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I Had to Do the Reading: A Phenomenological Case Study of College English Students

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A PHENOMENOLOGICAL CASE STUDY OF COLLEGE ENGLISH STUDENTS

by

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ABSTRACT

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The purposes of this qualitative phenomenological case study were to investigate multiple student experiences in a general elective *introduction to literature* course when music was added as an autonomously structured assignment. Music and song lyrics are no strangers to the classroom setting, but there is a gap in the literature examining the space where students can create meaningful links between music they enjoy and assigned course readings in college English. Informed by social constructivism and English studies theories this study was designed to investigate any impact that autonomously driven music-link assignments may have on students. The structured assignments were called music-link assignments. The music-link assignments were designed to encourage student criticality while interacting with an assigned reading and locating a link to a song of their choosing. Study documents included semi-structured and informal interviews, artifacts including music-link assignments that include an experiential portion for student reflection, and reflections taken in class during small group class discussions. Data and findings from this study indicated that many students cited positive affects in their experience, a greater feeling of agency in the class, and relatability to the assigned readings. Also, some students noted difficulty in completing the assignments. Overall, this study demonstrates the need for further research in combining facets of popular culture, such as music, in different content areas, and settings.

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, friends, and pets
whose support made my success possible.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I started teaching at a small private school for students with learning differences. A

lasting impression from working there was that the need for differentiation is essential. I

wondered if college students would benefit from curriculum assignment differentiation, and that

was the question I set out to answer in this study. Differentiating assessments for two classes of

thirty-six college students proved to be overwhelming, and I began to ponder the creation of

original assignments, not those that are a Google search away. After reading the textbook

prearranged by the university, it became apparent that if I wanted original work from my

students I would need to think of a unique assignment.

Origin of the Study

One of the problems I noticed in using the specific question and response sections from

the book was that the answers had been posted online. This became apparent after students

turned in identical answers about the reading, and then as discussion began it also became

evident that very few students could discuss the readings beyond the answers they found online.

I had a problem with this, because I wanted to encourage students to spend a significant amount

of time with the readings. Also, I could not guarantee that their answers or thoughtful reflections

would be their own. At its essence, I wanted to see if I could create an assignment that would

allow students the experience of doing the reading and using their own critical thinking skills to

complete their work.

On the first day of class while I am introducing myself, I often share different genres of

music I listen to in order to provide insight into who I am. Bettina Love, a hip-hop in education

researcher, is unremorseful when she describes her love of hip-hop, including songs with

scandalous lyrics. A quote I find myself using year after year is, "Just keep in mind that I was listening to Tupac and Biggie when they were still alive," that usually gets a nod of respect from a few students. I feel the same way as Love; if the beat is good, I am probably already nodding my head along no matter what is being said; and I am unremorseful in the music I share with my students.

The outline of my role as the researcher for this study is a product of the sum of my nine years' experience teaching. My favorite class to teach is the *introduction to literature* course. These classes are a general education credit requirement for all students at the large urban university where this study was conducted. A hope that most of my students have at least one fond memory of an English class, regardless of their major, is an underlying value that is essential to my teaching.

I prefer and enjoy the challenge of teaching non-English major students because they do not intend to take more literature courses. Every semester I take a poll on the first day of class and each time I am surprised by the small number of hands that go up referencing the question, "How many of you agree that you have enjoyed a literature class in the past?' Most students do not raise their hands to say that they have enjoyed literature. While I enjoy the challenge of exciting non-literature lovers, the possibility of reaching these students through the music-link assignments felt like opening a new chapter in my life as an English teacher.

Each day, walking across campus I noticed a commonality across all demographics: all types of students were traversing campus wearing either headphones or earbuds. I recall riding an elevator with a student whose headphones were on high volume; I enjoyed three brief floors of great beats. Keeping my desire to encourage students' critical thinking in mind, I began to slowly incorporate music into class discussions of literature and noticed I garnered some

students' attention that had evaded my instruction in the past. I wondered then if there was something a bit more structured, a way to uncover the experiences of students when music was incorporated as a graded assignment. When the idea of music-links occurred to me, I wondered if that style of assignment had been researched in college English education; I was surprised to find that this was a specific assignment experience that had not yet been investigated. It then occurred to me that the music-link assignments may be one avenue to investigate putting theory into practice in my own classroom. And from that, the research questions and design of the study formed. Further pondering about the music-link assignments led to the thought that the assignments should also be autonomous song selections. This aspect of the design of the study would serve as a liberating encouragement of agency of the individuals experience with the music-link assignments.

Positionality

Introduction to literature courses are a general education credit requirement for all students at this large urban university; many of whom are non-English majors. I prefer and enjoy the challenge that teaching non-English major students who do not intend to take more literature courses because they do not or have not enjoyed literature in the past. I like to remind my students of the power of words no matter their form or presentation; student participants are able to choose how a song relates to an assigned course reading. It would be unwise to assume to create English majors in this class; it would however be wise to link something students like to something they must complete to graduate. A fond memory of an English class is an underlying value that is essential to my teaching and researching; one cannot make someone love something, but one can attempt to create a moment of fun bonding between a 21st century student to a 19th century poem.

Purpose of the Study

In this study, students experienced literature and music in a manner that has not yet been studied. What sets this study apart from the rest is its disruption of the formalities of English class assignments and the utilization of autonomy in completing assignments. McComiskey (2006) observed that assignments in general elective college English class have been stagnant. Students find that regardless of level of study, read and report are standards that have been around since the beginning of English classes (Miller, 2010). My research questions are focused on discerning the experiences of college students when music-links are added as a curricular feature in an introductory literature course. In addition to the overall experiential question, personal relevance and the level of personal achievement students perceived after completing the assignments were investigated.

Research Questions

The purpose of this research is to learn about the lived experiences of a group of college students in a general education *introduction to literature* class when music is added to the curriculum assignments. The following research questions guide the study:

1. What are the lived experiences of college students in an *introduction to literature* course when music is a curricular assignment feature?

2. What are student perceptions of their achievement with the addition of music-link assignments in this course?

3. What are student experiences finding personal relevance to the course readings when music-link assignments are required curriculum assignments?

These questions were created in order to glean the experiential process students had while completing their music-link assignments. It was determined that from a phenomenological

stance investigating these questions would provide data for examining different facets of student experiences.

Theoretical Framework

The equanimity of the social constructivist framework guided this study. Social constructivism is sometimes referred to as interpretivism (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Mertens 2015). This style of framework implies that the researcher will apply a subjective lens in the interpretation of the data, and this was noticeable in the planning and execution of the study. Jerome Bruner and Lev Vygotsky are the founders of social constructivism being used in respects to learning. Bruner and Vygotsky argued that for students to construct meaning out of learning objectives students will initially use their individual experiences to bolster their connection to the learning goals (Anderson, 1998). In this light, learning cannot be separated from the constructs that students bring with them into the learning environment, which also links to the postmodernist perspective that individuals will always construct their own meanings and perceptions. Dewey, Bruner and Vygotsky, agree that an educational setting should be one of democratic thought and give and take between the educator and the students (Miller, 2010).

This study was inspired by the idea of studying the phenomenon of the way students autonomously construct meaning between any facet of the assigned course readings and the songs they choose to link with them. The constructivist underpinnings of the study also guided the choice to use autonomous song selection. The assignments were constructed individually and could be completed correctly in any number of ways by connecting music to the readings. Hansen (2008) highlights the importance of the creative structures of assignments created by the teacher to foster interest and engagement (p. 13).

Jacques Derrida's thoughts and theories on the study of literature were also used as guides in this study. Derrida believed that in order to find meaning in a piece of writing one must deconstruct it (Miller, 2010). Deconstructionism is a manner of evaluating a piece of writing and dissecting it from both the formalities within the words and structure, but also the plausible and multiple meanings behind choices made in the writing and in the content (Miller, 2010).

Paulo Freire supported the use of critical perceptions and constructs in the study of English and in the world around us. Freire may be best known for his work Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970). As it pertains to this study, the encouragement to be critical of the world in order to cultivate an open exchange of ideas, the creation of agency within the choice of songs, and the respect to share their ideas openly were seen. Freire's deconstructive notions about the construction of ideas and empowerment are important in the field of criticality and education.

Critical pedagogy theory, culturally relevant pedagogical theory, and popular culture pedagogical theory were also guiding theories for this study. The work of researchers such as Morrell, Love, Duncan-Andrade, Ladson-Billings will be discussed in respect to their pedagogical fields. Within the constructs of critical pedagogy, a portion is idealistically socially constructive at its base. The idea that teachers should anticipate and prepare for students who are bringing not only their backgrounds but also their critiques of the world around them, is certainly a constructivist base. A critical pedagogical instructor also someone who believes that teachers and students should learn from each other and expand their thoughts beyond the scope of the viewpoints they arrived with (Giroux, 2016). From the concept of a critical pedagogy came the notion of a culturally relevant pedagogy. Gloria Ladson-Billings is the theorist who first dubbed the phrase 'culturally relevant pedagogy' (Ladson-Billings, 1995). She argues that an attempt at teaching and learning devoid of any context or connection to the lives of students outside the

learning environment is lacking (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Ernest Morell is a renowned researcher in popular culture pedagogy. Popular culture pedagogy stemmed from culturally relevant pedagogy, and it is the acceptance of the necessity of a culturally relevant dialogue in addition to the adherence of the use of popular culture to provide contexts and manners of learning that are contemporary to the learners. Morrell (2002) highlights the necessity of popular culture pedagogy in the increasingly diverse student populations in schools today; it can provide a means to aid a student in locating the relevance of their learning and the application of the concepts in their daily lives. What critical pedagogy, culturally relevant pedagogy, and pop culture pedagogy have intrinsically in common is that they are constructivist concepts. In each of these theories, students and teachers are constructing meaning in their learning using what is provided in the learning environment in addition to the ideas and ideals they had before they began.

Methodology

Data was collected via documents, small group interviews, and researcher reflections and reactions. The methodology for the planned study was a phenomenological analysis. Participants from two introductory literature classes completed music-link assignments, small groups were interviewed, and researcher reflections and reactions were noted. The researcher will design the collection of data utilizing a constructivist lens (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Regarding the design of the research questions, John Creswell and Cheryl Poth (2018) state, "In terms of practice, the questions become broad and general so that the participants can construct the meaning of a situation, a meaning typically forged in discussions or interactions with other persons" (p. 24). Moustakas (1994) proffered that social constructivism as a framework lends itself to

phenomenological inquiry in the base assumption that the researcher will be interpreting, and/or constructing, the meaning of the experiences of study participants.

Significance of Study

The autonomy granted to students in the study documents creates a researchable niche of adding music to English curriculums that can be duplicated. The results from this study indicate that this is an area worthy of further study. The number of times that students linked the same song with the same reading was not frequent. And the way students made the links; setting, characters, dialogue, descriptions and others, from the readings to their song of choice was also frequently different rather than similar. One of the meaningful statements that I heard from students in both classes during the study was that this form of assessment, "Made me do the reading." While observing and writing reaction notes some students expressed that they could not complete the music-link assignments if they had not done the reading. Participants also expressed that when they found a song that they felt linked to the reading they were pleased with their efforts. Some participants noted that for the first time, they enjoyed doing an assignment for a college literature class. Although it was entirely possible that students said these phrases to placate me, I prefer to imagine that they enjoyed just one moment of a literature course assignment.

A complete example of a music link assignment may help as an overview of these ideas. Below is a complete example from a participant's music-link to the short story The Yellow Wallpaper by Charlotte Perkins Gilman. This story is about a female main character who was locked in a room for her mental health which leads to her feeling trapped and then her ensuing insanity. In the end it is the loss of her grasp with reality that sets her free. The participant explains:

I chose to link "Bird Set Free," by Sia because in this story the woman is trapped by her husband. She has no say in what she's going through and at the end of the story she sets herself free. This song is about being set free, like a bird. No more holding back or holding in what you wanna say, like the woman in the story realizes. The following quote from the song illustrates how the main character felt after she ripped yellow wallpaper off the walls But, like the song the character is in a manner, set free and liberated. She felt like she had a voice now and her husband couldn't control her anymore. "Now I fly, hit the high notes I have a voice, I have a voice, hear me tonight. You held me down. But I fought back loud, oh." The following quote from the reading explains how the woman realizes her freedom. This was after she tears the wallpaper off to see that the woman behind the wallpaper was a representation of herself. Now that she has ripped the paper that woman, herself, is free. "I don't like to look at the windows even-there are so many of those creeping women, and they creep so fast. I wonder if they all come out of that wallpaper as I did?" My experience completing this music-link assignment was very interesting because this story and song are very powerful to me. It is also very relevant to women not only back in history but today as well because there are still women in society and other countries who feel trapped by men. So this assignment was very enlightening and very heartfelt.

This was a thorough example of a music-link assignment response. This participant completed each step necessary and added extra information too.

An excerpt, from a piece of Giroux's (2016) anecdotal writing for a magazine, Monthly Review, eloquently and succinctly posits a birds-eye-view of the philosophical foundation underlying this study:

One of the most serious challenges facing teachers... is the task of developing a discourse of both critique and possibility. This means developing languages and pedagogical practices that connect reading the word with reading the world and doing so in ways that enhance the capacities of young people as critical agents and engaged citizens. In taking up this project, educators and others should attempt to create the conditions that give students the opportunity to become autonomous actors who have the knowledge and courage to struggle in order to make desolation and cynicism unconvincing and hope practical. (Giroux, 2016)

This quote serves to emphasize the importance of the decision to make the song choices for the music-link assignments autonomous. To capture the experiences of students interacting with the music-link assignments it was necessary to provide them with a sense of agency through autonomous selection. This was necessary so that some form of experiential relationship could be deemed between the literature and the song, as well as possibly adding a point of relevance to the assignments and students' experiences and/or lives. There are many ways that one could approach adding popular culture to their classrooms. Music was the easiest choice for me because of the impact music has on my daily life. A phenomenological case study was the best research design for me to explore the experiences of college English students and what happened when music was added to the curriculum.

Summary

This chapter detailed the place, purpose, significance, and research questions for this study. I also noted how I developed the idea, questions, structure, collection of data. Chapter two, will address previous research in a review of the literature. Later in Chapter three, I will discuss the theories that informed my theoretical framework and the ways that I utilized them for

this study. Chapter four will enumerate the methodologies used to perform this study. Chapter five will provide findings gleaned from data analysis. Finally, Chapter six will summarize my findings and note further research ideas.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter one set the stage for the study and provided information about its background. Chapter two will illuminate the areas of English studies and Education research in which this study finds its niche. An exploration of the research being done using music in the classroom, and the noticeable lack of studies being done that are akin to this study are highlighted. One element that differentiates this study from other research into how music may be a benefit to students was the autonomous song choice. I did not bring in lyrics to analyze as literature, and I did not bring in music to prove its veracity against the themes and lessons found within assigned readings. I asked the participants to find their own links to specific portions of their course readings and a song of their choosing. Bringing music into the classroom in this non-traditional manner set the stage for this study.

I do not remember where I heard the quote, but I know it was during the Trayvon Martin scandal, (paraphrased) "As a teacher I always knew to get my students ready for the world, but now I wonder who is getting the world ready for my students?" That quote resonated deeply with me when I first heard it driving to work in the morning on NPR. I could not help but agree and wonder about this myself. In my own way, college literature is a chance for me to plant and sow seeds of greatness in my students. By pulling back the blinds of high school, being raw, gritty, and passionate about life, music, literature I try to support my students' self-empowerment so that they are ready for the world and the world can be ready for them.

Literature Class Norms

Since the first literature classes were created in colleges, students have been doing the

same things in literature classes from high school into college; reading, reflecting and analyzing pieces of literature (Miller, 2010). The out-of-class assignments for a general education (GE) literature course are also based on the same constructs of literature courses from a century ago; students still write responses, write papers, collaborate on group work, and in modern times students might use various technologies in support of their responses, critiques, and analyses. It is not surprising then, that when some students attend the first days of GE literature classes they think they know what to expect. Aside from new authors and new plausible uses of technology for presentations, most students have "been there, done that," in their traditional high school English settings (Duncan-Andrade and Morrell, 2000). I wondered if music as a single facet of popular culture has a similar impact on student experiences with learning, and course-content relevancy?

History of English Studies

In the final quarter of the 19th century, American colleges and universities borrowed an idea from universities in Europe when they opened literature and language departments (Graff, 1987; McComiskey, 2006). The field of English studies began to slowly emerge from these departments, but it was not a linear emergence. The field split apart almost instantaneously, and then continued to branch out and become the field of English studies that exists today.

In its earliest appearances, English consisted of, "the practice of oratory, the study of rhetoric and grammar, the composition of poetry, and the appreciation of literature," as long as the literature was written by English authors, from England (McComiskey, 2006, p. 7). The diversification of English into sub-disciplines did not fortify English studies as a field, rather it served to weaken and diversify it to a precarious distance from its original foundation (Yood, 2003; Kliebard, 2004; McComiskey, 2006; Miller, 2010).

Without a true hierarchy, or slightly unifying theme, the department of "English," came to be known within colleges and universities as "English studies" in order to accommodate its untenable associations across the myriad disciplines that now fell under the larger English studies umbrella (Yood, 2003; Miller, 2010). McComiskey (2006) notes, "The vitriolic tone of the debates had returned with a vengeance, especially in English studies, with conflicts among literature and composition and English education, linguistics and literary criticism, critical theory and creative writing occurring with too much regularity" (p. 14-15). The sub-disciplines of English studies have yet to agree on a synchronous definition for their all-encompassing English ideals, and the debate over what constitutes 'English studies' rages on (Miller, 2010).

English is a field that is deeply rooted in traditions that stem from the beginning of communication and now reach out and extend through topics in computers, video games, and music (Graff, 1992; McComiskey, 2006). For the purpose of providing much needed focus to this examination, 'English studies,' will be narrowed to its' sub-discipline, literature, or 'literature studies'.

History of Literature Studies

The study of literature came to the forefront of English studies because of two historical events unfolding at the same time in American history. World War I ended, and Americans began evaluating their lives and their educations differently, and at the same time, the secession of the speech communication discipline from English departments left the structure of English departments unsettled (Yood, 2003; McComiskey, 2006; Miller, 2010). Eagleton (1987) described the mindset of Americans during the era after World War I to be akin to that of war-torn Britain (p. 26). Suddenly, people found themselves searching for deeper meaning in life through varying forms of artistic expression, especially the art of literature (Eagleton, 1987).

Pride in citizenry and a deeply felt need to explore what it meant to be an American, gave rise to

the narrowing of the literature discipline in colleges and universities to celebrate the works of

fellow patriots (McComiskey, 2006). This was a new way to approach, read, evaluate, and

discuss literature in an almost desperate search for deeper meanings or greater truths.

Miller (2010) and McComiskey (2006) wrote about a transcendent awakening of words

and ideas that had previously lay dormant on the printed page waiting for this time, waiting to be

discovered, discussed, and explored. A surge of interest would remain the status quo for years to

come for many of the humanities departments that, like literature, experienced an increase in

interest after World War I. It was not until the end of World War II, that there was another

academic power shift at the college and university level. When World War II ended the

American government encouraged colleges and universities to expand their science and

development programs in lieu of the celebrated humanities of the past. Hough (1964) jokingly

wrote about the power sieve away from the humanities; "the humanities do not make anything

explode or travel faster, and the powers that be at present are not much interested in anything

else" (McComiskey, 2006, p. 96). Although rather amusing, the all too real bottom-line of the

push towards the scientific meant that funds that once were promised to departments in the

humanities were now headed to departments that embraced new scientific inquiry and sound

research practices (Miller, 2010; McComiskey, 2006).

New Criticism

An attempt to answer the government's call for greater scientific inquiry was made by

English studies in what came to be known as "New Criticism" (McComiskey, 2006). The New

Critics believed in a method of close reading; that literature and writing could be broken down

into quantifiable, and generalizable sections (McComiskey, 2006; Miller, 2010). With this new

scientific approach to English, the New Critics all but directly asked for inclusion into the new scientific inquiry bastions that shut the humanities departments out. Not surprisingly, this new idealist form of inquiry for English did not last long, and the spotlight focus shifted in English departments to the canon of literature; biases within departments and the world at large (Yood, 2003; McComiskey, 2006, Miller, 2010). Although the shift was subtle, the impact on English departments six decades after the New Critics fell asunder, had a ripple effect that is still undulating into mainstream society today.

Music as Literature

In 2016, a renowned global committee answered the question: Are song lyrics literature? Writers for the New York Times, Sisario, Alter, and Chan (2016) explain:

> Mr. Dylan, 75, is the first musician to win the award, and his selection on Thursday is perhaps the most radical choice in a history stretching back to 1901. In choosing a popular musician for the literary world's highest honor (*The Nobel Prize*) the Swedish Academy, which awards the prize, dramatically redefined the boundaries of literature, setting off a debate about whether song lyrics have the same artistic value as poetry or novels. (New York Times Online, 2016)

This gift that the Nobel Prize committee gave to literature teachers around the world in stating that lyrics are literature is an endless one. It opened doors to use lyrics more frequently in the instruction of English.

One of the most impactful and resonating influences within the arts sector in the last few years has created a foundation for further discussion on the ways that music might be influential in educational forums. This influence was the brainchild of Lin-Manuel Miranda, and its single word title, *Hamilton* (NPR). This Broadway musical play tells the story of Alexander Hamilton,

and the distinguishing feature of this play is that the music and dancing were styled using R&B and Hip-Hop. *Hamilton*'s success has been demonstrated in places that are nothing like box-offices or Tony awards press releases. As detailed in an article by National Public Radio (NPR) on *Hamilton*:

> It's also become a popular teaching tool in America's classrooms. With funding from the Rockefeller Foundation and a curriculum developed by the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, 20,000 New York City high school juniors are not only getting to see the hottest show in town for 10 dollars a ticket — a "Hamilton" — they're also taking a deep dive into American history. Gilder Lehrman has provided a website with primary source documents, and the students spend a month researching and coming up with their own creative responses to the material; they write songs, raps, poems and scenes. Representatives from each participating high school then get to perform onstage at the Richard Rodgers Theatre before seeing a matinee performance of *Hamilton* on the very same stage. (NPR Online, 2016)

Although Miranda may not have realized the multiple educational opportunities when he began writing *Hamilton*, he likely sees the scope of the influence of his work today. Miranda's *Hamilton* and its myriad applications in educational settings is a perfect example of the successful utilization of popular culture in traditional educational settings. Its noted positive reception among students leaves me wondering what students' experiences are when their professors begin adding facets of popular culture as features in their curriculum (New York Times, 2016).

Dylan and Miranda provided the world with new ways to explore the relationships

between music and education, and education with popular culture. Hip-hop music has also been

a noticeable addition to the world of education research.

Music and Popular Culture in Education Research

Ever since the wonderful days that popular culture, especially hip-hop, began appearing

in classrooms across America English scholars have disagreed about the value, function, and

plausible purposes of hip-hop in education. High school English teacher and researcher Lauren

Leigh Kelly (2013) believes that hip-hop deserves its own course so that it can be presented,

discussed, and evaluated because hip-hop can be, "poetic, valuable, instructional, and cultural

texts, worthy of academic study" (p. 52). Kelly (2013) also asserts that "Rap can be a powerful

tool for helping students to develop skills in critical analysis, but that power is diluted when the

goal of its use is solely for reading" (p. 51). This is a common argument against hip-hop; that

using it for any single purpose, much like many topics in a classroom, would be a waste of a

wide variety of learning opportunities.

Emery Petchauer is a researcher who argues for a thorough analysis of how students

might bring hip-hop into their classrooms to enhance their learning experience, as well as

evaluations of students that indicate a love of hip-hop in order to better enumerate their attitudes

and habits. More foundational research is necessary to better ascertain probable commonalities

among students that identify as members of the hip-hop community (Petchauer, 2015). Petchauer

(2010) argues for the implementation of hip-hop, "In terms of hip-hop texts, if these narratives

are seen as authoritative in the eyes of students and used as one set of resources to make sense of

course material and the world, then they are valuable educational starting point" (p. 370).

This is the exact approach that I used when I began using hip-hop in my college literature

classroom. It was the second week of my first semester teaching college level literature, and I

realized that there were very few students buying into The Yellow Wallpaper I was selling. It was the end of class, after a semi- silent class discussion on, The Story of An Hour, and I was at a loss. Then an idea occurred to me so I asked my students to listen to Rihanna's "Disturbia," for a frame of reference for the content of the story, and to think of a horror movie that might be a good way to illustrate the character 'creeping'. I crossed my fingers and at the next class meeting, when I walked into the room I was greeted with comments from all over the room filled with thirty students about my song choice, and their movie ideas. In that moment, I was not the one selling any knowledge, I was the buyer, and I haven't looked back.

David Kirkland is known for his research into methods of using hip-hop to draw points of comparison and analyses between standard canonical literature texts and hip-hop music. Kirkland (2008) cites a specific song that I use as a source of inspiration; Nas's "I Can." This song may be geared toward younger people, but as a teacher I think, in a sense, it is a call to arms. The social justice advocate in me wants to teach the themes in the song to each of my students; to never give up and never define yourself with others' words. A quote from the end of the song can still bring hopeful tears to my eyes, "If the truth is told, the youth can grow, Then learn to survive until they gain control, Nobody says you have to be gangstas, hoes, Read more learn more, change the globe, Ghetto children, do your thing, Hold your head up, little man, you're a king…" (Nas's, "I can"). I found a YouTube video with this song and the lyrics so that my students can read along, and for some, despite knowing the song their entire lives, they discover something in the lyrics that means something different or appears a bit more profound. Music can do that. Nas' song gives me a link to my students' past, and it gives them a link to literature, and that is a beautiful thing on any day.

Kirkland (2008) specifically addresses the importance of the cultural directions and implications in hip-hop music, especially as they pertain to possibilities for constructive discussions about race in America, "In English education, for example, the asymmetrical and oftentimes racist distancing (and excluding) of hip-hop texts and cultures are now rightly being critiqued and re-considered. Hence, we are learning" (p. 43).

What was once considered music that was far too scandalous for the classroom has now found its way into classrooms across America, it has taken root in educational research and cemented a spot at the English studies table. Arguments against the use of hip-hop in classrooms are merely representative of a narrow knowledge base of hip-hop music. There are hip-hop artists that do not use profanity, or mention sex, women, money, or drugs in their songs e.g. Surreal, and Doomtree. There have also been political activist hip-hop artists like Eyedea.

Despite the songs that illustrate varying degrees of misogyny, misanthropy, and a general feeling of hegemony over others, there are examples that are less combative for classroom consumption and can be used to cultivate discussions about social issues, stereotypes, and a critique of the actions of characters in a song. Many outsiders to hip-hop are unaware that there are stock characters in hip-hop songs; a concept not unlike a facet of literary analysis. Hip-hop artists will often demonstrate respect for their predecessors by including a character from one of their songs, and in a community where respect is currency, demonstrations like that are always noticed.

Hip-hop is not the only genre of music being used in classrooms and in education research. Songs in general have been used in classes for decades. Kirby (1976) notes:

> The seeds of motivation for many students are in the popstyle reality and its language and
>
> icons and heroes. If English teachers can overcome their reluctance to deal with things

"popular" and can come to see their students as resources rather than souls to save, then classroom studies in popular culture can become exciting joint ventures. Many students are pop culture experts. They possess and are eager to share detailed information about pop culture. These are your resource people. The teacher's role in such a situation changes from information-giver to question-raiser. (p. 34)

The following study highlights the use of songs in aiding the instruction of writing and composition in Spanish and Portuguese. Bellver (2008) succinctly argues, "Given the omnipresence of music today, its prudent use in introductory literature classes can serve as a way to engage students and to illustrate cultural contexts" (p. 877). Songs in music education classes take on larger roles than their sheet music. Often music education yields some of the most positive notes on using songs in learner centered classes. Bellver (2008) utilized Gregorian chants in her research to evaluate student reception:

An analysis of the questions asked of students after each brief musical interlude shows that the experiment helped them tie the past to the present and the unknown to the known. Particularly successful was the inclusion of the recordings of Gregorian chant that became world-famous in the mid-nineties. The choices for music after the thirteenth century are more numerous and also readily available. This accessibility allows for the easy use of music as a means to demonstrate development in literary trends and to stimulate student interest in literature. (p. 877)

Music education and literature can indeed be intertwined. Bellver's study was narrowed by instructor choices in lieu of the autonomy utilized in my study. This study was about bringing songs in, but the songs were chosen by the instructor and did not grant any autonomy for the students. Bellver (2008) explains:

My experiment with the use of music to enhance the teaching of literature consists of

playing at the beginning of major historical periods a piece of music composed and

performed in that particular time-frame, asking the students to describe and register their

impressions of the music, and then adding my own commentary as an introduction to the

literature to be studied. (p. 889)

In her arguments, Bellver (2008) notes a positive impact of the utilization of music in the

classroom. The lack of autonomy fit the structure of her lesson, and her age group of high school

students also differed from the participants of my study. Bellver (2008) also highlights an

affective goal, "My basic aim is to create a bridge in the classroom from students' emotional and

spontaneous reaction to music to the reflective, analytical, and interpretive process involved in

reading literature critically" (Bellver, 2008, p. 889). Using music in classroom transcends the

language boundary as evidenced in this study by Bellver.

Songs have been used in other content areas like science to aid students in learning. One

of the biggest differences between my study and past and present studies that used songs in the

learning environment is the autonomous choices the students made. One study by Dale Allender

(2004) utilized songs chosen by the instructor and focused the student analysis on literary

elements on a worksheet. Allender (2004) posits, "We listened to a number of songs and

analyzed the lyrics for metaphor, use of clichés, and complexity. We listened to the relationships

between the music and the lyrics. We settled on several broad themes situated in a historic and

African American cultural context with the help of a short profile on Gaye written by Cornel

West" (p. 13). In this example the songs and the reading were paired by the instructor in order to

draw distinct similar impressions of how the reading ties with the song. Allender (2004)

continues to argue, "My point is this: Popular culture has affective and academic value. It should

be used in a variety of ways as one would use texts generally in a constructivist, cultural studies classroom concerned with student achievement and transformative learning" (p. 13-14). This is the style of thinking that guided the creation of this study.

Christopher Emdin uses popular culture, specifically hip-hop in his study that looked at the relationship between science and hip-hop music. Emdin (2013) lends his opinion, "I argue that science mindedness skills are required in order to be considered as an emcee, and that being one requires the ability to concurrently deal with complex ideas, weave narratives, utilize metaphor, and create analogies in a way that is relevant to the lives of a wide audience" (p. 88). Emdin is arguing that the way a song is broken down into the facets of its development that is like the way scientific concepts are broken down into their essential base pieces. Emdin (2013) notes "This simple connection between hip-hop and science highlights their complementary relationship and underscores the need for a deep exploration of the lessons for teaching science that may come from hip-hop, and the lessons for teaching with hip-hop that can come from science" (p. 84). Emdin (2013) speaking of the influences that hip-hop can have in a classroom, directly mentions one of the underlying themes for this study; what can be done with music in the literature classroom. Emdin (2013) notes:

> Teachers and researchers cannot make sense or meaning of hip-hop, and the interactions of participants in hip-hop using the finite and positivistic ways that we previously have. By this, I mean that we cannot be effective hip-hop educators if we are so guided by scripts for the class that we cannot move beyond them, so confined to standards for teaching content that we cannot question them, and so tied to models for teaching and learning that position students as empty vessels to be filled that we cannot see that they

come to the classroom as cultured beings with more knowledge by virtue of being hip-

hop than can be contained in the textbooks they are forced to memorize. (p. 98)

Emdin (2013) makes the argument that any stagnant source of learning will lose the interest and

ownership of that content for the student. He argues that students do not arrive in a class as

tabula rasa's they arrive with opinions and thoughts and knowledge. This ties into a

constructivist design for researching songs and popular culture in the classroom.

Some of the education research being conducted about using songs in the curriculum is

done below the college level. Some are as young as elementary school classroom research;

Tonya Gray Propst is one such researcher. Propst (2003) notes that "There seems to be a

relationship between activities relating to creating and responding and the amount of time music

is used by elementary classroom teachers" (p. 325). Her study indicated that elementary teachers

who embraced music to movement and interest in content such as folk dances and folk music, as

well as using music as backgrounds for charts and creating songs were beneficial additions to the

classroom. These types of positive experiences indicate a need for further research into adding

facets of popular culture into learning environments at all levels.

Critical thinking is essential to this study because I asked my participants to take their

usual textual analyses to a new level, a new depth, a greater understanding which they had to

locate for themselves. In this study, the aim for such an objective is to enhance their comfort

with text analysis by asking students to find a piece of a reading that they think can link to a

song. I did not limit students in their song choice, partly because of varying tastes in music and

partly because I am aware that it can be difficult with some pieces of literature to any facet of

their lives today. Giving students autonomy for their song choices allowed them to have agency

within their assignments. Some students noted that because they wanted to find a great song,

they needed to reread the assigned reading. Full credit was granted if students were able to relate the piece of the reading and the piece of the song they chose. Some were intrinsically driven to compete against themselves to find that "perfect song." This was not my intention but rather an added benefit to the data that could be looked at more closely, in further research. The student participants used their musicality with their criticality for the assigned reading to find the song they felt best represented the reading. Discussed further in chapter five, students found myriad ways to connect the readings to a song, some chose a line of lyrics; some chose the theme of the reading and the theme of a song. Their reasoning is also a point for further research.

Musicality is a term that is being more widely applied to the ability to deconstruct songs and music to study it and to note, in individualistic ways, the form of impact that a song has to each person. The Oxford English Dictionary defines musicality as, "A person's ability to connect with all levels of a song; a dancer or composer might demonstrate musicality" (OED). For the purposes of this study, the student participants used a critical lens when creating their music links, but they did so in ways that are not readily available to a course reading because there are no soundtracks to the readings. There are no notes in the columns of the reading assignments, indicating a song should be played while reading that section. Students had to use their sense of musicality and explain their rationale for connections to literature in order to complete the assignment. Participants noted that they listened to songs differently while they completed their music-links.

Jerome Evans is a researcher who also uses pop culture and songs in his classroom research. He too does not embrace student autonomy within the songs chosen, but rather uses songs to draw distinct lessons. Evans (2004) notes "Artifacts of pop culture serve as advanced organizers for students, who can then connect new material (prominent and persistent themes in

American literature) to their own experiences with literature (song lyrics)" (p. 33). In this respect Evans is noting a facet of my study, finding links, but his were chosen by the instructor. Evans (2004) "By showing the connection between a selected theme and specific lines in the song lyrics, they engage in critical thinking about literature (I tell them this later in the course) in much the same way they will when using quoted passages to support their assertions in academic writing about the literature we study" (p. 33). From his research Evans (2004) has found other indications for drawing connections such as, "Students can more readily practice critical-thinking skills supporting assertions with specific evidence-by showing how selected lyrics develop a theme in a song they know than they can in a novel or poem they are reading for the first time" (p. 37). He succinctly states, "Popular culture is popular for a reason. It plays an important role in the daily lives of students and definitely deserves a place in the English classroom" (Evans, 2004, p. 38). Although his styles and methods may be different from my study, the implications for further research are evident.

Many researchers, as indicated in the quotes below, agree that popular culture and music have a rightful place in an educational setting. Jordan (2005) asserts that "opening the composition classroom to various kinds of texts and other instances of language use means students provide much of the material themselves" (p. 181). Gorlewski and Garland (2012) state, "To create academic space for conversations centered on popular culture texts, educators should begin to conceptualize a new definition of literacy that values the study of multiple types of texts. Reconceptualizing literacy in this way will support teachers as they consider developing literacy events intended to support students as they 'read" all texts' (p. 106). These quotes from various researchers serve as support the gap my study addresses. Marion Fay's research embraces focusing on the stark similarities between literature and music; she states, "A short

story may include a character who is a musician, composer, or student of music. A poem may emulate music. Or a novel may trace the effect of a piece of music on a character. References such as these stem from a set of close relationships between literature and music" (Fay, 2001, p. 373). Fay (2001) is noting that music and literature through history may have references to each other within the works. Fay (2001) continues her exploration of the links between literature and songs to include affective student response:

> Put otherwise, although literature and music often exemplify the deepest conflicts of the human heart—and can, be used to serve divisive purposes—they also provide, not merely an escape from personal and public troubles, but an academically tenable pathway to self-renewal. Self-renewal may help, in turn, to nurture feelings of reverence for all living beings. Beyond that, it should be said that music is indeed a universal language; its most fundamental pulse lives within all of us, within our bodies, no matter who we are, no matter where we reside. (p. 377)

This type of give and take relationship between songs and literature does inspire a clearer understanding of the impact of words and melodies. Fay (2001) makes a solid argument for the use of songs and literature to explore different literary devices and their affective responses.

As shown, education research regarding popular culture and songs is being performed today, but my study is in an unresearched niche. My study setting is a college literature classroom, I grant autonomous song choice to my students, and I am gauging students experiences while performing the music-link assignments used in this study. This study added to the breadth of popular culture and song use in literature classroom research by expanding boundaries and embracing student choice.

Summary

This chapter two explored education research using songs and literature, and the use of songs in different content area research. There is an evident space where my study will add to the body of this research. There has not been a study conducted using songs and lyrics with complete student autonomy in a college English introductory literature course. The addition of student autonomy in my study is also an unexplored niche in the research. Chapter three will explore the theoretical framework of the study.

CHAPTER III

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Chapter two reviewed the gaps in the literature which provide the space for this study and the study's relevance amidst the current research. Chapter three will be an exploration of the social constructivist theoretical underpinning that guide for this study. Social constructivism and English theory and their places in education research will be explicated. Traced from their origins, constructivist theory, English theories, and pedagogy paradigms are acknowledged for their use as guides and resonance for the study.

Social Constructivist Theory

The rationale behind utilizing social constructivism for this phenomenological study is twofold in its design and implications. The first lies within the mind of the researcher; whose beliefs about learning in a literature course are embodied within a social constructivist perspective. The second lies within the research questions for the study, by evaluating students' experiences and how they interpret and construct meaning out of assignments, the social constructivist lens is best suited as a guiding lens. To explain these choices, it is necessary to review the history of social constructivist theory and its implications within learning in an English literature classroom.

In the early 1900s, John Dewey emphasized the importance of student-centered learning and an adherence to socially constructive ideals in the classroom (Hansen, 2008). His ideas about the learning experiences of students became the skeletal frame of a body of educational research whose reach can be seen in many research studies today. For example, in the 1920s any insistence on an individual's perception or experience with when learning was irrelevant. Hansen (2008) observed, "Dewey argues that all people can be educated in an interest in learning from

experience. If students are provided with sustained educational encouragement that incorporates quality academic materials in conjunction with interacting with diverse people and situations they can learn to enact as a matter of course such an interest" (p. 19). In this case, in a college English classroom whose students are diverse, any assignment should allow some individualization in order to be accessible and accomplishable by each student regardless of their background in English.

Constructivist interpretive theories are deeply rooted in the ideas of two prolific thinkers, Jerome Bruner, and Lev Vygotsky. In a student-centered social constructivist learning environment, the emphasis of the learning is with the students who are experiencing, interpreting, and constructing knowledge. There are four researchers who wrote about similar ideas but branched out in different directions in their truest definitions of constructivism. Jean Piaget and William Perry studied constructivism as it pertains to education research, however their perspective held no adherence to the social structures within the classroom (Mellon & Sass, 1981; Powell & Kalina, 2009). Omitting the social implications is the essential difference in understanding why Piaget and Perry are studied from an educational psychological perspective rather than a curriculum and pedagogical one like that of Bruner and Vygotsky (Powell & Kalina, 2009, p. 241). Vygotsky's theory on learning is also a guiding influence of the constructivist approach to this study.

Chronologically the idea of social constructivism began with Lev Vygotsky and his argument that students' learning is cultured by their life experiences and views of the world around the them (Anderson, 1998; Powell & Kalina, 2009; Mcleod, 2019). Vygotsky perhaps best known for his ideas about a zone of proximal development (ZPD), argued that students will construct meaning of what they are learning using the knowledge that they already have and

achieve the knowledge that they are guided toward with their socially constructed ideals (Anderson, 1998; Powell & Kalina, 2009; Mcleod, 2019). In this respect, students can construct meaning out of learning objectives based on their own individual interpretations when they are using a method of interpreting the knowledge in a way that enhances their comprehension of the activity or knowledge to be gained (Anderson, 1998; Powell & Kalina, 2009; Mcleod, 2019). Jerome Bruner expounded on Vygotsky's ideas about a social constructivist educational setting. Bruner (1996) postulates:

> And there is even one step beyond that, one of the most profound aspects of human knowledge. If nobody in the group "knows" the answer, where do you go to "find things out"? This is the leap into culture as a warehouse, a tool-house, or whatever. There are things known by each individual (more than each realizes); more still is known by the group or is discoverable by discussion within the group; and much more still is stored somewhere else in the culture say, in the heads of more knowledgeable people, in directories, books, maps, and so forth. (p. 52)

In this quote from Bruner, social constructivism, in its adherence to the social constructs that students bring with them to class, as well as other social factors within the student-centered learning environment highlights the necessity of the individual's social experience. These social constructs are inextricably linked to an individual's learning.

Herbert Kliebard (2004) posits, "Terms like individualization and individuality in the curriculum were operating not so much as precise descriptions of a particular way to reorganize instruction as a kind of slogan attracting allegiances but meaning quite different things to different groups" (p. 277). In order to embrace a subjective learning experience and subjective

ways for students to garner agency over their learning in the classroom, it is necessary to utilize social constructivism as a theoretical guide. These ideals were part of the design of this study.

Hays and Singh (2012) explain that, "Social constructivism is a belief system that assumes that 'universal truth' cannot exist because there are multiple contextual perspectives and subjective voices that can label truth in scientific pursuit" (p. 410). Social constructivism's roots continued in educational research in different ways. The postmodernist movement in social research maintains a similar belief that in human research there are multiple right ways to approach and evaluate a question and plausible answers (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 41). Although postmodernism and social constructivism may seem mutually exclusive in their ideals, the two theoretical approaches do share some commonalities in their timeframe of introduction to social research and the belief that meaning is subjective based on the eyes of the beholder. Hays and Singh (2012) summarize their beliefs that, "Social constructivists argue that reality about counselling and educational phenomena should never be labeled as objective since the voices of researchers and participants are biased and seated in different cultural experiences and identities" (p. 41). This study was aligned with these ideals about studying educational phenomenon because the music-links are autonomous and the differences in thoughts and opinions expressed by students are embraced as essential due to their uniqueness and due to the celebration of their individuality in completing the assignment.

Michael Crotty (1998) states, "Constructivism describes the individual human subject engaging with objects in the world and making sense of them" (p. 79). In this study, students engaged with their literature readings by constructing their own choices of songs as links. Then by linking the song to a piece of the reading they could have been able to construct meaning from the activity. Crotty (1998) argues, "It would appear useful, then, to reserve the term

constructivism for epistemological considerations focusing exclusively on the 'meaning making activity of the individual mind'" (p. 58). The meaning making aspect of the constructivist nature of the design of this study becomes apparent when considering the autonomous selection of songs. The ability for students to choose and apply their own constructs, interpretations, and ideas about the piece of literature they are reading was a possible way for students to construct their own relevance. By using the reading and applying what they read to their social world and their personal experiences by choosing a song and explaining their rationale for their choices, it became possible to study the phenomenon. Crotty (1998) continues, "Constructivism taken in this sense points up the unique experience of each of us. It suggests that each one's way of making sense of the world is as valid and worthy of respect as any other thereby tending to scotch any hint of a critical spirit" (p. 58). In this quote Crotty explains the necessity of the openness in the evaluation of any one person's individual experience because each person's experience is unique and important. In this light, the onus of this study as an aggregate of student's experiences does not place the value of one link over another.

Any positive notes from experiences made by students hold the same weight and importance as any negative notes from students' experiences. By providing students with a constructivist learning environment a teacher is encouraging their students to maintain their own subjective beliefs in the learning process. For the purposes of this study, a subjective experience was essential in the autonomous music-link assignments. Teaching and studying English literature do not necessarily need to be presented to students in a constructivist manner; not all English teachers ask students to impart their own beliefs on the meaning of a piece of literature (McComiskey, 2012, p. 277). Because of my personal adherence to social constructivist beliefs, I designed the study to embrace the task of asking students to share their subjective ideas about

the pieces of literature being read. Hansen (2008) notes that the teacher's responsibility is to "generate activities that engage student's powers to understand, explain, and come to grips with the new academic knowledge" (p. 13). The music-link assignments were created with a social constructivist aim to allow students to construct their own meanings from the literature texts by bringing their individual ideas to the forefront of their knowledge acquisition.

English Theory

English theory, prior to World War I was organized around a central theme, a method of literary analysis called recitation literacy. This theme strictly involved analysis through recitation. Recitation of fact kept the field of English entirely objective in their work with literary pieces, and entirely devoid of original thought (Edgar, 2012). Religion played a role in the field's adherence to recitation literacy because it was thought that, "the mind was a gift from God and not to be questioned" (Edgar, 2012, p. 1). The field of English changed drastically after World War II; recitation literacy faded out, and a new era, dubbed Extraction Literacy, began (Edgar, 2012).

The new conversations taking place in English departments across America were incited by the contemporary societal issues that were inadvertently supplying English academics with new modes of research. The civil rights movement, women's rights movement, and a growing abhorrence of the celebrated canon of old, prompted some literature professors to seek out new writings and evaluate old writings through new culturally polished lenses (McComiskey, 2006). These new progressive methods of evaluation would come to be called literary theory, and it, much like its umbrella discipline of English studies, would also branch out in surprising directions to permeate areas of thought that would compel interdisciplinary research into a whole new light. One of these profound theorists was Paul de Man; a progressivist theorist, a member

of the New Critics, who supported the notion that for literature to be understood, it must be deconstructed (Miller, 2010). Acknowledging that learning cannot take place without taking the social aspects of the learning environment, assignments, and pedagogy, into account is also the essence of utilizing a social constructivist approach in the classroom.

Literary Theory

During the 1950's, as the New Critics and recitation literacy theories steeply declined, literary theory evolved into its own field of study within English studies (Elbow, 1990). The new processes of viewing, and interpreting literature needed their own niche as a place to be discussed. As with any new method of research it needed to be a generalizable discussion for specific seedling thoughts to emerge. One of the most prominent of these theorists was Jacques Derrida. Derrida was a postmodern deconstructionist whose meditations on grammatology, writing, and deconstructing writing are widely read in upper level English courses today (Berlin, 1983; Miller, 2010). The New Critics adhered to a strict deconstructive approach limiting the analysis of literature to the basics of writing rather than an inferred deconstruction of ideas like Derrida's interpretation. Derrida's interpretation held social implications that the New Critics did not consider (Berlin, 1983). Miller (2010) notes several times in his book that lower level English courses could investigate the writings of Derrida, but all upper level English students must embrace the embodiment of the deconstructionism approach which Derrida so perfectly represents. Charles Lemert (1999) served as the editor of a comprehensive anthology of writings about social theory. In this book Lemert (1999) states, "In 1996, in a now famous talk at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Jacques Derrida announced the beginning of poststructuralism, a theoretical movement in which the practice known as deconstructionism came to be well regarded" (p. 15). Derrida developed his ideas about poststructuralism from the political unrest

and disruption of societal norms during the 1960's. For example, "Former colonial subjects (citizens made to be subjects of a foreign political system), women, workers, and Blacks were asserting themselves by asserting their differences" (Lamert, 1999, p. 16). In this respect, social constructivism is seen in literary interpretation. Although deemed deconstructionist, only a social constructivist approach in the classroom could unpack the social implications each student brings to the classroom.

While deconstruction still exists as a branch of literary theory today, the number of different types of deconstructionist and social constructivist theories across disciplines have drastically increased. Through these varying lenses, literary theorists are provided the structure for research and evaluations of literature. Literary theory also broadened the scope and content of literature classes in colleges and universities (Elbow, 1990; Yood, 2003; Miller, 2010). Scholars could individualize their areas of study not only by discipline, but by theory as well. For example, a professor may work solely with contemporary long works of fiction and focus their course on a unifying theme through postcolonial theory.

Miller (2010) explains, "As several contributors stressed, 'the study of literature means the study of literature, not of biography, not of literary history, …or anything except the works themselves, viewed as their creators wrote them, viewed as art, as transcripts of humanity" (Applebee & Langer, 1984; Miller, 2010, p. 139). Critical approaches to literary analysis vary, and still some professors do not adopt any single approach, because they find them to be a obstacle in classroom analysis.

Burke (2008) delineates a few of the most prominent critical approaches to literature: Aesthetic, Biographical, Deconstructionist, Existentialist, Feminist, Marxist, New Critical, Rhetorical, and Psychological. Each of these approaches is a distinctive way of reading a piece

of literature, a lens to focus analysis, and a recommended method of reconciling inquiry (Burke 2008; Miller, 2010). In an Aesthetic analysis, students would be instructed to approach a literary piece solely for the purpose of locating and appreciating the artistry (Burke, 2008). In a Biographical analysis, a literature professor would take an objective approach to a piece of literature and ask students to research an author, or the content of a story, in order to provide historical context or a point of comparison (Burke, 2008). A Deconstructionist analysis would mimic the New Critics approach to literature; a piece of literature would be broken down in order to analyze it in greater depth; in other words it would be deconstructed from the word-choice to the plausible meanings hidden in the text (Burke, 2008).

When a professor chooses an Existentialist approach to literary analysis they may be searching for hidden questions in the text about life, and the reader or author's place in it (Burke, 2008). An Existentialist analysis would seek out the uncomfortable spaces of the text for discussion, addressing the human reactions (e.g. anxiety, depression) to an existential line of questioning (Burke, 2008). The Feminist approach is precisely as it appears it might be, focusing on the analysis of a woman's experience in a piece of literature, and the myriad plausible implications therein, such as cultural experiences, or sexual oppression (Burke, 2008). The Marxist approach would imply that a professor asked their students to make special notes while reading the text on areas that address any of the following: class, inequality, or capitalism (Burke, 2008). An example of a New Critical approach is when a professor assigned students to read a text without informing them (or instating bias) about the cultural significance, history, author's name, or any information that might provide a critical comparative analysis (Burke, 2008). An analysis through a New Critical lens stipulates that: no comparisons are allowed; students are not allowed to use their judgment or anyone else's to form opinions about the text;

and students cannot construct their own meaning or interpret the text in an individual way (Burke, 2008). Once the expectation of a personal voice or opinion from the student is removed the onus falls on the author to supply the information.

The two remaining approaches are Psychological, and Rhetorical. A Psychological analysis hearkens back to Freud's theories on the id, ego, behavioral motivations, and sexuality as represented in a piece of literature (Burke, 2008). The final approach is named for one of the three original disciplines in English studies; Rhetoric. (Burke, 2008). If a professor wanted to perform a rhetorical analysis of a piece of literature with their class, they might ask their students to observe the impact a piece of literature has on its audience and evaluate it for examples of ethos, pathos, or logos, or determine the effectiveness of a persuasive argument (Burke, 2008). Each of these types of literary theoretical approaches has grown as a field and created their own bodies of work and manners of analyses. Social constructivism in the classroom may be best represented in Derrida's deconstructionist perspective, but another piece of the learning environment yet to be discussed is the pedagogical influences that both constructivist and deconstructionists have in common, the notion of criticality.

English Pedagogy

Etsuko Yamada's (2009) literature review of pedagogical criticality in single language learner classrooms uncovered a working definition for criticality which was used for this study: the notion that criticality is both inquiry and skepticism. By adopting this idea that students should be inspired into inquiry and still be skeptical of any single definition or analysis of a piece of literature, I am acknowledging the challenges implied in the music-link assignments as well as students' opportunities to be skeptical of the assignments in their experiential responses. In the same piece, Yamada notes that Richard Barnett (1997) discussed the notion of criticality in

his work on the systems of higher education. Barnett (1997) adopted the term criticality so that educators should embrace the ideal of "developing 'criticality' for fostering critical citizens with independent thought and action" (Yamada, 2009, p. 14).

Based on these definitions which connect to social constructivism and deconstructionism, I believe that criticality encompasses the ideas that:

1) Students bring their own social realities with them to class;

2) Literary works need to be approached from the lens of every student feeling free to deconstruct and reconstruct notions brought to bear within literary writings;

3) Every student has an individual notion of how to be critical about a text and criticality can embrace every manner of constructing and deconstructing the ideas within and prompted from a piece of writing; and

4) Each student may have a different interpretation of what a piece of literature means, says, explicates, or defines and may be critical of that piece differently.

In this study, criticality is embraced in the planning, execution, data analysis and data analysis and findings.

The beginning of criticality in its application to educational theory, was in part the brainchild of Paulo Freire, a Brazilian, writing for his people, and others struggling in societies worldwide. In an extension of his critique of societal norms, Freire may have been the first to highlight a need for critical pedagogical approaches in education, yet he rarely used the phrase critical pedagogy. Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970) remains a best-selling book, and a piece of required reading for everyone in the field of education who considers themselves an advocate for social justice, since its first publication in 1970.

Freire's opinions on the necessity of education and the issues with current educational standards are made clear through his comparison of education to a banking structure. Freire (1970) argues, "In their political activity, the dominant elites utilize the banking concept to encourage passivity in the oppressed, corresponding with the latter's 'submerged' state of consciousness, and take advantage of that passivity to 'fill' that consciousness with slogans which create even more fear of freedom" (p. 95). In this statement, he is using the widespread banking framework as the underlying structure of education, to illustrate the systemic nature that oppressors can slowly, but assuredly, usurp power from the oppressed. Applying this sort of critical analysis to education was a new phenomenon, despite the already present ripples occurring in law and sociological theory from the criticality necessary to interpret these ideas.

Another piece of Freire's (1970) analysis, that is ever-present in educational research today, is the notion that teachers and students have a great deal to learn from each other; and that cooperative learning environments, where respect is given to all parties, are some of the most beneficial learning settings (Leonardo, 2012). Freire (1970) posits, "Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other" (p. 72). Freire (1970) reminds us that critical perceptions in English education are, "embodied in action; a climate of hope and confidence develops which leads men to attempt to overcome the limit-situations" (Freire, 1970, p. 99). While this ideal may be representative of the dreamer within Freire, the notion of a more fully conscious, educated, and literate society is an ideal that is at the heart of many English teachers' career choice.

Robert Yagelski is a voice for criticality in the field of English studies. Yagelski (2006) articulates the juncture where Freirean concepts intercept criticality in English studies, "To

realize its transformative potential, in Freirean terms, English education as a professional field must confront its complicated relationship with formal schooling and fully embrace its inherently dialectical character" (p. 302). The many disciplines of English studies have had an intricate history of attempts at reform toward a unification and not finding success. Yagelski (2006) describes the status quo of American education as the most accepted way to grow up as an American. Yagelski (2006) continues strongly:

> Despite never-ending controversies about funding, testing, curriculum, and related aspects of formal education, most Americans seem to accept and support the central role that schools play in the upbringing and indeed in the socialization of their children…To tinker with the teaching of English, then, is to challenge deeply held beliefs about writing, reading, and schooling. (p. 303)

Yagelski (2006), argues that the study of English literature is fundamental within Freire's criticality because of the necessity of teaching students to view their lives and the world around them critically. Criticality's influence was not only felt in English departments, it spread across multiple disciplines, spreading and leaving its mark on theory and research. Freire's influence, his ideal of critical consciousness, was not a passing fad, it was deconstructive at its base, but still maintained an ever-constructive component (Bizzell, 1992; Lauer, 2006).

Berlin (1988) emphasized, "Every pedagogy is imbricated in ideology, in a set of tacit assumptions about what is real, what is good, what is possible, and how power ought to be distributed" (p. 492). The current state of affairs in English does not leave a great deal of hope for a unified college English presence anytime soon. Criticality in pedagogy opened the discipline of English to new ways of analyzing and interpreting text beyond understanding the

readings and applying or uncovering multiple meanings and social constructs (Berlin, 1988, p. 492).

Colin Lankshear and Peter McLaren collaborated on an essential English studies anthology of criticality in literature. In English education, the term "critical literacy," has a different meaning than it does in literacy education studies. According to Lankshear and McLaren (1993), "Critical literacy as we are using the term, becomes the interpretation of the social present for the purpose of transforming the cultural life of certain groups, for questioning tacit assumptions and unarticulated presuppositions of current cultural and social formations and subjectivities and capacities for agenthood that they foster" (p.413). In this context, critical literacy is as essential to the educational process of studying literature, as learning addition and subtraction are to studying mathematics. Lankshear and McLaren (1993), describe the embracing of criticality specifically as it pertains to the study of criticality in English studies:

> For educators this means constructing a place of hybrid pedagogical space where students do not feel that they need any longer the colonizer's permission or approval to narrate their own identities, a space where individual identities are not essentialized on the basis of race gender, or nationality, but where these expressions of identity can find meaning in collective engagement with conditions which threaten to undermine the authority and power or individuals to speak and to live with dignity and under conditions of equality and social justice. (p. 414)

Critical literacy in English has a powerful place in the classroom for educators that adhere to this concept. A professor that embodies the spirit of critical literacy will exhibit traits, such as; a social-constructivist approach to learning, a deconstructive approach to content and its varying impact and degrees of importance to individual students, as well as an overarching goal of

supplying students with links between educational content and their lives outside of school (Greene, 1983; McLaren, 1999). McLaren (1999) succinctly states, "The Freirean agent works silently but steadfastly in the margins of culture and the interstices of collapsing public sectors, away from the power- charged arenas of public spectacles of accusation and blame regarding what is wrong with our schools" (p. 54).

An adherence to the possibility of hope in education is essential to critical theorists. McLaren (1999) explains, "Freirean pedagogy is vitally important for contemporary educators to revisit, to build upon, and to reinvent in the contextual specificity of today's sociopolitical context with its traumatizing inequalities" (p. 54). Equality is an ever-present theme across American media in recent years. Greene may have written this in 1983, but because the adage, "Change in education is slow," is true, it could easily be in a scholarly journal today:

> Teaching for literacy conceives learning as action rather than behavior. The notion of action involves the reflective taking of initiatives: trying out what has been learned by rote, acting on the so-called competencies. This is in contrast to an unreflective, semi-automatic movement through predefined sequences of what is sometimes optimistically called "mastery." A concern for beginnings, for action rather than behavior, is different from a preoccupation with end points, with predetermined objectives. Indeed, once teachers approach their students as novices, as newcomers to a learning community extending back through time and ahead into a future, they may well open themselves (as well as their students) to all sorts of untapped experiential possibilities. (p. 327)

Given this apt and thorough description of the learning process through a Freirean/ Giroux/ McLaren and Lankshear lens of criticality, learning is evolving toward real world experience,

and an honest environment in which the instructor embraces a new level of honesty with students via discussion about what is really happening in the world, in lieu of a Disneyesque reality.

One of the most respected pedagogical theorists is Henry Giroux. Giroux is a Canadian/American Freirean academic who studies pedagogy, cultural studies, and criticality. Giroux (2004) posits, "Pedagogy is a moral and political practice that is always implicated in power relations and must be understood as a cultural politics that offers both a particular version and vision of civic life, the future, and how we might construct representations of ourselves, others, and our physical and social environment" (p. 33). In this light, pedagogy is a responsibility well beyond the instruction of material; it is a cultural imperative to enhance the lives of students; it is a socially constructed learning environment.

Giroux (2004), argues that a democratized education should provide students with not only skills and content, but also with a sense of confidence in their education so that they, "recognize anti-democratic forms of power, and to fight deeply rooted injustices in a society and world founded on systemic economic, racial, and gendered inequalities" (p. 35). This is a bit of a lofty goal for educators, but it is not too lofty to be an ideal for critical pedagogy as an overarching concept. Giroux is a strong proponent for the democratization of education, critical pedagogy as a form of democratization, and the connection to the empowerment of oppressed people. Criticality conceptually lends itself to the observations and interpretations in the study of cultural impacts on education research. One must be able to be critical and discerning when considering the many plausible interactions between a student's culture and their education.

Jeff Duncan-Andrade researches pedagogy, conditions of urban education, and the development and support of teachers in urban areas, and pedagogy. Duncan-Andrade & Morrell (2000) note that, "Cultural studies offer educators a critical language through which to analyze

and critique, yet it is incomplete without critical pedagogy as a mode of cultural criticism" (p. 21). Giroux, Lankshear, McLaren, and Peters (1996) advocate a joining of cultural studies and critical pedagogy so that researchers and educators alike can begin to decipher the mitigating societal factors that impact students in different ways. Giroux et. al. (1996) also describe the implications for studying the differing pop culture constructs that students will experience in their lives outside of school, and the manners in which those experiences seep into student's cultural identity and self-narratives. Racism is a topic that is seemingly unavoidable in a culturally relevant classroom. A goal of an instructor adhering to a culturally relevant pedagogy would be to discuss a topic like racism without inflammatory language, and if the topic of racism were introduced delicately with respect, it could allow an educator to set the tone for the semester/year in regard to hot-button issues like racism. Being a social justice advocate and educator is one of the ways to approach the cultural crises in our society within the context of classroom studies.

Gloria Ladson-Billings is a social justice advocate, education professor, and an esteemed writer and scholar. Ladson-Billings (1995) notes, "However, by situating it in a more critical paradigm, a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy would necessarily propose to do three things-produce students who can achieve academically, produce students who demonstrate cultural competence, and develop students who can both understand and critique the existing social order" (p. 480). Culturally relevant pedagogy demands a great deal of critical thought, respect, and a classroom environment in which each student feels that they can be agents of their own truths while maintaining cultural integrity (Ladson-Billings, 1995). This style of thinking in an English course takes into account the social constructivist approach because it embraces the

social atmosphere in which learning takes place. For ideas like pop culture pedagogy to take root, ideas like culturally relevant pedagogy had to first be established, recognized, and lauded.

Popular Culture Pedagogy

A prolific scholar in popular culture theory is Ernest Morrell. He is well known for his scholarly work on critical educational theory, critical media pedagogy, and pedagogies of social change, to name a few. Morrell (2002) describes, "As classrooms become increasingly diverse, educators struggle to find curricula and pedagogical strategies that are inclusive and affirmative yet facilitate the development of academic and critical," ideals (p. 72). The degree of diversity may vary from place to place, but as an educator, meeting the changing needs of students, and accounting for diversity is an everyday challenge. Pop culture pedagogy is an excellent way to attempt to reach as many students as possible using a unifying concept or theme (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2000).

Morrell (2002) notes. "By combining popular film with canonical texts, the students were able to hone their critical and analytical skills and use them in interpretations, (*students*) were also able to understand the connection between literature, popular culture, and their everyday lives" (p. 75). It is possible that not all pop culture references, analyses, or comparisons will result in the incredibly positive results found in Morrell's work and it is up to each educator to make those choices.

When Ernest Morrell was the president of the National Council of the Teachers of English (NCTE) in 2014 he gave an interview in which he described what he values in English teachers:

Great English teachers break down that dichotomy between popular culture and "high culture" in their units, lessons, and activities every day. As they do this, as they reinvent

the discipline to be relevant to a new century, they also evolve new theories of practice.

What we're doing is what Paulo Freire calls problem- posing. We ask difficult questions

like 'How do I incorporate popular culture and media while not losing my Shakespeare?'

As we ask these tough questions, we engage and transform old theories of practice, we

develop and reflect upon new practices, like juxtaposing canonical and popular cultural

texts in our classrooms. This process develops both new practices and new theories of

practice. (p. 304)

This quote was an impetus for this constructivist study. I began thinking about this dissertation in

the very same manner which Morrell (2014) notes that *great* English teachers approach their

curriculums; by spending time questioning the "dichotomy between popular culture and high

culture in their units" (p. 304). Morrell (2004) embraced a constructivist framework in his book,

Linking Literacy and Popular Culture, Finding Connections for Lifelong Learning. The

interpretivist side of social constructivism was highlighted in the planning and implementation

of assignments and readings in his literature courses. In his book Morrell states that when he was

strategizing his units he leaned on Shirley Bryce Heath's (1983) ideals. He borrows a direct

quote as Heath to describe a constructivist approach in literature, "a communication act that

represents any occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of participants'

interactions and their interpretive processes" (Heath, 1983; Morrell, 2004, p. 11). Morrell (2004)

goes on to add the following ideas to Heath's definition, "a communicative act in which any text

is integral to the nature of participants interactions and interpretive processes" (p. 11). Morrell's

definition speaks to the heart of this study.

 The music-link assignments were specifically designed for a literature course assignment

that would compel students to interact with the text, construct, and interpret meaning from the

text while applying meaning when choosing the song link. Morrell (2004) also suggests that finding these types of links for the interpretation and interaction do not need to be grounded in modern literature or the canon; these types of assignments can be applied to any era or genre of literature (p. 146). This applies heavily to this study because the readings chosen for research were both modern and canon texts.

Similarly, Petchauer (2010) embraces the authoritative nature of hip-hop music in the literature classroom. He argues that by using a hip-hop text students gain agency and the ability to construct meaning within a piece of literature as it pertains to a hip-hop song (p. 371). Petchauer's utilization of a constructivist lens in the creation of assignments that may provide space for a student's interpretation of the assignment is a step in the direction of this study. At the college level and with the provision of autonomy in song choice, this study seeks to unfold students' experiences in a different manner.

Likewise, Kirkland (2008) provides another example of a constructivist and interpretivist approach to research how the addition of music to an English class might be beneficial to a student-centered learning environment. Kirkland (2008) focused his research on the experiences of students in an English class when strictly canonical texts are used as points of comparison to hip-hop music (p, 130). This method allowed his students the ability to construct their own meaning out of the comparisons being drawn between a piece of classical literature and a modern hip-hop song. The success that Kirkland (2008) noted is one of the reasons that hip-hop pedagogy became a style of pedagogy worthy of individual study.

Hip-Hop Pedagogy

An eminent scholar in Hip-Hop based education is Bettina Love. Her research focus is Hip-Hop culture and its applications in education. Love was an elementary school teacher when

she first saw the benefits and possibilities of including Hip-Hop in her lessons. Love (2012), describes her personal view of the Hip-Hop artists that kept her company through their lyrics and stories, "Their gritty urban rhymes and 'hood stories of drugs, crime, violence, and womanizing - alongside tales of determination, strength, and overcoming obstacles - mimicked the conditions and raw emotions that were a common theme framing my neighborhood and many other communities across the United States in the early '80s and late '90s" (p. 1). The relatability that Love notes about hip-hop in the classroom is a theory that applies directly to this study. While students were not limited to hip-hop in their music-link assignments, the ability to use a hip-hop song that was a construct of their own lives provided an opportunity for agency in accomplishing the music-link assignment. There were many facets of social constructivism within this approach to pedagogy. Hip-hop in and of itself as an art form encompassing a cultural movement not strictly limited to music, lends to the idea that social constructs will be brought to the forefront of analysis linking literary works, concepts, or forms, to pieces of literature.

<div align="center">**Summary**</div>

In chapter three, theories that guided and aided in the preparation for this study were introduced and explained. The weight of the theoretical underpinning for this study was the social constructivist approach. The history of constructivism, the history of English theories, and the current usage of constructivist and interpretive lenses in research were also discussed. Chapter four will be an enumeration of the methods used to conduct this study. The setting, participants, and structure are detailed. In addition, the choices of literary pieces for the study are summarized and the music-link assignment structure is uncovered.

CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

In chapter three the theories that guided this study were explored. Chapter Four will detail the methodology to include the rationale, outline, details of the participants, setting, study timeline, data collection methods, role of the researcher, and ethical considerations. This chapter will serve as a guideline for creating and completing the study.

Research Questions

The intended purpose of this dissertation was to learn about the lived experiences of college students in a general education *introduction to literature* class when music was added to the curriculum and assignments. The following research questions guide the study:

1. What are the lived experiences of college students in an *introduction to literature* course when music is a curricular assignment feature?

2. What are student perceptions of their achievement with the addition of music-link assignments in this course?

3. What are student experiences finding personal relevance to the course readings when music-link assignments are required curriculum assignments?

Rationale for Methodology

Creswell (2013) recommends qualitative inquiry for researchers using different data collection methods and student responses to examine a phenomenon in the classroom. The foci of this study were designed to capture as many facets of student experiences to plausibly glimpse pieces of their lived experiences with the music-links. Qualitative inquiry was the best fit for this study because I investigated the essence of an experience through words from different sources. Because I was investigating the phenomenon of including music-links in the classroom and the

design of the research questions, phenomenology was chosen as the best option for methodology. Phenomenology was best suited for this study because the research questions guided the data collection in an analysis of words/feelings/affects/effects/ and emotions. Attempting to glean information from written, spoken, and observed data that produced words and data sets was most appropriate for a phenomenological inquiry (Creswell, 2013).

Participants

According to the university's website there are close to 20,000 undergraduates, and the average age of students is twenty-four years old. The student population also includes around twenty three percent first-generation college students indicating that almost a quarter of the school consists of students who are the first in their family to attend college. The two largest populations regarding ethnic demographics of the school are forty-six-point-five percent Caucasians, twenty-seven-percent African American (College-Factual). This urban university was also ranked in the top five colleges for African American students in America (U.S. News and World Report).

Student participants varied by age, ethnicity, country of origin, first languages, and prior educational experience including previous literature classes. The sole criterion for participants in this study was their enrollment in one of two *introduction to literature* classes where I was the instructor. Convenience sampling was utilized to recruit at least four students from each ENGL 112L class for three small group interviews (pre-, mid-, post-) outside of regular class time.

Research Site

The site for this study was a large, urban, four-year accredited university in the Southeastern United States. This site has robust student demographic diversity. The study was being conducted at the main site for the university, but there are multiple satellite campuses and

online courses. This study was in a face to face instruction course with a single researcher/instructor in the classroom.

Curriculum

The curriculum for this English, general education requirement course was guided by the university's catalog description, standards of learning, and overall course objectives supplied by the university. The specific curriculum e.g. books, short stories, poetry, drama selections are autonomous for each professor. The core curricular specification from the university was that three forms of Literature be examined each semester; drama, fiction, and poetry.

Role of the Researcher

Ethical Considerations

In any classroom research setting a certain amount of power rests on the shoulders of the teacher/researcher. One must conduct their research with the hope that student participants were not swayed by the researcher's approval, grading, and/or placation, but it was an unavoidable question that must be addressed. It was entirely possible that students noted enjoying their participation in the study to get better grades or make the instructor happy. It was also possible that students participated in all facets of the study just for better grades.

I balanced my study-volunteer request with an alternate assignment that students could complete to receive the same benefits of participation; 10 points added to their choice of assignment at the end of the semester. Students were also reminded that they do not have to participate at all and could also opt-out at any time for any reason. In this manner, I attempted to remove some of the need to impress that student participants may have felt. Ethics were essential in research and the need to allow for as many degrees of separation from your participants as

possible is essential in phenomenological qualitative inquiries (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Hays & Singh, 2012).

<div align="center">**Data Sources**</div>

Reflections

A methodological benefit stemming from the in-class small-group reflective-discussions was that the utilization of multiple data sources may improve data credibility (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Patton, 2015). I wrote reflections and notes including observations that occurred while students were in small groups discussing their experiences. This method of observation and notetaking in rich detail may allow the researcher to glean aspects of the experience not otherwise noted during the study (Patton, 2015).

Small Group Interviews

Charmaz (2008) notes the essentialness of valuing and examining the unique voices of participants, in lieu of looking for common voices and the small group interviews in this study will enhance my ability to capture individual participants' experiences. The content of interviews was structured around the participant's willingness to discuss their experiences before, during, and after they live the phenomenon of study. The interview-protocols for the proposed study were borrowed in part from Kvale and Brinkmann (2009):

> The interpretation of central themes of the phenomenon based on what is shared and how well it is stated; The capturing of distinct descriptions of the phenomenon; The use of specificity in all descriptions; and the aim of conducting each interview in a manner that fosters positive experiences for the participants and researcher. (p. 113)

Keeping Charmaz's (2008) ideas about eliciting participants' voices when collecting data, the music-link assignments were structured to request the description of personal experiences.

Music-link Assignments

The music-link assignments were assigned to four different pieces of literature. In TABLE 1 below summaries of the readings are included. From a broad perspective the task was to read a poem or short story, and then think of a popular culture song, that prompts them to think of some feature of, or facet of the assigned poem or story (e.g. a character, a quote, the setting, etc.). Students were asked to describe the specific feature(s) of the course-content that ties to the song, or piece of a song, they chose. In addition, they were asked to provide at least one quote from the course-content, and at least one quote from the song they chose that explains their rationale for the link they found between the course-content and the song. Students noted the part/aspect of the assigned course-content reading (e.g. a poem, a short story, a scene from a play) that prompts their music-link. Participants were then asked to reflect on their experience locating a music-link in at least three sentences.

The structure of the music-link assignments was identical to the following:

I chose, (*insert title of poem or story*), by, (*insert author's name*), and I chose (*insert song title*), by, (*insert artist or group's name*). I chose to link this poem or story and this song because (*explain rationale using at least one quote from the poem or story and one quote from the song*). My experience creating this music-link was (*write at least 3 sentences about your experience*).

Participants were asked to print their music-links, complete them in writing, or upload them to their student google drives. The links must have been completed prior to the start of class and be accessible for small group discussions and in class reflections.

Schedule of Assigned Readings

The semester calendar provided for four pieces of literature, two short stories, and two poems that had distinct differences and similarities. I chose works from different centuries. I chose male and female authors. I chose authors from different backgrounds. I chose to use two styles of writing to gain insight into different experiences with genres of literature.

TABLE 1

Brief Explanation of Assigned Readings for Study (Spoilers).

Number	Assigned Readings	Summary of the Readings
1	The Story of An Hour by Kate Chopin	"The Story of an Hour" by, Kate Chopin, is a short story originally published in 1894. This is a historically significant short story because of the time it was written, and because a female was the author. I did not discuss the story with the class prior to assigning reading and the music-link assignment. The story begins with a wife hearing that her husband died tragically in a train-wreck. The wife's knowledge of her husband's passing elicits a response that, especially for that time in history, was little talked about. Chopin does not provide the reader with the reasons why the wife reacts as she does. She stares out a window at a seemingly new world appreciating her newfound freedom. The reader is then told that the husband did not die in the train wreck and is not in fact dead. Unaware of this information the wife continues to be happy. The husband arrives at the door and at the sight of him the wife suddenly dies. The reader is told that she has heart troubles, but the reader also left to decide whether those problems were medical or emotional.

Number	Assigned Readings	Summary of the Readings
2	The Yellow Wallpaper by Charlotte Perkins Gilman	"The Yellow Wallpaper," by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, is a story that was originally published in 1892. Making students reach into history to relate to the subject matter or characters. This story is about a woman who suffers from psychiatric issues possibly linked to postpartum stress. She is trapped in a room for her betterment by her husband/doctor and her sister. The room has bars on the windows, the bed is bolted to the floor, and the walls are covered in a decrepit yellow wallpaper. She begins to slip into madness because of being trapped and she thinks she sees the yellow wallpaper in her room come alive. She sees a woman trapped in the paper and at the end of the story believes that she has freed both herself and the woman in the wallpaper as she succumbs to insanity. Her husband finds her creeping and crawling on the floor in the final scene of the story.
3	The Rose that Grew from Concrete by Tupac Amari Shakur	"The Rose that Grew from Concrete," by Tupac Amari Shakur published in 2000, is a poem about a rose that grew unattended in the concrete. The rose did not care about its surroundings. And even though it is difficult to imagine a rose growing in concrete the rose the speaker addresses grows and blooms beautifully in contrast to the concrete and cruel world that surrounds it.
4	Invictus by William Ernest Henley	"Invictus," by William Ernest Henley published in 1888, is a poem with a strong theme of survival. Henley wrote this piece during a turbulent time in his life when he was very ill and in need of inspiration. The poem demonstrates Henley's commitment to find a way through his sadness, pain, and anger.

Source: *Study Data*

This table, (TABLE 1) contains summaries that have been created by me. These are my interpretations of the texts and are as literal as possible as far as 'facts' from the stories and poems.

Data Analysis

Coding the Data

The data from the three sources were prepared for data analysis by anonymizing all student identifiers. I began data analysis with multiple, careful, reflective readings of the data. This style of data immersion is beneficial for descriptive analyses and reflections on the overall data (Creswell, 2013). Utilizing three data sources allowed for data triangulation. Prior to grading, the music-links were anonymized and saved as a single running document for ease of coding. The field notes from class discussions were typed into a single document. The interviews were transcribed and saved as a single running document. I began the first cycle coding process using in vivo coding as a guide. I coded each data source with anonymized identifiers for the participants. I began collapsing the codes as I noticed recurrences in the table of codes. It is important to maintain a high level of organization when collapsing codes and looking for themes (Hays & Singh, 2012; Saldana, 2015). I coded, collapsed codes, and checked for themes three times. After the third effort three main themes were found from the data that are explored in Chapter Five.

Trustworthiness

Participants were instructed to form small groups within the classroom to discuss the reflective component of the experience of the phenomena prior to submission. During this in-class time I will take rich field notes about students' experiences as they discuss with each other.

This step was essential for effective triangulation of data between the interviews, written reflections, and small group reflective discussions because triangulation is an important facet of qualitative study designs (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Triangulation of data-sets was accomplished via collecting documents from two classes, conducting three small group interviews with four students from each class, at the beginning, middle, and end of the study, and conducting four, 10 minute observations of students during regular small group discussions aimed at sharing experiences with readings and assignments.

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the methodology for this study. I began by detailing the study procedures and provided detailed explanations of the methods and planned data analysis. The participants, role of the researcher, ethical considerations, and trustworthiness were also outlined. In order for a more in-depth look at the methodology of this study, summaries of the assigned course readings were provided which will also aid in reading the descriptive data in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS

Chapter four detailed the methodology for this study. The particulars of the study, such as the research questions, design, curriculum and role of the researcher were discussed. Data sources, data collection, and the structure of analysis were described. In Chapter Five the results of the study will be elucidated.

Teaching is all about the students. Literature is not always students' favorite class. I believe that the study of literature has remained the same throughout history: plausibly transcendent. We all add our own experiences to any piece of fiction we read; it isn't for everyone! Therefore, finding pieces of literature that students with diverse interests in an introductory literature class might enjoy was daunting. This is a piece of the challenge, teaching general education courses, that I enjoy, and it became an essential piece of the rationale behind studying music-link assignments.

Coding the Data

The data were collected and delineated into three groups by the three types of artifacts that were collected for the study. The three artifacts collected for this study were music-link assignments, small group interview transcriptions, and field notes collected during in-class student-led discussions of the assignments. After the artifacts were identified, categorized, and transcribed I created a table of in vivo codes. Organization is essential in data analysis (Creswell, 2013; Hays & Singh, 2012; Saldana, 2015).

For this phenomenological study an adherence to Saldana (2015)'s coding definition was utilized. Saldana (2015) offers, "A code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative

attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (pg. 3). During this first cycle of coding

I read through these data three times while coding and collapsing codes. I mimicked in vivo

coding. The in vivo style was a good path for my coding process because it is suggestive of

pulling not just ideas but pieces from the artifacts (e.g.; direct quotes from transcripts,

assignments, and in class statements). In vivo is recommended in many styles of qualitative

phenomenological studies. Researchers whose goal is the analysis and exploration of experiential

data are recommended the use of in vivo coding for their study data (Creswell & Poth, 2018;

Saldana, 2015). Reflections and in the moment reactions, were evaluated as the third group of

coding after the music-link assignment responses and the transcribed interviews. The codes from

the reactions and reflections collected during student discussions on the experiences of

interacting with the music-link assignments, indicated a concision across the types of data sets.

From the direct quotes from assignments, transcribed quotes from interviews, and transcribed

quotes from the class observations of discussion about the assignments, three overarching themes

were evident.

      After coding, I collapsed codes checking and rechecking for the emergent themes. The

types of experiences that collapsed codes channeled into three main categories, or overarching

themes. Considerations were made with the collapsed codes and confluence into three themes.

For example, one of the themes noted was "perceived achievement." Collapsed coding indicated

that this theme included both the struggles and successes students experienced. A few

participants noted a great deal of perceived achievement in their descriptions of the time and

effort required to complete the assignments. This sense of achievement was prevalent across data

artifacts. A few participants noted that their experience had been difficult yet still led to a sense

of achievement. Many participants noted overcoming the difficulty and ultimately finding

success through significant time spent accomplishing the assignments. It was then decided that any route to success and achievement through the completion of the music-links would be noted through the emergent theme of achievement.

Another example of conscious delineation of collapsed codes occurred while analyzing the data. The research questions that guided this study did not take into account a consideration of the separation of achievement through understanding utilizing the music-links, and achievement through a simpler comprehension of the assigned reading. For example, a student may have noted success in understanding the literature through their analysis for a song, which was a part of this study. However, a different student may have noted that their sense of success came prior to the music-link portion of the assignment; it came when they were able to understand the assigned reading. A conscious effort was made while collapsing codes to separate the experiential from those that were noted strictly based on their completion of the assigned reading. If the study and research questions were designed differently, these types of factors may have been considered.

A keynote on the collapsed codes prior to introducing the table below parcels out how comments and responses like "interesting," were included in one of the three themes. The adjective 'interesting,' is noncommittal, however it was frequently mentioned as an experiential descriptor. Because of this an active reliance on other words in the artifact were considered in order to discern whether the participant was noting piqued curiosity for the reading or for the music-link experience. The most relevant portion for this study was piqued curiosity about the music-link experience. You will note this distinction in the table below (TABLE 2).

The following example is a completed music-link assignment from a participant. This was a single representation of the larger body of data that was collected. This is an important

step-by-step demonstration of one of the three types of data collected. The reading was, "The Rose That Grew From Concrete," by Tupac Amari Shakur:

> Did you hear about the rose that grew
>
> from a crack in the concrete?
>
> Proving nature's law is wrong it
>
> learned to walk with out having feet.
>
> Funny it seems, but by keeping its dreams,
>
> it learned to breathe fresh air.
>
> Long live the rose that grew from concrete
>
> when no one else ever cared.(Shakur)

From this poem students needed to think of a song that links to the poem in some way and defend their choice with a thorough explanation:

> Step 1: For "The Rose That Grew From Concrete," by Tupac Shakur, I chose *Since U Been Gone*, by Kelly Clarkson..
>
> Step 2: I chose to link this song to this literature course reading because in the chorus Clarkson states, "Since you been gone, I can breathe for this first time. I'm so moving on" the following quote from the song demonstrates that now she's on her own she can finally grow and move on with her life. She can finally focus on her herself and start over. I wanted to connect this with the following quote from the reading, "Funny it seems, but by keeping it's dreams, it learned to breathe fresh air. Long live the rose that grew from concrete when no one else ever cared", because basically the rose in the story is growing and will live a successful, long life on its own. Both quotes can connect and

potentially tell a story of an individual who no longer has that companion to rely on but is

still strong enough to continue and make the best of life with or without them.

Step 3**:** My experience completing this music link assignment was interesting. It was

definitely weird to connect a piece written by Tupac to a song sung by Kelly Clarkson.

Personally, I am going through a breakup and viewed this poem as motivation and linked

it to what I'm going through. Therefore, I decided to relate it to a song about a breakup as

well. Both pieces essentially give me hope for the future in a way. Knowing that even

without him, I can now successfully grow as a person (as corny as that sounds).

This example from the study is a great representation of the types of responses I received. Each

student had their own perception, reception, and appreciation for the reading as well as the song

they chose. This student also mentioned the relevance of the song to her life specifically.

The table below (TABLE 2) provides an overview of the process of codes, collapsed

coding, and final grouping of large themes. The table includes randomly chosen samples from

each of the three data artifacts. These randomly chosen data serve to explicate the manner of

findings. On the left side of the table the style of artifact is noted. The second column includes

direct quotes, and some paraphrasing, which is noted, from students' experiences creating the

music-links and codes are bolded in the full text.. The third column includes bolded enumerated

collapsed codes. The fourth column includes the themes these codes were placed into. The three

overarching themes were: the relevance of the assignment experienced by the students; the

perceived achievement students experienced while completing these assignments; and students

who noted an affective experience while completing the music-link assignments. These themes

were shortened for brevity in the table to be Relevance, Achievement, and Affect respectively.

TABLE 2

Artifacts, Responses and Codes, Collapsed Codes, Themes.

Artifact	Responses and Codes	Collapsed Code(s)	Theme(s)
Individual Music-Link Assignment	My experience completing this music-link assignment was e**ye opening** for this is because it takes a lot to fight through cancer and hardships and any other thing that can result in almost dying. **Kanye West and William Ernest Henley** almost died and they're still trying to be strong no matter what happens and in my eyes that **deserves the utmost recognition**.	[1]Eye opening [2]Henley & Kanye [3]Respect for both	Affect Relevance Affect
Individual Music-Link Assignment	My experience completing this music assignment was **exciting** because the poem was very **compelling** because of the authors **back story** and what he was going through when writing it, so finding the right song was that much more important. The eye of the Tiger is the background song to almost every training montage on YouTube because of the rocky movies and because it is a great song that will pump you up. I **enjoyed the assignment**.	[1]Exciting, [2]Compelling [3]Background… [4]Enjoyed	Affect Affect Relevance Affect

TABLE 2

Continued

Artifact	Responses and Codes	Collapsed Code(s)	Theme(s)
Individual Music-Link Assignment	This assignment **was difficult**. the story was a **bit confusing**. I had to choose a quote and then a song occur to me and I found **a link that helped me** understand the story because it related to my life.	[1]Was difficult [2]Bit confusing [3]Link that helped	Affect Affect Achievement
Individual Music-Link Assignment	My experience completing this musiclink assignment was **pretty easy** which is enough form. in general I do not consider myself a big music person so I cannot imagine finding myself enjoying assignments like this. **I do not know** a lot of music or artists so I thought this assignment would be a **lot harder** than it actually was. I guess you can say I was **pleasantly** surprised.	[1]Pretty Easy [2]Do not know music and artists [3]Harder than it actually was [4]Pleasantly surprised	Affect Relevance Achievement Affect
Individual Music-Link Assignment	My experience completing this music link assignment was very **interesting** because this story and song are very powerful to me. It is also very **relevant** to women not only in history but today as well because there are still women in society and other countries who feel trapped by men. So this assignment was very **enlightening** and very heartfelt.	[1]Interesting [2]Relevant [3]Englightening…	Affect Relevance Affect

TABLE 2

Continued

Artifact	Responses and Codes	Collapsed Code(s)	Theme(s)
Individual Music-Link Assignment	This was **not as difficult** as I thought it would be, when I was reading the story I kept thinking to myself what song possibly linked. Then as I **reached the end** and found out the woman was freed from the wallpaper then the song pursuit of happiness by Kid Cudi immediately **popped into my head.**	[1]Not as difficult [2]Reached the end [3]Popped in my head	Achievement Achievement Achievement
Individual Music-Link Assignment	My experience completing this music link assignment was **rather difficult** at first because I tried to focus mainly on relating a song that had to do with death, but I decided to dig deeper and connect the song through the main characters real emotions on the matter of her husband's death. **Digging deeper** I realized how character really felt and it was almost as if a burden had been raised from her chest. She seemed as if she would be OK with living her life alone or at least without her husband. Both of my quotes from these songs and the reading show how the main character feels about the death of her husband and she mentions how life would be different without him.	[1]Rather difficult [2]Diggin Deeper…	Achievement Achievement

TABLE 2

Continued

Artifact	Responses and Codes	Collapsed Code(s)	Theme(s)
Individual Music-Link Assignment	My experience completing this musiclink assignment was **not overly difficult** because the story was about how the mind can play tricks on someone and I had plenty of songs I thought I could use for this one like the ghetto boys my mind playing tricks on me. I ended up picking this one because it felt like it related to this story more because the singer is losing his mind from drugs and then narrator is losing her mind from her husband's horrible treatment and **both of those things reminded me of the song**	[1]Not overly difficult [2]Things reminded me of the song	Achievement Relevance
Individual Music-Link Assignment	My experience with this assignment was the **hardest but most rewarding**. For the first time since we started the musiclink assignments a song did not come to mind easily or quickly. I had to reread the poem 3 times and still nothing came to mind. So instead I had to really focus on the theme of the reading and then think of a song **I liked being able to link the reading to a Christian song**	[1]Hardest but most… [2]Link the reading…	Achievement Relevance

TABLE 2

Continued

Artifact	Responses and Codes	Collapsed Code(s)	Theme(s)
Individual Music-Link Assignment	my experience was **difficult at first** because the first time I read it I didn't understand what he was talking about. I had to read it 3 times before I could interpret the reading in my own way.	[1]Difficult at first	Achievement
	after I understood what he was talking about it **was easy to pick a song that** talked about being poor and making it out and being successful	[2]After I understood [3]Easy to pick song	Achievement Achievement
Individual Music-Link Assignment	My experience completing this music-link assignment was **very interesting** because it took a while to find the right song. However it is **very fun** because it **makes you analyze** really both the reading and the true meaning of the songs it really helps you dig deep.	[1]Very interesting [2]Very fun [3]Makes you analyze	Affect Affect Achievement
Individual Music-Link Assignment	This story was interesting and more fun than I thought it would be! I thought it **was going to be difficult** to choose a song because of the reading but it actually **was really easy** I had to narrow down a few songs. this assignment made me more intrigued to the short story because I was able to make a **connection** between the music and the story. it also **love listening** to music	[1]Going to be difficult [2]Actually really easy [3]Able to make a connection [4]Love listening to music	Achievement Achievement Relevance Affect

TABLE 2

Continued

Artifact	Responses and Codes	Collapsed Code(s)	Theme(s)
Small Group Interviews	Smiles and laughs. yeah well when she was talking to herself in the story of an hour the song radioactive by Imagine Dragons came on and I was just like ya **this is like perfect** for this because I saw it as her maybe "waking up" to a new life without her husband and being free for the first time **like in the song**.	[1]This is like perfect for this [2]Like in the song	Achievement Relevance
Small Group Interviews	I just **felt like it** and made me interact with the story more on a personal level 'cause I was looking into the content of the story and what it's about and thought of a song while I was reading it so I was able to see how they were like **linking today to 100 years ago.**	[1]Felt like [2]Linking today…	Affect Relevance
Small Group Interviews	I got confused it was a **difficult experience** and I had a **hard time doing this** because I was too focused on like the line by line um and like just going through it all that way, but I think I am gonna do it like they did… (makes sweeping arm motion at other participants)…and will wait till the end and like think of a theme and try it that way.. 'cause this way was really difficult for me.	[1]Difficult experience [2]Hard time doing this	Affect Achievement

TABLE 2

Continued

Artifact	Responses and Codes	Collapsed Code(s)	Theme(s)
Small Group Interviews	I thought this was **pretty eye opening** it showed me how death can affect a person in multiple ways both negatively and positively for example when they thought she might be dead inside the room and her husband breaks down the door to find that she might be alive but she might not be the same person he knew. it relates to she is a different person because she did not feel some sort of independence. **I had a toughtime** locating a song for this story until I started thinking about the times the world has taught artists were dead inside and all the suicides and how that can affect people differently**. I also thought about the pain of my previous break up because it can be paralyzing and prevent you from getting up off the floor of your room and you feel empty you don't want to see people for awhile because that pain can cause heart ache but not just for you for those who love you. I had to think about the story to understand it and that helps**.	[1]Pretty eye opening [2]I had a tough time [3] Paraphrased: personal relationship and sadness due to breakup were explained helped student uncover some feelings about how breakups effect everyone and how people may have felt around her	Affect Achievement Relevance

TABLE 2

Continued

Artifact	Responses and Codes	Collapsed Code(s)	Theme(s)
Small Group Interviews	My experience completing this music link assignment was **kind of emotional** for me because the song I'd chosen the story has to deal with losing a loved one and I lost someone that I loved so it brought back some memories. I also thought the assignment was very creative and a new way of learning because I've never had an assignment like this and it **was fun trying** to think of a song to try and compare it to a reading. My experience was also kind of **challenging** and I had to put a lot of thought into it because there's plenty of songs out there and it was **kind of tough** trying to pick one but it's a **different type of thinking I enjoy it**	[1]Kind of emotional [2]It was fun trying [3]Challenging [4]Kind of tough trying to pick one [5]Different type of thinking and I enjoy it	Affect Affect Achievement Achievement Relevance
Small Group Interviews	Um…I think the music um…**I like the music assignments**, they're more informative in a sense…or maybe the story gives you an internal message…ya know it portrayed the message of the story or whatever better. Like makes **you think, okay that's what this story is about**, or this part is about **and it finally makes sense.**	[1]I like the music assignment [2]Think okay that's what this story is about or part is about it finally makes sense	Affect Achievement

TABLE 2

Continued

Artifact	Responses and Codes	Collapsed Code(s)	Theme(s)
Small Group Interviews	My **experience was interesting** because the story was almost hard to read at points it became very intense period I started to believe that John was right about his wife. **But as I kept reading I understood more and more while I was thinking about a song to link it to that this was a complex story that had more layers than I thought**	[1]Experience was interesting [2]Paraphrase: searching for song link revealed deeper meanings from story	Affect Achievement
Small Group Interviews	For me more so it was **not like looking for a song to fit, but like while I was reading it certain parts would like I'd be like oh that song would check with this part** then I keep reading and **I'm like but this song would fit here**, and it would change throughout the story. And **I like the story early on and I thought of a song** but then I kept reading and it changed **and after I finished the reading** I thought OK I'm gonna use the first song I thought of because I like that one the most.	[1]Not like looking for a song to fit, but like while I was reading it certain parts would like I'd be like oh that song would check with the part [2]And I like the story early on and I thought of a song [3]and after I Finished the reading	Achievement Achievement Achievement

TABLE 2

Continued

Artifact	Responses and Codes	Collapsed Code(s)	Theme(s)
In-Class Discussion Comments	At first I was like yo this story is just about some crazy chic. And I **wasn't sure** how I was gonna pick a song that wouldn't offend someone because it was just about women being crazy. Haha. I thought about it a little bit and realize when they're talking about everything being nailed down that she really was locked up and there's a lot of people that are locked up that maybe shouldn't be. **So then I could relate to it and I was like yeah I can find a song for that.**	[1]Wasn't sure: Confused [2]Could relate	Affect Relevance
In-Class Discussion Comments	I thought this assignment was great. I had a lot of **fun connecting** a story and a song that I listen to. I like how the assignment **connects me** with the reading personally because we got to **put our own twist** in a way into the assignment **which is nice.**	[1]Fun connecting a story and a song [2]Connects me with the reading [3]Put our own twist which is nice	Affect Relevance Achievement
In-Class Discussion Comments	My experience completing this music-link assignment **was pretty good I love that we have to integrate music into our short stories that we are reading** especially think that this is **because we** can choose any music of our choosing I thought the story was interesting and…	[1]Was pretty good [2]I love that we have to integrate music into our short stories that we are reading [3]Because we	Affect Affect Relevance

TABLE 2

Continued

Artifact	Responses and Codes	Collapsed Code(s)	Theme(s)
	(*continued*) …that the song link I chose shows that the character is feeling better and that she can see beyond and maybe realizing that the rest of her life is up to her and that is uplifting	(*continued*)…can choose any music of our choosing	
In-Class Discussion Comments	I had to go back and **reread the story** a few times and I don't normally do that. But I **wanted to find a link and finally I did and I think I understood the story better too** which I didn't think would happen, I guess I got the point the whole time I was just thinkin too much.	[1]Reread the story [2]Wanted to find a link and finally I did and I think I understood the story better too	Achievement Achievement
In-Class Discussion Comments	Well I just felt like while I was **reading it, it took longer because I was searching for meaning and thinking** about songs like while I was reading and after 2. What the story means or how I might interpret it. **I guess it helped me** get the story more	[1]Reading it, it took longer because I was searching for meaning [2]I guess it helped me	Achievement Achievement
In-Class Discussion Comments	I **did not understand** the story and **got really frustrated** but then I started thinking about songs that would make the story make sense and then that **I actually did understand** the story	[1]did not understand story [2]Got really Frustrated [3]I did understand	Achievement Affect Achievement

Source: *Study Data*

Affective Outcomes

While coding and moving toward themes by noting similar responses I noticed that many students described how the assignments made them feel. Some noted "frustration" from the assignments, others "happiness," and still others noted an "okay," experience. As I delved deeper into the data I noticed the impact that the assignments had on some students leading me to a label of Affective Outcomes from data. Other terms that are known to fit in the affective domain were collapsed into this theme were: great, good, anxious, sad, liked, and notes that it was the emotions evoked from the assignments that led them to their links and/or led them to feel an impact from the experience of completing their assignments (Shephard, 2007). In the small group interviews students also noted how they felt about the assigned readings and as the interviews progressed points of comparison such as "good," and "awful," as comparisons students were drawing between their experiences throughout the study. Reflections and in the moment reactions transcribed during group class discussions were indicative of discussions of their song choices and how difficult or easy the process was for them.

Although a comparison of the songs was not included in the research questions for this study some students said that after talking about the links with each other they felt better or worse about their links. I reminded them frequently that the song choice was not a part of the study or the grade, but how they linked the reading to a song was essential. For some, the assignments fostered unexpected outcomes from the students, and some responses note that their reactions were indeed unexpected. There was significant variance among them; and I learned a great deal about the essence of individual affective student experiences while completing the same assignment. There is also overlap within the codes and themes. Some responses even note

their affect, the relevance the assignment encouraged, and comprehending the reading in a different way that they had experienced before.

According to Kerry Shephard (2007) "It is possible to separate what students learn about sustainability during their experience of higher education, from what they learn to value during this same period. Relevant theory separates affective learning from cognitive learning. Affective learning relates to values, attitudes and behaviours and involves the learner emotionally" (p. 88). The music-link assignments proved to be affective learning experiences at some point; out of the 65 students participating in the study 52 noted an affective experience within the sources of data collection. Students' responses varied from "exciting," to "troubling;" of the 65 students 42 noted consistent positive affects throughout, and twenty-three noted a confusing and/or negative experience at some point during the study.

The data provides myriad representative indications of affective responses to completing the music-link assignments. From the table, comments such as "it was a difficult experience," and "I liked," "I got confused," "was exciting," "kind of emotional," and "I was intrigued." These types of phrases and the codes that emerged from them indicated affective experiences in most student responses. It was as though they felt they had to evaluate their feelings during their work. The phrases listed above are all affective value-based domain phrases which eventually collapsed under the larger theme of affective outcomes. One student's response from the table stated, "My experience completing this music-link assignment was happy." A revealing and relevant response in the affective domain.

John Santrock (2004) argues that "instructors can and should maintain a balance between the cognitive and the affective domains of Bloom's taxonomy by using authentic assignment" (p. 113). Many students noted among the data in this chapter that they had not completed a

literature course assignment like the music-links before. Some students noted frustration; others noted joy; but overall it was an authentic assignment. It was what Santrock (2004) notes as a balance of comprehension and affective impacts in addition to adding relevance and relatability in assignments is beneficial for students.

Relatability and Relevance

Relatability is the next theme related to data analysis and emerging themes. Some students found that the assignment aided their ability to relate to the content or some other aspect of the assigned reading. Through the coding process, an ability to understand the assigned readings and how linking a song to the readings aided in their ability to more fully relate to the characters, words, and overall thoughts about the assigned readings. In an article on the importance of relevance, Snow (2016) notes that Schoenfeld (1999):

> Pre-supposed the relevance of education research to education; the two main points I wish to make are as follows: 1. Theories and models of competence in various content areas, which he argued provide direct input to curricular design, to pedagogical approaches, and to instructional goals. 2. Theories and models of acting in context, which he argued were crucial to understanding performances like teaching and thus to providing appropriate supports. (p. 66)

I am grateful that few students noted a negative affect and the majority noted positive affects.

Students ability to relate to the assigned readings indicated a level of interest in completing the assignments; which was a satisfactory indication of possible future success using these assignments (Shephard, 2011; Snow, 2016, p.66). Relating to material that was written in the 1800's is not an easy task for many; and providing students with a path to find relatability through linking the songs to their readings may have been beneficial in unanticipated ways.

Data further indicated a noted ability to relate or find relevance through completing the work for this study, finding links between literature and students' lives are provided. The criticality necessary to create relevance through autonomous work outside of class indicate a strong presence of relevance and relatability to the text through linking a song. Another example from "The Story of an Hour," indicates that the student participant enjoyed the process of being critical with the reading and the song choice;

A response from the TABLE 2 (above) indicates the search for relevance for a student "Because it makes you analyze really both the reading and the true meaning of the songs it really helps you dig deep" exemplifies that a student found relatability and relevance while completing this assignment. Yet it also indicates a bit of dissonance in the deliberation of finding their best song to link to the reading. It does highlight that the assignment increased relatability due to criticality and musicality as well as a greater understanding of the content being studied. In any Literature course this type of a relationship to literature can be difficult to garner (Miller, 2010). From the data there were one hundred and sixty-five responses that indicated that the assignment encouraged a personal relationship to the reading because of their song choices.

Another example of a student response "The authors share a lot of the same traits being that they are both strong and positive individuals who will fight for anything that is right, so I think I made a great choice." This student created relevance between the song and the story garnering relevance between the content of the story and the content of their song choice.

A third example that notes that this student found that the music-link assignment compelled her into criticality and musicality to find a relatable relevant song choice; "If (I) connect this story to the music I listen to now it has me thinking about the story in different ways then I like would have and the song in different ways that I like would have and just read and

write about it thanks it makes it more relatable to me because I'm young and I haven't had some of these experiences most of these experiences I guess." This student specifically notes that what they have experienced versus what the character or author may have experienced are likely different, and the assignment made the experiences relevant and relatable to her life.

These examples reinforce Snow's (2016) assessment of the essentialness of relevance to bring a relatable moment in the learning experience. Through the music-link assignments some students were able to find connections between their lives and the lives of authors and characters in stories written in the 1800's. As a teacher I have struggled to create these links for my students in the past. It is possible that the autonomy granted to complete these assignments that employed student's criticality helped them make the connections on their own.

As one student noted, "My experience completing this music-link assignment was rather difficult at first because I tried to focus mainly on relating a song that had to do with death but I decided to dig deeper and connect the song through the main characters real emotions."

Perceived Achievement

Perhaps one of the more striking features of the perceived achievement theme is the noted surprised reactions from the students. The data indicates that it was not until a song was linked to the assigned reading that the reading began to make more sense. This theme was designated "Perceived Achievement," because the data was collected prior to any grading or scoring for participants grades. Therefore, student's perceived achievement was strictly from the participant perspective on completing the assignment unaware of their future grades on the assignments. For some, dedication in reading and re-reading emerged as descriptors in student responses as listed in TABLE 2 and were included under the theme of Perceived Achievement. For other participants, locating a song which they felt linked to the reading aided their ability to understand

either some or all the assigned readings. Morrell (2014) states, "Students can develop their critical faculties and their writing skills through the analysis of these cultural artifacts, and they can also develop core literacies as they produce across many of these same genres" (p. 6). For the purposes of this study the cultural artifacts are the songs chosen as links and readings I assigned. As the codes became more condensed and it became evident that perceived achievement completing the assignments was one of three large themes to emerge in the study.

One student response noted a bit of difficulty in understanding the content of the reading, but by evaluating a song choice felt better equipped to make that decision. In fact, the student chose a song based on their understanding of the author and learning about the author was not a part of the assignment. It would be covered in the next class. This student noted that, "It was also a bit difficult trying to find a song that fit the same characteristics as the poem, but in the end, I think I did a great song comparison. The authors share a lot of the same traits being that they are both strong and positive individuals who will fight for anything that is right, so I think I made a great choice." This student dedicatedly strived to complete the assignments despite a bit of difficulty in understanding the story. The explanation also indicates that this assignment took longer to complete because it was difficult.

Songs, as per this study, emerged as a noteworthy addition to a literature assignment because students were engaged, citing relevance, and they persevered in completing them through difficulty in ways that I have not seen in all my other literature assignments. Michael Romick (2015) wrote an article about the impact that one of his teachers had on his learning in a literature class by using lyrics to songs. It was early in his education, but it made such an impact that years later he felt that it was time to reintroduce the topic. Romick (2015) relates that often students tell him of song lyrics that give voice to emotions or experiences they've had but were

unable to express which inspires him to have students find and share a song or poem they

identify with personally for class discussions and writing inspirations (p. 42-43). Romick (2015)

notes that the many positive effects of bringing songs into the classroom., that were also

suggested in this study.

Another student response worthy of note is a positive experience and explanation of the

ways that the music-link assignments improved their ability to understand the content of the

assigned reading. This student wrote, "I like the music assignments, they're more informative in

a sense…or maybe the story gives you an internal message…ya know it portrayed the message

of the story or whatever better. Like makes you think, okay that's what this story is about, or this

part is about, and it finally makes sense." This type of response is a literature teacher's dream.

Not only did the student spend more time with the reading, but they also figured out that the

action of seeking a part of the story in order to link a song helped them understand the story.

A third quote from a student's experiential notes about the music-links noted a positive

experience that challenged them to work harder to comprehend the assigned reading. They

wrote:

> I think that this way of doing an assignment is really smart because it's a different kind of
>
> critical thinking that isn't just memorizing a story even if you don't understand it so you
>
> can pass a test. it like makes you think the whole time you're reading, so you're paying
>
> attention I liked the it was a totally different way of checking whether I did the reading or
>
> not that was actually fun. (TABLE 2)

This student remained committed to comprehending the story, they persisted until they did, and

they had a good time doing it with the goal of finding a song to link the story to. This incredibly

positive response was a pleasure to read as this student autonomously chose to achieve more so

that she could comprehend the story in order to complete the assignment. There was no rote-memorization; the student indicated an internal motivation to keep working because the assignment was accomplishable.

Romick (2015) describes his own experience the first time a teacher introduced music to a class he was in, "My teachers were using a combination of poetry and current music to teach. I was totally engaged for perhaps the first time in my short academic career" (p. 40). This easy effort to find a way for students to comprehend the subject matter through something that is of their world, current music, immediately had an impact on him. Something as small as a song encouraged him to engage with the class assignments in a manner and depth he had not experienced before. This type of constructive reaction is noted throughout the data in this study; leading me to want to research other avenues of music-link assignments in the future.

Reflections

I am including the reflections and reactions for this study in a separate section because they create an active picture of all the themes interacting with the group discussions in class. Reflections were noted after the small group interviews, and the reactions were based on the interactions between students during the small group student-led discussions on the assignments during class-time. The reflections of the small group interviews were noted during and after the interviews occurred. The two classes this study was conducted in were similar in how they managed themselves for group discussions each day the music-link assignments were due. Most unassigned groups remained the same students as the first day discussions. Some groups were quick to share their links. Others remained reluctant to share and their body language indicated a bit of discomfort either in the discussion or in sharing their links.

All the groups became quiet as I toured the classroom. Also, despite my reminders to my classes that their song choices were only relevant in the manner that they demonstrated the link they found between the reading and the song; a few students remarked that they "weren't sure if their song was a good song."

An essential moment that created a level of unison unseen and unheard in any other music-link occurred within a group discussion during class-time. After a student told his group his song choice and explained how he made the link, one of his group members reacted loudly enough that the rest of the class heard. To the best of my knowledge all the students in the class then reacted in agreement and congratulatory remarks at the student's song choice. Regarding the short story, "The Yellow Wallpaper," the student noted that he felt that the main character was yearning to go to a new place. That her placement in the yellow room made her want to explore a new world even if it was within the wallpaper. The student then said that as he was thinking about what it would be like to want to be in a new world the song that occurred to him made him feel silly.

His group members encouraged him to share his song, and he said it was from a Disney movie. The whole group leaned in at this point indicating interest in his remarks. He then asked if they had seen "The Little Mermaid," and all group members nodded their heads yes. And when he said, "Part of Your World," a member of his group reacted with a loud "YAAAAS!!!!" and he turned to the remainder of the class and said "Y'all does Little Mermaid "A Part of Your World," fit for this or what?!"" The student who chose the song became noticeably embarrassed as he was generally quiet in class, however his red face quickly wore a giant smile as essentially the entire class reacted with "YES!'s" and "Oh dude!" and "That's SO PERFECT!" And in one moment a class that rarely agreed on anything became a group in agreement. They became

excited by his idea and that was the only time not only during the study that one single point united a group of 36 students. And it just happened to be a Disney movie about a mermaid trapped in the sea. It appeared every student in class understood why he made the link to the story and if they had thought of it, they would have made the same link. As a professor, it was a moment that I could not have dreamt of but will never forget. My other class had some intriguing conversations and by the last two weeks of the study were sharing more easily and listening more attentively to their peers. Both classes' group discussions improved through the course of the study. It is plausible that the reasoning behind the building comfort with each other. It was a distinct pleasure watching the students in my classes begin to have in depth conversations with each other about how they made their links and what their experiences entailed.

As the study progressed, students amount of discussion in class also changed. The first week indicated a hesitance to talk to each other after the first music-link assignment was assigned. Students were reluctant to share their links; one group asked all members to report that they turned in their work prior to class. I took this to mean that the group members did not want their work to be copied. Every assignment due date more and more groups discussions began with the question, "Everybody turned theirs in already right?" I believe this was an essential question because as the data revealed many students spent a significant amount of time creating their music-links, were proud of their work, and did not want anyone to borrow from their ideas.

The hesitancy noted at the beginning of the class discussions lessened significantly with the assignments. as the semester progressed. As the discussions became a common experience, the hesitancy was assuaged, and more students began to share their experiences whether they felt they were successful or had trouble. It was a positive and pleasant experience that the in-class discussions were successful in both classes. As I continued to tour the room each due date for the

links, I found that students were more willing to share and provide honest reactions to their peers by offering advice and encouragement. An example from my reactions was that a student noted that they too chose the same song, but they chose it by linking it to a different piece of the reading. One student had chosen the song to link to a character's actions at the beginning of reading, while the other chose to use the song to link to their overall impression of the ending of the reading. Not all the reactions were positive, as some students did not understand why other students linked songs to the readings the way they did, but each student was able to explain why they chose the song and seemed to be unaffected by their peers' confusion.

The opportunity to watch students participate in autonomously led discussions was fascinating. The data collected during these discussions were invaluable to the triangulation of data for the study. Although students' experiences varied being able to learn about them without a teacher-led discussion may have provided an insight into the experiences of the music-links. The aspect that affected me the most was watching students discuss the readings beyond the answers and reflections they may have found online. The students participating in these conversations about these assignments had done the reading and thought critically about it in order to find a relevant song to link the two.

Summary

This chapter reviewed the themes that emerged from data analyses in addition to providing examples of student artifacts from the study. Each of the artifact types was separated into the theme it represented. Direct quotes from students' music-link assignments were included, quotes from small group interviews, and field notes and my own recollections were also included. By separating the data in this manner, I demonstrate the three major themes in this study; Affective Outcomes, Relatability, Perceived Achievement. In the following chapter I will

discuss the possible implications of the findings in this study and the plausible directions for

further research that were indicated.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS

In chapter five, the analysis process and the results of those processes were enumerated. The three themes that emerged from the analyses of the data: Perceived Achievement, Relevance, and Affective experiences. These themes are important to the body of English education research because of their importance in the study of college literature. In chapter six, I will discuss the need for this study within education research. I will demonstrate the necessity of this study among other English education studies, and the factors that would be altered in future study. Lastly, I will address further implications for research.

Importance of Study

This study stands apart from the rest and is important to the body of education research, because it disrupts the English literature formalities, the previous research being done at the college-level, and the overall student experience.

Literature has been studied in English classrooms for decades. During these decades, the instruction, curriculum, and assessment in English classes have changed, but scholars like McComiskey (2006) note that there is a feeling of stagnation. The advancements in technology have altered the form or media in which the content might be delivered, but the assessments on the content seem to hearken back to the original classes that studied literature. It is this researcher's belief that a notion of formality has underpinned many introductory English classes, and formality is not always the best approach to teaching (Miller, 2010).

In this study, students experienced music in a literature class in a newly autonomous method unlike any they had experienced before. The students that participated in this study did not have a formal experience with literature. The overall goal of completion, comprehension,

and further thought were highlighted, but were done so in a manner unlike the usual read and report assignments. Students were asked to bring a school assignment together with a song of their choosing in a way that might connect the literature to the larger human experience. Leitch (2010) states:

> Literary texts, like other artworks, are neither more nor less important than any other cultural artifact or practice. Keeping the emphasis on how cultural meanings are produced, circulated, and consumed, the investigator will focus on art or literature insofar as such works connect with broader social factors, not because they possess some intrinsic interest or special aesthetic values. (p.29)

The broader social factors mentioned by Leitch (2010) are at the heart of this study that challenges the formal facets in English classes. A consistent comment from the written responses, interviews, and group discussions was that students noted the inherent differences in the assignment style from any other literature class they had taken. I argue that it is this departure from formality that is essential for growth within English instruction and assessment. One need not reinvent an entire content area like English class to turn students' heads in a new direction and down a new path to experience literature.

Formality can provide a level of familiar structure leading to comfort; reading and studying literature are no exceptions to this idea. Many students, including myself, took many English classes, but the same sort of read and respond assignments were the formal ways of conducting an English class in high school, college, and into graduate studies. One need not look far on a college campus to see that there are levels of formality in education that have been set aside for new ways of learning. Unpredictability though, a departure from formality if you will, like the assignments used in this study, was shown to garner a new and different sense of student

comfort with the content through an unconventional and new method of the study of literature. The music-link assignments provided a new method of experiencing literature, responding to literature, and being assessed on thoughtfulness of the response.

Limitations

An initial limitation for this study is the number of participants. A larger study including multiple different introductory literature classes with different instructors would have embodied a broader view about the impact of the assignments. A larger group could maximize the indications from the data of this study more generalizable. The larger group would also provide more diversity among the students in the study.

Another limitation for this study was the length of time in each semester. It may be interesting to conduct a similar study lasting two semesters, utilizing multiple instructors, and investigating concurrently assigned music-links assignments. The current study used music-link assignments for portions of the curriculum. In this manner, students were able to differentiate between the usual read and report assignments and the music-links. It might also be interesting to weave music-link assignments with traditional, or 'normal' English assessments. Students might complete the reading using different read and report assessments styles, followed by a music-link assignment. This might enable students to expand their reflections on the different experiences they had while completing their work. The addition of this information could prove invaluable in discerning the benefits of using music-links.

An additional limitation in this study was that there was one researcher conducting the research. Perhaps a larger group of researchers utilizing combined literature teaching experience could lend new ideas about how to further the study. It may be arguable that the music-link assignments could fit in with other content-area instruction which would be another limitation.

Implications

Student music-link experiential notes were recorded and triangulated using three different sources. Many responses indicated a positive, educational, and beneficial experience. Several areas of implications for this study emerged from the themes.

Perceived Achievement

The perceived achievement in this study presented itself in two forms. The first was an ability to comprehend the text. The second was the notion that students that usually did not feel successful completing assignments felt like they were able to be successful. The researcher may be due to confess that an underlying hope of the completion of the music-link assignments was completion of the reading. Summaries and websites abound that are able to help students do anything but read their assigned readings. Because the path to the 'answers' about the music-link readings was autonomous and due to uniqueness students were forced to spend time with the text in order to choose and defend their song choices. The type of reading that was necessary is known as deep reading, or close reading.

There are marked differences in the styles of reading and experiencing writing from online text or an assigned piece of literature. Comprehending literature almost demands the close reading experience; the nuances, the elements, the layers, and the minute details. The music-link assignments compelled students into the close reading space. There was nowhere to turn to complete their assignments, but into the piece of literature they were reading. This is the type of result which guides the necessity of an assignment like the music-links because it enforces the need to spend time with a text instead of reading just to read it for a class. Or worse, to look up a summary and find the answers to recall questions already posted by another student online. A study conducted by Raymond Mar, Keith Oatley, and Jordan Peterson (2009) suggests that

students who spend time close reading a piece of literature find it easier to understand other types of literature and build the ability to empathize and relate to others. This type of education is invaluable. This study reveals a new way for instructors to differentiate their students' experiences and achievements in and out of college. By using the music-links, a student's perceived understanding of a piece of literature can be accomplished, and it may deepen the critical thought and comprehension required to complete the assignment.

Affective

The affective responses from this study were for the most part positive. The outliers too added to the implications for this study. Mar, Oatley, and Peterson (2009) suggest that close reading can help students empathize with others and imagine a world in someone else's shoes (p.2). This type of affective response would be an excellent way to garner appreciation for the experience of reading a piece of literature, but the outliers that noted a great deal of frustration because they could not empathize are worthy of note. A point to build upon and to ponder for the future might be how to address the students who despite their best efforts did not enjoy the reading and the piece of literature. Morson (2015) states, "But great literature allows one to think and feel from within how other cultures think and feel. The greater the premium on understanding other cultures in their own terms, the more the study of literature matters" (p. 1). If the affective domain is being accessed during a close reading of a piece of literature, then an affective response when completing the music-link assignments encourages an implication worthy of further thought or examination. Although the intention of adding the music-link experience was not to create sentimentality, the data may indicate a point of interest in any further investigation.

Relevance

Creating relevance for students within literature written centuries ago is a challenge for any teacher. An implication from the data results in this study is that the music-link assignments added an element of relevance between the assigned readings and the songs chosen for their music-links. Researchers like Bettina Love and Ernest Morrell establish relevance for their students using hip-hop music and popular culture. Love used this type of contemporary reference for her elementary students and in current research, and Morrell used them with high school and college students.

According to Gary S. Morson (2015) "The more our culture presumes its own perspective, the more our academic disciplines presume their own rectitude, and the more professors restrict students to their own way of looking at things, the less students will be able to escape from habitual, self-centered, self-reinforcing judgments. We grow wiser, and we understand ourselves better, if we can put ourselves in the position of those who think differently" (p. 3). If the music-links are thought of in this manner, they provide a way to understand literature spanning centuries, to apply that knowledge to their music-link assignments, and in doing so teach themselves to look at the world differently.

The following table (TABLE 3) shows the links students made between writings from the 1800's (titles and year of publication listed in the left column) and music they know today (song title and artist in the right column). It serves as an example of students bringing culturally relevant topics and popular culture to link their learning to their lives. The number of songs that I did not know was more than I thought it would be. I liked to think that I was educated in most genres of music, but now that students can find local or global artists on YouTube. For some,

students the overwhelming number of options of songs was a challenging factor. For others, it was a good reason to go back through their music library.

TABLE 3

Writing from the 1800's and the Songs of Today

Title of Assigned Reading	Title of Song Linked to the Assigned Reading
<u>The Yellow Wallpaper,</u> 1892	*Locked Up*, by, Akon
<u>The Yellow Wallpaper</u>, 1892	*She's a Maniac*, by Hall and Oates
<u>The Story of an Hour</u>, 1894	*Free Falling,* by Tom Petty
<u>The Story of an Hour</u>, 1894	*A Thousand Years,* by Christina Perri.
"Invictus," 1888	*It's Not Over Yet*, by For King and Country
"Invictus," 1888	*Dark Times* by, The Weeknd
"The Rose that Grew From Concrete," 2000	*Daydreams* by, Lupe Fiasco
"The Rose that Grew From Concrete," 2000	*The Way I Are* by, Timbaland, feat. K. Hillson

Source: *Study Data*

Additional Implications

Criticality. The reluctance of some students in the study to share their music-links at the beginning of the study morphed into an interest in sharing and comparing by final music-link assignment. This reaction was noted as a possibility for further research as a measure of comprehension and ability to reference links in long-term learning. Dweck (2015) notes that students who retain a modicum of learning from an experience are more likely to be able to reference that information because they attained ownership of the experience. Rote memory

exercises may encourage a memory recall, but different and creative assignments may provide a student with a new method of critical thinking that compels them to create a link between the content and their lives. An example of a student quote that notes that they noticed that the music-links inspired a different type of learning:

My experience completing this music-link assignment was fairly different that the first music-link as this time I had a difficult time picking a song to go with the story. Overall, even though I had a tough time picking a song this assignment was still as enjoyable as the first one as I find looking at a piece of literary work and trying to find a song that is for entertainment to compare to it is a fun way to do critical thinking. (TABLE 2)

This example provides a single example of a student appreciating the different style of critical learning which could impact motivation; leaning on Dweck's (2015) recommendations.

Morrell (2014) a prominent scholar in the application of popular culture theory in education states, "Students can develop their critical faculties and their writing skills through the analysis of these cultural artifacts and they can develop core literacies as they produce across many of the same genres" (p. 6). This quote aligns with another student's direct experience in completing the music-link assignments, "So, overall the music-link assignment was enjoyable as it added critical thinking to a fun subject like music." This quote mentioned positive affect, relevance and relatability and fun with the assignment. Although an inquiry into whether students would find the assignments fun was not a part of this research study the idea may be worth further inspection. Miller (2010) explains that the type of instruction and assessment is crucial to a student's overall experience in a literature class, and he goes on to note that in the coming generations of student's literature teachers will be challenged to keep their curriculums

both socially conscious and relevant to the lives of the students in our classes. Regarding a lack of imagination in literature assignments Miller (2010) states:

> Many of the accounts of the social purposes of English studies that emerge from surveys suffer from limited conceptions of literature and literacy that almost inevitably arise when literary critics compositionists linguists and English education specialist fail to confer. These limitations can be seen as influential accounts of progressive reforms of high school English studies. such purposes might have been more richly defined if humanist had become more broadly engaged in deliberations with teachers on the politics of the liberal imagination. (p. 169)

In this quote Miller (2010) explains the importance of out of the box thinking about assignments in literature classes and ways to engage the student audience. It is my belief that different paths toward a critical stance within literature classes begins with imaginative concepts within course assignments and assessments. Morrell (2014) succinctly states, "Rather than tell students that they have to write, we would do better to create authentic situations where they can become someone powerful through their writing," like completing a music-link assignment (p. 6). The autonomous structure of student's ability to choose any song, and any manner of linking the song to the readings, supports Morrell's suggestions about building student criticality and increase student empowerment in learning through the teaching of literature.

Musicality. From a popular culture stance musicality became a widely used word in current media and is used to describe a person's ability to interact with music. In this study, musicality was used to define how a student interacted with the story and with their song choice. It was important for me to uncover the ways that students made their links and relevance and

relatability to the music and thus the literature emerged as an encouraging theme for further research. Early in the design of the study, questions were asked such as whether it is better to encourage all students to pull from a specific genre of music; however with the different demographics of students in my classes, I felt it would be too constricting and limiting for some students.

Bettina Love researches the uses of hip-hop culture and music in an elementary school setting. Perhaps one of the rationales for the use of a section of pop-culture in the classroom is described by Love (2015) sometimes a simple beat in the background can elicit a student response. What is it about a good beat that encourages a person to like or dislike a song? I explain to my students that the hooks needed to begin a paper are the same as the hooks that either prompts an interest in hearing the rest of the song or to change the station as quickly as possible. These individualized preferences also led to the decision of complete autonomy in student's completion of the music-link assignments. Student musical preferences in areas of musical genres as a necessity in this study was akin to stipulating the limitless options in the form and style of the music students chose from to create their links.

Romick (2015) notes a similar experience with music in the classroom in that sometimes the music doesn't have to be played to be appreciated. I did not play any of my students' musical choices for their link assignments; this encouraged them to be as free as they wanted in their choices because I also did not stipulate that students would have to find music that was appropriate for school. Many songs in pop-culture are not school appropriate but would also limit their autonomy in their song choices thus creating boundaries between the music and the content readings. Romick (2015) states:

I encourage teachers to use songs with your students. you don't have to do one every

week, but I think you'll be pleasantly surprised at the increased engagement of your

students and all the possibilities and teachable moments that using songs helped create.

I'm always careful to cite the author and performing artist of each song and inform

students where I accessed song. (p. 43)

This statement was a reinforcing reason to pursue music in literature class as an avenue for

students to connect with both classical literature and contemporary literature.

Many studies (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2000; Love, 2015; Morrell, 2002) have been

conducted within the realm of pairing music with classical literature to understand concepts like

similes and metaphors, but there is an inherent linkage to classical literature that I find to be

limited to the subject matter. It is not only essential that students learn about classical literature

but also that they are reading what authors are crafting today in the everchanging landscape of

literature classes. Providing relevance should not be limited to accessing literature from long ago,

it should also be allowed to provide points of access to any form of literacy that surrounds

students' lives today. The literary world is no longer confined to accessing textbooks; it

surrounds us in our daily lives from commercials to sports updates, to news channels, to phones

and video games.

Further Research

Further research options for this study are myriad. Creating a multi-semester version

spanning all literature course requisites may allow for a deeper understanding of the role the

music-link plays in multiple English courses. But the course content need not be limited to the

study of English literature. Other content areas like music, history, and even science might find

interesting results from adding music-links to their curriculums for study. For example, if music

and history prerequisite courses created a co-curriculum that utilized music-links as content enhancement in both subject areas. These analyses might yield intriguing experiential responses from participants. Perhaps a limiting factor being added might also be a way to further explore the phenomenon. For example, a music course might assign a specific genre of songs for students to choose from in reacting to an assigned literature course reading.

A different approach to the study might also be a point of extended research that would include investigations in the genres of music students chose for their assignments. Also, an analysis of the precise song's students chose and participants reasoning for their choices could reveal stimulating data for further research. An aspect of uncovering and evaluating reasoning might be finding commonalities and specific parts of the reading students chose to form their links. While those data were collected with the music-link assignments for this study the research questions that guided the study did not include looking into the specific portions of the reading that inspired the students to make their links. A researcher may be limited only in their imaginations to further the research begun in this study.

<div align="center">**Summary**</div>

In the previous chapter, the data resulting from this study were enumerated. There is no doubt in my mind that many other avenues could be taken in order to uncover more information about the impact and success of the music-link assignments and their use in a college literature class. Carol Dweck (2000; 2015) is a researcher known for her work on motivation in addition to mindfulness. A possible opportunity for additional research on this topic may be evaluating plausible intrinsic and extrinsic motivational values in completing the unique music-link assignments. Dweck (2000) explains that students gain and remember knowledge if they are involved in their learning. When students are able to apply their learning to their personal

experiences and how they experience the world, they gain new perspectives. And when students have growth mindsets as opposed to fixed mindsets, they believe in themselves and their own abilities and they will persist in the face of obstacles (Dweck, 2015). Through extrapolation of the data in chapter five one of the underlying themes is that students enjoyed being able to relate the readings to the music in their lives. Students today have unlimited access to music in recent years unlike any generation before them. Imagine the thousands of links that could be found as long as one maintains the growth mindset.

One such avenue would be investigating different grade levels; imagine the complexities that may arise from working with different ages. Certainly, different readings would be encountered by different grade levels which may alter outcomes, and different demographics may also reveal new responses to the assignments. It might be interesting to investigate the differences students encounter between pairing a canonical text to a song, versus a more contemporary text to a song.

The implications for further research on this topic are only confined by a researcher's imagination. A quantitative measure of motivation and graded student achievement using a controlled-design study may also shed further light on the subject. I plan on utilizing this concept in more of my assessments and assignments in my literature classes. The three themes that emerged in this study: affect, relevance and relatability, and achievement. Each revealed a level of power, or agency, experienced by the students in being able to craft their own assignments around their preferences. Not being graded on their song choices was also a feature which encouraged autonomy with the completion of the assignments. After combing through the data and finding my way through the imaginative responses I received, one thing became pleasantly clear about the music-link assignments; I would absolutely use them again.

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APPENDIX A

Small Group Interview Protocol Script

"Thank you all for volunteering to assist with this study. I have three overarching questions that I would like to pose, but if you say something that I would like to know more about I will certainly ask. The maximum amount of time for this small group interview will be ten minutes, and I will keep track of the time using my cell phone, which will also serve as the audio-recording device for our interview today. I would like to ask in advance that you silence your cell phones for these ten minutes in an effort to maximize our time and stay on topic. Your confidentiality is essential. Regardless of the level of your participation, your names will be changed, and any identifying factors will be omitted in any future publications. If you opt to participate in the three-small group interviews I will give you five points extra credit, that can be applied to any grade for my class this semester. Please let me know prior to (set date) which grade you choose. You may opt out of participating in the small group interviews at any time, and still be eligible for the extra credit by completing an additional music-link assignment on any course reading that will not be used in this study. Let's begin the interview:

Semi-Structured Small Group Interview Questions

1. Please tell me about your overall experience in this *introduction to literature* course that had music added to the curriculum.

2. Please tell me about your experiences completing course assignments that included locating links between a song and an aspect of an assigned course reading?

3. What are your thoughts on your ability to find personal relevance of your ability to relate to the content of the assigned readings for this course based on the addition of music?

APPENDIX B

Student Music-link Assignment Document Example

Music Link 1: Title of Assigned Reading

Step 1: Type the title of the song you chose and the artist/lyricist/group that wrote it.

Step 2: Explain your reasoning for the song you are linking to the assigned reading using at least one quote from the reading and one quote from the song to explain/support/ illustrate how/why you believe the song and reading can be linked.

Step 3: Answer the following question: My experience creating this music link was (write at least 3 sentences about your experience).

Example Answer Formats

Step 1 Format: For "*Title of Poem/Story*" by, (*author's name*), I chose (*type/copy&paste song title*), by, (*type/copy&paste the artist/lyricis/group's name).*

Step 2 Format: I chose to link this song to this literature course reading because…

    The following quote from the song supports/demonstrates/illustrates/explains/illuminates/shows…

    The following quote from the reading supports/demonstrates/illustrates/explains/shows… *Remember to use quotation marks around quotes! You will not need to provide an MLA citation for the songs you choose for these assignments, therefore intext citations will not be required <u>except</u> that you must give credit to the author or artist/group.

Step 3 Complete this sentence: My experience completing this music link assignment was…

APPENDIX C

TABLE 1

Brief Explanation of Assigned Readings for Study (Spoilers).

Number	Assigned Readings	Summary of the Readings
1	The Story of An Hour by Kate Chopin	"The Story of an Hour" by, Kate Chopin, is a short story originally published in 1894. This is a historically significant short story because of the time it was written, and because a female was the author. I did not discuss the story with the class prior to assigning reading and the music-link assignment. The story begins with a wife hearing that her husband died tragically in a train-wreck. The wife's knowledge of her husband's passing elicits a response that, especially for that time in history, was little talked about. Chopin does not provide the reader with the reasons why the wife reacts as she does. She stares out a window at a seemingly new world appreciating her newfound freedom. The reader is then told that the husband did not die in the train wreck and is not in fact dead. Unaware of this information the wife continues to be happy. The husband arrives at the door and at the sight of him the wife suddenly dies. The reader is told that she has heart troubles, but the reader also left to decide whether those problems were medical or emotional.
2	The Yellow Wallpaper by Charlotte Perkins Gilman	"The Yellow Wallpaper," by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, is a story that was originally published in 1892. Making students reach into history to relate to the subject matter or characters. This story is about a woman who suffers from psychiatric issues possibly linked to postpartum stress. She is trapped in a room for her betterment by her

		(*Yellow Wallpaper continued*)…husband/doctor and her sister. The room has bars on the windows, the bed is bolted to the floor, and the walls are covered in a decrepit yellow wallpaper. She begins to slip into madness because of being trapped and she thinks she sees the yellow wallpaper in her room come alive. She sees a woman trapped in the paper and at the end of the story believes that she has freed both herself and the woman in the wallpaper as she succumbs to insanity. Her husband finds her creeping and crawling on the floor in the final scene of the story.
3	The Rose that Grew from Concrete by Tupac Amari Shakur	"The Rose that Grew from Concrete," by Tupac Amari Shakur published in 2000, is a poem about a rose that grew unattended in the concrete. The rose did not care about its surroundings. And even though it is difficult to imagine a rose growing in concrete the rose the speaker addresses grows and blooms beautifully in contrast to the concrete and cruel world that surrounds it.
4	Invictus by William Ernest Henley	"Invictus," by William Ernest Henley published in 1888, is a poem with a strong theme of survival. Henley wrote this piece during a turbulent time in his life when he was very ill and in need of inspiration. The poem demonstrates Henley's commitment to find a way through his sadness, pain, and anger.

Source: *Study Data*

APPENDIX D

TABLE 2

Artifacts, Responses and Codes, Collapsed Codes, Themes.

Artifact	Responses and Codes	Collapsed Code(s)	Theme(s)
Individual Music-Link Assignment	My experience completing this music-link assignment was e**ye opening** for this is because it takes a lot to fight through cancer and hardships and any other thing that can result in almost dying. **Kanye West and William Ernest Henley** almost died and they're still trying to be strong no matter what happens and in my eyes that **deserves the utmost recognition**.	[1]Eye opening

[2]Henley & Kanye

[3]Respect for both | Affect

Relevance

Affect |
| Individual Music-Link Assignment | My experience completing this music assignment was **exciting** because the poem was very **compelling** because of the authors **back story** and what he was going through when writing it, so finding the right song was that much more important. The eye of the Tiger is the background song to almost every training montage on YouTube because of the rocky movies and because it is a great song that will pump you up. I **enjoyed the assignment**. | [1]Exciting, [2]Compelling

[3]Background…

[4]Enjoyed | Affect Affect

Relevance

Affect |

TABLE 2

Continued

Artifact	Responses and Codes	Collapsed Code(s)	Theme(s)
Individual Music-Link Assignment	This assignment **was difficult**. the story was a **bit confusing**. I had to choose a quote and then a song occur to me and I found **a link that helped me** understand the story because it related to my life.	[1]Was difficult [2]Bit confusing [3]Link that helped	Affect Affect Achievement
Individual Music-Link Assignment	My experience completing this musiclink assignment was **pretty easy** which is enough form. in general I do not consider myself a big music person so I cannot imagine finding myself enjoying assignments like this. **I do not know** a lot of music or artists so I thought this assignment would be a **lot harder** than it actually was. I guess you can say I was **pleasantly** surprised.	[1]Pretty Easy [2]Do not know music and artists [3]Harder than it actually was [4]Pleasantly surprised	Affect Relevance Achievement Affect
Individual Music-Link Assignment	My experience completing this music link assignment was very **interesting** because this story and song are very powerful to me. It is also very **relevant** to women not only in history but today as well because there are still women in society and other countries who feel trapped by men. So this assignment was very **enlightening** and very heartfelt.	[1]Interesting [2]Relevant [3]Englightening…	Affect Relevance Affect

TABLE 2

Continued

Artifact	Responses and Codes	Collapsed Code(s)	Theme(s)
	This was **not as difficult** as I thought it would be, when I was reading the story I kept thinking to myself what song possibly linked. Then as I **reached the end** and found out the woman was freed from the wallpaper then the song pursuit of happiness by Kid Cudi immediately **popped into my head.**	[1]Not as difficult [2]Reached the end [3]Popped in my head	Achievement Achievement Achievement
Individual Music-Link Assignment	My experience completing this music link assignment was **rather difficult** at first because I tried to focus mainly on relating a song that had to do with death, but I decided to dig deeper and connect the song through the main characters real emotions on the matter of her husband's death. **Digging deeper** I realized how character really felt and it was almost as if a burden had been raised from her chest. She seemed as if she would be OK with living her life alone or at least without her husband. Both of my quotes from these songs and the reading show how the main character feels about the death of her husband and she mentions how life would be different without him.	[1]Rather difficult [2]Diggin Deeper…	Achievement Achievement

TABLE 2

Continued

Artifact	Responses and Codes	Collapsed Code(s)	Theme(s)
Individual Music-Link Assignment	My experience completing this musiclink assignment was **not overly difficult** because the story was about how the mind can play tricks on someone and I had plenty of songs I thought I could use for this one like the ghetto boys my mind playing tricks on me. I ended up picking this one because it felt like it related to this story more because the singer is losing his mind from drugs and then narrator is losing her mind from her husband's horrible treatment and **both of those things reminded me of the song**	[1]Not overly difficult [2]Things reminded me of the song	Achievement Relevance
Individual Music-Link Assignment	My experience with this assignment was the **hardest but most rewarding**. For the first time since we started the musiclink assignments a song did not come to mind easily or quickly. I had to reread the poem 3 times and still nothing came to mind. So instead I had to really focus on the theme of the reading and then think of a song **I liked being able to link the reading to a Christian song**	[1]Hardest but most rewarding [2]Link the reading…	Achievement Relevance

TABLE 2

Continued

Artifact	Responses and Codes	Collapsed Code(s)	Theme(s)
Individual Music-Link Assignment	my experience was **difficult at first** because the first time I read it I didn't understand what he was talking about. I had to read it 3 times before I could interpret the reading in my own way.	[1]Difficult at first	Achievement
	after I understood what he was talking about it **was easy to pick a song that** talked about being poor and making it out and being successful	[2]After I understood [3]Easy to pick song	Achievement Achievement
Individual Music-Link Assignment	My experience completing this music-link assignment was **very interesting** because it took a while to find the right song. However it is **very fun** because it **makes you analyze** really both the reading and the true meaning of the songs it really helps you dig deep.	[1]Very interesting [2]Very fun [3]Makes you analyze	Affect Affect Achievement
Individual Music-Link Assignment	This story was interesting and more fun than I thought it would be! I thought it **was going to be difficult** to choose a song because of the reading but it actually **was really easy** I had to narrow down a few songs. this assignment made me more intrigued to the short story because I was able to make a **connection** between the music and the story. it also **love listening** to music	[1]Going to be difficult [2]Actually really easy [3]Able to make a connection [4]Love listening to music	Achievement Achievement Relevance Affect

TABLE 2

Continued

Artifact	Responses and Codes	Collapsed Code(s)	Theme(s)
Small Group Interviews	Smiles and laughs. yeah well when she was talking to herself in the story of an hour the song radioactive by Imagine Dragons came on and I was just like ya **this is like perfect** for this because I saw it as her maybe "waking up" to a new life without her husband and being free for the first time **like in the song**.	[1]This is like perfect for this [2]Like in the song	Achievement Relevance
Small Group Interviews	I just **felt like it** and made me interact with the story more on a personal level 'cause I was looking into the content of the story and what it's about and thought of a song while I was reading it so I was able to see how they were like **linking today to 100 years ago.**	[1]Felt like [2]Linking today…	Affect Relevance
Small Group Interviews	I got confused it was a **difficult experience** and I had a **hard time doing this** because I was too focused on like the line by line um and like just going through it all that way, but I think I am gonna do it like they did -*makes sweeping arm motion at other participants*- and wait till the end and think of a theme and try it that way 'cause like this way was really difficult for me.	[1]Difficult experience [2]Hard time doing this	Affect Achievement

TABLE 2

Continued

Artifact	Responses and Codes	Collapsed Code(s)	Theme(s)
Small Group Interviews	I thought this was **pretty eye opening** it showed me how death can affect a person in multiple ways both negatively and positively for example when they thought she might be dead inside the room and her husband breaks down the door to find that she might be alive but she might not be the same person he knew. it relates to she is a different person because she did not feel some sort of independence. **I had a tough time** locating a song for this story until I started thinking about the times the world has taught artists were dead inside and all the suicides and how that can affect people differently**. I also thought about the pain of my previous break up because it can be paralyzing and prevent you from getting up off the floor of your room and you feel empty you don't want to see people for awhile because that pain can cause heart ache but not just for you for those who love you. I had to think about the story to understand it and that helps**.	[1]Pretty eye opening [2]I had a tough time [3]Paraphrased: personal relationship and sadness due to breakup were explained helped student uncover some feelings about how breakups effect everyone and how people may have felt around her	Affect Achievement Relevance

TABLE 2

Continued

Artifact	Responses and Codes	Collapsed Code(s)	Theme(s)
Small Group Interviews	My experience completing this music link assignment was **kind of emotional** for me because the song I'd chosen the story has to deal with losing a loved one and I lost someone that I loved so it brought back some memories. I also thought the assignment was very creative and a new way of learning because I've never had an assignment like this and it **was fun trying** to think of a song to try and compare it to a reading. My experience was also kind of **challenging** and I had to put a lot of thought into it because there's plenty of songs out there and it was **kind of tough** trying to pick one but it's a **different type of thinking** and **I enjoy it**	[1]Kind of emotional [2]It was fun trying [3]Challenging [4]Kind of tough trying to pick one [5]Different type of thinking and I enjoy it	Affect Affect Achievement Achievement Relevance
Small Group Interviews	Um…I think the music um…**I like the music assignments**, they're more informative in a sense…or maybe the story gives you an internal message…ya know it portrayed the message of the story or whatever better. Like makes **you think, okay that's what this story is about**, or this part is about **and it finally makes sense.**	[1]I like the music assignment [2]Think okay that's what this story is about or part is about it finally makes sense	Affect Achievement

TABLE 2

Continued

Artifact	Responses and Codes	Collapsed Code(s)	Theme(s)
Small Group Interviews	My **experience was interesting** because the story was almost hard to read at points it became very intense period I started to believe that John was right about his wife. **But as I kept reading I understood more and more while I was thinking about a song to link it to that this was a complex story that had more layers than I thought**	[1]Experience was interesting [2]Paraphrase: searching for song link revealed deeper meanings from story	Affect Achievement
Small Group Interviews	For me more so it was **not like looking for a song to fit, but like while I was reading it certain parts would like I'd be like oh that song would check with this part** then I keep reading and **I'm like but this song would fit here**, and it would change throughout the story. And **I like the story early on and I thought of a song** but then I kept reading and it changed **and after I finished the reading** I thought OK I'm gonna use the first song I thought of because I like that one the most.	[1]Not like looking for a song to fit, but like while I was reading it certain parts would like I'd be like oh that song would check with the part [2]And I like the story early on and I thought of a song [4]and after I Finished the Reading	Achievement Achievement Achievement

TABLE 2

Continued

Artifact	Responses and Codes	Collapsed Code(s)	Theme(s)
In-Class Discussion Comments	At first I was like yo this story is just about some crazy chic. And I **wasn't sure** how I was gonna pick a song that wouldn't offend someone because it was just about women being crazy. Haha. I thought about it a little bit and realize when they're talking about everything being nailed down that she really was locked up and there's a lot of people that are locked up that maybe shouldn't be. **So then I could relate to it and I was like yeah I can find a song for that.**	[1]Wasn't sure: Confused [2]Could relate	Affect Relevance
In-Class Discussion Comments	I thought this assignment was great. I had a lot of **fun connecting** a story and a song that I listen to. I like how the assignment **connects me** with the reading personally because we got to **put our own twist** in a way into the assignment **which is nice.**	[1]Fun connecting a story and a song [2]Connects me with the reading [3]Put our own twist which is nice	Affect Relevance Achievement
In-Class Discussion Comments	My experience completing this music-link assignment **was pretty good I love that we have to integrate music into our short stories that we are reading** especially think that this is **because we** can choose any music of our choosing I thought the story was interesting and…	[1]Was pretty good [2]I love that we have to integrate music into our short stories that we are reading [3]Because we	Affect Affect Relevance

TABLE 2

Continued

Artifact	Responses and Codes	Collapsed Code(s)	Theme(s)
	(*continued*)…that the song link I chose shows that the character is feeling better and that she can see beyond and maybe realizing that the rest of her life is up to her and that is uplifting	(continued)...can choose any music of our choosing	
In-Class Discussion Comments	I had to go back and **reread the story** a few times and I don't normally do that. **But I wanted to find a link and finally I did and I think I understood the story better too** which I didn't think would happen, I guess I got the point the whole time I was just thinkin too much.	[1]Reread the story [2]Wanted to find a link and finally I did and I think I understood the story better too	Achievement Achievement
In-Class Discussion Comments	Well I just felt like while I was **reading it, it took longer because I was searching for meaning and thinking** about songs like while I was reading and after 2. What the story means or how I might interpret it. **I guess it helped me** get the story more	[1]Reading it, it took longer because I was searching for meaning [2]I guess it helped me	Achievement Achievement
In-Class Discussion Comments	I **did not understand** the story and **got really frustrated** but then I started thinking about songs that would make the story make sense and then that **I actually did understand** the story	[1]did not understand story [2]Got really Frustrated [3]I did understand	Achievement Affect Achievement

Source: *Study Data*

APPENDIX E

TABLE 3

Writing from the 1800's and the Songs of Today

Title of Assigned Reading	Title of Song Linked to Assigned Reading
The Yellow Wallpaper, 1892	*Locked Up*, by, Akon
The Yellow Wallpaper, 1892	*She's a Maniac*, by Hall and Oates
The Story of an Hour, 1894	*Free Falling,* by Tom Petty
The Story of an Hour, 1894	*A Thousand Years,* by Christina Perri.
"Invictus," 1888	*It's Not Over Yet*, by For King and Country
"Invictus," 1888	*Dark Times* by, The Weeknd
"The Rose that Grew From Concrete," 2000	*Daydreams* by, Lupe Fiasco
"The Rose that Grew From Concrete," 2000	*The Way I Are* by, Timbaland, feat. K. Hillson

Source: *Study Data*

VITA

JENNIFER ELEANOR FRANK

Education
Doctor of Philosophy ABD (May 2013 - present), Education, Curriculum & Instruction, College English Education focus at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, VA. Dissertation evaluates the experiences of students in an introductory literature course when music is added as feature in the curriculum.

Master of Science (August 2012), Field-Based, in Secondary English Education at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, VA. My thesis study was a quantitative analysis of the implementation of a positive behavior support system in the high school where I taught.

Bachelor of Arts (May 2005) in English with a focus in drama studies, George Mason University in Fairfax, VA.

Academic Employment
English Faculty (Adjunct), Old Dominion University, August 2015 – August 2017. I taught the following general education English courses: English 110- College Composition I, English 211- College Composition II, English 112- Introduction to Literature.

Graduate 1- year Assistantship at Old Dominion University, August 2014 – August 2015, with the PreK-6 Elementary Teacher Education Program. I scheduled meetings, documented and dispersed meeting minutes. Researched and created cohesive document on exemplary teacher education programs aligned with Virginia Department of Education, College Accreditation, and Teacher & Educator Standards.

Graduate Assistantship at Old Dominion University, January 2014 – August 2014, with the Distance Learning Initiative, Special Education, Master's degree program. The assistantship entailed the following duties: created culminating project rubric, created spreadsheets of core coursework to ensure cohesion of assignments throughout program, updated core course syllabi to reflect new standards, and updated core course matrix of competency standards spreadsheets.

High School English Teacher at Chesapeake Bay Academy, Virginia Beach, VA, July 2008 – June 2013. Taught Writing/Composition; American Literature (11th grade), Experiencing Literature (9th grade), Humanities (an advanced course for 11th and 12th graders), and Latin (I, II, III)

Academic Rewards
Temporary Assistant Director of Admissions, Field-Based Master's in Science in Education Program, June 2014 – July 2014. I evaluated admission requests from students, addressed interested students concerns and questions, and admitted or denied admission to the master's degree program.