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TRANSPLANTED APPALACHIANS' PERSPECTIVES OF CULTURALLY RELEVANT TOPICS/TEXTS AND HOW THESE TOPICS/TEXTS AID IN THEIR READING COMPREHENSION

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Digital Object Identifier: https://doi.org/10.13023/etd.2023.052

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TRANSPLANTED APPALACHIANS' PERSPECTIVES OF CULTURALLY RELEVANT TOPICS/TEXTS AND HOW THESE TOPICS/TEXTS AID IN THEIR READING COMPREHENSION

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in the
College of Education
at the University of Kentucky

By
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Lexington, Kentucky
2023

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

TRANSPLANTED APPALACHIANS' PERSPECTIVES OF CULTURALLY RELEVANT TOPICS/TEXTS AND HOW THESE TOPICS/TEXTS AID IN THEIR READING COMPREHENSION

The purpose of this research study was to understand Transplanted Appalachians' perspectives of culturally relevant topics/texts and how these topics/texts aid in their reading comprehension. This culturally relevant study was framed using Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, Barton and Hamilton's (1998) literacy as a social practice, and Rosenblatt's (1994) transactional theory. Research participants included five transplanted Appalachian adults from the Central Appalachian Region. The research methods included one introductory interview, four think-alouds, four post think-aloud interviews, and four Cultural Relevance Rubrics. Results from the data sources revealed the participants strongly related to six cultural themes including: community, authentic Appalachian experiences (e.g., settings, characters, and experiences), disliking vulgar language (i.e., cussing), disliking alcohol (i.e., drinking alcohol), dignity of work/dedication to work, and personal independence. Interview data and Cultural Relevance Rubrics revealed participants viewed the cultural relevance of texts on a spectrum of less to more culturally relevant rather than a binary categorization of culturally relevant or non-culturally relevant. In addition, think-aloud data revealed research participants utilized more instances of strategic processing and monitored their comprehension more often when reading the non-culturally relevant texts than the culturally relevant texts. This may suggest that the participants were unfamiliar with the non-culturally relevant texts perhaps resulting in the increase of strategic processing and comprehension monitoring. Thus, the educational implications of this research recommend for practitioners of transplanted Appalachians that they implement the six cultural themes into their daily instruction as a method of contextualizing instruction. Further, practitioners may want to use topics/texts with these six cultural themes as these may assist in meaning making for transplanted Appalachians and should provide a relevant framework for teaching comprehension strategies. Additional research could examine how well transplanted Appalachians comprehend more culturally relevant topics/texts compared to less culturally relevant texts.

KEYWORDS: Appalachians, Culturally Relevant Instruction, Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy, Reading Comprehension, Think-Alouds

Kathryn E. H. Smith

(Name of Student)

April 19, 2023

Date

TRANSPLANTED APPALACHIANS' PERSPECTIVES OF CULTURALLY RELEVANT TOPICS/TEXTS AND HOW THESE TOPICS/TEXTS AID IN THEIR READING COMPREHENSION

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Date

DEDICATION

"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope"
Jeremiah 29:11 (New American Standard Bible, 1962/1998).

I dedicate this dissertation to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I thank Him for His everlasting love and strength which has sustained and enabled me to complete this dissertation. You are the Faithful One and I will love you forever! May this work bring glory to Your Name!

Also, I dedicate this dissertation to my wonderful husband for his endless prayers, love, and encouragement. Thank you for believing in me and helping me to believe in myself. You are a precious gift from the Lord and I treasure you so dearly!

Lastly, I dedicate this dissertation to my three precious sons who are the greatest blessing and joy of my life. My sweet boys, I have never been prouder of anything than being your mommy and I believe you will accomplish wonderful things for the Lord. Always remember, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, and not unto men" Colossians 3:23 (New American Standard Bible, 1962/1998). Mommy loves you forever!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The following dissertation, while an individual work, benefited from the insights and direction of several people. First, my Dissertation Co-Chairs, Dr. Janice Almasi and Dr. Kristen Perry exemplify the high-quality scholarship and professionalism to which I aspire. In addition, Dr. Perry and Dr. Almasi provided timely and instructive comments and evaluation at every stage of the dissertation process, allowing me to complete this project on schedule. But more importantly, they are wonderful examples of caring and supportive teachers who gave endlessly for my success-thank you! Next, I wish to thank the complete Dissertation Committee including Dr. Mary Shake, Dr. Katherine McCormick and outside reader, Dr. Daniel Kahl, respectively. Each individual provided insights that guided and challenged my thinking, substantially improving the finished product.

In addition to the technical and instrumental assistance above, I received equally important assistance and love from family and wonderful friends. First, my dad, who is the first teacher and mentor in my life. You have always believed in me and encouraged me to accomplish anything I set my mind to-thank you for being my biggest cheerleader! Second, my mom who earnestly prayed for me and joyfully supported my endeavors -thank you for your faithful prayers and love! Third, Mary Morrison, my spiritual mother, and beloved friend-thank you for your endless love, prayers, and support. You are truly a gift from God! Next, I wish to thank the participants of my study for their time and energy invested into this study and the small University which allowed me to utilize their students/faculty. Finally, I sincerely thank everyone who prayed for me, encouraged me, and who believed in me! May God richly bless each one of you!

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CHAPTER 1

Seeing the Invisible

Topic and Rationale

Appalachians have been described as the invisible minority both unknown and unnoticed (Philliber et al., 1981; Purcell-Gates, 1995). Appalachians have unique social and cultural practices, speak Appalachian English, and self-identify as deeply connected to their place and family network. The definition of Appalachia according to the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) and utilized in this research is a geographical area which spans across 13 states and includes a population of over 25 million people (ARC, n.d.). Oberman and Miller (2016) argued that Appalachian students have unique cultural norms which separate them from the White mainstream culture. Mainstream culture has easily been recognized as having positions of power (Perry, 2012) and it does not widely include Appalachians. Unfortunately, negative stereotypes toward Appalachians as poor and illiterate are still very prevalent in popular media and academia (Donehower, 2003). Research has shown that Appalachian students have had a history of educational disparities compared to mainstream students (Hollings et al., 1994). The lack of job prospects in the Appalachian Region has forced many families out of the area in search of other economic opportunities (Mather, 2004). As a result, the percentage of transplanted Appalachian students in classrooms outside Appalachia has increased. However, Ladson-Billings (1995) explained that most preservice teachers are from White mainstream backgrounds and lack cultural experiences other than their own. Mahoney and Shamber (2004) explained that teacher candidates' cultural awareness could be enhanced with their teacher preparation courses. Unfortunately, transplanted Appalachian students are likely to be unnoticed and unknown as a minority group, and teachers are less likely to be prepared to educate these students unless they receive specific training on culturally relevant instruction (CRI) and/or culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) for Appalachians (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Paris, 2012).

Diversity and Poverty

Teachers may have misconceptions of how to teach literacy to diverse students (Brock et al., 2007), especially those living in poverty or having a low-socioeconomic status. Given that the Central Region of Appalachia has the highest poverty rate of all 5 areas of Appalachia, it is likely that these transplanted Appalachians have experienced poverty at some point (Pollard & Jacobsen, 2021). McGill-Franzen et al. (2006) found that the higher the student's poverty, the lower the reading achievement for third graders. In addition, Reynolds and Fish's (2010) research with rural Appalachian elementary students from low-SES homes determined the children as having relative weaknesses with vocabulary knowledge and pragmatic judgement. This is concerning because vocabulary size is strongly related to reading comprehension (Nation et al., 2004).

Rural Appalachia

Teachers may face additional difficulties teaching literacy to transplanted Appalachian students because those students most likely migrated from rural areas as opposed to urban Appalachia. Thirty-eight of the 54 Kentucky Appalachian counties are rural and do not border metropolitan areas (ARC, n.d.). This is relevant because transplanted Appalachian students from rural counties may have had fewer educational resources including no home computers, no home internet, and limited access to broadband (ARC, n.d.; Justice et al., 2017). Educational opportunities and school resources most likely contributed to the differences in third graders' reading achievement between rural and non-rural children who achieved low in kindergarten (Graham & Teague, 2011). Also, students from rural settings are more likely to have a mother with only a high school education compared to suburban and urban students (National Center for Educational Statistics, n.d.). Justice et al.'s (2017) study with rural Appalachian children determined that about 30% of kindergarten children fell into the socio-behavioral risk profile (i.e., attention, self-regulation, empathy, and cooperation) and 50% fell into academic risk profile (i.e.,

language, literacy, and math) which means these students were not adequately ready for kindergarten. Maternal education and family income were factors that improved students' kindergarten readiness (Justice et al., 2017). The previous mentioned findings were supported by Currenton and Justice's (2008) research with rural Appalachian children which demonstrated that children with more educated mothers performed better on standardized measures of preliteracy skills relating to print concepts and alphabetic knowledge than children with less educated mothers (Currenton & Justice; 2008). Print concepts have proven to be crucial in later literacy achievement and alphabetic knowledge is closely correlated to later reader and spelling achievement (Strickland & Shanahan, 2004). These findings support the need for transplanted Appalachian students to be recognized as a unique population and for teachers to obtain specialized literacy instruction and/or CRI/CSP training for Appalachians.

Summary

The American College Testing (ACT) reported that 38% of recent graduates of 2020 from the state in which this study took place met the reading benchmark compared to the national average for students reading benchmark at 45% (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 2020). Since the year 2000, there has been an increased demand for highly trained literacy teachers prepared to instruct diverse students, students living in poverty, and/or students from rural areas including transplanted Appalachians ("Teaching All Children", 2000). Research studies have examined the effects of CRI/CSP regarding reading comprehension for diverse students including African Americans (Lee, 1993, 1995; Maloch, 2005; Rickford, 2001), Asian Americans (Kong & Fitch, 2002/2003; Kong & Pearson, 2003), English language learners (ELLs) (Ebe, 2010), Mexican Americans (May, 2011b; Zoch, 2017) and Native Hawaiians and Polynesians (Au, 1980; Au & Mason, 1981; Crowell & Au, 1976, 1981). But the body of research lacks evidence surrounding implementing CRI/CSP texts for Appalachians regarding reading comprehension. As such, this research was a case study which sought to understand more about

culturally relevant topics/texts for transplanted Appalachians and how these topics and texts aided in their reading comprehension. Specifically, the two goals of this study were: (a) to understand transplanted Appalachians' perspectives on topics/texts they view as culturally relevant, and (b) to determine how culturally relevant topics/texts aided in the reading comprehension of transplanted Appalachian adults. These goals were linked to the justification of the study and present findings beneficial for teachers working with transplanted Appalachian students in reading comprehension.

Background

CRI was originally developed by Ladson-Billings (1995) during her seminal work, which necessitates teachers produce students who do the following: (a) achieve academically, (b) maintain their cultural competence, and (c) are critically conscious. Paris (2012) introduced CSP as a re-mix of CRI because it pushed the boundaries of CRI by sustaining and fostering students' linguistic, literate, and cultural practices as part of the nature of schooling (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris, 2012).

The 2015-2019 American Community Survey distinguished Appalachia from the rest of the United States on areas such as: education, income, employment, disability, and race (Pollard & Jacobsen, 2021). In addition, the ARC divided Appalachia into 5 distinct regions according to the continuous areas of homogeneous characteristics such as: topography, demographics, and economic diversity (ARC, 2020). The Central Region of Appalachia has been identified as having distressed economic levels compared to the other subregions of Appalachia including the highest unemployment rate, the lowest per capita market income, and the highest poverty rate compared to the national averages (ARC, 2020).

Assumptions

My primary assumption of this study was Appalachians are underrepresented minorities (URM) as defined by individuals who have been denied access to and/or experienced institutionalized discrimination which has been revealed by the imbalance of representation in different groups such as education and employment (Emory University, n.d.). URM is a term that has been applied as place-based Appalachian populations such as rural Appalachians (Eller, 1989), urban Appalachians (Purcell-Gates, 1995), and both White and Black Southern Appalachians (Heath,1983).

My second assumption was that transplanted Appalachians refer to individuals who have moved out of the Appalachian region into a non-Appalachian region as described by the Appalachian Regional Commission. The 2015-2019 American Community Survey distinguished Appalachia from the rest of the United States on areas including: education, income, employment, disability, and race to name a few (Pollard & Jacobsen, 2021). Mather (2004) explained that the lack of job prospects in the Appalachian Region has forced many families out of the area in search of other economic opportunities. Therefore, I assumed that these individuals had moved out of Appalachia in pursuit of better economic opportunities including education (Mather, 2004) but this study did not exclude participants if they transplanted for other reasons (e.g., to be closer to family, healthcare services, etc.)

My third assumption was that the participants who self-identified as transplanted Appalachians based on geographic location (ARC, n.d.), their social and cultural practices (Obermiller & Maloney, 2016), and their spoken Appalachian English variety (Wolfram & Christian, 1976) were honest in their self-identification status and accurately answered questions asked in the data collecting process (i.e., survey, questionnaires, comprehension).

My fourth assumption was that transplanted Appalachians had variations in their opinions regarding culturally relevant texts and topics. Rogoff (2003) explained how different opinions exist among members of a community and challenges often surround knowing who

should represent the group. Also, I assumed there would be diversities across the transplanted Appalachians' social and cultural practices. Researchers described how there are variations in cultural practices among Appalachians and often there exist local heritages and traditions (Obermiller & Maloney, 2016; Rogoff, 2003).

Statement of Purpose

Ladson-Billings (2009) explained that culturally relevant teachers often viewed their students as experts of their lived experiences and excavated knowledge out of the students to uncover those background experiences. As such, the first purpose of this study was to understand transplanted Appalachians' perspectives on the topics/texts they considered culturally relevant which provided information regarding their background experiences.

In addition, Moll et al. (1992) discussed that households have funds of knowledge which are essentially culturally developed bodies of knowledge as well as skills that are crucial for the functioning of households and individuals. Funds of knowledge relate to culturally relevant texts because these texts provided cultural and historical knowledge and skills relevant to the readers which support their reading comprehension. Therefore, the second purpose of this study was to learn how culturally relevant texts assist in the reading comprehension of transplanted Appalachians. These purposes supported the goals to understand culturally relevant literacy topics/texts, and useful practices for assisting transplanted Appalachians in reading comprehension with the hopes of supporting the literacy achievement of millions of Appalachians.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study were:

1. What topics and/or texts are considered culturally relevant for transplanted Appalachian adults from their own perspective?

2. How do culturally relevant topics/texts aid in the reading comprehension of transplanted Appalachian adults?

Definitions and Clarification of Terms

The following terms were discussed throughout this research:

Appalachia: The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) described this as a geographical area which spans across 13 states and includes a population of over 25 million people (ARC , n.d.).

Appalachian: This term referred to individuals "who, whatever cultural practices they embrace or relational network in which they are embedded, maintain a physical or emotional attachment to the mountains and an Appalachian ethnic identity (or lack of a non-Appalachian ethnic identity)" including White, Black, and/or other races (Webb-Saunderhaus & Donehower, 2015, pp. 5-6). Further, Appalachians share values, beliefs, and ways of knowing and being in the world (Webb-Saunderhaus & Donehower, 2015). This definition was selected because it was agreed upon by scholars with Appalachian heritage and/or strongly identified as Appalachians. Also, it supported the purpose of this study to understand Appalachians' local perspectives. It is important to note that many Appalachians may not refer to themselves by this term but instead used terms such as mountain people, mountaineers, hill people, and/or hill folk (Webb-Saunderhaus & Donehower, 2015).

Appalachian English: A non-standard or non-mainstream variety of English and speakers of Appalachian English are instantly recognized by their language form (Wolfram & Christian, 1976). The Appalachian English dialect is unique in its vocabulary usage (e.g., using *britches* instead of *trousers/pants* or saying *afeared* which means afraid), pronunciation (e.g., saying *holler* for *hollow* or *winder* for *window*), and grammatical structures (e.g., adding the a-prefix such as a-running or using might should/could which means probably should/could) (Luu, 2018).

Central Appalachian Region: This sub-region of Appalachia consists of about 68 counties in two states (ARC, n.d.). The population consists of 94.3 % White people compared to the national average at 60.1 % (Pollard & Jacobsen, 2021; Jones et al., 2021). The minority population consists of 1.8 % Black people compared to the national average at 12.5%, and 1.8% Hispanic people compared the national average at 18.5% (Pollard & Jacobsen, 2021).

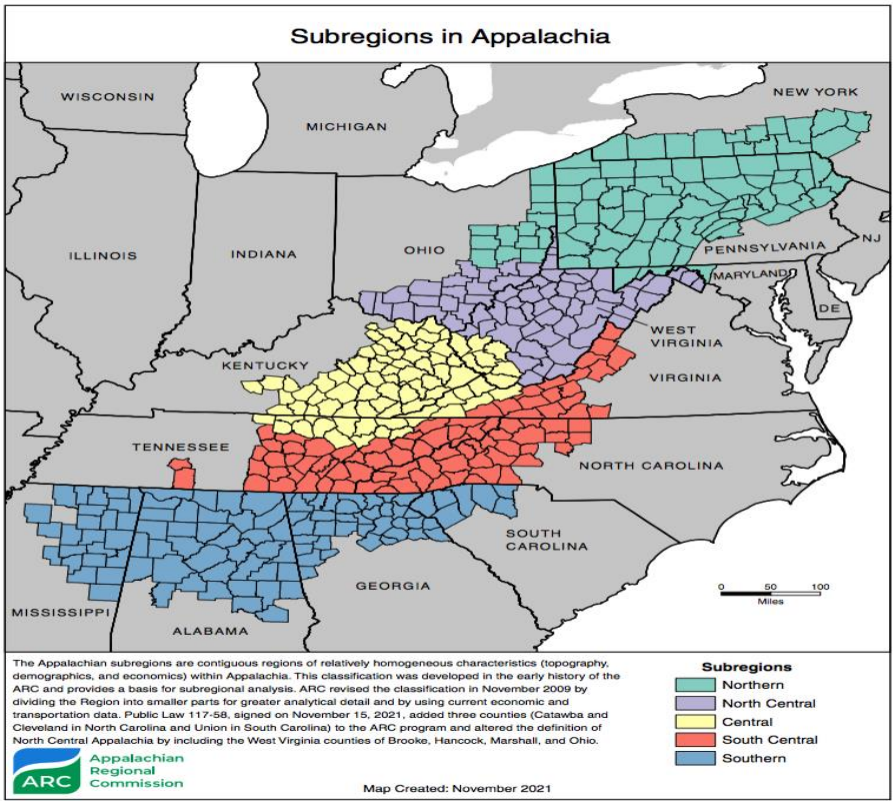


Figure 1.1 Subregions in Appalachia

Cognitive Strategies: This term was referred to as the "actions an individual selects deliberately to attain a particular goal" (Almasi & Fullerton, 2012, p. 1).

Discourse: Gee (1997) proposed two types of discourses. Discourse with a lower-case d referred to "connected stretches of language that makes sense" (p. 127). Discourse with a capital D referred to a type of identity kit which provide "instructions on how to act, talk, and often write, so as to take on a particular social role that other will recognize" (p. 127).

Reading Comprehension: This was described as "the process of constructing meaning while transacting with text" (Almasi and Fullerton, 2012, p. 113). In the transactional process the reader's construction of meaning was not contingent on only the text itself but also on the reader's background experiences and the context in which the reading took place. If these factors were changed in any way, then it may alter the meaning that was constructed by the reader (Almasi & Fullerton, 2010).

Reading Engagement: This term was described as "intrinsically motivated, builds knowledge, uses cognitive strategies, and interacts socially to learn from the text" (Guthrie et al., 2004, p. 404).

Reading Motivation: This term was related to the goals and beliefs that guide the reader's behavior (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).

Think-Aloud: Almasi and Fullerton (2012) defined think alouds as "a type of verbal report in which an individual expresses everything that he or she is thinking while performing a given task" (p. 88). Throughout this research, other terms were used to also mean think-aloud including, self-report, and/or verbal report (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995).

Transplanted Appalachians: This term referred to an individual who moved out of the Appalachia Regions described above and was currently residing in an area labeled as non-Appalachia for any period of time (ARC, n.d.). The use of "transplanted Appalachians" was consistent with Purcell-Gates' (1995) use of "urban Appalachians" because it explained how these individuals were situated within this cultural context and they often view the world from their status or membership as a transplanted Appalachian.

Underrepresented Minority: These were individuals who have been denied access to and/or experienced institutionalized discrimination which was revealed by the imbalance of representation in different areas such as education and employment (Emory University, n.d.). For this study, URM included Appalachians as they have had a history of educational disparities

compared to mainstream students (Eller-Powell, 1994), were denied access to positions of power (Pollard & Jacobsen, 2021), and labeled with negative stereotypes (Donehower, 2003).

Significance

The significance of this study is that the invisible minority (i.e., Appalachians) were seen and noticed as a minority group and considered as experts of their own culturally relevant topics/texts (Purcell-Gates, 1995). The second area of significance is that transplanted Appalachians' perspectives on culturally relevant topics/texts informed the researcher about how these topics/texts aid in their reading comprehension and further support the literacy and academic development of Appalachians.

The body of evidence demonstrates that children who did not develop age-appropriate literacy skills at least by the end of third grade are at an elevated risk of school failure (Snow & Matthews, 2016) and differences between high school dropouts and graduates could be seen by third grade (Lloyd, 1978). In Central Appalachia the high-school graduation rate is 79% and the rural areas of Appalachia are at 81% compared to the national average at 88% (Pollard & Jacobsen, 2021). Therefore, the above research on transplanted Appalachians provides insights on the ways in which culturally relevant materials can support comprehension.

Conclusion

Appalachians have been unnoticed and unknown in our society (Philliber et al., 1981; Purcell-Gates, 1995). Yet, the percentages of Appalachians leaving rural areas is about 3% and other regions of Appalachia have had a steady population loss going back several decades (Pollard & Jacobsen, 2021). Considering the Appalachian population changes, Appalachians have been moving transplanting into mainstream classrooms which means that teachers may be collaborating with transplanted students and families. While research has examined the effects of CRI/CSP with reading comprehension for diverse populations the body of research lacks evidence of the impacts of CRI/CSP with reading comprehension for transplanted Appalachians.

More research needs to be conducted exploring CRI/CSP with transplanted Appalachians regarding reading comprehension so we can better instruct these students.

CHAPTER 2

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Introduction to Theoretical Framework

For this case study, I believe that methods often reflect one's own theory (Purcell-Gates et al., 2011). As such, the lens used in this study is literacy as a social practice which is highly theoretical, and my foundational perspective (Purcell-Gates et al., 2011). To frame this study of culturally relevant instruction, I used Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, Barton and Hamilton's (1999) literacy as a social practice, and Rosenblatt's (1994) transactional theory.

First, Vygotsky's (1978, 1986) sociocultural theory focuses on learners' sociocultural (i.e., social, cultural, historical) contexts as the foundational components in shaping their learning and development. Next, Barton and Hamilton's (1999) social theory of literacy examines literacy within the social and communal aspects of people's daily lives and occurred in particular contexts (i.e., place, time, and purpose). Finally, Rosenblatt's (1994) transactional theory of reading provides insights into the reading process which includes a transaction involving the reader, the text, and the context (i.e., place, time, and purpose). Together, these three theories created a strong theoretical framework for understanding the multidimensional elements of CRI/CSP and the myriad ways that teachers approach working with transplanted Appalachian students.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory relates to the learning and development of children and adults. Specifically, Vygotsky emphasized (a) students' language and sociocultural experiences (i.e., social, cultural, historical contexts) shape their thoughts and development, (b) the importance of social interactions in students constructing knowledge, and (c) providing instruction in the student's zone of proximal development (ZPD).

Vygotsky (1978) emphasized that students' language and sociocultural experiences shape their thoughts and development. Even more, Vygotsky discussed the importance of social interactions in students' constructing knowledge. He argued that human learning required a social nature and involved a process in which the child grows into the intellectuals around them (Vygotsky, 1978). Thereby, the first two principles of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory are interrelated. In addition, Vygotsky recognized that the child's internal speech and reflective thought flowed out of their interactions with another person in their environment. Hence, these interactions impact the child's development and behavior (Vygotsky, 1978).

As previously mentioned, Vygotsky (1978) stressed the importance of social interactions as students construct knowledge. He highlighted the importance of student collaboration while constructing knowledge to solidify an understanding of the content (Vygotsky, 1978). In fact, Vygotsky argued that a child could accomplish more in collaboration with others and even reach beyond their actual mental age. Vygotsky believed that children constructed knowledge and moved forward developmentally through active play, collaboration, and discussion with others. In addition to this, Vygotsky explained that every function in the student's development occurred twice: first at the social level and later at the individual level or first between people and then inside the child's mind. Vygotsky believed relationships between individuals within their social environment was where the student's higher psychological functions including their attention, memory, and formation of concepts originated. This means that students not only learn from people within their social environments but explains how vital social learning is for the advancement of concepts and higher-level thinking.

Vygotsky (1978) argued that learning aimed at children's developmental levels already reached was ineffective because it lagged behind their understanding and did not provide room for advancement. Further, he proposed that "good learning" occurred when it was in advance of the child's development (Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, he defined the zone of proximal development (ZPD) as the distance between the student's actual development level or the

functions that have already matured and the level of potential development. Further, he explained ZPD as certain functions that were not yet matured but were in the process of maturation and would bloom into full maturation with the assistance of a more capable person. Similarly, Wood et al. (1976) introduced the scaffolding process, which enabled a novice to complete a task or solve a problem beyond their own ability with a tutor's assistance. Although Vygotsky did not use the term scaffolding, his ideas of ZPD represent a process similar to scaffolded instruction in which the adult controls the elements of certain task beyond the learner's capacity and allows the student to complete only certain elements that were within his or her range of competence (Wood et al., 1976).

Educational Implications of Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory was not prescriptive for teachers. However, his ideas regarding students' language and sociocultural experiences, the emphasis of social interactions in students constructing knowledge, and the ZPD, provides educators with a framework for understanding how students learn and develop. Further, Vygotsky's research on learning and development has educational implications which inform instructional practices because teaching methods often reflect one's own theory (Purcell-Gates et al., 2011). In practical terms, many educators have utilized culturally relevant instruction (CRI) as a method that supports learning and development in the ways that Vygotsky advocated (Lee, 1991; Meachan, 2001). Vygotsky's sociocultural theory aligns with two goals Ladson-Billings (1995) attributed to CRI including: to produce academically successful students and to produce culturally competent students.

First, Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory laid the foundation for integrating individual development as part of the sociocultural (i.e., social, cultural and historical) context (Rogoff, 2003). His theory provided valuable insights into how students' individual development must be understood within their sociocultural context instead of separating the two (Rogoff, 2003), and his work informs educators about ways to maximize students' academic success within this

sociocultural context. Therefore, Vygotsky's research about learning and development align with the first main goal of CRI to produce academically successful students.

Secondly, as previously mentioned, Vygotsky (1978) argued that all learning and development occurred within this sociocultural context which aligns with CRI's second goal to produce students who maintain their cultural competence (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Vygotsky argued for educators to understand how learning occurs and to recognize how higher thinking originates from students' sociocultural experiences (Vygotsky 1978). Vygotsky maintained that without studying the student's sociocultural history and biological roots the development of higher functions or thinking would be impossible. In other words, according to Vygotsky, students' progress and academic achievement would be stifled unless educators recognized the students' sociocultural backgrounds and made meaningful connections to these experiences (Meacham, 2001).

In practice, Vygotsky's view of learning and development occurring within sociocultural context have often resembled CRI teaching methods and/or learning environments (Meacham, 2001), and aligns with students maintaining their cultural competence. In fact, Au (1995) described Vygotsky's sociocultural theory as a holistic approach to learning because it considered the entire student including their cultural background, and language experiences as central in their learning and development. Similarly, CRI places students' culture at the center of instruction which serves as a medium for cultural competence and academic success (Powell et al., 2016). Although learning and teaching are different, they are related to each other as demonstrated here with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of learning and development intersecting with CRI and informing teachers' instructional practices with diverse learners.

Furthermore, Paris (2012) argued that CSP extends CRI by advocating for teachers to foster and sustain students' linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralisms as part of the school-wide program. This re-mix of CRI contributes to a deeper understanding of culture as both dynamic

and complex (Paris, 2012; Powell et al., 2016), and reconfirms CRI/CSP as an integral method for teaching in ways that aligned with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory of learning.

Summary

Educators have used Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory of learning to inform their instructional practices with diverse learners to produce academically successful students who maintained their cultural competence. For example, social constructivists believed that contextualizing instruction in meaningful ways for diverse students would promote academic success (Celaini et al., 2006; McIntyre et al., 2001). Also, Gay (2010) promoted the learning and development of diverse students in similar ways to Vygotsky when she defined culturally relevant teaching as "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of references, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them" (p. 31). In another study, Lee (1991) explained how culturally relevant literature provided a pedagogical scaffolding for underrepresented minority students. As previously stated, methodology often reflects our own theory (Purcell-Gates et al., 2011). From the evidence above and the studies mentioned, it can be determined that Vygotsky's sociocultural theory in practice often resembles CRI/CSP and informs teachers about the sociocultural nature of learning and development so they can produce students who are academically successful and culturally competent.

Literacy as a Social Practice

Literacy as a social practice was based upon research findings from education in the late 1980's (Barton & Hamilton,1998; Gee, 1989, 2015; Heath,1989; Purcell-Gates, 1995; and Street,1995). Since then, it has matured and been recognized as a widely accepted perspective. To better understand this lens and the standpoint taken in this research study, I discuss Barton and

Hamilton's six propositions regarding the nature of literacy and provide evidence from the previous mentioned research.

First, Barton and Hamilton emphasized that literacy is best understood as a set of social practices deduced from events which use written texts and spoken languages (1998). Literacy practices refer to the cultural ways of utilizing written language and it may also involve unobservable elements such as: values, attitudes, feelings, and social relationships (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Street, 1995). This relates to the current study because it provided the rationale for examining the social practices of transplanted Appalachians to discover and uncover their literacy practices.

The second proposition recognized was that different cultures possess different literacies in distinct domains such as home, workplace, and school. Each domain has a distinct discourse such as talking, acting, valuing, interpreting, and using written language (Barton & Hamilton, 1998). Gee (2015) also addressed Discourses as the strongest expressions of both personal and cultural identity. He defined Discourses with a capital "D" as the distinctive ways that people speak/listen and write/read coupled with the unique ways they act, interact, value, feel, dress, think, and believe with other people. Discourses are socially situated identities. Instead, discourses with a little "d" refer to language-in-use or the connected stretches of language such as stories, reports, or conversations. So, discourse with a little "d" is a part of Discourse with a capital "D."

Similarly, Street (1995) discussed the importance of understanding the local beliefs regarding literacy. He argued against the autonomous model of literacy which supposes literacy stands apart from social practices and it involves the mastery of literacy skills. In this view, the concept of literacy is very narrow and the idea is that the acquisition of literacy itself would lead to major impacts on social and cognitive skills. Instead, Street supported the ideological model which concentrates on the social practices of reading and writing and the culturally embedded nature of these practices. In his work in Iran, Street learned that different societies had diverse

views toward literacy education and that specialization in a particular area did not necessarily equate to career success within that society. In this current study, Appalachian culture impacted the different literacies and Discourses that were practiced, valued, and encouraged in distinct domains.

Next, Barton and Hamilton (1998) suggested literacy practices are shaped by social institutions which often reinforce certain literacy practices as valuable, significant, and globally accepted. Street (1995) also supported this idea when he explained how urban educators in Iran did not prepare students adequately for the commercial literacy they encountered in their rural workplaces. These types of schools simply reinforced the obvious literacy practices that were supported by government schools and did not recognize the hidden literacy embedded in the culture. As a result, the students that successfully graduated from government schools often struggled professionally compared to their peers who graduated from local schools which recognized the local literacies and cultural values of the community. This proposition relates to this study because it highlights the need for social institutions to recognize the cultural literacy practices of adult transplanted Appalachians and to provide instructional support and technical training that is culturally valued and beneficial for their future successes.

Fourth, literacy is viewed as being a part of a broader social goal and is usually a means to some other end (Barton & Hamilton, 1998). Therefore, literacy practices are often intentional and embedded into people's daily lives. This proposition relates to the current study because it provides a rationale and justification for examining the literacy practices of transplanted Appalachians in the broader context and motivations for use.

Finally, the fifth and sixth propositions are closely related so they are discussed together. Specifically, the fifth proposition described literacy as being historically situated; the literacy practices today were shaped and patterned after the historical literacy practices and social influences and within historical moments (Barton & Hamilton, 1998). Barton and Hamilton's sixth proposition explained that literacy practices change over time and new literacy practices are

acquired, invented, valued, and taught (1998). In this current study, the literacy practices of transplanted Appalachians were recognized as historically situated, evolving over time, and patterned after generations of significant social influences.

Barton and Hamilton's (1998) six propositions of the nature of literacy provided a unique lens for this research and for viewing culturally relevant instruction. They consider the social practices surrounding literacy and brings to the forefront how the learner's cultural practices impact their learning and development. Literacy as a social practice is the assumption that connects to CRI because it acknowledges the nature of literacy as embedded within the cultural practices and not as a separate set of skills to be mastered (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Street, 1995). Further, culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) pushes the boundaries of CRI to sustain and foster students' linguistic, literate, and cultural practices as part of nature of schooling (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris, 2012). As such, literacy as a social practice cradles CRI/CSP in a unique way which advocates for the student to maintain their cultural identity in the midst of the education process and to not squander their cultural heritage to the mainstream education system.

Rosenblatt's Transactional Theory of Reading

Rosenblatt's (1994) transactional theory provides insights into the reading process and consists of three equally important and interrelated parts: the reader, context, and the text. Rosenblatt explained that the reader and the text transact in a particular environment to create a dynamic reading event. This section provides a brief description of Rosenblatt's theory and follows with a section discussing how it aligns with CRI/CSP.

Rosenblatt (1994) described the first two elements of a reading event as the reader and the context. These elements are deeply related and are discussed simultaneously. The reader is an important element in Rosenblatt's transactional theory because the reader determines how the text itself is interpreted. In other words, the reader is active and builds a poem (i.e., interpretation) for

themselves using responses from the text. The reader pays attention to his/her own background experiences, feelings, images, and associations (Rosenblatt, 1994) which the text evokes within them. In addition, the reader constructs meaning using these associations and actively orders and corrects his interpretation as the text leads in this self-corrective process (Rosenblatt, 1994). Another aspect of the reading event involves the context (i.e., place, time, purpose). Rosenblatt stressed that the reader may reinterpret the text after he/she reads it again in a different environment. The text does not change but the reader and/or their purpose (i.e., context) for reading may have changed which may produce a new interpretation (i.e., poem). In other words, the reader brings their present personality to the text in a particular context to create a unique reading situation which will not occur again (Rosenblatt, 1994).

Next, Rosenblatt (1994) described the text as an essential element of the reading event. In fact, the text ignites two types of reading stances including the efferent (i.e., non-aesthetic) and aesthetic. Rosenblatt characterized the readers' stance as their relationship to the text and the activities he/she carries out in relation to the text. Further, she explained that same text can provide a situation for both concurrent reading stances based on the reader's attention and/or the context when reading (Rosenblatt, 1994). In efferent reading, the text was more informational, and the reader's attention is focused on the residue left behind after reading such as the information to be obtained, the solution to a problem, or the steps to followed (Rosenblatt, 1994). In aesthetic reading events, the reader is focused on the associations and images that are evoked by the text. Also, the text serves to stimulate the reader's past experiences, their present environment, and assists the reader to formulate a tentative interpretation which is tested by additional reading and/or by comparing with others' interpretation of the text (Rosenblatt, 1994). Continuing, Rosenblatt (1994) explained that efferent and aesthetic reading stances are different versions of the same reading process which exist on a continuum and the experienced reader learns to adopt his/her necessary stance based on his/her own purposes for reading. At one end of the continuum, the reader adopts a primarily efferent stance and somewhat disengages his/her

attention from personal elements in their background and seeks information to take away after reading. At the other end of the continuum, the reader takes mostly the aesthetic stance in which the readers' purpose is fulfilled during the reading event by fixing their attention to the associations evoked and their current environment (i.e., context) which will impact their interpretation. Importantly, Rosenblatt explained that the reader never assumes a complete aesthetic or efferent stance. In fact, a reader with an aesthetic stance will adopt the efferent stance at some point and a reader with the efferent stance will adopt the aesthetic stance at some point while reading (Rosenblatt, 2005).

Finally, Rosenblatt (1994) explained how the reader and the text do not stand alone but are aspects of a reading event involving the reader and the text at a particular time and place. This concept was important for this research with transplanted Appalachians because it suggests that the reader, the text, and the context constitute a unique reading event which produce the readers' unique interpretation in an on-going reading process (Rosenblatt, 1994). Comparatively, behaviorists and cognitivists believe in stimulus-response learning situations where the environment ignites an absolute response (i.e., behavior) from the learner and that any deviation from this constitutes a learner error (Tracy & Morrow, 2017). Cognitivists place more emphasis on the learners' mental activities that shape their response such as how they store and retrieve information (Ertmer & Newby, 2013). Rather, Rosenblatt argued that the reading event did not consist of the reader-text or a stimulus-response relationship and she did not agree that there was a linear path from the reader to the text to their poem (i.e., interpretation).

Connections Between Rosenblatt's Transactional Theory and CRI/CSP

Rosenblatt's (1994) theory connects to CRI/CSP and intersects with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory in two ways: the reading process is active and on-going, and the reader's sociocultural (social, cultural and historical) experiences and contexts (place, time, and purposes) for reading are essential in the reading transaction. For this reason, Rosenblatt's theory provided

insights into how transplanted Appalachian adults comprehend culturally relevant texts because it examines the active reading process within the sociocultural (i.e., social, cultural, and historical) framework during unique contexts. In her research, Rosenblatt described the reader as actively constructing meaning from the text using their assumptions and expectations which flow out of the stream of their life. Therefore, Rosenblatt's two main ideas presented above are discussed simultaneously as they are interwoven.

First, Rosenblatt (1994) described the reader as active and not merely barking at the words on the page. Rather, the student was building up an interpretation for themself out of his own responses from the text (Rosenblatt, 1994). As such, the reader shuttled the text back and forth in their mind to their own references, associations, feelings, and to the context (i.e., time, place, purpose) to produce their unique interpretation of the text (i.e., poem) (Rosenblatt, 1994). The text activates certain aspects of the reader's past experiences and contributes to their interpretation. Furthermore, the text is a stimulator that organizes and focuses the reader's attention using his/her background experiences (Rosenblatt, 1994). As such, Rosenblatt's transactional theory connects to CRI/CSP because this active reading process stimulates students' background experiences thereby allowing them to maintain their cultural competence and legitimates their cultural practices (Paris, 2012). Also, Rosenblatt's perspective of the text stimulating the reading process aligns with using culturally relevant topics/texts for transplanted Appalachians because these topics/texts activated the readers' sociocultural experiences and provide cultural references which educators can utilize for instruction and extensions to unfamiliar content.

Next, Rosenblatt (1994) explained that the reading process is on-going. Hence, the reader constructs and reconstructs meaning from the text because the transaction involves the whole person including their images, feelings, and associations, which produces only a tentative interpretation. The reader may realize they ignored parts of the text or did not really read the first line until they finished the last line (Rosenblatt, 1994). As such, the reading process is on-going

and can be viewed as a reading event that occurs at a particular time instead of a reader arriving at an absolute interpretation. When the reader comes across the same text again, they might reinterpret the text differently than before because perhaps they have a broader schema, a different perspective, or have a completely different purpose for reading. Transactional terminology was originally described by Dewey (1938) as, "an experience is always what it is because of a transaction taking place between an individual and what at the time, constitutes his environment" (p. 43). Similarly, CRI/CSP classroom environments have been described as constantly evolving with and toward students' cultures and serving as a bridge between the students' background knowledge and access to newer content (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Paris & Alim, 2014). Rosenblatt intertwined the reader and their environment, and she supported Dewey's idea that each were conditioned by and conditioned the other (1896, as cited in Rosenblatt, 1994). Therefore, the on-going reading process described by Rosenblatt could be observed in CRI/CSP classrooms as teachers connecting instruction to students' background experiences and viewing instruction within these sociocultural contexts which supports producing academically successful and culturally competent students.

Another aspect of active and on-going reading involves the social element. Rosenblatt (1994) mentioned that as students shared their own tentative interpretation of the poem and sought to compare their interpretations with others, they often reinterpreted their own poem (Rosenblatt, 1994). Likewise, Vygotsky (1978) discussed the social aspect of learning and development including a transaction and refining of concepts due to social interaction with a more capable teacher or peers. In this current study, Rosenblatt's (1994) perspective was used to understand the reading event with transplanted Appalachian students as they approached the text, actively constructed their own unique poem from their past experiences, shared their interpretations, and reinterpreted their own poem after discussing. The social element played a large role in the transplanted Appalachians' construction of their poem and reinforced the active and on-going reading event.

Rosenblatt's (1994) transactional theory views the reading event as active and on-going with the readers' sociocultural experiences and contexts informing their interpretation. Therefore, this perspective offered a unique lens for viewing the reading event and connected well for examining culturally relevant topics/texts with transplanted Appalachians.

Introduction to Literature Review

This literature review establishes the distinctiveness of Appalachians' social and cultural practices, discusses research on CRI/CSP with reading comprehension and culturally relevant literature, and examines think-aloud research.

Appalachian Social and Cultural Practices

Appalachians have historically been unnoticed as a minority group, marginalized, and viewed through a distorted and stereotypical lens (Schwartz, 2003). Appalachians have social and cultural practices which have separated them from the White mainstream population (Obermiller & Maloney, 2016). These social and cultural practices assisted in identifying this group as a regional population and included their devotion to place, funds of knowledge, literacy practices and unique Discourses. Obermiller and Maloney (2016) explained that these cultural practices are not fixed but dynamic and have changed over time. In addition, Billings et al. (2000) explained that within a minority group there are a wide range of variations, and one cannot necessarily apply widespread generalizations to that group because that would nullify any local heritage and experiences. Therefore, within the Appalachian population diversities have been present but there remained a set of shared sociocultural and language experiences that exist on a continuum and are described below (Billings et al., 2000).

Devotion to Place

This regional population has been identified by Appalachians as having a strong devotion to their own place and to kin (Wagner & Obermiller, 2000). Native Appalachians and researchers have described Appalachians as people who usually maintain a physical and/or emotional attachment to the mountains and identify as having an Appalachian ethnicity (Webb-Sunderhaus & Donehower, 2015), value the mountains they are from, and are devoted to a closeness with family (Hayes, 2017). Appalachian family closeness and togetherness was partially due to the remoteness of the mountains and how families depended on each other for survival (Philliber et al., 1981; Shaw et al., 2004). In Donehower's (2003) research in a small Appalachian community, the participants described anyone not from their town as an outsider which further supports the idea that Appalachians shared a mutual understanding of belonging to the mountains and to each other. In Sohn's (2003) research with Appalachian women the participants agreed that family is the center of their lives which supports Jones's (1995) perception that Appalachian people are more themselves when with their family circle. Further, Sohn's participants viewed the mountains as a barrier from the outside world that allowed them to maintain their independence (i.e., privacy) from mainstream society. Appalachians not only are devoted to their place, but their funds of knowledge, literacy practices and Discourses are tied to the Appalachian Mountains and are discussed next.

Funds of Knowledge, Literacy Practices, and Discourses

Appalachians' devotion to place has impacted their funds of knowledge, their literacy practices, and their discourses, and it is a justifiable reason to identify Appalachians as a regional population (Moll et al., 1992). In fact, Appalachians' funds of knowledge and literacy practices differ from non-Appalachians (McIntyre et al., 2001; Moll et al., 1992). They have unique funds of knowledge which are essentially their culturally developed body of knowledge and skills that are crucial for the household and individual functioning and well-being (Moll et al., 1992;

Obermiller & Maloney, 2016). McIntyre et al. (2001) explained that Appalachians' funds of knowledge in her study included: farming procedures, equipment, safety, responsibility around the farm, basket making, crocheting, car mechanics, television, and church rules. The Appalachians' funds of knowledge relate to their literacy practices because literacy is a social practice which means Appalachians often engage in social practices (i.e., literacy events) surrounding their funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992). For example, many Appalachians have funds of knowledge about the Bible due to their literacy practices of reading the Bible, memorizing scripture, and/or attending church (Heath, 1983). Sohn (2003) argued that to understand Appalachians one must understand their religion as it is the center of their lives and the foundation for their literacy experiences. As such, Appalachians' funds of knowledge and literacy practices are often related (Moll et al., 1992).

Continuing, Appalachians have unique literacy practices including the cultural ways they utilize written language in their daily lives through family recipes, religious texts, magazines on cultural hobbies and/or cultural practices, and local newspapers (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Eller, 1989; Heath, 1983). Moreover, Purcell-Gates et al. (2011) explained that literacy is woven into the daily experiences of people and shapes their attitudes, beliefs, and pursuits with literacy. For example, many Appalachian families cook together and often use a family recipe to pass the recipe down to the next generation (Soccio-Mallon, 2018). Family members remembered these social experiences with fondness, and they internalized the cultural value of cooking Appalachian food with family and eating together with family (M. Sohn, 2005). Extending this example, Appalachians have understood the types of food available to them in the mountains and the seasons in which certain foods are plentiful. Therefore, Appalachians' literacy practices surrounding cooking and/or recipes have often reflected Appalachian cultural insights which a non-Appalachian would not recognize and demonstrates how literacy is woven into Appalachians' daily lives (Sohn, 2005).

Also, Appalachian students' literacy experiences differed from mainstream students because of their unique culture (Eller, 1989; Purcell-Gates, 2008). In Heath's (1983) research in Appalachia she discovered how three communities (i.e., Roadville, Trackton, and townspeople) had their own literacy practices due to their diverse patterns of language use related to their distinct cultural practices. For example, Roadville was a White working-class community with four generations of families working in textile mills (Heath, 1983). Most residents lived in mill homes either they or their parents purchased. The homes were well-decorated, painted outside, and were situated in a well-maintained neighborhood. As such, the literacy experiences understood by the Roadville children surrounded their communities recreational use of literacy including reading/writing letters, taking notes, read-alouds for young children, and collecting books/magazines which were only kept for appearances but not read. Again, the Roadville children's patterns of language use was aligned with Roadville's cultural practices which impacted how the children used and valued literacy. Comparatively, the nearby community of Trackton was a Black working-class community with an older generation who were farmers, but younger residents worked in the mills (Heath, 1983). This community was situated on the edge of Gateway, a large metropolitan area. Residents of Trackton rented former mill houses as opposed to living in the Black projects of Gateway (Heath, 1983). Trackton had eight two-family wooden houses which were described as run down and in need of many repairs. Yet, most Trackton residents were described as "respectable" due to how they worked hard, lived right, and intended on purchasing their own home one day (Heath, 1983). As a result, children's experiences with literacy involved reading to learn and/or function in the community due to how the adults modeled reading street signs, discussed the meaning of their bills, filled out forms, and read price tags at local stores. The young children's language use was reinforced by cultural patterns within this community and directly impacted their perception of oral and written language. Given their diverse cultural practices and language usage, Roadville and Trackton had unique literacy practices which were remarkably different from each other and different from the mainstream

townspeople such as their teachers. Specifically, the children from Roadville and Trackton faced communication challenges and literacy difficulties when they began school because their mainstream teachers possessed a distinct set of literacy experiences shaped after the language uses reinforced within their mainstream culture (Heath, 1983).

To address the diverse literacy experiences among students as described above, some researchers (Kyle et al., 2002; McIntyre et al., 2001) have contextualized instruction for Appalachian students by integrating their funds of knowledge into literacy instruction and documented the students' emotional, social, and academic benefits. It is important to emphasize that funds of knowledge and CRI/CSP have a few elements in common, but they are not the same thing. Funds of knowledge seek to learn about students including their cultural experiences and the knowledge they possess as a basis for instruction (Moll et al., 1992). CRI was developed by Ladson-Billings (1995) which proposed teachers produce students who are academically successful, maintain their cultural competence, and are critically conscious.

Finally, Appalachians have a unique Discourse (i.e., language usage) which often differs from non-Appalachians and is related to their self-identity (Schwarts, 2003). In fact, Appalachians' self-identity has been established within the Discourses they use including the distinctive ways they speak/listen and read/write, combined with the distinctive ways they act, interact, value, feel, think, and believe with others in socially situated and recognizable activities (Gee, 2015). In Sohn's (2003) research with Appalachian women, language and dialect contributed to the participants' perception of themselves and it aided in establishing who was an insider (i.e., Appalachian) or an outsider (i.e., non-Appalachian). Gee (2015) explained that everyone has a primary Discourse which is their "culturally distinctive way of being" (p. 173), and it gives us our sense of self and sets the foundation for culturally specific vernacular identity. Examples of primary Discourse were found in Schwarts' (2003) study with middle school transplanted Appalachian girls who "took-up" identities which were sanctioned by their institutions and often conflicted with their home identities and Discourses. In Eller's (1989)

study, the writing composition of Appalachian students revealed that they constructed their writing based on their unique sense of identity which included the collective empowerment of their community and family unit which was the opposite for the non-Appalachian students' writing. These previous studies tell us that Appalachians' self-identity has been established in their Appalachian Discourses which reflect Appalachian values and practices and is the justification for identifying Appalachians as a regional population.

Summary

As discussed above, Appalachians have unique social and cultural practices including: a devotion to place and kin, funds of knowledge, and unique Discourses which has impacted their literacy practices. Literacy is a social practice, and it involves the cultural ways that people use written language in their daily lives (Barton & Hamilton, 1998). Because Appalachians have their own cultural practices the ways that they use literacy in their daily lives differ from the mainstream population. Even more, Appalachians' attitudes, values, feelings, and social relationships surrounding literacy including their awareness of literacy, constructions of literacy, and literacy Discourses are unlike the mainstream population (Barton & Hamilton, 1998). The previously mentioned social and cultural practices have assisted me to identify Appalachians as a regional population.

Culturally Relevant Instruction/Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

The unique social and cultural practices of Appalachians necessitate instruction that is culturally relevant and/or culturally sustaining for individuals from this region. During her seminal work, Ladson-Billings (1995) first developed CRI, which urges teachers to produce students that do the following: (a) achieve academically, (b) maintain their cultural competence, and (c) are critically conscious. Later, Paris (2012) introduced CSP as a re-mix of CRI because it pushed the boundaries of CRI by sustaining and fostering students' linguistic, literate, and

cultural practices as part of the nature of schooling (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris, 2012). The following sections review reading comprehension, CRI/CSP research with reading comprehension and culturally relevant literature.

Reading Comprehension

Given that this study examined reading comprehension with culturally relevant literature, this section briefly defines reading comprehension and discusses the essential elements of reading comprehension. Subsequently, I review the research on reading comprehension with CRI/CSP and culturally relevant literature.

There are many definitions of reading comprehension (Paris & Hamilton, 2009) and perspectives of how readers construct meaning (Kintsch, 1998.) However, in this research, I used a definition related to actively constructing meaning. As such, Almasi and Fullerton (2012) defined reading comprehension as "the process of constructing meaning while transacting with the text" (p. 113). Further, this definition supports Rosenblatt's (1978) Transactional Theory of Reading which recognizes how reading is a transaction between the reader, the text, and the context. Thus, if any one of these variables changes the interpretation of the text may change and it is possible to have multiple and conflicting interpretations of the text which are all valid (Almasi & Fullerton, 2012; Rosenblatt, 1978). Each of these three factors (i.e., reader, text, and context) impact how the reader constructs meaning and are briefly discussed next.

Importantly, reader factors were described by Almasi and Fullerton (2012) as those which make the individual unique such as their age, background knowledge, beliefs, culture, gender, emotional state, ethnicity, experiences, intelligence, personality, and religion. The research on reading comprehension has documented how the reader's background knowledge influences their reading comprehension (Guthrie et al., 2004; Lipson, 1982; Reynolds et al., 1982; Wharton-McDonald & Swiger, 2009). In addition, vocabulary knowledge has also shown to correlate with comprehension of the text (Nation, 2005). However, many students who are poor

comprehenders struggled to comprehend the text because they had difficulty accessing their background knowledge (Nation, 2005). Therefore, readers must possess both background knowledge and the ability to access this knowledge or they may struggle to comprehend the text. Further, research on reading comprehension has reported on affective domains such as the reader's engagement, motivation, and interest/attitude as factors that impact reading comprehension (Guthrie et al., 2004). The first two affective domains correlate highly with reading comprehension and are needed for readers to learn strategy development (Guthrie et al., 1999).

Next, textual factors impact how the reader understands the printed material including the genre, coherence, style, length, readability, and content (Almasi & Fullerton, 2012). As students read more challenging material in later elementary and middle school grades, reading comprehension becomes even more important and necessary for their learning (Kirsch et al., 2002).

Finally, contextual factors influence how the reader comprehends the text including the teacher, environment, instructional directions, and instructional strategies (Almasi & Fullerton, 2012). Also, Guthrie and Klauda (2014) found that teachers' instructional methods such as their strategy instruction in conjunction with motivational engagement supports increased middle school students' reading comprehension compared to only using traditional instruction. These three elements (i.e., reader, text, and context) occur in the readers' sociocultural context and contribute to the readers construction of the text (Vygotsky, 1978). The remaining sections discuss the research on CRI/CSP with reading comprehension and culturally relevant literature. Importantly, most of the studies discussed support the same definition of reading comprehension as used in this study and/or contain reading comprehension practices which lean towards actively constructing meaning.

CRI/CSP with Reading Comprehension

There is a strong body of research that examined CRI/CSP implementation with reading comprehension for diverse students including: Asian students (Kong & Fitch, 2002/2003, Kong & Pearson, 2003), Black students (Cartledge et al., 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Lee, 1995; Rickford, 2001), Latino/a students (Bui & Fagan, 2013; Ebe, 2010; Ebe 2012; May 2011b), and Native Hawaiian and Polynesian students (Au, 1980; Au & Mason, 1981), respectively. However, the existing research lacks CRI/CSP implementation with reading comprehension for the Appalachian population and justifies the need for more research in this area.

Several studies on reading comprehension with CRI/CSP focused on specific instructional methods. In particular, Kong and Fitch (2002/2003) and Kong and Pearson (2003) examined book clubs with Asian Americans to facilitate upper elementary students' discussions and active construction (i.e., comprehension) of diverse texts. The teachers in these studies used prompting and questioning with discussions to promote students' thinking of texts and strategy usage while also encouraging students to take ownership of their explanations and criticisms (Kong & Fitch 2002/2003; Kong & Pearson, 2003). In addition, Maloch's (2005) study revealed the benefits of using literature groups for diverse students as they used their cultural capital to gain symbolic capital (i.e., the capital recognized and valued by the teacher and the students in a particular setting) within discussions. As a result, struggling students deepened their understanding of the text though rich literature discussions which also challenged their identities as struggling students (Maloch, 2005).

Continuing, Machado (2017) documented the success of one CSP teacher's poetry unit in facilitating his seventh-grade students' comprehension of poetry. For example, students presented their poems to the class and revealed their play with languages, uses of literary devices, and critical stances of historical events, and texts (Machado, 2017). In Zoch's (2017) research with four urban elementary teachers of Latino/a students, she discussed the negotiations teachers make

to balance instruction with students' cultural backgrounds. Specifically, these teachers negotiated preparing diverse students for high-stakes testing while also sustaining their cultures (Zoch, 2017). In this study, the teachers became familiar with their students' backgrounds and were intentional to integrate diverse texts that promoted students' cultural competence and discussions on inequalities while also reinforced comprehension of complex concepts (Zoch, 2017). While beneficial, the research presented lacks a discussion on the effects of CRI/CSP instruction on students reading comprehension.

Continuing, the body of research has found CRI/CSP to be more beneficial for improving reading comprehension for diverse elementary students when also using culturally relevant literature and cooperatives groups, compared to only using CRI/CSP alone (Bui & Fagan, 2013). This was documented in Bui and Fagan's (2013) research with fifth graders who discussed that adding culturally relevant literature and cooperative groups possibly increased student engagement and motivation to read. Montgomery (2001) explained how cooperative learning provided contextualized strategies that may have enhance reading comprehension for diverse students of all ages because it increased motivation and engagement within a social environment. Across many studies, diverse children and adolescents participated in cooperative learning and/or group discussion as part of CRI/CSP and it fostered a deeper awareness of comprehension strategies (Bui & Fagan, 2013; Kong & Fitch, 2002/2003; Lee, 1995; Zoch, 2017). As part of class discussions, teachers facilitated asking questions to foster CRI which served to increase student motivation and engagement in the texts and enhanced the possibility of reading comprehension growth (Bui & Fagan, 2013; Lee, 1995; May, 2011a; Rickford, 2001; Zoch, 2011). These studies contributed to how CRI/CSP can be enhanced when using culturally relevant literature and/or cooperative learning with children and adolescents, especially because discussions facilitated engagement and refinement of comprehension strategies. Yet, more research involving reading comprehension with culturally relevant literature and cooperative groups should be conducted with adult students.

In addition, CRI/CSP has also been found effective for improving Native Hawaiian elementary students' reading comprehension when using culturally relevant participation structures (Au, 1981; Au & Mason, 1981). Erickson and Schultz (1977) defined participation structures as "interactionally constituted environments [which can] change from moment to moment" (p. 6). Specifically, these participation structures allowed for Native Hawaiian students to engage in their cultural Discourse which promoted their reading comprehension (Au, 1980). Au and Mason's (1981) research demonstrated how culturally relevant participation structures and cultural Discourse aided in students' reading engagement and achievement when compared to Discourses and participation structures that were mainstream and incongruent for Hawaiian students. Both studies provided evidence that CRI/CSP implementation with reading comprehension is feasible and beneficial for diverse elementary students and possibly for Appalachian students.

The above-mentioned research demonstrated how CRI/CSP has been implemented with a variety of diverse students and using a variety of instructional methods. However, CRI/CSP has been enhanced when using culturally relevant literature and cooperative learning (Bui & Fagan, 2013) possibly due to how students were more engaged in reading tasks. While this body of research is beneficial and useful for impacting teachers' instruction in reading comprehension it reveals how CRI/CSP research is lacking. For example, every study discussed was conducted with children or adolescents which justifies additional research on CRI/CSP with reading comprehension for adult students. Also, we need more research examining the types of texts that diverse students consider culturally relevant and to determine how these texts impact reading comprehension for adult learners. To fill in these research gaps, more research should be conducted in this area, especially related to Appalachian adult students.

Culturally Relevant Literature

Educational researchers have suggested that there are five pillars of effective reading including: phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (National Reading Panel, 2000). However, Allington (2005) argued that interesting texts are an additional pillar of effective reading which impacts both student motivation to read and comprehension (Valentine, 2008). Interesting texts are defined as texts that students possess background knowledge about, that are relevant to their own lives (Schiefele, 1999; Valentine, 2008), and have characters like them (Purves & Beach, 1972). In the simplest sense, background knowledge acts as a scaffold for students and opens possibilities to comprehend other challenging texts (Smith, 1987). In addition, culturally relevant literature impacts the affective dimension of reading comprehension such as engagement, motivation, and interest which are also discussed in this section.

Cultural knowledge and/or background knowledge has been found to influence students' reading comprehension (Guthrie et al., 2004; Lipson, 1982; Reynolds et al., 1982; Wharton-McDonald & Swiger, 2009) and readers often dislike texts they do not understand (Jordan, 1997). As a result, culturally relevant literature provides an opportunity for diverse learners to relate to literature and deepen their understanding of the text. For example, Cartledge et al.'s (2016) research on culturally relevant literature for primary-age urban students explored how culturally relevant texts affected their interest and likeability of the text compared to non-culturally relevant texts. The Black students in this study overwhelmingly rated culturally relevant literature positively with self-identity being a major factor of their likability (Cartledge et al., 2016). These students disliked non-culturally relevant texts and found them to be more confusing and difficult to understand. These findings were supported by Cox and Many (1992) who reported that readers who were personally involved in the story obtained a higher level of understanding than students that read efferently (i.e., to gain knowledge or learn facts). As such, the students in Cartledge et

al. (2016) liked the culturally relevant texts and made more personal connections. Thereby, they found the text easier to understand. Similarly, Bui and Fagan's (2013) research with fifth-grade English Language Learners (ELL) examined a culturally responsive teaching approach for explicitly teaching reading comprehension. The researchers taught reading comprehension on two levels with the second level including culturally relevant texts and cooperative learning. In both levels the culturally relevant framework assisted in increasing students' word recognition, reading comprehension, and retell measures (Bui & Fagan, 2013). However, the participants in level two had a greater gain on reading comprehension which was attributed to the positive impact than culturally relevant texts and cooperative learning had on the students' engagement and motivation. These studies provided support for using culturally relevant texts for diverse students to improve their reading comprehension.

Continuing, Rickford's (2001) research with adolescent Black students examined the role of culturally relevant literature on students' reading comprehension. She asserted that ethnic folk tales and contemporary narratives increased students' motivation and allowed for higher order comprehension questions that both deepened students' engagement in the texts and furthered their understanding (Rickford, 2001). In her study with Black students, Lee (1995) found that culturally relevant texts with Black English vernacular not only interested the students but scaffolded their comprehension and supported their future strategy usage. Jordan (1997) explained how students read out of their own experiences and knowledge and often personalize their responses and perceptions of the characters. As such, when students read the text and are required to make inferences, they pull out of their own prior knowledge to make meaning (Jordan, 1997) which is why culturally relevant literature is beneficial to incorporate as readers gain background knowledge necessary to comprehend other diverse texts.

McKeown et al. (1992) explained that when readers lack background knowledge about a topic it can impede their comprehension, and the readers' extent of knowledge can hinder their quality of comprehension. In addition, a student's reading engagement can be affected depending

on the types of texts they read. For instance, Stuart and Volk's (2002) research with ELLs found that reading engagement increased when students read culturally relevant texts. According to Guthrie et al. (2004) engagement is the greatest predictor for reading achievement even when considering students' socioeconomic status. For this research, I used Guthrie et al.'s (2004) definition of engaged reader as "intrinsically motivated, builds knowledge, uses cognitive strategies, and interacts socially to learn from the text" (p. 404). Reading motivation is related more to the goals and beliefs that guide the reader's behavior (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). In turn, the reader's motivation propels him or her to build knowledge (i.e., construct meaning) from the text. In addition, cognitive strategies refer to the "actions an individual selects deliberately to attain a particular goal" (Almasi & Fullerton, 2012, p. 1). Finally, the reader interacts socially with the teacher and peers possibly through discussion to refine their interpretation of the text. As such, culturally relevant literature is an important affective dimension of reading involving engagement, motivation, and the reader's interest.

The affective dimension of reading comprehension involving student interest (i.e., attitude) is also worth discussion as it relates to student motivation to complete reading tasks (Guthrie et al., 2004). Hence, in Ebe's (2010) research with ELL students she used culturally relevant literature to assess their reading comprehension and found that students performed greater on their retellings of the story identified as culturally relevant. The students had higher comprehension, recalled more information, and were more accurate in their retellings of the culturally relevant texts (Ebe, 2010). This could be attributed to how the text did not require extensive background knowledge about an unfamiliar topic and the students were interested in these texts (Ebe, 2010). Ebe (2012) conducted another study with Mexican Americans and found that the students were more successful in making meaning of culturally relevant texts because these texts were closer to their personal experiences. Similarly, Jiménez's (1997) research with Latino/a students found that culturally relevant texts enabled the students to make inferences and

become more metacognitively aware which led to an increase in their reading comprehension (Jiménez,1997)

The above research supports previous findings (Guthrie et al., 2004; Lipson, 1982; Reynolds et al., 1982; Wharton-McDonald & Swiger, 2009) of how background knowledge and/or cultural knowledge had a positive influence on reading comprehension for diverse students. It is important to distinguish background knowledge from funds of knowledge which are essentially the culturally developed body of knowledge and skills that are crucial for household and individual functioning and well-being (Moll et al., 1992). Background knowledge (i.e., schemata) relates to the prior knowledge and experiences that the individual has about "ideas, concepts, events described in the text" (Lipson & Wixson, 2013, p. 47). Often, students' background knowledge about a text including their funds of knowledge initiates their interest in the text and motivates students to continue reading. This research has demonstrated how students' culturally relevant literature impacts the affective dimensions of reading comprehension for children and adolescents related to engagement, motivation, and interest. However, more research should be conducted to explore how culturally relevant texts affect reading comprehension including the affective dimensions for adult Appalachian students.

Challenges of Culturally Relevant Literacy Instruction

The research on CRI/CSP has demonstrated how implementing CRI/CSP in literacy has been coupled with many challenges related to misunderstandings of CRI/CSP, the fluidity of cultures, learning students' diverse cultures, and assessing and addressing students' literacy needs. This section discusses some of the challenges found in the research.

The first challenge related to CRI/CSP involves correcting teachers' perceptions about this pedagogy. Ladson-Billings (2014) acknowledged that her theory has been misappropriated and reduced to only using diverse texts and/or displaying images of diverse students. In fact, in Ladson-Billing's (1995) seminal work she encouraged teachers to make instruction more

reflective of students' home cultures and native languages. Her three tenets of academic success, cultural competence, and sociocultural consciousness were to be integrated into instruction. Unfortunately, teachers have not properly understood CRI and have misapplied it in practice (Ladson-Billings, 2014). In addition to correcting teachers' perceptions, Ladson-Billings (2014) has recognized how CSP extends CRI for students of the 21st century. Specifically, the goal of CSP is for teachers to "foster-to-sustain [students'] linguistic, literature, and cultural pluralisms" while also providing them access to the cultures of power as part of the academic project of schooling (Paris, 2012, p. 93). As such, CSP extends CRI because it not only acknowledges students' cultures, but it assists in teaching in a more pluralistic and critical approach (Machado et al, 2017). There are challenges for redefining existing terminologies related to CRI/CSP and correcting teachers' understandings for integrating the three tenets into instruction while also implementing CSP for students.

The second challenge is culture is always changing and is fluid (Ladson-Billings, 2014). In addition, culture is a mixture of "human activity, production, thought, and belief systems" (Ladson-Billings, 2014, p. 75). As such, diverse students from a particular population today are dramatically different than their parents and ancestors. Therefore, teachers are challenged to recognize the fluidity of culture itself and how their students' culture is also dynamically changing, so they can foster-to-sustain their students' literacy, language, and cultural practices (Paris, 2012). Across the research on CRI/CSP, many teachers attended professional development seminars on CRI/CSP and implemented CRI/CSP in literacy which required they abandoned their previous teaching practices and mindset for more culturally relevant practices (Machado et al., 2018; Powell et al., 2018).

Another challenge of CRI/CSP was the investment involved for teachers to learn their students' sociocultural and language practices. In several CRI/CSP studies (Ladson-Billings, 1995; May, 2011a; Machado et al., 2017; Powell et al., 2016; Watanabe , 2015; Zoch, 2017), teachers displayed an enormous amount of perseverance learning about their students' culture.

However, teachers were able to use the students' background knowledge in their instruction as part of sustaining their students' culture. For example, in Au and Mason (1981) teachers that shared the same cultural background were not necessarily challenged to learn their student's culture. However, the teacher that failed to learn her students' culture disrupted their cultural practices which resulted in decreased engagement, participation, and reading achievement (Au & Mason, 1981). Therefore, even after teachers were committed to being trained on CRI/CSP and adapted their teaching practices, they were also challenged to learn about the diverse cultures of their students so they could foster-to-sustain these practices.

The final challenge discussed in the research has been assessing students' literacy needs, and modifying literacy instruction, while also implementing CRI/CSP. McIntyre (as cited in McGill-Frazen et al., 2011) discussed how CRI/CSP teachers became familiar with their students' reading skills and behaviors so they could scaffold literacy instruction. To determine students' literacy needs teachers often used a variety of instructional method such as book clubs, literature circles, poetry units, and engaged in culturally relevant Discourses (Lee, 1995; Machado et al., 2017; Rickford, 2001; Zoch, 2017). The research described how despite the challenges of balancing literacy instruction with CRI/CSP, teachers were successful at scaffolding literacy instruction within the CRI/CSP framework for URM's (Lee, 1993; Machado et al., 2017; Powell et al., 2016; Savage et al., 2011). Researchers also discussed how literacy assessments were not also culturally relevant for students, so this posed another challenge for teachers to find and/or create assessments that produced valid results of students' literacy abilities (Ebe, 2010; Ebe 2012). Despite these challenges, researchers reported how literacy teachers were successful at fostering students' cultural frames of reference within literacy and which deepened students' engagement.

As discussed above, implementing CRI/CSP with literacy is challenging for educators and students. Yet, the benefits for teachers and students far outweigh the challenges.

Think-Alouds

Think-alouds reveal valuable information regarding the student's thought process before, during, and after reading including the processes that are efficiently and effectively used to comprehend, which can lead to better teaching practices (Israel, 2015). Thus, think-alouds have been used by many literacy researchers to assess students' reading comprehension both domestically and abroad (Afflerbach, 1990; Bergeson, 2019; Israel, 2002; Janssen, Braaksma, Rijlaarsdam, 2006; Kendeou, Mulis, & Fulton, 2011; Lau, 2006; Loxterman, Beck & McKeown, 1994; McKeown & Gentilucci 2007; Prichard & O'Hara, 2006; Schellings, Aarnoutse & Leeuwe, 2006; Tompkins, Guo & Justice, 2013). Almasi and Fullerton (2012) defined think-alouds as "a type of verbal report in which an individual expresses everything that he or she is thinking while performing a given task" (p. 88). Throughout the body of research on think-alouds (i.e., verbal reports) readers typically used three overarching activities including: constructing meaning of the text, monitoring (i.e., fix-it strategies), and evaluating the text (i.e., readers' disposition) (Israel, 2015; Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995). Importantly, these activities do not occur in a linear fashion and are difficult to separate because they involve a dynamic interaction (Block & Israel, 2004; Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995). This section discusses the research on think-alouds including the emerging activities related to constructing meaning of the text, monitoring, and evaluating the text.

Across the research, there was a distinction between how good and poor readers constructed the meaning of the text, monitored their understanding, and evaluated the text. Unfortunately, the research was not always transparent about what constituted a good or poor (i.e., weak) reader. Some research studies reported reading levels and/or reading assessments (Lau, 2006; Schellings, Aaronoutse & Leeuwe, 2006) to document students' good or poor reading status. However, in other studies the teacher recommended the student as a good or poor reader without providing the data used in their decision (Janssen et al., 2006). As such, there were inconsistencies across the studies including a misunderstanding of definitions and vague think-

aloud practices (Israel, 2015). Nevertheless, the literature provided insights into how think-alouds revealed different activities among good and weak readers. For example, in Janssen et al.'s (2006) research with good and weak readers, researchers found that the monitoring strategies utilized by the good readers demonstrated selectiveness of reading strategies and a repertoire of strategies such as rereading the text, retelling, and reevaluating. As such, good readers were flexible in their strategy usage and adapted their strategies to different texts because they knew how to monitor their comprehension and were sensitive to text features (Lau, 2006; Schellings et al., 2006). Comparatively, weak readers seemed to paraphrase (i.e., retell) as a method to construct meaning of the text and usually did not shift away from this reading activity during different texts (Janssen et al., 2006; Lau, 2006). Pressley (2002) explained how awareness of one's thinking (i.e., metacognition) is essential for students to monitor their comprehension. As such, the good readers described recognized when they did not understand the text. In contrast, the poor readers did not recognize when they failed to comprehend and/or they did not know how to fix their breakdown in comprehension (Israel & Massey, 2005).

Further, the research on think-alouds revealed how despite the readers' age, the text type was foundational in how readers constructed meaning, used monitoring strategies, and evaluated the text. Interestingly, these studies did not discuss the text reading level. Instead, they examined the text type (i.e., genre, vocabulary usage, and conciseness, and/or explicitness). Tomkins, Guo, and Justice's (2012) research on think-alouds explored the processes that four- and five-year-old children used to comprehend wordless picture books. This study revealed that wordless books provided the opportunity for young children to make a variety of inferences, and certain inferences demonstrated students' comprehension of the text. Specifically, when children inferred the goals, actions, and characters emotional state it was significantly related to their story comprehension. In addition, Schellings et al. (2006) explored the reading activities of third graders when reading expository texts and argued that the diversity of the strategies used were induced by the texts itself which included text-based, prior-knowledge based and metacognitive

strategies (Schellings et al., 2006). This was due to how expository texts contain unpredictable reading activities (Cote', Goodman & Saul, 1998) because both content and text structure can be unfamiliar to the reader (Schellings et al., 2006). In Loxterman et al.'s (1994) research, they examined text coherence and think-alouds to determine their effects on the sixth graders' reading comprehension. Students were assigned to read under four different conditions including: the original text silently, the original text in a think-aloud, the revised text silently, and the revised text while thinking-aloud. This study revealed that students benefited more with the revised text (i.e., explicit, and detailed information) in conjunction with a think-aloud because together it fostered active engagement and text coherence compared to the other three conditions. The revised text reduced any potentially problematic text features of the original text by clarifying, elaborating, and explaining content and explicitly making connections (Loxterman et al.,1994). In addition to text type, the readers' beliefs also played a role in how they constructed meaning, monitored and evaluated the text. For example, Kendeou, Mulis and Fulton (2011) found that readers with more sophisticated epistemic beliefs (i.e., beliefs about learning) engaged in more conceptual change compared to the readers with less sophisticated epistemic beliefs when they read refutation texts as opposed to non-refutation texts (Kendeou et al., 2011). As such, the type of text (i.e., text alone, with a think-aloud, or related to the readers epistemic beliefs) had a significant role in the reading activities that students used to construct meaning, monitor, and evaluate the text.

The research on concurrent think-alouds (i.e., reporting thinking while reading) also revealed how readers constructed meaning of the text, monitored their thinking, and evaluated the text differently depending on their background knowledge of the text (Israel, 2015; Lipson, 1982). In Afflerbach's (1990) research on think-alouds he argued that prior knowledge had a significant role in the reading comprehension of expert readers. Specifically, readers with prior knowledge related to the concepts in the text constructed the main idea automatically. Comparatively, readers who were unfamiliar with the text's content used draft-revision strategies

significantly more. Lau's (2006) research demonstrated how good readers were able to activate their prior knowledge easier than the poor readers. In turn, the good readers often used their background knowledge as part of their strategy repertoire. Likewise, Schellings et al., 2006 found that when students lacked background knowledge of the content in the text, they used paraphrasing as a monitoring strategy more often because it aided making meaning. Finally, McKeown and Gentilucci's (2007) research with English language learners (ELL) found that more proficient readers used their background knowledge and inferencing to understand the text. Across the studies on think-alouds, background knowledge was activated by readers as a monitoring and evaluation strategy to aid their construction of the text.

Furthermore, Kucan and Beck (1997) explained think-alouds are not only a useful method of inquiry, but they can also be an effective instructional tool for teachers. Prichard and O'Hara's (2006) documented how ELL students benefited from think-alouds because they became aware of the monitoring strategies and independently utilized these strategies in their own think-alouds. In fact, this study provided evidence for using think-alouds to teach ELL students about how to use monitoring strategies to increase their own comprehension. Further, Bergeson's (2019) study demonstrated how reading specialists used think-alouds to teach students monitoring strategies to increase their comprehension. Even more, the teachers gained insights into the students' strategies including where comprehension broke down (i.e., lacked) because only a single monitoring strategy was constantly applied, a strategy was used ineffectively and/or inefficiently. Adding to this, researchers also learned about how think-alouds are not an effective instructional tool for certain ELL students. For example, McKeown and Gentilucci's (2007) study provided insights into how ELL students successfully used metacognitive strategies, but the efficacy of the strategies depended on the students' English proficiency. As such, not all ELL students made comprehension gains when using think-alouds, especially the students with low levels of English proficiency, possibly due to how they struggled with decoding and vocabulary (McKeown & Gentilucci, 2007). Therefore, the research demonstrated how think-alouds provided

teachers with valuable information which could be explicitly implemented into instruction and further students' reading comprehension.

Finally, think-aloud research revealed engagement and motivation as an influence in the reader's reading comprehension (Israel, 2015). Think-alouds opened a window into the reader's engagement because reading strategies and reading comprehension skills demanded effort and motivation (Stipek, 2002). Guthrie et al. (2004) explained that engaged readers are "intrinsically motivated, builds knowledge, uses cognitive strategies, and interacts socially to learn from the text" (p. 404). In addition, intrinsic motivation was related to an increase in reading strategies used (Guthrie et al., 1996) which was evident in think-aloud research. For instance, in Kendeou et al.'s (2010) research involving think-alouds, readers with more sophisticated epistemic beliefs displayed more engagement and motivation when reading refutation texts as evident by their conceptual change processes compared to when they read non-refutation texts. These readers used more strategies to comprehend the text, monitored their thinking, and evaluated the text which meant they were more engaged and worked in a motivated way (Cunningham & Cunningham, 2001). Think-alouds also revealed when students lacked motivation and how it negatively impacted their reading comprehension. For example, in Lau's (2006) research some students were unmotivated which was revealed when they used fewer strategies, became frustrated, and aimed to finish reading as quickly as possible. Think-alouds themselves can be an instructional tool which may produce engagement and motivation. Ivey and Broaddus's (2001) research with middle school students revealed that the students enjoyed and were motivated by the teacher think-alouds because they helped them to understand the reading strategies. Therefore, think-alouds may provide insights into when students are engaged and motivated readers or are disengaged and unmotivated readers and offer opportunities to motivate students to learn the reading comprehension strategies.

All the above-mentioned studies provided evidence as to how readers constructed meaning, monitored, and evaluated the text related to good and poor readers, text types,

background knowledge, and engagement. In addition, think-alouds have been used not only as a method of inquiry into the reading comprehension process but also as an instructional tool to foster student motivation and strategy usage.

Conclusion

This literature review has established the unique social and cultural practices of Appalachians, discussed CRI/CSP with reading comprehension and culturally relevant literature, and reviewed think-aloud research. Also, it has reported the challenges teachers encountered when implementing CRI/CSP with diverse students. While this research is robust and contributes to our knowledge of these topics, more research should be conducted to extend our understanding of CRI/CSP in reading comprehension, especially with the Appalachian population.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

Rationale

Merriam (2009) explained that the overall motive of a qualitative study is to understand how people make sense of their lives. Also, Merriam said that research in education often lends itself toward qualitative designs that use discovery, insight, and understanding from the participants' perspectives because it can make a significant difference in people's lives (2009). Hence, the first purpose of this qualitative study was to understand transplanted Appalachians' perspectives on the topics/texts they consider culturally relevant. This purpose provides educators with an understanding of transplanted Appalachian students' sociocultural experiences including the culturally relevant topics/texts that can be implemented into teachers' daily instruction. The second purpose was to understand how culturally relevant topics/texts aided in the reading comprehension of transplanted Appalachians which serve educators with the best practices for reading comprehension with this population of students. This collective case study of transplanted Appalachians examined the participants within their sociocultural contexts which necessitated the design of this study, served to answers the research questions, and supported the purposes of the study (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2014).

Research Questions

The research questions presented below constitute the heart of the study and informed all the other components of the study (Maxwell, 2013). These questions included:

1. What topics and/or texts were considered culturally relevant for transplanted Appalachian adults from their own perspective?
2. How did culturally relevant topics/texts aid in the reading comprehension of transplanted Appalachian readers?

Research Design

Qualitative researchers are concerned with understanding how people interpret their experiences and the meanings that are attributed to these experiences within sociocultural contexts (Merriam, 2009, Yin, 2014). Within the field of education qualitative research is successful because many of the questions asked seek to understand people's experiences and improve one's practice (Merriam, 2009). Because the purpose of this study was to understand transplanted Appalachians' perspectives of culturally relevant topics/texts and how these texts aid in their reading comprehension it called for a qualitative design (Meriam, 2009, Stake, 1995).

Continuing, a case study is defined as an "in-depth description and an analysis of a bounded system" (Merriam, 2009, p. 41) which occurs in both quantitative and qualitative research and may include many different methods (Stake, 1995). A bounded system has been defined as a unit with boundaries and for this study included the transplanted Appalachian participants (Merriam, 2009). The case was investigating a contemporary phenomenon within its context because it is often difficult to separate the phenomenon from its context (Merriam, 2009). Further, a collective case study as used in this research involved collecting and analyzing data from several cases (Merriam, 2009). As such, it resulted in thick descriptions of each individual case and then a cross-case analysis suggesting generalizations across the cases because case studies are a weak basis for generalizations (Stake, 1995). The primary importance of a case study is to learn and/or understand the unique case which supports the previously mentioned purposes of this study.

Researcher Roles

Throughout the research process, I assumed many researcher roles, but I remained flexible in both the design and data collection process (Stake, 1995). Prior to beginning the research, I completed the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process. After IRB approval was completed, I contacted my gatekeeper at the location of my research site. This person was an

insider at the small university where I conducted research, was familiar with the institution, and provided me with advice for making access decisions (Glesne, 2016).

My first role in this research was that of participant-observer. Glesne (2016) described the participant-observer's main goal as "to better understand the research, setting, its participants, and their behavior" (p. 67). This meant that I wanted to learn about my participants' perspectives on the topics and the texts they considered culturally relevant for transplanted Appalachians. As such, I observed the participants' four recorded think-alouds and five recorded interviews (i.e., one initial interview and four post think-aloud interviews) for different perspectives and behaviors (i.e., body language and hesitations) to gain a deeper understanding of the topics/texts they viewed as culturally relevant. I realized that I was a part of the social world that I studied, and I could not avoid my unintended influence on the phenomenon (Maxwell, 2013) which was why I remained reflexive throughout the process. As a participant-observer, I was the primary instrument in my data collection which meant that I was the individual who conducted the interviews and think-alouds, transcribed the audio recordings, and analyzed the video and audio recordings. Merriam (2009) explained that subjectivity and interaction are assumed by the participant-observer, but I took steps to account for my positionality as described in the next section.

My next role in this research was that of a learner. This entailed that I set aside my assumptions about the research and the participants and sought to understand the phenomenon (Glesne, 2016). To accomplish this, I relentlessly sought explanations from the participants when I did not understand their perspectives rather than inserting my own opinions (Glesne, 2016). I aimed to understand the participants' perspectives about culturally relevant topics/texts for transplanted Appalachians by using an adapted version of Freeman and Freeman's (2007) Cultural Relevance Rubric (see Appendix G). This rubric asked participants to rate the text's cultural relevance (i.e., extremely culturally relevant, somewhat culturally relevant or not culturally relevant) according to the characters, experiences, place (i.e., setting), time, main

characters' age and gender, and language. Further, I conducted an informal and immediate member check during the first session to ensure that I understood the participants' initial interview responses. During session two, I used formal member checking where I presented the original initial interview transcript. Then, during sessions three and four I conducted formal member checks by presenting cultural relevance rubrics, and Post Think-Aloud Interview transcripts for participants to verify and/or retract their responses. During the final session, I conducted a final member check where I presented each participant with their four think-aloud transcripts and allow them to correct or retract any statements that were made. The decision to give the think-aloud transcripts at the end of the study was to ensure that participants were not primed to use the same think-aloud processes throughout the study. In addition, I had the participants rate the texts from most culturally relevant to least culturally relevant as a method to check my emerging findings of the research.

Lastly, I simultaneously assumed the roles of evaluator and interpreter. Stake (1995) explained that the case researcher is always an evaluator. In fact, Stake connected the roles of interpreter and evaluator by explaining that "most cases are not evaluation studies rather some of the interpretations made by the researcher will be evaluative in nature" (p.96). I agree with his statement that researchers are crafts people who study and interpret their phenomena (Stake, 1995). I interpreted and evaluated during the initial interview, think-aloud training and modeling, the practice think-aloud, the four think-alouds, the four-post think-aloud interviews, when reviewing the participant's four revised Freeman and Freeman's (2007) Culturally Relevant Rubric, and while transcribing and coding the data.

Site Selection and Context

The research site for this study was at a small university outside of the Central Appalachian Region as described by the ARC (n.d.). The University has over 10,000 undergraduate and graduate students. While most of the students and faculty attend the main

campus, there are also those who reside across the state and can attend classes online, and/or at one of the seven other campuses across the state. Only individuals who were currently residing outside of the Appalachian Region were permitted in this study.

Identification of Regional Population of Appalachia

To establish the regional population of Appalachia there were two factors considered: the geographical area, and the Appalachian English spoken within Appalachia.

Geographical Area

The identification of the regional population of Appalachia has been described by the ARC as a geographical area which spans across 13 states and includes a population of over 25 million people (ARC, n.d.). In addition, the ARC has divided Appalachia into five subregions according to the continuous areas of homogeneous characteristics such as: topography, demographics, and economic diversity (n.d.). The 2015-2019 American Community Survey distinguished Appalachia from the rest of the United States on areas including: education, income, employment, disability, and race to name a few (Pollard & Jacobsen, 2021). The ARC has determined the Central Region of Appalachia as having distressed county economic levels (Pollard & Jacobsen, 2021). In turn, the Central Appalachian Region has the worst economic levels of all five subregions including the highest unemployment rate, the lowest per capita market income, and the highest poverty rate compared to the national averages (ARC, 2020). The findings presented above demonstrate how the Central Appalachian population is a distinct regional population.

Appalachian English

Another variable used to identify Appalachia as a regional population is the language variety spoken known as Appalachian English. It is a non-standard or non-mainstream variety and speakers of Appalachian English are instantly recognized by their language form (Wolfram & Christian, 1976). American English differs from Appalachian English in vocabulary usage,

pronunciation, and grammatical structures (Luu, 2018; Wolfram & Christian, 1976). Often, this non-standard English variety is associated with negative stereotypes and viewed as improper English (Luhman, 1990; Purcell-Gates, 2008). Across the Central Appalachian Region the minority population consists of less than 5% Black people compared to the national average at 12.5% and less than 5% Hispanic people compared the national average at 18.5% (Pollard & Jacobsen, 2021). This means that most people in the Central Appalachian Region are White but are not considered mainstream White due to the Appalachian English variety they speak.

Participants and Sampling Techniques

The participants in this study were purposefully selected based on their transplanted Appalachian status and included faculty and students of the university previously described who resided outside of the Appalachian region according to the ARC (n.d.). Purcell-Gates et al. (2011) explained how children learn the "language and literacy practices embedded in their homes and cultural communities" (p. 1) and described how these cultural patterns are dynamic and shift overtime as their cultural conditions change. Therefore, these adult participants were born and lived most of their lives in the Appalachian region and transplanted (i.e., a minimum of one month to a maximum of 10 years) out of Appalachia into a non-Appalachian area.

Convenience sampling has proven to be problematic in past research studies (Au, 1980; Au & Mason, 1981). As such, purposeful sampling was used in this qualitative case study as it allowed me to discover, gain insight, and understanding from the sample of transplanted Appalachians (Merriam, 2009). Purposeful sampling has been defined as the selection criteria for participants and/or sites in a research study which directly reflects the purpose of the study (Merriam, 2009). Therefore, I determined the selection criteria for participants as: (a) adults who are 18 years or older, (b) born and raised in the Appalachian region according to the ARC (n.d.), and (c) moved out of this geographic area a minimum of one month to a maximum of 10 years ago. I used adults over 18 years old because I wanted to gain the perspectives of adults who were

both born and spent their formative years growing up in the Appalachian culture. Individuals who resided in Appalachia 10 years ago or more were excluded from this study due to how cultural patterns are dynamic and shift overtime with the changing of cultural conditions (Purcell-Gates et al., 2011). Hence, I used participants who lived outside of Appalachia for no more than 10 years as it allowed me to capture the authentic reading comprehension of transplanted Appalachians.

To obtain research participants, I emailed my gatekeeper who then emailed the prospective students and faculty at the research site and provided them with the criteria previously described for participation in this study. I used this university because I knew from personal experience that there were transplanted Appalachians affiliated with this institution. I realized that using individuals in higher education would impact the findings due to how college students and/or college professors were most likely proficient readers (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2007) and possibly had strong background knowledge which would influence their reading comprehension (Hirsch, 2003). However, I believed that there was a great deal of knowledge to gain from researching transplanted Appalachians who attended (i.e., face to face or virtually) and/or worked at a small university situated in a rural town.

Continuing, I provided a brief timeline of the study (see Appendix A) to ensure that participants were aware of the responsibilities and timeframe of my research. After I received a response from the original email, I used the criteria above to purposely select participants. If I was unable to reach a saturation point as data was analyzed, I was open to recruiting more participants until I reached a saturation point in my data collection. Because the original email did not provide at least five participants, I conducted snowball sampling by asking the individuals participating if they knew of any other transplanted Appalachians that met the selection criteria. Snowball sampling has been used to help start the process of locating research participants by asking current participants to assist in locating additional participants (Glesne, 2016). Likewise, snowball sampling was an effective manner of gathering the five original participants I needed for this study.

I planned to use at least five participants because it allowed me to conduct interviews, collect in-depth descriptions, and analyze the data of each case as well as across the cases in a timely and cost-effective manner (Merriam, 2009). In addition, I realized that the participants' ability to think-aloud would vary depending on their verbal skills (Lipson & Wixson, 2013), so selecting five participants to each give four think-alouds ensured that I had sufficient data from each individual case and across the cases to reach data saturation.

As mentioned, five participants volunteered for this research study. Participant A is a White male faculty member at the university in which the study took place. He is about mid-60, has a doctoral degree, and teaches courses in his respected field. This individual was born and raised in the Appalachian Region and currently resides in a non-Appalachian area. Participant B is also a White female faculty member at the university. She is in her early 40's, has a doctoral degree, and teaches courses at the university. Participant B was born and raised in the Appalachian Region and currently lives in a non-Appalachian area. Participant C is a White female who is a senior undergraduate student at the university. She is in her early twenties, was born and raised in Appalachia and moved out of the area to attend the university. Similarly, Participant D is a White female who is a senior undergraduate student at the university represented. She is in her early 20's, was born and raised in the Appalachian Region and moved to a non-Appalachian area to attend the university. Participant E is a White male graduate student in his late 20's. He was born and raised in Appalachia and currently resides in a non-Appalachian area. All of these participants have lived outside of Appalachia no longer than ten years.

Data Sources and Collection

This case study included a variety of qualitative data sources and collection methods as supported by Coffee and Atkins (1996) including: one video/audio recorded introductory interview for each participant (see Appendix B), four video/audio recorded think-alouds per participant (see Appendix F), four revised versions of Freeman and Freeman's Cultural

Relevance Rubrics per participant (2007) (see Appendix G), and four post think-aloud interviews per participant (see Appendix H). Maxwell (2013) explained how qualitative studies may need to be modified and redesigned throughout the study therefore I remained open to adding additional interviews, Cultural Relevance Rubrics, and/or think alouds as they were needed during this study.

Recorded Initial Interview

During the first session, I conducted an initial semi-structured recorded interview (see Appendix B) which asked questions such as: where were you born, do you have any family living in the Appalachian area, and how do you feel about reading? The purpose of the initial interview was to build rapport with the participants, to learn about their backgrounds, and their literacy experiences. DeMarrais (as cited in Merriam, 2009) defined interviews as "a process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study" (p. 87). Asking the initial interview questions opened the doors for me to gain a deeper understanding of participants' perspectives and answer my first research question regarding the topics/texts that transplanted Appalachians perceived as culturally relevant. The time-frame for this introductory interview took about 15-20 minutes and the length of time really depended on how much the participant was willing to share.

The initial interview occurred synchronously on Zoom which has shown to produce benefits for building rapport (Archibold et al., 2019) and faster recruitment time (Rupert et al., 2017). However, rapport can be affected when technology works poorly including dropping participants due to weak connections (Seitz, 2019). To mitigate the potential drawbacks of using Zoom for interviews and other data collection methods, I asked the participants to notify me if the internet connection was weak and they could not hear/see me. I also aimed to conduct interviews when there was pleasant weather, and the internet signal was strong. If the participant or I had a

weak connection that could not be fixed for more than 5 minutes, then I was open to rescheduling the interview, but this never occurred.

Further, using Zoom could have limited my ability to see participants completely and cause me to possibly miss out on their body language and items they were pointing to in the text. Roberts, Pavlakis and Richards (2021) suggested for researchers using Zoom to take additional steps to be creative and purposeful to mitigate the social distance. Therefore, if the participant pointed to and/or referred to something in the text, I asked the individual to clarify with me to avoid losing any meaning. Also, Zoom provided the option to video record the session. Hence, I recorded every session and watched the recording to observe any elements (i.e., body language or facial expressions) that were unclear and/or missed during the synchronous session. Because the primary method of data collection for this study required computer and Zoom capabilities, I asked the participants if they had any concerns about using this technology and provided a link for a Zoom tutorial (see Appendix N). However, none of the participants expressed needing assistance using Zoom. In addition, I provided ongoing tech support for each session, and answered any questions about Zoom to ensure that each participant was comfortable using this platform. The Zoom link remained the same for each individual participant during the research study and was emailed prior to each session. I also used the virtual waiting room feature on Zoom to protect the participants from anyone uninvited attempting to join our session.

The second half of this initial interview had questions about cultural relevance designed from Freeman and Freeman's (2007) Cultural Relevance Rubric (see Appendix G) and asked: what types of texts are considered culturally relevant to transplanted Appalachians and what topics can transplanted Appalachians relate to? Also, I followed Patton's (2001) recommendations for asking good questions including: asking participants about their experiences and behaviors, opinions and values, feelings, knowledge, and backgrounds/demographics. Sample questions included how do you feel about reading and what types of topics did you grow up reading about?

Recorded Think-Alouds

During the recorded think-aloud the participant read a text aloud and stopped periodically to share their thinking about the text. The purpose of the think-aloud was to reveal the reading processes that the reader used to make meaning of the text (i.e., comprehended) (Israel, 2015). Each participant completed four think-alouds during two different sessions. At each session, the participant completed a think-aloud on both one culturally relevant text (see Appendix J and K) and one non-culturally relevant text (see Appendix L and M) for the purpose of answering my second research question which asked: how do culturally relevant texts aid in the reading comprehension of transplanted Appalachians?

Four think-alouds were selected because participants' think-alouds have been found to improve with practice (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995) and reading behaviors vary depending on different texts and tasks (Afflerbach, 2000). As such, four think-alouds revealed the participants' comprehension of these texts as well as provided insights into the readers' approaches to process the texts (Lipson & Wixson, 2013).

The think-aloud training, modeling, practice, and subsequent think-alouds occurred virtually using Zoom. As such, I was in my home office and the participants were in a quiet and private space using their own computer. I realized that I needed to be creative and purposeful to mitigate the potential negative effects of using Zoom. Therefore, I asked questions when I was unsure of participants' comments and/or references to the text. I encouraged the participants to ask questions during this part of the session. Also, I recorded the think-alouds and watched the recordings to verify that I did not miss any meaning during the synchronous meeting.

During our first session, I briefly trained (see Appendix C) and modeled (see Appendix D) how to think-aloud by using both Ericsson and Simon (1993) and Pressley and Afflerbach's (1995) recommendations for conducting research with verbal reports. These recommendations were emailed to participants. The training and modeling took about 10 minutes since participants

usually needed only a small amount of time to learn how to give verbal reports (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995). I began the training by explaining how long it would take, I described a think-aloud, and provided the purpose of the think-aloud so the participants had a basic understanding of the task. Then, I shared the recommendations for thinking-aloud including: your thinking should reflect exactly what you are thinking as you read, some thoughts may be unclear, and you do not need to interpret your thoughts but simply report them. I emphasized that participants were to report anything they were thinking, at any time, and there would be variability in thinking-aloud so they should not be concerned about saying something incorrect because there was no right or wrong way to think-aloud. Next, I modeled the think-aloud process by using "Hill Women" (2020) written by Cassie Chambers (see Appendix E) and I paused periodically to share my thinking. Afterwards, I asked the participants if they had any questions about thinking-aloud.

Immediately after the training and modeling, I provided the participants with a sample practice text (see Appendix I) and gave them the opportunity to practice a think-aloud from "Night Comes to the Cumberlands" (1962/2017) by Harry Caudill which was about five minutes long. This ensured that the participants understood how to think-aloud and were comfortable with the think-aloud during the data collection. Next, I asked the participant if they had any questions about thinking-aloud.

I personally selected four texts used for the think-alouds during data collection were in the Lexile range of 1010-1200 (Meta Metrics Inc., 2022) which ensured that the texts' reading levels were equally difficult. During session two (see Appendix A) the participants gave a think-aloud to a culturally relevant and a non-culturally relevant text (see Appendix J and L) and during session three the participants read another culturally relevant and non-culturally relevant text (see Appendix K and M). The reason the participants read both culturally relevant and non-culturally relevant texts was to reveal their reading processes (i.e., how they comprehend) when reading these different texts and to answer my second research question about how culturally relevant topics/texts aid in the reading comprehension of transplanted Appalachians.

I selected two culturally relevant texts based on the authors' Appalachian ethnicity, the Discourses used in the texts, and the authentic Appalachian experiences and settings. The first culturally relevant text (see Appendix J) selected comes from *Miracle Boy and Other Short Stories* (2011) authored by Pinckey Benedict who was born and raised in West Virginia. The next culturally relevant text was from *The Mountain the Miner and the Lord* (1989) authored by Harry M. Caudill (see Appendix K). Caudill was a native Appalachian and has been considered one of the most important Kentuckians of the 20th century (Reed, 2017).

I selected two non-culturally relevant texts based on the authors' non-Appalachian ethnicity, the Discourses used in the texts, and the non-Appalachian settings, characters, experiences. The first non-culturally relevant text was *Bear Town* (2016) written by Fredrik Backman (see Appendix L) who was from Sweden and originally wrote the text in Swedish. The next non-culturally relevant text (see Appendix M) was *Catch-22* (1961/2011) which was authored by Joseph Heller a native New Yorker and son of Russian immigrants. As previously mentioned, all four texts had similar Lexile levels which was important because I wanted to reduce the likelihood that any differences in individual readers' think-alouds (i.e., each case) were due to the cultural factors of the text rather than other factors such as text reading levels.

Cultural Relevance Rubric

The Cultural Relevance Rubric (see Appendix G) was a rubric designed to capture the participants' perspectives regarding the cultural relevance of the four texts (see Appendix J, K, L, and M) according to categories including: characters, experiences, setting, time, and languages (i.e., Discourses) used within the text. Participants used the rubric to descriptively rate each category from the text as extremely culturally relevant, somewhat culturally relevant, or not culturally relevant. The purpose of the Cultural Relevance Rubric was to provide details about the participants' perspectives of the four texts and served to answer my first research question regarding the topics/texts that transplanted Appalachians perceived as culturally relevant. The

Cultural Relevance Rubric used in this study was adapted from Freeman and Freeman's (2007) Cultural Relevant Rubric and included a descriptive rating scale compared to the original scale which used numbers.

During this recorded Zoom session, I shared my screen to display the Cultural Relevance Rubric and I asked the participant to verbally select their answers while I wrote down their responses on my own printed hard copy. At the beginning of the next session, I conducted a member check on this rubric and invited the participant to change any answers if they desired. When the session was over, I immediately watched the video recording to verify that I did not miss any information including the participants' body language and/or facial expressions.

Post Think-Aloud Interviews

The Post Think-Aloud Interview (see Appendix H) was an interview that occurred after the participant thinks-aloud and completed the Cultural Relevance Rubric. The purpose of the Post Think-Aloud Interview was to solicit more feedback from each participant about the cultural relevance of the four different texts (see Appendix J, K, L, and M). Also, the Post Think-Aloud Interview complimented the Cultural Relevance Rubric by gathering deeper data related to answering my first research question about the topics/texts transplanted Appalachians perceived as culturally relevant. The questions asked in the Post Think-Aloud Interview included items such as: how the characters in the text are similar or dissimilar to you and your family, how the experiences in the text are similar or dissimilar to your own experiences, and describe how the characters in the text communicate compared to you and your family. These open-ended questions fostered participants' descriptive answers and generated rich data related to comprehension. Depending on the individual participant's verbal skills and interest in talking, these interviews took anywhere from 10 minutes to 25 or 30 minutes. Sometimes a participant would spend more time talking about a particular text and would not discuss as much during the next text so each post think-aloud interview varied in the length of time.

The four Post Think-Aloud Interviews per participant were video and audio recorded on Zoom Cloud to capture the participants' body language and verbal responses, and allowed me to watch the recording to verify the participants' verbal answers that I wrote down during the Post Think-Aloud Interviews. As I previously mentioned, I was purposeful and creative when using Zoom by asking participants questions when I misunderstood their responses and/or references to the text (Roberts et al., 2021).

Data Analysis Techniques

This section discusses the data analysis techniques used in this research and provides justification to support the data analysis decisions.

Interviews

There were two types of interviews conducted during this study which included the initial interview (i.e., one interview per participant) and post think-aloud interviews (i.e., four per participant). Both types of interviews were audio and video recorded on Zoom Cloud. I uploaded the Zoom audio to Atlas.ti and used this software to conduct an intelligent/naturalized transcription which removed distracting sounds or pauses but accurately captured the participants' perspectives of culturally relevant topics/texts and answered my first research question.

Due to the participants' verbal skills and interest in each particular text the interviews ranged in the duration of time. Please see Table 3.1 which reveals how long each interview took according to the five participants, respectively.

Table 3.1
Length of Interviews

Participant	Introductory Interview	Post Think-Aloud Interview			
		1	2	3	4
A	34 minutes	6 minutes	8 minutes	10 minutes	5 minutes
B	52 minutes	9 minutes	9 minutes	8 minutes	5 minutes
C	32 minutes	8 minutes	6 minutes	5 minutes	5 minutes

Table 3.1 (continued)
Length of Interviews

Participant	Introductory Interview	Post Think-Aloud Interview			
		1	2	3	4
D	35 minutes	8 minutes	10 minutes	9 minutes	7 minutes
E	45 minutes	10 minutes	7 minutes	7 minutes	7 minutes

Next, I began to code the data. Saldaña (as cited in Miles et al., 2020, p. 63) described coding as a "short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data." As such, I completed the first cycle of coding on Atlas.ti by using emotion coding because it allowed me to label the participants' perspectives about culturally relevant topics and texts. Emotion coding was conducted on each individual case (i.e., participant) and included codes such as happy, excited, sad, frustrated, disliked, enjoyed, related to, hopeful, and confused. Miles et al. (2020) explained that emotion coding provides insights into the participants' worldviews, life conditions, and experiences. Therefore, it was appropriate for my research to understand the topics/texts that transplanted Appalachians viewed as culturally relevant. Also, I used in vivo coding as it allowed me to capture the participants' cultural Discourses related to culturally relevant topics/texts of transplanted Appalachians. Some of these codes included Appalachian English comments related to emotion such as afeared (i.e., afraid) or other cultural words such as britches, holler, and buggy for shopping cart. I looked for patterns of cultural words and/or phrases used across interviews for individual participants and across cases.

The second cycle of coding that I used was pattern codes which was a way of grouping the first set of codes into smaller categories, themes, or concepts across four functions including: (a) categories, (b) cause or explanations, (c) relationships among people, and (d) concepts or theoretical constructs (Miles et al., 2020). Again, I used Atlas.ti in the second round of coding to segment the data into the four functions described and I exported these results onto an excel document for further analysis. I continued this same analysis (i.e., emotion, in vivo, and pattern

coding) with Atlas.ti throughout the research collection for each of the five interviews (i.e., one initial interview and four post think-aloud interviews per participant). Some codes that developed from this analysis across the four functions included: (a) positive emotions or negative emotions, (b) positive literacy experiences or negative literacy experiences, (c) negative perception related to characters, experiences, and/or languages used, and (d) the text was described as extremely culturally, somewhat culturally relevant, or not culturally relevant. I also used a matrix display for each individual case to organize the codes in an organized format which allowed me to reflect, verify, and draw conclusions of the data (Miles et al., 2020).

Finally, I conducted a cross-case analysis using variable-oriented coding strategy which often looks for themes that appear across the cases as common experiences of all the participants (Miles, et al., 2020). I looked for overarching themes that emerged from participants' interviews during the first phase of emotion coding and in vivo coding, and then during the pattern coding. This helped me to consolidate the participants' experiences and to discern the most common and/or frequent emerging themes (Miles et al., 2020). Some examples of themes that emerged were literacy experiences-beneficial (e.g., the participant discussed a positive childhood literacy experience including daily reading with a family member), literacy experiences-negative (e.g., being required to read particular genres, and/or content within texts), positive literacy emotions related to the characters (e.g., the characters in the text reminded the participant of themselves), negative literacy emotions related to the experiences in the text (e.g., the text reminded the participant of being marginalized), and positive language usage in the text (i.e., Discourses) (e.g., the text contained language and/or Discourses similar to the participant's Appalachian English vernacular).

Think-Alouds

Active readers are metacognitively aware and think-alouds are an effective verbal report used to assess reading comprehension (Pressley, 2002). As a result, the participants engaged in a

total of four audio/video recorded think-alouds (i.e., two during each session) on Zoom Cloud which ensured that the data was preserved for analysis (Merriam, 2009). After each recorded think-aloud, I uploaded the Zoom audio into Atlas.ti for intelligent/naturalized transcriptions so that I could accurately capture how the participants processed the text, which helped to answer my second research question about how culturally relevant texts aided in their reading comprehension. Then, I coded the think-aloud data using descriptive coding because it allowed me to summarize the codes using the following codes: how the participant constructed meaning, (e.g., monitored their comprehension, summarized, accessed and used background knowledge, made inferences), evaluated the text (i.e., the style and content), and their aesthetic responses (i.e., emotions). Pressley and Afflerbach (1995) supported this analysis when they explained that many researchers who examined think-aloud have used induced codes as a successful method for analyzing the readers' processing of text. Continuing, I completed a second round of pattern coding using Atlas.ti for each participant's think-aloud (i.e., four per participant) using the four functions: (a) categories, (b) cause or explanations, (c) relationships among people, and (d) concepts or theoretical constructs (Miles et al., 2020). Some of the codes from pattern coding across the four categories were: (a) constructing meaning-summarized, inferencing, ability to access and use background knowledge and/or monitored comprehension (i.e., revised a previous prediction), evaluated the text (e.g., author's style or content), and aesthetic response (e.g., low motivation- reads too fast, does not fix known errors, and negative/positive emotions). Using pattern coding as a second cycle analysis method condensed the codes into smaller units, organize the codes, (Miles et al., 2020) and helped to answer my research question about how culturally relevant topics/text aided in the reading comprehension of transplanted Appalachians. After the four think-alouds were analyzed for each participant, I presented the results in a matrix display and organized the material which allowed "reflection, verification and conclusion drawing" (Miles et al., 2020, p. 83).

Finally, I analyzed the think-aloud data across the five cases by using the variable-oriented strategy because it allowed me to validate each participant's think-aloud reports while also consolidating common experiences among all the participants (Miles et al., 2020). Some of the common themes that emerged included constructing meaning (e.g., summarizing, accessing and use background knowledge to make connections, making inferences, monitoring comprehension and/or fix-up strategies- reader stated their confusion and reread), evaluated (e.g., the participant observed the text style and commented about it being an easy read), and aesthetic responses (e.g., the reader expressed positive or negative emotion while reading). Using variable-oriented coding strategy helped to ensure that I gathered sufficient data in each case as well as across cases so that I reached the point of saturation and no new codes and/or themes emerged.

Cultural Relevance Rubric

The Cultural Relevance Rubric (see Appendix G) was originally designed by Freeman and Freeman (2007) to rate the cultural relevance of texts. However, I adapted the original rubric by replacing the scale of 3, 2, and 1 with characteristic values such as extremely culturally relevant, somewhat culturally relevant, or not culturally relevant. I used these descriptive characteristics because it allowed the participants to rate the four texts according to their cultural relevance and helped to answer my first research question. Researchers have found that culturally relevant texts assisted students to read more and to comprehend better (Freeman et al., 2003; Goodman, 1982). As such, the five participants rated the cultural relevance of each text they read (i.e., immediately after reading and thinking-aloud) for a total of four culturally relevant rubrics. These rubrics also served as a formal member check (i.e., during the following session) to verify that I fully understood the participants' perspectives of the texts. I displayed the participants' completed rubric and asked them to verify their rating and answers to ensure that I understood their responses.

After the four rubrics were completed (i.e., during the final session), I used formal member checking by showing these completed rubrics to the individual participants and asked them to rate the four texts from most culturally relevant to least culturally relevant. It was at this time that the participants were permitted to retract and/or correct their original perspective of the cultural relevance of the texts they read during the study. Again, I displayed these results in a matrix to show the data in an organized manner which allowed for easier analysis. Then, I conducted variable-oriented coding strategy by examining the Cultural Relevance Rubrics across the five cases to look for themes and/or common experiences (Miles et al., 2020). This helped me to answer my first research question and understand the topics/texts that transplanted Appalachians considered culturally relevant.

Researcher Positionality

Positionality has been described by Hay (as cited in Glesne, 2016) as the researcher's "social, locational, and ideological placement relative to the research project or to other participants in it" (p. 151). As a previous classroom teacher to students from diverse backgrounds and an extensive history with transplanted Appalachians, I realized that I had a unique position related to my research with transplanted Appalachians. Yet, as a researcher, I realized that my experiences put me in a position that could have impacted the research in positive and negative ways (Maxwell, 2013). Therefore, this section discusses my positionality.

My status of having family members who were transplanted Appalachians put me in a unique position to build rapport with my participants. I recognized the value of the initial interview, and the post think-aloud interviews as key to building rapport and trust with transplanted Appalachians. I also understood many Appalachians have strong familial ties so asking questions about their family and culture demonstrated my respect and interest in their experiences which deepened our researcher-participant trust. In addition, I knew my position could have me go off script in the interviews and show too much interest in the participants which

may have made it challenging to stay on topic, however, it could have led to gathering more contextual information about the participants' perspectives. As such, my positionality may have had a positive impact on building participant rapport which helped me to gather richer and trustworthy data.

Further, my position as an insider to transplanted Appalachians could have caused me to be blinded in some areas such as data gathering. For example, I may have assumed that the participants understood my interview questions and I could have misinterpreted their responses. I also may have assumed that the participants were trained properly with one practice think-aloud because I had false expectations and/or opinions about my participants. In addition, my position may have given me unrealistic expectations regarding how seamless the data collection occurred.

Continuing, my positionality could have caused me to analyze the data with my feelings and/or beliefs rather than using the patterns and themes as they emerged. For example, my connection to transplanted Appalachians could have caused me to recognize certain patterns that were favorable for this population and ignore negative patterns. In turn, this could have caused me to generate findings that were not accurate and not trustworthy. Also, my positionality may have affected the findings because of my personal perceptions and my expected outcome of this research. On the other hand, my positionality gave me the determination to accurately understand my participants' perspectives, to gather rich data, and produce trustworthy findings.

Trustworthiness of the Study

In this qualitative case study with transplanted Appalachians, I dealt with the complex phenomenon of understanding the participants' perspectives of culturally relevant topics/texts and how these topics/texts aided in their reading comprehension. Yet, I realized the ethical obligation that I must minimize any misrepresentation and misunderstanding (Stake, 1995). Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that trustworthiness of the study can be dealt with by using: credibility, transferability, reliability and confirmability which are discussed in this section.

First, I ensured the trustworthiness of my study's findings by using triangulation. Lincoln and Guba defined this as "different data collection modes (interview, questionnaire, observation, testing) or different designs" (1985, p. 306). As such, I conducted this study using five interviews per participant (i.e., one initial interview and four post-think-aloud interviews), four Cultural Relevance Rubrics (i.e., per participant for each text), and four think-alouds per participant. These different data collection methods increased the trustworthiness of the study and reduced the risk of chance associations due to using only a single method of data collection (Maxwell, 2013). In addition, I had scripts for the five interviews, the four Cultural Relevance Rubrics, and the four think-alouds which ensured that I was prepared to ask appropriate questions and stay on topic. Also, the scripts helped me to collect the data necessary to answer my research questions, allowed every participant to receive the same instructions, and assisted me to not get distracted during data collection.

Secondly, member checking is a method that researchers often use to ask participants to provide critical observations, suggestions, and interpretations of the data and/or the emerging findings (Stake, 1995). Lincoln and Guba (1985) provided recommendations for conducting member checks such as informal immediate checks and formal checks. For this study, I conducted immediate informal member checks after the participants completed their initial interview. I clarified their responses and made sure that I did not assume their perspectives or answers. Next, I began session two with a formal member check where I presented the initial interview transcript to each participant. I asked the participants to verify their answers and asked them if there were any parts that they wanted taken out to protect their privacy and so that I did not project my own interpretations and gather inaccurate data. During session three, I conducted another formal member check on the two Cultural Relevance Rubrics (see Appendix G) and two post think-aloud interviews (see Appendix H) by presenting a copy of these documents and transcripts. At this time, the participant was welcome to correct, retract, and/or clarify their answers. At the beginning of session four, I followed this same pattern for the final member

check, but I also presented all four of the think-aloud transcripts to ensure that participants were not primed to use the same thinking processes during the study. Further, this helped me to assess the participants' intentionality of responses, correct any errors, volunteer additional information, and agree to the correctness of the data collected (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Third, I used a critical friend as a method to increase the trustworthiness of this study if I needed outside advice during data collection and/or data analysis. This allowed for a qualified colleague to provide external reflection and input into my research (Glesne, 2016). Further, I used a critical friend strengthen the trustworthiness of the findings because it ensured that the data collection and/or data analysis was reliable and confirmable between myself and my critical friend. It also ensured that I did not allow my personal opinions and/or beliefs to overshadow the emerging themes (i.e., patterns) from the data.

Finally, adequate engagement was a method of data collection that I used to get a deeper sense of understanding the phenomenon. Merriam (2009) explained that researchers should collect rich data from enough people over time so that it produces patterned data and that patterned findings emerge until a saturation point at which no new findings emerge. As such, I looked for patterns within the data across time and used the saturation point as a factor for determining when enough data were collected. I was open to the possibility that data saturation may not occur with the original five participants, and I was willing to increase the participants until I reached data saturation. However, I did obtain data saturation with my five participants as no new themes emerged from the findings. Lincoln and Guba (1985) encouraged researchers to spend enough time with participants to learn their culture, to understand the context of the phenomenon, and to build the participants' trust. Therefore, I spent significant time getting to know the participants during the initial interview, the think-aloud modeling and training, and the think-aloud practice session so I could learn their culture and build their trust. In addition, the entire data collection took approximately four sessions (i.e., one to four weeks depending on the participants' schedule and flexibility) which allowed me to "detect and take account of

distortions" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 302) that may have crept into the data including my own personal distortions.

All the methods described above increased the trustworthiness of my study's findings and ensured that the data gathered were credible, transferable, reliable, and confirmable.

Ethical Conduct of Research

In qualitative research there are many measures that can be taken to deal with the ethical issues of the research (Glesne, 2016). In this section, I describe how I conducted myself in an ethical manner throughout this research study.

First, I informed potential research participants about the nature of my study including the research purposes, the procedures, and how I was going to share the results in a consent form (see Appendix O), and I selected participants on a voluntary basis (Glesne, 2016). As the study evolved, I kept the participants informed about changes in the study and asked for their consent to continue with these changes such as increasing the gift amount.

Next, I respected the privacy and confidentiality of the participants during data collection by not discussing the research with anyone else (Glesne, 2016) except my critical friend and only using fictitious names during those discussions. As I began to write up the study, I used pseudonyms for participants to protect their privacy. Also, I protected the video and audio data with passwords protected on my computer, my Zoom account, and my Atlas.ti account. I did not explicitly share this data with anyone else outside of the study and I conducted all analysis of data privately.

Another ethical issue I considered were the benefits and the costs of this study. Miles et al. (2020) explained how researchers often benefit from the study while the participants invest their time and energy without receiving any benefit. As such, I provided a small monetary compensation for each participant's involvement in this study in the form of an Amazon gift card.

This was awarded to each participant upon full participation in the study after all five participants completed their fourth and final session (see Appendix A).

Conclusion

In this qualitative case study, the methods and data collection tools were designed to answer the research questions: what topics/texts are considered culturally relevant to transplanted Appalachians from their own perspective and how do culturally relevant texts aid in their reading comprehension? The main motive of qualitative research was to understand how people make sense of their lives (Merriam, 2009). As such, this study was designed to discover, gain insight, and understanding from the transplanted Appalachian participants with the hopes of making a positive impact on the literacy achievement of millions of Appalachians (Merriam, 2009).

CHAPTER 4

Findings and Discussion

This section contains the findings and discussion regarding the themes of culturally relevant topics/texts as perceived by transplanted Appalachians from the Central Appalachian Region. Also, it seeks to answer the first research question asking, "what topics and/or texts are considered culturally relevant for transplanted Appalachian adults from their own perspective?" Subsequently, is a section related to the think-aloud findings and discussion which answers the second research question asking, "how do culturally relevant texts aid in the reading comprehension of transplanted Appalachian readers?" Relevant research is discussed throughout each theme to substantiate the findings of this research with transplanted Appalachians.

Themes of Culturally Relevant Topics and Texts

There were two types of interviews conducted in this research including the initial introductory interview (see Appendix B) and four post think-aloud interviews (see Appendix H). Six themes emerged from the initial interview data and the four post-think aloud data related to transplanted Appalachians' perspectives of culturally relevant topics and texts. Therefore, the interviews were the main source for these six cultural themes which include community, authentic Appalachian experiences (e.g., settings, characters, and experiences), disliking vulgar language (i.e., cussing), disliking alcohol (i.e., drinking alcohol), dignity of work/dedication to work, and personal independence. The next section includes the findings related to these six major themes and a discussion of the themes substantiated by relevant research.

Community. The strongest theme across all five research participants as mentioned by each participant multiple times for a total of 92 instances was the concept of community. Appalachians have historically been devoted to a closeness with family and togetherness (Hayes, 2017). In fact, Sohn (2003) explained how family is the center of Appalachian life. The emphasis of this theme is Appalachian Community, and the discussion envelops how the research

participants embody Appalachian Community with their literacy practices. These include how they commune through texts with other individuals, and share in a community (i.e., joining in the characters' journey). Overall, the Appalachian Community is the main theme discussed with the embodiment and/or enactment of this theme occurring uniquely, harmoniously, and simultaneously. Importantly, the texts presented did not explicitly use the term community.

The findings revealed how participants relate to the Appalachian Community, particularly to togetherness and familiarity within Appalachia. Importantly, all five participants (i.e., 65 instances) discussed how the Appalachian Community was a strong element of Appalachian culture. In addition, the cross-case analysis revealed how all five participants deeply related to and/or understood the family community (i.e., being tight knit), and a small-town community (i.e., where everyone knows everyone). Also, the data suggested the participants deeply connected to texts with elements of the Appalachian Community such as everyone supporting and helping one another. Although community was not explicitly mentioned in any of the texts, the five participants regularly discussed this theme without any prompting from the researcher. Examining these findings, I see a connection to Barton and Hamilton's (1998) view of literacy as a social practice as the nature of literacy is viewed as embedded within the cultural practices. Literacy practices refer to the cultural ways of utilizing written language and it may also involve unobservable elements such as: values, attitudes, feelings, and social relationships (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Street, 1995). Similarly, CRI/CSP emphasizes the importance of grounding learning in the learners' culture. Thus, the transplanted Appalachian readers viewed the texts through their cultural lens and immediately recognized cultural elements (e.g., themes of community) which stood out and aligned to their own cultural practices. An example of this occurred with Participant E when he explained how he selected texts to experience the "connection of the community as well, on how they harbored and connected, or they understood and empathized better" toward community members.

Continuing, in the Post Think-Aloud Interview Participant C was asked, "Please describe how the characters in this text are similar or dissimilar to you and your family?" and her answer explains that she felt this non-culturally relevant text, *Bear Town* (Backman, 2016) was dissimilar:

> So, I feel like this text was pretty dissimilar to my family. Because hockey is not a thing that has ever been in my family. In the region. Really, when I say the region, I mean Kentucky specifically like hockey in Eastern Kentucky is not a big thing at all. I can't even tell you if there's a hockey team anywhere in the area. So that's really the main difference.

However, she did relate to the community aspect found in the non-culturally relevant text, *Bear Town* (Backman, 2016):

> On the other hand, very much the small-town community coming together. So, like everyone knows what the "bang bang" sound means like that idea of everyone knows this, everyone knows who this family is. Everyone knows what this kid is doing and then when that kid was missing for a second, everyone went out to look for him. So that very much that community, family togetherness, and engagement are similar.

Although this quote describes a scene from the non-culturally relevant text, *Bear Town* (Backman, 2016), five out of five participants pointed out the themes of community and togetherness resembled Appalachian culture. In addition, this evidence suggests that texts exist on a cultural relevance continuum ranging from less to more culturally relevant. Often, texts might seem to be non-culturally relevant but contain some cultural elements for readers making them still on the spectrum of cultural relevance. As such, these findings suggest a revision of the binary terms such as culturally relevant and non-culturally relevant texts to instead be replaced with a cultural relevance classification system ranging from least to most culturally relevant texts.

Continuing examining this theme of community comes from Participant A who was asked "What are some places described that are similar or dissimilar to places you have lived or visited?" regarding the *Bear Town* (Backman, 2016) text and he answered:

> It sounded like it was a small community, small town, or little hamlet in the country, so that's very similar to where I was raised. My first 18 years. Okay, and I may have read that. I may have read that in it, or I just was assuming it was a small community.

This text did not explicitly describe *Bear Town* (Backman, 2016) as taking place in a small town or in a country setting. When the main character in the story was missing, "half of the town was out searching for him" (p. 7), which might be the reason Participant A assumed it was a small town. However, it is more likely that Participant A was transacting with the text and was paying attention to his own background experiences, feelings, images, and associations (Rosenblatt, 1994) which the text evoked in him. In turn, Participant A has strong associations (i.e., connections) to his own Appalachian Community so when he was reading this non-cultural relevant text, he focused on the elements which aligned with his Appalachian culture and were relevant to him.

Continuing, in Donehower's (2003) research the small-town Appalachian participants had an insider or outsider perspective meaning anyone not from the area was typically easy to identify and viewed as not belonging to the community. This means that Appalachians have a mutual understanding of belonging to their community (i.e., area) and to each other (Donehower, 2003). Further, Shaw et al., (2004) explained that family closeness and togetherness is due in part to the remoteness of the mountains and how families (i.e., communities) depend on each other for survival. This was also demonstrated by research Participant C when she was asked in the Introductory Interview to complete the following sentence, "Appalachian people relate to topics about" and provided the answer:

> So, I would say that, like self-preservation and community, I think that's a really common theme at least for me. It is the idea that we are very isolated, but we very much come together and build each other up as a community.

The Appalachian Community has historically been essential to Appalachians' survival (Philliber et al., 1981; Shaw et al., 2004) which is also why the five participants deeply relate to topics/texts involving community. And the Appalachian Mountains themselves act as a barrier from the outside world which allowed Appalachians to maintain their independence (i.e., privacy) from mainstream society and strengthen their devotion to family (i.e., community) within.

In addition, the research participants embodied Appalachian Community uniquely as they demonstrated how they communed through texts with other individuals. This was evident as four out of five of the research participants discussed (i.e., 13 instances) how they regularly engaged in reading texts with other individuals such as family, friends, and even colleagues. Often, participants had discussions, book clubs, or simply passed a text from one person to another. For example, Participant A explained how his family passed books around, "I'm given [books] by my wife and my kids, and other people for leisure reading." And Participant B described her book club, "It's just me and Heather (pseudonym). We are the only people that can get in it [book club]. Nobody else is super interested in it but we you know, and we'll plan it out." These examples demonstrate how literacy is woven into the daily experiences of people and shapes their attitudes, beliefs, and pursuits with literacy (Purcell-Gates et al., 2011). Specifically, the participants pursued literacy though their cultural lens which was obvious as they sought out ways to commune with others through texts thereby reestablishing that sense of Appalachian Community. In addition, this embodiment of Appalachian Community demonstrates that Appalachians have a unique literacy practice of communing with others through literacy, which is a cultural way they utilize written language in their daily lives (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Heath, 1983).

Another example of the embodiment of Appalachian Community is when Participant C described how she learned about an important Appalachian speaker, songwriter, and singer, "My

mother is an English teacher, so she has told me a little bit about Cratis Williams, who was like the forerunner of Appalachian studies." This exemplifies the oral tradition of Participant C as her mother passed down important information pertaining to this historical Appalachian author. Also, it struck Participant C strongly enough for her to share her experience in the initial interview when she was asked if she knew any Appalachian authors. Further, the five transplanted Appalachian participants recommended the following culturally relevant texts/authors including: *The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek* (2019) by Kim Michelle Richardson, and writings by Appalachian authors including Harry Caudill, Wendell Berry, Cratis Williams, Silas House and Jesse Stuart. The only author mentioned by more than one participant was Jesse Stuart. Participant D could not name any Appalachian authors at all while the remaining four participants all knew at least one Appalachian author.

In addition, the findings revealed how the research participants embodied community by seeking opportunities to share in a community with the characters and/or authors of the texts. Four out of five participants discussed (i.e., 14 instances) how they connect with characters and/or authors in the text they read and join in their personal journey. Aspects of sharing in a community were revealed as participants explained they established and shared in a community with the characters/authors who faced challenges, difficulties, and similar personal experiences. For example, Participant C elaborated on how she related to texts in her Introductory Interview:

> So, I also really enjoyed reading books like Richard Peck. I can't remember the title. But it's like stories from a small hometown, and just how all like the people know each other and connect and love each other and build that sense of community.

Participant C related to this text because she identified with aspects of community closeness, and togetherness, which fostered her connection with the characters. This embodiment of the Appalachian Community leads to the discussion regarding the contextualization of literacy practices for Appalachians. Vygotsky (1978) emphasized that the learners' language and sociocultural experiences (i.e., social, cultural, and historical) shape their thoughts and

development. Thus, to understand why these participants embody Appalachian Community we must consider the context of their literacy practices within their Appalachian Culture (i.e., sociocultural experiences) and how their cultural experiences shape the ways they interact and utilize texts. These participants embody the Appalachian Community as this is a foundational aspect of their language and sociocultural experiences.

Also, when Participant B was asked why she enjoyed reading certain texts, she said the text helped her to escape from reality and "join their worlds." Participants enjoyed sharing in a community with the characters and/or authors as it allowed them to join in the characters'/ authors' journey, escape from their own realities, and establish connections to other individuals. Community sharing also revealed that participants were encouraged and often inspired as they connected to characters and/or authors who faced and overcame obstacles. For example, Participant E explained in his Introductory Interview, "it is inspirational to know that the challenges and the obstacles" autobiographers overcome and feel like "yes, we can get through this, and this is how we can continue to push forward." So, sharing in a community with the characters and/or authors has shown to be a strong theme for these transplanted Appalachians.

Summary. Community was the strongest theme in this research study, given all five research participants discussed aspects of community at a total of 92 instances. Also, the participants embodied elements of Appalachian Community as demonstrated in the ways they communed through texts with other individuals, and shared in a community (i.e., joining in the characters'/authors; journey). In turn, Appalachians deeply relate to topics/texts which include community especially relating to Appalachian Community.

Authentic Appalachian Experiences. The second strongest theme was recognized across all five participants for a total of 29 instances was topics/texts with authentic Appalachian experiences. These topics/texts include characters, settings, and experiences that typically occur within the Central Appalachian Region because all five participants were from this area. As such, the five transplanted Appalachians all described culturally relevant settings as rural areas, with

hills/hollers and/or small towns that were set apart from larger and more industrial cities. Familiar experiences included hunting, farming, adventures outside or in nature such as in the mountains, holler, or on a family farm. Also spending time with family including extended family such as grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins was also described as a typical Appalachian experience. The following details the Appalachian experiences of Participant B when asked, "Who are your favorite Appalachian authors?":

> I did have an Appalachian book. It was a poetry book, and I really like several of them. But not anyone in particular. I just enjoyed the tone a lot of it cause they spoke so much about nature. They spoke so much about you know the hills, the mountains, the seasons, and the family traditions, and I feel like that really was something that made sense to me from what I experienced growing up.

In addition, Participant C expressed wanting to celebrate her Appalachia heritage and read about her Appalachian experiences:

> I'm very proud to be from Eastern Kentucky. So, any chance that I do get to read about that particular area, or just any like small town country setting, I really relate to that a lot and enjoy that a lot.

Also, all five participants described strong family ties (i.e., togetherness and/or traditions) with four participants mentioning having a family practice of faith (i.e., having a Bible, practicing Christian values, reading religious texts, and/or attending a church). This leads to the importance of understanding "local" beliefs regarding literacy (Street, 1995). Specifically, Appalachians value texts which contain strong family relationships and religious traditions as these are synonymous with authentic Appalachian experiences and therefore culturally relevant. Street (1995) argued that the ideological model concentrates on the social practices of reading and writing and the culturally embedded nature of these practices. Street's ideological model played out in the ways the participants recognized and valued authentic Appalachian experiences woven

in texts, thereby, it reinforced the cultural nature of literacy as embedded in these Appalachian social practices.

Further, when Participant A was asked about what topics/texts were culturally relevant for Appalachians, he answered, “Well, Appalachian culture is a very religious rich culture” indicating that he identified strongly with and believed that other Appalachians would relate to religious texts. To support this claim, Participant D expressed positive connections to *The Mountain, the Miner, and the Lord* (Caudill, 1989) in this quote regarding honesty:

> So, when me and my Nana kind of get like get into it like, argue and I’m like Nana, I think you're lying, and she'll say, “well take me to court take me I'll put my hand on the Bible and everything.”

In her quote, Participant D viewed and related the courtroom scene in this text through her lens and experiences as a religious person. Further, it supports Sohn’s (2003) argument that to understand Appalachians one must understand their religion as it is the center of their identity.

Another interesting finding was that Participant E did relate to authentic Appalachian experiences such as Appalachian settings and Appalachian characters (i.e., practices). However, Participant E did not mention religion as being an authentic Appalachian experience. These findings suggest that there is a variation of Appalachian experiences even within the Central Appalachian Region, and we cannot make widespread assumptions (Billings et al., 2020). However, most of the research participants indicated that topics/texts were culturally relevant when they did contain elements of authentic Appalachian experiences including faith.

Further, the authors’ authentic Appalachian experiences was also stressed as important as discussed by Participant A:

> The author who wrote the book about Breathitt County. That was popular. I read a little bit of that book. What's the name of it? A lot of folks in Appalachia criticized it because they felt like he was sort of a carpetbagger. He lived in Jackson County for maybe a couple of years. But he wrote about it like he lived there for 30 years.

This quote reveals how Appalachians value texts written by Appalachian authors as they write from a place of experience and mutual understanding. Again, this aligns with Donehower's (2003) research of how Appalachians view individuals not from Appalachia as an outsider and individuals from Appalachia as insiders who share a mutual understanding of belonging to the mountain and to each other. As such, authors who grew up and spent time in Appalachia are insiders of Appalachian culture. Given their insider status, they can write and capture Appalachia in authentic ways which other Appalachians recognize and value.

Disliking of Vulgarity and Alcohol. Four out of five research participants discussed how they did not relate to and/or use vulgar (i.e., offensive) language found in texts as mentioned a total of 24 instances. In addition, most of these participants attempted to skip over the vulgarity found in the text and some of them replaced the words with "blank" or just paused at a cuss word. Also, these same four participants explained they did not relate to, make, and/or did not consume alcohol (e.g., moonshine) as found in the texts. This was mentioned in a total of 18 instances. When participant C explained how she and her family did not curse and was asked if this was exclusive to her family or an Appalachian custom, Participant C answered:

> I think that's a difficult question because it's kind of the whole like religious aspect like strong Christian families, and groups within Appalachia that definitely don't curse and then there's some other families that do curse so I would honestly consider a mixed bag pretty similar to the rest of the nation.

Gee (2015) addressed Discourses as the strongest expression of both personal and cultural identity. As a result, the findings provide insights into the four participants' Discourses including the ways they speak/listen and write/read coupled with the unique ways they act, interact, value, feel, think, and believe such as preferring texts without profanity and harsh language (Gee, 2015).

Continuing, other participants also recognized the vulgarity and cruel treatment of animals in the texts. For example, when describing the harsh language of *Miracle Boy and Other Short Stories* (Benedict, 2010), Participant E said,

> My family's big animal lover so like we typically don't like talk to dogs in a mean way, especially me, being like a psych major. I know that animals have emotions, too. So, I have to be really careful about what I say.

And again, Participant A found *Catch-22* (Heller, 1961/2011) to be very dissimilar to his own language usage:

> I was raised in a home where you just try to use "G" rated language, and also you know even in the situation where you disagree with someone you try to have empathy for them. So that's the main difference as I was reading, I don't know that I've ever heard that phrase "I'm gonna make you eat your liver. I want you to eat your liver." That was just language that was not ever modeled around me when I was growing up.

The above examples support the findings that four out of five participants did not relate to vulgarity and/or offensive language so this type of language would not be considered culturally relevant for Appalachians. Also, this leads to the discussion regarding the broader social goals of literacy as used by these participants (Barton & Hamilton, 1998). Specifically, by learning that most participants did not use offensive language, we learn about the broader literacy context and motivations of use. Meaning, if these participants did not use offensive language or relate to offensive language in texts, they would most likely feel more drawn to, motivated by, and/or relate to topics/texts without vulgarity.

Next, four participants disliked and/or did not relate to alcohol consumption, moonshining making and/or selling of moonshine. For example, Participant C explained the following "So my family does not make moonshine so we're not moonshiners. But I have seen moonshine in somebody's house before." This provides evidence that individuals may have seen moonshine in homes before but still do not drink and/or relate to alcohol consumption. It is

unclear why these participants did not relate to alcohol if they had seen it made and consumed, but the point is they did not approve or like alcohol in the texts. For example, Participant D expressed being turned off by the text because of the discussion surrounding alcohol even though this was a story which took place in Central Appalachia:

> So, starting off mainly my family like we don't have anything really to do with any alcohol or anything like that. So that kind of just turned me away from the story like being associated with my family and we just don't.

Participant E had a different perspective related to the topics/texts with vulgarity and alcohol consumption compared to the other participants. This individual regularly read the vulgarity in the text instead of skipping over it (e.g., as the four other participants often did) and identified positively with smelling, making, and/or drinking moonshine. For example, this participant said, “I made moonshine in high school for dual credit class, and my grandmother, who raised me, didn't want me to learn this.” In addition, this participant mentioned he was familiar with the discourse (i.e., language use) found in *Miracle Boy and Other Short Stories* (Benedict, 2011) from family members compared to the other four participants who did not relate to vulgar (i.e., cussing or offensive) language. In fact, Participant E explained that he related to the "old man [who said] shit in one hand wish in the other to see which one fills up faster” as this was a phrase his “grandfather, maybe an uncle, or a cousin” would have said. Although Participant E’s discourses differ than the other participants, we learn more about his Discourses (e.g., his identity) by observing how he related to and used vulgarity. Specifically, Participant E’s personal and cultural identity were revealed in the ways he acted, interacted, valued, felt, believed and accepted vulgarity and alcohol use which Gee (2015) referred to an individual's Discourses.

Summary. The initial interview and post-think aloud interview data provides insights into the types of topics/texts which are not culturally relevant for most Appalachians from the Central Appalachian Region as described by the ARC (2021). The findings also support Billings et al. (2000) belief that within a minority group such as Appalachians there are a wide range of

variations but there are a set of shared practices. As such, a pattern emerged demonstrating that most of these transplanted Appalachians did not enjoy the topics/texts when they contained vulgarity (i.e., cussing or offensive language) and/or alcohol use (e.g., moonshine). Further, Gee (2015) described Discourses as an "identity kit" which provides us with instructions on how to act, interact, value, think, and believe to take on a particular social role which others will recognize. Therefore, the discourses each participant used revealed more about their Discourses or socially situated identity (Gee, 2015) suggesting which types of topics/text are and are not culturally relevant.

Dignity and Dedication of Work. The next major theme identified across all five cases was the dignity of work (i.e., taking pride in your work) and dedication to work as mentioned for a total of 16 instances. When you consider the ruggedness and remoteness of the Appalachian Mountains, it is no surprise that the transplanted Central Appalachians take pride in working hard and have a strong work ethic. Philliber et al., (1981) explained how families depended on each other for survival in the Appalachian Mountains. Families did not survive these harsh mountains and rugged terrain without dedication to hard work (i.e., survival) and often experienced pride working for their families and communities' well-being (Portelli, 2012). Barton and Hamilton's (1995) fifth proposition describes literacy as being historically situated. Meaning, literacy practices today were shaped and patterned after the historical literacy practices and social influences within historical moments (Barton & Hamilton, 1998). Given the findings, we see this proposition coming to life as research participants recognize, value, and practice literacy in ways modeled for them by previous generations of dignified and hard-working Appalachians.

The first example is when Participant A said most Appalachians relate to texts with characters and experiences such as:

> The farm life, living in rural communities, knowing your neighbors, blue collar focus, you know, working with your hands and working on a job. That is, it puts food on the

table, but not necessarily having to have an advanced degree to do it, although obviously there are thousands and thousands of people that have gone on to get advanced degrees.

When the five participants were reading the four texts, they each pointed out aspects of the characters' dignity and dedication to their work (i.e., craft, hobby, occupation). Even when reading a non-culturally relevant text, the participants identified strongly with the theme of dignity and dedication to work. For example, Participant B connected to the main character's determination in *Bear Town* (Backman, 2016):

> That bear that they kinda allude to that drive that determination, although I expect there's more to it than that. You know it would almost have to be that drive to get things right. Some of us have that. That was a little much, but I can relate to that. But that was a little more than normal, I guess, than what we've experienced.

In addition, Participant E mentioned relating to elements of the main character's determination in *Bear Town* (Backman, 2016):

> The age of dedication and talent. I am not a sports person, but the dedication to your craft as a at a young age. I can recall that very well. I knew that I was more academically prone to compared to family members that I grew up with and so connecting to that dedication of time, effort, and energy whether it be to the young boy's hockey talent or to my academy is something that's very similar to me.

The quote above suggests that non-culturally relevant texts can be considered culturally relevant for certain individuals within cultural groups if the text contains culturally relevant elements. Hence, it poses the possibility that the cultural relevance of texts exists on a continuum of least to greater relevance rather than a binary of culturally relevant or non-culturally relevant texts.

Summary. Central Appalachia is a very rugged area and is isolated from the rest of mainstream society by physical mountains which act as boundaries. As such, all five participants

deeply related to aspects of dignity of work and dedication to work. Philliber et al., (1981) explained many Appalachians have learned to be self-sustaining and hard working to survive the harshness of the mountains they love. This theme aligns with Barton and Hamilton's (1998) fifth proposition of literacy as the literacy practices of today were shaped and patterned after the historical literacy practices and social influences within historical moments. Therefore, the findings reveal how Appalachians deeply relate to the dignity of work and dedication to work as these are cultural practices which are essential for the well-being and survival of the Appalachian people, and they continue to influence the literacy practices and preferences of Appalachians today.

Independent Path. Three out of five research participants discussed the concept of not following in their family's footsteps for a total of 26 instances. While this theme only included 3 of the participants the number of instances mentioned was considerably high, meaning that these individuals strongly felt it was an important part of their Appalachian identity. Therefore, it could be considered a topic that is culturally relevant for some Appalachians. Personal independence included: pursuing a different career path, education, school, region to live, and/or personal life choices (i.e., marriage, children, and reading preference). This theme suggests how the literacy practices of Appalachians change over time and new literacy practices (i.e., preferences) are acquired, invented, valued and taught (Barton & Hamilton, 1998) such as having an independent path. The first example is from participant E when he was asked, "What kinds of experiences would you feel like you could relate to, or connect to? And what would those characters be doing, or what would they be like?" and he answered:

> So, I mean the stigma is a family has struggling financially and having their father work in the coal mine, while the mother takes care of the child at the house, and then, when the child becomes of 14, 15 or 16 they have to go off to the coal mine as well. That's the first

> thing that I think about. However, in reality of living in 2022. The coal mines are now lesser [prominent] jobs than what they were in the seventies and eighties. We know about the dangers of Black lung so now I think the experience of the characters would be the family, son or daughter, whoever the children are saying "no" to mom or dad, and saying, "I'm not going down there. I want to be able to live outside of a 50- or 55-year age. And I want to be able to make sure that I am getting the relevant money, income, health insurance, and livelihood of longevity of living to 80 years old.

Participant E felt so strongly about his personal independence that he regularly discussed how he left Appalachia to pursue better employment opportunities and a higher income and was not planning on returning to Appalachia. In addition, Participant D explained how she related to the culturally relevant text, *Miracle Boy and Other Short Stories* (Benedict, 2011):

> I know nowadays from my experience, a lot of people do you kind of go on their own path like I was describing in the first question, like they go off their own path. That's happening more often because I feel like kids are getting more of a chance to express themselves.

Finally, Participant B explained the difficulties she experienced when pursuing her own independence:

> I was shunned because I didn't do medicine. Got the wrong type of doctorate degree, and you know that was not good. I didn't stay in the region to become anything that they expected me to do. I feel like they frown upon things that would not align with their culture or their expectations for family.

Even though the above participants knew their family's (i.e., Appalachians) expectations, values, and traditions, they decided to take their own independent path, possibly against the cultural traditions and expectations. During the interview process these three participants all explained they left the area for reasons including jobs and/or education. Of these three participants, two have very strong connections to the area and often visit and/or plan to return to

the Appalachian Region. However, one participant who also left this area for upward mobility (i.e., education, job, and higher income) has very little connection to this area and aims to disassociate himself with his Appalachian dialect, beliefs, and practices altogether. He expressed negative feelings toward Appalachians growing up and some rejection from his people. Given this information, these Appalachian participants might have perspectives that differ from Appalachians who left the region due to job loss. And given these findings, it explains why these three participants would relate to topics/texts dealing with independence as this defines them as individuals.

Summary. Again, this theme supports Barton and Hamilton's (1998) sixth proposition regarding the nature of literacy. Specifically, this proposition explains how literacy practices change over time and new literacy practices are acquired, invented, valued, and taught (Barton & Hamilton, 1998). The idea that some research participants relate to topics/texts of independence seems to have changed over time due to how mobile and transient Appalachians have become. Historically, the mountains separated Appalachia from mainstream society causing most Appalachians to remain isolated and close to home. Now however, Appalachians who desire to move out of Appalachia can do so resulting in individuals who often value, acquire, and are taught different literacy practices than their ancestors (Barton & Hamilton, 1998) as observed in this research study.

Conclusion

The data from the five interviews including the introductory and post think-aloud interviews (i.e., 25 interviews total for the entire study) revealed not all Appalachians have the same perspectives regarding the topics/texts they consider as culturally relevant. However, the data did reveal five major themes most and/or all participants relating to topics/texts with community, authentic Appalachian experiences, disliking vulgarity (i.e., offensive language), disliking alcohol (moonshine), and believing in the dignity/dedication of hard work. Further, the

data revealed three out of five Appalachians deeply connected to topics/texts involving a theme of personal independence (i.e., following one's own path) which suggests new literacy practices are valued, taught, and practiced (Barton & Hamilton, 1995). The following section details the findings of the think-aloud data which helps to answer the second research question previously mentioned.

Think-Aloud Findings and Discussions

This section includes the findings and discussions of the think-alouds for the five research participants. Each participant's think-aloud data are discussed separately to provide adequate data and to support the findings.

Participants Individual Comprehension Strategies

Pressley and Afflerbach's (1995) research on think-alouds (i.e., verbal reports) have revealed that readers typically use three overarching activities including constructing meaning of the text, monitoring (i.e., fix it strategies), and evaluating the text. Importantly, these activities do not occur in a linear fashion and are difficult to separate as they do involve a dynamic interaction (Block & Israel, 2004; Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995). As such, each research participant's think-aloud was analyzed to determine the reading activities used across the four texts (i.e., two culturally relevant and two non-culturally relevant) and to answer the second research question asking, "how do culturally relevant topics/texts aid in the reading comprehension of transplanted Appalachian readers?"

It is important to mention that think-alouds provide richness regarding the readers' monitoring (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995) including monitoring shifts and processing of texts. However, it is difficult based on this "think-aloud data to separate monitoring from the shifts in processing induced by monitoring" (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995, p. 62) and this section does not attempt to do so.

Participant A. Participant A is a White male faculty member at the university represented and in his mid 60's. He earned a doctorate degree in his field of study and teaches courses in this his respective field. This individual was born and raised in the Appalachian Region. He currently resides in a non-Appalachian county and volunteered for this study on his own initiative.

Participant A had a wide-variety of comprehension strategies that he flexibly used across each think-aloud indicating he was an exceptional reader (Janssen et al., 2006). Over the course of the four texts this participant displayed 47 overarching instances of strategic processes while reading (i.e., constructing meaning, and evaluating, and aesthetic responses to the text). He used the following comprehension strategies to construct meaning for 25 instances: summarizing, accessing and using background knowledge to make connections (i.e., to the text/characters), and inferencing (e.g., inference, drawing conclusions, predictions). Participant A also constructed meaning by monitoring his comprehension including questioning, rereading, expressing confusion and losing his place, fixing his thinking, and clarifying for 10 instances. As such, he constructed meaning a total of 35 instances across the four texts. In addition, Participant A evaluated the text in five places and expressed an aesthetic response (e.g., low motivation and negative emotions) to the text for 7 instances. Given the findings presented above, Participant A used meaning construction strategies most often, which could suggest he was most familiar with meaning construction strategies and regularly used these strategies to make meaning.

Table 4.1 details every comprehension strategy Participant A used across the culturally relevant and non-culturally relevant texts, respectively:

Table 4.1

Participant A's Instances of Strategic Processing

	Culturally Relevant Texts	Non-Culturally Relevant Texts	Totals

Table 4.1 (continued)

Strategic Process	*Miracle Boy and Other Short Stories* (Benedict, 2011)	*The Mountain, the Miner, and the Lord* (Caudill, 1989)	*Bear Town* (Backman, 2016)	*Catch-22* (Heller, 1961/2011)	
Constructing meaning					
Monitoring comprehension (e.g., states confusion, states they lost their place, adjusts thinking, and clarifying), and/or fix-up strategies (e.g., rereads, ask questions, reads ahead)	3	0	4	3	10
Summarizes	0	0	1	0	1
Ability to access and use background knowledge to make connections (i.e., to the text/characters)	3	5	5	2	15
Inferencing (e.g., inference, predictions, and draws conclusions)	1	4	2	2	9
Visualization	0	0	0	0	0
Cognitive processing by text	7	9	12	7	
Cognitive processing total	16		19		35
Reader evaluations					
Authors Style: Length, Content and Tone	4	0	0	1	5
Reader aesthetic responses					
Motivation and Engagement (e.g., disengaged, does not fix thinking, reads too quickly)	1	1	1	0	3
Negative emotions (e.g., dislikes vulgarity, dislikes characters' actions)	2	0	0	2	4
Positive emotions (e.g., expresses positive emotions toward text/characters)	0	0	0	0	0
	Culturally Relevant Texts		Non-culturally relevant text		Total
Strategic Process	Miracle Boy and Other Short	The Mountain, the Miner, and	Bear Town (Backman, 2016)	Strategic Process	Miracle Boy and Other

	Stories (Benedict, 2011)	the Lord (Caudill, 1989)			Short Stories (Benedict, 2011)
Total aesthetic response	3	1	1	2	7
Total by text		4		3	
Instances of strategic processes by text		24		23	47

Table 4.1 provides insights into the types of comprehension strategies Participant A used across the four texts. According to this data, Participant A monitored his comprehension at 10 instances. He monitored his thinking more during the non-culturally relevant texts at 7 instances compared to the culturally relevant text at 3 instances. This suggests he was monitoring his thinking twice the amount when reading a text that was non-culturally relevant. An example of Participant A monitoring his thinking occurred during his reading the non-culturally relevant text *Bear Town* (Backman, 2016), "I'm thinking about why he is inconsolable if they won [the hockey game] 12 to nothing." In this instance, Participant A is monitoring his comprehension by asking a question about the text. Participant A also monitored his comprehension as displayed in Table 4.2 of reading the non-culturally relevant text *Catch-22* (Heller, 1961/2011):

Table 4.2

Participant A's Think Aloud Sample One

Actual Text *Catch-22* (Heller, 1961/2011)	Text Read	Text read with think-aloud in italics	Coding
Corporal Kolodny learned about it first in a phone call from Group and was so shaken by the news that he crossed the intelligence tent on tip toe to Captain Black who was resting drowsily with his bladed shins up on the desk and relayed the information to him in a shocked whisper.	Corporal Kolandi learned about it first in a phone call from group and was so shaken by the news that he crossed the intelligence tent on tiptoe to Captain Black, who was resting drowsily with his bladed shins up on the desk and relaying the information to him in a shock whisper.	Corporal Kolandi learned about it first in a phone call from group and was so shaken by the news. *So, I'm thinking group he's in some counseling* that he crossed the intelligence tent on tiptoe to Captain Black, who was resting drowsily with his bladed shins up on the desk and relaying the	Inference Accesses/Uses background knowledge Monitoring Comprehension: Revising

	information to him in a shock whisper. *So now I'm thinking I don't have any idea what's going on yet.*	

Table 4.2 demonstrates that Participant A was monitoring his comprehension because he realized when he did not understand the text and needed to keep reading to construct meaning. In addition, he recognized that either he did not know what was going on in the text because he was not given that information yet or because he did not understand. Either way, he used the strategy of continuing reading to gain more information when reading *Catch-22* (Heller, 1961/2011).

In contrast, Participant A monitored his thinking on three occasions during the culturally relevant text *Miracle Boy and Other Short Stories* (Benedict, 2011) and zero instances during *The Mountain, the Miner, and the Lord* (Caudill, 1989). Because Participant A had fewer instances of monitoring his thinking during the two culturally relevant texts it seems that these texts may have provided more automatic meaning making compared to the non-culturally relevant texts and aided in his comprehension.

Almasi and Fullerton (2012) explained that there is an extensive amount of cognitive processing that occurs when readers engage in a think-aloud which can interfere with the cognitive processing it takes to read the text. Further, the four texts used in this study provided the same conditions for the reader such as the same Lexile range of 1010-1200 for each text. Also, the two culturally relevant texts had 436 words (Benedict, 2011) and 491 words (Caudill 1989) while the non-culturally relevant texts had 451 words (Backman, 2016) and 462 words (Heller, 1961/2011). So, the only difference between the texts was that two texts were culturally relevant, and two texts were not culturally relevant. Therefore, when Participant A read the non-culturally relevant texts it may have required more metacognitive thinking as demonstrated by the number of instances he monitored his thinking, hence, increasing his cognitive effort.

The next two comprehension strategies Participant A used are discussed simultaneously as they are grounded in the reader's background knowledge. First, is the ability to access and use background knowledge to make connections (i.e., to the text/characters) which Participant A used a total of 15 instances during the culturally relevant and non-culturally relevant texts. Next, Participant A made inferences (e.g., inferences, predictions, and drawing conclusions) for a total of 9 instances across the culturally relevant and non-culturally relevant texts. These three strategies are condensed as some researchers have often grouped them together (Raphael et al., 2009). For this research study, an inference is defined as "any piece of information that is not explicitly stated in the text" (McKoon & Ratcliff, 1992, p. 440). When readers make inferences, they connect to their background knowledge and make connections to the text itself (Kintsch & Kintsch, 2005) so the inferencing comprehension strategies involve a two-part process. As such, Participant A used his background knowledge for the culturally relevant texts for 8 instances and made inferences for 5 instances. In addition, Participant A used his background knowledge for the non-culturally relevant texts at 7 instances and made only 4 inferences as displayed in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

Participant A's Background Knowledge and Inferences Instances

Strategic Process	Culturally relevant text	Non-culturally relevant text
Ability to access and use background knowledge to make connections (i.e., to the text/characters)	8	7
Inferencing (e.g., inference, predictions, and draws conclusions)	5	4
Total	13	11

Given these data, it could suggest Participant A had about the same amount of background knowledge during the culturally relevant and non-culturally relevant texts, which possibly indicates he accessed his background knowledge automatically to make inferences. In addition, it could suggest that Participant A was more familiar with using these strategies to construct meaning. Or it may be a strategy he relied on to help construct meaning. Table 4.4

shows a sample of Participant A's read aloud and think-aloud of the culturally relevant text, *The Mountain, the Miner and the Lord* (Caudill, 1989):

Table 4.4

Participant A's Think Aloud Sample Two

Actual Text *The Mountain, the Miner and the Lord* (Caudill, 1989)	Text Read	Text read with think-aloud in italics	Coding
The men were Federal officers with a search warrant for his mysterious vehicle.	The men were Federal officers with a search warrant for his mysterious vehicle.	The men were Federal officers with a search warrant for his mysterious vehicle, *and I'm just automatically thinking moon shine illegal.*	Inferencing

In Table 4.4, the italicized text is Participant A's thinking which demonstrates how he used context clues to make an inference about what was inside the mysterious vehicle. Participant A possessed adequate background knowledge to understand the officers were searching the main character's vehicle looking for moonshine because it was illegal and smuggled in the Appalachian Region during this time period. Participant A used this two-part comprehension strategy to access his background knowledge and use context clues from the text to infer meaning automatically.

Importantly, Participant A had general sports knowledge which could have provided him relevant background knowledge of the non-culturally relevant text about hockey, *Bear Town* (Backman, 2016), than the non-culturally relevant text about wartime, *Catch-22* (Heller, 1961/2011). When asked how the characters in the text *Bear Town* are similar or dissimilar to you and your family, Participant A answered, "Come from a sports family. So, except for the aspect of hockey being a sport, we never played- that's very similar." And on his Cultural Relevance Rubric (see next section), Participant A rated this text as the most culturally relevant text even though it is a non-culturally relevant text from Sweden. Also, when reading this text, Participant A had 5 instances where he accessed and used his background knowledge to make connections

and 2 instances of making inferences. For example, Participant A accessed and used his background knowledge to make an inference during *Bear Town* as the text described a "bang-bang-bang-bang" sound that was coming from the family's garden and he said, "So I'm thinking they were shooting something." But after reading more the author referenced skates and a stick so Participant A expressed, "Now I'm thinking I was assuming wrong. This is hockey." So, the reader was able to access his background knowledge to make inferences throughout this non-culturally relevant text. In contrast, he accessed and used background knowledge in only 2 instances and made 2 inferences in the other non-culturally relevant text, *Catch-22* (Heller, 1961/2011). Given Participant A's increased effort to access and use background knowledge and make inferences during *Bear Town* (Backman, 2016), it might suggest that Participant A has sufficient background knowledge of sports in general, and he used his knowledge to make inferences similarly to how he used this strategy for the culturally relevant texts. It also could suggest that Participant A used his background knowledge to connect to not only culturally relevant texts but non-culturally relevant texts to construct meaning. Therefore, these findings possibly suggest the culturally relevant texts did not necessarily aid Participant A in comprehending the texts as he was equally able to access and use his background knowledge and make inferences when reading both culturally relevant and non-culturally relevant texts.

Continuing, the think-aloud data also revealed how Participant A evaluated the text as he read. Specifically, the reader evaluated the author's tone, writing style, and content within the culturally relevant text *Miracle Boy and Other Short Stories* (Benedict, 2011) for 4 instances. For example, Participant A expressed the following critique of the author's writing style:

> So, I'm thinking about as an author myself just writing exactly what you're thinking just the way you talk. That's an interesting way to do it. Some editors wouldn't read this because of the way that it is reading. But it is from his mind, and his heart. So yeah authors do that too.

In addition, Participant A evaluated the tone of *Catch-22* (Heller, 1961/2011) for 1 instance, “I’m thinking that's really a harsh term. [You] don't even hear that in modern day,” in which Participant A criticized the phrase “eat your livers”, that the author repeatedly used.

Even more, Participant A did not evaluate the author’s style of writing for one culturally relevant text *The Mountain, the Miner, and the Lord* (Caudill, 1989) or the non-culturally relevant text *Bear Town* (Backman, 2016). Given Participant A’s irregular evaluations of texts, it could suggest he did not rely on evaluations to construct meaning as much as he relied on comprehension strategies to construct meaning. In addition, reader factors make an individual unique such as their age, background knowledge, beliefs, culture, gender, emotional state, and personality which can also influence their reading preferences (Almasi & Fullerton, 2012). This data could also suggest it may not have mattered if a text was culturally relevant or not culturally relevant, the reader’s factors themselves could determine if the reader evaluates the text.

Further, the data revealed Participant A’s aesthetic responses to the texts including his motivation/engagement and his negative emotions to vulgarity or the characters’ behavior. When reading the texts, Participant A had a similar number of aesthetic responses with the culturally relevant texts at 4 instances and the non-culturally relevant texts at 3 instances. Specifically, the culturally relevant text *Miracle Boy and Other Short Stories* (Benedict, 2011) he had 1 instance of lacking motivation/engagement as indicated by how he expressed, “I’m just thinking have I missed something here cause the way he runs his sentences together. And that's me not concentrating as much as I should.” Although Participant A monitored his comprehension during this instance, he did not employ a fix-it strategy such as rereading to gain the information he felt he missed. Hence, it reveals Participant A may have lacked motivation to exert additional effort to employ a comprehension strategy to bring more meaning from the text. Also, he may have lacked in motivation/engagement when reading *The Mountain, the Miner, and the Lord* (Caudill, 1989) as revealed when he did not recognize his comprehension error regarding the setting of the text. In addition, Participant A revealed two instances of disliking the vulgarity and/or harshness

toward the treatment of the dog in *Miracle Boy and Other Short Stories* (Benedict, 2011) so this produced negative emotions for the reader.

In comparison, when reading the non-culturally relevant text *Catch-22* (Heller, 1961/2011) Participant A experienced 2 instances where he experienced negative emotions of the character's actions and the vulgarity used. Also, he displayed 1 instance of lacking motivation when he expressed, "I'm thinking I don't know understand that last paragraph, So I lost my train of thought again" but he did not attempt to reread the paragraph he misunderstood. As such, these findings might suggest that the reader's lack of motivation/engagement was not necessarily due to his negative emotions about the text. Sometimes, Participant A seemed unmotivated and/or disengaged from reading, and it was not because he expressed dislike for the text. Lau's (2006) research on think-alouds also found that participants who were unmotivated aimed to finish reading as quickly as possible which might be why Participant A did not reread to bring more meaning from the text. Another important finding is how Participant A expressed dislike for the non-culturally relevant text *Catch-22* (Heller, 1961/2011) twice and criticized the author's writing style once, but he did not present any aesthetic response suggesting he was unmotivated/disengaged during this text. So, this could suggest a reader can dislike elements of the text including the characters but still be motivated to read and construct meaning.

In addition, Participant A constructed meaning 19 times for the non-culturally relevant texts and 16 times for the culturally relevant texts. This could suggest it required more cognitive demands for him to read the non-culturally relevant texts. Also, Participant A used an average of 3.5 reading comprehension strategies across the non-culturally relevant texts and 2.5 reading comprehension strategies for the culturally relevant texts. So, he had to employ at least one more strategy when reading the non-culturally relevant texts. Considering these findings it could suggest that the culturally relevant texts may have aided in the in Participant A making meaning as he used fewer construction activities and less comprehension strategies.

The above findings possibly suggest the culturally relevant texts aided Participant A as he used fewer instances of strategic processes and fewer comprehension strategies on average. Also, he used fewer monitoring strategies which could imply the texts were easier for him to automatically construct meaning. Comparatively, when reading the non-culturally relevant texts he utilized more comprehension strategies and more monitoring strategies which could suggest it was more challenging to construct meaning. Finally, Participant A seemed to access and use his background knowledge and make inferences equally when reading the culturally relevant and non-culturally relevant texts, so he possibly had about the same background knowledge across all the texts. Alternatively, Participant A could have preferred to access and use his background knowledge and make inferences as a comprehension strategy to construct meaning.

Participant B. Participant B is a White female faculty member at the university represented. She is in her early 40's and has earned a doctorate degree. She teaches courses in her respective field. This individual was born and raised in the Appalachian Region and currently resides in a non-Appalachian Region.

Participant B had 50 overarching instances of strategic processes while reading all four texts (i.e., two culturally relevant and two non-culturally relevant). She constructed meaning by using the following comprehension strategies for 48 instances activating background knowledge and making inferences, asking questions, clarifying, and rereading the text. Participant B relied more on constructing meaning as a comprehension strategy at 48 instances, than she did for evaluations at zero and aesthetic responses at 1. Table 4.5 below details every comprehension strategy, evaluation, and aesthetic response that Participant B used across the culturally relevant and non-culturally relevant texts, respectively:

Table 4.5

Participant B's Instances of Strategic Processing

	Culturally Relevant Texts	Non-culturally relevant text	Total

Table 4.5 (continued)

Strategic Process	*Miracle Boy and Other Short Stories* (Benedict, 2011)	*The Mountain, the Miner, and the Lord* (Caudill, 1989)	*Bear Town* (Backman, 2016)	*Catch-22* (Heller, 1961/2011)	
		Constructing meaning			
Monitoring comprehension (e.g., states confusion, states they lost their place, adjusts thinking, and clarifying), and/or fix-up strategies (e.g., rereads, ask questions, reads ahead)	2	1	3	8	14
Summarizes	0	0	0	0	0
Ability to access and use background knowledge to make connections (i.e., to the text/characters)	5	6	6	3	20
Inferencing (e.g., inference, predictions, and draws conclusions)	4	3	5	3	14
Visualization	0	0	0	0	0
Cognitive processing by text	11	10	14	14	
Cognitive processing total	21		28		49
		Evaluation			
Authors Style: Length, Content and Tone	0	0	0	0	0
		Aesthetic responses			
Motivation and Engagement (e.g., disengaged, does not fix thinking, reads too quickly)	0	0	0	0	0
Negative emotions (e.g., dislikes vulgarity, dislikes characters' actions)	1	0	0	0	1
Positive emotions (e.g., expresses positive emotions toward text/characters)	0	0	0	0	0
Total aesthetic responses	1	0	0	0	1
Total per Culturally Relevant Texts	1		0		
Instances of strategic processes by text	22		28		50

Table 4.5 demonstrates that Participant B primarily used three comprehension strategies to construct meaning. The first two comprehension strategies include accessing and using

background knowledge at 19 instances and inferencing at 15 instances. Again, I will discuss these two comprehension strategies simultaneously as they are both grounded in using background knowledge. The research on reading has revealed that background knowledge influences reading comprehension (Guthrie et al., 2004). And readers must possess background knowledge and know how to access their background knowledge, or they struggle to make meaning (Nation, 2005). When reading the culturally relevant texts *Miracle Boy and Other Short Stories* (Benedict, 2011), and *The Mountain, the Miner, and the Lord* (Caudill, 1989), Participant B accessed and used her background knowledge for 11 instances and made 6 inferences for a total of 17 times. In comparison, Participant B used her background knowledge for 9 instances and made 8 inferences during the non-culturally relevant texts *Bear Town* (Backman, 2016) and *Catch-22* (Heller, 1961/2011) for a total of 17 times. Therefore, Participant B had 2 more instances of accessing and using her background knowledge during the culturally relevant texts, but she had two more instances of making inferences when reading the non-culturally relevant texts as displayed in table 4.6.

Table 4.6

Participant B's Background and Inferencing Instances

Strategic Process	Culturally relevant texts	Non-culturally relevant texts
Ability to access and use background knowledge to make connections (i.e., to the text/characters)	11	9
Inferencing (e.g., inference, predictions, and draws conclusions)	6	8
Instances Total	17	17

Given Table 4.6's results, it could suggest that Participant B used about the same amount of background knowledge across the four texts. As explained before, making inferences involves a two-part comprehension strategy of activating background knowledge and using the context clues to infer meaning (Kintsch & Kintsch, 2005). Because Participant B accessed and used her background knowledge and made about the same number of inferences across texts, she may have had about the same amount of background knowledge of all four texts. Alternatively, it

could be that Participant B preferred to use these comprehension strategies to construct meaning which is why she had higher instances of using background knowledge and making inferences. Further, the data possibly suggests there were not many differences in how Participant B constructed meaning related to accessing and using her background knowledge and making inferences across the four texts. As such, this may suggest the culturally relevant texts did not necessarily aid Participant B in constructing meaning because she had a wide range of background knowledge and possibly preferred this comprehension strategy, so she employed it evenly across all four texts.

Further, the think-aloud data could suggest that Participant B monitored her comprehension significantly more when reading the non-culturally relevant texts at a total of 11 instances compared to when she read the culturally relevant texts for only 4 instances. As such, she had to monitor her thinking almost three times more when reading the non-culturally relevant texts, possibly because these texts were less familiar. Table 4.7 provides an example of Participant B monitoring her thinking of a non-culturally relevant text, *Catch-22* (Heller, 1961/2011) with her thinking in italics:

Table 4.7
Participant B's Think Aloud Sample One

Actual Text *Catch-22* (Heller, 1961/2011)	Text Read	Text read with think- aloud in italics	Coding
It was the first really good laugh Captain Black had enjoyed since the day Major outsmarted him and was appointed squadron commander, and he rose with torpid enthusiasm and stationed himself behind the front counter in order to wring the most enjoyment from the occasion when the bombardiers arrived for their map kits.	It was first, for really. It was the first really good laugh Captain Black had enjoyed since the day Mayor outsmart him and was appointed squadron commander and he rose with torpid enthusiasm and stationed himself behind	It was first, for really it was the first really good laugh Captain Black had enjoyed since the day Mayor outsmart him and was appointed squadron commander. *So we're in the military* and he rose with torpid enthusiasm and stationed himself behind the front counter in order to ring	Monitored comprehension: Repair: Reread Inference

Table 4.7 (continued)

Participant B's Think Aloud Sample One

Actual Text *Catch-22* (Heller, 1961/2011)	Text Read	Text read with think-aloud in italics	Coding
"That's right, you bastards, Bologna," he kept repeating to all the bombardiers who inquired incredulously if they were really going to Bologna. "Ha! Ha! Ha! Eat your livers, you bastards. This time you're really in for it." Captain Black followed the last of them outside to observe with relish the effect of the knowledge upon all of the other officers and enlisted men who were assembling with their helmets, parachutes and flak suits around the four trucks idling in the center of the squadron area.	It was first, for really. It was the first really good laugh Captain Black had enjoyed since the day Mayor outsmart him and was appointed squadron commander and he rose with torpid enthusiasm and stationed himself behind the front counter in order to ring the most enjoyment from the occasion when the bombardiers arrived for their map kids. "That's right you bastards, Bologna." he kept repeating to all the bombardiers who inquired incredulously. If they were really going to Baloney or Bologna? Ha! Ha! Ha! Eat your livers you bastards this time you're really in for it. Captain Black. Captain Black followed the last of them outside, to observe with relish the effect of the knowledge upon all of their	the most enjoyment from the occasion when the bombardiers arrived for their map kids. That's right you bastards, Bologna. *I'm not sure if they're saying a name or a place*, he kept repeating to all the bombardiers who inquired incredulously. If they were really going to Baloney or Bologna? Ha! Ha! Ha! Eat your livers you bastards this time you're really in for it. *So they're going to prepare for a fight. So if it's a place it probably has more of an accent to it, it's pronounced differently,* Captain Black. *It's not a name.* Captain Black followed the last of them outside, to observe with relish the effect of the knowledge upon all of their officers and enlisted men who were assembling with their helmets, parachutes, and flax suits around the four trucks idling in the center of the squadron area.	Monitored comprehension: Repair: Questioned Self Monitored Comprehension Pronunciation of Word Inference Monitored Comprehension Repair: Fixed thinking

	officers and enlisted men who were assembling with their helmets, parachutes, and flax suits around the four trucks idling in the center of the squadron area.

Table 4.7 demonstrates the active and overarching comprehension activities that Participant B used to make sense of this non-culturally relevant text. Participant B recognized she was unsure of the meaning of Bologna (i.e., a place or a person's name), she did not know how to pronounce Bologna, she made an inference that the characters were going to Bologna, so it must be a place, and therefore, it was not person's name. As such, Participant B was able to make sense of the text, however, it did require more back and forth constructing, reconstructing, and monitoring comprehension strategies. When reading the non-culturally relevant text *Catch-22* (Heller, 1961/2011), Participant B used 8 comprehension monitoring strategies which could suggest it was challenging for Participant B to construct meaning. Also, when reading the non-culturally relevant text *Bear Town* (Backman, 2016), Participant B had 3 instances of monitoring her comprehension. Therefore, she had 11 instances of monitoring her comprehension compared to only 2 instances for *Miracle Boy and Other Short Stories* (Benedict, 2011) and 2 instances during *The Mountain, the Miner, and the Lord* (Caudill, 1989). These findings may suggest that the culturally relevant texts aided in the meaning making process for Participant B as she was able to actively construct meaning and rarely had to monitor her comprehension.

Another important finding was that Participant B did not evaluate the four texts at all and had only one aesthetic response to a text which was negative. Her only aesthetic response occurred when she read the culturally relevant text *Miracle Boy and Other Short Stories* (Benedict, 2011) when she described the scene involving shooting the dog's brains out as "a very intense scene." Otherwise, this reader did not seem to have strong emotions while reading the

four texts. Given the lack of evaluations and aesthetic responses while reading, it could suggest that Participant B relied heavily on constructing meaning as a comprehension strategy to bring meaning from the text more than she relied on evaluations or her aesthetic responses. Alternatively, it could suggest that Participant B had about the same perspective and/or aesthetic response of all four texts. Almasi and Fullerton (2012) explained how reader factors such as emotional state are what makes an individual unique. Hence, the data related to Participant B's aesthetic response could suggest that Participant B did not adopt a more aesthetic stance when reading a culturally relevant text than reading the non-culturally relevant texts. Hence, the culturally relevant texts may not have produced evaluations or an aesthetic response from this participant and may not have aided in her comprehension.

Overall, Participant B had 21 instances of strategic processing while reading the culturally relevant texts and 28 instances of strategic processes while reading during the non-culturally relevant texts. This increase in strategic processes while reading the non-culturally relevant texts may suggest these texts were more challenging to construct meaning resulting in additional strategies. Although Participant B seemed to have about the same amount of background knowledge across all four texts it could be that she preferred to access and use her background knowledge to make inferences as comprehension strategies to bring meaning. Further, Participant B monitored her comprehension three times more during the non-culturally relevant texts which may indicate Participant B found it more challenging to grasp meaning. Therefore, reading the culturally relevant texts possibly aided in Participant B's automatic meaning making which may have resulted in fewer instances of strategic processes while reading and less comprehension monitoring.

Participant C. Participant C is a White female in her early 20's. At the time of this study, she was an undergraduate senior student at the university represented. This individual was born and raised in the Appalachian Region and left this region to attend university.

Participant C utilized a variety of different comprehension strategies across all four of the texts (i.e., two culturally relevant and two non-culturally relevant) for a total of 87 overarching instances of strategic processes while reading. Specifically, Participant C constructed meaning by using strategic processes on 64 instances including: accessing and using background knowledge, inferencing (i.e., inferencing, predicting, drawing conclusions), and monitoring comprehension such as rereading, questioning, and fix-up strategies. As such, the think-aloud data revealed that this participant has a repertoire of strategies which she flexibly used indicating she was an expert reader and comprehender (Janssen et al., 2006). In addition, Participant C evaluated the text for 8 instances and displayed 15 aesthetic responses as she read all four texts. Therefore, Participant C constructed meaning (i.e., monitoring, accessing and using background knowledge, and making inferences) by using comprehension strategies more often than evaluations or aesthetic responses as a method to bring meaning from texts. Table 4.8 details Participant C's instances of strategic processing while reading including her text evaluations and aesthetic responses to the texts, respectively:

Table 4.8

Participant C's Instances of Strategic Processing

	Culturally relevant texts		Non-culturally relevant texts		Total
Strategic Processing	*Miracle Boy and Other Short Stories* (Benedict, 2011)	*The Mountain, the Miner, and the Lord* (Caudill, 1989)	*Bear Town* (Backman, 2016)	*Catch-22* (Heller, 1961/2011)	
Constructing meaning					

Table 4.8 (continued)
Participant C's Instances of Strategic Processing

	Culturally Relevant texts		Non-culturally relevant text		Total
Strategic Process	*Miracle Boy and Other Short Stories* (Benedict, 2011)	*The Mountain, the Miner, and the Lord* (Caudill, 1989)	*Bear Town* (Backman, 2016)	*Catch-22* (Heller, (1961/2011)	
	Constructing meaning				
Monitoring Comprehension (e.g., States confusion, states they lost their place, adjusts thinking, and clarifying), and/or fix-up strategies (e.g., rereads, ask questions, reads ahead)	1	1	1	2	5
Summarizes	0	0	0	0	0
Ability to access and use background knowledge to make connections (i.e., to the text/characters)	9	8	10	6	32
Inferencing (e.g., inference, predictions, and draws conclusions)	5	6	9	6	26
Visualization	0	0	0	0	0
Cognitive processing by text	15	15	20	14	
Cognitive processing total	30		34		64
	Evaluation				
Authors Style: Length, Content and Tone	2	0	0	6	8
	Aesthetic Response				
Motivation/engagement (e.g., disengaged, does not fix thinking, reads too quickly)	0	0	0	0	0
Negative emotions (e.g., dislikes vulgarity, dislikes characters' actions)	4	0	1	3	8
Positive emotions (e.g., expresses positive emotions toward text/characters)	2	1	2	2	7
Total Per Text	6	1	3	5	15
Total per Culturally Relevant Texts	7		8		
Total instances	39		48		87

Specifically, when reading the culturally relevant texts, Participant C constructed meaning during 30 instances. Comparatively, Participant C constructed meaning for 34 instances when reading the non-culturally relevant texts. Importantly, all four texts were in the same Lexile range of 1010-1200 and all have an average word count of around 450 words. Given these data, it may suggest Participant C did not utilize much more cognitive effort when she was reading the non-culturally relevant texts than when she read the culturally relevant texts. Therefore, the culturally relevant text may not have aided in her automatic meaning making because she only used 4 more instances of strategic processing during the non-culturally relevant texts. Alternatively, it could be that Participant C actively constructed meaning across all four texts, so she automatically constructed meaning regardless of the type of text she was reading.

The two comprehension strategies Participant C used most often were accessing and using background knowledge for 32 instances and inferencing (i.e., inferencing, predicting, drawing conclusion) for 26 instances for all four texts. Specifically, when she read the two culturally relevant texts, Participant C accessed and used her background knowledge for 17 instances and made 11 inferences for a total of 28 instances. In addition, Table 4.9 demonstrates that when reading the non-culturally relevant texts Participant C used her background knowledge at 16 instances and made 15 inferences for a total of 31 instances.

Table 4.9

Participant C's Background Knowledge and Inference Instances

Strategic Process	Culturally relevant texts	Non-culturally relevant texts
Ability to access and use background knowledge to make connections (i.e., to the text/characters)	17	16
Inferencing (e.g., inference, predictions, and draws conclusions)	11	15
Instances total	28	31

Based on Table 4.9, it could suggest that Participant C had about the same amount of background knowledge to actively construct meaning of all four texts. Alternatively, it could suggest that Participant C preferred to use these strategies to construct meaning more than other comprehension strategies. Therefore, it may suggest that Participant C has sufficient background knowledge to automatically construct meaning of texts even when they are non-culturally relevant. This was supported by Afflerbach's (1990) research on think-alouds as he argued that prior knowledge had a significant role in the reading comprehension of expert readers. As such, readers with prior knowledge of concepts found within the text constructed the main idea automatically (Afflerbach, 1990). It is important to give more context about Participant C to understand why she had strong background knowledge. She stated the following regarding how she feels about reading:

> I love to read. I'm a really avid reader. Especially during the summers, when I have a little bit more free time. I grew up in a family of readers. My mother is an English teacher, so we all read avidly, and I really enjoy reading.

This quote demonstrated that Participant C was an avid and motivated reader who may have an increased schema based on her reading proclivities. For example, when reading all four texts, Participant C regularly provided definitions, synonyms of words, or commented on how she loved the vocabulary used. In the non-culturally relevant text *Catch-22* (Heller, 1961/2011) the word "consternation" was used to describe the characters' expressions and Participant D explained "that's a really great word" in her think-aloud. During the post think-aloud interview, Participant C was asked how the characters in the text communicated compared to her and her family and Participant C explained,

> "I don't come from family of people who swear, and I don't come from a family of military people. So, we don't really talk in that military fashion. Just like barking orders and things like that. On the other hand, there's [the word] consternation. That's just a word that I feel like our family does say and that's just a fun word that I enjoy."

Participant C's example of word knowledge aligns with Nation (2005) and Wharton-McDonald and Swiger (2009) who explained that word knowledge, their meanings, and prior knowledge are important for comprehension. In fact, Participant C was the only participant that regularly defined words and/or provided synonyms for words during her think-aloud. In Table 4.10, she also revealed her strong background knowledge of the settings and terms necessary to automatically comprehend the text *Catch-22* (Heller, 1961/2011) compared to the other participants as demonstrated in her think-aloud:

Table 4.10

Participant C's Think-Aloud Sample One

Actual Text *Catch-22* (Heller, 1961/2011)	Text Read	Text read with think-aloud in italics	Coding
He laughed at it again and shook his head in pleasant amusement. "Oh, boy, I can't wait to see those bastards faces when they find out they're going to Bologna. Haha!"	He laughed at it again and shook his head in pleasant amusement. "Oh, boy, I can't wait to see those "blank's" faces when they find out they're going to Bologna. Haha!"	He laughed at it again and shook his head in pleasant amusement. Oh, boy, I can't wait to see those "blank's" faces when they find out they're going to Bologna. Haha! *So now I realize that it's not bologna, the food that I like to eat. It's Bologna the place in France.*	Evaluation-vulgarity Monitoring comprehension: Repair: Fixes thinking Access/uses Background Knowledge

Table 4.10 reveals how Participant C used her background knowledge to identify Bologna as a place rather than a food. She never thought it was a person's name as the other participants did. While it is important to note that Bologna is in Italy and not France, Participant C had sufficient background knowledge to know it was a city in Europe and actively constructed meaning from the text. Thus, the non-culturally relevant text did not aid her in understanding because she possessed background knowledge and the ability to access and use her background knowledge evenly across all four texts.

In addition, Participant C rarely monitored her thinking across all four texts with only 2 instances of comprehension monitoring during the culturally relevant texts *Miracle Boy and Other Short Stories* (Benedict, 2011) and *The Mountain, the Miner, and the Lord* (Caudill, 1989) compared to 3 monitoring comprehension instances during the non-culturally relevant texts *Bear Town* (Backman, 2016) and *Catch-22* (Heller, 1961/2011). These findings suggest that Participant C actively constructed meaning from all four texts and rarely experienced construction issues. Hence, the cultural relevance in the texts may not have mattered for Participant C's reading comprehension as she could be an expert reader who actively constructs meaning even when reading non-culturally relevant texts.

Another important finding relates to Participant C's evaluation and aesthetic responses when reading the four texts. Specifically, when Participant C read the culturally relevant texts, she had 2 instances of evaluations and 7 aesthetic responses (e.g., 4 negative and 3 positive). Comparatively, when she read the non-culturally relevant texts, Participant C had 6 evaluations and 8 aesthetic responses (e.g., 4 negative and 4 positive). These data may suggest Participant C used evaluations less often to make meaning, whereas she used aesthetic responses more often to make meaning from the texts. In addition, the data possibly indicates Participant C did not lack motivation/engagement as she regularly sought to make meaning using these strategies despite which type of text she read. The reader is an important element in Rosenblatt's (1994) transactional theory because they determine how the text itself is interpreted as they build up their own interpretation using their responses from the text. Therefore, the data may suggest Participant C's aesthetic responses were about equal across all four texts and her evaluations were just a little more during the non-culturally relevant texts. Hence, this could mean that the cultural relevance in texts did not matter for Participant C's reading comprehension due to how she transacted with the texts by using evaluations and aesthetic responses when reading all four texts.

Participant D. Participant D is a White female in her early 20's. At the time of this research study, she was undergraduate senior at the university represented. Participant D was born and raised in the Appalachian Region and left the area to attend the university.

Participant D had 108 overarching instances of strategic processes while reading all four texts. She constructed meaning by using the following comprehension strategies for 82 instances including: accessing and using background knowledge to make connections (i.e., to the text/characters) to semantics, accessing and using background knowledge to make connections to syntax, making inferences, and monitoring comprehension (i.e., asking questions, clarifying, and rereading the text). In addition, Participant D evaluated the text 8 instances and had 18 aesthetic responses to the texts. Given this data, Participant D may have relied more on constructing meaning than evaluations or aesthetic responses as a strategy to bring meaning from the texts. Below is Table 4.11 demonstrating the strategies Participant D used across each of the four texts, respectively:

Table 4.11

Participant D's Instances of Strategic Processing

	Culturally relevant texts		Non-culturally relevant texts		Total
Strategic Processing	*Miracle Boy and Other Short Stories* (Benedict, 2011)	*The Mountain, the Miner, and the Lord* (Caudill, 1989)	*Bear Town* (Backman, 2016)	*Catch-22* (Heller, 1961/2011)	
Constructing Meaning					
Monitoring Comprehension (e.g., States confusion, states they lost their place, adjusts thinking, and clarifying), and/or fix-up strategies (e.g., rereads, ask questions, reads ahead)	5	7	4	18	34
Summarizes	0	0	0	0	0

Table 4.11 (continued)

Participant D's Instances of Strategic Processing

Strategic Processing	Culturally relevant texts		Non-culturally relevant texts		Totals
	Miracle Boy and Other Short Stories (Benedict, 2011)	*The Mountain, the Miner, and the Lord* (Caudill, 1989)	*Bear Town* (Backman, 2016)	*Catch-22* (Heller, 1961/2011)	
Constructing Meaning					
Ability to access and use background knowledge to make connections (i.e., to the text/characters)/semantics	5	7	4	18	34
Ability to access and use background knowledge related to syntax	5	5	4	5	19
Inferencing (e.g., inference, predictions, and draws conclusions)	0	0	3	1	4
Visualization	0	0	0	0	0
Cognitive processing by individual text	16	19	17	30	
Cognitive processing total	35		47		82
Evaluation					
Authors Style: Length, Content and Tone	2	2	0	4	8
Aesthetic Response					
Motivation and Engagement (e.g., disengaged, does not fix thinking, reads too quickly)	3	1	3	3	10
Negative emotions (e.g., dislikes vulgarity, dislikes characters' actions)	3	0	1	4	8
Positive emotions (e.g., expresses positive emotions toward text/characters)	0	0	0	0	0
Total aesthetic responses	6	1	4	7	18

Table 4.11 (continued)

Total aesthetic responses by texts type	7	11	
Instances of strategic processes by text	46	62	108

The comprehension strategy Participant D relied on most often was constructing meaning. Specifically, Participant D had 34 instances of monitoring comprehension while reading all four texts. When reading the culturally relevant texts, Participant D had 12 instances of monitoring comprehension whereas she had 22 instances of monitoring comprehension during the non-culturally relevant texts. As such, she monitored comprehension almost twice as often when reading the non-culturally relevant texts. Almasi and Fullerton (2012) explained that when a reader notices satisfactory comprehension progress has not been made, then repair strategies (e.g., slowing down, rereading, or asking/discussing questions) are used to get back on track. Given these data, it might suggest that the non-culturally relevant texts were unfamiliar to Participant D resulting in more monitoring to support her comprehension. Also, it could indicate that the culturally relevant texts aided Participant D in constructing meaning automatically as these texts were perhaps more familiar resulting in fewer instances of monitoring comprehension.

Table 4.12 is an example of Participant D reading the non-culturally relevant text *Catch-22* (Heller, 1961/2011):

Table 4.12

Participant D's Think-Aloud Sample One

Actual Text *Catch-22* (Heller, 1961/2011)	Text Read	Text read with think- aloud in italics	Coding
It was the first really good laugh Captain Black had enjoyed since the day Major outsmarted him, and was appointed squadron commander, and he rose with torpid enthusiasm, and stationed himself behind the front	It was the first. It was the first really good laugh Captain Black had enjoyed since major the day. Major outsmarted him, and was appointed squadron commander, and	It was the first. It was the first really good laugh Captain Black had enjoyed since today's major the day. Major outsmarted him, and was appointed squadron commander, and he rose with torpid enthusiasm, and stationed himself behind the front counter in order to wring the most enjoyment	Monitoring comprehension: Repair: Rereads Background knowledge: semantics/syntax Monitoring comprehension: Repair: Rereads Inference

Table 4.12 (continued)

Participant D's Think-Aloud Sample One

counter in order to wring the most enjoyment from the occasion when the bombardier arrived for their map kits.	he rose with torpid enthusiasm, and stationed himself behind the front counter in order to wring the most enjoyment from the occasion when the bomborders arrived for their map kits.	from the occasion when the bomborder arrived for their map kits. *It kind of sounds like they're going to war. I don't know why he's excited.*	Monitoring comprehension: States confusion

As demonstrated in Table 4.12, Participant D had many instances of constructing and reconstructing her thinking resulting in more comprehension monitoring. Participant D had the most instances of comprehension monitoring during the non-culturally relevant text, *Catch-22* (Heller, 1961/2011), resulting in 18 instances. Comparatively, she had 4 monitoring comprehension instances for the non-culturally relevant text *Bear Town* (Backman, 2016), and 5 instances during the culturally relevant texts *Miracle Boy and Other Short Stories* (Benedict, 2011) and 7 instances during *The Mountain, the Miner, and the Lord* (Caudill, 1989). These data could suggest that *Catch-22* was more difficult for Participant D to construct meaning. Given the amount of monitoring Participant D used across all four texts; it may indicate that she had difficulty constructing meaning automatically. However, the culturally relevant texts may have aided Participant D to construct meaning more easily as she used less comprehension monitoring.

Further, Participant D regularly accessed and used her background knowledge to make connections related to both semantics (i.e., meanings) and syntax (i.e., language structure). Specifically, during the culturally relevant texts, Participant D had 13 instances of accessing and using her background knowledge for semantics and 10 for syntax. Comparatively, during the non-culturally relevant texts, Participant D had 12 instances of accessing and using her background

knowledge for semantics and 9 for syntax. Table 4.13 below provides an example of Participant D using these strategies as methods to construct meaning:

Table 4.13

Participant D's Think-Aloud Sample Two

Actual Text *Catch-22* (Heller, 1961/2011)	Text Read	Text read with think- aloud in italics	Coding
Corporal Kolodny learned about it first in a phone call from Group and was so shaken by the news that he crossed the intelligence tent on tip toe to Captain Black who was resting drowsily with his bladed shins up on the desk and relayed the information to him in a shocked whisper.	Corporal Kolodny learned about his first in a phone booth from the group, and it was so shaken by the news that he crossed the intelligence tent in tiptoe to Captain Black, who was resting drowsily with his head bladed with his bladed shins up on the desk and relaying the information to him in a shocked whisper.	Corporal Kolodny learned about his first in a phone booth from the group, and it was so shaken by the news that he crossed the intelligence tent in tiptoe to Captain Black, who was resting drowsily with his head bladed with his bladed shins up on the desk and relaying the information to him in a shocked whisper. *Wonder what information?*	Background knowledge: semantics/syntax Monitoring comprehension: Repair: Reread Monitoring comprehension: Asks question

The first line of the text should have been read as, "Corporal Kolodny learned about it first from a phone call from Group" but Participant D did not read it this way. Instead, Participant D relied on her background knowledge of semantics (i.e., meanings) and syntax (i.e., language structures) to reword the text thereby changing the meaning slightly. In this instance, Participant D did not revise/reread her semantics/syntax deviation but kept on reading. Nation (2005) found that many poor comprehenders have difficulty understanding the text because they struggle to access their prior knowledge and semantic information swiftly. Hence, it may be that Participant D over relied on her prior knowledge of semantics and syntax more than the text itself which resulted in textual incongruity (Almasi & Fullerton, 2012). In essence, Participant D may have thought the text was going to read a certain way because of her own use of semantics and syntactical backgrounds (i.e., discourses) so she relied on her background knowledge rather than

paying close attention to the texts. Further, McKeown et al., (1992) explained that when readers lack background knowledge about a topic it can impede their comprehension and the readers extend of knowledge can hinder their quality of comprehension. It may have been that this reader had some background knowledge of these topics, but she possibly overused her semantic/syntactic background, so it slowed down her automatic meaning making. Table 4.14 below demonstrates Participant D's instances of using these strategies for the culturally relevant and non-culturally relevant texts, respectively.

Table 4.14

Participant D's Background and Inference Instances

Strategic Process	Culturally relevant texts	Non-culturally relevant texts
Ability to access and use background knowledge to make connections (i.e., to the text/characters)/semantics	13	12
Ability to access and use background knowledge related to syntactic	10	9
Total	23	21

Considering the data in Table 4.14, Participant D accessed and used her background knowledge of semantics and syntax to make connections about equally across the culturally relevant and non-culturally relevant texts. Rumelhart and Ortony (1977) explained how readers' schemata are continually updated and revised as they read in a process of instantiation. Hence, this data may suggest that Participant D had difficulty retrieving relevant schema quickly, so she retrieved background knowledge of semantics and syntax related to her own Discourses. As a result, the culturally relevant texts may not have aided Participant D in her comprehension related to background knowledge because she may have over relied on her schema as a comprehension strategy and possibly did not pay attention to the text itself.

Next, Participant D had 18 aesthetic responses while reading the four texts. These include 10 instances of low motivation/engagement, and 8 aesthetic (i.e., negative) responses to the texts.

Considering the 10 instances of low motivation, it is important to provide more details regarding how Participant D viewed herself as a reader. During one data collection session, Participant D said, “I don’t know if this is relevant. I probably should have told this to you last time, but I am dyslexic....so when I’m reading, the letters get switched up and it takes me a tad longer.” Paris et al., (2009) explained how readers develop theories of ability and effort early on in their school experiences which often are modified as time and environments change. Hence, Participant D’s self-efficacy has been shaped by her belief that she has dyslexia. This is important because Participant D’s view of herself (i.e., her self-efficacy) shapes the goals she chooses, the expectations she has, and the effort she puts forth to be strategic (Almasi & Fullerton, 2012). So, when reading the culturally relevant texts Participant D displayed 4 instances of low motivation/engagement as observed when she did not fix her thinking or read too quickly/made many mistakes. Alternatively, it could be that Participant D did not realize the text did not make sense (i.e., she was comprehending poorly). Guthrie et al., (2004) explained how engagement is the greatest predictor for reading achievement even when considering socioeconomic status. Engagement is demonstrated by a reader who is “intrinsically motivated, builds knowledge, uses cognitive strategies, and interacts socially to learn” (Guthrie et al., 2004, p. 404). When reading the non-culturally relevant texts, Participant D had 6 instances of low motivation/engagement. Given Participant D’s statement of having dyslexia and her 10 instances of low motivation/engagement, it could suggest that Participant D may have low self-esteem related to her reading abilities. As such, she may be less likely to initiate and/or persist at a strategy because she associates her reading difficulties to her having dyslexia (Almasi & Fullerton, 2012). Therefore, the culturally relevant texts may not have aided in Participant D’s aesthetic responses because she utilized about the same amount of low motivation/engagement responses across all four texts.

Next, Participant D used evaluations a total of 8 instances across all four texts. Specifically, Participant D evaluated the culturally relevant texts for 4 instances and the non-

culturally relevant text *Catch-22* (Heller, 1961/2011) for 4 instances. Although the evaluation strategy was used least often it does provide details related to how Participant D used evaluations to make sense of the texts. Given the limited data related to evaluations, it does not seem that the culturally relevant texts aided Participant D in her evaluations of the texts.

Finally, Participant D used 47 instances of strategic processes while reading the non-culturally relevant texts and 62 instances while reading the non-culturally relevant texts. As such, the non-culturally relevant texts resulted in Participant D having 15 more instances of strategic processes. Given these findings, it may suggest the culturally relevant texts resulted in fewer instances of strategic processing because they were more familiar to Participant D which aided in more automatic meaning making compared to the non-culturally relevant texts.

Participant E. Participant E is a White male in his late 20's at the time of the study. He is a masters student and had already earned a bachelor's degree in his respective field. This individual was born and raised in the Appalachian Region and was residing in a non-Appalachian Region.

Participant E had 68 overarching instances of strategic processing while reading all four texts (i.e., two culturally relevant and two non-culturally relevant). He had 57 instances of constructing meaning using the following comprehension strategies: summarizing, accessing and using background knowledge, inferencing, and monitoring comprehension. In addition, he had zero instances of evaluating the texts and 11 instances of aesthetic responses to make meaning. As such, Table 4.15 shows Participant E used more strategies related to constructing meaning than evaluations or aesthetic responses, respectively.

Table 4.15
Participant E's Instances of Strategic Processing

	Culturally relevant texts	Non-culturally relevant texts

Table 4.15 (continued)

Strategic Processing	*Miracle Boy and Other Short Stories* (Benedict, 2011)	*The Mountain, the Miner, and the Lord* (Caudill, 1989)	*Bear Town* (Backman, 2016)	*Catch-22* (Heller, 1961/2011)	Total
		Constructing meaning			
Monitoring comprehension (e.g., States confusion, states they lost their place, adjusts thinking, and clarifying), and/or fix-up strategies (e.g., rereads, ask questions, reads ahead)	0	1	4	5	10
Summarizes	1	2	0	2	5
Ability to access and use background knowledge to make connections (i.e., to the text/characters)	3	8	7	6	24
Inferencing (e.g., inference, predictions, and draws conclusions)	2	5	6	5	18
Visualization	0	0	0	0	0
Cognitive processing by text	6	16	17	18	
Cognitive processing total	22		35		57
		Evaluation			
Authors Style: Length, Content and Tone	0	0	0	0	0
		Aesthetic Response			
Motivation and Engagement (e.g., disengaged, does not fix thinking, reads too quickly)	0	0	0	2	2
Negative emotions (e.g., dislikes vulgarity, dislikes characters' actions)	4	0	1	1	6
Positive emotions (e.g., expresses positive emotions toward text/characters)	2	0	1	0	3
Total aesthetic responses by text	6	0	2	3	11
Total by texts	6		5		
Instances of strategic processing by texts	28		40		68

Considering Table 4.15, Participant E most often used the comprehension strategies accessing and using background knowledge and making inferences to construct meaning in 42 instances. Specifically, when reading the culturally relevant texts Participant E accessed and used his background knowledge for 11 instances and made 7 inferences. Comparatively, when reading the non-culturally relevant texts, Participant E accessed and used his background knowledge for 13 instances and made 11 inferences. Jordan (1997) explained how readers use their own experiences and knowledge to personalize their responses and perceptions of characters. As such, when Participant E was making inferences, he may have pulled out of his own prior knowledge to make meaning (Jordan, 1997). Refer to Table 4.16 with the data:

Table 4.16

Participant E's Background Knowledge and Inferences Instances

Strategic Process	Culturally relevant texts	Non-culturally relevant texts
Ability to access and use background knowledge to make connections (i.e., to the text/characters)	11	13
Inferencing (e.g., inference, predictions, and draws conclusions)	7	11
Total instances	18	24

When reading the non-culturally relevant text, *Bear Town* (Backman, 2016), the main character was practicing hockey after missing a goal at his recent game and Participant E made the following inference, "The boy just wanted to deal with his mistake" which indicated Participant E accessed his background knowledge and made an inference to construct meaning of this scene. Given his increased effort to use these two strategies, it may suggest Participant E preferred to use these strategies to construct meaning. Alternatively, it could suggest Participant E had about the same amount of background knowledge for all four texts, so he evenly applied this strategy. Regardless, Participant E accessed and used his background knowledge and made inferences about the same for all four texts which may indicate the culturally relevant texts may not have mattered in his constructing meaning.

Another important finding relates to Participant E's comprehension monitoring strategy usage. When reading the culturally relevant texts, Participant E monitored his thinking only once. However, when reading the non-culturally relevant texts, Participant E used this strategy for 9 instances. As such, Participant E monitored his comprehension 8 times more during the non-culturally relevant texts. Given these data, it may suggest that Participant E monitored his comprehension more often because the non-culturally relevant texts were more unfamiliar to him and possibly challenging him to construct meaning. Comparatively, the culturally relevant texts may have provided automatic meaning making for Participant E which could be why he did not monitor his thinking at all during *Miracle Boy and Other Short Stories* (Benedict, 2011) and only once during *The Mountain, the Miner, and the Lord* (Caudill, 1989).

Table 4.17 provides an example of Participant E reading the non-culturally relevant text *Bear Town* (Backman, 2016) which demonstrates how he monitored comprehension:

Table 4.17

Participant E's Think-Aloud Sample One

Actual Text *Bear Town* (Backman, 2016)	Text Read	Text read with think- aloud in italics	Coding
Year after year they have heard the boy's body grow, the banging becoming harder and harder, faster and faster.	Year after year they have heard the boy's body grow, the banging becoming harder and harder, faster and faster.	Year after year they have heard the boy's body grow, the banging becoming harder and harder, faster and faster.	
		I gotta reread that.	Monitored comprehension: Repair: Reread
	Year after year they have heard the boy's body grow. The banging became harder and harder, faster and faster.	Year after year they have heard the boy's body grow. The banging became harder and harder, faster and faster.	
		I got you.	Monitored comprehension: Confirmed thinking

In Table 4.17, Participant E monitored his comprehension as he recognized a breakdown in his understanding. Therefore, Participant E employed a rereading strategy and expressed, "I got

you" which meant he understood the meaning of the text after rereading. Further, the non-culturally relevant text *Catch-22 (*Heller, 1961/2011) may have been more challenging to construct meaning as Participant E had 5 instances of monitoring his comprehension. Table 4.18 provides an example of Participant E monitoring his comprehension:

Table 4.18

Participant E's Think-Aloud Sample Two

Actual Text *Catch-22* (Heller, 1961/2011)	Text Read	Text read with think-aloud in italics	Coding
"That's right you bastards", he kept repeating to all the bombardiers who inquired incredulously if they were going to Balogna. Ha, ha, ha! Eat your livers you bastard. This time you're really in for it.	"That's right you bastards", he kept repeating to all the bombardiers who inquired incredulously if they were going to Balogna. Ha, ha, ha! Eat your livers you bastard. This time you're really in for it.	"That's right you bastards", he kept repeating to all the bombardiers who inquired incredulously if they were going to Bologna. Ha, ha, ha! Eat your livers you bastard. This time you're really in for it. *Okay, what's going on at Boloney?*	Monitoring comprehension: Repair: Asking Questions

During the Post Think-Aloud Interview, Participant E expressed his difficulties in reading and comprehending *Catch-22* (Heller, 1961/2011):

> It was just a little bit overwhelming for me to want to get into since I lost other points to what these texts were offering. So, if I can't, and if I'm losing focus or losing details that kind of seemingly are important, because there's too many adjectives, I'll give up on a book.

Participant E went on to explain that *Catch-22* had too many adjectives which resulted in him feeling overwhelmed and not able to digest the material. Which leads to another important finding related to Participant E's aesthetic responses and evaluations of the four texts. He had zero evaluations while reading which could indicate he may not utilize this strategy because he

relies on the other strategies to construct meaning. However, Participant E had 11 total instances of aesthetic responses from all four texts. When reading the culturally relevant texts, Participant E had 6 (i.e., 4 negative and 2 positive) aesthetic responses to *Miracle Boy and Other Short Stories* (Benedict, 2016). During this text, Participant E expressed aesthetic responses toward the father-son's relationship as, "Okay, they have got this tightness (i.e., friction) and I don't like it at all!" Next, when reading *The Mountain, the Miner, and the Lord* (Caudill, 1989) Participant E expressed zero aesthetic responses. Comparatively, when reading the non-culturally relevant texts, Participant E had 2 (i.e., 1 negative and 1 positive) aesthetic responses to *Bear Town* (Backman, 2016) and 3 (i.e., 1 negative and 2 low motivation/engagement) aesthetic responses to *Catch-22* (Heller, 1961/2011). Again, Participant E expressed how he could not get into *Catch-22* because it had too many adjectives and he felt overwhelmed by the details. Participant E only displayed low motivation/engagement during this text so there is not sufficient data to suggest what caused his low motivation/engagement. Guthrie et al., (2004) found that the affective dimensions of reading comprehension involving students' interests (i.e., attitude) relate to student motivation to complete the reading tasks. As such, this data may suggest Participant E used a variety of aesthetic responses to construct meaning. In addition, Participant E may have used aesthetic responses about equally during the culturally relevant and non-culturally relevant texts. Given these findings, it may indicate that the culturally relevant texts did not matter for Participant E's aesthetic responses relating to making meaning.

Cross-Case Analysis. The data presented above demonstrates that all five research participants used a wide range of cognitive processing such as constructing meaning, evaluations, and aesthetic responses to bring meaning to the culturally relevant and non-culturally relevant texts. Participant D had the most instances of strategic processing at 108 and Participant A had the least instances of strategic processing at 47. The Table 4.19 describes the participants' instances of strategic processing according to the culturally relevant and non-culturally relevant texts, respectively:

Table 4.19

Instances of Strategic Processing by Participant

Participant	Strategic instances in culturally relevant texts	Strategic instances in non-culturally relevant texts	Total Strategic Instances
Participant A	24	23	47
Participant B	22	28	50
Participant C	39	48	87
Participant D	46	62	108
Participant E	28	40	68
Total Instances	158	201	360

Table 4.19 displays participants used more instances of strategic processing when reading the non-culturally relevant texts compared to the culturally relevant texts. As such, it may indicate that these texts were unfamiliar to the transplanted Appalachian readers which caused them to use more strategic processes to construct meaning. Hence, it may suggest that the culturally relevant texts aided in automatic meaning making as displayed by fewer instances of strategic processing for almost every participant.

Another important finding relates to the amount of comprehension monitoring required across all four texts. Table 4.20 shows how many instances participants were monitoring their comprehension for the culturally relevant and the non-culturally relevant texts, respectively:

Table 4.20

Participants' Monitoring Comprehension

Participant	Monitoring Comprehension CR Texts	Monitoring Comprehension NCR Texts	Monitoring Comprehension Totals
Participant A	3	7	10
Participant B	3	11	14
Participant C	2	3	5
Participant D	11	22	33
Participant E	1	9	10
Total Instances	20	52	72

Note. CR= culturally relevant texts. NCR= non-culturally relevant texts

Table 4.20 demonstrates that all five participants were monitoring their comprehension more often when reading the non-culturally relevant texts. Some readers such as Participant C only had one more instance of monitoring comprehension during the non-culturally relevant texts.

However, the other participants all had at least double the amount of monitoring during the non-culturally relevant texts compared to when they read the culturally relevant texts. Again, this may suggest that the culturally relevant texts were more familiar to these transplanted Appalachians which resulted in more automatic meaning making compared to when they read the non-culturally relevant texts because participants were expending more cognitive effort to construct meaning.

Overall, the culturally relevant texts may have aided these five transplanted Appalachian readers in different ways resulting in less instances of strategic processing and less comprehension monitoring. Therefore, the culturally relevant texts may have provided more automatic meaning making for the transplanted Appalachian readers compared to the non-culturally relevant texts. However, some readers seemed to have strong background knowledge so the cultural relevance of the text may not have mattered in their reading comprehension. The following section details the participants' Cultural Relevance Rubrics findings which also serve to triangulate the data presented.

Summary

The think-aloud findings presented above may suggest that the five participants often utilized more strategic processes during non-culturally relevant texts compared to the culturally relevant texts. Also, these findings may suggest that participants aesthetically responded and evaluated the text differently depending on the type of text they read. The next section discusses the findings of the cultural relevance rubrics for all five participants and help to triangulate the research findings.

Cultural Relevance Rubric Cross Case Analysis

Each participant completed four Cultural Relevance Rubrics immediately following their think-aloud of two culturally relevant texts (i.e., *Miracle Boy and Other Short Stories,* Benedict, 2016, and *The Mountain, the Miner, and the Lord,* Caudill, 1980), and two non-culturally relevant

texts (i.e., *Bear Town,* Backman, 2016 and *Catch 22,* Heller, 1961/2017). This section discusses the findings of the Cultural Relevance Rubrics. and Table 4.21 displays the results.

Table 4.21

Cultural Relevance Rubric Results of all Five Participants

Cultural Relevance Rating by participant	*Miracle Boy and other Short Stories* (Benedict, 2011	*The Mountain, the Miner and the Lord* (Caudill, 1989)	*Bear Town* (Backman, 2016)	*Catch-22* (Heller, 1961/2011)
Participant A	2	3	1	4
Participant B	2	1	3	4
Participant C	2	1	3	4
Participant D	1	2	3	4
Participant E	2	1	4	3
Total	9	8	14	19

According to the participants, the most culturally relevant text was *The Mountain, the Miner, and the Lord* (Caudill, 1980), followed by *Miracle Boy and Other Short Stories* (Benedict, 2011), then *Bear Town* (Backman, 2016), and lastly *Catch-22* (Heller, 1961/2017).

Participant A was an outlier as he was the only one who identified *Bear Town* as culturally relevant. In comparison, the other four participants all rated this text a 3 or a 4 which meant it was the least culturally relevant for them. Specifically, Participant A explained in his initial interview that he was an avid sports lover and reader. As such, this might be the reason why he rated a non-culturally relevant text, *Bear Town,* as culturally relevant. Importantly, Almasi and Fullerton (2012) described reader factors as those unique qualities about an individual such has their age, background knowledge, beliefs, culture, gender, intelligence, and personality to name a few. It could be that Participant A's reader factors (i.e., his reading preferences and background knowledge about sports) combined with the cultural element of community discussed in *Bear Town* caused Participant A to strongly identify elements of the text. However, it is hard to tease apart whether participant A viewed this non-culturally relevant text as culturally relevant due to his love for sports or because of his connections to community or if it was a combination

of both reasons. It seems more likely that Participant A rated *Bear Town* as culturally relevant because of his love for sports because the other four participants did not rate this text as highly culturally relevant even though they did connect to the community aspects represented.

Another important finding is how the two most culturally relevant texts T*he Mountain, the Miner, and the Lord* (Caudill, 1980), and *Miracle Boy and Other Short Stories (*Benedict, 2011) both contained elements the readers did not enjoy or connect to such as vulgarity and/or alcohol consumption. However, since these texts were considered the most culturally relevant it may suggest that readers strongly identify with certain cultural elements of the text and discard elements they dislike. Also, the findings could suggest that when the author has the same cultural background as the reader the text still might not be 100 percent culturally relevant because within cultural groups there are diversities (Billings et al., 2000). In addition, cultural relevance exists on a continuum of less to more culturally relevant rather than a binary classification of culturally relevant or non-culturally relevant. So, when the reader identifies with enough cultural elements, they view the text as more culturally relevant as was the case for *Bear Town* (Backman, 2016). If the reader cannot culturally connect with enough elements from the text or if they do not possess reader factors (e.g., such as Participant A) they may perceive the text as less culturally relevant.

Given the distinctiveness of Appalachians' social and cultural practices it is not unusual that participants would have similar perceptions of the Cultural Relevance of the texts (Obermiller & Maloney, 2016). For example, Participants B and C had the exact same cultural relevance rating for all four texts and Participant D rated his two most culturally relevant texts the same as these two participants. These findings reveal that most participants agreed on the cultural relevance of the texts provided in this study. And it further supports Billings et al.'s (2000) discussion of how diversities within minorities groups exist but there are often a set of shared sociocultural and language experiences which shape this unique population including their perceptions of culturally relevant texts.

Summary

The findings above provide insights into the topics/texts that transplanted Appalachians perceive as culturally relevant. Also, the findings give insights into how the culturally relevant texts aid in the reading comprehension for transplanted Appalachians. The Cultural Relevance Rubrics triangulate the data by revealing the research participants' perspectives of the four texts used in this research study. Therefore, the Cultural Relevance Rubrics substantiate that the culturally relevant texts utilized (i.e., *Miracle Boy and Other Short Stories*, Benedict, 2011, and *The Mountain, the Miner, and the Lord*, Caudill, 1980) were indeed culturally relevant for transplanted Appalachians. Hence, the data from the initial interview, four post think-aloud interviews, and four think-alouds have properly generated valid findings to answer the previously mentioned research questions.

CHAPTER 5

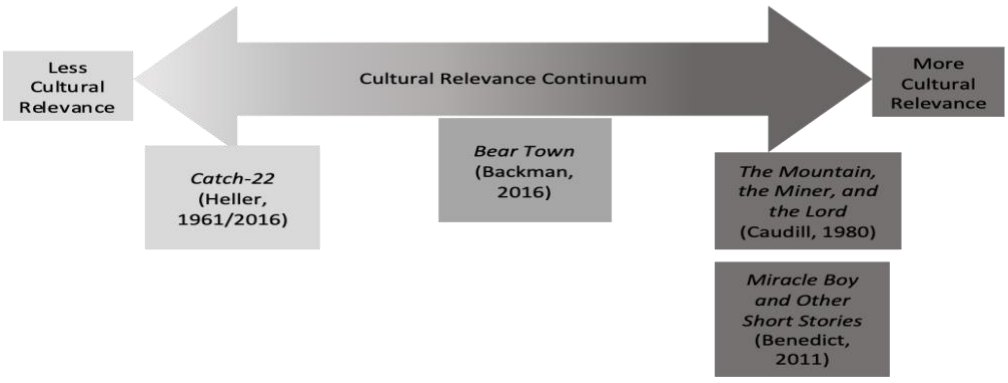
Invisible No More

This chapter discusses the conclusions from this research study with transplanted Appalachians and it introduces the Cultural Relevance Continuum. Also, it discusses the limitations of this research study and the implications for future research and for practitioners of transplanted Appalachians.

Conclusions

This research study with transplanted Appalachians has provided valuable findings related to the topics/texts transplanted Appalachians perceive as culturally relevant as well as how these topics/texts aided in the comprehension. Specifically, the findings suggest that the cultural relevance of texts possibly exists on a continuum from less to more culturally relevant. Please see Figure 5.1 which displays the four texts used in this research study on the Cultural Relevance Continuum from less to more cultural relevance:

Figure 5.1 Cultural Relevance Continuum



These findings are important because they reshape the categorization of texts from the binary perspectives of culturally relevant and non-culturally relevant to less/more culturally relevant texts. In addition, these findings suggest that for texts to be considered more culturally

relevant the text needs to contain not just cultural elements but sufficient and essential cultural elements. For example, community was the strongest cultural theme recognized by all five participants and the non-culturally relevant text *Bear Town* (Backman, 2016) contained elements of community. Although this text contained some cultural elements (e.g., community) it was not considered as culturally relevant as the texts *Miracle Boy and Other Short Stories* (Benedict, 2011) and *The Mountain, the Miner, and the Lord* (1980) because the latter texts contained essential and sufficient cultural elements. These findings relate to Rosenblatt's (1994) transactional theory of reading because the reader actively shuttles the text back and forth in their mind to their own references, associations, feelings, and to the context (i.e., place, time, purpose) to form their interpretation. Hence, the text stimulates and organizes the focus of the reader's attention using their background experiences (Rosenblatt, 1994). As such, this may suggest that the more culturally relevant texts were more familiar to these participants which possibly activated their background knowledge, stimulated the reader thinking, and organized their thinking in ways the less culturally relevant texts did not.

Also, the four think-alouds gathered valid data regarding the strategic processes transplanted Appalachians use when reading culturally relevant and non-culturally relevant texts. As a result, the findings suggest that the culturally relevant texts aided in the reading comprehension of transplanted Appalachians by lowering the number of strategic processes utilized and lowering the degree to which they had to monitor their comprehension. This is important because it may imply that the transplanted Appalachians automatically made meaning when given culturally relevant texts compared to when they read non-culturally relevant texts. Hence, these data have answered the two set forth research questions asking, "What topics and/or texts are considered culturally relevant for transplanted Appalachian adults from their own perspective?" and "How do culturally relevant texts aid in the reading comprehension of transplanted Appalachian readers?" The following sections discuss the limitations of this research study and the implications for future research and for practitioners.

Limitations

This section discusses the limitations of this research study with transplanted Appalachians related to the findings of the culturally relevant topics/texts and the think-aloud data.

Culturally Relevant Topics/Texts

The topics/texts presented in this study represented only a small portion of topics/texts available in literature. Although the data are rich and descriptive, it is limited because there may be other topics/texts that are less/more culturally relevant for transplanted Appalachians. Also, the five participants in this study represent a small portion of transplanted Appalachians from the Central Region of Appalachia. As such, the topics/texts that these five research participants found less/more culturally relevant may not reflect transplanted Appalachians as a whole and widespread generalizations cannot be made. Also, these participants were all associated with the same small university and were attending college and/or had graduated from college. Therefore, the research participants represent a unique demographic of educated transplanted Appalachians who moved out of the Central Appalachian Region by their own choosing and not due to job loss and/or economic hardships. Therefore, it limits the findings because other transplanted Appalachians may have different perspectives regarding the topics/texts they view as less/more culturally relevant.

Finally, the interviews varied in length of time for each participant even though the interview scrips were identical for all participants. The durations of participants' interviews varied due to the participants' verbal skills, interest in discussing a particular text, and/or their personal work/school schedules. As such, the findings are limited because some participants may not have had sufficient time to discuss a text and/or felt unsure when answering the questions. Importantly, the interview questions repeated for all four texts so it may have been that participants were possibly bored or felt the questions were repetitive. Even though I used the

interview scripts, I asked follow-up questions to clarify and/or gather additional information but some participants may not have wanted to discuss a text further which limited the information gathered.

Think-Alouds

There are also limitations regarding the think-aloud findings. For example, think-alouds reveal the process rather than the product of comprehension (Afflerbach & Johnston, 1984). So, the data obtained in this study relate to how (or if) the readers strategized while reading (Almasi & Fullerton, 2012). This study did not collect performance data on the readers to determine if they comprehended the culturally relevant or non-culturally text as this was not the scope of the research project. As such, it is limited to only providing data regarding the strategic processes readers employed during the reading event itself and does not present findings relating to how well the research participants comprehended the given texts.

Also, the think-aloud data presented in this study depended on the readers' ability to talk about their reading activities (Lipson, 1996). Which means that participants with weak verbal skills possibly may not have expressed as much thinking as participants with strong verbal skills (Garner, 1987). Thus, it is difficult to determine if the thinking given was complete and/or accurate. Almasi and Fullerton (2012) explained how "no individual has complete accessibility to or is consciously aware of all ongoing cognitive and metacognitive processes" (p. 87). Which means readers often do not remember what they were thinking, give incomplete reports, or use prior knowledge of what they think good readers do (Garner, 1987). As such, the data provided from the think-alouds might not be accurate and could be limited in terms of how much processing the reader shared.

Another limitation is think-alouds require a significant amount of cognitive processing which can interfere with the cognitive processes used to read a text (Almasi & Fullerton, 2012). Although the think-aloud was modeled and participants engaged in a practice think-aloud they

still could have experienced cognitive overload which could have slowed down or disrupted their reading process (Bereiter & Bird, 1995). Therefore, this limitation is important as the results presented above could be due in part to readers experiencing cognitive overload during their think-aloud.

Summary

As previously mentioned, the findings of this research study are limited to the five transplanted Appalachians' perspectives represented. As such, wide-spread generalization cannot be projected to transplanted Appalachians beyond these five participants. However, the findings could signify the possibility of a continuum of less/more cultural relevant topics/texts for these research individuals. Also, the findings are limited to the think-aloud data which reveals the process of comprehension rather than the product of comprehension, respectively. However, the data itself provide valuable findings which inform researchers and practitioners. The following section details the implications of these findings for researchers and practitioners.

Implications

Given the findings presented above, this section discusses the implications for future research and for practitioners.

Implications for Research

Recommendations for future research studies suggest examining other topics/texts transplanted Appalachians perceive as culturally relevant. Afflerbach (2000) found evidence that students' reading behaviors and think-alouds may vary as texts and tasks change. As such, researchers could examine other topics/texts with transplanted Appalachians as this could produce more robust information regarding the topics/texts they perceive as less/more culturally relevant, and how these topics/texts aid in their reading comprehension. In addition, researchers

could also conduct similar research on transplanted Appalachians who are from other regions of Appalachia (e.g., North Appalachia, North Central Appalachia, Southern Appalachia, and South-Central Appalachia). Even more, researchers may consider examining the cultural relevance of non-fiction texts such as information and/or biographical to determine how these topics/texts aid the reading comprehension of transplanted Appalachians.

All the participants in this study were seeking higher education or had obtained a doctoral degree at a higher education institution Therefore, another consideration is for researchers to conduct a similar study with transplanted Appalachians who left Appalachia due to job loss, and/or economic hardships. In doing so, it could contribute to our understanding of the topics/texts which are less/more culturally relevant and how these might differ from transplanted Appalachians who left Appalachia for other reasons (e.g., personal choice, education, to be closer to friends/family, medical reasons). Also, research could be conducted to understand the product of transplanted Appalachians' reading comprehension when reading less/more culturally relevant topics/texts. That is, future research could aim to understand how well transplanted Appalachians understand less/more culturally relevant topics/texts. In addition, a similar study could include Appalachians across the five Appalachian regions mentioned above to determine the topics/texts they perceive as less/more culturally relevant and how these topics/texts aid in their reading comprehension.

Continuing, future research would benefit by extending this study to other diverse populations beyond transplanted Appalachians and Appalachians. Specifically, research could be conducted to learn more about the topics/texts other diverse populations perceive as less/more culturally relevant and how these topics/texts aid in their reading comprehension. Finally, researchers should consider examining the effects of more culturally relevant texts on the reading comprehension of diverse populations. That is, do more culturally relevant texts increase the reading comprehension of diverse students compared to less culturally relevant texts?

Implications for Practitioners

The practitioner implications begin with educators understanding the findings above and aligning their literacy teaching practices with these findings to produce transplanted Appalachian students who (a) achieve academically in literacy, and (b) maintain their cultural competence (Ladson-Billings, 1995). As such, the recommendations for implications are presented in this section.

The first implication is for practitioners to recognize the six cultural themes from this research study with five transplanted Appalachians and to consider implementing the themes into their own literacy instruction. The six cultural themes include: community, authentic Appalachian experiences (e.g., settings, characters, and experiences), disliking vulgar language (i.e., cussing), disliking alcohol (i.e., drinking alcohol), dignity of work/dedication to work, and personal independence. Some researchers (Kyle et al., 2002; McIntyre et al., 2001) have contextualized instruction for Appalachian students by including elements of their funds of knowledge (i.e., cultural knowledge) into literacy instruction. This has produced positive emotional, social, and academic benefits (Kyle et al., 2002; McIntyre et al., 2001). While the six cultural themes identified may not necessarily represent these participants' funds of knowledge, they are cultural elements that the participants find relatable. As such, practitioners might consider selecting topics/texts with these six cultural themes to contextualize instruction and possibly aid in reading comprehension. Specifically, educators could select topics/texts for transplanted Appalachian students which include themes of community, authentic Appalachian experiences, do not contain vulgar language, do not include alcohol, portray characters who possess dignity of work/dedication to work, and display characters and/or themes with personal independence. In doing so, practitioners may observe that their transplanted Appalachian students experience positive emotional, social, and academic benefits like the study mentioned above.

The next implication for practitioners involves incorporating the six cultural themes directly into the daily classroom community as a method producing transplanted Appalachian students that are academically successful and culturally competent (Ladson-Billings, 1995). In doing so, it may foster transplanted Appalachians' cultural practices and promote a sense of belonging and community among these learners. Several studies on reading comprehension with CRI/CSP focused on specific instructional methods for diverse learners (Kong & Fitch, 2002/2003; Maloch, 2005). The six cultural themes could be implemented in book clubs (Kong & Fitch, 2002/2003) or literature groups (Maloch, 2005) to support a sense of community (i.e., trust) which could strengthen connections and relationships among classmates. The findings in this study revealed that transplanted Appalachians strongly related to community. As such, practitioners would do well to incorporate activities that would allow transplanted Appalachians to possibly engage in community embodiment with peers, texts, and characters which may lead to deeper reading interest, engagement, and discussions. Maloch (2005) found that her struggling diverse students deepened their understanding through rich discussions which also challenged their identities as struggling readers. Hence, the recommendation is for practitioners to foster environments which intentionally include these six themes which transplanted Appalachians find relatable.

Further, practitioners should consider using culturally relevant topics/texts with these six themes for transplanted Appalachians because they may aid the automatic meaning making compared to less culturally relevant texts as found in this current study. In addition, Lee (1995) found that culturally relevant texts with Black English Vernacular not only interested her Black students but scaffolded their comprehension and supported future strategy usage. Therefore, practitioners could implement topics/texts with these six cultural themes for their transplanted Appalachians as a scaffolding method to aid in their comprehension and possibly introduce other topics/texts to extend their understanding. In turn, this would support the first two elements of

CRI/CSP to produce students who are academically successful and culturally competent (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Another implication for practitioners is to consider how more culturally relevant topics/texts possibly impact their transplanted Appalachian students' affective (i.e., engagement, motivation, interest/attitude) domains. Allington (2005) argued that interesting texts impact both student motivation to read and reading comprehension (Valentine, 2008). Interesting texts are those which students possess background knowledge about and are relevant to their own lives (Schiefele, 1999; Valentine, 2008) which may include topics/texts with the six cultural themes for transplanted Appalachians. Given these data of the six cultural themes transplanted Appalachians strongly relate to, it may suggest topics/texts with these themes support students' reading interest as opposed to topics/texts that deal with unfamiliar concepts. Also, educators should consider the adverse effects of less culturally relevant topics/texts on student' interest as readers often dislike texts they do not understand (Jordan, 1997) and less culturally relevant texts may be unfamiliar to readers as was found in the current study. Even more, in this research study the least culturally relevant texts (i.e., non-culturally relevant) *Bear Town* (Backman, 2016) and *Catch-22* (Heller, 1961/2017) required more instances of cognitive processing and more monitoring comprehension which sometimes produced negative emotions and low engagement/motivation in the readers. Therefore, practitioners should consider using more culturally relevant texts as it could positively support their students' affective (i.e., engagement, motivation, interest/attitudes) domains toward reading which has been shown to impact comprehension (Valentine, 2008). Further, teachers need to understand the additional cognitive demand and support that students need when reading less culturally relevant texts. As such, teachers will need to scaffold more and possibly provide more explicit instruction of comprehension strategies when students read less culturally relevant texts. Again, Ladson-Billings (1995) described how CRI/CSP necessitates teachers produce academically successful students and so more culturally relevant topics/texts may be useful to promote students' reading comprehension success.

Continuing, practitioners should use more culturally relevant topics/texts as the findings from this study may suggest that more culturally relevant topics/texts required less comprehension monitoring. This was because the texts were possibly more familiar to the participants. Cultural knowledge and/or background knowledge has been found to influence student's reading comprehension (Guthrie et al., 2004, Wharton-McDonald & Swiger, 2009). Therefore, more culturally relevant topics/texts may provide the support for readers to automatically make meaning which may result in less comprehension monitoring. Again, more culturally relevant topics/texts could be useful as a scaffolding method for teaching comprehension strategies as students would have background knowledge necessary to aid in their comprehension and foster learning new comprehension strategies with less cognitive effort given to monitoring comprehension.

Summary

Historically, Appalachians have been the invisible minority group both unseen and unnoticed (Philliber & McCoy, 1981). This study was born out of a passion to see and hear from this invisible minority group and to provide researchers and teachers with a better understanding of this wonderful and unique population. Hence, the findings of this study have revealed the five transplanted Appalachians' perspectives of culturally relevant topics/texts. Also, it has produced think-aloud findings which inform us about how more culturally relevant topics/texts may aid in transplanted Appalachians' reading comprehension. In turn, this study has answered both research questions successfully. Also, the findings have suggested there is a continuum of less/more culturally relevant topics/texts and how these topics/texts possibly aid in the reading comprehension for transplanted Appalachians. While this study contains limitations it also has valuable findings which inform practitioners for future research studies and practitioners on ways to incorporate more culturally relevant topics/texts with their transplanted Appalachian students which may aid in their reading comprehension.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Descriptive Timeline of Research

1. **Pre-Data Collection (Week 1-2)**
    a. Gain access, email potential participants, identify and select participants
    b. Participants sign consent form
2. **Participant Session 1**
    a. Introductory Interview-Appendix B
    b. Think-Aloud Protocol Training-Appendix C
    c. Think-Aloud Modeled & Practiced-Appendix D
3. **Participant Session 2**
    b. Member Check 1 (i.e., Introductory Interview transcript)
    c. Think-Aloud 1-Appendix J
    d. Cultural Relevance Rubric 1-Appendix G
    e. Post Think-Aloud Interview 1-Appendix H
    f. Think Aloud 2-Appendix L
    g. Cultural Relevance Rubric 2-Appendix G
    h. Post Think-Aloud Interview 2-Appendix H
4. **Participant Session 3**
    a. Conduct Member Check 2 (i.e., Culturally Relevant Rubrics and Post Think-Aloud Interviews)
    b. Think-Aloud 3-Appendix K
    c. Cultural Relevance Rubric 3 -Appendix G
    d. Post Think-Aloud Interview 3-Appendix H
    e. Think-Aloud 4-Appendix M
    f. Cultural Relevance Rubric 4-Appendix G
    g. Post Think-Aloud Interview 4-Appendix H
5. **Participant Session 4 (Final Session)**
    a. Final Member Check 3 (i.e., Culturally Relevant Rubrics, Post Think-Aloud Interviews, and four Think-Aloud transcripts)
    b. Final Survey-Rating the four texts by cultural relevance

*Please note that participants may move through the four sessions at different paces due to their personal schedules and flexibility in meeting.

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Participant Session 1
Introductory Interview

(Hello Participant)
Thank you for agreeing to meet with me today. This introductory interview should take about 30 minutes. I have several main questions to ask you today and I may ask you follow-up questions also. If at any time you do not want to answer a question or you want to end the interview, please let me know.

Main Interview

1. Where were you born and raised?
    a. County, State?
    b. How long did you live there?
    c. Where do you live now?
    d. When did you move to this area?
    e. How old were you when you moved out of Appalachia?
    f. What was the reason that you moved out of Appalachia?

2. Do you still have family living in the Appalachian region?
    a. Mother/Father
    b. Siblings
    c. Grandparents/Aunts/Uncles/Extended family?

3. How often do you return to the Appalachian area?

4. What is the highest level of your education?

5. What is your current occupation?

6. How do you feel about reading?
    a. What types of things do you enjoy reading?
    b. Why do you enjoy these items?
    c. What topics do you enjoy reading about?
    d. Are there any types of texts that you have difficulty reading or understanding?

Culturally Relevant Interview Questions:

7. What types of topics did you grow up reading about?

8. Appalachian people relate to topics about _____.

9. Who are your favorite Appalachian authors including fiction and non-fiction?

10. What texts would you consider relevant to Appalachian people including fiction and non-fiction?

11. What kinds of experiences or characters would be relevant to Appalachians?

12. What type of text settings (i.e., place) would be relevant to Appalachians?

13. What languages and/or dialects would you consider relevant for Appalachian readers? Please consider the following: vocabulary words (e.g., britches for pants), pronunciation of words (e.g., holler for hollow), grammatical structures (e.g., a-running, might/could).

Conclude: Thank you for your time today.

Appendix C: Think-Aloud Protocol Training (Participant Session 1)

The follow recommendations were given from Ericsson and Simon (1993) and Pressley and Afflerbach (2009) regarding how to effectively give verbal reports (i.e., think alouds or self-reports).

(Hello Participant**)**
This think-aloud training should take about 10 minutes. The purpose of this exercise is to help you understand how to give a think-aloud. A think-aloud is when the reader gives information about what they are thinking about the text while they are reading.
I have several recommendations to give you today regarding how to give a think aloud. If you have any questions at any time, please feel free to stop me and ask. After this training, I will model how to think-aloud and then you will complete a practice think-aloud where you can ask more questions and become familiar with this process.
During your next session, you will independently complete two think-alouds and at the following session you will complete two more think-alouds for a total of four think-alouds. Each think-aloud will be recorded on Zoom. You will be asked at the beginning of each think-aloud sessions if you would like to reference these recommendations.

1. Your think-aloud should reflect exactly what you are thinking about as you are reading:
    b. As you read, please say aloud whatever you are thinking as you read the text even if your thoughts are unclear.
    c. You do not need to interpret your thoughts but simply report them.
2. I will only ask you to report what you are thinking as you read this text today. I will not ask you to report your thinking about this text during our next sessions.
3. Please do not at any time provide explanations of your thinking.
    a. For example, please do not try to explain "why" you are thinking something. Just report what you are thinking.
4. Please report anything that you are thinking as you are reading.
    a. The most important thing about this think-aloud is the accuracy of your thoughts.
5. Thinking-aloud is a natural process.
    a. As we read, we think about various thoughts in our minds. I am simply asking you to share your thinking verbally.
6. There is variability in giving think-alouds, therefore, please understand that there is no right or wrong way to express your own thoughts.
    a. Again, accuracy of thinking is most important.

Conclude:
Do you have any questions?
Do you promise to try to be accurate and honest with your thinking during each think aloud?

Appendix D: Think-Aloud Protocol Model (Participant Session 1)

(Hello Participant)
Now we will begin the think-aloud model where I demonstrate how to give a think-aloud. After, I think-aloud you will have the opportunity to practice giving a think aloud (see Appendix I). Let's begin.
Model a think-aloud to the Hill Women by Cassie Chambers (see Appendix E).

Appendix E: Think-Aloud Modeling Text

Hill Women (2020), Cassie Chambers (pp 16-17)
Lexile 810-1000, 432 words

I was born in the fall of 1986. I had my father's bright red hair and my mother's quick-to-flare Eastern Kentucky temper. I screamed most of the time I was in the hospital.

My parents, Wilma and Orlando, were young, still students. They had gotten married a little less than a year before, and they hadn't counted on having a baby so soon. When my mother told my father they were pregnant, he joked, "Well, I suppose we will just have to put her out to pasture if we want to feed her." His joking hid his very real, very palpable concern: babies cost money, something they didn't have.

Wilma and Orlando had met when Wilma was a freshman at Berea College. Owsley County High School had left Wilma unprepared for Berea's rigorous curriculum, so the college made her take a few remedial courses her first semester. One of these, to Wilma's numerically challenged horror, was math.

It was there that she met my father.

Orlando was born in Ohio, in a small town about an hour from Cincinnati. His family has deep ties to Eastern Kentucky: his grandfather was born in Lee County, which shares a border with Owsley. His family had lived in Eastern Kentucky since the mid-1800s, but Orlando's grandfather left the mountains in the early 1900s, part of a wave of people who left the hills in search of better opportunities in more industrial cities.

In many ways, this plan paid off for Orlando's family. Orlando's father worked in a factory, earning a blue-collar living with a good manufacturing job. His mother was a homemaker. Like Wilma, Orlando grew up in farm country, but in an area with far less poverty. There was a movie theater and a Kmart less than ten miles away. He and his siblings got to go to restaurants occasionally. Everyone always had plenty of clothes and food.

Wilma's family, on the other hand, grew most of their food, and it wasn't until she was in high school that Granny treated them to a store-bought frozen pizza. Almost all of Wilma's clothes were secondhand, given by churches and neighbors. When she was young, she asked Granny why Santa Claus hated her, since she and her siblings never got toys for Christmas.

Orlando was a couple of years ahead of Wilma in college. He had bright red hair that curled around his ears and always had a crinkle across the front from putting on a baseball cap right after showering. He was a math major and the teaching assistant assigned to Wilma's section of remedial math.

Appendix F: Think-Aloud Protocol 1, 2, 3, 4

Participant session 2 and 3

(Hello Participant)

During today's session, I will ask you to complete two think alouds to two different texts which will take approximately 10 minutes each. Please remember that you may pause at any point in the text to give your thinking (ideas, comments, questions, concerns, reread, etc.).
Please note that after each think-aloud, you will be asked to complete the Culturally Relevance Rubric (see Appendix G) in which you rate the text for its cultural relevance. Then, I will ask you questions about the text you just read in a post think-aloud interview which will take about 10 minutes. Following this, you will complete the next think-aloud.
If there are any connection issues, please let me know immediately so that we can pause our session and resolve the issue. Would you like to review the Think-Aloud Protocol Training (see Appendix C)?
Do you have any questions prior to us beginning?

Appendix G: Cultural Relevance Rubric

The following is a cultural relevance rubric designed after Freeman and Freeman's (2007) Cultural Relevance Rubric. Due to the nature of this qualitative case study, the numerical values at the top of the chart have been replaced with descriptive features/characteristics.

(Hello Participant)
Thank you for meeting with me today. During our time together, I will provide you with a rubric which you will use to decide how relevant the text is to you as a transplanted Appalachian. You will be given this same rubric for each of the four texts that you read. Please complete it as honestly and transparently as possible.
In this study, the term cultural relevance as mentioned below refers to text and/or topics that contain ideas, experiences, characters, and/or languages similar to your own native Appalachian culture.

Cultural Relevance Rubric
Please rate the cultural relevance of the text you just read based on how culturally relevant it was to you as a transplanted Appalachian.

	Extremely culturally relevant	**Somewhat culturally relevant**	**Not culturally relevant**
Characters	The character(s) in the text are very much like me and my family. The character(s) would fit in well.	The character(s) in the text have some similarities to me and my family; but there are also many differences.	The character(s) in the text are not at all like me and my family. The character(s) would not fit in well at all.
Experience	I have had experiences exactly like the one(s) described in this story. The events matched my experiences well.	I have had some experiences like the one(s) described in this story; but I have had different experiences as well.	I have not had experiences like the one(s) described in this story. The events are unlike my own experiences.
Place (Setting)	I have lived in or visited places just like those in the story. The setting was familiar to me.	I have lived in or visited places that were similar in some ways to those in the stories; but there were definitely differences.	I have never lived in or visited places just like those in the story. The events took place in a location that was not familiar to me.
Time (Setting)	The events in the text could take place this year. They happen in the present.	Some of the events in the text could take place this year, but others either took place in the past or future.	The events in the text could not take place this year. They either take place at some point in the past or the future.
Main Character's Age	The main character(s) in the text are very close to me in age.	Some of the main characters in the text are very close to me in age while others are not.	The main character(s) in the text are not very close in age to me.

Main Character's Gender	The main characters in the text are the same gender as I am.	Some of the main characters in the text are the same gender as I am.	The main characters in the text are not the same gender as I am.
Languages	The characters in the text communicate like me and my family. They talk, read, and write like us.	Some of the characters in the text communicate like me and my family. Others do not talk, read, and write like us.	The characters in the text do not communicate like me and my family. They do not talk, read, or write like us.
Frequency	I read, view, or listen to texts just like this one very often.	I sometimes read, view, or listen to texts just like this one.	I never read, view, or listen to texts just like this one.

Appendix H: Post Think-Aloud Interview Guide

Sessions 2 and 3

Today we completed a recorded think-aloud about the text _____. During this next portion of our time, I will ask you some interview questions about the text that you read and the think-aloud in general.
The following is a list of questions that I will ask during the interview.

1. How are the characters in the text similar or dissimilar to you and your family?
2. How are the experiences in the text similar or dissimilar to our own experiences?
3. What are some places described in the text that are similar or dissimilar to places that you have lived?
4. Please describe how some of the events in the text could occur in the present day?
5. Please describe how the main character is similar or dissimilar to you including their age and gender?
6. Please describe how the characters in the text communicate compared to you and your family?
7. How often do you read, view, or listen to text like this?
8. How well do you feel that this text accurately depicts Appalachians?

Appendix I: Practice Think-Aloud Text

Harry M. Caudill (1962/2017), Night Comes to the Cumberlands, (pp. 47-48)

Lexile 810-1000, 485 words

"Well, about two years after the war started, about this time of year, a gang of Union soldiers come through this here country. They was camped at the Cumberland Gap and had to just take things to eat away from folks. They went through the country robbin ' widders and orphans, and payin' em with greenbacks if they was on the Union side and nothin' atall if they was Democrats. They was about fifty in this gang and they was ridin ' horses . They had a herd of cattle they had stole and was drivin' 'em to the Cumberland Gap . They called their robb'ry " foragin.

"They camped right thar in that bottom and cooked supper. They eat up all our ham meat and about ten fat hens. The next morning they left afore daylight and took all our cattle and work stock with'em . Their captain said he didn't have to pay us a cent fer nothin ' because pap was a traitor.

"Well, ma cried and begged him to leave us a mule to plow with but the captain said, "NO, let yore old man quit fightin ' his country and come home and work fer ye. So just afore they rode off one of them sons-of bitches went to the creek and got water and poured it in our bee gums and drownded our bees . All them other rascals just stood around and laughed.

"As soon as they got gone brother Oliver grabbed pap's old hog-rifle and went to the mountain, and me right after him. He took a nigh cut and got ahead of them Yankees, so we could see'em come in sight. Oliver put in a good smooth ball and a heavy charge of powder and waited. Pretty soon we seed'em a—comin' and just waited real still till they was all out of sight except the last one. Then Oliver took good aim and shot him right betwixt his galluses. He yelled and fell out of his saddle and me and Oliver took off back to the house . We stopped just long enough to clean the gun, then hung it up over the fireboard and started hoein ' corn just like nothin' had happened.

"In about twenty minutes here come them Yankees with their dead buddy. They was awful mad and threatened to kill us fer shore. But the captain said we hadn't done hit and made his men leave us alone. He went up to the graveyard and had his men dig a grave and bury the dead Yankee. Then he come down to the house and all the men got a drink from our well afore they left. The old captain sort of softened up and give us back a plow mule and warned me and Oliver to stay out of trouble. He said he had two young-'uns about like us back home.

Appendix J: Sample Culturally Relevant Text 1

Pickney Benedict (2011), Miracle Boy and Other Short Stories (Chapter 7)

1010-1200 Lexile, 436 words

Vandal Boucher told his dog Hark to go snatch the duck out of the rushes where it had fallen, and Hark told him No. In days to come, Vandal probably wished he'd just pointed his Ithaca 12-gauge side-by-side at Hark's fine-boned skull right that moment and pulled the trigger on the second barrel (he had emptied the first to bring down the duck) and blown the dog's brains out, there at the edge of the freezing, sludgy pond. But that unanticipated answer — any answer would have been a surprise, of course, but this was no, unmistakably no, in a pleasant tenor, without any obvious edge of anger or resentment — that single syllable took him aback and prevented him from taking action.

Vandal's old man, now: back in the day, Vandal's old man Xerxes Boucher would have slain the dog that showed him any sign of strangeness or resistance to his will, let alone one that told him no. Dog's sucking the golden yolks out of the eggs? Blam. Dog's taking chickens out of the coop? Blam. Dog's not sticking tight enough to the sheep, so the coyotes are chivvying them across the high pastures? This dog's your favorite, your special pet? You wish I would refrain from shooting the dog? Well, sonny, you wish in one hand and shit in the other, see which gets full first. Blam. Nothing could stop him, no pleading or promises, and threats were out of the question. But that was Xerxes in his prime, and Vandal wasn't a patch on him, everybody said so, Vandal himself had ruefully to agree with the general assessment of his character. So when Hark said no, Vandal just blinked. "Come again?" he said.

No.

Well, Vandal thought. He looked out into the reeds, where the body of the mallard he had just shot bobbed in the dark water. That water looked cold. Hark sat on the shore, blinking up at Vandal with mild eyes. It would have struck Xerxes Boucher as outrageous that the dog should balk at wading out there into that cold, muddy mess, the soupy muck at the pond's margin at least shoulder-deep for the dog where the dead mallard floated, maybe deep enough that a dog — even a sizeable dog like Hark — would have to swim.

But damn it if, on that gray November morning, with a hot thermos of his wife's bitter black coffee nearby just waiting on him to drink it, and a solid breakfast when he got home after the hunt, and dry socks — Damned if Vandal couldn't see the dog's point.

"Okay," he said. "This once."

Appendix K: Sample Culturally Relevant Text 2

Harry M. Caudill (1989), The Mountain the Miner and the Lord (pp. 58-59)

Lexile 1010-1200, 491 words

A mile inside the Kentucky border he rounded a curve to see a road-block stretched across the highway. There were three cars and several armed men. One of them carried a submachine gun and two others held Winchester rifles. He braked the truck to a halt and his troubles began. The men were federal officers with a search warrant for his mysterious vehicle. A roadside search followed the breaking of the lock, and his astonished eyes beheld the stacks of cardboard boxes. An agile agent jumped inside, tore open a carton, and lifted out a tightly sealed quart fruit jar. When the top was twisted off, he smelled for the first time in his life the pungent odor of southern moonshine whiskey. A count revealed that each carton contained a dozen jars, and there were forty cartons. “I’ve been in jail ever since, Mr. Calvert. So far as knowing what was in the truck, I am as innocent as the judge.” Then with a shrug, “But I guess no one will believe me if I swear it for a hundred years.”

Calvert heard the tale with incredulity and astonishment. He wanted desperately to believe the prepossessing youth, and yet it was so preposterous, so fantastic. Would hard-eyed jurors ever swallow such a yarn? Probably not, but then Christmas was near and strange things happened at that gentle season. His fighting spirit flared. “Let’s go tell it to the jury.” He thundered.

The trial was brief, lasting only a few hours. A jury consisting of a couple of coal operators, a merchant from Harlan County, three or four miners, and a half-dozen hill farmers were interrogated, accepted by both prosecution and defense, and sworn by the clerk to “try the case and a true verdict rendered.” The government called as its first witness an agent who described mammoth bootlegging operations in Chicago and told how the source of whiskey had been traced patiently back to the Tennessee hills. An informant had telephoned to say that the truck had arrived, and he had worked all night to organize the road block and obtain the search warrant. Another agent told about the stopping of the truck, the breaking of the lock, the finding of nearly 500 quarts of whiskey. He handed up a jar of the stuff, took off the lid, and passed it around so the jurors could sniff it. Calvert noticed that one or two of them practically drooled as the forbidden liquid was handed back to the officer. The witness pointed his finger at the defendant and identified him as the driver of the truck and its sole occupant. The road map, marked with red ink along routes to be followed, was studied by the jurors. The prosecution rested its case and the triumphant district attorney looked at defense counsel with an air that said, "Come on, Calvert! Quit kidding yourself and give up. You can't squirm out of this one!"

Appendix L: Non-Culturally Relevant Text 1

Fredrik Backman (2016), Bear Town (p. 7)
1010-1200L, 451 words

For more than ten years now the neighbors have grown accustomed to the noises from the Erdahl family's garden: bang-bang-bang-bang-bang. Then a brief pause while Kevin collects the pucks. Then bang-bang-bang-bang-bang. He was two and a half years old the first time he put a pair of skates on, three when he got his first stick. When he was four he was better than the five-year-olds, and when he was five he was better than the seven-year-olds. During the winter following his seventh birthday he got such a bad case of frostbite that if you stand close enough to him you can still see the tiny white marks on his cheekbones. He had played his first proper game that afternoon, and in the final seconds missed a shot on an open goal. The Beartown youngsters won 12–0, and Kevin scored all the goals, but he was inconsolable. Late that evening his parents discovered that he wasn't in his bed, and by midnight half the town was out searching for him in the forest. Hide-and-seek isn't a game in Beartown—a young child doesn't have to stray far to be swallowed up by the darkness, and a small body doesn't take long to freeze to death in thirty degrees below zero. It wasn't until dawn that someone realized the boy wasn't among the trees but down on the frozen lake. He had dragged a net and five pucks down there, as well as all the flashlights he could find, and had spent hour after hour firing shots from the same angle from which he had missed the final shot of the match. He sobbed uncontrollably as they carried him home. The white marks never faded. He was seven years old, and everyone already knew that he had the bear inside him. That sort of thing can't be ignored.

His parents paid to have a small rink of his own constructed in the garden. He shoveled it himself every morning, and each summer the neighbors would exhume puck-graveyards in their flowerbeds. Remnants of vulcanized rubber will be found in the soil around there for generations to come.

Year after year they have heard the boy's body grow—the banging becoming harder and harder, faster and faster. He's seventeen now, and the town hasn't seen a player with anything close to his talent since the team was in the top division, before he was born. He's got the build, the hands, the head, and the heart. But above all he's got the vision: what he sees on the ice seems to happen more slowly than what everyone else sees. You can teach a lot about hockey, but not that. You're either born with that way of seeing or you aren't.

Appendix M: Sample Non-Culturally Relevant Text 2

Joseph Heller (1961/2011), Catch-22 (pp. 126-127)
Lexile 1010-1200, 462 words

Corporal Kolodny learned about it first in a phone call from Group and was so shaken by the news that he crossed the intelligence tent on tiptoe to Captain Black, who was resting drowsily with his bladed shins up on the desk and relayed the information to him in a shocked whisper.

Captain Black brightened immediately. "Bologna?" he exclaimed with delight. "Well, I'll be damned." He broke into loud laughter. "Bologna, huh?" He laughed again and shook his head in pleasant amazement. "Oh, boy! I can't wait to see those bastards' faces when they find out they're going to Bologna. Ha, ha ha!"

It was the first really good laugh Captain Black had enjoyed since the day Major outsmarted him and was appointed squadron commander, and he rose with torpid enthusiasm and stationed himself behind the front counter in order to wring the most enjoyment from the occasion when the bombardiers arrived for their map kits.

"That's right, you bastards, Bologna," he kept repeating to all the bombardiers who inquired incredulously if they were really going to Bologna. "Ha! Ha! Ha! Eat your livers, you bastards. This time you're really in for it."

Captain Black followed the last of them outside to observe with relish the effect of the knowledge upon all of the other officers and enlisted men who were assembling with their helmets, parachutes and flak suits around the four trucks idling in the center of the squadron area. He was a tall, narrow, disconsolate man who moved with a crabby listlessness. He shaved his pinched, pale face every third or fourth day, and most of the time he appeared to be growing a reddish-gold mustache over his skinny upper lip. He was not disappointed in the scene outside. There was consternation darkening every expression, and Captain Black yawned deliciously, rubbed the last lethargy from his eyes and laughed gloatingly each time he told someone else to eat his liver.

Bologna turned out to be the most rewarding event in Captain Black's life since the day Major Duluth was killed over Perugia and he was almost selected to replace him. When word of Major Duluth's death was radioed back to the field, Captain Black responded with a surge of joy. Although he had never really contemplated the possibility before, Captain Black understood at once that he was the logical man to succeed Major Duluth as squadron commander. To begin with, he was the squadron intelligence officer, which meant he was more intelligent than everyone else in the squadron. True, he was not on combat status, as Major Duluth had been and as all squadron commanders customarily were; but this was really another powerful argument in his favor, since his life was in no danger and he would be able to fill the post for as long as his country needed him.

Appendix N: Zoom Tutorial

The primary method of data collection requires computer and Zoom capabilities. Therefore, the link below is a tutorial that instructs participants on how to navigate Zoom using Pickus Production (2021).

How To Use Zoom in 2021 | Tutorial for Beginners

Appendix O: Consent Form

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

KEY INFORMATION FOR TRANSPLANTED APPALACHIANS' PERSPECTIVES OF CULTURALLY RELEVANT TOPICS/TEXTS AND HOW THESE TOPICS/TEXTS AID IN THEIR READING COMPREHENSION

We are asking you to choose whether or not to volunteer for a research study about the topics/texts that transplanted Appalachians perceive as relevant to their own culture and how these topics/texts aid in their reading comprehension. We are asking you because the circumstances that makes the person eligible include: *individuals 18 years old and older, individuals born and raised in the Appalachian Region (see Appendix C), and individuals that have moved out of Appalachia a minimum of one month to a maximum of 10 years prior into a non-Appalachian area.* This page is to give you key information to help you decide whether to participate. We have included detailed information after this page. Ask the research team questions. If you have questions later, the contact information for the research investigator in charge of the study is below.

WHAT IS THE STUDY ABOUT AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

By doing this study, we hope to learn about the topics/texts that transplanted Appalachians perceive as culturally relevant and how these topics/texts aid in their reading comprehension. Your participation in this research will last about 1 to 1/1/2 hours over four sessions (i.e., a total of 4-6 hours for the entire study).

WHAT ARE KEY REASONS YOU MIGHT CHOOSE TO VOLUNTEER FOR THIS STUDY?

The reasons to volunteer in this study are that the transplanted Appalachian community will benefit from the rich description and/or information regarding the topics/texts that aid in their reading comprehension. Also, you will be assisting researchers to understand more about the topics/texts that transplanted Appalachians consider culturally relevant.

Also, participants in this study will be compensated for their time with an Amazon gift card for the amount of $150.00 after they have completed all four sessions.

For a complete description of benefits and/or rewards, refer to the Detailed Consent.

WHAT ARE KEY REASONS YOU MIGHT CHOOSE NOT TO VOLUNTEER FOR THIS STUDY?

The reasons an individual may not want to participate in this study is that it does require time and effort to participate in a research study. Also, certain individuals may not want to be interviewed, read aloud, think aloud, answer interview questions and/or be audio and video recorded on Zoom.

For a complete description of risks, refer to the Detailed Consent.

DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?

If you decide to take part in the study, it should be because you really want to volunteer. You will not lose any services, benefits, or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer.

As a student, if you decide not to take part in this study, your choice will have no effect on your academic status or class grade(s).

WHAT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, SUGGESTIONS OR CONCERNS?

If you have questions, suggestions, or concerns regarding this study or you want to withdraw from the study contact Kathryn Smith of the University of Kentucky, Department of Education at 859-539-3491.

UK/CU Participants: If you have any concerns or questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact staff in the University of Kentucky (UK) Office of Research Integrity (ORI) between the business hours of 8am and 5pm EST, Monday-Friday at 859-257-9428 or toll free at 1-866-400-9428.

CU Participants: You may also direct concerns or questions to Dr. Terry Wilder, at Campbellsville University (CU) IRB Chairman, 270-789-5039 or tlwilder@campbellsville.edu

DETAILED CONSENT:

ARE THERE REASONS WHY YOU WOULD NOT QUALIFY FOR THIS STUDY?

Individuals that are under 18 years old are not permitted to participate.
Individuals that were not born and raised in the Appalachian Region as described by the Appalachian Regional Commission cannot participate in this study. (see Appendix C)
Individuals that move out of the Appalachian Region 10 years ago or more cannot participate. (see Appendix C)
Individuals will be asked to be audio/video recorded during this research study so anyone uncomfortable with recordings may not want to participate.

WHERE WILL THE STUDY TAKE PLACE AND WHAT IS THE TOTAL AMOUNT OF TIME INVOLVED?

The research procedures will be conducted entirely on Zoom. You will need to attend 4 times virtually during the study. Each of those visits will take about an hour to an hour and half. The total amount of time you will be asked to volunteer for this study is 4-6 hours over the next 4 sessions or days.

WHAT WILL YOU BE ASKED TO DO?

During this study you can expect to be interviewed a total of five times. This includes one introductory interview and four interviews after you read aloud and think-aloud to four different short texts. You will be trained on how to think-aloud. Also, you will complete four questionnaires/rubrics after reading the four texts.
As part of the research, the participant will perform the five interviews, four think-alouds, and four questionnaires/ rubrics related to the cultural relevance of texts.
At the last session, participants will be asked to check their transcripts.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

Please see Appendix B.

WILL YOU BENEFIT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

We do not know if you will get any benefit from taking part in this study. However, some people have experienced enjoyment when taking part in educational studies. However, if you take part in this study, information learned may help others.

IF YOU DON'T WANT TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY, ARE THERE OTHER CHOICES?

If you do not want to be in the study, there are no other choices except not to take part in the study.

WHAT WILL IT COST YOU TO PARTICIPATE?

There are no costs associated with taking part in this study. Due to the nature of this study, participants may only use their computers so they can view the texts being displayed. Therefore, cellphones and/or data usage charges do not apply to this research study.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT YOU GIVE?

When we write about or share the results from the study, we will write about the combined information. We will keep your name and other identifying information private.
We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is. To protect your information including audio/video recordings, interviews, and questionnaires/rubrics you will select a nickname which will be used as a key identifying your data. This nickname will be in a stored in locked location on the Cloud. The audio/video recordings and all paper copies of your information will be kept in a separate location using the nickname you selected instead of your actual name. It will also be locked with a password.
The University of Kentucky, may look at or copy pertinent portions of records that identify you.

CAN YOU CHOOSE TO WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY EARLY?

You can choose to leave the study at any time. You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study.
If you choose to leave the study early, data collected until that point will remain in the study database and may not be removed.
The investigators conducting the study may need to remove you from the study. This may occur for a number of reasons. You may be removed from the study if:

- you are not able to follow the directions,
- they find that your participation in the study is more risk than benefit to you

WILL YOU RECEIVE ANY REWARDS FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

You will receive $150.00 for taking part in this study in the form of an Amazon gift card after all data has been collected by the researcher. Participants that do not complete the entire study will receive a pro-rated Amazon gift card amount of $37.50 for each session they did participate in after all data has been collected by the researcher. Participants must skip no more than 3 interview and/or questionnaire questions per session to receive credit for the entire session.
With a few exceptions, study payments are considered taxable income reportable to the Internal Review Service (IRS). A form 1099 will be sent to you if your total payments for research participation are $600 or more in a calendar year.

WILL YOU BE GIVEN INDIVIDUAL RESULTS FROM THE RESEARCH TESTS/SURVEYS?

You may be given feedback about the results from your surveys done for purposes of this research.

Do you give your permission for the investigator or staff to contact you regarding your willingness to participate in future research studies? □ **Yes** □ **No Initials**_____

WHAT ELSE DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?

If you volunteer to take part in this study, you will be one of about 5-10 people to do so.

Kathryn Smith is a student at UK is being guided in this research by Dr. Almasi and Dr. Perry. There may be other people on the research team assisting at different times during the study.

WILL YOUR INFORMATION BE USED FOR FUTURE RESEARCH?

Your information collected for this study will NOT be used or shared for future research studies, even if we remove the identifiable information like your name.

Descriptive Timeline of Research

1. **Participant Session 1**
    a. Introductory Interview
    b. Think-Aloud Training
    c. Think-Aloud Modeled & Practiced
2. **Participant Session 2**
    a. Think-Aloud 1
    b. Questionnaire/ Rubric 1
    e. Post Think-Aloud Interview 1
    f. Think Aloud 2
    g. Questionnaire/ Rubric 2
    h. Post Think-Aloud Interview 2
3. **Participant Session 3**
    a. Think-Aloud 3
    b. Questionnaire/ Rubric 3
    c. Post Think-Aloud Interview 3
    d. Think-Aloud 4

Appendix B: Expected Risks Chart

	Expected Risks			
Procedure	**Rare**	**Occasional**	**Often**	**Steps to reduce risks:**

Initial Interview	It is possible that there could be a breach of confidentially due to the participant being audio/video recorded using Zoom and stored locally on my computer.	The participant will be asked to discuss his/her background and/or history related to literacy practices. This may be emotionally uncomfortable for some individuals.		To reduce the risk of a breach of information, each participant will select a nickname which will be typed in a word document and uploaded to my cloud account. The audio/video recording will be labeled with this nickname and stored in a separate location with a password protection. To reduce the risk of emotional discomfort, the researcher will allow the participant a break if they need one or to skip a question.
Think-aloud training and practice	The participant will be trained on how to give a think-aloud and will practice reading and thinking aloud. It is possible that the participant may be emotionally uncomfortable doing so.			The participant will receive a paper with instructions on how to think aloud. Also, he/she will be properly trained on thinking-aloud with modeling and a practice think aloud. In addition, the participant will be permitted to ask questions and to take a break should they need it. Finally, this process will not be video/audio recorded to allow the participant comfort in learning these skills.
Four Think Alouds	It is possible that there could be a breach of confidentially due to the participant being audio/video recorded using Zoom and stored locally on my computer.	It is possible that the participant may be emotionally uncomfortable thinking-aloud.		To reduce the risk of a breach of information, each participant will select a nickname which will be typed in a word document and uploaded to my cloud account. The audio/video recording will be labeled with this nickname and stored in a separate location with a

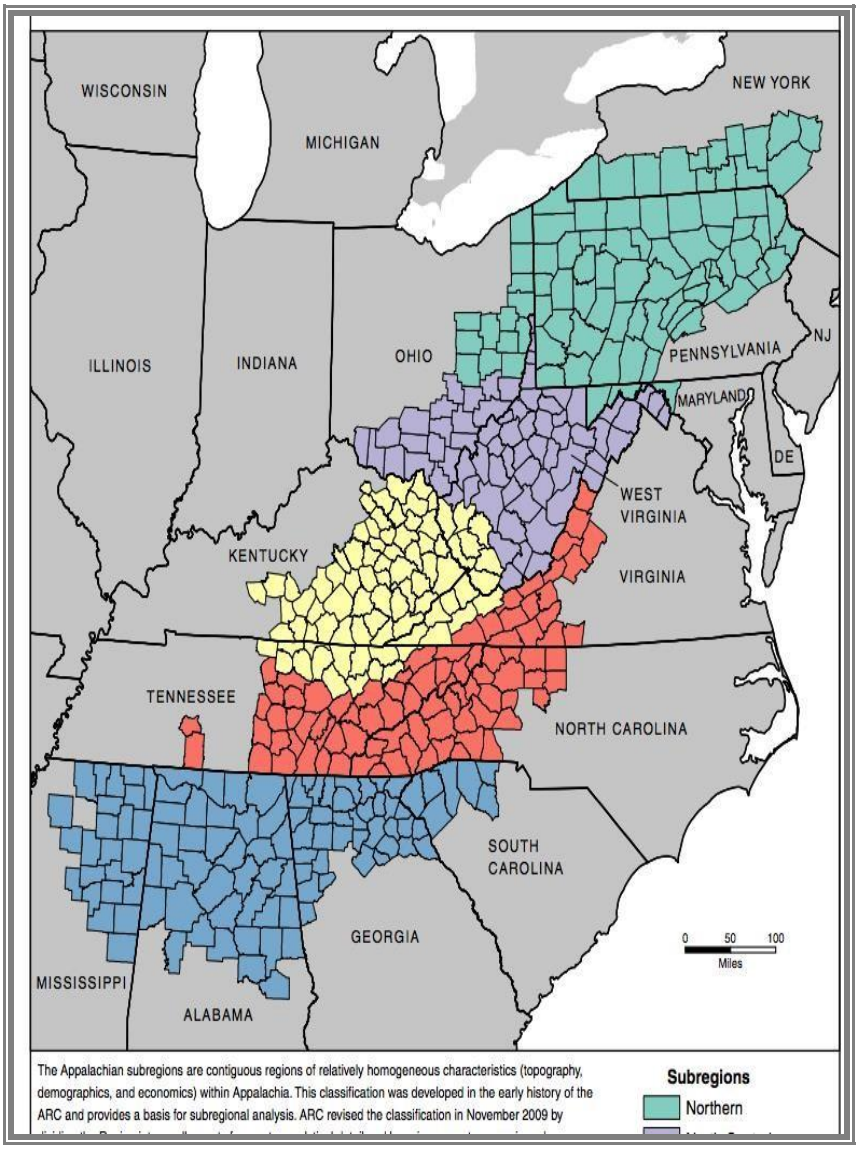
				password protection. To reduce the risk of emotional discomfort, the researcher will allow the participant a break if they need one.
	Expected Risks			
Procedure	**Rare**	**Occasional**	**Often**	**Steps to Reduce Risk**
Four Post Think aloud Interviews	It is possible that there could be a breach of confidentially due to the participant being audio/video recorded using Zoom and stored locally on my computer.	To reduce the risk of emotional discomfort, the researcher will allow the participant a break if they need one.		To reduce the risk of a breach of information, each participant will select a nickname which will be typed in a word document and uploaded to my cloud account. The audio/video recording will be labeled with this nickname and stored in a separate location with a password protection. To reduce the risk of emotional discomfort, the researcher will allow the participant a break if they need one or to skip a question.
Final Survey	It is possible that there could be a breach of confidentially due to the participant being audio/video recorded using Zoom and stored locally on my computer.			To reduce the risk of a breach of information, each participant will select a nickname which will be typed in a word document and uploaded to my cloud account. The audio/video recording will be labeled with this nickname and stored in a separate location with a password protection.

e. Questionnaire/ Rubric 4
f. Post Think-Aloud Interview 4

4. **Participant Session 4**
   a. Final Survey

Appendix C: Map of the Appalachian Region as Described by the Appalachian Regional Commission.

Participants in this study must be from a county shaded on this map.



Appendix D: Campbellsville University (CU):
Signatory Page For CU Participants only:

_____ _____
University of Kentucky Student Researcher Date

_____ _____
University of Kentucky Supervisor/Primary Investigator Date

_____ _____
University of Kentucky Supervisor/Primary Investigator Date

(Please note: CU views the Primary Investigator (PI) as the student researcher's supervisor.)

INFORMED CONSENT

This consent includes the following:

- Key Information Page
- Detailed Consent
- Appendix A: Descriptive Timeline of Research
- Appendix B: Expected Risks Chart
- Appendix C: Map of Appalachian Region
- Appendix D: Campbellsville University Signatory Page

Please note you will be asked to provide your verbal consent. If you have any questions about the research, please ask the investigator now.

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Education

2012-2014 **Asbury University**
Wilmore, KY
Masters of Arts in Teaching English as a Second Language

2007-2011 **University of Kentucky**
Lexington, KY
Bachelors of Arts in Elementary Education

Awards

UK Graduate School

Dean's List, six semesters

Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Graduate Student Scholarship, two academic years

Assistantship Scholarships- Full Tuition Scholarships, two academic years

Randall J. Rogers Scholarship

John Edwin Partington & Gwendolyn Gray Partington Scholarship

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UK Undergraduate

George Denmark Scholarship

Certifications and Licenses

2011-Present
Kentucky Certified Elementary Teacher-Primary through fifth grade, Rank 1

University Teaching Experiences

Campbellsville University **Campbellsville, KY**
Assistant Professor
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Campbellsville University **Campbellsville, KY**
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Asbury University **Wilmore, KY**
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Assistantship and Mentorship Experiences

University of Kentucky **Lexington, KY**
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Fall 2014, Spring 2015, Fall 2015, Spring 2016

Elementary Level Teaching Experiences

Homeschool Teacher, Kindergarten **Central, KY**
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Rosenwald-Dunbar Elementary School **Nicholasville, KY**
October to December 2013
Second Grade Long-term Substitute

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August 2012 to June 2013
Second Grade Classroom Teacher

Rosenwald-Dunbar Elementary School **Nicholasville, KY**
August 2011 to June 2012
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Practicum Teaching Experiences

Cassidy Elementary (ESL Department)
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Spring 2014
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