 2015).

### **Implications**

The study's findings carry implications for adolescent identities, high school ELAR content, and current and future literacy practices. In this section, the researcher specifically outlines the implications for recognizing and leveraging out-of-school identities in the classroom, bilingual and multilingual language identities and practices, and finally, the recognition of digital literacies as a way to connect out-of-school identities with in-school content.

#### **Implications for Leveraging Out-of-School Identities in the ELAR Classroom**

The study's findings support Bronfenbrenner (1989), Gee (200b), and Kucer (2014), who emphasize that students' outside-of-school identities are complex, multifaceted, and influenced by multiple layers of experience that take place over space and time. Adolescents' out-of-school identities directly affect what they read, express, build, and produce in the classroom. As this study's data illustrated, students' families, churches, and neighborhoods form these out-of-school identities (Wilson, 2007). Within

these communities, adolescents associate themselves with the customs, cultural practices, and power dynamics that define who they are in their communities.

In terms of literacy practices, the study's findings confirm Wortham (2010), who notes that these community influences are deep-rooted and will ultimately manifest in what an adolescent will ascribe to in-school, including the types of texts they will read and the stories they will invest their interest. They can also play a role in students' motivation and determine how they feel about their literacy and academic abilities. The students in this study all said they did not read at home, but they did. They read texts, posts, articles, Snaps, directions for gaming, and online stories. They dismissed their academic value because they did not associate these formats with the traditional formats in their classrooms. Educators know, however, that books or no books, when students read any text consistently, they gain fluency, critical thinking, and the ability to develop a personal stance. All of these skills are required (and tested) in ninth grade ELAR. Complex characters, stories, and the imaginary worlds that past generations sought in books are plentiful in the out-of-school, digital worlds of adolescent students. Again, schools and classrooms cannot become hotbeds of video gaming and YouTube watching, however, balancing students' out-of-school affinities and literacy practices with traditional literacy practices might be a great place to start. Teachers who are unsure of their students' affinities and digital funds of knowledge simply need to ask them, "what do you like?" "what are you into?" "what do you know?" Once a teacher opens the door to their students' out-of-school identities, they tell the students they care about developing more than just their literacy, they tell them they care about developing who

they are as a person. The simple act of building a relationship with a student instills in them same validation they seek online with likes, hearts, and streaks, because it says to them “I see you and I honor who you are and what you have to say.”

### ***Understanding Who Students Are Outside of School***

Ives (2011) poses those students will mask who they are outside of school to position themselves in school as individuals who are equal to their teachers' tasks and expectations. On the other hand, when an ELAR teacher maintains a willingness to understand who their students are as individuals outside of their classroom, it can positively influence their learning, motivation, and long-term retention of ELAR concepts. The advantage that a teacher gains when they learn about their students' out-of-school identities is that they can discover their preferred literacy practices and then align them to their classroom practices.

Moje et al. (2008) led a study that revealed over 80% of 800 students liked to write outside of school, but they never shared this because they did not think that poetry, songs, or other out-of-school literacy products qualified as writing. The same concept applies to students in the study like JJ, who writes songs and makes political posts on Instagram but does not see an opportunity to use these literacies in ELAR. Making these discoveries about students' out-of-school identities does not require formal pre-assessments, nor can they be singularly drawn from the students' STAAR scores or school records. This study uncovered that to discover students' backgrounds, affinities, and out-of-school literacy practices, a great place to start is by simply asking them.

### *Literacy Practices that Go Beyond Traditional Assessments and Products*

Reading and writing are imperative. In addition to being the bedrock of communication and expression in our culture, they are necessary for students to achieve inside of school and pass the obligatory standardized testing that still dictates a student's matriculation. The thing to remember is that just because students do not have an interest in reading, or cannot pass a standardized test, does not mean that they do not possess valuable literacy skills and relevant literacy practices (Alvermann et al., 2018). Student choice is one way that the ELAR classroom can recognize their students' funds of knowledge and allow them to exercise and express their out-of-school affinities and lived experiences.

Adolescents, like adults, enjoy a range of literacy choices. For instance, Instagram articles that are read from a smartphone still teach fluency, context, positionality, and author's purpose just as effectively as a novel or a persuasive essay. When learning how to analyze characters, students could quickly learn the elements by starting with a character from popular culture, like a YouTube influencer, a TikTok princess, or a videogame character. Teachers and ELAR curriculum might work to include characters and stories that support an adolescent's identity. The hard pill to swallow for some teachers and leaders of curriculum and instruction is that those characters may no longer exist in a book.

The teachers in this study appeared to be inclusive, open-minded, and made significant strides in their classrooms to be more identity centered. Still, without more consideration for the affinities and out-of-school literacy practices, the students expressed

a disconnect between who they were outside of school and what was happening in their ELAR class. Even with classroom libraries full of stories about multiple ethnicities, cultures, and social justice, a large part of students' interest was lost because they did not like to read novels. While ELAR classrooms must maintain the importance of traditional ELAR formats, it does not mean that these formats, or these definitions of literacy, have to remain the exclusive offerings.

### ***An Identity-Centered Classroom***

ELAR teachers who endeavor to create more identity-centered classrooms, like the one in this study, allowed their students to step out of the accepted power roles fashioned by archaic teacher-student relationships (Freire & Ramos, 1993). Instead, these teachers leveraged their students' funds of knowledge, which valued the students' out-of-school identities and added a level of depth that enriches the class (Tracey & Mandel Morrow, 2017). The approach can incorporate a world of stories, backgrounds, cultures, languages, and characters. ELAR provides an ideal environment to access these funds of knowledge (Moll, 2019). Literacy has more than one definition; ELAR teachers and classrooms should explore multiple modalities as well.

### **Implications for Bilingual and Multilingual Adolescent Identities**

The students reported that they did not feel that the language used in their ELAR class was an infringement on their out-of-school identities. They seemed comfortable with the language homogeneity found in both the content and the products that they submitted to their teacher. Because these students had long endorsed English as their in-school language, they continued to associate it with their in-school, "worker," identity.

The troubling aspect of the data was that they appeared to privilege English as the superior academic language. On the other hand, these students recognized their home language as a part of their out-of-school identities, heritage, and culture.

Their home language was and is essential to them. Because these students acknowledged their Spanish language identity as a vital part of who they are outside of school, classrooms and teachers might further explore how they can leverage and afford a greater use of their home language in an academic capacity. This starts by looking for ways that the students can build on their home language in an academic way, without confusing or intimidating them. Like the *Babysitters Club* example from Chapter 2, giving students a text that is simply translated into Spanish, may not be appropriate for their interest or their academic proficiency in their home language. However, asking students to create an ELAR product that gently stretches that home language and allows students to use a preferred modality or out-of-school digital literacy could make all the difference. Teachers are also encouraged to work with the bilingual classrooms on campus to find ways to connect home language with ELAR content. These teachers have an extensive background in developing creative ways for bilingual and multilingual students to learn new content in a way that honors their home language by building on the students' current language skills. Just because an ELAR teacher does not speak the home language of their students, does not mean they should miss an opportunity to help them see the beauty as well as the marketability of speaking/using both languages for academic, as well as social purposes.

### ***Current In-School Language Practices***

In the school district where the study took place, early childhood dual-language programs promote and nurture the use of two languages until fifth grade. In fifth grade, the students' standardized tests and the content they get in their classes moves exclusively to English. By the time students become adolescents, they consider English the language of academia; therefore, the student's mastery of English becomes a priority as well as an avenue to success, good grades, and achievement.

Discouraging the use of their home language diminishes the students' out-of-school identities and undermines the value of refining their home language for use in an academic setting. Bilingual students often do not learn the benefit of knowing more than one language or how increasing their proficiency can make them more marketable in a global world. Gee (2000a) agrees and notes that the new capitalism will not only value, but demand thinkers and a workforce that is multilingual and multicultural.

### ***Developing a New Perspective of Out-of-School Language Identities***

This study's findings support Martinez et al. (2017) and encourages secondary classrooms to adopt the same outlook and practices observed in early childhood bilingual and multilingual/multicultural programs where the curriculum focuses on the growth of both languages simultaneously. Bilingual research recognizes the knowledge and use of multiple languages as an asset to bilingual and multilingual students; however, it also points out that students will hide these funds of knowledge and language identities if they are not afforded in the school environment (Moll, 2019). The students in this study had

already established that English was their priority, but not wholly who they were outside of school.

The school in this study was taking a step in the right direction by offering the Honors Spanish for Spanish Speakers course. This course sees bilingual students as more than current or former English Language Learners (ELLs), but rather as Spanish speakers who could take their home language, culture, and trans language abilities and incorporate them as part of their in-school identities. Still, the gap in their Spanish education from fifth grade to ninth grade creates challenges and significant gaps in the academic proficiency of their home language. By continuing to offer bilingual courses throughout the students' careers, ones that marry ELAR content and non-English languages, vocabulary, characters and stories, the appreciation these students report they have for their home language can also flourish in school, as well.

### **Implications for New Literacies and How Literacy is Defined**

The New London Group (1996) poses that the definition of literacy needs to be updated to represent the world's growing technology. Based on this study, classrooms and ELAR content should adopt a more deictic definition. *Deixis* is a term used in linguistics to define words whose meanings change rapidly (Leu et al., 2004). ELAR teachers should consider how they can prepare students for a deictic world. The same critical lens teachers ask students to apply to a character in an ELAR canon could be applied to world leaders, influencers, or even leaders in the fields that the students are interested. A famous gamer, their strategy in a game, or even the game itself, can be analyzed annotated, and explained. As a former administrator the researcher is aware

that teachers cannot conduct a class where their students watch TikTok and play video games, but they wondered if the teachers had ever explored ways to connect elements of both worlds, and how they could bring them together for their students. This approach could improve motivation, morale, and ultimately the student's mastery of ELAR concepts that are part of the prescribed content.

### ***Valuing Out-of-School Identities in School***

The students know that their out-of-school digital literacy has power. They can use them to influence friends, get likes, and post their personal feelings in a space that has less consequence than doing it face-to-face. It gives them freedom. The ELAR classroom and school curriculum at large do not do enough to leverage out-of-school literacy practices. Leu et al. (2014) argued that “to be literate tomorrow will be defined by even newer technologies that have yet to appear and even newer discourses and social practices,” many of which, depending on our exposure to digital sources and media, can leave some of us in the dust (p. 1150). The notion that all knowledge and information have become a nebulous, moving target is not entirely accurate, but it does reinforce the need for a dual literacy theory, one that maintains the broad umbrella of literacy, but also gives credence to the constantly evolving literacies that many of our students use outside of school.

Uppercase New Literacies represent the broader, common threads that are identified in lowercase new literacies. They are arguably more concrete, stable and illustrate early theories that describe the use of offline texts. Leu et al. (2004) believed that they should be defined according to the following principles: 1) The internet is this

generation's defining technology for literacy and learning within the global community; 2) The internet and related technologies require additional new literacies to access their potential three fully; 3) New literacies are deictic; 4) New literacies are multiple, multimodal, and multifaceted; 5) Critical literacies are central to new literacies; 6) New forms of strategic knowledge are required with new literacies; 7) New social practices are a central element of new literacies, and; 8) Teachers become more critical, though their role changes, within new literacy classrooms.

### ***Consequences of Ignoring Out-of-School Digital Literacy Practices***

How we choose to understand, use, and teach these technologies is of vital importance, however. The average child under the age of nine uses the internet for at least 2 hours a day, and that statistic increases substantially as the student matriculates. Students' use, and even their dependency, on digital information makes it a topic that we should assign greater attention to as educators. This acknowledgment is especially significant when we consider the research surrounding student's use of online text resources.

Reading is shifting from page to screen at an exponential rate. However, most of the research on reading achievement gaps focused primarily on offline texts (Leu et al., 2014). And while the rapidly evolving nature of online content makes it challenging to build theory (and by proxy, pedagogy), practitioners must start to consider how our students consume and use this content. The number of resources available to them is astronomical, however without a critical lens and the skills to determine what information

is most useful students risk perpetuating a world that contains a surplus of information, and a dearth of knowledge at the same time.

### **Conclusions**

An adolescent's out-of-school identity can directly influence which literacy practices they gravitate toward in their ELAR classroom. The tight web of discourses, affinities, and institutions that make up their world determine where they see themselves in the texts and the technologies their teacher puts before them. While teachers, like the ones in this study, are working to become more identity-centered they still operate at the mercy of the standards they are required to teach. These standards, while they uphold foundational literacy skills and knowledge, often omit the digital literacies that students crave and the modern world demands.

In a movement to overcome these challenges our field can continue to explore and develop a new definition to literacy used in schools. An updated definition of literacy, like Bronfenbrenner's biological systems model, would concede that within all things there is an indelible evolution, one that asks us to reconsider our preliminary approach. For modern classrooms this definition might be a collection of skills, knowledge, multiple modalities, and multiple languages used to learn and communicate.

This new definition will need to be reinforced through practices that bolster multiple digital offerings in school. It will also need to include the skills, knowledge and critical lens that support students' as they navigate these pathways. This will take time considering new digital literacies are created and acquired every day. In the meantime, a teacher's willingness to take an old-fashioned approach to get to know their students,

build relationships, and simply talk to them about their out-of-school identities and affinities maintain an equal amount of integrity to creating a more identity centered classroom.

## REFERENCES

- Alspaugh, J. (1998). Achievement loss associated with the transition to middle school and high school. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 92 (1), 20–25.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00220679809597572>
- Alvermann, D. E., Unrau, N. J., Sailors, M., & Ruddell, R. B. (2018). *Theoretical models and processes of literacy*. Routledge.
- Anderson, P. (2021). BookSnaps: Reading and analyzing young adult novels across languages. Unpublished article.
- Behram, E. (2006). Teaching about language, power, and text: A review of classroom practices that support critical literacy. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 49(6), 490–498.
- Blackburn, M., & Schey, R. (2017). Adolescent literacies beyond heterosexual hegemony. In K. Hinchman, & D. Appleman, *Adolescent literacies: A handbook of practice-based research*. Guilford Press.
- Bogden, R., & Biklen, S. K. (2006). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods*. (5th ed.). Pearson.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1989). Ecological systems theory. In R. Vasta (Ed.), *Annals of child development: Six theories of child development* (pp. 187–249). JAI.
- Bronfenbrenner, U., & Ceci, S. J. (1994). Nature-nuture reconceptualized in developmental perspective: A bioecological model. *Psychological Review*, 101(4), 568–586.

- Bronfenbrenner, U., & Morris, P. A. (1998). The ecology of developmental processes. In W. Damon (Series Ed.) & R. M. Lerner (Vol. Ed.), *Handbook of child psychology: Vol. 1: Theoretical models of human development* (pp. 993–1028). Wiley.
- Buchholz, B., & DeHart, J. & Moorman, G. (2020). Digital citizenship during a global pandemic: Moving beyond digital literacy. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 64*, 11–17.
- Coiro, J., Coscarelli, C., Maykel, C., & Forzani, E. (2015). Investigating criteria that seventh graders use to evaluate the quality of online information. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, 59*(3).
- Colwell, J., Woodard, L., & Hutchison, A., (2018) Out-of-school and literature discussion. An exploration of adolescent’s participation in digital book clubs. *Online Learning Journal, 2*(22), 221–247.
- Compton-Lilly, C. (2016). *Reading students' lives: Literacy learning across time* (1st ed). Routledge.
- Compton-Lilly, C. (2017). The development of literate identities and practices across a decade: Families, friends, and schools. In K. Hinchman, & D. Appleman, *Adolescent literacies: A handbook of practice-based research*. Guilford Press.
- Compton-Lilly, C., & Nayan, R. (2015). Literacy capital in two immigrant families: longitudinal case studies. In P. Schmidt & A. Lazar (Eds.), *Reconceptualizing literacy in the new age of multiculturalism and pluralism* (2nd ed.). Information Age Publishing.

- Corson, D. (2002). Teaching and learning for market-place utility. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 5, 1–13.
- Creswell, J. W. (2017). *30 Essential skills for the qualitative researcher*. SAGE.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE.
- Crump, A. (2013). Fostering multilingual spaces in second and foreign language classrooms: Practical suggestions. *Journal of Language Teaching and Learning*, 3(2), 65–71.
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2000). *Critical race theory: The cutting edge*. Temple University Press.
- Douglas, E. P., & Jordan, S., & Lande, M. & Bumbaco. (2015). Artifact elicitation as a method of qualitative inquiry in engineering education. Proceedings of ASEE Annual Conference and Exposition.
- Faircloth, B. S. (2009). Making the most of adolescence: Harnessing the search for identity to understand classroom belonging. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 24(3), 321–348. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558409334248>
- Faulkner, V. (2005). Adolescent literacies within the middle years of schooling: A case study of a Year 8 homeroom. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 49(2), 108–117.
- Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. Pantheon.
- Freire, P., & Ramos, M. B. (1993). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Continuum.

- Gee, J. P. (2000a). Identity as an analytic lens for research in education. *Review of Research in Education*, 25, 99–125.
- Gee, J. P. (2000b). Teenagers in new times: A new literacy studies perspective. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 43 (5), 412–420.
- Gee, J. P. (2015). *Social linguistics and literacies: Ideology in discourses* (5th ed). Routledge.
- Gee, J. P. (2017). *Social linguistics and literacies: Ideology in discourses*. Routledge.
- Haddix, M., Garcia, A., & Price-Dennis, D. (2017). Youth, popular culture, and the media: Examining race, class, gender, sexuality, and social histories. In Hinchman, K. & Appleman, D. *Adolescent literacies: A handbook of practice-based research*. Guilford Press.
- Hall, L. (2012). The role of reading identities and reading abilities in students' discussions about texts and comprehension strategies. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 44(3), 239–272. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1086296X12445370>
- Harklau, L., & Moreno, R. (2019). The adolescent English language learner: Identities lost and found. In Goa, X. *Second handbook of English language teaching*. Springer International.
- Hayn, J. A., Kaplan, J. S., & Nolen, A. (2011). Young adult literature research in the 21st century. *Theory into Practice*, 50(3), 176–181.
- Heath, S. B. (1983). *Ways with words: Language, life, and work in communities and classrooms*. Cambridge University Press.

- Hinchman, K. A., & Appleman, D. A. (2017). *Adolescent literacies: A handbook of practice-based research*. Guilford Press.
- Hopper, R. (2006). The good, the bad and the ugly: Teachers' perception of quality. *English in Education, 40*(2), 55–70.
- Hull, G., & Schultz, K. (2001). Literacy and learning out of school: A review of theory and research. *Review of Educational Research, 71*(4), 575–611.
- Ives, D. (2011). Spotting foolbirds: Literacies hiding in plain sight in an urban English language arts classroom. *Journal of Literacy Research, 43*(3), 250–274.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1086296X11413721>
- Ivey, G., & Fisher, D., (2006) *Creating literacy-rich schools for adolescents*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Juzwick, M., VanDerHeide, J., Macaluso, K., Smith, A., Perez, N., Caughlin, S., Macaluso, M., & McKenzie, C. (2017). Constructing literacies in secondary English language arts curriculum. In K. Hinchman, & D. Appleman, *Adolescent literacies: A handbook of practice-based research*. Guilford Press.
- Kellner, D., & Share, J. (2019). The critical media literacy guide: Engaging media and transforming education. Leiden: Brill Sense 125 pp. ISBN: 978-90- 04-40452-6. *Central European Journal of Communication, 13*(26), 299–301.  
[https://doi.org/10.19195/1899-5101.13.2\(26\).11](https://doi.org/10.19195/1899-5101.13.2(26).11)
- Kinloch, V., Burkhard, T. & Penn, C. (2017). When school is not enough: Understanding the lives and literacies of black youth. *Research in the Teaching of English, 52*, 34–54.

- Kress, F. (2003). *Literacy in the new media age*. Routledge.
- Kress, G., & Bezemer, J. (2015). *Multimodality, learning and communication: A social semiotic frame* (1st ed.). Routledge.
- Kucer, S. B. (2014). *Dimensions of literacy: A conceptual base for teaching reading and writing in school settings*. L. Erlbaum Associates.
- Lam, W. (2006). Culture and learning in the context of globalization: Research directions. *Review of Research in Education*, 30, 213–237.
- Latour, B. (1991). *We have never been modern*. Harvard University Press.
- Leu, D. J. (2000). Our children's future: Changing the focus of literacy and literacy instruction. *Reading Teacher*, 53(5), 424–429.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/20204814>
- Leu, D. J., Jr., Castek, J., & Henry, L. A. (2004). The lessons that children teach us: Integrating children's literature and the new literacies of the Internet. *Reading Teacher*, 57(5), 496–503.
- Leu, D. J., McVerry, J.G., O'Byrne, W. I., Kiili, C., Zawilinski, L. Everett-Cacopardo, H., Kennedy, C., & Forzani, E. (2011). The new literacies of online reading comprehension: Expanding the literacy and learning curriculum. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 55(1), 5–14. <https://doi.org/10.1598/JAAL.55.1.1>
- Leu, D. J., Forzani, E., Rhoads, C., Maykel, C., Kennedy, C., & Timbrell, N. (2014). The new literacies of online research and comprehension: Rethinking the reading achievement gap. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 50(1), 37–59.  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.218>

- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. SAGE.
- Luke, A. (2000). Critical literacy in Australia: A matter of context and standpoint. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 43, 448–461.
- Luke, A., & Elkins, J. (2000). Special themed issue: Re/mediating adolescent literacies. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 43(5), 396.
- Mackey, M. (2001). The survival of engaged reading in the internet age: New media, old media and the book. *Children's Literature in Education*, 32(3), 167–189.
- Martinez, D. P., Morales, Z., & Aldana, U., (2017) Leveraging students' communicative repertoires as a tool for equitable learning. *Review of Research in Education*, 41(1), 477–499.
- McLeod, J., & Yates, L. (2006). *Making modern lives: Subjectivity schooling and social change*. SUNY.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998) *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. Jossey-Bass.
- Merriam, S., & Tisdell, E. (2015). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. Jossey-Bass.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2014) *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook*. Sage.
- Moje, E., Overby, M., & Tysvaer, K. M. (2008). The complex world of adolescent literacy: Myths, motivations, and mysteries. *Harvard Educational Review*; 78(1), 107–154. <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.78.1.54468j6204x24157>

- Moje, E., & Luke, A. (2009). Literacy and identity: Examining the metaphors in history and contemporary research. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 44, 415–437.
- Moje, E., Giroux, C., & Muehling, N. (2017). Navigating cultures and identities to learn literacies for life: Rethinking adolescent literacy teaching in a post-core world. In J. McLeod & L. Yates, (Eds.), *Making modern lives: Subjectivity schooling and social change*. SUNY.
- Moll, L. C. (2019). Elaborating funds of knowledge: Community-oriented practices in international contexts. *Literacy Research: Theory, Method, and Practice*, 68(1), 130–138. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2381336919870805>
- Montoro, L. (1995). To Kill a Mockingbird and its three Spanish translations: Analysis and conclusions. *Livius*, 7, 85–93.  
<https://buleria.unileon.es/bitstream/handle/10612/6371/To%20Kill%20a%20Mockingbird%20and%20its%20Three.pdf?sequence=1>
- New London Group. (1996). A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures. *Harvard Educational Review*, 66(1), 60–92.
- Poth, W., & von Unger, H., (2018). Current perspectives on research ethics in qualitative research. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 19(3), 1–13.
- Ravitch, D. (2010) *The death and life of the great American school system: How testing and choice are undermining education*. Basic Books.

- Ruddell, R. B., & Unrau, N. J. (1994). Reading as a meaning-construction process: The reader, the text, and the teacher. In R. B. Ruddell, M. R. Ruddell, & H. Singer (Eds.), *Theoretical models and processes of reading* (pp. 996–1056). International Reading Association.
- Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. (3rd ed.) SAGE.
- Scribner, S., & Cole, M. (1981). *The psychology of literacy*. University Press.
- Shannon, P., Edmondson, J., Ortega, L., Pitcher, S., & Robbins, C. (2009). Fifty years of federal government involvement in reading education. In *Changing literacies for changing times: An historical perspective on the future of reading research, public policy, and classroom practices* (pp. 249–265). Routledge Taylor & Francis Group. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203875186>
- Smith, M. W., & Wilhelm, J. D. (2002). *Reading doesn't fix no Chevys: Literacy in the lives of young men*. Heinemann.
- Solórzano, D. G., & Yosso T. J. (2002). Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for education research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8(1), 23–44. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107780040200800103>
- Spradley, J. P. (1979). *The ethnographic interview*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Tesch, R. (2013). *Qualitative research: Analysis types and software tools*. Routledge.
- Texas Education Agency. (2019). Texas essential knowledge and skills TEKS for kindergarten-grade 12. [https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/Kinder\\_TEKS\\_0819.pdf](https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/Kinder_TEKS_0819.pdf)

- Tracey, D., & Mandel Morrow, L. (2017). *Lenses on reading: An introduction to theories and models* (3rd ed.). Guilford Press.
- VanWynsberghe, R., & Khan, S. (2007). Redefining case study. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 6(2), 80–94.
- Weiner-Levey, N., & Popper-Giveon, A. (2013). The absent the hidden and the obscured: reflections on “dark matter” in qualitative research. *Quality and Quantity*, 47, 2177–2190.
- Wilson, S. (2007). The times, they are changed: The revolution of new literacies. *New England Reading Association Journal*, 43(1). 63–69.
- World Health Organization. (2020). *Adolescent health*. [https://www.who.int/health-topics/adolescent-health#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/adolescent-health#tab=tab_1)
- Wortham, S. (2005). *Learning identity: The joint emergence of social identification and academic learning*. Cambridge University Press.
- Wortham, S. (2011). Youth cultures and education. *Review of Research in Education*, 35, vii–xi.
- Ziff, P. (1960). *Semantic analysis*. Cornell University.

APPENDIX A  
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The researcher will conduct a one-on-one, face-to-face, semi-structured, in-depth interview with each of the seven participants who were purposely selected to participate in this case study. As minors, the participants were permitted, through consent, to participate by a parent or guardian who is 18 years of age or older. The interview participants in this study will be seven students who are currently enrolled in a ninth-grade English Language Arts course. Before each interview takes place, the researcher will review a general informational letter about the purpose of this study, and she also will review a letter of informed assent required for participation in this study. She will answer the participant's questions related to the study and the interview process before conducting the interview. Before the interview begins, the researcher will obtain the participant's permission to participate in this case study by asking them to sign the letter of informed assent. After a signature is obtained, the researcher will provide the participant with a copy of this letter. To maintain anonymity, the results of each interview will be reported under a pseudonym which the participant will select at this time. All responses and notes from each participant will be recorded under their respective pseudonym.

### **Purpose of the Interview**

The purpose of the interview will be to gather data related to the research questions. To ensure that students understand the questions, they will be framed in their native language, which means that they contain words and language that are familiar to them (Spradley, 1979).

The researcher will conduct each interview on location at an urban Texas High School where the participants attend. The interview will last for 40 to 90 minutes, and it will involve three parts:

1. Open-ended questions focusing on student identities in and out of school. Additional probing questions will occur to obtain in-depth responses and clarification as needed.
2. A word choice activity focused on identities where students select words/phrases/symbols which they identify.
3. Eleven open-ended questions related to experiences in their ELAR classrooms with additional probing questions to obtain in-depth responses and clarification as needed.

### **Part 1 Identity Questions**

1. Identity means how we describe ourselves. When you are at home how do you describe who you are and what you do? How would your family describe who you are and what you do? How would your friends describe who you are and what you do?
2. How do you describe yourself at school? What do you like to do at school?
3. How would teachers describe you and what you do at school? How would other students describe you?

The researcher will ask each question and give ample time for the student to respond. When the student finishes speaking, the researcher will wait five seconds before probing or asking the next question. Then the researcher will probe each question at least one time to generate richer descriptions. After the student responds, the researcher will rephrase a portion of the answer and probe. For example, “you said (rephrase) tell me more about what you meant” or “you said (rephrase) say more about that”.

## **Part 2 Identity Word Choice Activity**

The researcher will take digital photographs of the word choice activity, and will assign the results to each student, respectively. In addition, the researcher will audiotape the interview questions and responses using a transcription recording program (Sonix Transcription), and she will later transcribe and analyze the participant's responses to determine emergent themes.

The word choice activity will ask students to select a series of words that are grouped according to Gee's (2000b) description of the four identities outlined in "Identity as a Lens for Educational Research." The potential outcome for these lists is wide-ranging, so to compile a more precise list, I consulted the counseling team, administrative team, and the academic leadership team at the high school to establish the list of N-identities and I-Identities which are assigned by nature and by the school as an institution. The words in the D-identity and A-identity categories were then checked by adolescent students in a pilot round to ensure that they included common terms or expressions, in their native voice, that explained these identities as they saw them.

The word activity will consist of two rounds. In each round, the students will be asked to select 10 of the 40 words. In the first round, the students will be asked to select the words that they feel best to describe their out-of-school identity. The words will be established from demographics in the students' archival data which will provide many of the N-identity words. For the N-identities, I will continue my justification of the Big Five (Asian, Black/African American, Native American, Latinx, and White) as cited by Delgado & Stefancic (2013), which as I explained above is known by the researcher to be

a social construct, but for the sake of the way that demographics are noted in the archival data, this terminology will remain. I, D, and A-identity words for the activity were be provided by teachers, counselors, and adolescent students themselves.

In the second round, students will be asked to select the words that they feel best to describe their identity in their ELAR classroom. The words will be selected without the students having any knowledge of which categories each of the words falls into within the matrix below. After each round, the researcher will direct the student to explain why they selected at least two of the words based on their initial response to the open-ended questions about identity. This will occur because a student chooses something that contracts their narrative responses in the first part of the interview. The researcher will take pictures of each student's selections in response to both rounds of questions.

### **Part 3 Experiences in ELAR Classrooms Questions**

---

Question Type (Spradley, 1979)	Sample Questions
Descriptive	Tell me about your English class. Then probe. Please describe the activities, digital devices, and apps that you use in your English class? Why do you think your teacher uses these? Please describe the activities, digital devices, and apps that you use outside of school. Why do you prefer those apps?
Structural	What types of books/stories/themes/characters do you like to read about in your ELAR class? What types of apps would you prefer to use in your ELAR class? What types of books/stories/themes/characters and apps would you prefer to use to show your teacher that you understand the material in your ELAR class? Why?

After you read something in class, how would you prefer, if you had the choice, to show the teacher you understood what you read? What do you think works best for you?

After you read something in class, how would you **NOT** prefer, if you had the choice, to show the teacher you understood what you read? What do you think works best for you?

Contrast

What are the differences between the books and apps that you use at home and the ones that you use in ELAR class?

What books and apps relate the most to who you are outside of school?

. What books and technologies/apps in your ELAR class relate to who you are the least?

. What books and technologies/apps in your ELAR class do you think will benefit you the most in the real world?

---

APPENDIX B  
ARCHIVAL DATA COLLECTION PROTOCOL

### **Procedures for Archival Data Review**

The researcher will review data from existing school and Texas Education Agency records. Specific archival data will include the participant's demographic data (i.e. identified race, home language), 2018-2019 STAAR (State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness) scores, and results of a materials survey which the students completed their 8th-grade year that was issued by the school district. The survey, which is not a formal part of this study, but does lend information regarding the student's A-Identities, as they reported them during the February of their 8<sup>th</sup>-grade year. (See Appendix F) Anonymity will be secured for all individual students, and the data used will not cite any individual's identity or their personalized records. All personal information that leads to the identification of the participants will be kept confidential to the maximum extent possible. The researcher will do everything she can to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants. She will not tell anyone outside of the research team about the participants who were in this study or what types of data were reviewed about them.

### **Purpose of the Archival Data Review**

The purpose of reviewing demographic data for this case study is to establish the potential influence of the student's N-identities which are explained in Chapter 2. The purpose of reviewing the students' 2018-2019 STARR scores is to explore potential influences on the student's I-identities, which are also explained in Chapter 2. The results of this analysis will be discussed in a research report that will be written and submitted for a graduate dissertation. The archival data will be displayed in tables and

charts in a research paper, and the paper will be shared with the researcher's advisor and advisory board. No actual names of employees or students will be included in the paper.

APPENDIX C  
EXAMINATION OF ARTIFACTS PROTOCOL

### **Procedures for Artifact Review**

The researcher will keep a memorandum from the interviews as well as a journal. In addition, the researcher will capture results from the word activity explained in Appendix A. The results will not capture the images of any individual students, nor will these pictures note the actual names of any students. The artifacts will be collected without disturbing the setting.

The researcher will consider the following questions from Marshall & Rossman (2015):

1. How might using these artifacts harm the organization or individuals, even though they are not specifically identified?
2. Could analysis and writing about these materials denigrate those who produced them? In what ways?
3. Could the researcher be viewed as an artifact “lurker”? A spy?
4. Is my journal purposeful? Does it disclose troublesome information?
5. Would the contents of the artifacts cause the participants to feel exposed or that their privacy has been violated? (p. 167)

### **Purpose of Artifact Review**

The researcher agrees with Marshall & Rossman (2015), that these artifacts will add depth and richness to the study. Furthermore, the interviews and archives will provide additional material to prevent the study from reaching erroneous conclusions.

APPENDIX D

SYLLABUS FOR ELAR CLASS PROVIDED BY TEACHERS

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

Welcome to English I! English consists of complex learning objectives, expanding and developing skills in critical literacy, vocabulary development, grammar, writing about literature and non-fiction, and recognition and proper use of the literary elements. Authors and works of literature are chosen in alignment to prepare for sophomore, junior and senior English classes. Works are at a reading and content level appropriate for an English I. This course stresses incorporates analysis of poetry, prose, short stories, non-fiction, and both classic and contemporary novels. Writing assignments emphasize the successful development of personal style and expression.

## **EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENT LEARNING (TEKS):**

Are available online at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/teks/> (Links to an external site.) or via the DISD webpage.

## **MYP MISSION STATEMENT**

The MYP (Middle Years Program) covers the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Grade portion of the International Baccalaureate. The IB aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable, and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect. To this end, the organization works with schools, governments, and international organizations to develop challenging programs of international education and rigorous assessment. These programs encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate, and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.

## **AIMS**

As a part of the Middle Years Program (MYP) of the International Baccalaureate program, the teaching and study of English aim to encourage and enable the student to:

- use the language as a vehicle for thought, creativity, reflection, learning, and self-expression, as well as a tool for personal growth, social interaction, and for developing relationships within the international community
- comprehend more clearly aspects of their own culture and those of other cultures by exploring the interdependence of human beings through a variety of works
- explore the many facets of the language through the use of media and information technology
- develop the skills involved in speaking, listening, reading, writing, and viewing in a variety of contexts respond appropriately to a variety of texts
- read widely to promote a lifelong interest in language and literature, and develop a critical and creative approach to studying and analyzing literature

- develop language skills through interdisciplinary work consider the role of literature both culturally and historically reflect on the learning process in various ways and at various stages
- empathize with real people and fictional characters as and when appropriate

## ROLE OF THE MYP GLOBAL CONTEXT

Throughout the year, all MYP Global Context will be addressed. Teaching and learning in global contexts support the IB’s mission to develop “inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect”. Using global contexts in planning and teaching helps learners by providing relevance and meaning, which may lead to increased student engagement.

## UNITS OF STUDY

### Fall Semester

**Under Pressure**-short stories, literary texts, and analytical writing

**Navigating Complexities**-Drama and literary text, Expository writing

### Spring Semester

**Influence**-Persuasive speeches, Expository writing

**Looking Forward**- Nonfiction (inquiry and research), Expository writing

## METHODS OF ASSESSMENT

Classroom assessment methods in English I will cover a range of assessment methodologies, including selected response, constructed response, and performance-based assessments such as performance tasks, portfolios, teacher observations, and conferences which will be evaluated using MYP criterion rubrics in knowledge, concepts, skills and organization/presentation, modified writing rubrics and a performance-based rubric created by DHS English teachers.

## ASSESSMENT

**Major Summative** (Essays, Tests, Projects) 70%

**Minor Summative** (quizzes, class assignments...) 30%

- Your assigned readings, classwork, projects serve to reinforce the current topics of study and must be completed by the assigned due dates to be effective. A failure to turn in assignments on time impedes class progression and interrupts the education

process. **Parents, we ask for your support and guidance in helping your students meet deadlines.**

- **Specific grading guidelines are available in the DISD grading policy.**
- **Extra Credit:** Extra credit is in direct violation of district, school, and department policies and will not be made available under any circumstances.

## **ACADEMIC HONESTY**

Plagiarism, copying, cheating, claiming someone else's work as your own, and/or any other form of academic dishonesty may result in both academic and disciplinary repercussions and are at the discretion of the teacher. All school policies will be followed in regards to academic dishonesty.

## **HOME ACCESS CENTER**

To sign up for Home Access Center (HAC), go to the DISD Parent home page: <http://www.dentonisd.org/tab/parents> (Links to an external site.). There is a list of options on the left side of the page. From the menu, select Home Access Center (HAC). Follow the instructions to sign up for HAC.

## **Course Specific Guidelines and Procedures**

**Participation:** You will be expected to participate in class discussions and readings.

**Group Work:** When taking part in group activities you will not be graded as a group but as individuals. This ensures that all group members are participating to earn their grades.

**Daily Work/Homework:** If a student in our class has homework it is almost always due to them not finishing their work in class. Homework will not be sent home daily.

**Taking Notes:** Students are required to take notes. A spiral notebook labeled with your name and an English one is needed for this class. Any lesson given by the teacher in any format needs to be documented with notes.

**Writers Notebook: Each student will be required to purchase a hard-back composition notebook for my class.**

**Please label it with your name and English I.** We will write in this book daily. The student must have this notebook with them daily. Each student will decorate their notebook for added character and identification.

**Due Dates:** Due dates are **firm** and can be found in the calendar section in Canvas.

**Online:** Work will have a digital submission portal. Please be aware of due dates.

**In-person:** There is a designated turn-in tray for each class period. It is the student's responsibility to make sure the work is put where it belongs. If any student is caught taking another student's work from the tray, an automatic tutorial time will be set, and the student will have an additional assignment to make up for that grade, as well as parent contact.

**Academic Integrity Policy-Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is a violation of the Denton ISD Academic Integrity Policy. Plagiarism, by definition, is “to use and pass off (the ideas or writings of another) as one’s own.” Plagiarizing a paper will result in the following consequences: Zero on the assignment, parent contact, ISS, and the student's file will be documented. There are no warnings given for those who plagiarize.

APPENDIX E

8th GRADE MATERIALS SURVEY



## Reading Survey

Denton High School is getting new books, and we want your input!

Please answer the questions below to help us choose what books to buy.

Your email address ([bhokamp@g.dentonisd.org](mailto:bhokamp@g.dentonisd.org)) will be recorded when you submit this form. Not you? [Switch account](#)

\* Required

### Book Ratings

Rate the books you've read below.

	Haven't read it.	Loved it!	Liked it.	Didn't like it.	Hated it.
The Border Murders	<input type="radio"/>				
Uprooted	<input type="radio"/>				
A Long Way Gone	<input type="radio"/>				
Lincoln's Grave Robbers	<input type="radio"/>				
Hey Kiddo	<input type="radio"/>				
We Beat the Streets	<input type="radio"/>				

War Cross	<input type="radio"/>				
Legend	<input type="radio"/>				
Among the Hidden	<input type="radio"/>				
Uglies	<input type="radio"/>				
Matched	<input type="radio"/>				
The Giver	<input type="radio"/>				
Misunderstood	<input type="radio"/>				
Claudette Colvin	<input type="radio"/>				
The Other Wes Moore	<input type="radio"/>				
Unbroken	<input type="radio"/>				
Life in Motion	<input type="radio"/>				
The Playbook	<input type="radio"/>				
Fever 1793	<input type="radio"/>				
Before We Were Free	<input type="radio"/>				
Code of Honor	<input type="radio"/>				
Chains	<input type="radio"/>				
A Night Divided	<input type="radio"/>				

Prisoner B	<input type="radio"/>				
Trapped: How the World Rescued 33 Miners From 2,000 Feet Below the Chilean Desert	<input type="radio"/>				
The Warrior's Heart Becoming a Man of Compassion and Courage	<input type="radio"/>				
A Long Walk to Water	<input type="radio"/>				
Phineas Gage: A Gruesome But True Story about Brain Science	<input type="radio"/>				
Witches	<input type="radio"/>				
Brown Girl Dreaming	<input type="radio"/>				
Lost in Outer Space	<input type="radio"/>				
The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind	<input type="radio"/>				
Bomb	<input type="radio"/>				
The Boys Who Challenged Hitler	<input type="radio"/>				

I am Malala	<input type="radio"/>				
Small Steps, The Year I Got Polio	<input type="radio"/>				
One of the Murphys	<input type="radio"/>				
Out of My Mind	<input type="radio"/>				
The Thing About Jellyfish	<input type="radio"/>				
Ghost	<input type="radio"/>				
Refugee	<input type="radio"/>				
Bridge to Terabithia	<input type="radio"/>				
Whirligig	<input type="radio"/>				
The Outsiders	<input type="radio"/>				
The Glory Field	<input type="radio"/>				
The Adventures of Tom Sawyer	<input type="radio"/>				
Stargirl	<input type="radio"/>				
Out of the Dust	<input type="radio"/>				
Night	<input type="radio"/>				

Night	<input type="radio"/>				
Hound of the Baskervilles	<input type="radio"/>				
And Then There Were None	<input type="radio"/>				
White Lilacs	<input type="radio"/>				
The Watsons Go to Birmingham	<input type="radio"/>				
The Dark is Rising	<input type="radio"/>				
The Cay	<input type="radio"/>				
Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry	<input type="radio"/>				
Maniac McGee	<input type="radio"/>				
Homecoming	<input type="radio"/>				
Holes	<input type="radio"/>				
Freak the Mighty	<input type="radio"/>				
A Christmas Carol	<input type="radio"/>				
Tuck Everlasting	<input type="radio"/>				
The Westing Game	<input type="radio"/>				
Sign of the Beaver	<input type="radio"/>				

Number the Stars

Lupita Manāna

Journey to Topaz

The Boy in the Striped Pajamas

A Wrinkle in Time

What school do you currently attend? \*

McMath

Calhoun

As a 9th grader, I plan to take \*

Honors English

Regular English

Reading books is something I like to do. \*

Never

Not very often

Sometimes

Often

I think reading is \_\_\_\_\_.\*

- a boring way to spend time
- an OK way to spend time
- an interesting way to spend time
- a great way to spend time

Reading is \_\_\_\_\_.\*

- very easy for me
- kind of easy for me
- kind of hard for me
- very hard for me

What types of texts do you read the most (choose 3) \*

- Books
- Magazines
- Newspapers
- Online articles
- Emails
- Tweets
- Text messages
- Snap Chat posts

APPENDIX F  
STUDENT MEMBER CHECK EXIT QUESTIONNAIRE

Student Exit Questionnaire  
Student Identities in the ELAR Classroom  
Student Name:

---

1. When you are in ELAR class whose voice matters most:
  - a. Your family
  - b. Your teacher
  - c. Your friends
  - d. Your own voice
  
2. What technology would you prefer to use to learn ELAR in your ELAR classroom?
  - a. Textbook/novels/ and pen/paper
  - b. Google Classroom/Canvas
  - c. Tic Tok/Youtube or other media platforms
  - d. A combination of traditional and new tech platforms
  
3. When you do an assignment would you rather
  - a. Work alone
  - b. Work in a group
  
4. What influences your interest in the stories that you read in class the most?
  - a. The experiences and background of your family
  - b. The recommendation of your teacher
  - c. The recommendation of an online book club
  - d. The recommendation of a friend in class
  
5. What do you find you most relate to about the characters from the stories you have read in your ELAR class?
  - a. Their culture
  - b. Their age
  - c. Their personalities
  - d. The choices that they make in the story
  
6. Would you prefer to talk to your teacher:
  - a. Face-to-face
  - b. Through Google Classroom/Canvas
  - c. Through instant message
  
7. Would you prefer to talk to your friends:
  - a. Face-to-face

- b. Through Google Classroom/Canvas
  - c. Through instant message
8. Would you prefer to talk to your family:
- a. Face-to-face
  - b. Through Google Classroom/Canvas
  - c. Through instant message
9. Who are your literacy choices most influenced by when you are at home?
- a. Your family
  - b. Your friends/social groups in school
  - c. Your friends/social groups online
  - d. Social media influencers
10. Who are your literacy choices most influenced by when you are in your ELAR class?
- a. Your family
  - b. Your friends/social groups in school
  - c. Your friends/social groups online
  - d. Social media influencers
11. In general, if you are learning something new where do you go first?
- a. A family member
  - b. Google
  - c. YouTube
  - d. Your teacher
12. What book would you be more likely to finish?
- a. One that you selected yourself
  - b. On that, your teacher selected for you
13. What book would you be more likely to finish?
- a. A graphic novel
  - b. A book on tape that someone reads to you
14. If you had one way to produce a character analysis which way, would you choose?
- a. A Snap story
  - b. A written essay
  - c. An Instagram post
  - d. A blog post
15. What form is requested MOST in your ELAR class to show understanding?



