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QUEERING THE CURRICULUM: ESTABLISHING EQUITY FOR LGBTQIA STUDENTS AND EDUCATORS IN MICHIGAN

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QUEERING THE CURRICULUM: ESTABLISHING EQUITY FOR LGBTQIA STUDENTS
AND EDUCATORS IN MICHIGAN

By

Miranda Findlay

THESIS

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QUEERING THE CURRICULUM: ESTABLISHING EQUITY FOR
LGBTQIA STUDENTS AND EDUCATORS IN MICHIGAN

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ABSTRACT

QUEERING THE CURRICULUM: ESTABLISHING EQUITY FOR LGBTQIA STUDENTS AND EDUCATORS IN MICHIGAN

By

Miranda Findlay

This project examines the state of Michigan's efforts in creating an equitable learning and working environment for LGBTQIA K-12 students and educators, explicitly focusing on 11th and 12th grade English Language Arts (ELA) standards. In the first chapter, I evaluate the relationship between queer theory and pedagogy and illuminate the need to implement queer pedagogy in teaching K-12 ELA classes. The following chapter reviews the progressive state of California for its promotion of culturally responsive pedagogy and its inclusion of LGBTQIA topics in its K-12 curriculum. The third chapter analyzes Michigan legislature and policies to highlight gaps that allow for the perpetuation of heteronormativity. This chapter also acknowledges efforts the state of Michigan has undertaken to improve the LGBTQIA community's experiences in the education system. The subsequent chapters detail specific measures that must be taken to fill the gaps that Michigan leaves open. I discuss how those gaps might be filled through the use of queer and culturally responsive pedagogies in ELA classrooms, by reconsidering text selection processes, and also through the restructuring of pre-service education requirements.

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2020

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to all the people who never felt seen, the children who search for themselves, and the teachers who build bridges to acceptance.

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This thesis follows the format prescribed by the APA Citation Style and the Department of English.

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INTRODUCTION

Early adolescence is a time of significant change. Young adolescents develop their own identities, brought on by their evolving social environments and bodies, causing many to feel uncomfortable about their differences. For LGBTQIA (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, intersex, and asexual) adolescents, this feeling of difference can have a damaging effect on their quality of life. Compared to heterosexual-identifying youth, LGBTQIA youth are two times more likely to consider suicide, and the demographics' suicide rate is also two to seven times higher (Behavioral Health). According to the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network's (GLSEN) 2013 national school climate survey, 85% of the surveyed LGBTQIA youth reported verbal harassment at school, and 56% reported feeling unsafe at school. GLSEN's "School Climate in Michigan" (2017) report shows that only 40% of Michigan's secondary students consider their school administration as being supportive of LGBTQIA students. 92% of students heard "gay" used negatively, and 85% heard other homophobic remarks. Additionally, 15% of students reported hearing school staff make homophobic remarks, with 34% more specifically hearing staff make negative remarks about someone's gender expression. School supports, such as an LGBTQIA-inclusive curriculum, can help create a safer space for LGBTQIA youth. However, even though LGBTQIA students who are provided positive representations of LGBTQIA people and history report more positive school experiences and better educational outcomes, GLSEN's most recent *National School Climate Survey* (2017) found that less than one-fifth of LGBTQIA students attend schools with an LGBTQIA-inclusive curriculum.

It is not only LGBTQIA students who suffer when schools and curricula are not inclusive. Historically and presently, LGBTQIA educators have faced challenges in being their authentic selves. Wright and Smith (2015) conducted two national surveys in 2007 and 2011, which demonstrated that one-third of LGBTQIA educators felt that their jobs would be at risk if they were out to administrators and over half felt that their jobs would be at risk if they were out to their students. Roughly one-quarter also reported harassment at the schools where they work. Since the administration of Wright and Smith's surveys, support for LGBTQIA educators has increased; however, there are still times when LGBTQIA educators do not feel very safe, and the same must be said for students.

In 2015, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) posted a new NCTE Guideline document titled "Diverse Gender Expression and Gender Non-Conformity Curriculum in English Grades 7-12." The new document suggests that classrooms focus on texts representing a diverse range of people, including those who are LGBTQIA and/or gender non-conforming. The guideline advocates that by doing this, we will meet all students' needs and help all students develop sophisticated ways to understand gender through an "equitable focus on issues honoring a range of diverse expressions related to gender and gender non-conformity." Nevertheless, while scholars urge educators to teach LGBTQIA literature, succeeding in this task does not simply mean selecting a text with a gay protagonist for a class read. Heterosexism—the marginalization and/or oppression of LGBTQIA people based on the ideology that heterosexuality is the norm (Anti-Defamation League)—is already part of the school community, and solving the problem requires a variety of strategies. The development of an equitable experience for LGBTQIA students, families, and educators requires the elimination of the heteronormative framework, one that supports the belief that the only "normal" sexual identity

and gender expressions are the heterosexual feminine female and masculine male (Lin, 2017). Doing this requires the review of the education system itself, including the analysis of state legislation, pre-service education requirements, and commonly taught texts.

While there are still states with laws prohibiting LGBTQIA-inclusive curricula (GLSEN, 2018), many policymakers, educators, and school districts across the country are embracing LGBTQIA individuals and issues in the classroom. In 2019, New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy signed a law requiring Boards of Education to adopt instructional materials that accurately portray political, economic, and social contributions of individuals with disabilities and the LGBTQIA community (S.B. 1569, 2018, 2019). Illinois passed a similar bill in 2019 requiring all schools to include “the role and contributions of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people in the history of this country and this State” in official textbooks (S.B. 3249, 2017, 2018). California stands out for its efforts in this area. It became the first state requiring public schools to teach LGBTQIA history when the state Senate passed the Fair, Accurate, Inclusive, and Respectful Act, also known as the FAIR Act, in 2012 (S.B. 48, 2011, 2012). In the fall of 2018, California’s K-12 classrooms began using textbooks that included LGBTQIA content, and for the last several years (2015-2019), a San Francisco high school has offered an LGBTQ Studies course, likely the first of its kind in the country (Moorhead, 2018).

New Jersey, Illinois, and California have identified a need for LGBTQIA inclusivity in their schools, and they are reacting. Last year, Maryland joined the list of states moving to require an LGBTQIA-inclusive curriculum (Zalaznick, 2019). Michigan, however, has the same need for K-12 education reform but has been slow to act. California’s efforts specifically present the opportunity to see how an LGBTQIA-inclusive curriculum can operate in schools, and they

offer guidance on how to encourage an acceptance of understanding varying gender and sexual identities among students.

This paper will identify where Michigan's curriculum is now, explicitly focusing on 11th and 12th grade English Language Arts standards. I will then highlight the gaps that allow for the perpetuation of heteronormativity and determine how these gaps might be filled through the use of queer and culturally responsive pedagogies. An original component of this project was meant to involve the surveying of Michigan educators in order to determine their familiarity with culturally responsive and queer pedagogies and their comfort in implementing LGBTQIA-inclusive texts. However, the survey only yielded a small sample of results and did not achieve the desired significance. I distributed over three hundred surveys via email, through academic connections, and at professional conferences and, unfortunately, only collected three in response. Going forward, if I wanted to continue this research, the methodology would need to be altered, perhaps by offering incentives and widening the scope.

Out of the responses to the survey, all three stated that queer pedagogy and theory was not taught in their pre-service education courses, and while culturally responsive pedagogy may have been mentioned, they did not receive any extensive training. They have varying understandings of queer pedagogy; all three are self-educated on the subject, and one leads queer pedagogical professional development workshops for other educators. Of the three educators, only one consciously employs LGBTQIA-inclusive texts in their classroom. The responses detail that all three educators do not fear teaching LGBTQIA literature, but only one educator describes their community and school as accepting of such texts. The other two educators express their concern that religious individuals in their community would push back against an LGBTQIA-inclusive curriculum.

While the information collected from the survey is not statistically significant in any way, it does offer perspectives from Michigan educators who teach in differing settings (rural, urban, and online) of varying demographics (male/female, late 20s/upper 50s) who have been provided limited education of queer and culturally responsive theories and pedagogies. This information demonstrates a gap in Michigan's pre-service education curriculum. It should be noted that the three responses were provided by white educators, though because 92% of Michigan's teacher workforce is white (Stackhouse, 2018), this result could be expected.

After the survey produced insufficient results, I discovered a new angle by which to approach the project. In February of 2020, the state of Michigan produced new pre-service education guidelines to be reviewed by state educators before the final vote in June of 2020. Further research revealed that California approved new pre-service education guidelines for February of 2020. With this new presentation of information, I found a new purpose. This project examines California's progressive legislation, its new curriculum, and its pre-service education requirements in comparison to the state of Michigan to assess the steps we must take to develop equity for LGBTQIA students and educators. After reviewing the necessary goals Michigan must set for itself in order to join California in their inclusivity efforts, I offer a new, non-heteronormative way of teaching two commonly implemented 11th and 12th-grade texts along with a suggested contemporary young adult LGBTQIA-inclusive novel. Above all, what this project seeks to illustrate is our quickly evolving societal climate, which every year becomes more tolerant of the LGBTQIA community, but requires a faster response from the education system to fully bridge the gap and establish equity.

Review of Literature

My effort to fully understand the severity of the problem for LGBTQIA K-12 students and educators led me to Helmer's (2015) "Reading Queerly in the High School Classroom." According to Helmer, research indicates that teacher preparation programs continue to exclude or minimize the voices and experiences of LGBTQIA students, families, and educators, generally ignoring LGBTQIA-inclusive topics. Helmer explains that out of twelve popular multicultural education textbooks used in teacher preparation programs, five devoted less than 1% to LGBTQIA topics. Additionally, many texts of these texts relied on the victim narrative (Helmer, p. 30).

In "Breaking Down the Last Taboo," Renzi and Steffel (2009) detail Michigan's typical pre-service education student: a white, middle-class female, from a conservative rural small town, who had positive high school experiences. As the authors illustrate, LGBTQIA issues are not particularly welcome in the views of Michigan's future public school teachers. A study conducted by Blackburn and Buckley showed that some students were offended that they were asked to read LGBTQIA-inclusive material and were "appalled by the suggestion that [a text with LGBT themes] is appropriate for middle school students" (Renzi & Steffel, 2009, pp. 30-31). Through my reading of Helmer, along with Renzi and Steffel, I began to understand that in order to derail the perpetuation of heteronormativity in our education system, pre-service education standards, and text requirements must be reshaped.

Many of my suggestions for employing queer pedagogy in K-12 education are adapted from James A. Banks' and Geneva Gay's respective works involving culturally responsive and multicultural pedagogy. In order for students to become participating citizens in a democratic

society, Banks says, they have to have the skills, knowledge, and racial attitudes needed to work with people from diverse groups. Through his “Five Dimensions of Multicultural Education,” Banks (2010) provides a framework to help educators make their classroom more equitable and to guide their students in better understanding communities different than their own.

As Gay (2010) explains *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice*, “The best-quality educational programs and practices can never be accomplished if some ethnic groups and their contributions to the development of U.S. history, life, and culture are ignored or demeaned” (p. 20). Gay asserts the need for teachers to teach *to and through* the strengths and backgrounds of their students by making their learning experiences more relevant to and useful for them. The frameworks provided by Banks and Gay led me as I analyzed the cultural responsiveness of California’s and Michigan’s curriculum and pre-service education standards, highlighting any successes and gaps in including the historical and cultural contributions of the LGBTQIA community.

Theorist Judith Butler shaped my understanding of queer theory. Rather than starting with the nature of sex, her well-known work *Gender Trouble* (1990) urges us to analyze the normative frameworks by which gender and sexuality are constituted and inhabited in the first place. In her later text *Undoing Gender*, Butler (2004) not only adds more nuance to the concept of gender performativity, but she also questions the parameters our heteronormative society uses to devise the concept of the human, parameters that perpetuate the othering of LGBTQIA individuals.

To then understand queer theory’s relation to pedagogy, I turned to Luhmann’s (1998) “Queering/Querying Pedagogy? Or, Pedagogy Is a Pretty Queer Thing.” In this text, the author attempts to explain the function of queer pedagogy and what it means to queer learning and

teaching. According to Luhmann, the goal of both queer theory and queer pedagogy is to subvert the processes of normalization (p. 142). Similar to Butler's thesis, Luhmann's notion suggests that the construction of the norm requires and depends on its Other to become intelligible. In conjunction with Butler, this text has helped me to understand how queer pedagogy will function to make LGBTQIA students intelligible to the administration, their teachers, and their classmates.

Britzman's (1995) "Is There a Queer Pedagogy? Or, Stop Reading Straight" proposes that queer pedagogy is primarily concerned with a radical practice of deconstructing normalcy, which would suggest that it is not confined to strictly teaching for or about queer subjects. This suggestion supports my recommendation to employ queer pedagogy in teaching texts that do not consist of queer themes or characters.

Through my thesis work, I have read several texts commonly taught in Michigan's 11th and 12th grade English Language Arts classes, as well as numerous LGBTQIA-inclusive young adult novels that could easily be integrated into the 11th and 12th grade ELA classroom. F. Scott Fitzgerald's (1925) *The Great Gatsby* is a classic that has secured a position as a text exemplar for Michigan and California. There are options for including this text into the curriculum in a way that does not employ a heteronormative lens: it offers gender depictions that provide opportunities for analyzing roles and interactions in a distinct period. LGBTQIA-inclusive texts, Emily M. Danforth's (2013) *The Miseducation of Cameron Post*, provides queer characters that are relatable for straight students and those who identify as LGBTQIA. What makes a text like Danforth's uniquely suited for 11th and 12th-grade classrooms is that it also offers an opportunity to explore an important issue in American LGBTQIA history. The author provides a view into Christian gay conversion camps with which many non-LGBTQIA students and teachers may be

unfamiliar. My exploration of queer and culturally responsive pedagogies prepared me to review one of Michigan's current text exemplars for its effectiveness and to suggest an accessible LGBTQIA young adult text for potential curriculum integration.

Chapter 1: Connecting Queer Theory to Queer Pedagogy

To properly integrate LGBTQIA-inclusive texts into the K-12 curriculum and to upend the perpetuation of heteronormative frameworks in teaching, educators need to become familiar with queer theory. Unfortunately, the term *queer* in and of itself often acts as a sort of alarm signaling content and conversations that many feel educators should not participate in or include in their classes. What is *queer* in actuality? Is it always synonymous with *gay* or *homosexual*? From where did the term arise? Has it entered education, and if yes, how? How does *queer* inclusion serve the LGBTQIA populations to represent their experiences and subjugated bits of knowledge, to end the normalization of heterosexuality in education policy, curriculum, and practice, and to continue to work toward institutional change?

Queer maintains an ambiguity that sets many people on edge. The *Oxford English Dictionary's* (OED) definition is used the least in 21st century English: “strange, odd, peculiar, eccentric; also: of questionable character; suspicious, dubious” (“queer, adj.1.,” 2020). In the 1970s, the *OED* added “(slang, especially of mean) homosexual. Also, of thing: pertaining to homosexuals or homosexuality” (“queer, n.2.,” 2020). In his article “Queer,” Whittington (2012) explains that while *queer* does still often involve relations to LGBTQIA texts, themes, or representations, it is also used to reference non-LGBTQIA topics. Now, *queer* can represent a position against normative ways of thinking and being (Whittington, 2012, p. 157).

The term *queer theory* is relatively new. In fact, in Halperin's (2003) “The Normalization of Queer Theory,” he credits Teresa de Lauretis with coining “queer theory” as recently as 1990 (p. 339). At this time, the term's shock value tied to its defamatory usage led to the definition of queer as something meaning to unsettle and unnerve as well as to highlight the “incoherencies in

the allegedly stable relations between chromosomal sex, gender and sexual desire” (Jagose, 1996, p. 3). De Lauretis (2011) explains this beginning of the term as the framing “of a project at once critical and political, aimed at resisting the cultural and sexual homogenization in academic ‘gay and lesbian studies’” where she wanted “to confront our respective sexual histories and deconstruct our own constructed silences around sexuality and its interrelations with gender and race” (p. 257). De Lauretis intended to release homosexuality from its subordination by the dominant heterosexuality. For Butler (2013), queer is also about destabilizing the “fixed” normative sex, gender, and sexuality, and it succeeds because of its derogatory past (p. 19). With the performativity of gender that produces a queer subject, the necessary solidarity for community and political progress also forms through that interpellation of queer, meaning that what was at once a marginalized and marginalizing symbol, queer has been reclaimed to seek out and disrupt that process of marginalization.

The Institutionalization of Heteronormativity

One highly influential theory that disrupts dominant notions related to sexuality, sex, and gender is Butler’s theory of performativity. Her work, *Gender Trouble* (1990), in which she developed her theory of the performativity of gender, is frequently cited as one of the founding texts of queer theory. Butler (1990) argues that people must rethink the most basic categories of human identity to make society better. She works to “deconstruct identity” and “denaturalize” gender, sex, and compulsory heterosexuality through a critical genealogy of gender that examines the institutional and discursive practices by which sexual difference and the category of woman is constituted (Butler, 2008, p. 106). She achieves this by debating the sex/gender distinction and the category of sex itself, revealing gender and sex as mutually constitutive

constructions, which allows her to destabilize the binary gender and sex categories. With this, Butler (1990) further undoes what she calls the “heterosexual matrix”:

[the grid] of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, genders, and desires are naturalized...a hegemonic discursive/epistemological model of gender intelligibility that assumes that for bodies to cohere and make sense there must be a stable sex expressed through a stable gender (masculine expresses male, feminine expresses female) that is oppositionally and hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality. (p. 194)

Butler reveals how the supposed congruence between only two existing sexes and genders produces the idea of compulsory heterosexuality. She further exposes the regulatory ideals of sex, gender, and compulsory heterosexuality as “a norm and a fiction” that disguises itself as the law but that can only be maintained through “political regulations and disciplinary practices” (pp. 172-73). For Butler, assumptions about what is “normal” will result in “abnormal” people having unfulfilling lives. She discusses how social conventions about dress and behavior give the appearance of “natural.” She sees this understanding of naturalness as coming from society as a whole; men and women acting as they are expected to establish masculinity and femininity in existence.

Understanding the dynamic that underlies the heterosexual matrix and the disciplinary practices and regulations that are necessary to keep it in place effectively disrupts notions of heterosexuality as normal and natural. Butler (1990) reveals sexualized and gendered speech acts, gestures, behaviors, and enactments as performative in the sense that they continuously produce and reproduce a series of effects that fabricate and perpetuate the illusion of an essential natural core of sexual and gender identities (p. 175). According to Butler, the “roles” in

sexuality, sex, and gender are not only performed, but the establishment of such roles is performative because it has productive consequences in that it fabricates the fantasy of a natural gendered and sexualized self (1990, p. 174). Such theorization of identity as everyday performances through actions, speech, and behaviors denaturalizes compulsory heterosexuality and sex and gender roles and successfully interrupts the idea of pre-existing, essential identities.

Butler's (1990) theory of performativity requires us to think differently about agency and transformation because "the reconceptualization of identity as an effect, that is, as produced or generated, opens up possibilities of 'agency' that are insidiously foreclosed by positions that take identity categories as foundational and fixed" (p. 187). In other words, if how we construct sexual and gender identities is created by what Butler calls the "stylized repetition of acts," then transformation becomes possible through "variation on that repetition" that constitutes "subversive repetition," for example, in the form of the "failure to repeat" or "parodic practices" (1990, pp. 179-186). For instance, Butler examines the cultural practices of drag, cross-dressing, and the adoption of butch/femme identities as instances of subversive repetition (1990, p. 174). Rejecting critiques that these practices uncritically appropriate or reflect gender- and/or sex-stereotyping, Butler maintains that through the performance of imitation of gender, the assumed naturalness of the "original" is revealed as a fantasy that is just as fabricated as the imitation (1990, p. 158). This means that practices crossing the boundaries imposed on sex, gender, and sexuality are disruptive and offer opportunities for transformation. Therefore, Butler's theory of performativity allows for resistance and change through repetition with a difference.

Defining the Human

In *Undoing Gender*, Butler (2004) asks the following: What makes life bearable for a person? What makes us human? What are the elements that constitute a "human ontology"?

Butler emphasizes the point that the parameters which have been used to approach, recognize, and categorize humans have always been fluid, and even more so, these parameters are socially constructed rather than natural and necessary as society asserts (2004, p. 20-59). The criteria used for defining the human are many times restrictive and paradoxical; what is used to grant the status of human to one individual may deprive another of achieving this status. Butler writes, “On the level of discourse, certain lives are not considered lives at all, they cannot be humanized; they fit no dominant frame for the human, and their dehumanization occurs first, at this level. This level then gives rise to physical violence that in some sense delivers the message of dehumanization which is already at work in the culture” (2004, p. 25). When it comes to literature, if we are only provided with heteronormative themes and characters, we will not be able to develop the knowledge and skills to assess the Othered queer body as human. If one who identifies as LGBTQIA is only given heteronormative literature, and they are solely provided with the straight human as a construct for identity or as a character in literature, the probability of their self-dehumanization will increase.

Mehdi Amiri and Sara Khoshkam (2017) clarify that the fictional, fluid idea of gender Butler describes is something that is not a material thing but is reproducing and changing. In Butler’s view, gender is only an essential part of a body’s identity that is presented in the world (Amiri & Khoshkam, 2017, p. 2). In her analysis of Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*, Butler (1988) explains:

When Beauvoir claims that “woman” is a historical idea and not a natural fact, she clearly underscores the distinction between sex, as biological facticity, and gender, as the cultural interpretation or signification of that facticity. To be female is, according to that distinction, a facticity which has no meaning, but to be a woman is to have become a

woman, to compel the body to conform to an historical idea of “woman,” to induce the body to become a cultural sign, to materialize oneself in obedience to an historically delimited possibility, and to do this as a sustained and repeated corporeal project. (p. 522)

By claiming that gender is performative, Butler (2004) means that one can create their gender by doing gendered things. Although society generally considers biological differences as “fixed,” gender differences are the repressive results of social ideologies that dictate how women and men should behave (Amir & Khoshkam, 2017, p. 2). Butler (1988) argues, “...gender appears to the popular imagination as a substantial core which might well be understood as the spiritual or psychological correlate of biological sex” (p. 528). However, since gender is social, that also means it is malleable by social and political reform.

Amiri and Khoshkam (2017) acknowledge Butler’s abandonment of the common assumption that sex, gender, and sexuality exist in relation to each other, that if one is biologically female, she is expected to have feminine characteristics. Instead, Butler claims that gender is unnatural, and there is no significant relationship between one’s body and one’s gender. It can be said that there is the potential for someone to have a female body and not to have feminine characteristics (Amiri & Khoshkam, 2017, p. 2). Butler (1988) says that one’s performance begins even before one’s birth, as the gender “script” always exists. However, the gender act “requires individual actors in order to be actualized and reproduced as reality once again” (Butler, 1988, p. 526). Someone acts and speaks in ways that associate the impression of being a man or being a woman. Identity politics and issues of representation are based on these performances that construct what it means to be male or female. Instead of imagining an “essential” woman defined by the maternal body, Butler believes that there is no essential femininity or masculinity (Amiri & Koshkam, 2017, p. 3). She writes in *Bodies that Matter*

(1993), “There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very expressions that are said to be its results” (p. 33). In Butler’s idea, norms of gender identity are constructed and stabilized within a dominant cultural ideology, binding gender to sex according to the commands of heterosexual reproductive biology. She claims that sex is an effect of binary gender thinking rather than the origin of it (Amiri & Koshkam, 2017, p. 3). For her, femininity is something that is always performed and is wholly a social matter with identity established in performativity: “There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very “expressions” that are said to be its results” (Butler, 1993, p. 25). According to Butler (1988), gender as a performative act is not a choice: “Gender reality is performative which means, quite simply, that it is real only to the extent that it is performed” (p. 527). As with *Gender Trouble*, she calls for disquieting the gender categories through performance.

In another illuminating discussion, Butler (2004) argues that one’s understanding of their gender and self is based on their awareness of the Other, emphasizing the fact that the site of the body departs from the individualism that is normally assigned to it. She claims that the public dimension is very much implicated within conceptions of the body, meaning that it is “constituted as a social phenomenon in the public sphere, my body is and is not mine” (Butler, 2004, p. 21). Part of understanding the oppression of the Other requires understanding that there is no way to argue away this condition of vulnerability to one another. Countering oppression requires an understanding that lives are supported and maintained differentially and that human physical vulnerability is distributed across the world in radically different ways (Butler, 2004).

Some lives will be highly protected, and others will barely qualify as “grievable.” According to Butler (2004), grief serves to display our relations with others, which she says

interrupts our preoccupation with ourselves in ways that challenge the very notion of autonomy. The idea of grief is vital to note in a discussion of the character narrative of an Othered body. Authors want us to feel for the character, and this feeling is established by grief. In the case of an Other, we require grief for them to become intelligible. We need to feel the sadness associated with them. Butler says that we are undone by each other, that through grief, we are given accessibility to the inaccessible.

If we are not exposed to the Other, they will remain unintelligible to us. It is only through exposure that acceptance for the LGBTQIA can begin. Özlem Sensoy and Robin DiAngelo's (2017) discussion of *critical social justice* can serve to further elucidate the need for queer pedagogical teaching to truly establish equity in the classroom. As the authors explain in *Is Everyone Really Equal?*, critical social justice is the theoretical perspective that views society as systematically unequal, affecting social groups of race, class, and ability, as well as gender and sexuality. They argue that it is social justice illiteracy that allows injustice to persist, and the dominant powers have been able to perpetuate this illiteracy by orchestrating ignorance (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017, pp. xix-xx). Educators must teach through employ the critical social justice framework to battle social justice illiteracy. If we do not teach certain moments of history in our curriculum, it is likely students will only learn about these events when in college, if not even later. If we exclude certain groups of people from our curriculum, we are establishing this exclusion as the norm. The best way for us to bring about the necessary level of awareness to lead to acceptance is to make K-12 education more inclusive.

In "Recognizing and Utilizing Queer Pedagogy," Zacko-Smith & Smith (2010) endorse queer theory for educators to change their focus from understanding LGBTQIA students as an Other, prompting a reexamination of what it means to consider sexuality without using the

stereotypical association labels, or “organizing terms” (6). Based on the ideas of queer theory, queer pedagogy seeks to contribute to practices of education by analyzing the variability and the flexibility of society, affirming that educational institutions should not attach themselves to one set model. As Britzman (1998) explains, queer pedagogy does not seek the correct methods or questions. Instead, queer pedagogy offers everyone involved in academic spaces the possibility of understanding issues of sexuality from a new angle, whether they identify as straight or LGBTQIA. Queer pedagogy and curriculum are for everyone, not just for those who recognize themselves in this subject position, that is, as queer subjects. With teachers that are adequately trained in queer pedagogy, we can begin to integrate LGBTQIA-inclusive texts while also teaching the most popular K-12 texts in new ways that do not perpetuate the heteronormative structure.

To Engage in Queer Pedagogy

The debate over whether or not teachers should be allowed to employ queer themes in their class often results in the silencing of LGBTQIA-identifying teachers. For these teachers, being who they are could mean getting fired. However, we know how beneficial it can be for educators to be open with their K-12 students about their own identities. As Allen (1995) argues in “Opening the Classroom Closet,” teachers sharing their authentic selves with their students is as essential in communicating knowledge as the content taught in the classroom. Because sexual orientation is not necessarily apparent to the eye, teachers must make the decision of whether or not to self-disclose. Allen explains that a heterosexual teacher may not find an issue with discussing their family situation with the class; this sharing reflects the heterosexism of the mainstream culture. LGBTQIA educators disclosing their sexual or gender identity would model for students the disruption of this heterosexual privilege (Allen, 1995, pp. 137-138). Rofes

(2000), an openly-gay educator, surveyed and interviewed his students 20 years after they took his class. Despite the common fear that queer teachers will produce queer-accepting students, or worse, queer students, none of the students who responded to Rofes identified as gay. In addition to this finding, Rofes' former students said that having a queer teacher made them better LGBTQIA allies. One student said, "Having an openly gay teacher taught me to be receptive to diversity and about the complexity of human beings....I think it would benefit all children and society if they had openly gay teachers" (Rofes, 2000, p. 403). For teachers to feel comfortable disclosing their identity, the school system must be structured in a way that makes it clear to students and teachers that identifying as LGBTQIA is normal and accepted. This can come from the use of queer pedagogy in the K-12 classroom and the pre-service education classroom. The ability to employ queer pedagogy in their classes will certainly help to establish equity for K-12 educators and their students; however, it is also crucial for straight-identifying teachers to practice queer pedagogy so they can help to improve the education experience for all of their students.

What is queer pedagogy?

At this point, most American K-12 public schools operate through a homophobic/heterosexist framework. This is defined by Lin (2017) as a teaching framework that supports the belief that the only "normal" sexual identity is heterosexual and gender expressions are feminine female and masculine male. Anything else is considered a deviation from the norm, and therefore abnormal. Expressions of this belief are called heteronormative. Assumptions of heteronormativity and privileging heterosexual expressions and experiences is called heterosexism (Lin, 2017, p. 24). As Lin explains, queer pedagogy was first described as "a radical form of educative praxis implemented deliberately to interfere with, to intervene in, the

production of ‘normalcy’ in schooled subjects” (2017, p. 32). Queer pedagogy has remained largely academic because, as Britzman (1995) clarifies, it is foremost concerned with a radical practice of deconstructing normalcy. Therefore, it seldom makes its way into the discourse of classroom teachers.

According to Luhmann (1998), both queer theory and pedagogy argue that the sense-making process of the self relies on binaries such as homosexual-heterosexual, ignorance-knowledge, learner-teacher, and reader-writer. Queer theory and pedagogy position the desire to deconstruct binaries central to Western modes of meaning-making, learning, teaching, and doing politics and subvert the processes of normalization (Luhmann, 1998, p. 128). Thus queer theory and pedagogy, in opposing a repressive hypothesis of sexuality and power, suggest that the construction of the norm requires and depends on its Other to become intelligible, as Butler (2004) would agree. Luhmann (1998) writes, “The norm and its negated Other are implicated and mutually constitutive of each other. Normalized identities such as straight and stable gender identities work through, invoke, produce, constitute, as well as refuse its Other” (p. 128). The idea of “queer” attempts to interrupt these modes of sense-making by refusing stable identities and producing new identifications that lie outside binary models of gender and sexuality.

The point of queer pedagogy is neither to apply queer theory onto pedagogy nor to apply pedagogy in the spreading of queer theory. Rather than posing “the right” knowledge as a solution, Luhmann (1998) argues that queer theory and pedagogy position knowledge as an endless question. Queer pedagogy skeptically views the processes of how identities are constructed, and Britzman (1995) explains that it also becomes concerned with normalcy’s inherent exclusions. She suggests that queer pedagogy is obviously not confined to strictly teaching for or about queer subjects. Additionally, Britzman (1995) claims, the refusal of any

normalization could potentially be part of the “queer agenda” (p. 154). De Lauretis (2011) argues that queer theory must persist in self-critiques and reflect on how normalization may also constitute lesbian and gay studies. Rather than exploring, presenting, and manifesting queer subjects, a queer pedagogy aims at the infinite production of new identifications. Still, there is the complicated question of how to engage in such self-critical practices without losing track of the broader methods of social injustices persists. Alternatively, Britzman (1995) asks how we can “exceed such binary oppositions as the tolerant and the tolerated, the oppressed and oppressor yet still hold onto an analysis of social difference that can account for how dynamics of subordination and subjection work at the level of the historical, the structural, the epistemological, the conceptual, and the social, and the psychic” (p. 164).

Just as Butler (2004) argues, Luhmann (1998) explains that with learning, the making of selves begins with an Other. The queer pedagogy that Luhmann (1998) details engages students in a conversation about how textual positions are being taken up or refused. She relates the example of when someone is reading lesbian and gay texts or when they are listening to somebody speaking “gay.” She asks what happens to the self in this dialogue, what does the student actually hear, and how does the student respond to the text? Luhmann also inquires if queer teaching, rather than assuming and affirming identities, can tackle the problem of how identifications are created and refused in the process of learning (1998, pp. 129-130).

Queer pedagogy, Luhmann (1998) asserts, does not hold the promise of remedying homophobia or curing a lack of self-esteem. For her, this pedagogy is not about a new curriculum or different methods of instruction; it is an inquiring of the conditions that make learning possible or impossible. What occurs through the implementation of this pedagogy is the interrogation of the processes of how we make ourselves based on how we view the Other. As an

inquiry into this process, Luhmann explains queer pedagogy does not position itself as a hero in the fight against oppression, but it will hopefully encourage an ethical practice by studying the limits of its own practices, the risks of normalization, and the possibilities—and impossibilities—of subversive teaching and learning (1998, p. 121).

Approaches for Integration

The movement to integrate queer pedagogy as commonly-practiced K-12 methodology mirrors the effort to promote critical multiculturalism and culturally relevant/responsive pedagogies. As Lin (2015) explains, critical multiculturalism and queer pedagogy both seek to challenge the status quo and disrupt hegemonic understandings of identity, experience, and perspective. In this way, queer-inclusive critical multiculturalism urges ELA teachers to develop a pedagogy that treats literacy not only as reading and writing but as a critical tool for understanding and transforming oneself and the world. Lin claims that perhaps the most necessary facets of these pedagogies is the overall approach taken in the classroom and the way the teacher positions the literature (2015, p. 27).

The issue with multicultural education today, Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017) argue, is that it often amounts to a mere “celebration of diversity” rather than the employment of particular pedagogies to adequately challenge the dominant ideologies, norms, and policies in education (p. 142). To avoid this kind of problem with queer pedagogy, we must make sure that we are not using tokenistic approaches to teaching. Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017) explain that multicultural education must include a study of unequal power between groups. They define anti-racist education as a form of multicultural education that focuses on the analysis of social, cultural, and institutional power that shapes the meaning of racial differences. This type of education recognizes that racism is embedded in society and perpetuated because of socialization, and it is

virtually inescapable. Antiracist multicultural education can help counteract this socialization by teaching the dominant group—in this case, White people—about what racism truly is and how it operates in our society (Sensoy & DiAngelo, p. 142). In a queer-inclusive critical multicultural classroom, Lin (2015) elucidates, the literature would not merely be positioned as “another good story” along with the more heteronormative texts, nor would it be positioned as indicative of the LGBTQIA experience (p. 45). It would be presented as an opportunity to critically explore the complex intersection of experience, power, culture, and identity, particularly as related to sexuality.

One queer pedagogical strategy Lin (2015) details is to blur the boundaries between reading for academic purposes and reading to examine our society and “the implications of social, cultural, and historical influences on one’s sexual orientation” (p. 46). Another approach might include teaching students about queer theory so that they might develop another lens to read not only the literature at hand but all texts. Lin (2015) refers to a suburban high school English teacher who teaches queer theory and asks students to consider, “How can theory allow us to see from various perspectives in order to understand the complexity of human experience, to be in dialogue with the past and present? How can theory help us enter new dialogues to create different paradigms?” (p. 46). In this sense, Lin (2015) claims this educator’s pedagogy is distinctly queer in the sense that it disrupts what is commonly thought to be normal and challenging hegemony. The educator creates the conditions for her students not only to learn how to read literature from multiple perspectives but also to read the world from multiple perspectives. As Lin (2015) illuminates, literature does not need to specifically have LGBTQIA content to be used to queer the classroom. Queer pedagogy would explore the implicit or explicit heterosexuality in most stories as well. Additionally, in stories that contain what might be

considered “peripheral LGBTQ content” (p. 48), a queer-inclusive English class would deeply acknowledge and explore that content rather than simply address it and move on.

The Need for Queer Pedagogy

One may argue that it is not the school’s job to establish LGBTQIA inclusivity and that it is instead the parents’ decision to integrate certain information involving the LGBTQIA community into their children’s lives. However, if effective teaching is considered to be the creation of knowledge and the development of human beings socially, morally, intellectually, then we need educators at all levels to be fluent in diversity. Educators must also be unafraid of immersing themselves in the world as it evolves around them and accept their role as mentors who help to define reality for those they are educating. To ignore the continually emerging requirements of critical social justice means that educators will quickly become outdated and ineffective, but more importantly, potentially damaging and socially unjust. Zacko-Smith and Smith (2010) argue that schools are at least partially responsible for cementing societal norms and for defining what is considered “normal.” They indicate, “...if hegemony is to be upheld, people in the culture must be constantly reminded of the natural and rational [that is] inherent in what it [the culture] advocates. Through these constant reminders, a certain normality is segmented in people’s consciousness” (Zacko-Smith & Smith, 2010, p. 3). When viewed through this lens, it is understood that educators either uphold the status quo, or they define and redefine what is classified as “normal” in their classrooms, and therefore, the larger society as well. Bringing attention to this responsibility of educators and giving them the necessary tools to expand definitions of what is and is not “normal” in the realm of sexuality and gender can help schools to achieve equity. Another important possible outcome of this is that students’ anxiety

surrounding their own sexual orientation and gender issues could be alleviated (Zacko-Smith & Smith, 2010, p. 3).

When schools tolerate homophobia, it produces immediate and adverse effects that ripple outward, contaminating the whole school, community, and the larger society. While the association between sexual orientation and school has progressed toward being one of tolerance and/or acceptance, it is still evident that educational contexts significantly contribute to the perpetuation of stereotypes and negative attitudes towards LGBTQIA students. For example, many canonical texts that have been deemed indispensable are continuously implemented in K-12 English Language Arts classes. Stallworth and Gibbons (2012) polled over one thousand public schools in the southeastern US and found the canon texts most commonly used in high schools were: *The Great Gatsby*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Crucible*, *The Odyssey*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and *Night*. These texts are often taught in a way that perpetuates heteronormativity. If we teach a text in a way that ignores the possibility of understanding it outside of the heterosexist frame, then we are depriving our students of fully understanding the world around them. Take Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* for example. The idea of "fate" and "star-crossed lovers" are common themes referred to when teaching the play. While we do not see relationships between Juliet and any other woman besides Lady Capulet and the Nurse, we do see Romeo interact with many male characters outside of his family tree. Juliet is expected to marry a man, and Romeo is expected to marry a woman. While there are many phallic references between Romeo and his gang, it is not up for serious discussion that Romeo could be romantically interested in his close friend Mercutio. Logically, Romeo is presented with Juliet, and that is whom he is destined to marry and die for. The play provides the often ignored opportunity to discuss our society's heterosexist relationship requirements, reaching back to

historical views of same-sex relationships and connecting those roots to where we are now. The text could also allow us to analyze heterosexist gender roles with students. Why do we only focus on Juliet as a girl in love, and not as a dynamic character who undergoes a stark transformation into an adult woman? Juliet herself also debates identity: “What’s in a name? that which we call a rose / By any other name would smell as sweet” (Shakespeare, 2015, 2.2.80-86). Many students consider Shakespeare’s works outdated and unrelatable, and rather than trying to connect them to the text with discussions of love, arranged marriage, and fate, we can draw direct lines between the play and societal expectations that we all face.

If the next step in developing LGBTQIA equity involves reconstruction of the English Language Arts curriculum in schools, how should it be done? While we could simply integrate more contemporary LGBTQIA-inclusive queer literature, one could argue that throwing out the most commonly taught canonical texts could potentially bring about strife in this conversation that so many already find controversial. While the content of some commonly taught texts can possibly be harmful to LGBTQIA students, there are some that can remain part of the curriculum. However, queer pedagogical practices can be implemented to make canonical texts more viable within the greater conversation of LGBTQIA inclusivity. Additionally, it is crucial to remember that pre-service education programs of the past often instructed educators in training to teach in ways that correlate more directly with heterosexist teaching frameworks. It is not and should not be on the shoulders of individual educators to make all the changes themselves. Pre-service education requirements must reflect the need for queer pedagogy in our schools to fully establish LGBTQIA equity.

Chapter 2: California: The State to Watch

While there are still states with laws prohibiting LGBTQIA-inclusive curricula (GLSEN, 2018), many policymakers, educators, and school districts across the country are embracing LGBTQIA individuals and issues in the classroom. In the fall of 2018, California K-12 classrooms began using textbooks that included LGBTQIA content, and for the last several years (2015-2019), a San Francisco high school has offered an LGBTQ Studies course developed by Lyndsey Schlax, likely the first of its kind in the country (Moorhead, 2018). California's efforts present an opportunity to see how an LGBTQIA-inclusive curriculum can operate in schools, and they provide direction on how best to encourage understanding and acceptance of varying gender and sexual identities among students.

In 2011, California took a massive step in ensuring LGBTQIA youth equity. A spike in suicides among LGBTQIA youth, along with emerging research on the benefits of a curriculum that includes LGBTQIA topics (Bird, Kuhns, & Garofalo, 2012), pushed Governor Jerry Brown to sign into California law Senate Bill 48, otherwise known as the Fair, Accurate, Inclusive, and Respectful (FAIR) Education Act. FAIR required the contributions of LGBTQIA individuals and people with disabilities to be added to the state's history and social studies curriculum. After five years and multiple challenges to FAIR, the California State Board of Education approved a social studies curriculum framework (2016) that requires topics including the contributions of lesbian and gay figures in history the evolution of gay rights. A selection of compliant textbooks followed this approval. New supplemental instruction for teachers also includes LGBTQIA individuals and issues (Moorhead, 2018). McGraw-Hill added the following to a teacher's edition: "Though [Walt] Whitman never publicly addressed his sexuality, his poetry, letters, and

journals suggest that Whitman would identify as gay if he were alive today...Whitman shared a decades-long romantic friendship with bus conductor Peter Doyle. Though the two never lived together, Doyle was Whitman's muse” (Harrington, 2017). Textbooks have also included other historical figures, such as Emily Dickinson, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and President James Buchanan, that are widely considered by historians to have been LGBTQIA (Moorhead, 2018).

California's FAIR Act added language to Education Code Section 51204.5, which advocates for the inclusion of various groups’ contributions in the history of California and the U.S. This section already included men and women and several ethnic groups. It now specifically covers “...men and women, Native Americans, African Americans, Mexican Americans, Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, European Americans, [LGBT] Americans, persons with disabilities, and members of other ethnic and cultural groups, to the economic, political, and social development of California and the United States of America,” (California Department of Education, 2019). Additionally, the legislation added some requirements for instructional materials. *Education Code* Section 51501 outlines bans on material included in textbooks or other instructional materials. This section already banned content that “reflect[s] adversely upon persons because of their race, sex, color, creed, handicap, national origin, or ancestry,” but the bill added “sexual orientation” to the list. By *Education Code* Section 60040, governing boards are directed to exclusively adopt instructional materials that “accurately portray the cultural and racial diversity of our society.” This specific section already included several minority groups and was amended to include all of those previously listed. Finally, the legislation also provides a reminder to charter and alternative schools that

engaging in discrimination is also prohibited per Section 235 of the *Education Code* (California Department of Education, 2019).

The FAIR Act did not change any of the California curriculum standards, and it does not include any power for the State Board of Education to alter the standards to reflect the law's requirements. The content that is now required by the law is not in conflict with the state's standards. Just as with Michigan's State Standards, California's provide a description of what students are expected to know and be able to do by certain grade levels, but they are not meant to restrict or to be an exhaustive list of topics required (California Department of Education, 2019).

California's curriculum framework, developed in 2015, comprises of more than 20 classroom examples showing teachers how they can integrate their instruction to build students' history and social science knowledge and skills, literacy skills, and English language development. The framework adds information on civic learning, consistent with the work of the California Task Force on K-12 Civic Learning. In addition, the framework adds information about financial literacy, voter education, genocide, and the contributions of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Americans and people with disabilities to the history of California and the United States (California Department of Education, 2016). Tom Torlakson, the California State Superintendent of Public Instruction, stated, "This document will improve the teaching and learning of history and social science. It will give our students access to the latest historical research and help them learn about the diversity of our state and the contributions of people and groups who may not have received the appropriate recognition in the past" (California Department of Education, 2016).

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

With the development of a new curriculum framework, the California Department of Education also called for the use of a specific pedagogical framework: culturally responsive pedagogy. Ladson-Billings introduced the term to describe a form of teaching that calls for engaging learners of cultures and lived experiences that are traditionally excluded from mainstream settings (Muñiz, 2019, p. 9). Culture can be viewed within or beyond ethnic groups in terms of race, gender, sexuality, abilities, class, and many other ways. A person may belong to several cultures, and so the ways of viewing culture will intersect naturally. One may wonder what it means to "respond" to and include culture in curricula and what it is that we must do to become a culturally responsive educator. Gay (2000, 2010) describes culturally responsive pedagogy as transformative, multidimensional, and empowering. She refers to culturally relevant pedagogy as the use of “cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frame of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning more relevant to an effective...It teaches to and through strengths of the students. It is culturally validating and affirming” (Gay, 2000, p. 29). Along with improving academic achievement, culturally responsive pedagogy is committed to helping minority students maintain their identities with their ethnic groups and communities. This approach helps students develop a sense of personal efficacy, building positive relationships and shared responsibility while they acquire an idea of success that is compatible with the idea of cultural pride. Infusing the history and culture of students into the curriculum is vital for students to maintain self-efficacy and positive school socialization (Gay, 2000, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Gay also argues that an asset-based approach to education—where every community is valuable; every community has strengths and potential—is necessary to achieve higher levels of student self-efficacy and equity (Muñiz, 2019,

pp. 9-10). This valuing of students' cultural and linguistic heritage while also ensuring their access to a fully-developed education makes culturally responsive education one of the most effective means of meeting the learning needs of culturally diverse students.

The California Department of Education's "Health Education Framework" details the importance of implementing culturally responsive pedagogies when integrating an LGBTQIA-inclusive curriculum. In order to create genuinely fair education experiences, teachers should continuously strive for access, equity, and social justice. As Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017) explicate, to disrupt social justice illiteracy, educators and administrators must take up a position of inquiry concerning their practice and engage in collaborative, ongoing discussions about challenging issues, including language, culture, race, and equity. The "Health Education Framework" references the National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems (NCCRES) and its emphasis on the importance of creating a shared responsibility for cultural responsiveness. This organization explains that culturally responsive education systems are rooted in the belief that our society consists of specific groups of people who are afforded privileges that are not accessible to other groups. Privileging some over others creates a class structure in which the advantaged have more access to high-quality education and, therefore, more job opportunities in high-status careers. This leads to socio-economic stratification and the development of majority versus minority opposition. Schools can turn the tide on this institutionalized problem by developing systems responsive to cultural differences and seek to include rather than exclude. Additionally, culturally responsive educational systems create spaces for teacher reflection, inquiry, and mutual support around issues of cultural differences (California State Board of Education, 2019, pp. 3-5).

The California Department of Education acknowledges the eight educator competencies detailed by Muñiz (2019) in *New America's* "Culturally Responsive Teaching: A 50-State Survey of Teaching Standards." The first of these competencies requires that culturally responsive educators (CREs) reflect on their own group memberships based on race, ethnicity, social class, and gender. They are mindful of the fact that their lived experiences and group memberships could generate biases that can potentially influence their interactions with students, families, and colleagues. Secondly, CREs also recognize that their students' access to educational opportunities may be affected by their social identifiers and advocate for all students to have access to high-quality teachers and schools. The third competency expects CREs to use their students' cultures and experiences when planning their classes, and reject teaching materials that contain biases or stereotypes. They supplement the curriculum if it is lacking representation of their students' heritage. Competency four calls for CREs to connect their curriculum to real-world problems and inspire students to come up with solutions. These issues could involve injustices that exist in their communities or nationwide. CREs empower their students to see themselves as change agents that can right the wrongs that exist in the world through this process. For the fifth competency, Muñiz obliges CREs to maintain high expectations for all students and believe that they can all achieve academic success. Competency six asks CREs to model how students should respect each other and embrace their classmates' differences. The seventh competency states that CREs must work to collapse barriers that might prevent students' families from participating in their children's education, such as parent work schedules or language barriers. They make efforts to learn about the families and communities in which they teach. Finally, CREs must understand and be considerate of the verbal and nonverbal culturally-influenced communication styles of their school's community. They also pursue communication

with parents that speak a home language other than English by utilizing translation services (Muñiz, 2019, pp. 12-15). Understanding the expectations of a culturally responsive educator, as embraced by the state of California, can make the gaps in Michigan's standards for teachers more visible and guide us in our transformation.

Culturally Responsive LGBTQIA Content Integration

Banks' (2010) integration of multicultural content model moves teachers to transformative teaching and social action through the use of a culturally responsive curriculum. His model is not just for K-12 students; it can and should be used in pre-service education programs so that educators know how to develop a curriculum that is multicultural. Banks' multicultural content model has four approaches that move toward a high-quality multicultural curriculum. Lyndsey Schlax, a California educator, Banks' Four Levels of Integration of Ethnic Content in developing an LGBTQIA-inclusive course at the Ruth Asawa San Francisco School of the Arts (Moorhead, 2018). Banks (2010) acknowledges the difficulty many schools face in the attempt to implement multicultural content. He says that no approach will find success if teachers do not have in-depth knowledge about ethnic cultures and experiences, to then properly integrate the ethnic content, experiences, and points of view into the curriculum.

The Contributions Approach. Banks' (2010) characterized the contributions approach, which he refers to as "Level 1" on the Four Levels, by the insertion of ethnic heroes/heroines and discrete cultural artifacts— such as the foods, dances, music, and objects of ethnic groups— into the curriculum. These elements are selected using criteria similar to those used to select mainstream heroes/heroines and cultural artifacts. For example, additions to the curriculum included individuals such as Crispus Attucks, Benjamin Bannaker, Pocahontas, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Cesar Chavez and they are generally discussed when American heroes/heroines are

studied in mainstream curriculum. Banks describes the heroes/heroines and holidays approach as a variant of the contributions approach, where the ethnic content is limited primarily to special days, weeks, and months related to ethnic events, such as during school Cinco de Mayo, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, and African American History Week celebrations. With these celebrations, teachers involve students in lessons, experiences, and pageants related to the ethnic group being commemorated.

Because the contributions approach allows educators to quickly integrate ethnic content into the curriculum, Banks (2010) says that many teachers who have little knowledge about ethnic groups and curriculum revision but are committed to integrating their curricula with ethnic content will consequently resort to this more limited approach. Banks explains that when the integration of the curriculum is accomplished primarily through the inclusion of ethnic heroes/heroines and contributions, students do not receive a global view of the role of ethnic and cultural groups in U.S. society. Instead, they will likely see ethnic issues and events primarily as an addition to the curriculum and consequently as a sidebar to the "main story" of the development of the nation. Teaching ethnic issues with the use of heroes/heroines and contributions also tends to gloss over important concepts and issues related to the victimization and oppression of ethnic groups and their struggles against racism and for power (Banks, 2010, pp. 238-239).

There are often intense political demands from ethnic communities for schools to put their heroes/heroines, contributions, and cultures into the school curriculum. These contributions can help give an ethnic group a sense of structural inclusion, validation, and social equality. Curriculum inclusion also facilitates the quests of marginalized ethnic and cultural groups for empowerment, efficacy, and social equality, which correlates positively with academic

achievement (Banks, 2010, p. 240). Schlax's LGBTQ Studies course, which actively included all four of the approaches to curriculum, implemented level one by adding a mix of celebrations: International Transgender Day of Visibility, LGBT Pride Month, LGBT History Month, and National Coming Out Day. Schlax also endorsed the school's student-run Genders and Sexualities Alliance (GSA), which planned events around such celebrations (Moorhead, 2018).

The Additive Approach. “Level 2” in the Four Levels is the additive approach, which Banks (2010) states is often accomplished by adding a book, unit, or course to the curriculum without fundamentally changing it. The additive approach allows the teacher to put ethnic content into the curriculum without beginning a process that would take substantial time, effort, and training as well as a rethinking of the curriculum and its nature and goals. The additive approach can be the first phase in a transformative curriculum reform effort designed to restructure the entire curriculum and to integrate it with ethnic content, perspectives, and frames of reference. However, this approach has several issues similar to those of the contributions approach. Because it does not involve restructuring the curriculum, it usually results in the viewing of ethnic content from the perspectives of mainstream historians, writers, artists, and scientists. The events, concepts, and issues selected for study are chosen using mainstream criteria and perspectives. Content added to a curriculum as appendages instead of being integral parts of a unit of instruction can become problematic (Banks, 2010, pp. 240-242).

California's textbook initiative falls into the additive approach. The Teacher's Curriculum Institute's second grade textbook includes a section called “Different Kinds of Families.” The text provides a photograph of a girl with two moms, and it explains, “There are many kinds of families. Some children live with one parent. Others live with two parents. Some families have two moms and two dads. Some children are raised by their grandparents” (Hefling, 2017). A

fourth grade textbook by Pearson highlights how, until recently, same-sex couples couldn't marry in all U.S. states. The book includes a photo of a lesbian couple that tells of their legal efforts to secure the right to marry, as well as a subsequent case that made marriage rights guaranteed to all same-sex couples (Hefling, 2017).

For her course, Schlax pursued first-person voices from the LGBTQIA community, including U.S. politician and LGBTQIA rights activist Tom Ammiano, same-sex couples, and trans individuals. She explained, "I definitely work to create a connection to the city where I teach" (Moorhead, 2018). Some teachers may have narrow options based on their community and location, but organizations, such as Everyone Is Gay, offer comprehensive lists of resources by state, and modern videoconferencing tools can help to bring guest speakers into the classroom (Moorhead, 2018).

The Transformation Approach. The third level of Banks' (2010) integration tiers differs fundamentally from the contributions and additive approaches where ethnic content is added to the mainstream core curriculum without changing its basic assumptions, nature, and structure. In the transformative approach, the fundamental goals, structure, and perspectives of the curriculum are changed. This approach alters the central assumptions of the curriculum and allows students to view concepts, issues, and themes from several ethnic perspectives. The mainstream viewpoint is one of only several perspectives from which issues, problems, and concepts are viewed. Banks asserts that seeing every issue, idea, event, or problem from the point of view of every U.S. ethnic and cultural group is at once impossible and undesirable. Instead, the goal should be to enable students to view concepts and issues from the perspective of the cultural, ethnic, and racial groups that were the most active participants in, or were most clearly influenced by, the topic of study. The critical curriculum necessities for multicultural

curriculum reform are not the addition of a long list of ethnic groups, heroes, and contributions. Instead, we need the infusion of various perspectives, frames of references, and content from different groups that will extend students' understandings of the nature, development, and complexity of U.S. society (Banks, 2010, pp. 242-243).

Banks' (2010) third level moves educators into the realm of substantive changes in curriculum, which calls for the need for new texts. For Schlax, however, this was a difficult feat in 2015: "There is no textbook. It doesn't exist," Schlax said, "No one has written an LGBTQ studies textbook for high school students and certainly not for lower-grade kids. So any textbooks about LGBTQ studies, gender studies, queer studies, those have been used to help inform me and help me create content and a timeline of learning" (Moorhead, 2018). Schlax settled on *Finding Out: An Introduction to LGBT Studies* by Michelle A. Gibson, Jonathan F. Alexander, and Deborah T. Meem, *Out of the Past: Gay and Lesbian History from 1869 to the Present* by Neil Miller, and *Becoming Visible: A Reader in Gay and Lesbian History for High School and College Students* by Kevin Jennings. She also included articles from blogs and magazines and collected primary sources. Additionally, students and teachers shared news articles, podcasts, music, and other audio elements through social media (Moorhead, 2018).

Schlax used these resources to inspire students to explore the impact of cultural, historical, social, and political factors on the LGBTQIA community. To succeed in class, students needed to make connections between significant events, discussion topics, and broader historical and cultural critical-thinking standards. Specifically, students studied the social construction of the LGBTQIA community across time and place, theoretical debates regarding sexual orientation, identity development, and intersecting oppressions, gender identity and roles, homophobia, and HIV. Writing prompts and other activities throughout the semester encouraged

students to consider their own connections to the material and built toward Banks' (2010) final level (Moorhead, 2018).

The Social Action Approach. Banks' (2010) fourth tier—social action—includes all the elements of the transformation approach but adds components that require students to make decisions and take steps related to the unit's concept or issue of study. Major instruction goals in this approach are to educate students for social criticism and social change and to teach them decision-making skills. While the traditional objective of schooling has been to socialize students to unquestioningly accept the existing ideologies, institutions, and practices within mainstream society, the goal of the social action approach is to empower students and help them gain political efficacy to become reflective social critics and skilled participants in social change (Banks, 2010, p. 245).

The social action approach means to help students acquire knowledge, values, and skills needed to participate in social change so that marginalized and excluded groups can become participants in U.S. society, and the nation will move closer to accomplishing its democratic ideals. Students must learn social criticism and understand the inconsistency between our ideals and social realities, the work required to close this gap, and how students can, as individuals and groups, influence the social and political systems in U.S. society to participate effectively in democratic social change. In this approach, teachers need to be agents of social change who promote democratic values and the empowerment of students (Banks, 2010, p. 245).

With the social action approach, educators allow students to decide and act on social issues important to them. To help students determine how to act and what to act on, Schlax worked to show students contemporary LGBTQIA issues in family, religion, media, education, and the law and mapped out paths for civic engagement. She assisted students in developing an

understanding of effective activism strategies, good ally practices, and ways in which identity—particularly that of LGBTQIA people—is conveyed. Schlax sought out activities that would establish the foundation for students' chosen actions. She explains "the complaining project," where students received the email addresses of San Francisco's board of supervisors and taught them how to speak up to spark change in various city programs by contacting these officials or other local leaders. Students also had the opportunity to write for the *San Francisco Bay Times*, a well-known LGBTQIA publication. Students could also participate in creating an annual LGBTQIA art gallery, working on such elements as aesthetics, organization, and promotion in the community (Moorhead, 2018).

Banks' Four Levels came as a response to what he called a "strong assimilationist ideology" amid U.S. educators who struggle to "think differently about how U.S. society and culture developed" (2010, p. 236). The tiers can be implemented in order of level or through a mixture. As Schlax suggests, educators including LGBTQIA content in their curriculum for the first time could begin with Banks' first tier and gradually move to the final one, or they may save the lower tiers for earlier grades and opt for the higher tiers in more advanced grades. Another option is to identify content areas (e.g., literature, history, or social studies) for piloting the higher-level approaches, which would allow for the gradual structural changes in curriculum and could precede full-scale implementation across a school or district (Moorhead, 2018). Educators could also consider where LGBTQIA content "most authentically appears in the curriculum" (Vecellio, 2012, p. 174) and implement Banks' approaches from there, meaning they could look for historical figures already included in the curriculum or state standards which were known or considered to have been LGBTQIA. This approach also applies to historical moments and court cases (Vecellio, 2012).

California has been proactive in providing legal ways to enact changes in education. It would be wise for the state of Michigan to observe and adopt California's efforts on its own path to becoming more equitable for its students and teachers. As the following chapters continue to examine the issue of LGBTQIA-inclusivity in K-12 education, I will discuss Michigan's status in the endeavor and highlight any gaps that may allow heteronormativity to perpetuate in the state's education system.

Chapter 3: Michigan: Where Are We Now?

California's new legislation is clear on its purpose for requiring LGBTQIA inclusivity that adheres to the state standards for social studies. While the state of Michigan has not developed legislation requiring LGBTQIA inclusivity in K-12 education subject, policymakers have recently begun to consider LGBTQIA well-being. In "Creating Safe Schools for Sexual Minority Youth," the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) reports the results of a 2013 survey on youth risk behavior. It was found that 8.7% of students identify as LGBTQIA or have participated in sexual activity with a member of the same sex. The survey shows that these students compared to others are three (3) times more likely to be threatened or injured with a weapon on school grounds, 2.7 times more likely to skip school because they did not feel safe, and 4.6 times more likely to attempt suicide. In response to these staggering numbers, the MDE launched a workshop in 2014-15 intended to help educators assess, understand, and improve school safety for all, especially those who identify as LGBTQIA. The workshop, called "A Silent Crisis: Creating Safe Schools for Sexual Minority Youth," was typically held at intermediate school districts, but open to educators of all types of schools. It was designed to help educators understand, assess, and improve school climate and safety for youth who identify as LGBTQIA. A higher-level workshop called "Planning for Action: Next Steps for Creating Safe Schools for Sexual Minority Youth" addressed more in-depth issues of gender identity, privilege, and supports for transgender and gender-expansive students. As of July of 2015, the MDE reports, 56 workshops had been implemented, with over 2100 participants across 314 Michigan school districts ("Creating Safe Schools").

In 2016, the MDE released the “State Board of Education Statement and Guidance on Safe and Supportive Learning Environments for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ) Students.” These guidelines suggest inclusive school policies and administrative guidelines regarding implementation that provide clear direction for school administrators, educators, staff, families, and students. Fulfilling this guideline would ensure that the entire school community has consistent expectations for what is considered appropriate conduct in school and at school-related activities. Because LGBTQIA students are disproportionately at risk of bullying, violence, truancy, substance use, homelessness, discipline treatment, and involvement with the juvenile justice system, the guidelines propose that schools collect and review data to identify disproportions that create obstacles to providing a safe and successful learning experience for LGBTQIA students. The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) includes a national school-based survey conducted by the Center for Disease Control, as well as individual state, territory, tribe, and community surveys conducted by smaller agencies. The most recent Michigan Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) reported results for 2017, which found that fewer than one in ten (8%) Michigan students attend a school with a bullying/harassment policy that protects them from harassment based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. Non-discrimination and other protective policies at the state and local levels, which help protect LGBTQIA student and family safety, are essential to improve the mental and physical well-being of all students.

The MDE also calls for professional development opportunities on issues affecting LGBTQIA students to district staff and board members and accessibility to appropriate and meaningful family engagement and support. The guidelines also require that schools support

extracurricular student-led clubs, such as Gay-Straight Alliances or Gender and Sexuality Alliances (GSAs) in middle and high schools (Michigan Department of Education, 2016).

The fifth and sixth guidelines are more directly related to LGBTQIA content in K-12 schools. Guideline five necessitates the encouragement of respect for the human and civil rights of all people, including those who are LGBTQIA, which should come from “incorporating LGBTQ topics throughout the educational culture of the school fosters an inclusive and safer environment for all students, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity” (“State Board of Education Statement,” p. 2). The sixth guideline requires that schools provide “age-appropriate information related to LGBTQ youth, local and national resources, and LGBTQ health information” (“State Board of Education Statement,” pp. 2-3) in their libraries and other resource centers. Libraries are also encouraged to include a selection of LGBTQIA books and media, and local policies and procedures should guide this selection. The final guidelines advise that schools designate a building-level staff to assume a leadership role in working with LGBTQIA students and their families. The staff member would also educate the school community regarding LGBTQIA topics, serve as the point person for issues related to sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression for the school, work closely with the district’s Title IX Coordinator, and be a liaison to MDE (Whiston, 2016, p. 4).

These critical endeavors by the state demonstrate policymakers’ recognition of schools’ abilities to intervene in/address issues of LGBTQIA youth. They are still, however, inadequate efforts. Also, while the guidelines suggest the possibility of creating more equitable school environments for LGBTQIA students and teachers, it is important to understand that the MDE’s document states explicitly, “These guidelines are *voluntary* [emphasis added] and should not be considered mandates or requirements” (“State Board of Education Statement,” p. 1).

Core Curriculum Standards for English Language Arts

Michigan and California have the same Core Curriculum State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts (ELA), so it can be deduced that their goal for student outcomes is the same. The Michigan State Board of Education adopted the current K-12 Standards for English Language Arts in 2010. To produce the CCSS for ELA, Michigan joined forces with other states to “to build on and refine current state standards that would allow states to work collaboratively to develop a repository of quality resources based on a common set of standards” (“Michigan k-12 standards,” p. 3). The CCSS for ELA only define what all students are expected to know and be able to do; they do not outline how teachers should teach. While the CCSS for ELA refers to some particular forms of content (i.e., foundation U.S. documents, works of mythology, and Shakespeare), the state acknowledges it cannot enumerate all of the content students can or should be taught. The document insists the CCSS must be complemented by a content-rich curriculum consistent with the specified expectations and that for ELA a great deal of the curriculum at the discretion of teachers.

The CCSS provide text samples—called text exemplars—for ELA that primarily serve to exemplify the level of complexity and quality with which the standards require all students in a given grade to engage. These texts mean to “serve as useful guideposts in helping educators select texts of similar complexity, quality, and range for their own classrooms,” but they “expressly do not represent a partial or complete reading list” (Common Core State Standards Initiative, n.d.b). Text complexity measurements include the consideration of qualitative and quantitative dimensions, as well as reader and task considerations. In “Text Complexity: A New Way Forward or Two Steps Back?” Sanden (2014) explains that the CCSS Appendix A provides tools for determining quantitative text components and outlines qualitative dimensions. Still,

there are no resources specific to reader and task considerations, “including such elements as motivation, knowledge, purpose, and experiences” (Sanden, 2014, p. 8). Sanden argues that the CCSS may cause teachers to feel increased pressure to use text exemplars that are guided explicitly by the complexity requirements rather than by student needs, which will deter them from choosing their own texts. However, it is important for teachers to provide access to texts that will support student motivation for reading in addition to the CCSS text exemplars. The CCSS for ELA explains it should be viewed as allowing for “the widest possible range of students to participate fully from the outset and as permitting appropriate accommodations to ensure maximum participation of students” (Common Core State Standards Initiative, n.d.a, p. 6). Teachers are supposedly welcome to include a variety of texts in their classrooms at their discretion. Sanden writes, “Assuring that reader considerations are taken into account in text selection requires insightful and skilled teachers who are tuned in to the individual needs and characteristics of each of their student readers” (2014, pp. 8-9). Yet, if the standards do not require specific text inclusivity for the exemplars, thus requiring teacher education programs to adhere to such inclusivity, the problem will persist.

With the language employed in the introduction to the CCSS, as well as within the ELA standards themselves, the state of Michigan announces its dedication to ensuring students are exposed to a range of voices and that the curriculum content is accessible to students of ranging abilities. The language in the CCSS, however, does not overtly state which diverse groups should be included in the curriculum. From the 31 texts (stories, drama, and poetry) listed in the CCSS for ELA, 12 are written by authors of color. Also, on this list, only Lorraine Hansberry and Oscar Wilde can be identified as queer beyond public speculation.

While the CCSS adhere to culturally responsive pedagogical requirements, they fall short of adhering to queer pedagogical requirements. The CCSS requires the inclusion of multiple diverse perspectives to increase the knowledge base of K-12 students, but the language does not identify gender or sexually diverse populations as perspectives that are required to be included in the curriculum. This gap allows educators to easily avoid LGBTQIA-inclusive texts if it is something they do not desire to teach, or if they are uncomfortable with teaching the content because of lack of training.

Chapter 4: Text Suggestions for an LGBTQIA-inclusive Curriculum

The Core Curriculum State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts (ELA) provide several text options in *Appendix B: Text Exemplars and Sample Performance Tasks* for Michigan’s K-12 educators to employ in their classrooms. This list of “Text Exemplars” also details which CCSS for ELA each text will fulfill. Especially for new teachers, the text exemplars can reduce the stress of integrating texts into the ELA classroom and eliminate the possibility of having to defend a text against potential censors. While this may be easier, it is not always better.

Most of the texts on the exemplar list are canonical—included in the list of books considered indispensable by the literary world—and there is often a tried and true way of teaching these texts that many educators fall back on. However, what has always been done does not equal what is best, and these common lessons often maintain heteronormativity in the classroom. To say that canonical texts should be eliminated from the text exemplar list would be rash; for many of the texts (which include books, poems, plays, short stories, and nonfiction pieces), instructional strategies exist that do not involve employing a heteronormative framework. Moving forward, it is important to consider different ways of teaching some of the most popular texts used in ELA classes.

Text Exemplar: *The Great Gatsby*

F. Scott Fitzgerald’s (1925) *The Great Gatsby* is listed as an 11th-CCR text exemplar. The text adheres to the following Reading Standards: RL.11-12.1, RL.11-12.2, RL.11-12.3, RL.11-12.4, RL.11-12.5, and RL.11-12.6. With the study of *The Great Gatsby*, students are expected to be able to cite thorough textual evidence to support analyses of what the text explicitly says, as

well as what inferences students drawn from the text. Students will also determine multiple themes of a text and analyze their progress over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex story. With this text exemplar, educators will be expected to teach students to analyze the impact of the author's choices concerning how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama, including how the action is ordered, and how the characters are developed. Additionally, students will determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text and assess the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone. Students will also examine structural elements of the text, such as how the author chooses where to begin or end a story, and the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution. With Fitzgerald's novel, students will also analyze elements such as satire, sarcasm, and irony, distinguishing what the text says implicitly compared to what it means explicitly. As Tyson (2006) states, "we couldn't ask for a more overtly heterosexual plot than that of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*" (p. 342). However, there may be more to the novel than meets the eye. In viewing the text from a different perspective, we will find opportunities to explore it in ways that will not exclusively employ a heterosexist framework of reading.

Queering The Great Gatsby

The relationship between Fitzgerald's (1925) narrator Nick Carraway and title character Gatsby has been scrutinized by queer theorists, as Bourne (2018) explains in "The Queering of Nick Carraway." A straight reading views Nick Carraway as a friend who assists Gatsby in his effort to rekindle his love with Daisy, a woman unhappily married to another man. This heterosexist point of view is most commonly taught in high school classrooms; it is a classic tale about doomed love and the American Dream. However, in a queer reading of the story, Nick is *in love* with Gatsby. When Gatsby wears a pink suit, Nick says, "I could think of nothing but the

luminosity of his pink suit under the moon” (Fitzgerald, 1925, p. 50). In “Will the Real Nick Carraway Please Come Out?” Tyson (2006) argues that this phrasing is similar to if “a desirable woman were being described” (p. 345). She calls this suit a queer sign but highlights that more notably, this scene offers the possibility of a queer character. Nick also mentions his appreciation of Gatsby’s “gorgeous” appearance and “romantic readiness” (Fitzgerald, 1925, p. 6), and explains that it feels “safe” for him to love Gatsby only after Gatsby’s death.

Tyson (2006) explores Nick’s with the love interest Jordan Baker. She argues that Jordan exhibits many lesbian signs, which might be why Nick is drawn to her in the first place. Jordan wants to appear straight: “[she] doesn’t want to be seen through. She doesn’t want to be thought to have a private life that ‘diverges’ from the code, so she dates men she can manipulate” (p. 346). Tyson highlights Nick’s reaction upon first meeting Jordan when he says, “She was a slender, small-breasted girl with an erect carriage which she accentuated by throwing her body backward at the shoulders like a young cadet” (Fitzgerald, 1925, p. 15). This use of masculine terms, coupled with the gender ambiguity of “Jordan Baker,” strikes Tyson (2006) as an indication of lesbian subtext.

These queer analysis examples of *The Great Gatsby* would likely be too advanced for an 11th or 12th-grade ELA classroom. More importantly, perhaps, these overtly-queer readings of the novel may not be welcome in the classroom and would require a strong rationale in defense of the teaching methods. However, the text presents several other ways to easily integrate non-heteronormative content into a curriculum unit on Fitzgerald’s acclaimed novel.

Michigan’s Recommendations for Teaching Gatsby

The “Michigan Merit Curriculum Course/Credit Requirements English Language Arts Grade 12,” developed by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE), identifies content

expectations and guidelines that provide a framework for developing curriculum, assessments, and relevant lessons for students (p. 2). The MDE provides a goal statement for this particular document:

The goal for English Language Arts 12 is to refine, apply, and extend the solid foundation of knowledge, skills, and strategies developed in English Language Arts 9 through 11. Using the lens of leadership skills, English Language Arts 12 students will develop a world perspective by analyzing classic and contemporary texts in a variety of genre, including post-colonial literature. Twelfth graders will synthesize information, ideas, and themes to understand the past, the present, and to think innovatively about the future. They will identify and apply their own leadership skills and prepare for responsible action as American citizens in the context of a global world. (“Michigan Merit Curriculum,” p. 3)

The unit framework aligns with the CCSS for ELA. As the document explains, the presented thematic units of instruction were designed by Michigan teachers (p. 6).

The American Dream. The specific instruction unit for Fitzgerald’s (1925) *The Great Gatsby* can be found in “Unit 12.3 Balance of Power: Leadership for the American Dream.” The themes of focus include “the qualities of leadership transcend class,” “the promise of America leaves no one out,” “upward mobility within America’s class structure depends on access to educational and economic opportunities,” “money should not be the only index of class distinctions,” great leaders can emerge from adversity, and “character counts” (“Michigan Merit Curriculum,” p. 42). One of the primary focuses of this learning unit includes “The American Dream.” Educators can introduce the topic of the American Dream in a way that questions the often heteronormative way of thinking associated with this ideal. When students imagine the

American Dream, who do they picture achieving it? Is the person a man? Did he find success at his place of work, moving up the ladder to a higher position with an increased salary? Is he married to a woman? Teachers can ask students what the dream means for a woman in the United States. Would it involve finding a husband and having children? What if a woman cannot bear children, or does not want to? Teachers can lead students in considering the “traditional” family versus the “non-traditional” family. What is the American Dream for an LGBTQIA person? It has only been four years since the United States Supreme Court granted the right to same-sex marriage. The year 2019 saw Mayor Pete Buttigieg as the first openly gay major presidential candidate, who managed to rise to the primary’s top tier (Epstein & Gabriel, 2020). *The Great Gatsby*, set during the summer of 1922, can present many opportunities to interrogate heteronormative gender roles and family ideals in ways that do not necessarily have to involve scrutinizing the sexuality of the characters like Tyson (2006) encourages. Still, this approach takes a central theme usually used to fulfill RL.11-12.2, but expands the discussion to include more diverse perspectives.

The MDE refers to *The Great Gatsby* as a social protest novel, which provides social commentary, uses characters to deliver a message of social change, and/or possesses a purpose to conjure social change. Many of the proposed lesson activities in some way involve an analysis of class roles presented in the book. The unit refers to the determinants of social class laid out by the unit, adapted from “A Paradigm for the Study of Social Strata” by James Cole (1965). The MDE lists several categories by which students could analyze class within the book: personal performance (education, occupation, income, awards, and achievements), wealth (both amount and source from which it is received), and social orientation, (interactions, class consciousness, and value orientation) (“Michigan Merit Curriculum,” p. 54). The “Unit 12.3” does not bring into

conversation love or relationships between the male and female characters. It is unclear if teachers are encouraged to discuss the female characters' access to income or education or how marriage plays a role in social orientation and personal performance. This gap would allow educators to disrupt the heteronormative way of thinking by merely debating a woman's ability to achieve upward mobility in the social classes.

Historical Perspectives. One unit activity presented by the MDE—a “critical perspective exercise”—asks students to examine Fitzgerald’s novel from a sociological, political, and/or historical perspective. This teaching unit mainly focuses on the Jazz Age, so a review of the text from a historical perspective would likely involve this theme. However, the text’s focus on the American Dream can also provide the opportunity to discuss LGBTQIA history in the United States, and Michigan in particular. According to Mallory, Brown, Freeman, et al.’s (2019) “The Impact of Stigma and Discrimination against LGBT People in Michigan,” the state began specifically targeting the LGBTQIA community in 1816 with the implementation of the sodomy law. It states, “Sodomy or that infamous crime against nature, committed with mankind or beast, shall be adjudged a high crime and misdemeanor and be punished by fine and solitary imprisonment at hard labour” for up to 21 years (Mallory, Brown, Freeman, et al., 2019). Michigan enacted the “gross indecency” statute in 1903, which initially criminalized any case where a “male person who in public or private commits or is a party to the commission of or procures or attempts to procure the commission by any male person of any act of gross indecency with another male person” (Mallory, Brown, Freeman, et al., 2019, p. 14). The law was revised in 1939 to include acts between two women or a man and woman (2019, p. 14). Even after the Wayne County Circuit Court determined these laws were unconstitutional in 1990, they continued to be enforced in many areas of the state because of the indistinct standards for

evaluating indecency. The sodomy law was abolished by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2003 on the grounds that banning private and consensual sexual acts between adults violated the constitution (p. 14-15). The following year, the Michigan public voted to ban same-sex marriage “to preserve the benefits of marriage for our society and for future generations of children” (Mallory, Brown, Freeman, et al., 2019, p. 15). Despite the ruling for marriage equality in all fifty states, Michigan law still defines marriage as an “inherently unique relationship between a man and a woman” (Mallory, Brown, Freeman, et al., 2019, p. 15). Reviewing the history of LGBTQIA discrimination in Michigan and the country as a whole would allow the students to formulate a clearer idea of how the American Dream operates for the diverse populations of the United States.

If Michigan required the teaching of important LGBTQIA historical and social movements, the 1920s, in particular, would be a thought-provoking era to discuss. Teachers can facilitate activities to explore the social standing of queer men and women in the 1920s. As the NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project details in the *Historic Context Statement for LGBT History in New York City*, the setting of Fitzgerald’s novel was considered a hub of LGBTQIA activity and representation in the 1920s. The Greenwich Village and Harlem neighborhoods of Manhattan are noted for large populations of LGBTQIA people, though the specific histories of each area vary due to the differing racial demographics of the neighborhoods. After World War I, the LGBTQIA community of Greenwich Village began to develop their own spaces for interaction, such as Webster Hall, where the lesbian and gay community-sponsored their own events. Harlem, Manhattan’s major African American neighborhood, consisted of the only places where New York’s African American LGBTQIA residents could patronize commercial establishments. The historical setting of *The Great Gatsby* offers educators the chance to introduce the increasing

visibility of the LGBTQIA community in the 20th century in an organic way and would fulfill the RL.11-12.3 in a more equitable way for LGBTQIA students and teachers.

Integrating Queer Young Adult Literature

While the use of canonical fiction is often encouraged for the ELA classroom, as emphasized by the text exemplars, students' connection to classroom literature often increases when educators offer young adult (YA) texts (Hays, 2016). Often, Hays states in "Using Young Adult (YA) Literature in a Classroom," educators avoid using YA literature for the fear that it is not "literary enough," resulting from an over-emphasis on text complexity (2016, p. 57).

However, as Gibbons et al. (2006) have found, many English teachers believe YA literature offers a sophisticated reading option for addressing curriculum standards, designing a relevant curriculum, and engaging young readers in texts that provide fruitful and relatable discussions. Additionally, Olan and Richmond (2016) explain that if YA texts were to be used in methods courses, pre-service teachers could make meaningful, culturally responsive connections with such texts and with their students. The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) (2018) endorses YA literature for its ability to "raise preservice teachers' awareness of the power of these books to affirm lived experience, create empathy, catalyze conversations, and respect the questions, challenges, and emotion of childhood and adolescence" ("Preparing Teachers with Knowledge").

The selection of queer YA literary texts has steadily increased over the years from texts that propagate stereotypes of LGBTQIA identity and characters "doomed to either a premature death or a life of despair lived at the darkest margins of society" to texts that portray queer characters as "people of various ages, cultures, incomes, perspectives, as the friends, family, neighbors, and mentors who are part of the social web of connectedness that teens of all sexual

orientations navigate on a daily basis” (Logan et al., 2014, p. 31). A YA text, the NCTE (2018) argues, has the potential to spark personal and social transformation, and this can be especially true of a queer YA text (“Preparing Teachers with Knowledge”). A logical step forward in establishing LGBTQIA equity in the classroom includes integrating queer YA literature into the curriculum.

A Queer Young Adult Literature Text Suggestion: The Miseducation of Cameron Post

Emily Danforth’s (2013) *The Miseducation of Cameron Post* follows the story of Cameron, a young lesbian girl who experiences immense and debilitating loss at the same time confusing facets of her identity emerge. The text, which takes place in rural Montana, highlights the realities of homophobia. Danforth’s novel is endorsed for classroom integration by the NCTE: “...it holds important messages for our students; the teen characters face up to important issues and sort them out; and the book is well written, well-reviewed, award-winning, and pertinent” (Davis, 2018).

The article “This Text is Right for Kids. Why’s It Not Right for Some Adults” written for the NCTE by Davis (2018), reminds readers of the possibility of censorship even when students say a text has been significant for their learning experience. *The Miseducation of Cameron Post* was removed from the Cape Henlopen Schools in Delaware’s summer reading list in 2014. The NCTE fought alongside the National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC) to denounce this move. As reported by O’Neil (2014) for the NCAC, the official reason for the removal was based claims of the text’s “obscenity.” During the meetings for debating the removal, censors highlighted passages that featured swearing, underage drinking, and smoking in an attempt to illustrate the novel as the “perfect manual for corrupting teens” (O’Neil, 2014). As a reminder, for a claim of obscenity to stand, censors must also prove that the text “lack[s] serious literary,

artistic, political, or scientific value” (NCAC, 2017, p. 6). Davis explains that while calling a book “important” is certainly a compliment, it is equally imperative to emphasize the text’s literary quality. In developing a text rationale, Davis’ advice is important to keep in mind as educators integrate LGBTQIA-inclusive texts. Davis doubles down on the novel’s importance and encourages educators and parents to consider it despite its “controversial” content.

The Miseducation of Cameron Post would be a practical choice to fulfil the 11th- and 12th-grade CCSS ELA requirements. Like *The Great Gatsby*, the text fulfills the RL.11-12.1, RL.11-12.2, RL.11-12.3, and RL.11-12.5 standards. In addition, the novel was adapted into an award-winning film in 2018. This presents the opportunity to evaluate multiple interpretations of the story by considering how the text is interpreted, which could fulfill the RL.11-12.7 standard.

In “Gay and Lesbian Literature in the Classroom: Can Gay Themes Overcome Heteronormativity?,” Sanders and Mathis (2013) discuss the need for LGBTQIA text that are *saturated* with LGBTQIA themes. Using such texts can combat heteronormativity because the themes are inextricable from the text; they cannot simply be ignored during a classroom discussion, because if they were, the entire structure of the text would not be adequately addressed (p. 15). To come to this conclusion, the authors reviewed six LGBTQIA texts, all of which won the 2010 Stonewall Book Award for the children and YA literature category. Through close readings and analyses of the texts, Sanders and Mathis extricated the common themes that saturated the texts to the point that they could not be glossed over. The authors identified “Coming Out,” “Tolerance and Acceptance,” “Homophobia,” and “Decisions Related to LGBT Issues” as central themes specific to the YA texts (p. 10). Danforth’s (2013) *The Miseducation of Cameron Post* also possesses these four themes in a way that shapes its structure and demands to be addressed and explored by readers.

Coming Out. The process of sharing one’s sexual and/or gender identity with friends and family, as well as with one’s broader community, is a critical and potentially life-altering process. Throughout history, many LGBTQIA people were closeted for most—or all—of their lives, and if and when they did come out, they often suffered for it. Sanders and Mathis (2013) refer to the novel *Vast Fields of Ordinary* by Nick Burd, which features a queer character whose main focus throughout much of the text is on his coming out process. The coming out process was not merely a plot point; it moved the story. In the novel’s very end, the character comes out to his college roommate. A teacher could not offer this text in the course curriculum without addressing the character’s experience with the coming out process (Sanders & Mathis, 2013, p. 11).

In Danforth’s (2013) novel, Cameron’s own experience with coming out is inseparable from the novel. Cameron is unceremoniously outed by Coley Taylor, the girl she loves. When Cameron is outed, her conservative Aunt Ruth sends her away to God’s Promise, a boarding school that specializes in “curing” children of their gayness. These “schools” are also known as LGBTQIA conversion camps, which the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (2019) defines as the practice of counseling and/or psychotherapeutic interventions to change one’s gender identity or sexual orientation. In teaching this novel, an educator would not be able to ignore the issue of coming out as it directly affects Cameron’s story and character development.

Tolerance and Acceptance. As Sanders and Mathis (2013) describe, *Vast Fields of Ordinary*’s central character faces intolerance from his parents and the process of receiving their acceptance takes up much of the story. His parents become angry and cry when their son reveals his sexual identity, and the book details their awkward encounters with their son’s new boyfriend. As the story goes on, though, the character does receive their acceptance. Sanders and

Mathis explain that *Vast's* queer character is “consumed with those in [his] environment tolerating or accepting [him] and [his] sexuality” (p. 12). He is an outcast in grade school, but when he moves on to college, he is able to find an ally in his new roommate. This fight for tolerance and acceptance is a major conflict of the text that requires exploration as part of understanding the text as a whole (Sanders & Mathis, 2013, p. 12).

Danforth's (2013) character also struggles to find tolerance and acceptance from the other characters in the text. The novel begins with the death of Cameron's parents just as she's beginning to explore her sexuality. Cameron's idea of queerness at her young age is clear: “...even though no one had ever told me, specifically, not to kiss a girl before, nobody had to. It was guys and girls who kissed—in our grade, on TV, in the movies, in the world; and that's how it worked: guys and girls. Anything else was weird” (Danforth, 2013, p. 12). As a young girl, this correlation is incredibly damaging; she believes her queerness was the reason for her parents' accident. After she is orphaned, her mother's sister comes to live with her. Cameron never got the chance to come out to her parents, and Aunt Ruth makes it clear that Cameron will not receive her acceptance. However, the novel does more than discuss issues of family acceptance; the story also comments on the practice of conversion therapy. The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (2019) explains that while historical conversion therapy interventions were physically dangerous, including methods such as shock therapy and lobotomies, current practices typically involve hypnosis, behavior and cognitive taught therapies, and conformity training. Even though these practices are not as extreme, they still subject patients to severe psychological risks, and they are generally ineffective. The Williams Institute at the University of California estimates that nearly 698,000 LGBTQIA Americans between the ages of 18 and 59 have been

subject to conversion therapy at some point in their lives, and roughly 350,000 received such treatment in their adolescence (Mallory, Brown, Conron, 2019).

In Danforth's (2013) novel, the God's Promise conversion camp is a religious institution, which reflects the reality of many LGBTQIA individuals. The content of the novel would allow students to interrogate the role of religious institutions, along with other social institutions, in forming identity and seeking acceptance. Thankfully, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (2019) reports that as of 2014, the American Associate of Christian Counselors changed the language in its Code of Ethics. Rather than promoting the practice of conversion therapy, it recognizes that these therapies are harmful. Despite this, approximately 57,000 13- to 17-year-olds across the U.S. will likely receive conversion therapy through religious advisors by the time they turn 18 (American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, 2019, p. 1-2). How are individuals supposed to learn to love themselves if they face intolerance from such large, influential establishments? Students can consider how this compounds the experiences adolescents face as they begin to grow into themselves.

Homophobia. Unsurprisingly, homophobia is a reoccurring theme in all the books analyzed by Sanders and Mathis (2013). The main character in *Vast Fields of Ordinary* regularly deals with negative comments about his sexuality, most often from his classmates (Sanders & Mathis, 2013, p. 12). In "Scenes of violence and sex in recent award-winning LGBT-themed YA novels and the ideologies they offer their readers," Clark and Blackburn (2016) argue for the inclusion of a diverse array of LGBTQIA characters in schools. This is partially so that straight-identifying students can engage with LGBTQIA characters and their worlds, but also to challenge students to consider what it means to be LGBTQIA, allied, or homophobic (p. 867). Clark and Blackburn specifically discuss internalized homophobia and inward violence presented

in *The Miseducation of Cameron Post*, which they claim is an essential facet of the LGBTQIA identity and experience that needs to be explored in K-12 education.

While at God's Promise, Cameron meets fellow resident Mark Turner. She considers him the "poster boy for a Christian upbringing" (Danforth, 2013, p. 364). However, as Clark and Blackburn (2016) discuss, Mark struggles with his father's and the camp leader's homophobia, as well as his own internalized homophobia. When psychologist Lydia Marsh leads a group support session, Mark shares a letter in which he is told that he cannot go home yet because his father still believes Mark is "very feminine and weak" and says he "cannot have this weakness in [his] home. It sends the message to the congregation that [he approves] of it when [he does] not" (Danforth, 2013, p. 366). Mark is unable to deal with this, and he collapses to the floor, sobbing, "I can't, I can't do it" (p. 369). Later after the meeting, Cameron's friend Adam finds Mark in his dorm room, having cut his genitals several times and poured bleach over the injuries, and he rushes to get him help (Danforth, 2013, p. 380). Clark and Blackburn (2016) explain that these scenes display complex executions of internalized homophobia, as well as the horrendous, self-directed violence that often results when that self-hatred is met with extreme homophobia instead of acceptance and love. Mark's story shows how easy it can be to internalize that homophobia, considering the intensely homophobic messages one may receive from friends, family, and even strangers. In other words, Clark and Blackburn clarify, we cannot simply blame the person experiencing the violence for the results of that internalized homophobia (p. 877). When students read Danforth's (2013) novel and experience Mark's story, they will see how an outside force—in the form of a friend, classmate, or family member—that teaches heteronormativity as the only acceptable expression of gender and sexuality exacerbates the negative experiences of an LGBTQIA person in often violence, irreparable ways.

Decisions Related to LGBTQIA Issues. While it is a non-LGBTQIA individual who makes the decision to accept or tolerate an LGBTQIA individual, LGBTQIA people must deal with that straight individual's decision. They must also decide how to deal with the prejudice and harassment that comes from homophobia: will they confront it or ignore it? When it comes to coming out about one's sexual identity, an LGBTQIA person must decide if, when, and how this will happen, as well as to whom they want to come out (Sanders & Mathis, 2013, p. 13). As Sanders and Mathis explain, these issues can be intensified by a lack of resources and support, and LGBTQIA people from poor and rural communities are especially disadvantaged "in obtaining resources, finding allies, and integrating into school culture" (2013, p. 13). The Movement Advancement Project's (MAP) study "Where We Call Home: LGBT People in Rural American" (2019) describes more of the dangers that come with living in a rural community as an LGBTQIA person, including increased visibility. MAP defines "rural" as geographically isolated with relatively small population centers, and these communities may be historically rooted in agricultural lands. Because there are fewer people populating rural communities, any difference is more noticeable (2019, p. 3). In Danforth's (2013) novel, Cameron seeks to understand her queer identity in the rural Montana town of Miles City. MAP (2019) reports that roughly one in five Americans live in rural areas, and national surveys of rural areas show that between 3% and 5% of the adult population in rural areas identify as LGBTQIA. In the state of Michigan, 18% of residents, which equals to about 1,798,939 people, live in rural areas (*Rural Health Information Hub*, 2018). MAP also speculates that rural areas may actually have more LGBTQIA youth than adults because young people are more likely to identify as LGBTQIA. They cite the *Gallup Daily* tracking survey of millennials born in 1980-1999, which showed that 8.2% identify as LGBTQIA (2019, p. 5-8).

According to MAP, parents with an LGBTQIA child in a rural community may not be able to access the necessary information or resources to make an informed decision about their child or to fully accept them. This lack of accurate information about the LGBTQIA community can also lead to community intolerance. Additionally, as LGBTQIA children grow up, they are at a disadvantage when it comes to social and physical development stages; they do not have the same support that straight adolescents might receive from family and the public school system (MAP, 2019).

Students will likely be able to reflect on how their community shapes their identities, but unless they identify as LGBTQIA or know someone who does, the extensive issues that something as simple as location can cause for the LGBTQIA community may not be something they have considered. Teaching a novel like *The Miseducation of Cameron Post* in a rural, urban, or suburban environment can help improve the school experience of teachers and students. As Greathouse et al. (2018) write in *Queer Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the English Language Arts*, “Queer fiction does not exist in a vacuum; it reflects the changing realities of life in the real world” (p. 5). Through a reading of Danforth’s (2013) novel, teachers can show students how our reality has changed, that it will continue to change, and show how important it is to develop an accepting community for their LGBTQIA peers.

Relating to All Students

The Miseducation of Cameron Post consists of several themes especially relevant important to the LGBTQIA community. While reading such content would certainly benefit straight-identifying students, it does not mean that this text lacks relatable topics for the straight community. A non-LGBTQIA reader will find that many of Cameron’s experiences she faces are grounded in the many struggles all adolescents endure.

A major theme of the text is identity and the search for one's identity. Cameron goes through many phases during her search for identity: rebelling, abandoning the search for the self, and then returning to the search. Many readers will identify with this journey of self-discovery and relate to the struggles Cameron faces while trying to locate an authentic identity. Another relatable theme presented in the text is loss. The loss of a loved one—and a resulting loss of innocence—are consistently significant throughout the text after the death of Cameron's parents. Readers of all demographics would likely relate to the notion of physical or emotional loss. These losses help Cameron define her identity and have a lasting effect on the person she becomes.

The novel also focuses on the idea of *truth* and what that means to each of us individually. Danforth (2013) deals with the subject of sexual *truth* and personal identity in a sensitive and thoughtful manner that is also grounded in realism. For teenagers who cannot relate to the sexuality component of the text, this reading experience will offer them a chance to see the unique struggles and issues queer teenagers face, and it may make them more empathetic toward their peers. Finally, Cameron's perceived difference may also speak to students who are *othered* in some way, whether racially, economically, physically, or religiously. Cameron's struggle to fit in and eventually embrace her differences provides a moving lesson about seeking and sharing one's *truth*. These themes are perhaps even more significant to teenagers than to any other group of readers. As the text follows Cameron from age 11 to 17, young adult readers will undoubtedly relate to Cameron's experiences and emotions.

More than Inclusion

Combating heteronormativity requires more than offering an LGBTQIA-inclusive text. Sanders and Mathis (2013) discuss an educator who taught the novel *Stitches*, which features a

main character who is bullied for being gay. When this teacher's pedagogical methods were investigated, it was discovered that class activities and discussions focused on the issue of bullying, not the root of the problem: homophobia. Because of this, stereotypes about the LGBTQIA community were reinforced as the proper context was not provided for discussing the character's queer identity or the issue of homophobia. This choice perpetuated heteronormativity even though a gay character was included in the classroom literature. Discussion of texts with queer characters *must* also include talking about queer themes. The authors suggest that oftentimes, an educator will include a gay character in order to "solve" homophobia, but they assert that adding literature with an LGBTQIA theme or character to classroom reading is not enough. The pedagogy an educator employs must include ways of discovering how heteronormativity has taught the LGBTQIA characters that they are not part of the norm.

As Sanders and Mathis remind us, literature plays an active role in identity formation. If diverse texts are not included in the classroom to help students understand identity—their own and those of the text's characters—the inclusion of the diverse text is only "surface-level inclusion" (Sanders & Mathis, 2013, p. 5). When pedagogical training necessary for proper integration of LGBTQIA-inclusive texts is not provided for educators, the inclusion of these texts will likely serve to reinforce heteronormative frameworks of thinking. Because of this silence regarding LGBTQIA themes and characters, the probability of students' stigmatization of homosexuality and discomfort in discussing such topics will increase (Sanders & Mathis, 2013, p. 5). One cannot skip the process of learning *how* to effectively teach an LGBTQIA-inclusive text in favor of incorporating the text in the classroom just to cover one's bases. However, the responsibility does not all fall on the educators. To ensure proper integration, adequately

represent the LGBTQIA community, and successfully serve our students, the state of Michigan must do its part to require inclusion in its education system.

Chapter 5: Transforming Pre-service Education Requirements

While their goal for student outcomes is the same, the methods used and the rationale behind Michigan and California's goals are different. The "why" relates to the state's legislation, and it has been established that California's "why" is to make education more equitable for LGBTQIA populations while also increasing education and promoting tolerance to those who do not identify within the LGBTQIA spectrum. The state of California has also demonstrated its willingness to address the "how" in establishing equity for LGBTQIA students and educators by revising its pre-service education requirements for K-12 teachers.

The National Council of Teachers of English Position Statement

The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) calls for improved training of teachers, meaningful connections to culturally and linguistically diverse students, and culturally responsive assessments that capture the literacy practices diverse students bring to the classroom (NCTE, 1986). In 1986, the NCTE's Task Force on Racism and Bias in the Teaching of English prepared the position statement "Expanding Opportunities: Academic Success for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students." This statement promoted an asset-based approach to supporting the success of diverse students. Specifically, the statement highlighted effective teaching strategies to help the academic success of diverse learners, and it provided suggestions to improve curriculum development, pedagogy, and policy. In 2018, English educators Price-Dennis and Alvarez updated the 1986 statement to provide recommendations that reflect the field's evolved understandings of how to support diverse learners.

NCTE Suggestions for Teacher Preparation and Professional Development

The NCTE’s position statement explains that reflection on practice is central to pedagogy in diverse contexts. Price-Dennis and Alvarez (2018) assert that teachers must approach students’ abilities to use all their languages in creative and critical ways. Teachers engaging with communities they are not members of must be humble and become students themselves as they build commitment and trust with those communities. To create classroom success, teachers should develop and extend neighborhood networks beyond their schools. Teacher preparation programs, Price-Dennis and Alvarez emphasize, should provide sustained volunteer opportunities in the community in service-learning, field-based courses, or advocacy-based roles. They also necessitate continued professional development opportunities to build on methods for creating culturally responsive and inclusive classrooms (Price-Dennis & Alvarez, 2018).

California’s New Pre-service Education Standards

In February of 2020, the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing published the *Preliminary Multiple Subject and Single Subject Credential Preconditions, Program Standards, and Teaching Performance Expectations*. The “Teaching Performance Expectations” (TPEs) encompass the body of knowledge and skills beginning general education teachers have the opportunity to learn in approved teacher preparation programs in California. These expectations, aligned with California’s Standards for the Teaching Profession, “[signal] to beginning teachers, preparers of beginning teachers, and those who support and mentor teachers in their first years of employment the importance of connecting initial teacher preparation with ongoing support and development of teaching practice in the induction years and beyond” (California Commission, 2020, p. 13).

Embracing Student Identities and Emotions

The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing's revised expectations includes information on "Subject-Specific Pedagogical Skills for Multiple Subject Teaching Assignments" for the teaching of English Language Arts. The document explains that beginning teachers must understand the socioeconomic, linguistic, and cultural background, funds of knowledge, and achievement expectations of students, families, and the community. They will then use these understandings, not only within the instructional process, but also to establish positive relationships inside and outside of the classroom (California Commission, 2020, p. 15). Beginning teachers, the document states, are also capable of using available community resources, prior student experiences, and applied learning activities to make instruction individually and culturally relevant. By doing so, teachers assure the active and equitable participation of all students (p. 16). Emphasis on culturally responsiveness and relevancy continues throughout the teacher expectations (Gay, 2000, 2010). Teachers must be able to create a learning atmosphere that promotes productive student learning, encourages positive interactions among students, reflects multiple diverse perspectives, and are culturally responsive. These learning environments must also be physically, mentally, and emotionally healthy to enable all students to learn, recognize, and appropriately address instances of intolerance and harassment among students, such as bullying, racism, and sexism (California Commission, 2020, p. 17).

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) recognizes social and emotional learning (SEL) as the process of developing students' and adults' social and emotional competencies needed to make successful life choices (McVeagh-Lally et al., 2018, p. 5). California participated in the CASEL Collaborating States Initiative, which involved

representatives from over 20 school systems in California. This State Team helped to curate comprehensive resources for implementing SEL, compiled into the “Social and Emotional Learning in California: A Guide to Resources. The California Department of Education.” The document introduction states, “Weaving together social, emotional, and academic development create high-quality learning environments in schools and classrooms...[where] children can confidently do their best work because they interact with a cooperative and welcoming community of learners” (McVeagh-Lally et al., 2018, p. 5). The state of California implemented essential ideas from this initiative in developing their new pre-service education requirements. Now, the standards require teachers to understand that students’ development varies across age ranges, that it is influenced by social, cultural, linguistic, and other contexts, and that these factors influence each other in complex ways (California Commission, 2020, p. 25). They must also inclusively support students’ mental, social, emotional, and physical health needs by promoting a safe classroom environment where students feel a sense of belonging. Teachers need to understand the ways that students’ learning and development are influenced by the interaction between their ranging environmental and cultural experiences that they bring to the classroom; however, teachers must also recognize that in addition to these experiences, students may be affected by negative or traumatic childhood experiences, mental health issues, and social-emotional and physical health needs (p. 17).

Additionally, teachers should exhibit positive dispositions of caring, support, acceptance, and fairness toward all students and families, as well as toward their colleagues. The standards also say teachers need to be aware of their implicit and explicit biases. They must understand the potential impact, positive or negative, on their expectations for and relationships with students, families, and colleagues (California Commission, 2020, pp. 23-24). Beyond acknowledging their

own biases, teachers must be able to ask questions and structure academic instruction to help students recognize their implicit and explicit bias and subjectivity in historical actors. Teachers should create classroom environments that support the discussion of sensitive issues (e.g., social, cultural, religious, race, sexuality, and gender issues) and encourage students to reflect on and share their insights and values while acknowledging other viewpoints (California Commission, 2020, p. 40). The use of fiction in the K-12 classroom will help educators encourage this student reflection. Alsup (2017) argues that reading fiction can increase young readers' capability to identify and empathize with others, think critically, and engage in philanthropic behavior. Reading fiction can also stimulate brain activity parallel to that of a real-world experience, and it can result in increased incidences of "prosocial" behavior. Additionally, reading literary fiction can encourage ethical decision making, increase inference-making abilities, and increase students' valuing of diversity (Alsup, 2017, p. 38).

California's new pre-service education expectations acknowledge a wide variety of issues teachers must consider in their class, and they indeed open the door for LGBTQIA consideration and inclusion in the classroom; the same could be said for their Common Core Curriculum standards also adopted by Michigan. However, California takes it a step further with its pre-service education expectations by using language specifically referencing the community:

Beginning teachers articulate and practice the profession's code of ethics and professional standards of practice, and they uphold relevant laws and policies, including but not limited to those related to: ...education and rights of all stakeholders, including students with disabilities, English learners, and those who identify as LGBTQ+; ... and students' acts of intolerance and harassment such as bullying, racism, and sexism. (California Commission, 2020, p. 24)

As required by the document, teachers must also be familiar with issues of equity and justice within the contexts and structures of public education (California Commission, 2020, p. 24). The state of California made great strides by requiring the inclusion of LGBTQIA information in social studies courses, and they have continued to fill the gaps in the K-12 curriculum by demanding that the preparation of educators also be more inclusive of issues that reach beyond heteronormative academic structures.

Michigan’s Proposed Pre-service Education Standards

This February of 2020, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) released the *Standards for the Preparation of Teachers in Professional Knowledge and Skills in Middle Grades (5-9) and High School (7-12)*. These revised standards come after the November 13th, 2018, State Board of Education adoption of new “Standards for the Preparation of Teachers of Lower Elementary (PK-3) and Upper Elementary (3-6) Education.” The MDE shared the draft language with stakeholders—including experts in adolescent learning and development and professional teacher preparation, English language arts content and instruction, and mathematics content and instruction—for feedback at annual conferences of the Michigan Reading Association, Michigan Council of Teachers of English, and the Michigan Council of Teachers of Mathematics. The Board solicited additional feedback from selected stakeholders representing K-12 schools and districts, intermediate school districts, college and university teacher education programs, the education research community, and teacher and administrator professional organizations. Now, Michigan educators will have the opportunity to review the new standards before the State Board of Education vote on June 9th, 2020.

In the introduction to the standards, the MDE states that a central goal of this structure is the more in-depth preparation of teachers to meet the unique learning, developmental, and socio-

emotional needs of children at each grade level. It also states that in response to feedback from educators around the state, “each of these sets of standards has a deep focus on equity, shifting the vision of a well-prepared beginning teacher at the secondary level from an emphasis on decontextualized content knowledge and toward an emphasis on classroom practices that address the diverse social, emotional, developmental, and learning needs of the whole child” (Michigan Department of Education, 2020a, p. 2). This new emphasis on equity by educators, combined with the calls for culturally responsive pedagogy and social justice teaching, provides the momentum from which to propel the movement to develop an LGBTQIA-inclusive curriculum.

Responding to the Diverse Student Body

Much like California’s teacher requirements, Michigan necessitates educators’ ability to recognize and respond appropriately to the multiple influences on adolescent development, including but not limited to cultural, linguistic, religious, gendered, historical, economic, and social-emotional contexts throughout all aspects of teaching and learning. In the proposed standards, it states that teachers must be able to provide interactions with socially, culturally, and linguistically diverse texts. They should also include self-selected reading and writing materials with a variety of text complexity (e.g., through school and classroom libraries, mentor texts, digital resources) in their classrooms, which can increase student interest levels. Selected instructional materials—classic and contemporary, print and non-print texts, including young adult—need to represent a range of world literatures, cultural and historical traditions, genres, and the experiences of a variety of genders, ethnicities, and social classes (Michigan Department

of Education, 2020b, pp. 2-3). Well-prepared teachers of English language arts will also be able to:

(a) Use knowledge of theories and research about social justice, diversity, equity, student identities, and schools as institutions to enhance students' opportunities to learn in English language arts; (b) Create learning experiences responsive to students' local, national and international histories, individual identities (e.g., race, ethnicity, *gender expression* [emphasis added], age, appearance, ability, spiritual belief, *sexual orientation* [emphasis added], socioeconomic status, community environment), and languages/dialects as they affect students' opportunities to learn in ELA. (Michigan Department of Education, 2020b, p. 2)

The proposed standards specify that teachers must be able to “identify factors that contribute to challenges to developing English language arts proficiencies (e.g., linguistic, cognitive, neurodevelopmental, social, cultural, behavioral, identity), adjust instructional contexts and practices to address challenges, and connect students with appropriate strategies, resources, and assistive technologies” (Michigan Department of Education, 2020b, p. 4). In the adolescent stage, individuals are questioning and looking for their way of being in their world. As a social institution, schools have a direct effect on a student's identity. Johnston (2004) says that students are “developing personal and social identities” (p. 22) in addition to their literacy skills. In order for students to create positive identities, and to see their cultural identities as positive, schools must provide opportunities for students to tell positive stories about themselves and seek support when their attempts are unsuccessful, which will help them to develop agency and self-efficacy (Johnston, 2004). As Rosenblatt (1995) describes, readers bring all of their experiences and emotions with them when they read: “...the reader infuses intellectual and

emotional meanings into the pattern of verbal symbols, and those symbols channel thoughts and feelings” (p. 24.) Reading is an act of relating to oneself and to others. Michigan’s proposed standards acknowledge how students’ identities can affect their English language arts proficiencies, which is an important aspect of culturally responsive pedagogy.

The standards also necessitate teachers’ acknowledgment of the diversity of individual and group identities, particularly those whose learning experiences and needs are different from their own, including both individual differences (e.g., personality, interests, learning modalities, life experiences), and group differences (e.g., race, ethnicity, ability, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, nationality, language, religion, political affiliation, socioeconomic background) and use these in designing instruction to validate and build productive identities (Michigan Department of Education, 2020b, pp. 5-6). Teachers must also have an understanding of literature as oral, written, enacted, and visual texts that reflect diverse cultures, values, traditions, and perspectives, including but not limited to books written for children and young adults (e.g., fiction, nonfiction, multimodal texts) (Michigan Department of Education, 2020b, p. 10). Additionally, it’s vital that they have an “awareness of the power of literature to affirm lived experience, create empathy, catalyze conversations, and respect the questions, challenges, and emotions of childhood and adolescence” (Michigan Department of Education, 2020b, p. 10). Just as California embraced the concept of social-emotional learning, Michigan also promotes the “universal approach” of SEL (“Social-Emotional Learning”). In their ELA courses, teachers should model good appropriate social and emotional skills, demonstrate care and respect for their students, and pay attention and respond to student needs. The MDE reports: “...students in SEL interventions increased in social-emotional skills, attitudes towards self and others, academic achievement...and decreased in conduct problems and emotional distress.” Additionally, such

students gained 11 percentile points in test scores, consistent across grade levels, location, and school type (schools serving culturally diverse student populations) (“Social-Emotional Learning”).

The standards require that teachers have diverse knowledge of contemporary and classic literature relevant for secondary students in ELA classrooms and appropriate for different developmental levels and student needs, including multicultural/world literature. Interestingly, the revised standards also specifically request teachers’ familiarity with literature by women and literature for young adults (Michigan Department of Education, 2020b, p. 11). With these inclusions, the language opens up the possibility of including other non-heteronormative gender representations. These new requirements may require educators to pursue texts outside of the current text exemplar list, as the selection of literature by women and for young adults is not as abundant as the more canonical text selections. As educators choose new young adult literature to incorporate in their classes, we see the opportunity to include LGBTQIA-inclusive texts more seamlessly. In the young adult literature genre, there is not as much division between LGBTQIA-inclusive themes and themes presented in heteronormative texts. For example, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky (1999) is categorized as a young adult coming-of-age novel. The novel’s narrator, Charlie, follows the traditional characterization of a protagonist in the young adult genre: he is a complex, heterosexual, fifteen-year-old trying to understand who he is. Along the way, he discovers that his new friend, Patrick, is gay. Through Charlie’s position as the main character, *Perks* appears typical for heteronormative texts in the YA genre. However, Charlie’s role goes far beyond the expectations of a straight narrator. Unlike many of the other novels in its era, Charlie is completely accepting and supportive from the moment he uncovers Patrick’s sexuality. In the era of which *Perks* was created, most straight narrators highlighted the

inner-struggle of the protagonist to accept a queer friend. Charlie shines above the heteronormative protagonist for his steadfast support of his friend even in times of hardship (Chbosky, 1999). The LGBTQIA themes in a young adult novel integrate seamlessly in this story told by a straight narrator. Even though finding and integrating an LGBTQIA text is much easier than an educator might have previously assumed, the new language of the standards does not specifically reference LGBTQIA-inclusive texts, so a gap remains.

Like California's, a selection of these proposed Michigan teacher education standards address injustice and inequality. Teachers must address the impact of curriculum, policies, processes, and practices on the education of all adolescents, with particular attention to historically underserved communities and social identity groups through culturally responsive curriculum, instruction, and advocacy (Michigan Department of Education, 2020b, p. 3). The standards also require teachers' capability to guide students in applying literary theory to critically analyze print and non-print texts to identify themes, patterns, and biases that perpetuate or challenge stereotypes, injustices, and inequalities. The standards encourage teachers' involvement in making their students more politically aware by requesting that they connect teaching and learning to social, political, and cultural contexts in ways that support students' growth of critical consciousness. Teachers should be able to connect to teaching young adult literature in ways that honor literary quality as well as the potential to spark personal and social transformation. The state also wants educators to advocate for diversity, inclusion, justice, and equity in English language arts classrooms, curricula, and instruction and within the school and district at large (p. 11).

Rationales for Text Selections

The Michigan Common Core Curriculum State Standards for English Language Arts provide flexibility for educators in choosing their classroom texts so long as they abide by the text standards. Because of this, educators have the option to include texts involving LGBTQIA characters or themes, but this is currently not mandatory. As explained in the MDE document, teachers must be able to prepare rationales for the selection and employment of literature and other texts to present to students, parents, and other stakeholders and to respond to potential challenges (Michigan Department of Education, 2020b, p. 11). The NCTE guide “How to Write a Rationale” developed by Brown (1994) was meant to help educators develop defenses for their textual choices. The text stresses, “Problems can be averted by carefully analyzing the audience (the students), the school, and the community and taking into full account the most effective means for meeting students’ interests and educational needs” (Brown, 1994, pg. 1). As the proposed teaching standards emphasize the need for truly understanding one’s school and community, it is expected that teachers will be prepared to tailor their rationale for their audience. One of the guidelines for writing a rationale requires teachers to consider “what problems of style, tone, or theme or possible grounds for censorship exist in the book?” (Brown, 1994, pg. 2). While research shows the benefit of materials for children and adolescents that reflect a variety of identities, as well as family situations, teachers may still find pushback against LGBTQIA-inclusive texts.

As explained by the National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC) (2019), pushback against an LGBTQIA-inclusive text often involves the citing of religious beliefs; however, while the First Amendment protects religious freedom, it also prevents public officials from making decisions based on religious beliefs. Another reason for pushback involves discomfort with

sexual portrayals. The advocates for this particular form of censorship argue that referring to sexual preference is itself sexually suggestive and inappropriate for school children. As the NCTE (2014) explains, “Age-appropriateness alone is never sufficient reason to include particular materials in the English language arts program.” When evaluating age-appropriateness, the courts consider the value of the material as a whole and relevance to educational objectives against the possibility of a negative impact on students. If the material serves a legitimate pedagogical purpose, courts consider it age-appropriate.”

In the “NCAC’s Book Censorship Action Kit” (2017), the Coalition explains that books on sex and sexuality are First Amendment-protected speech unless they are obscene. To be considered obscene, a text has to be “patently offensive,” “appeal to the prurient interest,” and “lack serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.” The NCAC (2019) provides resources for teachers to prepare them to identify how their chosen text is necessary to include in their class. In one suggestion for defending LGBTQIA books, the Coalition suggests carefully reviewing the school district’s and school board’s website for procedures on the selection and review of controversial materials. School policies should prevent officials from removing or restricting content without a committee review of its educational merits. As the Coalition asserts, a text should never be restricted simply because someone considers it inappropriate. Educators can help protect themselves against pushback by choosing teaching materials that align with the school or district’s general philosophy, the curriculum objectives of the ELA program, and the learning outcomes of the particular course or grade level (NCTE, 2014). This can defend them against any claim that their text choice is obscene, as they will be able to demonstrate literary, artistic, political, or scientific value to counter the claim.

Unfortunately, the need to rationalize text selection can act as a deterrent for educators considering implementing LGBTQIA texts in their classrooms. While Michigan's ELA standards provide the flexibility for educators to incorporate different texts of their choice in their classroom, not all teachers will jump at the chance to integrate LGBTQIA-inclusive texts. Michelle Page's "From Awareness to Action: Teacher Attitude and Implementation of LGBT-Inclusive Curriculum in the English Arts Classroom" (2017) details the results of a survey that was intended to determine Minnesota secondary ELA teachers' comfort levels with incorporating LGBTQIA young adult literature in their classrooms. While 52.6% of the teachers said they would be comfortable using such literature, only 23.7% of respondents reported that they actually do integrate LGBTQIA-inclusive literature in their classes (p. 4). In "Breaking Down the Last Taboo," Renzi and Steffel (2009) report their findings based on their study consisting of pre-service education students. The authors note that these students are mostly middle-class white females who identify as heterosexual (Renzi & Steffel, 2009, p. 31). The majority of students expressed their comfort with reading texts consisting of LGBTQIA themes or characters and with speaking to LGBTQIA people directly. However, when they were asked to consider having discussions on these topics in their classroom, with family members, or even with strangers, the students expressed discomfort. Renzi and Steffel report that nearly 40% of the surveyed pre-service education students indicated that they would not be comfortable incorporating discussions or lessons on LGBTQIA topics and themes in their own classes (p. 33). Discomfort is a strong enough deterrent to halt change. If the state of Michigan does not require LGBTQIA-inclusive texts, thereby requiring training in teaching those texts, Michigan educators cannot be expected to include such texts on their own volition.

Michigan Teacher Preparation Programs

Unlike California, the standards for Michigan teachers do not explicitly name an educator’s ability to address implicit and explicit bias—both their own and their students’—as a responsibility. Additionally, while the proposed standards are more culturally responsive, Michigan’s still do not require LGBTQIA inclusivity, unlike California’s new education preparation standards. According to the MDE *ProPrep* website, the state of Michigan has 35 educator preparation programs. The University of Michigan, which is one of the two largest public universities in the state (the other being Michigan State), offers many courses that would help prepare Michigan educators to accommodate diverse populations of students. The course *Education Policy in a Multicultural Society* focuses on the U.S. public school system with an emphasis on equity and access (“Courses and Syllabi”). The class involves the examination of mandates and legislative texts, policies, data on school improvement, other resources designed for the improvement of schools, as well as personal pre-service education student experiences. Students search for assumptions about teaching and learning and their improvement, evaluating the “key levers” for improvement that they provide, and inferring implications for the design and valuation of change. This course prepares students to “write and speak about educational policy persuasively,” which could certainly serve them in their efforts to write text selection rationales in their own classrooms. The University of Michigan also offers *Learning for Social Change*, which explores the relationships among power, learning, and education, in addition to investigating the design of learning environments that promote empowerment and/or social change. The program’s *Equity in Everyday Practice* course offering focuses on communicating with diverse individuals and audiences, listening across difference, supporting learning in diverse domains, assessing learning and impact, giving feedback, designing and leading meetings, using

artifacts and texts, and attuning the work to participants' experiences and identities. The University of Michigan provides many opportunities for pre-service teacher students to develop an arsenal of skills, priming them for catering to their diverse students. The university consisted of over 30,000 undergraduate students in 2018; in the same year, the university accepted 23% of applicants, or one in four applicants ("University of Michigan"). Compared to other educational institutions in Michigan, the University of Michigan is one of the more competitive universities for applicants.

Unlike the University of Michigan, Baker College offers an open admission policy and accepts all or most applicants who have a high school diploma or GED ("Baker College"). Baker College is "Michigan's largest independent, not-for-profit college" ("Get to Know Us"), serving about 16,000 students at their eight campus locations ("Michigan"). Classes in their pre-service education program—which only "gained preliminary approval" in 2002 ("History")—can be taken at several campus locations, and many classes are also offered online. The secondary education program requires *Introduction to Professional Education Experiences*, which involves a review of "the realities of the teaching profession," the structure and operation of schools, as well as the current education issues and trends. The course *Instructional Design Assessment* provides an "emphasis on teaching and learning for all students" (Baker College, "Curriculum"). However, none of the education courses listed have any language involving or similar to *diversity*. Although, as a general education requirement, Baker students must take *Cultural Diversity*, meant to increase student knowledge, sensitivity, and personal awareness. This course focuses on "Sociological (as well as psychological, historical, economic, and anthropological) perspectives [as] applied to concepts such as prejudice, stereotyping, discrimination, racial and ethnic identity, racial formation, power and privilege, assimilation and

pluralism, and tolerance” (“Curriculum”). The program also requires the English curriculum course *Language and Culture*, which discusses linguistic variation to cultural and social identity, multilingualism, expressive speech, language for sociopolitical uses, language learning and preservation, as well as censorship. This course could potentially help prepare educators for their text rationales. Baker education students are required to sign an acknowledgment form, which contains the following policy: “Ability to effectively communicate in English, both verbally and in writing, using accurate and appropriate terminology with classmates, faculty, and individuals of all ages, races, genders, and socioeconomic, and cultural backgrounds” (“Acknowledgment Form”). While we cannot assume Baker College’s program does not offer similar courses to the University of Michigan’s program simply because they do not display in-depth course descriptions, state requirements for LGBTQIA-inclusivity in K-12 ELA courses would help to dissipate the air of mystery surrounding program expectations.

Because the state of California has made specific requirements for pre-service education that establish LGBTQIA inclusion, teacher preparation programs must offer classes that adhere to these requirements. For example, California State University of Sacramento offers *Gender Perspectives on Schooling, Past-Present* in which students examine gender dynamics in schools, analyzing theories of education in order to understand the role of gender in schools, past and present. The course also explores ideas and pedagogies associated with gay and lesbian theory, masculinity studies, and anti-oppressive education. In *Foundational Issues in a Pluralistic Society*, students are required to examine their own attitudes regarding gender, sexuality, race, language and ability to develop a multicultural teaching philosophy (Sacramento State University). Michigan has established many preliminary elements of change for LGBTQIA-inclusivity in K-12 education. However, because Michigan does not currently have LGBTQIA-

inclusive pre-service education requirements, teacher education programs are not required to offer classes that guide future educators in creating LGBTQIA-inclusive classrooms. Examining the teacher education courses at the University of Michigan and Baker College reveals what is needed to move the state toward changes that other states like California have already made that promote socially just and culturally responsive teaching.

Conclusion

It is the year 2020—two decades into the 21st century—and it is time we see a sufficient push for LGBTQIA equity in the state of Michigan. For the November 2020 ballot, a coalition of leaders in civil rights, business, and politics is launching an initiative to expand Michigan law by including anti-discrimination protections for gay and transgender residents. The petition submitted to state election officials would expand the definition of “sex” in the Michigan Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act of 1976 to include “sexual orientation” and “gender identity or expression” (Oosting, 2020). This revision would guarantee safeguards in housing, public accommodation, and employment for the LGBTQIA community. Current Michigan law prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, national origin, color, religion, age, sex, height, weight, familial or marital status, but if this new initiative is enacted, Michigan will join the 21 other states with laws that explicitly prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity (Oosting, 2020). This progressive shift in Michigan’s societal climate will be a great step, but for greater systematic change, the state will certainly need to do more overall, including making changes in K-12 curricula and teacher education programs.

Literature majorly impacts the development of society, shaping civilizations, changing political systems, and exposing injustices. Literature gives us a preview of human experiences, allowing us to connect on basic levels of desire and emotion. Providing LGBTQIA-inclusive texts in schools, and revising the way we teach canonical texts to eliminate the possibility of maintaining heterosexist frameworks, will help to bridge the gap between the LGBTQIA community and normative society. Discussions about LGBTQIA issues and textual themes can be challenging to begin and facilitate in classrooms. However, educators need to challenge

students to read and discuss literature that realistically portrays lives that may differ from their own and to understand the challenges faced by LGBTQIA youth. Also, LGBTQIA students require texts and classroom lessons that validate their experiences.

Texts that discuss sexual orientation, gender expression and identity, and LGBTQIA history and cultural experiences have been condemned as immoral and perhaps damaging to young readers. While it is now known that inclusive school programs and curriculum improve the quality of life for LGBTQIA students and educators, some people have a difficult time dealing with LGBTQIA issues being discussed in young adult texts or K-12 classrooms. As a result, while there has been an increase of LGBTQIA-oriented young adult literature, teachers remain fearful of challenges to this material in some districts. According to Renzi and Steffel (2009), 80% of prospective teachers report negative attitudes toward gay and lesbian people, 77% would not encourage a class discussion on homosexuality, and 85% oppose integrating gay/lesbian themes into their existing curricula (p. 29). Regardless of this pushback, sexual orientation is a significant issue in contemporary life, and cannot be ignored due to discomfort and intolerance.

In the fight to establish equitable spaces for K-12 students and teachers, culturally responsive pedagogy and queer pedagogy are inextricably linked. In order to sufficiently teach to and through students' experiences, we must consider all experiences. Building off of multicultural education and culturally responsive frameworks, we can begin to incorporate the queer pedagogical framework in our education system. These frameworks can then help transform pre-service education standards and prepare educators to handle LGBTQIA-inclusive content and themes accurately and respectfully.

When we start doing the work with our youth, we can make sure the community sees LGBTQIA individuals, and that they also see themselves in the literature they study. We have a long way to go, but with Michigan's proposed teacher education standards, we see the potential for real change. As the movement finds momentum, we can hope to achieve a true understanding of, and empathy for, the LGBTQIA community and the establishment of equity and self-efficacy for LGBTQIA students and educators in Michigan.

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