WHAT ARE GRADE TWELVE STUDENTS READING?
SURVEYING SASKATCHEWAN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS B30 TEACHERS

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By
Carmen Lee Holota
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Carmen Lee Holota, candidate for the degree of Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction, has presented a thesis titled, *What Are Grade Twelve Students Reading? Surveying Saskatchewan English Language Arts B30 Teachers*, in an oral examination held on July 14, 2017. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

External Examiner: Dr. Larry Steeves, Educational Administration

Supervisor: Dr. Val Mulholland, Curriculum and Instruction

Committee Member: Dr. Alec Couros, Curriculum and Instruction

Committee Member: Dr. Troni Grande, Department of English

Chair of Defense: Dr. Donalda Halabuza, Faculty of Social Work

*Not present at defense*
Abstract

The purpose of this research study is to investigate how the recent English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum renewal has been adopted throughout Saskatchewan by looking specifically at the full-length texts taught in the ELA B30 course throughout 2014-2015, as a possible indicator. The basis of this research study stems from two prior Canadian studies: “The Constancy of the School ‘Canon’: A Survey of Texts used in Grade 10 English Language Arts in 2006 and 1996” by Mackey, Vermeer, Storie, and DeBlois (2012), as well as Allison Skerrett’s 2010 study, “Of Literary Import: A Case of Cross-National Similarities in the Secondary English Curriculum in the United States and Canada.” While these two studies are based in Alberta and Ontario, at the time of this research project, there is no information regarding what texts are commonly studied in Saskatchewan.

This qualitative bounded case study draws upon mixed methods for data collection. ELA B30 teachers were surveyed on-line, and following that, ELA consultants and/or coordinators from a variety of Saskatchewan school divisions were interviewed. The focus was to learn, as an indicator, what full-length texts are used in ELA B30 and to further unpack how the curriculum renewal process occurred in Saskatchewan classrooms, and whether or not teachers felt supported to change their text selections.

Teachers and coordinators found the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education support to be lacking in the implementation process of the curriculum renewal, and data from this research study revealed that full-length text selections are primarily dated, male-dominated, and reflect the voices of British or American male authors. To conclude, a
case for Culturally Responsive Pedagogy is made for possible transformation of text selection and/or teaching of full-length texts.

*Key Words:* curriculum, Saskatchewan, English Language Arts, case study, mixed methods, novels, full-length text, culturally responsive pedagogy.
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But it hasn’t all been theoretical. I would like to recognize Regina Public Schools for their continued financial support each semester. As well, I appreciate the school divisions across Saskatchewan for participating in this research study and granting access to their teaching staff and consultants/coordinators. Also, I am deeply appreciative for the critical and detailed feedback provided by my University of Regina committee members: Dr. Alec Couros - Associate Professor - Information and Communication Technologies and Dr. Troni Grande – Department Head of English, Faculty of Arts.

And finally, this English teacher is at a loss for words in how to thank my supervisor, Dr. Valerie Mulholland for her wisdom, grace, patience, and humour along this journey. The value of her mentorship can only be eclipsed by the quality of her character. If, in this thesis, or in my profession, I have achieved anything, it is completely due to her example. Onward.
Dedication

This was not easy. In fact, this might be the hardest thing I have attempted and I know that the only reason I persevered was through the love, support, and patience of my family. I had never attempted to push my limits and see what I was truly capable of in the world of academics. Furthermore, to do it while raising two children, working in what would become a whirlwind of various roles (teacher, librarian, instructional consultant, teacher again, vice principal, and University of Regina sessional), and keeping my head above water proved challenging. Clearly, I had people holding me up along the way.

Thank you to my parents for cheering me on and listening to my endless research stories. I am grateful for my late night companion, Graycie, who religiously sat on all papers and offered encouragement, via purring, in the late night hours as I typed. As well I am indebted to friends who humoured my whining about deadlines and celebrated alongside each small victory with me.

I want to dedicate this to my children, Nicholas and Charlotte, and thank them for understanding when mommy had to work late, or hide in the basement and type. I hope this book serves as an example to follow your dreams, and to persevere even when things are difficult and your faith in yourself is waning. Anything is possible.

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Chapter One: Novels, Non-fiction, New Curriculum, and Me

Researcher’s Viewpoint in Context: Why Me – Why Now

I have participated in the same conversation in various forms throughout the past sixteen years of my career as a secondary educator: on planes, at dinner parties, in elevators. “A high-school English teacher? Guess I’d better watch my grammar. What book are you teaching?” From there Robert Frost would say that my “two roads diverge.” Either the conversation celebrates the texts people adored in their high-school experience: “Oh, *The Outsiders* – Stay Gold, Ponyboy, right? Stay Gold.” Or conversely, the story outlines the torture endured as a result of a teacher’s selection of text: “We read some book for two months about those soccer players that ate each other.” Clarifying that I am actually an English Language Arts (ELA) educator (focused on numerous literacies) tends to be a lost point in most conversations. To me, teaching ELA in a high-school context is rooted in language literacy, which the Saskatchewan Literacy Commission (2004) defines as:

> the involvement of a continuum of interrelated skills, practices, and learnings that contribute to the development of an individual’s ability to understand, communicate, and participate in a variety of roles (e.g., parent, citizen, and worker) and settings (e.g., in the home, at work, in education, and in the community). These include listening and speaking, reading and writing, viewing and representing. (p. 1)

In my ELA classroom, I do so much more than just “teach a book.”

However, it seems the socially constructed concept of what it means to be a high-school English teacher, in my experience, is deeply rooted in the perceptions and
experiences of books. More specifically, the books people love to hate. Suffer through Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*? Of course the recount is told to me in vivid detail. When I suggest that perhaps my students should not have to read it? An immediate, sputtered reaction, hailing the notion of tradition. I have learned to not dare broach the subject of Shakespeare. It seems, that when it comes to the books of high-school, there is a foundational shared experience that is difficult to discuss and herculean to alter. We are mired in tradition. As an educator, I see literary text selection as a vehicle which curriculum drives to meet numerous student literacy outcomes. Why not upgrade the vehicle to meet the revised needs of an updated curriculum? However, this premise most definitely inspires heated debate. Much like the work of DiPardo (2005), who writes about the resistance to change of texts in the face of renewed curricula, it is in this limited space, in the tension of literature and curriculum renewal, where I am most fascinated.

The conversation about course text selection is not restricted to people outside the educational community. Curriculum renewal and text selection are also hot topics in the Saskatchewan ELA community at this point in time. In Saskatchewan, the ELA A10, B10 (Grade 10), ELA 20 (Grade 11), and ELA A30 and B30 (Grade 12) curricula have just finished the renewal process. The ELA 10 curriculum was released in 2011, ELA 20 in 2012, and finally, ELA 30 2013. This means that the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education documents have been completely rewritten, changing not only the required student outcomes, but also the themes in each course. These renewed documents have been released on the Ministry of Education website (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2013), and teachers are now required to follow them. Because the ELA 10, 20, and 30 courses are freshly renewed, I am approached by colleagues with the question
“What novel would you recommend for (insert course)?” My professional opinion in this matter is sought because of my diverse educational experience, and it is this context and framework which influence the focus of my research study.

On further consideration, while I view the numerous literacies at play as equally important in literacy education, when it comes to the reaching of student outcomes, and anchoring the content of high-school courses, the book is still key.

**So, Why Me?**

To understand why educators ask me about text selection, it is important to identify the position from which I enter this research. First and foremost, I am a secondary ELA teacher in Regina, Saskatchewan. Teaching ELA provides the opportunity to become a solitary professional, shut away in a classroom behind piles of marking. However, my experience has been remarkably varied. My sixteen years of teaching lie primarily in this city; however, in regard to programming, my work has been diverse, as I have taught in the International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement programs (international programs, which enhance student expectations to a university level), in modified programming (where expectations are modified to meet students’ ability), as well as in the “regular” stream. I have taught ELA from grades nine through twelve, including optional electives, such as Creative Writing 20 and Media Studies 20, and held the roles of ELA Core Leader, Teacher Librarian, Instructional Consultant, Learning Leader, and Vice Principal along my path of English Language Arts education. I also teach an ELNG 300 course at the University of Regina, where the focus is unpacking and understanding secondary ELA curricula. These various teaching
experiences have allowed me the opportunity to see not only what is taught in ELA classrooms from a variety of perspectives, but has also constructed a wide network of ELA educators with whom I work. Furthermore, during the recent renewal of the Saskatchewan ELA 10, 20, and 30 curricula, I was selected as a Saskatchewan Teachers Federation (STF) representative to the Ministry-appointed ELA curriculum writing committee.

My involvement in the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education’s Curriculum Reference Committee began in 2003. Throughout a five-year process, I worked among a partnership of Ministry curriculum writers, fellow ELA teachers, university professors, and high-school students to renew the ELA 10-30 curricula. While many pedagogical issues were explored, the role of text selection piqued my interest. As questions were raised surrounding how many texts should be required in a course, what constitutes “good literature,” or what might be the merits of Shakespeare, I found myself wondering exactly what is currently taught in Saskatchewan ELA classrooms? I, like many of my colleagues, have always been curious when planning a course: what book is being used, and how is it going in other classrooms?

Why Now?

Concurrent with these curriculum-drafting discussions was the question of how these renewed curricula would be implemented within the Saskatchewan professional teaching community. I entered the profession during the curriculum renewal in the late 1990s, which was a time of increased excitement due in part to resources both through material funding, as well as numerous workshops for professional development to
support implementation. I volunteered on the provincial special subject group, the Saskatchewan Teachers of English Language Arts (STELA) during this time. My work throughout the years as Membership Chair, President, Conference Chair, and workshop presenter with STELA focused on offering supports for teachers to implement the renewed ELA curricula among other professional responsibilities. When it became clear in the most recent renewal process, that neither the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education nor STELA would be offering implementation support, I questioned whether text selections would change in Saskatchewan secondary ELA classrooms. A great deal of effort by the committee had been put into renewing the ELA curricula to offer new opportunities for teachers to select different texts and approach teaching and learning in new ways. But with this lack-luster roll-out, would anything really change?

My roles as Core Leader, Learning Leader, and Instructional Consultant have placed me in a variety of situations to observe how ELA curriculum renewal has occurred in various classrooms in my school division. However, after reading the research study “The Constancy of the School ‘Canon’: A Survey of Texts used in Grade 10 English Language Arts in 2006 and 1996” by Mackey, Vermeer, Storie, and DeBlois (2012), I have become very curious as to how ELA curriculum renewal has been adopted throughout Saskatchewan by looking specifically at which texts are studied as a measure. Throughout my career, my primary commitment has always been to improve my teaching practice, as well as to offer supports for other teachers to grow their teaching. After many years spent drafting and renewing the ELA curricula, and helping to offer supports to teachers, I wanted to know: have the texts we teach in our Saskatchewan ELA classrooms changed?
Research Questions and Objectives: It’s More Than Just a Book

The design of this research study relies heavily in the framework and research of Mackey, Vermeer, Storie, and DeBlois (2012). The purpose of their research was “to provide a description of what texts are being used in Grade 10 English Language Arts classrooms, to identify trends in selection of texts, and to speculate on what informs those trends” (p. 27). What sparked my attention the most in this study is the focus on the material list itself. The book list. From that research, I saw an opportunity to satisfy my curiosity in relation to my own Saskatchewan context.

The purpose of my research study is to investigate how the recent ELA curriculum renewal has been adopted throughout Saskatchewan by looking specifically at the full-length texts taught in the ELA B30 course. Are we, as ELA teachers in Saskatchewan, teaching the same texts, or are we trying something new? Because I conducted my own research, I limited the scope of the study to focus solely on the full-length text studied in ELA B30 in one specified semester. As an ELA educator in Saskatchewan, my discourse in these first two statements reflects the jargon of my discipline and context. In my classroom, I would help students unpack the statements to understand the implied references. In a thesis, the same understanding is required. Let us begin with what I mean when I use the phrase “full-length text.”

Aren’t most texts full-length? A haiku is full-length in its three-line, 5-7-5 syllable requirement. A short story, with its beginning, middle, and end is full-length for its genre. I purposely use the term “full-length text” in my research study because that is the language of the Saskatchewan ELA curriculum when referring to novels or non-fiction (in this regard, this would apply to texts such as autobiographies and biographies
primarily). In essence, when speaking to people outside of education about “books,” ELA teachers in Saskatchewan think of full-length texts. I chose to focus on the full-length text, because that is the question I am most asked by colleagues, and that is the text form in which I am most interested. In short, I love a good book.

If this is what is meant by full-length text, what do I mean when I refer to the ELA B30 course? Furthermore, why choose it when recreating the Mackey, Vermeer, Storie, and DeBlois (2012) study, which focuses on grade ten ELA classrooms? First, it is important to understand the framework of the secondary ELA courses in Saskatchewan. In grade ten, students take two separate courses: ELA A10 and ELA B10. In grade eleven, only one course is required – ELA 20. Finally, in their grade twelve year, students once again are required to take two separate courses: ELA A30 and ELA B30. The ELA A30 course focuses on the literature and perspectives of Canada, while the ELA B30 course focuses on students exploring two “Big Ideas” – “The Search for Self” and “The Social Experience” through the study of international texts. The Saskatchewan ELA Curriculum document outlines that “Big Ideas as Questions for deeper understanding are used to initiate and guide inquiry and give students direction for developing deep understandings about a topic or issue under study” (p. 14). Clearly, the “Big Ideas” and “Questions for deeper understanding” afford many options in regard to full-length text selection in ELA B30. Furthermore, I am curious about which full-length texts students in Saskatchewan study before they graduate high-school. I chose ELA B30 for three specific reasons: it is the most recently renewed ELA curricula; its focus is international perspectives, which opens a large variety of literature options; and it is also a course historically rooted in the British and American literary canon.
Finally, the word “canon” also has specific connotations in regard to this research study. According to Abrams (2009),

[In recent decades the phrase literary canon has come to designate – in world literature, or in European literature, but most frequently in national literature – those authors who, by a cumulative consensus of critics, scholars, and teachers, have come to be widely recognized as “major”, and to have written works often hailed as literary classics. (p.38)]

In this definition, the word “canon” can be quite generic, although it is important to highlight that teachers are referenced as a deciding influence in defining canonical works. Furthermore, Abrams points out that what is deemed canon is fluid and ever-changing. Since the 1970s, various critical theorists have contested the traditional canon and have offered differing canons, determined by political, social, and ideological perspectives, such as feminist, deconstructive, or postcolonial. Clearly the lens and context inform the working definition of what constitutes “canon.” As this is a specific context (Saskatchewan secondary ELA classrooms), when referring to “canon” in this study, I will be applying Skerrett’s (2010) educational context description: “Eurocentric and Anglo-centric literature [which has] dominated the curriculum” (p. 36). In Saskatchewan, what constitutes high-school literature canon can be found in the book rooms, Saskatchewan Ministry-recommended book lists, and sample units from the previous ELA curricula. The same Eurocentric and American titles echo – *Lord of the Flies, Animal Farm, The Great Gatsby, To Kill a Mockingbird, Nineteen Eighty-Four, The Diary of Anne Frank*, et cetera. They are the same titles which surfaced in my reading of studies similar to my research. Mackey, Vermeer, Storie, and DeBlois (2012) focused
their research in Alberta, while Skerret (2010) concentrated on Ontario and American schools. In each study, the same titles reappeared and were recognizable to me as canonical texts in Saskatchewan classrooms. It is in this “frequent reference to an author or work within the discourse of a cultural community; and the widespread assignment of an author or text in school and college curricula” (Abrams, 2009, pp. 38-39) on which I will focus in relation to Saskatchewan secondary ELA canon.

Furthermore, there will be times I also refer to the concept of eurocentrism in the high-school literary canon. This phrase can be defined in many ways. John Hobson (2012) describes it “as shorthand for Western-centrism but it can also mean a more specific privileging of Europe” (p. 185). In the context of this study, I will be applying the term in relation to the privileging of British voices in literary texts. Privilege in this context refers to the choice to use British full-length texts. While my study does not completely investigate how literature is taught in detail, for the purposes of this analysis, eurocentrism is tracked primarily in relation to publication and author’s country and perspective. Furthermore, the term eurocentrism will be used to refer to what can possibly occur when, according to Bulhan (1985), texts are “derived from a white, middle-class male minority, which is generalized to humanity everywhere” (p. 63). Because the scope of this study is primarily to recognize trends in literature choices in the Saskatchewan ELA B30 context, eurocentrism will be limited to a marker in the theming of data. I cannot assert how each text was approached in each classroom, as that was not within the scope of this research study.

But first, best to focus on the task at hand. The organization of this thesis will develop by first reviewing the literature relevant to the research question in Chapter two.
In Chapter three, I explain my use of Case Study methodology, and my rationale for drawing upon mixed methods. Chapter four outlines the specific findings of the research, with some explanation. Finally, chapter five focuses specifically on my interpretation and learnings through this data, along with possible next steps.

The Tyranny of Objectivity

This is a qualitative research study. Influenced by DiPardo’s (2005) research regarding the tension between literature choices and curriculum renewal, I foolishly thought that would be the sole tension in my research journey. In the beginning, heavily influenced by the work of Mackey, Vermeer, Storie, and DeBlois (2012) and Skerrett (2010), I believed that I would be able to maintain a completely objective perspective, focused solely on learning the trends in full-length text selection in my home province, Saskatchewan. The studies provide a solid base for the research design; however, as the process unfolded, tensions arising from my role as a teacher-researcher became increasingly apparent. I recognize that what I describe as the “tyranny of objectivity” emanates from a positivist paradigm that dominates popular understandings of what constitutes research. Although firm in my resolve to design and execute a qualitative study consistent with the works cited above, and asserting my commitment to an interpretivist research paradigm, I ultimately had to wrestle with remnants of positivist ideology exemplified in my naïve hope to be “objective.” I am fiercely loyal to my colleagues who do the best with what they have. I have attempted the same with objectivity. Therefore, I assert now that my tensions are subjective, and I acknowledge all that my declaration entails.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

Have secondary Saskatchewan ELA educators been inspired to change their full-length text selections at this time of curriculum renewal? Or do the “tried and true” canonical texts of Saskatchewan high-school English classrooms remain the constant? My research question, “By looking specifically at the full-length texts taught in the ELA B30 course, how has ELA curriculum renewal been adopted throughout Saskatchewan?” is grounded in a variety of foundational educational research concepts such as curriculum reform and renewal (Allen, 1980; Pirie, 1997) and canon reform (Applebee, 1992; Mackey et. al, 2012; Skerret, 2010). In reading for this study, I determined that collecting and interpreting the texts studied in Secondary ELA classrooms have occurred in a variety of settings, as has the curriculum renewal process; however, data is lacking in a Saskatchewan context. Mackey, Vermeer, Storie, and DeBlois (2012) focused on the Alberta context, while Skerret (2010) concentrated on Ontario and American schools. In the following sections, I will outline specifically the research in the field of curriculum reform/renewal, as well as in secondary ELA canon reform, in order to synthesize the pertinent research and/or theory as it relates to my research questions.

Curriculum Reform and Renewal

An understanding of curriculum reform and renewal is necessary to understand how secondary ELA reform has occurred in Canada and the United States. Because the basis of this research study is to gain insight into how text selection has changed (or not) throughout the curriculum renewal process in contemporary Saskatchewan ELA B30
classrooms, it is important to understand how curriculum reform has occurred in similar contexts. Historical changes in curriculum reflect contemporary issues in education. Allen’s (1980) *English Teaching Since 1965: How Much Growth?* begins with a description of teaching in the early 1960s which echoes my own experience with curriculum renewal in the late 1990s. According to Allen (1980), “It [the early 1960s] was an exhilarating, buoyant time of high hopes, of great ferment. Each new book seemed to stretch the boundaries of my subject. There was a confidence that we English teachers were doing a vital job” (p. 1). He writes of 1963 as a time of progressive discussion in the teaching of English, where creative writing was hailed as purposeful for students, while rote grammatical lessons’ effectiveness was called into question. He highlights the foundation of “Language Across the Curriculum” as an initiative where literacy was expected to be taught not only in English classes, but in other courses as well.

The context of Allen’s experience is rooted deeply in the effects across the curriculum of the Dartmouth Conference, which had a profound effect on curriculum reform. His (1980) text describes the scope of the Dartmouth conference:

The Anglo-American Dartmouth Seminar was brought together in the belief that English as a school subject was facing a series of critical problems both in the U.S. and in the United Kingdom and that an international exchange of experience and opinion would be helpful in arriving at solutions and in suggesting lines of future international collaboration. (p. 27)

The grand scale of what occurred in Dartmouth is remarkable. To realize that the academics in this field, internationally, joined together to actively deconstruct both what
was happening in English classrooms, as well as what could and what should occur was indeed monumental. It is important to appreciate the wealth of knowledge and experience involved in the debates which ultimately shape the daily events in contemporary classrooms. As English educators we have all, unwittingly, been influenced by the discussions stemming from Dartmouth.

Allen (1980) describes the landscape of teaching English prior to the Dartmouth conference, and the discussions which occurred at the event. In essence, the primary shift evident was from a transmission model of literature appreciation towards a student-centred, reader-response approach to literary education. Allen queries about how change has been implemented by 1980 in regard to the underlying theories of teaching English in the years afterward Dartmouth. He highlights the divide between those who “saw the English teacher’s main task as the teaching of literature very much in terms of countering the effects of a mass society” (p. 9) and those who argued that all students benefit from child-centred, reader-response theory. The first chapter describes well the concerns educators held regarding the shift in treatment of literature at this time:

[The shift] has constituted an erosion of belief in the power of literature as such, in the value of exposing oneself to the impact of the poem or story or novel for its own sake? And a concurrent downgrading of the discipline of submitting oneself to the ordering of experience embodied in the actual words of the writer. (Allen, 1980, p. 7)

This description is reminiscent of many hot debates still occurring among ELA educators in my milieu. Currently some ELA teachers argue that they must uphold the teaching of classic (canonical) literature, in a style of literary appreciation, assuming that reading is
taught in every subject now, and their role is to uphold the value of literature. It is significant to see that aspects of this debate were at the heart of discussion at Dartmouth over fifty years ago and still apply to my research.

The argument that the appreciation of canonical literature is necessary in the English classroom is significant for my research, specifically in regard to the construction of the survey and interpretation of data. For my research, I am cognizant that some teachers who resist the teaching of new texts, do so not because of an inability to procure new resources, nor because of professional apathy, but rather, because their view of English study is firmly rooted in the traditional perspective of people like Denys Thompson, who “saw the English teacher’s main task as the teaching of literature, very much in terms of countering the effects of mass society” (Thompson in Allen, 1980, p. 9). Allen’s article is important to my research study, as it serves to emphasize my conscious effort to be mindful of my own bias. I agree with the philosophical stance of Ladson-Billings’ article “But that’s just good teaching: The case for culturally relevant pedagogy” (1995) because it has informed my opinion of how I interpret the renewed ELA curricula through a culturally responsive lens. This article emphasizes the need to acknowledge students’ culture in the literature they study, and that is very much a framework which I apply in my ELA classroom. Throughout this research study, it has been my responsibility to maintain objectivity in collecting and analyzing the data of my peers, rather than making assumptions based on my own foundational beliefs.

Bruce Pirie’s (1997) *Reshaping High-school English* traces the progression of curriculum reform thirty years after Dartmouth. Pirie’s text focuses on his experience entering the teaching profession in 1978, picking up where Allen left off. He reflects on
the introduction of actively teaching the writing process to students during this time period, and how within five to ten years after this change, he believes, the writing process had found a solid place in English classrooms. He then moves into the concerns of 1997: “The multicultural realities of English-speaking countries make it hard for us to hold up reverentially a model of culture that was designed in another age for purposes that no longer seem so commanding, including imperialistic and moralistic purposes” (p. 3). This excerpt acknowledges the struggle in contemporary high-schools and the teaching of literature: whose voice is taught, and in what way? The renewed Saskatchewan ELA curricula is written to afford teachers the opportunity to acknowledge the multiculturalism of the community through its themes. Has this been the case?

Clearly Pirie (1997) is writing from a time period of significant curriculum reform. In the midst of reading Allen’s text (1980), I mentioned becoming acutely aware that, knowingly or not, all educators were teaching from a pedagogical perspective shaped from voices at the 1966 Dartmouth Conference. Pirie (1997) takes this acknowledgement a step further when he writes, “We may claim to scorn theory, but the moment we begin teaching we enact our understanding – our theories – of what language and communication are all about and what kinds of reading, writing, and talking deserve student effort” (p. 6). Pirie’s statement voices arguments for curriculum reform in a powerful way. He appreciates the need for change in teaching practices and text selection. He echoes the opinion of Peter Elbow in that “we haven’t yet firmly committed ourselves to reading with students, revealing to them our confusions, hesitations, and wild goose chases as we encounter a brand new text” (Elbow in Pirie, 1997, p. 33).
Clearly, my interpretation of the renewed Saskatchewan ELA curricula mirrors this statement. What I wonder is – have other teachers been influenced in the same way?

The idea of the study of literature as curriculum reform pushes teachers to reconsider their purpose in text choice, as well as the approaches for teaching perspective and inter-connectedness in humanity. I applied this concept in my survey questions, by exploring what motivates teachers in their text selections. Pirie’s assertions tie well into how my investigation took shape, as it opens the door to the objective of discovering whether the teachers who respond felt supported to implement new full-length texts in the ELA B30 courses. It is this type of shocking frankness that ignites my interest in finding out what teachers are using for sources, while at the same time describing why it is important to uncover this data. Pirie (1997) says it best when he writes, “We should beware of locking students inside the rooms of our own academic histories” (p. 94). However, Pirie’s statement does pose an interesting question to consider: are the voices reflected in literary texts challenging status quo and requiring students to become critical thinkers, or do we continue to uphold the perspective of dominant culture?

Canon Reform in Secondary Classrooms

The focus of my investigation is to uncover precisely what texts are taught in ELA B30 classrooms, after curriculum renewal. I want to delineate that in my research context, the Saskatchewan ELA curricula were not reformed, but rather renewed. Allison Skerrett’s 2010 study, “Of Literary Import: A Case of Cross-National Similarities in the Secondary English Curriculum in the United States and Canada,”
compares and contrasts the selection and distribution of literary texts in the English programs of two diverse secondary schools, one in Massachusetts, USA, the other in Ontario, Canada. Analysis of the departments’ curriculum documents, state/provincial curriculum policies, and teacher interviews indicated that at both schools, Eurocentric and Anglo-centric literature dominated the curriculum of advanced courses. Analysis further demonstrated that texts of U.S. origin permeated the curriculum of advanced courses at both the U.S. and Canadian schools. (p. 1)

This study applies to my interest in what literature is taught in Canadian schools and shows that there is an awareness of the strong European perspective held in most literature taught in English classrooms.

According to Skerrett (2010), two patterns emerge in regard to literature selection. The first is that British literature holds the highest status in both the U.S. and Canada. This aspect is not necessarily surprising, as Skerrett points out that both countries are former British colonies. It is the second pattern which immediately drew my attention: U.S. literature is given a great deal of attention in Canadian schools, while absolutely no Canadian literature is reflected in the U.S. English courses. While this information is beyond the scope of my research study, it is something I have considered when theming the data from my survey. The renewed ELA B30 curriculum stresses that students should read a broad range of texts from a variety of cultures. Skerrett’s data suggests this is not the case in Ontario. While Skerrett (2010) outlines a number of reasons for text selection in Ontario and Massachusetts, I do acknowledge that the working conditions are somewhat different in Saskatchewan. Our population is smaller, less dense, and
predominantly rural. However, Skerrett does suggest that some material is taught in order to align with post-secondary expectations and the “official curriculum of the university tradition” (Skerrett, 2010, p. 40), which is a canon of its own. In my experience, the selection of literature in high-schools has, at times, been made to align with texts and authors commonly taught in universities. Skerrett’s acknowledgment of the high-school and university connection in literature choice contributed to the narrowing of my focus to the full-length texts of ELA B30. I was curious: what literature do we as a profession feel is necessary for students to read in their final year of secondary education? I wanted to know if my findings would echo any of the research conducted by Skerrett.

On one level, this study provides rich data regarding how little change has occurred in text selection for secondary Edmonton classrooms. Mackey et al. points out that *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Romeo and Juliet* continue to be the most commonly taught texts by a significant margin. After reading Skerrett’s research, I noticed the finding that texts are American and British, which mirrors the data stemming from Ontario. The findings of provinces on either side of Saskatchewan highlights the need for further research in my home province. I was curious whether similar titles are in circulation in Saskatchewan, and possibly are part of the discourse of English teaching?

The work of Applebee (1992), referenced by both Skerrett and Mackey et al., “Stability and Change in the High-School Canon” (1992) provided a primary source for my research:

Strong voices have argued that the English curriculum is white, male, and Eurocentric, marginalizing the contributions for women and the people from other
cultural traditions. Equally strong voices have reasserted the values of a traditional liberal education, arguing that the curriculum in English has already been diluted too much (Bennett 1988; Hirsch 1987). What is lacking most in such debates, however, is perspective on what is being taught in schools across the nation. (p. 27)

It is in this introductory paragraph that Applebee emphasizes the key components of my research question: What specifically is currently taught in ELA B30 classrooms? Furthermore, do teachers feel supported by their peers and school divisions to make text changes? How has the renewed curricula been interpreted? Applebee highlights a key point in this debate, which aligns with my research perspective: there are no binary right or wrong texts. Rather, the key to this area of study is in discovering the trends in what is actually occurring in classrooms.

Applebee (1992) also provides further depth regarding my decision to survey full-length texts. He asserts, “One way to gain a sense of what ‘counts’ most is to examine the amount of time teachers devote to literature of various types” (p. 29). While the renewed Saskatchewan ELA curricula are skill- (outcome-) driven, texts in my experience are used as vehicles to drive the learning outcomes. Most often the full-length texts in an ELA course garner the greatest amount of devoted time. Applebee’s acknowledgment of this fact ties into my research focus regarding whether the renewed curriculum resulted in full-length text changes. In other words: do teachers put their money where their mouth is? Is class time spent on literature which supports the multicultural expectations of the renewed ELA B30 curriculum; or when it comes to intensive study, is the dominant culture the arena where students spend most of their time and energy? I acknowledge that
there are some assumptions at play in these questions. One assumption I am making is that teachers spend the most time with full-length texts, so by identifying which texts they choose, I am able to infer what they value most. That is an epistemological assumption. Through the survey data I also consider that sometimes people teach the texts that are available. Further analysis of text choice occurs in later chapters of this written thesis.

Applebee (1992) cites a number of reasons teachers mention for not changing their text selections:

1. Teachers remain personally unfamiliar with specific titles.
2. Teachers are uncertain about the literary merit and appeal to students.
3. Teachers are worried about possible community reactions. (p. 31)

These reasons asserted by Applebee highlight a possible need for more data in my research study. While my primary research question focuses on solely learning which full-length text titles teachers chose, further questions uncover the rationale for texts. This provides valuable insight in regards to curriculum renewal in this particular context and how explanations in Saskatchewan compare to Applebee’s statements.

Brass and Burns (2011) also informed my research design. Their research project was incredibly large in scope, focusing on all empirical studies in secondary English education, published between 1912-2011. Brass and Burns state that it is not a comprehensive study, but rather they “sampled intentionally.” I also sampled intentionally the ELA B30 teachers in Saskatchewan, in order to find out exactly what texts Grade Twelve students are reading. Teachers across all geographic corners of
Saskatchewan, from both urban and rural populations, were approached, in order to
construct a diverse and accurate representation of data.

The Interpretive Paradigm

Clearly, the discussions stemming from Dartmouth created not only a wide
variety of debate regarding curriculum reform and renewal in the English Language Arts
classroom, but also a rich context for academic research. Allen (1980), Thompson (1980),
Ladson-Billings (1995), and Pirie (1997) each not only highlight specific tensions
inherent in how curriculum reform occurs in their respective time periods, but also mirror
the continuing tensions at play in the current Saskatchewan context. Furthermore, when
progressing to the idea of canon reform, these tensions echo in the studies of Skerret
(2010), Mackey et. al (2012), Applebee (1992), and Brass and Burns (2011). It seems that
the classroom context is key to unlocking a clear understanding of the ideological
frameworks at play.

It is for these reasons that describing the reality of the Saskatchewan ELA B30
context is sufficient for this research study. To be clear, my research focus in this
bounded case study is based in the interpretive paradigm. Mills (2014) defines the
interpretive paradigm as “a research paradigm concerned with human beings, which
recognizes that actions are the products of judgements, reasoning, and intentions” (p.
258). This is most definitely the basis of my study, as I am concerned with Saskatchewan
ELA B30 teachers, their specific full-length text choices, and how these choices reflect
their curriculum renewal experience. Furthermore, in the interpretive paradigm, my
focus is “to use methods that can capture a range of individual observations and present
the complexity of [the] findings” (Burrell and Morgan in Mills, 2014, p. 148). As well, the interpretive paradigm in educational research is important in understanding the philosophical frameworks at work in defining literacy (and by extension, language) education in North America because “schooling practices, i.e., curriculum, pedagogy, etc., produce cultural effects” (Kelly, 1997, p. 26). Furthermore, Kelly (1997) argues that “situating schooling practices as forms of cultural politics entails recognizing the ways in which such practices operate as established, institutionalized, and ritualized modes of regulation, and the resting place of which is embodied subjectivity” (p. 26). In short, the reality of the classroom provides the most information for me in this research context.
Chapter Three: Research Design and Methods

Overview

The purpose of this study is to investigate how ELA curriculum renewal has been adopted throughout Saskatchewan by looking specifically at the full-length texts taught in the ELA B30 course. This concept for my research study was not born in a vacuum. The design of the study was highly influenced by the 2012 work of Mackey, Vermeer, Storie, and DeBlois. When I first read their study, “The Constancy of the School ‘Canon’: A Survey of Texts used in Grade 10 English Language Arts in 2006 and 1996” (2012), I was immediately fascinated with their application of quantitative research methods to uncover trends in something which, in my experience, has been conducted in isolation: the selection of texts.

As an English Language Arts educator, it has been my experience to choose novels for one or all of the following three reasons: (a) because I enjoyed them; (b) because I found them to have literary merits which would appeal to teenagers; or, in some cases, (c) because they were simply available in the school’s book room. I gave little thought to why I taught the novels and full-length texts I chose, beyond these small, somewhat arbitrary, components. To consider what others are teaching in my context, and then to delve further to consideration of trends, was paramount in my interpretation of the Mackey, Vermeer, Storie and DeBlois study. I recognized the novels on their list! These were texts I had taught. Perhaps what I’m teaching parallels what is happening in other classrooms? While their Edmonton-based research study worked on a grander scale, in that they collected data based on a variety of literary genres taught at the grade ten level, the structure of the research study provides an excellent model for the sample
information I collected in regard to what novels and full-length non-fiction texts, specifically, ELA B30 students are reading in Saskatchewan. In short, my goal was to compile my own list and uncover what trends are at play. Furthermore, I used this process to provide an access point to see if a renewed ELA B30 curricula inspired change in novel and full-length text choices. Mackey, Vermeer, Storie, and DeBlois had not only opened my eyes, but set my sights on a very specific goal.

Methodology

Rationale. This research study is in the interpretive paradigm because my overall goal is to seek understanding. Brass and Burns (2011) highlights that research methodology is a reflection of the time period in which it originates; at this point in educational research, both quantitative and qualitative methodologies are accepted as compatible in research studies mentioned in the literature review. Accordingly, in the context of this research study, I drew upon a mixed methods approach using survey data and structured interviews in a case study. Stotsky and Mall (2005) state that “[t]he immediate purpose of academic research in education…is to seek empirical evidence for explanatory generalizations, or theories about the relationships among teaching practices, learning processes, and educational outcomes” (p. 1). This consideration of the purpose of research is pivotal to my research. Although I have experience as a classroom teacher, instructional consultant, and contributor to the renewed ELA curricula, I did not enter this research with a specific end in mind. In this case study, I did not expect to find one specific text which should be taught in Saskatchewan ELA B30 classrooms, nor do I assert that binary right or wrong texts to study exist. As an English Language Arts
educator, it should come as no surprise that I revel in the grey areas of literature. Instead, my goal was to seek to uncover how the recent curriculum renewal has had any affect on full-length text selection in Saskatchewan ELA classrooms by compiling data regarding what is taught. In short, I was not rooting for one text, but rather was focused on uncovering current trends. Even upon compiling the data for trends, my goal was always to research literary choices, rather than to prove a specific point.

Accordingly, I used a bound case study methodology drawing upon mixed methods to generate data. While the Mackey, Vermeer, Storie, and DeBlois (2012) study focused on Edmonton, my research attempted to gain an overall snapshot of Saskatchewan as a whole. Accordingly, I selected Saskatchewan school boards in order to create a balance of urban and rural teachers from a variety of geographical Saskatchewan regions, along with a purposeful mix of both public and separate school divisions. I sent an on-line survey to Saskatchewan ELA B30 teachers, to collect information regarding their full-length text selection. The questions (located in Appendix A) did not solely ask which texts are used, but rather also requested information regarding teaching process and how the implementation of the renewed curricula was supported. Once I had collected the teacher data, as anticipated, I still had questions. Consequently, I contacted every Saskatchewan school division (twenty-eight at the time of my research). Ultimately, I conducted four structured telephone interviews with the ELA consultants and/or coordinators to learn how they facilitated curriculum renewal with ELA B30 teachers in their division. I specifically asked about their respective divisions because I was interested in investigating two different interpretations of the same phenomena. When new curriculum was released by the Saskatchewan Ministry of
Education, did the teachers and consultants view the process of implementation in a similar or differing way? Why there were so few available consultants will be discussed in greater length in chapter four.

As a teacher, I work with learning outcomes and objectives for my lessons with students. It should come as no surprise that throughout this research process, I focused on a number of specific objectives for my learning in this study:

- To learn what full-length texts are currently taught in SK ELA B30 classrooms.
- To learn if high-school canonical texts are prevalent.
- To learn if the renewed curriculum has had an impact on text choice.
- To find out if teachers feel supported to implement new texts.
- To understand if teachers are using the same texts as before the curriculum renewal, but feel they approach texts differently.

**Case study.** When identifying my research methodology, at first the idea of case study did not make sense to me. I had erroneously believed that case study focused primarily on one experience. How then, could this methodology work for me, when I am interested in the diverse experiences of Saskatchewan ELA B30 educators? However, upon further reading of case study expectations, it became clear that this research project is absolutely a bound case study. My research looks specifically at a moment in time, in a specific location, with a specific question to answer. I am interested in the 2015-2016 school year, in Saskatchewan ELA B30 classrooms. I want to know what novels or full-length texts are in use and whether the selections have changed after the ELA B30 curriculum renewal process. This information is based entirely on the information
supplied through the survey of ELA B30 classroom teachers in Saskatchewan. Stewart (2014) defines case study as:

an intensive study of an individual unit of interest (Stake, 1995), with a focus on the developmental factors of that unit (Flyvbjerg, 2011). Case study is an exploratory form of inquiry providing an in-depth picture of the unit of study, which can be a person, group, organization, or social situation. The definition of what constitutes the “unit”, or case to be studied, is at the discretion of the researcher.” (p. 145)

In this research study I define the unit of study to be specifically the ELA B30 classrooms across Saskatchewan in the 2015-2016 school year. Collectively, ELA B30 educators will stand as one, universal experience. This is a specific context within the framework that “[c]ase study is the examination of an instance in action. The choice of the word ‘instance’ is significant in this definition because it implies a goal of generalization” (Macdonald & Walker, 1975, p. 2). Helen Simons (1996) highlights this paradox because in case study one studies “the uniqueness of the particular” in order to “understand the universal.” By exploring, specifically through the voices of classroom teachers and division consultants, the implementation of the Saskatchewan ELA B30 curriculum and categorizing the full-length texts studied, I am able to appreciate on a larger scale what the current trends and texts are in Saskatchewan ELA B30 classrooms.

**Mixed methods.** Although designed as a case study, mixed methods approaches to data collection have allowed specific information that is both quantitative and qualitative to be gleaned. What literature is taught, and how curriculum renewal is
supported, are complex concepts with a lot of moving parts. Accordingly, my curiosity required more than one method of data collection. A number of educational researchers promote the use of mixed methods because “virtually all significant educational problems call for a mix of methods, and all require vigorous conceptualization and creative design” (Calfee & Chambliss, 2005, p. 44). Mixed methods is defined by Burke Johnson and Onwugbuzie (2004) as “a class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study” (p. 17). This mix offers my research study the opportunity to create a deeper understanding due to its variety of options, rather than the constriction which can occur when obligated to follow a single methodological tradition (Weisner, 2005). Furthermore, Greene, Kneider, and Mayer (2005) suggest that “complementarity uses the different lenses of different methods to generate elaborated and comprehensive understandings of complex social phenomena” (p. 260). Indeed, in my research study, the goal of understanding an entire province’s adoption of renewed ELA B30 curriculum with regard to text selection definitely fulfills this mandate. To understand a complex question requires more than one method of data collection. While I needed to gain data and stories from classroom teachers through a survey, a different approach to learning the information from the perspective of the consultants/coordinators needed to be collected in a very different manner.

In order to apply a mixed methods approach to research in this study, a clear plan for application was required in order to gather data effectively. My intent was to use sequential explanation strategy, for which, as Terell (2012) describes, the “[p]rimary focus is to explain quantitative results by explaining certain results in more detail or
helping explain unexpected results (e.g. using follow up interviews) to better understand the results of a quantitative study” (p. 262). In this research study, the quantitative results of the survey are better analyzed with follow-up structured, qualitative interview data. Questions from the Mackey et al. research study were adopted. While the interviews were structured to ensure consistency in data collection, I was also cognizant during the process that “[f]lexibility in the use of qualitative methodologies is essential to create best-fit with the research question, and to optimize the desired outcome” (Mills, 2014, p. 44). While quantitative data is beneficial when dealing with large groups of people, the qualitative data helped to appreciate how and why the phenomena occurred (Burke Johnson & Onwugbuzie, 2014).

**Data Collection**

As mentioned previously, this research study focuses on the implementation of the ELA B30 renewed Saskatchewan curriculum by determining which full-length texts are currently taught. I surveyed on-line a sampling of ELA B30 teachers in Saskatchewan in the 2015-2016 school year, with four school divisions completing the survey in the Fall of 2016. This occurred because my survey was sent out to schools in May and June of 2016. Some larger school divisions do not allow for external research with their teachers during this time, a policy which was not made known to me until after the survey had been sent. Accordingly, I resent the survey in September of 2016 in order to add more voices to my sample. This was important to me, as large urban voices would help to balance the research. The sample reflects a variety of urban/rural teachers from geographically diverse Saskatchewan public and separate school divisions. By public
school division, I refer to the eighteen school divisions which work under the Public Schools of Saskatchewan mandate of “…embracing our mandate to open our schools to every child, no matter where he or she live. Our schools are open to all race, religion, economic circumstance, political outlook, intellect and physical ability” (2017). When I refer to separate school divisions, I refer to the nine school divisions which work under the Saskatchewan Catholic School Boards Association’s mission statement: “Serving Catholic education through faith-filled leadership” (2017). I did not include the one other Saskatchewan school division, Conseil des écoles fransaskoises, as it is a Francophone school division.

While the work of Mackey et al. (2012) primarily influenced my survey questions, the work of Fink (2006) and Fowler (1995; 2013) was used as well to inform my survey design, as I purposefully manipulated questions to accurately acquire meaningful survey data regarding specifically which full-length texts are currently taught in Saskatchewan ELA B30 courses, as well as how supported teachers felt in their choices. Gaining access to teachers proved remarkably difficult. Upon achieving my ethics approval from the University of Regina, I set to work contacting what Wanat (2008) describes as the “gatekeepers.” This process will be discussed further in chapter four, as I believe it links to the data I collected in the structured telephone interviews with ELA consultants. Working through a variety of directors, superintendents, and coordinators, I was finally able to achieve a balanced sample among my participants. Digital consent was required of all Saskatchewan school divisions. It also proved difficult to identify who the ELA consultants are for each school division. ELA consultants are tasked in school divisions with supporting ELA teachers in their teaching and assessment practices, along with
resource selections in order to implement curricula for diverse student needs. Follow-up structured interviews with ELA consultants provided additional qualitative data to the survey’s quantitative results regarding implementation of the ELA B30 curriculum and selection of texts. In the structured interviews, identical questions were asked of each school division’s ELA consultant in order to create consistency in data collection (Mills, 2014).

In chapter four of my thesis, anonymity is protected by the use of pseudonyms and aggregated data. As stated earlier, ethics approval from the University of Regina was required before applying to school divisions for access. Furthermore, interview participants received written explanation of the research project and questions prior to the interviews. I collected signed consent forms in advance as well. Finally, participants were able to leave the research study until the thesis was written, without penalty. Fortunately, this was not required in this study, as all participants were happy to oblige.

**Data Analysis Techniques**

Because this research study is closely modeled after parts of the Mackey et al. 2012 study, data analysis techniques are also similar. I am using what Somekh and Lewin (2011) term a “component design.” As I have two aspects of data collection – teacher survey and structured interviews – my data is “analyzed according to the conventions of that data type and then ‘mixed’ at the point of inference” (Somekh & Lewin, 2011, p. 261). As an ELA educator, I am most interested in the inference and theming at the end of data analysis.
Analysis of quantitative survey data was conducted in the same fashion as Mackey, Vermeer, Storie, and Deblois (2012), using descriptive data to discover what texts are taught, as well as responses to the other survey questions. Analysis of the structured consultant interviews also used coding as a starting activity, to begin “the process of putting tags, names, or labels against pieces of data” (Punch, 2005, p. 199). The first step was “organizing the material into chunks or segments of text” (Creswell, 2009, p.186). Alongside this organization was “memoing,” which is “the theorizing write up of ideas about codes and their relationships as they strike the analyst while coding” (Punch, 2005, p. 201). During the telephone interviews, I began to notice parallels in experiences, which I noted as I listened. My process was ultimately to memo the information, analyze the data, and then chunk the data into common themes. Finally, in regard to sharing the data, I have included charts of the survey data in chapter four, in the same format as Mackey, Vermeer, Storie, and Deblois (2012). My intent with this approach is to create a well-rounded, contextual appreciation of data in this case study.

**Methodological Characteristics**

Going into this study, I foresaw three limitations, which proved accurate. The first is that I am relying on participants not only responding, and responding honestly, but that their responses will be their interpretation of events. Flood (2005) warns that the “[p]urpose in much ELA research is to determine how valid a theory is in explaining a phenomenon; however, all research in this [ELA] discipline is limited by human behaviour. All research in this area is never-ending” (p. 2). In this case study, by drawing upon mixed methods, I am wedged between two paradigms. The need for validity
supports the quantitative data, while trustworthiness and credibility relate to the qualitative data in my research. Indeed, while getting teachers to respond proved difficult, my concern grew as to how well they recalled their reasons for text selections and this concern has had a definite impact on my research findings. It is for this reason I extended my interpretation of the Mackey, Vermeer, Storie, and Deblois (2012) research study to also include structured interviews regarding implementation. This worked to provide further information to guide my interpretation of the quantitative data. While this strategy does still leave the issue of “never-ending” context and research, I believe the structured interviews helped to ensure that I had enough meaningful data to proceed. Stewart (2014) also warns that negotiating access to the ELA teachers and consultants requires contacting school division “gate keepers” (p. 151), which also proved time-consuming for my research timeline. Indeed, this was the most frustrating part of this research process. School divisions were slow to respond, and in some cases, completely unwilling to participate. School division response times tie into the third obstacle in my mixed methods experience, which is how time-consuming using multiple methods is. While thoughtful and accurate research is always time-consuming, in this case by drawing upon mixed methods I increased the number of times I had to contact school divisions. I also learned a variety of research methods. Burke, Johnson, and Onwugbuzie (2004) state that mixed methods research requires the researcher to learn about multiple methods and approaches and understand how to mix them appropriately (p. 21). Indeed, not only did physically completing two different research methods take a lot of time, but prior to contacting school divisions, I needed a solid appreciation of surveys, interviews, implementation, and analysis techniques, which required additional effort and time.
Mixed methods was not the easiest route to influence research; however, as is the case with most endeavours, thoughtful, purposeful work results in better results.
Chapter Four: Research Results

Teacher as Researcher

My position as a high-school ELA teacher in Saskatchewan matters in the following chapter, as there will be times I refer to teachers with the pronoun “we.” While I have endeavoured to be an impartial researcher in this study, Starman (2013) would argue that I am not:

Although case studies have often been considered to be part of qualitative research and methodology, they may also be quantitative or contain a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. Qualitative research is characterized by an interpretative paradigm, which emphasizes subjective experiences and the meanings they have for an individual. Therefore, the subjective views of a researcher on a particular situation play a vital part in the study results. (p. 30)

Throughout this study, I have attempted to balance my roles as researcher, curriculum editor, and classroom teacher. As a researcher, I have aimed to be mindful of my bias and to search for understanding through mixed methods. As someone involved in renewing the ELA B30 curriculum, I have wondered if the years of work renewing the curriculum resulted in change. However, it is in my role as a member of the Saskatchewan ELA teaching community that I hold specific understandings and struggle with respect to the data. At times I use the pronoun “we” because I also am part of the classroom work, and identify as a working teacher. I understand the choices and statements made by teachers. However, in these instances and in relation to the data, I have also endeavoured to maintain some objectivity, and to not become defensive of my colleagues. And with this
awareness of my role in the research, let’s discuss what is going on in Saskatchewan classrooms.

**Constraints and Curricular Expectations**

So what novels and full-length non-fiction texts are the ELA B30 teachers actually teaching in Saskatchewan classrooms? Before I can outline my findings, it is important to review the complicated relationship teachers must navigate between texts, outcomes, and themes. Indeed, “[t]he power of literature is such that it is difficult to think about the English curriculum without thinking at the same time about the texts that are used to teach the curriculum” (Reed, 2003, p. 62). This is evident in the renewed Saskatchewan ELA curricula, in that they are language-based courses, as suggested in the title “English Language Arts” and in the language-based outcome requirements. This is far different than the “English” curricula of previous decades in Saskatchewan. The 1976 curricula, written by Joseph Duffy, relied on literary modes, while Dr. Bill Prentice introduced objectives, informed by psycho-linguistics, in the 1999 Saskatchewan curricula. The most recently renewed curriculum document specifically declares that “Language and language study are at the centre of the Secondary Level English Language Arts program” (p. 23). Indeed, Saskatchewan teachers do not solely teach “books,” but rather have a number of language expectations at play in their text selection.

When choosing full-length texts for analysis in an ELA B30 classroom, Saskatchewan teachers have two curricular frameworks to consider, alongside the specific learning needs of their students. The first framework includes the identified reading outcomes. The renewed Saskatchewan ELA B30 curriculum document outlines precise expectations for the teaching of reading, under the framework of “Comprehend
and Respond” (CR) outcomes. The Saskatchewan Ministry ELA B30 curriculum defines
the expectation that:

[st]udents will extend their abilities to view, listen to, read, comprehend, and
respond to a variety of contemporary and traditional grade-appropriate texts in a
variety of forms (oral, print, and other media) from First Nations, Métis, and other
cultures for a variety of purposes including for learning, interest, and enjoyment.
(p. 21).

The overall definition of CR outcomes is the same throughout grades ten, eleven, and
twelve. However, in regard to the specific expectations of the ELA B30 reading skills,
teachers have two additional outcomes in the Saskatchewan Ministry ELA B30
curriculum to address:

CR B 30.1: View, listen to, read, comprehend, and respond to a variety of grade-
appropriate international, including indigenous, texts that address:

• identity (e.g., Sense of Self)
• social responsibility (e.g., Social Criticism), and
• social action (agency) (e.g., Addressing the Issues).

CR B 30.4: Read and demonstrate comprehension of a range of contemporary
and classical grade-appropriate informational (including position papers,
magazine and newspaper articles, and electronic communications) and literary
(including drama, novels, poetry, short stories, essays, biographies, and
autobiographies) texts from various international, including indigenous, cultures
and analyze the philosophical, ethical, and social influences that have shaped
information, issues, characters, plots, and themes. (p. 21)
Indeed, when looking to these outcomes, teachers have lofty expectations to meet, along with a fair amount of professional discretion in getting there. By way of illustration, the ELA B30 curriculum outlines the “Minimum Guide for Resource Selection” (p. 36) so that teachers know how many texts to select in the teaching of reading. In the ELA B30 course, this chart requires one teacher-guided study (TGS) and one independent study (IG) in the category of “Full-length Non-fiction and Novel.” The terms “teacher-guided study” and “independent study” are defined as follows: “A teacher-guided study (TGS) refers to a selection that is studied in some detail for a specific purpose and involves explicit instruction. An independent study (IS) refers to a selection intended for application of previously learned strategies and/or for personal enjoyment” (p.36). In essence, teachers are required by the curriculum to intensively teach reading strategies through one full-length text, and then to have students apply these strategies independently through a second full-length text.

However, Comprehend and Respond outcomes and minimum guides for resource selection are not the critical attributes of a teacher’s choice of full-length text in the ELA B30 classroom. As previously mentioned, there are two curricular frameworks at play in the choice of full-length text. The second consideration lies in the renewed thematic expectations of the course, described as the “Big Ideas” and “Questions for deeper understanding.” It is through these themes that teachers are expected to have students grapple with the complex aspects of society and think deeply. The curriculum document describes this framework: “Questions for deeper understanding are used to initiate and guide inquiry and give students direction for developing deep understandings about a topic or issue under study” (p. 14). In the study of full-length non-fiction and novels, it is
in this area that teachers are expected to choose literature for support. The ELA B30 course has two “Big Ideas” which are outlined:

Unit I–The Search for Self (Sense of Self; Ideals; Joy and Inspiration; Doubt and Fear) The discovery of self is a most profound discovery. On the path to this discovery, we develop our understanding of who we are, what it means to be human, and the purpose of our lives. We find meaning and fulfillment as we explore these concepts. Through powerful texts, both literary and informational, we examine the human condition - the great and the ghastly, the generosity and the greed, the good and the corrupt, the dignity and the disgrace, the truth and the deception - and the nature of the human mind and heart. Individually and collectively, we search for answers and strive to realize our hopes and dreams despite self-doubt and fear. In this unit, students consider who they are, how they relate to others, how they develop their individual identity, what kind of identity they wish to create for themselves throughout life, and how they respond to joys, inspiration, doubts, and fears.

Unit II–The Social Experience (Dealing with Universal Issues; Ambition, Power, and the Common Good; Social Criticism; Addressing the Issues) Every person is part of the larger society and is shaped by and responsible to it. Historically and currently, people have strived to create a better society that attends to the individual as well as to the collective good. Human endeavour, history, and literature attest to the ongoing challenge of achieving balance between individual and societal concerns, rights, and responsibilities; between individual aspirations and societal needs; between personal ambition and the common good; between
individual beliefs and societal values. This ongoing challenge manifests itself in conformity and rebellion, causes and crusades. In this unit, students examine, critique, and interrogate the society in which they live and consider the actions students can take to create the kind of society in which they would like to live. (p. 10)

These thematic outlines are grand in scope, allowing teachers a great deal of flexibility in customizing their text selections to meet the needs of their students. This flexibility ties well into Mackey et alia (2012) when they assert, “In English Language Arts classrooms in Canada, teachers have considerable autonomy in deciding what texts to use with their classes” (p. 26). This process of continual renewal appears to be the case in Saskatchewan classrooms, since the Ministry of Education describes the curriculum as “evergreen” in text selection:

For instructional, assessment, and evaluation purposes, teachers should choose resources and selections from their respective listings of English Language Arts core and additional resources (including the Secondary Level bibliographies) or alternate resources that have not been suggested at other grade levels and that pose comparable challenges for the other students. (p. 36)

In other words, teachers have a list of suggested titles; however, if they find a text not used in other courses, they can exercise their professional discretion to include the text in their ELA course selections. Presumably, the inclusion of other texts can prove difficult for teachers, as the lists are no longer updated and reviewed, as they once were.

Amid language-based curriculum, “Big Ideas”, CR outcomes, an aging Ministry of Education Title Search, and economic constraints, choosing a full-length text is no
easy task for my peers. Saskatchewan teachers work in what seems a paradox of constraining curricular expectations and literary freedoms in their course constructions. I could not wait to ask my colleagues what their text selections were. My research was similar in that their survey “is a study of materials, not curriculum priorities or of classroom experience” (Mackey et al, 2012, p. 27). While the context of my research study is post-curriculum renewal, I am not judging what should or should not be taught. However, the data I collected differs in the questions I asked teachers and the information I collected through school division coordinators and/or consultants. While the Mackey, Vermeer, Storie, and DeBlois (2012) data “are only descriptive, and do not provide any firm answers about how these texts are used in the classroom, nor...why or how they were chosen” (p. 27), I did choose to investigate these aspects. Because the scope of my research is not a ten-year comparative study, but rather is focused solely on one genre in a specific course, I chose to ask teachers for follow up information regarding text selection, in hopes of gaining a better understanding of their specific context in this bound case study. This is about one issue, in a specific context, and I wanted to try and understand it well.

**School Division Survey Demographics**

Of the 28 public, separate, and Francophone school divisions and five federal schools in Saskatchewan which I contacted, eight agreed to participate in this research study. There were three primary reasons provided by school divisions which did not agree to participate. The first was in regard to small divisions, Francophone, and federal schools, which did not have ELA 30 teachers in their employ. They responded, in
essence, that they simply could not provide meaningful data to the study. I believe that this in itself is important data, which I will discuss further in chapter five. The following two reasons tied directly to what Wanat (2008) describes as the difficulty of access due to the “gatekeepers.” The second reason given from a number of other school divisions which declined to participate was the statement of an unwritten, general policy of not allowing external research in their division because they believe it “distracts teachers from their work.” The third response resulted from the timing of this research. Ethics approval was delayed, resulting in the release of the survey in May and June of 2016. The reason some larger school divisions declined to participate was due to division policy which does not allow external research at this point in the year, in order to not increase workload for teachers at the end of semester. Because I did not want to abandon these divisions, as I believe they hold important urban data for this case study, I reapplied to the school divisions and their teachers completed the survey in September of 2016.

In total, forty-four teachers completed the survey. It is important to acknowledge that in Saskatchewan, ELA 30 has a final departmental exam, created and scored through the provincial Ministry of Education. Teachers who would like to create their own ELA 30 final assessments must become accredited. To do so one must first complete twenty-four university credit hours, with twelve hours in the study of English. Furthermore, three credit hours must be in a secondary-level methods course. Once university requirements are fulfilled, teachers must have two years of full-time teaching in a school division, and successful completion of a Saskatchewan Teachers Federation accreditation seminar. Accordingly, in many schools, teachers who are accredited teach all of the ELA 30 courses. In larger school divisions, accreditation is required to teach ELA 30; this is
not necessarily the case in all rural divisions. I believe because of the accreditation process, there are not a lot of ELA 30 teachers, which is an important mitigating factor when considering the volume of responses I received.

With all of these mitigating factors at play, what happened when I finally was able to contact the teachers? In the following pages, I will list the questions in my on-line survey, followed by the results, and some of my interpretations of these results. Both the survey, and my specific language choice in this paragraph, reflect how I balanced mixed methods in this research process. I use “results” as a positivist word “to describe an approach to research based on the assumption that knowledge can be discovered by collecting data through observation, measurement and experimentation to establish truth” (Somekh & Lewin, 2011, p. 327). For this reason, I have included descriptive statistics as quantitative data. However, mixed methods allowed me to enhance my questions in order to provide “thick descriptions” (Punch, 2005, p. 238) and, through qualitative data, acknowledge the “holism and richness…to deal with the complexity of social phenomena” and further understand the “specific cases embedded in their context” (Punch, 2005, p. 238). So whom did I ask and what did they say?

**Survey Results: Classroom Demographics**

Before asking what type of full-length texts teachers were using, I paralleled Mackey, Vermeer, Storie, and DuBlois’s research (2012) by inquiring about demographics. As this is a bound case study, I wanted to have a clear understanding of the context, both in regard to students and teachers. I asked three general context questions.
First, I asked about the school context. The first question in the survey asked teachers to identify whether they would describe their school context as urban or rural. Remember that this is Saskatchewan and “urban” would not mean the same thing as in New York or Shanghai. In this context, I chose the language of urban and rural, as it is the language used by Statistics Canada and the Saskatchewan School Board Association. Statistics Canada (2015) defines “urban” as an “[a]rea with a population of at least 1,000 and no fewer than 400 persons per square kilometre.” Examples would include cities such as Saskatoon or Swift Current, which fulfills the assumption I was working under. Of the forty-four teachers who responded, forty answered this question with an even 50-50 split. This represents quite accurately the educational landscape in Saskatchewan, with an equal number of rural and urban teachers.

As a follow-up question to appreciate the context of the teachers, they were asked to identify the student body as either multicultural or monocultural. By “multicultural”, I meant diverse cultures represented in their school context, whereas “monocultural” suggested a culturally homogeneous student body. As the survey was anonymous, teachers did not identify information further than this question. In response to the demographics of their classrooms, 55% (22/44) teachers identified their context as primarily multicultural. 45% of classrooms (18/44) identified as primarily monocultural. My subsequent question focused on the teacher’s ELA 30 experience. See Table 1.
Table 1
Have you taught ELA B30 prior to this year?
Of the forty teachers who responded to question number three, 90% (36/40) of teachers surveyed stated that yes, they had taught ELA B30 previously in their career. Only 10% (4/40) had not previously taught ELA B30. Based on the first three questions of the survey, my understanding of my participant context is that I have an equal number of urban and rural teaching environments represented, with almost an even split of multicultural and monocultural student bodies, and that 90% of ELA B30 teachers have had prior experience teaching this course.

After asking demographic questions, the survey shifted to asking about the teaching of full-length texts in ELA B30 classrooms. The following question focused on how the full-length text was studied in class. Specifically this question relates to the Ministry of Education ELA B30 curriculum requirement that one full-length text be studied as a teacher-guided study, while the second should be approached independently.

ELA B30 teachers have a variety of approaches to choose from when teaching a full-length text. Some teachers rely on a whole class, teacher-guided study of a text. Some offer a variety of options, in order to differentiate for varying reading levels and interests. Question four asked teachers to identify their approach to teaching the full-length text. The majority of teachers, 72.5% (29/40), responded that they use one full-length text (novel or full-length non-fiction) as a teacher-guided, whole class study. Far fewer teachers offer students a choice from a variety of texts (novel or full-length non-fiction). Only 27.5% (11/40) responded that they offer choice. It was at this point, I asked the question to which I was most excited to learn the answer. What full-length texts are students reading in ELA B30? See Table 2 and Table 3.
### Table 2
Top ELA B30 Full-Length Texts Taught in 2015-2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lord of the Flies</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Night</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Kiterunner</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Great Gatsby</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal Farm</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Thousand Splendid Suns</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catcher in the Rye</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Way Gone</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brave New World</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wuthering Heights</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart of Darkness</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Road</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nineteen Eighty-Four</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3
Novel and Non-fiction Publication Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Novel/Full-length Text</th>
<th>Date of Publication</th>
<th>Place of Publication</th>
<th>Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lord of the Flies</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>William Golding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Night</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>Elie Wiesel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Kiterunner</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Khaled Hosseini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Great Gatsby</td>
<td>1922</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>F. Scott Fitzgerald</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal Farm</td>
<td>1945</td>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>George Orwell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Thousand Splendid Suns</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Khaled Hosseini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catcher in the Rye</td>
<td>1951</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>J. D. Salinger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Way Gone</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Ishmael Beah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brave New World</td>
<td>1932</td>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>Aldous Huxley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wuthering Heights</td>
<td>1847</td>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>Emily Brontë</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart of Darkness</td>
<td>1899</td>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>Joseph Conrad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Road</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Cormac McCarthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nineteen Eighty-Four</td>
<td>1949</td>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>George Orwell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Peregrine’s Home for Peculiar Children</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Ransom Riggs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As noted in Tables 2 and 3, of the full-length texts taught in the 2015-2016 school year, the most frequently taught text is William Golding’s 1954 British allegorical novel, *Lord of the Flies*, which half of the teachers surveyed responded to it as their primary choice. The second most popular text studied was Elie Wiesel’s German Holocaust autobiography, *Night*, which was published in 1960. The third most popular text, with twelve teachers responding, was Khaled Hosseini’s 2003 novel *The Kiterunner*, which focuses on Afghani-American culture. Thirty-three additional full-length texts were also listed; however, of the survey group, only one teacher used each text. These are listed in Appendix C. Many of these texts do not appear on the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education Title Search. This could be because the Title Search is not kept up to date. However, teachers have their own professional discretion to use texts, if they feel they are appropriate for students and help to support the Big Ideas and Questions for deeper understanding.

There are some key similarities between the results in this data and the results reported by Mackey, Vermeer, Storie, and DeBlois (2012). They state that “[t]he most frequently listed novel titles tend to be relatively older publications. Of the 66 citations of novels used…80% were of novels published at least 25 years previously” (p.38). This seems to be the case as well in regard to Saskatchewan full-length texts, as the first two texts were published well over twenty-five years ago. Of the fourteen most popular full-length texts, nine were published prior to 1960. In comparison, only 65% of Saskatchewan B30 full-length texts were published more than 25 years ago; however, of those texts, the dates reflect publishing of at least 55 years previously. From this survey data, it would seem that Saskatchewan school book rooms provide a choice between quite
recent or very old texts, with few choices between for teachers and students in ELA B30 courses.

The titles and ages of texts also parallel some specific findings in the Edmonton context of the Mackey, Vermeer, Storie, and DeBlois (2012) study. *Lord of the Flies*, which ranked first in my Saskatchewan survey, ranked fifth in both their 2006 survey and 1996 survey (p. 37). Furthermore, it ranked first in Reed’s Ontario survey of English Language Arts teachers in 2003 (Reed, 2003, p. 101). Clearly, this novel, which has been in print for over 63 years, is still popular across Canadian secondary classrooms. While the data in my study suggests that many teachers are working with multicultural populations, it seems that many teachers are relying on primarily British and American novels in ELA B30. Why are the full-length texts primarily representing only two cultures in a global course? To me, there is evident cultural disparity in this data.

It is not only in the age of texts that the two studies hold similarities. Mackey, Vermeer, Storie, and DeBlois (2012) also identified in their snapshot of the data that “[t]he gender division of authors was heavily male, with 605 males and 252 females” (p. 42). It seems the divide is even greater in Saskatchewan ELA B30 classrooms. Of the top 14 most commonly taught texts, only one female author appears in the tenth spot: Emily Bronte’s nineteenth century novel *Wuthering Heights*. This novel also includes the only female protagonist in this list. In the entire list of authors referenced in the survey, including all of the texts only taught by one person, more female authors appear. In this case, of the 49 texts listed, 19 are written by women. It seems by this data that while male authors are consistently more represented, a variety of female voices are taught in some
Saskatchewan ELA B30 classrooms. Furthermore, the voices in the texts are primarily male. Students are hearing the stories of male authors, as told by their male protagonists.

Once I understood what texts are currently taught, it was important for me to understand how much time teachers were using in their courses teaching the full-length texts. Applebee’s (1992) assertion that “[o]ne way to gain a sense of what ‘counts’ most is to examine the amount of time teachers devote to literature of various types” (p. 29) links to this aspect. My follow-up questions were designed to learn more about the approaches to teaching the literature, following curriculum renewal. Accordingly, I needed to understand what percentage of a semester teachers dedicated to these texts. The curriculum is designed for one semester, with one hundred teaching hours. (Although with pep rallies, basketball games, and other such incidents, this number is rarely accurate in classrooms.) I knew that in my experience, it takes me approximately three to four weeks to cover a full-length text, which translates into fifteen to twenty hours of curricular time. I personally try not to exceed three weeks, as the renewed curricula have a lot of outcomes for students to meet. I also know that in previous eras, teaching full-length texts used to take approximately six weeks, which would encompass thirty hours of curricular time. By asking how much time teachers spend, I’m not only addressing Applebee’s observation, but also comparing my experience in teaching full-length texts to my peers. I include this, not because my experience is completely part of a mixed methods approach; however, as an ELA B30 teacher in Saskatchewan, I am part of this community, with experience in this context. The survey responses are listed in Table 4.
Table 4
Time Spent Teaching ELA B30 Full-Length Texts in 2015-2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Duration</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Embedded All Semester</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-13 Weeks</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Weeks</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Weeks</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Weeks</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Weeks</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Weeks</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Weeks</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 Weeks</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Weeks</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Weeks</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Week</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Of the teachers surveyed, Table 4 suggests the majority appear to devote between three and four weeks (15-20 curricular hours) to teaching a full-length text. See Table 4. Three teachers responded that the teacher-guided study takes on average three weeks per text, while the second, independent full-length text takes a shorter amount of time (within 1-2 weeks). Two teachers responded that they embed the study of full-length texts throughout the entire semester. This could reflect what would be expected in the renewed ELA B30 curriculum, as there are many other outcomes and indicators. However, when referring back to the data regarding the low representation of female authors and virtually no authors from outside of Britain and America, I must highlight that approximately 25% of the course time is spent studying work by deceased white men. The focus of ELA B30 is to study international perspectives – it seems a significant amount of time is spent on British and American perspectives – which mirror dominant male Canadian voices. This mirrors the conclusion of Skerret’s (2010) study, in which she states the courses “unequally represented the various cultural backgrounds and contemporary lived experiences that students brought to school” (p. 54). Furthermore, Skerret (2010) also highlights that students receive “a hidden curricular message about the hierarchical organization of literature in which knowledge was categorized into either high status and sacred, or low status and profane, depending upon its cultural and national origin” (p. 54). This causes me concern about what other texts and voices are studied in the rest of the semester. Accordingly, the following survey questions were structured to find out more about how the texts were approached and why they were chosen. Are these texts habit? See Table 5.
Table 5
Were These Full-Length Texts Taught Prior to 2015-2016?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mix - Have taught some; some are new</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No - First time teaching these texts</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes - Have taught texts before</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Learning about the experience teachers have in working with full-length texts was key to learning more about why, specifically, these full-length texts were used in the 2015-2016 school year. Overall, I found the results of this question to mirror the three reasons I outlined in the first chapter. As a classroom ELA teacher, I value the thoughtful consideration teachers put into their text choices. In Reed’s (2003) study of Ontario teachers and texts, a teacher highlighted that “the decision-making process in this school is a complex system of thoughtful, seriously considered decisions that has grown out of and is rooted in years of decisions that have sometimes worked and sometimes not” (cited in Mackey et al., 2012, p. 50). Table 5 shows that of the 39/40 teachers who responded to this question, 23 wrote that they had taught the full-length text previously and 5 additional teachers wrote that they used texts they had used previously, alongside new full-length texts. This means that in total, 28 teachers continued to use full-length texts from prior years, which is over half of the responding body. Referring to the demographic information, four teachers had stated beforehand that they were new to teaching ELA B30. Of the eleven that stated that they were teaching new full-length texts, I might assume that these four would contribute to this representation. It would make sense that the first time they teach a course would result in the first time they teach a text identified for the ELA B30 course. Furthermore, when the renewed ELA curricula were released, no additional government funding was provided to support workshops or the purchasing of new texts.

These responses made me curious in two ways. First, were teachers using the same material but teaching it differently to explore the “Big Ideas” in the curriculum? Second, how supported were teachers by their school divisions in the curriculum renewal
process? These two questions were the basis for the following questions in my teacher survey, and also provided the basis for my structured interviews with school division ELA coordinators/consultants. The following question was presented in the survey to teachers who responded that ‘yes’ they were teaching the same text: “If so, in your opinion, are you approaching the text in the same way as before the renewed curriculum? Explain briefly.” The results are represented in Table 6.
Table 6
Teachers Who Feel They Approach the Full-Length Text Differently Prior to Curriculum Renewal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching The Same Way</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Teaching The Same Way</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Teaching The Same Way</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6 reflects the only question in the survey that a significant number of participants opted out of answering. When asked if they approach full-length texts in the same way as before the ELA B30 curriculum renewal, 23% of respondents declined to respond. Seven teachers stated that they are approaching the teaching of full-length texts in the exact same way as previous years. In one case, a teacher referred to large class sizes as a factor that made it difficult to change practice. Another teacher stated in the survey that “whether it is a whole class novel or an independent study, they still need to cover the basic elements of fiction, and then it is usually tied to one or more of the writing outcomes.” This response reflects an approach to teaching ELA which holds a literary analysis focus. However, because the approach has not changed, one cannot immediately suggest that the teaching has not developed over time. As one educator stated in the survey: “I had already used tools and ways of thinking outlined in the previously renewed grade 9-11.” Because the ELA curricula from grades nine through eleven had already been renewed, it is evident that this teacher had already embraced the expectations of outcomes and “Big Ideas” in his/her teaching. Once again, it became apparent that in this case study research, there would be no hard and fast “right” or “wrong” answers.

Of the teachers who did respond, over 50% stated that while the print resource was the same, the approach to studying the text with students had changed. Many responses highlighted the importance of the renewed outcomes, and the focus of having the outcomes drive the instruction of full-length texts. Offering student choice was listed as a driver for change in pedagogy. While this is not technically a learning outcome, responses spoke of a desire to engage students. A number of responses highlighted that
the basic themes of the renewed ELA B30 curriculum echo those of previous ELA 30 curricula, and that they feel that they have always worked with solid pedagogy which continues to fit with the renewed ELA B30 curriculum. Regarding changes in his/her teaching of the same full-length text, one teacher wrote: “Somewhat in the sense that one of the major projects that I do with them is a major writing assignment, but the assignments have changed. Thematically, I use them under the theme/idea of social criticism - I think the old curriculum had a similar theme.” This echoed many other similar responses. While some teachers claim to be outcome-driven in their full-length text lessons, other responses pointed out that the renewed ELA B30 curriculum offers new opportunities for teaching the “Big Ideas” with older texts. According to one educator’s survey response:

I think that the renewed curriculum has allowed me to be able to push further into teaching ideas of social justice, anti-oppressive/anti-racism (and feel that there is support for my decisions!). Therefore, I am approaching the course differently as a teacher. When it comes to novel study selections, I attempt to be transparent what the author/subject/worldview is with my students. We discuss how some books represent the traditional canon of literature and why people would choose to read/not read these books. They then can make an informed decision about why teachers would make the decisions they do and, in turn, decide what they want to study. However, my instruction/assignments/assessments have differed greatly from before the renewal - I think that I was engaging in good pedagogy and that I still am.
A similar sentiment was echoed in another educator’s interpretation of the study of full-length texts after a renewed curriculum: “No...it is not a novel study any more... [I] use the books to answer and reflect about essential questions. I pose a problem, see how characters react/deal with issues etc. then the students must apply what they learned in a variety of learning methods.” It seems, according to the data, that in the majority of ELA classrooms, the renewed curriculum has impacted how teachers are approaching their full-length texts. These responses are highly perceptive, as they suggest that Eurocentric canonical and global, post-colonial texts can equally offer occasions for critical analysis. Clearly, there is opportunity for teachers to work with texts in a variety of ways, including a culturally responsive approach. However, these responses were unclear in that I could not identify if texts were chosen because they were the primary choice, or if other texts simply were not available. This led directly to my final question in the teacher survey, which focused on teacher perspective regarding the supports in place during the ELA B30 curriculum renewal process. See Table 7.
Table 7
Teachers Felt Support in Curriculum Renewal
In response to the question, “Did you feel supports were offered to help you implement the renewed ELA B30 curriculum?”, only 15% of teachers responded with “definitely yes.” The majority of answers (55%) replied “somewhat”, while 30% said “definitely not.” With so many teachers falling into the “somewhat” category, I was glad to have included a follow-up, open-ended question, in order to dig into what supports teachers felt they were offered in the curriculum renewal process. I asked this question to help fill in my understanding of the teachers’ perspective of this context.

Overwhelmingly, the vast majority of responses highlighted division-led in-service education and professional development days. Division consultants were referenced as available, specifically four times. Accreditation seminars were listed three times as useful to teaching the new ELA B30 curriculum, as were other Ministry of Education opportunities, like marking departmental exams. One educator stated:

Through marking departmental exams, many resources and ideas have been shared with other colleagues from around the province. The school division I work with has also allowed opportunities to work collaboratively with other educators teaching similar courses.

In some cases, teachers absolutely stated that there were supports in place for professional growth through the renewal process, and the usefulness of teacher professional collaboration was echoed throughout many responses.

However, in qualitative ways, overall the tone of the responses in this section reflected a certain level of frustration with the curriculum renewal process. Negative phrases such as “no” and “not enough” surfaced. One teacher responded with the following observation: “We had a couple PD [professional development] sessions offered
by our division. Not enough. Because there were no pilots...or I missed them if there were...the true meaning of the curriculum was lost.” While prior curriculum renewal in Saskatchewan has included pilot units (sample units which are tried out in classrooms before the curriculum is released), the absence in this renewal was identified by this educator. Other frustrations regarding the process surfaced in responses such as this: “There was a general in-service but at that time the literature was not finalized. In fact, everything was still considered a DRAFT and I never did hear that the draft was finalized.” This lack of communication between classroom teachers and the Ministry of Education was paralleled in the following observation by one of the surveyed teachers:

The struggle is in having a book budget that allows for us to purchase new texts. Also given that the Ministry seems to have stopped updating the text selections, guidance as to how to follow curriculum puts teachers in a place where they lack support for choosing newer selections.

There is an allusion in this comment to the Title Search on the Ministry of Education’s curriculum website. Through the Title Search, teachers can investigate titles to determine what can be taught in the varying genres and grade levels. The Title Search was supposed to be renewed alongside the curriculum, and does not seem to be regularly updated, as referenced by this teacher’s answer. There is not a definitive list of ELA B30 full-length texts. Indeed, the comments in this section reflected the survey data quite accurately. It seems teachers did feel somewhat supported, through division and peer supports; however, they highlighted a number of deficiencies in the process.
School Division Structured Interview Results

After the survey data was collected, I returned to the school divisions to request structured interviews with their ELA consultants/coordinators. As was the case with the first request for survey data, some school divisions declined due to general disinterest in participating in a research study. However, the larger issue in this aspect of the research was my discovery of how few school divisions still employ consultants who are charged with the ELA portfolio. When the research began, I contacted the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education in order to access the ELA consultants list. When I was informed that no such list was available, I assumed this reflected poor record-keeping or a possible disconnect between the Ministry of Education and the province’s school divisions. I discovered I was wrong when numerous divisions responded that this position no longer exists. This was disappointing, but not shocking. In my work with the Saskatchewan subject council, the Saskatchewan Teachers of English Language Arts (STELA), I had once worked with a number of specific ELA consultants throughout the province. However, I’m also someone who was a consultant, and was downsized, according to budget constraints. Accordingly, I was able to conduct four structured interviews and was pleased that they reflect urban and rural divisions from different geographical locations in Saskatchewan. Much like the teachers in Saskatchewan’s ELA B30 classrooms, I decided to work with what I was given and learn as much as possible.

Divisions Represented

I wanted to reflect a cross section of the Saskatchewan context; therefore I used purposeful sampling to attract school division participants. Each consultant/coordinator
spoke of the large geographic scope and sparsely distributed population represented in their division. The school divisions were comprised of anywhere between 5,000 to 22,000 students. Two divisions were described as quite multi-cultural, with a significant number of English as an Additional Language (EAL) families in their population. Another division was described as primarily homogeneous, with very few First Nations/Métis/Inuit (FNMI) or EAL students. Conversely, the fourth division represented was described as primarily rural, with at least 40% of students declared as FNMI. Indeed, much like the population of Saskatchewan, the divisions I accessed for interviews were diverse in their teaching context.

Before learning about the context of the curriculum renewal process in each division, I felt it was important to understand the role of each interviewee. The titles were diverse and reflected very broad portfolios: Learning Consultant, Literacy Coordinator, Coordinator of Learning, and Curriculum Coordinator. I quickly learned in the interviews that the straightforward role of “ELA Consultant,” which I had relied upon in the early 2000’s, no longer exists. Each consultant/coordinator spoke of ELA as only one small aspect of their job responsibilities. In one division, the co-ordinator is responsible for literacy from Kindergarten to Grade Twelve, alongside all Arts Education support. Another coordinator spoke of being responsible for the support of five different curricular subjects, teacher accreditation, home school, and career development counselling in three different geographical regions of the school division. The third coordinator referred to a portfolio which includes all curriculum and assessment from grades 4-12 in every subject, student support services, and strategic planning with administration in seven different schools. The fourth interviewee is tasked with working in nine different schools
as a coach for all teachers in developing instruction and assessment. Each coordinator referred to what one respondent termed “the diversification of roles.” It seems that in each division, funding has required fewer school division staff to adopt more responsibilities into their job. The rural-based coordinators spoke of spending hours in their vehicles, attempting to reach all of their schools, while urban coordinators spoke of being inundated with requests and responsibilities in their roles. It seemed that no matter the division, coordinators felt a great responsibility to help teachers, but also voiced concerns regarding an overwhelming work load. These responses made me wonder – how in this scenario did they manage to implement the renewed ELA B30 curriculum?

Curriculum Renewal Supports

It turns out that in 2013 when the Ministry of Education released the renewed ELA B30 curriculum to the Internet, teachers in Saskatchewan school divisions were not completely left to fend for themselves, as might be inferred by the 30% of teachers surveyed who responded that they did not feel supported throughout the curriculum renewal process. In the teacher survey, 15% of teachers surveyed responded that they absolutely felt supported throughout the ELA B30 curriculum renewal. In the middle, with 55%, were most teachers who felt moderately supported in this process. Teachers primarily responded that in-service education workshops were made available, and were helpful, but that further support would have been appreciated. This corresponds with the interviews, as the coordinators spoke highly of the in-services made available to ELA B30 teachers throughout the renewal process. All four division representatives spoke of division-wide professional development days, focused on unpacking outcomes so that
teachers understood the new expectations/language in the renewed curriculum, followed by the sharing of resources among teachers. One school division spoke of bringing in a collaborator, who helped renew the curriculum with the Ministry of Education, to in-service their ELA 30 teachers. Two coordinators reflected that in the process, ELA 30 teachers were, in their words, “ripped off,” as significant professional development had occurred throughout the previous grade nine to eleven ELA curriculum renewal.

Accordingly, very little attention was paid to in-servicing grade twelve teachers with the same level of depth. Throughout these conversations, it became apparent that the teacher data paralleled the experience of co-ordinators. Co-ordinators in each division spoke with pride about assigned professional development time, and the opportunities for professional collaboration, but at the same time, felt badly that further supports were not able to be offered due to budgetary and time constraints.

The following question focused on the reference to budget constraints:

Approximately how much money was allocated for new print resources in ELA last year (2014-2015 school year)? My personal experience of curriculum renewal in the late 1990s was during a time when money was allocated by the government, specifically for the purpose of not only providing workshops, but also for renewing the contents of English Language Arts book rooms. From the onset, I knew in the process of revising the curriculum, that this would not be the case in the 2014 ELA 30 curriculum renewal process. Furthermore, in my role as an instructional consultant during the most recent renewal, I did not experience the same financial support in action.

As listed in the chart indicating the full-length texts in use in ELA B30 classes, many of the books are homogeneous. Were teachers given the fiscal opportunity to
purchase new texts? The responses to this question varied greatly among the interviews. One coordinator answered that for the past seven to eight years, “all funding is decentralized,” implying that schools are free to order for themselves. This response did not confirm whether new texts were purchased, or existing titles, such as *Lord of the Flies*, were replaced. When left to their own devices, we cannot know if this scenario allows for freedom to try new texts, or provides a rationale to stay with what is known. The three other school division representatives spoke of investing primarily in professional development time (in-service education). They also stated that centrally purchased anthologies were ordered for all renewed ELA curricula, primarily Pearson’s *iLit* series. Two coordinators spoke of how difficult it was to find anthologies which would work for ELA B30, as ELA A30 (the course which focuses on Canadian perspectives) had more available resources. This is interesting to note, because it seems the tide has turned in Canadian curriculum reform. In previous curricula, Donawa and Fowler (2013) note that resistance to Canadian literature in the ELA A30 course used to focus on a lack of suitable resources. As the focus of this research study is full-length texts, I noticed that at no time did the purchasing of novels or full-length non-fiction texts come into the discussion. It seemed on-line resources and short stories, poems, and essays seem to have received the priority for funding new texts.

What Went Right

Near the end of each interview, I asked each coordinator to reflect upon what aspects they were most proud of in the ELA B30 curriculum implementation/renewal process. In each interview, I expected at this point to hear about how positive the
professional development in-services were; however, this was not the case. My expectations here were a result of the teacher surveys and conversations with each consultant. Instead, one division coordinator spoke of pride in their collection of non-print resources, as their division focus was to move towards including more on-line texts in classrooms. Furthermore, this coordinator addressed the fact that “most teachers are pretty stuck on their novel choices” and accordingly, the focus changed to offering on-line supports which would diversify the cultures/voices represented in the course. One coordinator spoke highly of specified space on the division’s website, offering a variety of instructional tools, lessons, texts, and assessment supports. The third division coordinator promoted the division’s approach of “giving credit to the wealth of knowledge” in teachers, by facilitating school connections, inter-collegiality and opportunities of collaboration. The final coordinator’s response did not speak to text selection, but rather spoke of the division’s work with the big picture in education, in that teachers in this division are now focusing on “student-centered reading and writing instruction” at all grade levels, which aligns with the school division’s strategic plan to improve literacy. This strategic plan is a mandated initiative by the Ministry of Education. While many meaningful pedagogical opportunities arose in these school divisions, the introduction of new course materials (specifically full-length texts) did not seem to emerge in any of these responses. This is consistent with the teacher survey responses, as it seems a variety of supports were offered; however, specific introduction of new texts was lacking, or the inherent value of new materials was not entertained.
**Division Struggles**

As reflective practitioners (Schön, 1987), teachers think back over their lessons and decide what worked and what needs to change in the future. To me, it only made sense to end each telephone interview with a similar approach. Accordingly, I asked the coordinators, “What challenges do you face implementing the new ELA curriculum?” Once I had collected all of the responses, and coded them, one major theme became apparent: a lack of specific Ministry support in this process caused hardship. This contradicts what was said earlier in the interviews. One division representative voiced frustration regarding the lack of Ministry explanation of unpacking what an outcome is in the renewed curricula. When I referred to the 2010 Ministry document, *Renewed Curricula: Understanding Outcomes*, the coordinator pointed out that the document was merely released to the website, without Ministry explanation and that furthermore, their division was unaware of the information prior to ELA curricula renewal. There seems to be a communication disconnect between the Ministry of Education resources/mandates and the school divisions.

Another division coordinator highlighted the lack of Ministry guidance regarding assessment expectations. Mirroring this frustration with a lack of Ministry supports, another coordinator highlighted the lack of sample unit plans and variety of rubrics. In this interview question, the interviewee referred to the ELA curricula renewal process in Saskatchewan throughout the 1990s, when the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education led workshops, released sample units, as well as lists of recommended resources to ensure the renewed curricula were understood and accessible for teachers. It is for this reason, according to the coordinator, that they are “still trying to move teachers in the direction
[of understanding ELA curriculum renewal]. It’s slow because teachers didn’t get enough support.” Another coordinator stated that “teachers are overwhelmed and are missing the understanding about what is meant [in the curriculum document] and how to assess it.”

There is a parallel between division coordinators and ELA B30 teachers in this sentiment. It seems that both sides felt that while positive steps occurred in the implementation of ELA curricula, both parties also felt that the supports were lacking in part as well.

This response by both teachers and school division representatives could cause some alarm, as it suggests that teachers are technicians, rather than professionals. At first glance, this could be interpreted that teachers are unable to grow without specific, mandated supports. As a teacher involved in the recent curriculum renewal process and the one in the 1990s, my interpretation of this information differs. I would argue that in this case, the intent of the teachers and division representatives is a desire to have clearer expectations outlined by the Ministry, via professional development educational opportunities, in order to have consistency in the province. Furthermore, it is not that teachers require model units to teach specifically, but rather, to have as models on which to base their own units. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, teaching ELA in Saskatchewan requires the balancing of a lot of curricular and pedagogical expectations.

Overall, the responses from teachers and division representatives did not ask to learn exactly how or what to teach, but rather to have clearer expectations regarding the philosophy of outcomes and supplemental text suggestions to support classroom implementation.

If teachers are requiring further supports for the new ELA B30 curriculum, it seems that primarily text options are needed, according to the coordinators. All of the
division coordinators spoke of a gap in the area of text selections for ELA B30 classrooms. Teachers are not requesting new resources to support the new ELA B30 curriculum. In one interview, the coordinator suggested that teachers do not feel confident to use texts not listed on the Ministry Title Search, as the list is not updated and therefore viewed as ineffective. A similar sentiment was voiced in another school division, as the coordinator said that the “curriculum was a positive shift to diversify [content and instruction] and engage kids, but there was no clear articulation regarding resources.” Simply stated, while teachers may be open to teaching new full-length texts, it seems that they are not accessing them for a variety of reasons. Again, the school division’s perception of the situation seems to mirror that of the teaching staff, who in the survey responded that over half use the same full-length texts as they did prior to the curriculum renewal process. Based on the survey data and the structured interviews, it seems that there were many areas to celebrate throughout the renewed curriculum implementation; however, there are areas in need of further attention.

As I mentioned in the first chapter, when I first read the Mackey, Vermeer, Storie, and DuBois (2012) study, the texts jumped out as similar to what is taught in Saskatchewan. I began this research study with the intent to see if this was actually the case. It turns out that the high-school canon (full-length text) in Saskatchewan ELA B30 classrooms is fairly static, just as was the case in Edmonton. Both teachers and school board representatives voiced little change in full-length text selection after the most recent curriculum renewal. While both seem to point fingers at limited Ministry of Education supports, there do seem to be some contradictions between classroom teachers and division coordinators/consultants. I noticed that a number of division representatives
stated that teachers do not ask for new materials, while some teachers reported a lack of support from their respective school divisions. This seems to highlight the tension between those in the classroom and those working from division offices. It seems both feel the other side could be working harder.
Chapter Five: Next Steps

Initial Response: I Know What You’re Teaching. Now What?

I came into this process curious about what full-length texts my peers are teaching in their ELA B30 classrooms. Would the results provide me with a list of new authors to explore? After opening the conversation, and metaphorically peeking into their classrooms, it seems the answer is no. Furthermore, it seems the majority of full-length texts assigned are not only dated, but primarily reflect the voices of male authors from Britain and America. Do teachers feel they are engaging in the teaching of these texts differently? Mostly yes; however, it seems a significant portion of teaching hours are dedicated to limited voices, when the entire international community is available. Marginalized voices do not exist in the full-length texts. As for female voices, pickings are slim. While the data reflects that many teachers are working with multicultural classrooms, it seems that many teachers are emphasizing mainly Eurocentric and American novels in the ELA B30 global course. In Chapter Two, I refer to the work of Arthur N. Applebee’s “Stability and Change in the High-School Canon” (1992), referenced by both Skerrett and Mackey et al., who states:

Strong voices have argued that the English curriculum is white, male, and Eurocentric, marginalizing the contributions for women and the people from other cultural traditions. Equally strong voices have reasserted the values of a traditional liberal education, arguing that the curriculum in English has already been diluted too much (Bennett 1988; Hirsch 1987). What is lacking most in such debates, however, is perspective on what is being taught in schools across the nation. (p. 27)
It is important to revisit this statement because it seems, after collecting the data in the Saskatchewan ELA B30 context, that his first point may be accurate in contemporary classrooms in Saskatchewan, at least insofar as the data collected for this study would indicate. There are many implications from Applebee’s assertion. To me, the key word is “perspective.” From the teacher responses, it became evident to me that while the voices may appear to be homogenous, we cannot know entirely how the text is approached in all Saskatchewan classrooms. Applebee (1992) states that there are two sides to the issue of literature, and in this study, it seems that while I set to uncover what is being taught in school, how it is approached could warrant further investigation.

Did teachers feel supported to branch out and try new texts? Yes and no. Yes, they felt basic introductions to curricula were presented; however, teachers would like more support from the Ministry, as would school divisions in the realm of workshops, recommended resources, rubrics, and sample units. It seems that in their professional desire to teach the courses well, they would like samples, not merely to copy, but rather to use as a basis for their own course planning. This was interesting, as in both the surveys and structured interviews, participants spoke of the professional strengths of teachers to collaborate and foster professional learning among themselves. However, it seems that support regarding specific materials and sample units (expectations) would be appreciated. Coordinators and consultants spoke of teachers’ reticence to independently try new full-length texts, specifically. An easy response to this information is to return to the teacher feedback, create a list, and argue that next steps need to include better funding of education, more curriculum workshopping, and additional text lists and model units to be made available. This over-simplifies the issue. Indeed, these aspects might help;
however, if at the end of the day, it results in further purchases of the same materials, how has the teaching truly changed? Over ten years later, Mackey, Vermeer, Storie, and DeBlois’s original list of novels taught in Alberta is eerily similar to the list of full-length texts I have compiled for this study. Love it or hate it, over decades, we continue to teach *Lord of the Flies*, throughout Canada. It is the number one full-length text in Saskatchewan ELA B30 classrooms. Why is the fear of British boys abandoning British societal customs, and returning to “savagery” the primary story we link in our ELA B30 World Perspectives course? Are teachers critically analyzing the text? Is it just a matter of the texts availability in the school book room? Or either consciously/unconsciously are teachers perpetuating a postcolonial approach to education? I argue that the response of “it was available in the book room” is insufficient. Why have no new texts been purchased? In my mind, it is because educators need further support in actively engaging in culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) in their classrooms, specifically in regard to their full-length text selections. Through Saskatchewan Ministry of Education or regional, school-division-based supports, implementation of CRP in full-length text selections could help teachers across Saskatchewan provide richer learning experiences in their exploration of various world views in, all, but specifically in this study, ELA B30 courses. Returning to the work of Pirie (1997), I caution that through our repeated choices of traditional high-school canon texts, “[w]e should beware of locking students inside the rooms of our own academic histories” (p. 94). Saskatchewan classrooms are culturally changing, the world is becoming ever more at our fingertips, and accordingly, a CRP infusion could benefit ELA B30 classrooms in Saskatchewan. While this has become remarkably evident to me after collecting and analysing the data in this bound
case study, it is a concept I was also introduced to when the Saskatchewan ELA curricula were in the stages of being rewritten.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP)

When I entered into this research, I did not have a “right answer” in mind. My purpose was to learn, without judgement, what full-length texts are taught and to notice any similarities/differences to the work Mackey, Vermeer, Storie, and DeBlois (2012). However, as I coded and themed the data, and compared it to the opportunities in the curriculum and diversity of student populations, my position began to wane. By this point in my research, I shifted out of a solely interpretive theoretical paradigm.

Allow me to explain. As a white, female educator in Saskatchewan, I was able to ignore social inequities in the beginning of my career. The concept of culturally responsive pedagogy was foreign, until I first began my work with the Saskatchewan Ministry of Learning to renew the secondary ELA curricula in 2003. High-school canonical texts had been at the heart of my own personal education and, in many cases, were the basis of the courses I taught in my first years of teaching. This was absolutely apparent in my International Baccalaureate ELA classes, as the program is rooted firmly in Anglo-European literature. As my classroom teaching experience grew, I became increasingly aware of the diversity of my students; however, I did not yet have the reading and philosophy to give this tension a name. Geneva Gay (2002) best defines the concept of CRP as “using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively” (p. 106). It was during my involvement in the drafting the renewed ELA B30 curriculum that I was
introduced to the concept of CRP. While it is not a mandated aspect of the renewed curricula, as a classroom teacher, through group discussions and personal/professional reading, I saw opportunities for its implementation in my teaching of the renewed curriculum. While we grappled, as a working group, with syntax, semantics, and the “Big Ideas” of the renewed curricula, it became apparent to me that the literature of the course could reflect the diversity of students. My survey data states that 55% of teachers would describe their Saskatchewan classroom as multicultural. The data stemming from my research study highlights a startling issue to me, which I believe CRP could help to rectify. While the curriculum does not mandate for me to teach in a culturally responsive way, through my research for this project and my own classroom experience, I believe that CRP offers an opportunity for teachers to think critically about their pedagogy and relate their work to best suit the needs of their students. It also evident in the teacher responses, that some other teachers in Saskatchewan hold a similar view in their approach to teaching full-length texts.

Rychly and Graves (2012) extend this concept of CRP to suggest that this form of pedagogy “can be thought of as teaching practices that attend to the specific cultural characteristics that make students different from one another and from the teacher” (p. 44). Indeed, my voice was not the same as my students’ and CRP would serve as an important basis for my own classroom reform as the curricula were renewed. In my own classroom, I moved to include more essays, short stories, and poetry by diverse voices. However, full-length texts proved more difficult to locate. The time commitment is a challenge. Also, novels are sometimes equated as “literature” in popular consciousness and novels are widely consumed. Clearly, there are many opinions to mediate. It’s
complicated. After surveying my peers through this research study, we see in the data from chapter four, that the voices inherent in the full-length texts reflect minimal diversity. CRP may not be informing the selection or teaching of full-length text selections in ELA B30 classrooms. However, we do not know completely how the texts are approached. What I did learn through the teacher feedback was that I was not alone in my experience in the ELA B30 curriculum renewal experience.

Why do I advocate for CRP in ELA classrooms? The need for CRP ties directly to the concept of the hidden curriculum, which is deeply entrenched in ELA classrooms where teachers are held as knowledge-holders of the sacred literary canon. Hidden curriculum is no longer a new concept, as Evelyn Shirk’s (1976) “The Hidden Curriculum Revisited” outlined the issue over forty years ago. It highlights that many educators are completely unaware of their bias when teaching, and yet this issue continues to exist in contemporary ELA classrooms. Her example of “double teaching” reflects canon literature as a basis for “rote learning” under the guise of “creativity” (Shirk, 1976, p. 53). For example, in her study, the high-school canonical play, *Hamlet*, was to be taught so that students could appreciate the tragic mode elements inherent in Renaissance drama. Creative responses were not to demonstrate personal connections or interpretations of the text, but rather to parallel the literary merits as described by both the teacher and curriculum document. This model of cultural transmission teaching created a reliance on teacher as “knowledge-keeper” that allowed for what Shirk described as “[t]he student’s use of the teacher as moral model” (p. 55). Furthermore, the traditional reliance on Shakespeare as yet another “pale, male, and stale” author does little to acknowledge the diversity of the students in the classroom. Shakespeare as a field of
literary study can afford a culturally diverse and rich literary experience, which CRP can support. In my research study, it is clear that a significant portion of teaching time is spent on dominant voices, in the teaching of full-length texts. All of the data is directly from teachers, self-identifying their material and time. While teachers responded that in many cases, they feel they are interacting with the teaching of texts differently, I wonder how many are unintentionally following Shirk’s model, and implementing a hidden curriculum. Further investigation into how teachers approach the texts could reveal further understanding of the intentional or unintentional teaching of hidden curriculum.

A similar scenario to the role of teacher in regard to CRP is prominent in Alex Pomson’s (2002) “The Rebbe Reworked: An Inquiry Into the Persistence of Inherited Traditions of Teaching.” I find this study important, as it reflects a seemingly different, yet similar situation in regard to a bound case study and the teaching of literature. This case study helps in understanding CRP in a very different philosophical stance because it encounters how culturally embedded teaching archetypes influence how teachers approach their work. As someone interested in how teachers adopt change, teach literature, and influence culture in classrooms, I see an interesting parallel in the experience of teaching literature in a Jewish day-school study. In the case study, the teacher claims she has no time for the aspects of literary study she enjoys teaching because of the majority of allotted time for linguistic development. She goes on to state that she can still teach the values she wishes, by maintaining her lens when approaching course content. As a recommendation for further research, if another survey was conducted in this context, I would want to know the teachers’ demographic information. Based on the top fourteen literature choices in Saskatchewan ELA B30 classes, I wonder
if secondary ELA teachers are primarily white settler descendants? Is it possible that this lens filters literature selection, as it did in Shifra’s study?

Educational bias has also been explored a little closer to home, in Saskatchewan. In her article “Re-settling the margins: using postcolonial theory to retell our story” (2007), Valerie Mulholland suggests that there is still a long road ahead for Saskatchewan educators. Previously a high-school English Language Arts teacher, her reflections on the various biases inherent in the Saskatchewan English classroom cause her to “advocate using Postcolonial theory to disrupt the white-settler story of the heroic pioneer that permeates curricula and school culture in Western Canada” (Mulholland, 2007, p. 22).

But what exactly is this “white-settler story” she describes? In brief, it is a common story in Saskatchewan, in which European explorers struggle against a harsh and barren landscape in order to ultimately (via a strong Christian work ethic) overcome nature in order to construct “proper” civilization. Mulholland acknowledges that in these narratives First Nations people are absent, or if they are included are locked into the role of “noble savages, members of [a] dying race” (Mulholland, 2007, p. 23). The curriculum here implies the First Nations people of Saskatchewan as “less than” their European counterparts. Their experience of European invasion is not acknowledged. While the voices of Canadian FNMI peoples may not have a specific role in the global focus of the ELA B30 curriculum, this article does lend me pause and once again evokes the primary novel taught in Saskatchewan – *Lord of the Flies*. In this novel, I would argue a scenario similar to Mulholland’s occurs, but as a cautionary tale. It works off a common concept, being shipwrecked on a deserted island. From there, European boys struggle against a harsh and barren landscape in order to ultimately (via a strong Christian work ethic)
overcome nature in order to impose “proper” civilization. When they lose their Anglo-Christian values, anarchy occurs, and “savagery” results. Golding’s novel has sparked animated scholarly debate. Marijke van Vuuren (2004) argues that this allegorical tale is firmly rooted in Christianity: “In Golding's allegory the children, exiled on an island until such time as they may be rescued, represent fallen humanity awaiting redemption” (p. 5). It seems a hidden curriculum could be at play in ELA B30 classrooms, which Sterzuk highlights in her work as well.

Sterzuk’s (2010) work supports my argument for the need for CRP in Saskatchewan ELA classrooms by highlighting that it is not solely in the literature choices that hidden curriculum resides in the secondary ELA curricula. How language is approached and taught in Saskatchewan reflects a great deal of colonial bias. According to Sterzuk, “not all English language varieties are considered equal, and colonial attitudes about proper English manifest in many ways and places in settler Saskatchewan, including schools” (2010, p. 110). She further argues that this is an important aspect to acknowledge in classrooms because “[b]iased language beliefs legitimize discriminatory school practices” (Sterzuk, 2010, p. 110). This is tricky business in the realm of secondary English Language Arts. ELA teachers promote what dominant society deems “proper” or “standard” English (especially in regard to canonical literature); however this creates quite the paradox for teachers. On one hand, teachers want to prepare their students for success in the dominant culture; however, at the same time, by adhering to a construction of languages/dialects in hierarchy, teachers are supporting the biased system. Furthermore, for those students who struggle with a non-dominant dialect, academic success is incredibly difficult. While standard English may be suggested to provide
access to cultural capital, there is no guarantee that it will provide social mobility. When returning to my research data, specifically, the 14 most commonly taught full-length texts are written in “standard” English. According to Fowler's Concise Dictionary of Modern English Usage (2016), standard English can be defined as “the form of English that is most widely accepted and understood in an English-speaking country and tends to be based on the educated speech of a particular area” (p. 569). Considering the vast nature of world texts available, to rely so heavily on British and American “standard” texts reflects a tendency in Saskatchewan teachers to not change their full-length texts easily.

The ELA B30 curriculum allows for diverse voices, but it can also be difficult to maneuver. The ELA B30 curriculum specifically requires that through the CR outcomes, “[s]tudents will extend their abilities to view, listen to, read, comprehend, and respond to a variety of contemporary and traditional grade-appropriate texts in a variety of forms (oral, print, and other media) from First Nations, Métis, and other cultures for a variety of purposes including for learning, interest, and enjoyment” (p. 21). International indigenous voices are directly stated; however, the text list I collected seems to reflect “other cultures” to be British or American. A CRP focus requires a focus on the student context, which canonical texts are unable to achieve, unless the student demographic reflects similar cultural heritage, or the text is approached with a critical lens.

Furthermore, Verna St. Denis (2011) critiques multiculturalism in education, and states that it is actually a disservice to the FNMI community. “Aboriginal groups suggest that multiculturalism is a form of colonialism and works to distract from the recognition and redress of Indigenous rights” (St. Denis, 2011, p. 308). In this context, St. Denis highlights the importance of not only including diverse perspectives, but also of teaching
treaty education and FNMI perspectives. She states that one should do so specifically in opposition to the perspectives of typical canon literature.

While racialized perspectives are absent, so are other marginalized voices in English Language Arts. Kristopher Wells’ (2012) article “Generation Queer” highlights what some might consider the last frontier of taboo material in regards to hidden curriculum and written curriculum content. In this text, he emphasizes the growing need for supports for LGBTQ (Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgendered/Transsexual/Queer/Questioning) youth in Canadian educational institutions.

But how does this relate to the teaching of English Language Arts in Saskatchewan? It broadens the scope. When Wells inquires in his article, “Ask yourself: Are the…books in my school library inclusive and affirming of LGBTQ individuals?” (2012, p. 19), one may quickly scan the list of texts in this study and respond with a resounding “NO.” However, queering literature is an approach which could be applied to the full-length texts in ELA B30. Wells’ statement highlights the need for CRP in the literature available to students, but I would argue that approach to the literature is equally important. While the ELA curricula are “evergreen” which means teachers can add resources upon their own discretion, I stated earlier that Saskatchewan teachers are reticent to deviate from the list. When referring to the lists of texts generated in my research study, none overtly reflect the voices of the LGBTQ community and many could be taught in a traditional manner. It seems changing the status quo in literature choices has proven remarkably difficult for Saskatchewan Grade Twelve ELA educators. While this study did not go into detail regarding how the texts are approached, there is
opportunity for critical LGBTQ discourse in the teaching of what are considered traditional canonical texts.

Indeed, there are a number of challenges in teaching within a CRP framework. Anna Kirova (2008) highlights that there is a gap between theory and practice when it comes to multicultural education (p. 106). Another challenge, according to St. Denis, is that multicultural education is inherently conservative. CRP, in contrast, has an emancipatory agenda rooted in Critical Theory. Susan Dion (2007) states, “[w]ith the advent of multicultural and antiracism education teachers have been inundated with demands to address ‘difference’ in their teaching, yet many teachers do not know what to teach or how to teach difference” (p. 331). Young’s (2010) study, “Challenges to Conceptualizing and Actualizing Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: How Viable is the Theory in Classroom Practice?” cites structural issues working against meaningful CRP teaching due to teacher bias, racist school settings, and lack of support for implementation. This echoes the voices of Saskatchewan teachers and consultants/coordinators, who also spoke of support for curriculum/resource implementation as lacking. Furthermore, DiAngelo and Sensoy (2010) take the difficulty a step further, asserting that CRP in education can never afford easy answers, but rather entails a general awareness and acceptance of an ongoing struggle. Their work has influenced my interest to not only uncover what full-length texts are studied, but to begin to understand if supports were offered to alter full-length text selections. DiAngelo and Sensoy’s assertions led to my learning about where teachers and division representatives felt supported, and where they felt there is still work to be done.
Clearly some Saskatchewan teachers are struggling to implement CRP. The initial work of Ladson-Billings’ (1995) offers a framework for the mindset involved in the teaching of CRP in a thoughtful and meaningful way. She cites the work of Cornel Pewewardy (1993) who states, “educators traditionally have attempted to insert culture into the education, instead of inserting education into the culture” (in Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 159). This perspective shift resonates years later. Right at the time of the ELA B30 curriculum renewal, Ladson-Billings (2014) revisited this concept and defines three important attributes in successful CRP teachers:

I identified three major domains of their work: academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness. Briefly, by academic success I refer to the intellectual growth that students experience as a result of classroom instruction and learning experiences. Cultural competence refers to the ability to help students appreciate and celebrate their cultures of origin while gaining knowledge of and fluency in at least one other culture. Sociopolitical consciousness is the ability to take learning beyond the confines of the classroom using school knowledge and skills to identify, analyze, and solve real-world problems. (p. 75)

Each of the three domains outlined could work seamlessly in the ELA B30 course. Cultural competence could be supported through the full-length text choices in Saskatchewan ELA classrooms, by either choosing new texts entirely, or adding contrapuntal readings to study alongside. I appreciate that Ladson-Billings highlights the need for rigour and growth in relation to academic success because it opposes the notion that by choosing culturally responsive texts, teachers are abandoning academic rigour.
Furthermore, the expectation of students’ sociopolitical consciousness parallels the “Big Ideas” mandated by the Saskatchewan curricula. For me, this article provides a variety of valid options for teachers to use, moving forward in their ELA text selections.

**CRP Isn’t in the Text – It’s in the Teacher**

With all of this criticism, which text should be used? How do we know what constitutes “good literature”? While an easy solution might be to mandate or fund new full-length texts in Saskatchewan secondary classrooms, the power ultimately lies within the teachers. As the research from Mackey et al. (2012) and Skerrett (2010) suggests, texts such as *Lord of the Flies* do not seem to be leaving classrooms. The ELA B30 course was renewed in Saskatchewan, yet the full-length texts do not seem to have changed. Currently, the renewed ELA B30 course does provide opportunities for Saskatchewan students to explore two “Big Ideas” – “The Search for Self” and “The Social Experience” through the study of international texts. The educators in my study may be teaching the texts listed in chapter four through a variety of critical lenses. Or they very well might not be. The Saskatchewan ELA Curriculum document outlines that “Big Ideas as Questions for deeper understanding are used to initiate and guide inquiry and give students direction for developing deep understandings about a topic or issue under study” (p. 14). There is opportunity for CRP to be implemented throughout the teaching of Big Ideas; however, I think there is room for growth in the written curriculum.

Why do I feel this way? I have two children who will learn under the umbrella of the Saskatchewan curriculum. While I hope they have innovative, CRP focused teachers
in their high school experience, I fear the opposite. My work with the Ministry of Education drafting the revised ELA curricula has me wishing for more. The idea of a global B30 course is a good one; however, there is room for growth. Smith (2011) argues:

> With the benefit of postmodern hindsight, we may now regard this conceptual unification of world literature, with its corresponding idea of manageable ‘world unity, as naïve at best. At worst, such rhetoric chauvinistically assumes that an exclusively Western perspective can encompass all global cultures. (p. 589)

To further empower teachers, an alternate ELA B30 course could be created to address Smith’s (2011) concern and to also infuse further opportunities for CRP. The two Big Ideas, “Search for Self” and “The Social Experience” could be further explored by reframing the overall course. I would argue that a simple shift requiring educators to teach numerous perspectives on the same topic would ensure that students read full-length texts (as well as other genres) through a variety of critical lenses. Gender and race lenses could be just the beginning for critical thinking, reading, and viewing. Required contrapuntal readings could further help students to begin to appreciate the complicated nature of humanity, while also appreciating literary text analysis. The opportunities are endless and I believe both teachers and students would benefit.

**A Good Novel Has an Ending, Right?**

I started this process simply curious, wondering what my colleagues are teaching. I wanted new answers for the question “What novel should I teach next semester?” I needed clarity regarding what I could say, when asked, “Oh you teach English. What
book do you teach?” I wanted to know, after years drafting and redrafting the ELA curricula, what did it look like in the classroom, as far as “the book taught”? Did teachers change texts? Were they professionally supported? Did the Saskatchewan context mirror those in Alberta or Ontario? I learned a lot, and yet some things stayed the same. As I stated in chapter one, I love a good book. Five years later in this process, I still love a good book. But truth be told, it’s so much more than that. Now, I really love a good book that challenges students and provides opportunity for change. Hopefully, this book will get some of my peers to start challenging their books (and assumptions) too. Perhaps in ten years I will be able to revisit my data and see further diversity in the full-length texts studied in ELA B30 classrooms. Perhaps my perspectives ill continue to shift in order to enable deeper understanding. Maybe, like all good research, this is the beginning and not an ending at all.

In the process of searching for answers to my research question, it seems the result is simply more questions. To revisit these classrooms in ten years, just as Mackey, Vermeer, Storie, and DeBlois (2012) did, would be fascinating. Will the texts change or will they stay the same? At this point, the literature seems so dated, but perhaps things could transform? As well, I would ask additional questions to clarify the findings in this research study. What are the demographic details for the teachers completing the survey? In my efforts to maintain anonymity, I missed learning what cultures are represented in the teachers. This could help to uncover whether cultural bias influences text choices. However, this vein of research would also require further questioning of teachers to uncover if bias exists. More specifically, I would love to have asked teachers to explain their rationale for the full-length texts they currently teach.
Furthermore, this process has me curious about the other Grade Twelve required ELA course – ELA A30, which focuses solely on Canadian perspectives and literature. Are the full-length texts in this course as homogeneous as those in my research of ELA B30? Are they as dated? Do FNMI authors have more of a presence when studying the literature of home or are Verna St. Denis’ concerns about multiculturalism overshadowing FNMI perspectives valid? In all, the question becomes: are male authors the norm for full-length text study in secondary ELA classrooms, or is it primarily the case in ELA B30? How old are the publication dates of texts? In many ways, it seems this research study is just the tip of the iceberg.

To dig even further into this research, the voice of students would be powerful as well. To survey graduating ELA B30 students to ask about their experience with the full-length text would garner rich information. Did they enjoy the texts? Did they identify with the literature studied? Did they struggle with new perspectives? Was there purpose to their reading, or was it a transmission of the text and its values? The questions are endless, when it comes to understanding how the full-length texts were appreciated (or not) on the other side of each ELA B30 classroom.

Or better yet, we could ask the students if they read any “good books?”
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Appendix A
Teacher Survey Questions

Survey Questions:

1. How would you describe your school? (urban or rural?)

2. Would you describe your class as multicultural or monocultural?

3. Have you taught ELA B30 prior to this year?

4. Will your class be studying one or more full-length text (novel or full-length non-fiction) together as a class, or will students be offered a choice from a variety of texts?

5. If your class will be studying one text together, what is/are the name(s) of the novel/full-length non-fiction text(s)?

6. How many weeks have/will be spent studying this/these text(s)?

7. Have you taught this/these text(s) before the ELA B30 curriculum was renewed in 2014?

8. If so, in your opinion are you approaching the text in the same way as before the renewed curriculum? Please explain briefly.

9. (a) Did you feel supports were offered to help you implement the renewed ELA B30 curriculum?

   (b) If so, what supports were offered? (inservices, resources, etc.)
Appendix B

School Division ELA Consultant Structured Interview Questions

1. How would you describe your school division’s demographics?

2. How would you describe your role in this school division (title and responsibilities)?

3. What supports were put in place by your division to implement the renewed ELA B30 curriculum?

4. Approximately how much money was allocated for new print resources in ELA last year (2014-2015 school year)?

5. What are you most proud of in regard to ELA curriculum implementation/renewal?

6. What challenges do you face implementing the new ELA curriculum?
**Appendix C**  
**Full-length Texts Listed Only Once In Teacher Survey**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Their Eyes Were Watching God</th>
<th>The Help</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turn of the Screw</td>
<td>Cellist of Sarajevo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Huck Finn</td>
<td>Power of One</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poisonwood Bible</td>
<td>What is the What</td>
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<td>As I Lay Dying</td>
<td>Outliers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scarlet Letter</td>
<td>Rabbit Proof Fence</td>
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<td>Sold</td>
<td>Life After Life</td>
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<td>Joy Luck Club</td>
<td>I am Malala</td>
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<td>Breaking Night</td>
<td>La Prisonniere (Stolen Lives)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Lovely Bones</td>
<td>The Kitchen God's Wife</td>
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<td>True Grit</td>
<td>The Swallows of Kabul</td>
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<td>19 Minutes</td>
<td>Pride and Prejudice</td>
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<td>Things Fall Apart</td>
<td>Jane Eyre</td>
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<td>Zeitoun</td>
<td>Grapes of Wrath</td>
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<td>No Country for Old Men</td>
<td>Pygmalion</td>
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<td>I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings</td>
<td>Snowball's Chance</td>
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<td>The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time</td>
<td>Memoirs of a Non Prom Queen</td>
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<td>Indian</td>
<td>Arks Can’t Save Aardvarks</td>
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<td>Mr God This is Anna</td>
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Appendix D

Ethics Approval

University of Regina
Research Ethics Board
Certificate of Approval

REB #
2016-048

Investigator(s): Carmen Holota
Department: Faculty of Education
Funder: Unfunded
Supervisor: Dr. Valerie Mulholland

Title: What are Grade Twelve Students Reading? Surveying Saskatchewan ELA 830 Teachers

APPROVED ON: April 20, 2016
RENEWAL DATE: April 20, 2017

APPROVAL OF:
Application For Behavioural Research Ethics Review
On-line Survey Consent
Telephone Survey Consent
School Division ELA Consultant Structured Interview
Survey Questions

FULL BOARD MEETING
DELEGATED REVIEW _X_

The University of Regina Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above-named research project. The proposal was found to be acceptable on ethical grounds. The principal investigator has the responsibility for any other administrative or regulatory approvals that may pertain to this research project, and for ensuring that the authorized research is carried out according to the conditions outlined in the original protocol submitted for ethics review. This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above time period provided there is no change in experimental protocol, consent process or documents.

Any significant changes to your proposed method, or your consent and recruitment procedures should be reported to the Chair for Research Ethics Board consideration in advance of its implementation.

ONGOING REVIEW REQUIREMENTS
In order to receive annual renewal, a status report must be submitted to the REB Chair for Board consideration within one month of the current expiry date each year the study remains open, and upon study completion. Please refer to the following website for further instructions: http://www.uregina.ca/research/for-faculty-staff/ethics-compliance/human/forms1/ethics-forms.html.

[Signature]

Dr. Larena Hoeber, Chair
University of Regina Research Ethics Board

Please send all correspondence to:
Research Office
University of Regina